Young Citizens and Political Participation in a Digital Society

Philippa Collin

Addressing the Democratic Disconnect

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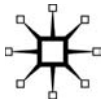

First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978–1–137–34882–1

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

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Acknowledgements

This book has emerged from nearly a decade of work in organisations and academia and through engaging in research, policy making and service design with young people. Their work, passion and generosity are the foundations of this project. I acknowledge all of those who participated in the research and thank them for their openness and insightful reflections.

I would also like to thank the organisations whose case studies are presented in this book for their involvement, and particularly, the staff and executives who gave their time to help me understand their aims and practices.

I am indebted to many intellectual friends, but most specifically to Ariadne Vromen, David Marsh, Eric Sidoti, Lucas Walsh, Greg Noble, Ned Rossiter and Amy Denmeade for their guidance and critique at various points in this project. I also thank Ien Ang and the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney for the institutional support to realise this book.

I am also grateful to Vanessa Mendes Moreira De Sa for her research assistance and to Caroline Cockburn, my wonderful mum, for her support in all aspects of my life and work – as well as editing and feedback on the manuscript. Some of the chapters draw on work previously published in article form, such as 'The Internet, Youth Participation Policies and the Development of Young People's Political Identities in Australia', *Journal of Youth Studies* 11(5): 527–542, 2008; and 'Building and Connecting to Online Communities for Action: Young People, ICT and Everyday Politics', *International Journal of E-Politics: Special Edition on E-Democracy – Online Youth Participation and Engagement* 1:3, 1–18, 2010.

This book is in memory of Kelly Betts, the kind of Everyday Maker who could have changed the world, and for Marcelo, Violeta and Amelia – three who can.

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Introduction: Young People, Participation and Digital Media

When Annie, 19, responded to my Skype call it was a windy day in Canberra where she attends university. She was on her way to the shops, but was able to fit my interview on her experiences of participation in between other commitments, and I was grateful for her time. Annie was on the board of directors of an Australian non-government organisation – appointed 'by accident', she said laughing, when nominated by her collaborators in a youth-led organisation. I asked if her experience paralleled, in some dark way, that of the previous Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. But Annie said that the organisation and other board members had been very accepting and supportive of her. By contrast, her experience discussing policy matters with politicians had been more confronting. 'Governments just want to fix things, to find policy responses that keep the public happy and minimise criticism', she tells me. She was even more sceptical about the ways in which government engages with young people to find solutions to policy problems. Her direct experience with the Australian Government's flagship youth involvement mechanism, the Australian Youth Forum, was that it was highly managed:

> This is the government policy: go away and tell us what young people think about this policy. There was never a sense of control or [informing] any department or informing any decision. It was, 'Do this so we can say we've engaged with young people' and that's that.

Consequently, Annie has decided to focus her energies on youth-led and youth-serving NGOs working with other young people and adults, around the country and the world, on issues such as gender equality.

Annie exemplifies both the optimism and fears regarding young people and civic engagement in contemporary discourse. The rapidly

diversifying social, communicative and cultural landscapes of the local, national and global are at odds with the institutions, processes and dominant political cultures of established western democracies. Scholars and policy makers continue to struggle to comprehend the causes and implications of a general decline in traditional forms of political participation. Young people are frequently blamed for this decline and are targeted with a range of policy mechanisms to 'remedy' the 'problem'. In recent times youth participation policies have become an increasingly popular solution to a range of perceived 'issues' related to young people or to address their exclusion from government and community decision-making.

In the past two decades in Australia, Europe and the US, dwindling membership in political parties and low voter turnout has raised concerns that contemporary societies are facing a crisis of democracy. Research indicates the trend away from formal institutionalised participation is particularly marked amongst the young and this in turn fuels concern for the future of liberal democracies. In response, governments are keen to formulate policies to promote participation, particularly by young people. Running parallel to this story of democratic civic deficit, a youth participation agenda has emerged from a range of other fields, influenced by the child rights movement, developmental approaches, participant centred approaches and the new sociology of youth.

In the academic literature, definitions of youth participation are varied. In some cases, youth participation is viewed as the degree of civic mindedness and political behaviour of young people – for instance, the ways that young people contribute to and influence civil society (Martin, 2012; Mellor et al., 2002; Pittman et al., 2003). Studies on youth political participation typically look to intention to vote or voter enrolment or turnout (Saha et al., 2005) or membership of political parties (Leighley, 1995). Even studies that attempt to take a more open view of political engagement privilege institutional measures and conclude that variations in the normative political behaviour and attitudes of young people can be interpreted, at best, as young people being 'uncertain' about citizenship (Martin, 2012). This view neglects research on young people's own conceptions of 'the political', participation and citizenship and their subjective experiences of transitions as citizens (Harris et al., 2007; Lister et al., 2003; Marsh et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2005). Such research is rooted in critical revisions of what counts as political participation and in particular, the implications of what Norris has described as a generational shift away from traditional acts underpinned by a 'politics of loyalties' to the 'politics of choice' (Norris, 2003). In her

influential book, *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism,* Norris (2002: 215–216) argues that:

> political activism has been reinvented in recent decades by a diversification in the agencies (the collective organisations structuring political activity), the repertoires (the actions commonly used for political expression), and the targets (the political actors that participants seek to influence)

The integration of a 'culturalist' approach (Dahlgren, 2009) provides further means by which greater attention can be paid to the meanings, identities and practices that underpin a generational shift to this new 'politics of choice'. This brings into view the ways in which digital media are also creating opportunities for new forms of youth participation (Coleman and Rowe, 2005; O'Regan et al., 2002; Vromen, 2008). While digital media appears to largely reinforce traditional structures, opportunities and barriers to participation (Livingstone et al., 2007; Vromen, 2007;Banaji and Buckingham, 2013) it is also associated with new forms of political identity and belonging that are more everyday, individualised or informal and mundane in nature (Harris et al., 2010: 27).

In parallel with academic research, non-government organisations (NGOs) have significantly advanced concepts and practices of youth participation through the increasingly important role that they play in research, service delivery and advocacy. The policy and practitioner literature contain a vast array of approaches to youth participation including, civic education, involvement in community and government decision-making, or as a strategy for maximising the benefits of youth development programmes for individual young people. Typologies, frameworks, handbooks, guidelines and models for participation proliferate. Youth participation is used to describe a whole range of activities in diverse settings, some adult-led, some youth-led, some focusing on young people as individual agents and others that view them as social groups or cohorts. Although youth participation emerges as a focus within a range of social and public policies the emphasis is usually on conventional practices for instance, within the education system, the work force and institutional politics (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Sercombe, 1996: 51, 53; White and Wyn, 2004: 82). In Australia and the United Kingdom (UK), international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) form part of the broader policy context for federal, state, territory and local governments, are influential in the non-government sector and have been the source of theoretical arguments in favour of

extending children and young people's citizenship rights (Cockburn, 2013; Kaplun, 1995; Sidoti, 1998). However, such frameworks are rarely anchored in legislation. A critical failure in policies for youth participation – particularly those that appeal to a human rights framework – is that they do not compel individuals or organisations to act on these obligations (Bessant, 2003: 98; Shier, 2001). This has been highlighted by recent debate on the purpose and effectiveness of youth roundtables in Australia where the discussion themes of the roundtable are set by politicians and bureaucrats, and there is no legislative mechanism by which participants directly contribute to policy development (Bo'sher, 2006; Bridgland Sorenson, 2007; Saggers et al., 2004). Concerns arise that these forms of high profile and highly managed participation processes are tokenistic, elitist and designed to emphasise the development of select individuals over the broad sharing of decision-making power with young people (Bessant, 2003: 93; Bo'sher, 2006; De Brennan, 2005). Such concerns form part of a broader debate over the elitist tendencies of new participatory opportunities created through network governance (Bang, 2005). When delivered online these approaches are often at odds with the rhetoric and research on the democratising potential of the internet as a mechanism for the expansion and recognition of diverse forms of political participation. These tensions might be more productively conceptualised as constituting a democratic disconnect – a disconnect between normative and institutional expectations, discourses and policies of youth participation and the ways in which young people, and many organisations and networks, seek to ensure their involvement in shaping the society they live in.

How then, do competing discourses of 'youth' and 'participation' complicate definitions and experiences of citizenship for young people? In what ways do they shape young people's attitudes towards politics and influence the forms of participation in which they engage – both online and offline? The interconnectedness of local, national and global issues, organisations and forms of action are increasingly borne out in more complex and hybrid forms of identity, relationships and forms of participation. The porosity of national boundaries, exemplified by digital media practices, call for international and comparative lenses that can search for new understandings and explanations of the relationship between policies, identity and practice. Although governments, organisations, technologies and youthful forms of participation will change, there remains an underlying relationship between them – one that calls into question how citizenship is shaped by the interaction between individuals, communities and networks of young people and

the institutions that structure their lives. The purpose of this book is to engage with these questions by exploring the relationship between youth participation policies, digital media and the development of youth political identity by analysing young people's experiences of participation in Australia and the UK. Using empirical qualitative data it examines the policy discourses, youth participation policies in non-government organisations and young people's subjective experiences. While government, technologies and forms of participation will change over time, this book seeks to identify fundamental features and implications of youthful politics in the context of increasingly mediated, networked and participatory social life. At the centre of this project are several key questions: What constitutes youth participation in a digital society? How are young people's political identities shaped by policies for youth participation? What are the implications of a shift in understandings and practices of participation for advanced representative democracies such as Australia and the UK? How can state and other actors respond to youth-centred notions of participation in order to recognise and deepen youth citizenship and evolve democracy to better serve a network society? Such a task involves engaging with a number of theoretical and empirical questions: What is the nature of 'youth'? How do we define youth citizenship and participation? What is the role of policy discourse in the development of political identity?

Thinking about 'youth' and citizenship'

Studies of youth, or adolescence, have emerged from distinct disciplines, epistemological positions and theoretical traditions. Influenced by psychology and developmental sociology, the traditional approach has historically viewed 'youth' as a universal, biological stage, focused on identifying and promoting normative pathways to 'adulthood'. This has shaped policy that creates pathologies of difference and promotes interventions that target the behaviour of individuals and groups. However, by the 1960s, studies on young people's experiences of social reproduction and transformation challenged the essentialist and deterministic assumptions of the functionalist approach on the basis that youth experience is shaped by social structures (Allen, 1968: 322). Wyn and White (1997: 10–11) have argued that youth should be viewed as a 'relational' concept and that studies of youth '... refers to the social processes whereby age is socially constructed, institutionalised and controlled in historically and culturally specific ways.' They have called for a balance to be struck between recognising the physical

and psychological changes experienced by young people and the extent to which these are constructed by social institutions and negotiated by individuals (Wyn and White, 1997). Mizen (2004) has argued that age has a practical, rather than essentialist importance for the experience of youth as it is the basis upon which young people's lives are organised and regulated by the state through policy on education, welfare and legal rights. Of particular interest is the way that social structures – in particular class and education (Bynner et al., 1997: 3) – and cultural and historical processes (Wyn and White, 1997: 10) shape the experience of youth. From this perspective, youth is defined and understood in relation to structures, processes and social conventions – including the notion of 'adulthood'. In other words, youth is a relational concept and young people are often positioned as 'becoming', rather than 'being', as deficient rather than sufficient, as needing protection – or protection from.

The experience of youth is often framed in terms of the relationship of young people to key social institutions, such as the family, justice and education systems and the state (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Jones and Wallace, 1992; White and Wyn, 2004). These institutions are underpinned by notions of citizenship in western democracies, closely tied to ideas about rights and obligations. Yet young people have long occupied an ambiguous place in modern democratic societies, such as the UK or Australia, where there is no distinct point or age at which, young people become full citizens (Allen, 1968). In terms of rights, the age at which young people can officially leave formal education varies according to jurisdiction – anywhere from 15–17 years – but they are not paid 'adult' wages until age 18 if living in Australia, or 22 if living in the UK. From the age of 14 they can be held criminally responsible for their acts and from 17 years be jailed in adult prisons, but in Australia, young people are not considered 'independent' for the purposes of accessing student support payments until they are 25 years. In terms of obligations, young people in both Australia and the UK can, and do, participate in political activities although they cannot become members of a political party until they are 15 years (or 16 years for those young Australians wishing to join the Liberal Party) or participate in elections until age 18. The role of adolescence as a 'project of modernity', fundamentally oriented towards the production of good, rational, productive citizens is borne out in a social policy tradition underpinned by a 'deficit' approach to youth citizenship whereby young people are situated as 'citizens-in–the-making' and are the subjects of a wide range of socialisation strategies seeking to create the 'good citizen' (Owen, 1996: 21; White and Wyn,

2004: 87). This is most evident in citizenship education policy within which young people are constructed as 'becoming' citizens, rather than 'being' citizens (Bennett, 2007; Holdsworth, 2007: 9). This positioning prescribes for young people what forms of participation are 'good' and 'desirable', delimiting the social and political spaces young people's participation is deemed to be appropriate.

Counter to the dominant deficit discourses of youth and citizenship, a youth participation agenda has emerged. The new sociologies of childhood and youth have played an important role by demonstrating that young people are often excluded from social processes, rather than being incapable of participating (James et al., 1998; White and Wyn, 2004). In addition, the consumer movement and children's rights agendas have converged in a productive alliance for young people's participation in many domains and levels of society (Sinclair, 2004). These arguments have led to policy and practice responses anchored in specific structures and processes to make possible youth participation. However, there are concerns that the discourses that underpin these mechanisms are aimed at cultivating either 'responsible' citizens or transforming marginalised young people through 'empowerment' to 'active citizens' (Vromen, 2012). These can be incongruent with young people's own perceptions of participation as often rooted in everyday, culturally relevant and community based forms of organising and action (Vromen and Collin, 2010). At best, such a disjuncture contributes to limited perceived effectiveness of some participatory mechanisms (Fleming, 2013). There is growing agreement that definitions and models of participation need to be critically rethought such that young people are recognised for how and what they contribute in a changing social environment characterised by risk and individualisation (Harris, 2006). This requires that research and policy discourses recognise and respond to young people's every day, cultural and often ordinary or mundane activities. Nevertheless, youth participation is often narrowly conceptualised as consultation and making sure that young people 'have a voice' in the democratic process (Bessant, 1996: 33), severely limiting the perception of young people's capacities, interests and the range of activities they can engage in as members of society. This raises one of the central problems for studying youth citizenship which is often conceptualised in terms of adult-led structures and processes. Young people are subject to expectations to which they are simultaneously denied the means and access points to meet. Whether it is exercised online or offline, youth citizenship is compromised by conflicting standards and expectations. As Livingstone et al. (2005: 289) put it: 'What exactly must young people do [online]

before society will judge them "politically active" or "engaged in civic participation"?'. One of the problems is that, as Bennett puts it, civic education policy views young people 'as if they were their grandparents' (2008: 227).

Problems in the study of youth participation

The very concept of participation is in need of generational renewal. In many established democracies, there are indications of a decline in certain forms of political participation. In the UK, studies of young people's behaviour and attitudes find lower levels of participation and loyalty to political parties and that lower numbers of young people vote or view electoral participation as a civic responsibility (Henn et al., 2002; Park, 1998; Pattie et al., 2004). The dominant view is of a youth cohort that does not care about politics or democracy. Pirie and Worchester (1998: 10–11) have concluded that young people who were aged around 21 in 2000 have turned away from formal political processes and institutions, such as political parties and elections. Although they find that this cohort is prepared to take action on issues they care about and that one in four have participated in activities such as fundraising for a cause, they conclude that this is an 'apolitical generation' (Pirie and Worcester, 1998: 10). Henn et al. (2002: 186) also find that young people are sceptical of governments and politicians, but that they are still supportive of democratic process and elections. In contrast to Pirie and Worchester, they argue that young people are not apathetic, but they are disillusioned with unresponsive officials and political systems (Henn et al., 2002: 187).

In Australia, research on youth political participation predominately focuses on levels of political knowledge or 'civic literacy' (Civics Expert Group, 1994; Mellor et al., 2002; McAllister, 1998); electoral participation (Bean, 2007; Edwards et al., 2006; Print et al., 2004; Saha et al., 2005; Saha et al., 2007) and attitudes towards citizenship, politicians and governments (Lean, 1996; Mellor et al., 2002; Manning and Ryan, 2004; Saulwick and Muller, 2006). It is well established that political knowledge and trust in politicians and parties is low amongst Australian young people and that very small numbers join political parties, unions and other formal political organisations (Beresford and Phillips, 1997; Vromen, 2003; Harris et al., 2007). Because voting is compulsory, Australia records high levels of participation of all age cohorts relative to countries with non-compulsory systems, such as the UK and the US. However, the Australian Electoral Commission has estimated that only

80 per cent of young people aged 18–25 are enrolled to vote (Print et al., 2004: 2). Furthermore, when asked if they would enrol to vote if it were not compulsory, much lower numbers respond in the affirmative. The study found that only 50 per cent of survey respondents and 30 per cent of focus groups respondents said they would enrol and vote if voting were not compulsory (Print et al., 2004). Many reported they did not see the efficacy of voting (Print et al., 2004).

However, the mainstream literature has come under critique for taking a 'narrow' and normative view of political participation (Harris et al., 2007; Lister et al., 2003; Marsh et al., 2007; O'Toole, 2003; Vromen, 2003). While some research acknowledges that young people may conceptualise politics and participation differently (Henn et al., 2002; Park, 1998; Russell, 2005), the tendency within the literature is to conclude that young people are not participating in traditional forms of political participation because they are either apathetic or insufficiently knowledgeable or socialised (Pirie and Worcester, 2000). However, this view does not take into account – or seek to understand – the ways in which new kinds of 'agencies, repertoires and targets' of political participation (Norris, 2002) feature in the political views and practices of young people. This is partly due to the fact that most research is quantitative and uses surveys to assess attitudes and aspirations. However, large scale, survey-based research is not itself problematic, but rather the frames of reference used in analysis. For example, despite recognising 'non-conventional' forms of participation arising out of social movements and including demonstrations and protests, much of the literature concludes that young people who do not engage in predetermined forms of participation are 'inactive' (Parry et al., 1992) or 'disengaged' (Print et al., 2004). Whilst recent major studies have significantly expanded the definition of participation (Pattie et al., 2004), they have nonetheless stopped short of exploring young people's own views on politics and participation, instead measuring youth behaviour against adult-centric views of engagement.

The failure to consider young people's conceptualisations of participation leads to three problems. Firstly, non-participation is equated with apathy (O'Toole et al., 2003: 48). Secondly, non-participation is rarely seen as a political act in itself and where engagement in non-conventional forms of protest or political participation are identified amongst young people they are dismissed due to negative correlation with voting intention (Saha et al., 2005). Thirdly, new forms of participation, including those arising out of participation policies, are not identified or understood. Although mechanisms such as youth committees,

advisory boards and representative roles are the subject of research into the efficacy of participation policies, these are rarely explicitly considered within the mainstream literature on political participation. Though they may fall into the category of volunteering, young people are likely to under-report such activity because do not consider many of their participatory acts to be 'volunteering' (Ferrier et al., 2004).

Ultimately, the problem with studying youth participation through a conventional lens is that new political views and vantage points are missed. When youth experience is approached from a generational perspective (Wyn and Woodman, 2006) studies must account for the distinct political, cultural, social, technological and economic environments in which young people live and explore how young people themselves conceptualise and respond to politics. Some foundational work has been undertaken in this area (Harris et al., 2007; Marsh et al., 2007). These studies have used youth-centred, qualitative methods to explore young peoples' own conceptualisations and experiences of participation and to help explain why young people appear to be disengaging from conventional forms of political participation.

Chapter 2 will examine trends in Australia and the UK where participation policies are intended to expand a limited array of participatory practices. In managing such mechanisms, the state and other actors play a critical role in the political economy of youth: defining the terms, funding and availability of participatory opportunities including youth grant-making, social enterprises, volunteering and formal advisory roles. Furthermore, in the context of emerging patterns of 'network governance' (Considine, 2005; Rhodes, 1997), or 'culture governance' (Bang, 2004), there is a concern that 'professional political deliberation, participation and cooperation uncouples citizenship from the politics of the ordinary, which is also at the heart of democracy' (Bang, 2005: 173). In other words, participation policies may work to limit, rather than expand youth participation in democracy and youthful civic cultures. To respond to these concerns, research must consider whether the internet mobilises those seen to be 'disengaged' or reinforces the participation of those who are already civically minded (Norris, 2001: 96–98) while focusing on the diversity of online practices that support civic engagement (Banaji and Buckingham, 2013; Vromen, 2007).

Youth participation and digital media

The dilemmas of how to define, measure or explain contemporary youth participation in democracy have been brought into stark relief as

the internet and related technologies have come to play an increasingly significant role in the social and political lives of citizens (for example, Castells, 1997; Gibson et al., 2004; Howard and Jones, 2004; Norris, 2001). Studies focused specifically on the internet and youth political participation can be summarised in two broad approaches.

The first assumes a normative position on political participation and looks at how technology is extending or deepening democracy as a legal and administrative mechanism, and for strengthening the legitimacy of normative political ideas and culture. The focus is often on the opportunities and effectiveness of 'e-democracy' in strengthening existing institutional arrangements (Lewis, 2005), the ability of technology to link decision-makers and political elites to citizens (Dahlberg, 2001; Delli Carpini, 2000; Luhrs et al., 2001) and extending government to marginalised or 'hard to reach' groups, such as young people (Brackertz, 2005; Simpson et al., 2005). These accounts view the internet as a vehicle for public information, 'civic education' and enhanced citizen-government deliberation. There is also optimism that the internet will foster 'active citizenship' – community engagement in (often local) government (Goodwin, 2005) or 'youth service to the community' – through such mechanisms as online volunteer matching (Delli Carpini, 2000: 347).

The persistent top-down nature of e-governance can be criticised for focusing on communicating policy to young people, being government/decision-maker focused and limiting the degree to which young people are able to contribute to agenda setting or decision-making. Conventional approaches to online participation generally reinforce the role of those who are already engaged, whilst further marginalising those who are not (Banaji and Buckingham, 2013; Norris, 2001). While recent international comparative and cross-sectional quantitative research suggests that social media may address some structural inequalities to participation (Xenos et al., 2014), it remains to be seen whether top-down mechanisms using social media effectively link policy makers with young people. What is clear from international research of a participatory practices is that– both on- and offline – young people are least likely to seek contact with political institutions and elites (Banaji and Buckingham, 2013). In the main, the limitations of traditional politics have not been addressed by simply employing digital media strategies for communicating and connecting young people to political institutions and elites.

The second approach challenges both the way that participation is conceptualised (for example Bakardjieva, 2010; Hartley, 2010; Norris, 2001; Vromen, 2003) and the way that it is researched (for example

Coleman and Rowe, 2005; Livingstone et al., 2005). Generally speaking, the internet is viewed as an expanding public space due with opportunities for civic activity, including generating and accessing information, forming networks and communities, participating in discussion and deliberation in a variety of structured and unstructured ways. Digital media is embedded in contemporary political participation, organising and activism transforming and being transformed by the political actions of individuals and groups who, through wide, shallow networks, use the internet as both a space and a tool for political communication (Bennett, 2003). While some survey-based research in the UK (Livingstone et al., 2005) and Australia (Vromen, 2003) has deliberately explored a broad range of participatory opportunities one of the key challenges continues to be how 'participation' is defined. This dilemma reflects a wider limitation of much existing research on young people's political participation, epitomised by quantitative studies with predetermined notions of how young people relate to the political. These fail to capture how young people translate their conception of the political into action and are often based on assumptions about youth non-participation that rest on an engaged/disengaged paradigm. These approaches have demonstrated a need to move beyond formal political systems to consider broader civic cultures using methods that privilege young people's own interpretations and repertoires of participation. The diversification of expressions of civic culture made possible, particularly, by digital media has required that definitions of 'civic' be extended to encompass a range of repertoires and settings (including formal websites, social media platforms, use of SMS, email and other digital modes of communication). As Banjali and Buckingham (2013: 13) argue, 'not all youth digital participation is somehow "civic"'. However, research must be oriented to take into account the diversity of young people, the internet and civic participation. In order to avoid falling into the trap of treating the online and offline as independent realms of experience, this book will broadly consider 'mediated youth participation' as a contemporary expression of youth citizenship. It examines the role of policies, digital media and structured lived experience as three important mediating factors.

The study

In order to explore the relationship between policy discourses, digital media and youth participation, this book draws on comparative research in Australia and the UK. As case studies they are most similar, sharing many characteristics which directly impact on the experience of

youth: access to formal processes of government (age of majority: 18); education systems (compulsory education to age 16), employment environment (both countries have introduced youth wages and, or, removed wage protection from low paid jobs and have welfare states which are in decline). In both countries almost all young people have access to the internet: in the UK 99.1 per cent of 16–24 years olds (Office for National Statistics, 2013); in Australia 96 per cent of 18–24 years olds (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). However, the impetus and main focus of the debate on youth political participation is distinct in each country due to the difference in electoral systems, as discussed further in Chapter 2.

The original empirical data this book draws on was generated through in-depth interviewing of young people, staff and executives of what can be broadly defined as youth-serving or youth-led non-government organisations. As NGOs play an increasing role in the everyday lives of young people through provision of services and programmes, they become sites in which young people come to know and articulate their sense of self, what matters and generate participatory repertoires. These organisations constitute environments in which to study power relations, both between young people and organisations, and between organisations-as-agents and social structures. Methodologically organisations constitute actual spaces where the impact of policies can be observed and where particular social strata (such as gender, class and ethnicity) are typically reproduced (Clegg, 1989). Organisations are thus treated as settings from which to respond to Dunleavy's (1996: 290) call to map '…those interactions, processes and linkages experienced as important by citizens themselves, whether or not they issue in immediately efficacious political consequences'. This is achieved by focusing on what young people themselves consider political participation to be in the context of the policy discourses and the views of staff and executives of organisations. Care has been taken to allow the voices of the young people to 'speak for themselves' and to allow the diversity, messiness and contradictions in their accounts to push back against the social science drive for patterns and order. The analytical framework outlined in Chapter 1 aims to maintain an openness to the complexity of the experience of youth and acknowledges that the 'double hermeneutic' is at work in so far as what is reported in this book is my interpretation of interviewees' interpretations of their social worlds (for a more explicit discussion see: Marsh et al., 2007: 27–29).

Case study organisations in each country were selected according to three main criteria: their services sought to benefit young people; they explicitly used the internet to engage with young people; and,

young people contribute substantially to strategic and practical decision-making in the organisation. They address a broad range of issues including youth affairs, education and training, volunteering, mental health, climate change, global poverty and included large charities, small NGOs in research, service provision and advocacy, youth-led coalitions and social enterprises. Of the ten organisations studied three were 'youth-led', meaning that no one over the age of 25 was involved in the operational or strategic work of the organisation.

In-depth qualitative key informant interviews (Blee and Taylor, 2002: 105) were conducted with young people and executive staff and board members. While case study organisations or initiatives are identified here, all participants have been provided with a pseudonym. In total 52 young people and 18 staff and executives were interviewed across the two countries. Among the young people ten were also staff or executives of organisations. Interviews explored subjective experiences of participation, organisational policies, practices and cultures, the role of digital media and implications of youthful politics and repertoires of participation for traditional elites and institutions of democracy. A purposive sampling approach (Marsh et al., 2007) was used and young people's connections with the organisations through youth participation activities was considered the most important criteria. Gender, geographical location and length of time involved with the organisation were also considered so as to build a diverse sample. Class and socio-economic status (represented by level of education) were explored as factors that might constrain or promote participation, but were not used in the selection of interview participants.

Research was conducted between 2007 and 2013, a period during which both the diversity and scope of activity to support youth participation and forms of digital media has exponentially increased. As such, the case studies selected for this book illustrate, rather than catalogue, this diversity. These organisations are presented as exceptional case studies that have unique ways of approaching youth participation. Their popularity and longevity suggest they can adapt over time to remain highly relevant and engaging for young people. Some of the organisations featured here did not exist in 2007, while others have since merged with other entities, but the insights they offer and the views and experiences of the young people who have engaged with them remain germane to questions of youth political identity and participation.

Acknowledging the significant definitional and methodological challenges associated with studying the intersections of 'youth', 'citizenship' and 'digital media' (Banaji and Buckingham, 2013), this book does not

forward a deterministic argument about the impact of policies and the internet on the way young people define and engage in politics. Rather, it aims to expose and explain the relationship of these policies to the social, political, cultural and digital contexts in which young people live by focusing on the range and nature of experiences young people report in relation to participation policies.

While some young people may increasingly experience new forms of 'communication power' (Castells, 2009) enabling them to bypass or contest forms of authority, present assessments find that, in general, youth citizenship and participation are very much managed by hierarchical forms of power in a range of institutions including families, workplaces, schools and government. As such, Fincham's theory of Institutional, Organisational and Processual power (Fincham, 1992) helps render visible for analysis the ways that various forms of power collide in the networked arrangements to produce contemporary youth experience. Participation policies often explicitly place young people at the junction of the contextual, institutional and agential. The 'Institutional' perspective relates to the social, economic and political structures that frame youth participation. These include laws, polices, policy networks, and practitioner and youth discourses. Institutional factors of interest include approaches to 'youth', 'participation' and 'citizenship' and structural inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, disability and class. The 'Organisational' perspective is concerned with the systems, internal policies and procedures within government departments and NGOs that give life to participation policies. The Processual, or 'Agential', perspective refers, in this study, to the experiences and actions of individuals. This framework enables a relational analysis of structure and agency whereby organisations can be viewed as institutionalised structures (in relation to individual agents) and as agents of social change in relation to social, economic and political structures.

Outline of the book

Chapter 1 reviews the literature on citizenship and participation, with a focus on the role of policy and digital media. Here it is argued that, if we are experiencing a shift from government through hierarchy, to governance through networks (Rhodes, 1997), a shift from normative approaches to performative approaches to political participation is required. Special attention is paid to the work of Lance Bennett and Henrik Bang who each forward theories for understanding new citizen

identities, as is Stephen Coleman's theoretical framework for examining how organisations' use of digital media shape youth citizenship. This chapter will argue there is a critical need to study managed, top-down policies alongside the networked, collaborative and often youth-driven forms of participation that characterise the more horizontal emergent partnerships between young people and many youth-facing NGOs and youth-led 'bottom up' strategies. This chapter argues for qualitative, youth- centred research to examine how organisations confront and shape these policy contexts, young people's perceptions and practices of participation and the role of digital media.

The following four chapters examine these areas from the perspective of policy, young people, staff and executives of case study organisations. Each of these presents case studies and considers the ways ideas about politics and participation are structured by life experience. Chapter 2 charts the policy context for youth participation in both Australia and the UK and demonstrates that policy discourses frame young people, citizenship and participation in powerful ways. Despite some promising moves in youth participation policy over the past three decades, the tendency is to emphasise the development of young people, the promotion of 'leadership' and normative contributions to local community and institutionalised political process. This attempt to manage young people and their emergent citizenship practices exacerbates the democratic disconnect – the everyday and 'ordinary' political orientations and actions of young people are easily ignored or discounted. In Chapter 3 the ways in which organisations confront and shape these policy contexts is considered through the practices and perspectives of non-government organisations in both countries.

By focusing on the views and experience of young people in the UK and Australia, Chapter 4 explores the relationship between policy and the development of political identity to examine the drivers of the democratic disconnect. This chapter demonstrates that some young people are cynical and feel unrecognised by traditional political institutions and processes. However, rather than becoming apathetic, they are mobilised around issues, engaged with networks and organisations and undertake action in a wide range of ways. These repertoires of participation are diverse, personalisable and rooted in interpersonal relationships. Far from being disengaged or apathetic, these young people seek out spaces, organisations, agencies and opportunities to take action on issues that they care about. These are anchored to broad governance networks, not yet readily recognised or understood in the mainstream literature.

While the role of digital media is considered throughout the book, Chapter 5 looks explicitly at how young people in the UK and Australia go online to engage with and take action on issues they care about. The chapter highlights a number of critical shifts in the ways in which mediated participation challenges traditional and normative understandings of youth participation. Young people's online participation is not linear (individual to organisation or institution) but, rather, takes place in relation to a range of issues of political significance to them and across many different sites, communities and networks for action. Digital media afford young people agency and encourage the building of networks and communities for action. Digital media also enable mini-publics and creative public spaces not otherwise available to young people.

The final chapter summarises the implications of young people's subjective experiences of policy discourses and participation approaches as articulated in community and non-government organisations and youth-led movements. It argues that young people are not disengaging from society or the social issues they care about, but, rather, are turning to new repertoires of participation and focusing their efforts on different policy targets. It highlights the critical importance of recognising and responding to the political identities of Bang's 'Expert Citizens' and 'Everyday Makers'. The chapter presents ways to address the democratic disconnect, focusing on what is required of institutions and traditional political actors to come to terms with this shift, concluding with a series of policy provocations to shape more democratic, responsive and engaging political institutions.

1
Conceptualising Young Citizens

Questions of youth participation are fundamentally about citizenship. Yet, both the statutory and discursive markers of youth citizenship in the UK and Australia are ambiguous and young people receive mixed messages about their rights, responsibilities and opportunities to exercise citizenship. In the context of an apparent decline in formal political engagement in advanced democracies, increased dissatisfaction with the institutions and mechanisms of democracy and limited development of democratic society and polity associated with social and economic inequality, there has been a renewed interest in theorising citizenship (for example, Turner, 1990). This has led to: claims that citizenship should play an independent normative role in political theory; renewed emphasis on the Aristotelian 'good citizen'; and renewed emphasis on concepts of 'active citizenship' and 'responsible citizenship' in theory and public policy (for example, Kymlicka and Norman, 1994; Marsh et al., 2007: 33; Stokes, 2002: 24). As such, policy and research in the area of youth citizenship take place in the context of broader debates on democracy, the role of citizens, forms of participation and the ways in which these are being configured in a networked society. How are these to be read in the context of changes in modern nation states as a result of globalisation and changing systems of governance at the local and national levels? What kinds of political identities and civic cultures might be emerging under the conditions of late modernity and are these evident among young people? How are youthful political identities influenced by policies aimed at young people which are opening up new opportunities to connect into policy networks? How might institutions and traditional political elites respond to meet the emerging expectations and civic cultures of young citizens?

Normative ideas about what constitute 'good' or 'active' citizens vary amongst different democratic theories. So too is there variance in the policies and approaches to youth participation. This chapter begins by exploring how participation is conceptualised in citizenship theory and in relation to young people. It then considers new understandings and ways of researching youthful political participation in the context of digital media and builds a framework for studying managed, top-down youth participation policies alongside the 'bottom-up' networked, collaborative and often youth-driven activities associated with many youth-serving and youth-led NGOs.

The participation of 'good' citizens

The question of what youth political participation is – or should be – how it can be fostered and what relationship it has to the state and other social institutions and actors depends on which theory of citizenship is drawn upon. While citizenship is a highly contested concept, the literature can be broadly summarised according to how different theories grant citizenship status and what participatory acts are thought to be indicative of a 'good' citizen, according to the relative emphasis that they place on 'rights', 'responsibilities' and 'difference'.

'Good citizenship' as the exercise of rights

Social policy in advanced democracies typically reflects liberal conceptualisations of citizenship whereby young people are constructed as apprentice citizens emphasising the need to socialise young people for 'minimal' (Evans, 1995: 16), or 'thin' citizenship (Marsh et al., 2007). As liberal theory views democracy primarily as an institutional arrangement designed to protect the legal and political rights of individuals (from arbitrary or oppressive acts by government or individuals), 'rights' are privileged as the regulating mechanism of democracy (Habermas, 1996; Stokes, 2002). These rights are pursued in the 'public sphere' by individuals acting autonomously and according to relatively narrow definitions of the 'politics', arenas and targets of political action. The 'good young citizen' successfully transitions to adulthood by achieving educational and employment status, becoming an economically independent and productive member of society who is law abiding and votes in elections. Socialisation is typically assessed by measuring young people's participation in political parties, voting in elections, political attitudes and literacy (Civics Expert Group, 1994; Lean, 1996; Martin, 2012). The normative

construction of the citizen-as-adult and universalist assumptions embedded in liberal construction of rights has prompted re-visioning of what Moosa-Mitha calls 'children's ... rights to belong as "differently equal" members of society, outside the private/public dichotomy that results in marginalizing children's interests and needs as "private" as reflected in adultist norms and social practices of the public culture' (Moosa-Mitha, 2005: 386). This conception of rights necessarily requires recognition of processes of marginalisation and exclusion along with a wider range of practices that constitute political and civic culture. Nevertheless, scholarly and official accounts of youth political participation persist in diagnosing the lack of conventional engagement by young people as failure of socialisation processes and argue that young people must build 'capacities', skills and political literacy to engage in normative political participation. This point will be returned to when considering new understandings and ways of researching youth political participation below.

'Good citizenship' as the exercise of duties

In the context of an apparent failure of political socialisation and the resulting decline in engagement with traditional political agencies (such as political parties, unions, voter enrolment) theoretical approaches that emphasise 'duty' as the key component of citizenship have experienced a renaissance. These can be somewhat crudely grouped under the label 'duty-based' although there are important distinctions between civic republicanism, communitarianism and neo-conservatism. Like liberal accounts, duty-based notions of citizenship emphasise participation in the public sphere, and in existing political institutions and processes (Stokes, 2002: 34). However, they prioritise the 'common good' over private interests, and civic virtue, common values and ethics in public decision-making, these accounts contest narrow, purely legalistic approaches to citizenship.

For duty-based conceptions of citizenship, participation in the community plays a critical role in the socialising of democratic norms and values, particularly reason and deliberation (Etzioni, 1995), and civic virtue (Van Gunsteren, 1998). While widely critiqued, particularly in relation to Putnam's interpretation of civil society organisations and the reasons for their decline (Putnam, 1993, 2000), duty-based perspectives have had significant influence on youth policy. This is particularly evident in the widespread use of 'active' citizenship and public decision making through involvement in civil society groups and contribution to the common good as policy goals for youth.

These notions of 'active citizenship' call on young people to respond to their 'responsibilities' to participate in adult-defined, pro-social activities principally as a way to improve welfare, well-being and 'train' young people for (norm-consistent) participation in the broader public arena. Young people are, therefore, viewed as apprentice citizens for whom a wider range of participatory acts including volunteering, are not expressions of citizenship, but a method for socialisation. While this provides a 'maximal interpretation of citizenship' (Evans, 1995: 16) such conceptions retain the central role of the state and maintain focus on civil and legal status, rights and responsibilities, promote law-abiding behaviour and an active commitment to the community through service.

'Good citizenship' as the articulation of difference

In contrast to duty-based notions of citizenship – which also value active participation and hold citizens to be sovereign – 'difference-based' interpretations are inclusive and transformative and are, thus, particularly relevant for advancing questions of youth citizenship and participation. Difference-based interpretations derive from radical and interpretivist theory. Radical – or critical realist – interpretations emphasise the way that structured inequality (such as age, class, gender and ethnicity) impacts on citizenship. The experience of inclusion and resistance to exclusion is what defines citizenship (Lister, 1997). By comparison, post-structural and post-modern views see citizenship as problematic precisely because both the substance (forms of participation) and the arenas (public and private) by which citizenship is articulated are contested. It is the way patterns of inclusion and exclusion reflect unequal power relations that make citizenship an always contested notion. Such conceptions of citizenship frame the approach taken in this book because they contest several assumptions embedded in both rights-based and duty-based perspectives that limit recognition of young people's citizenship and participation in democracy.

The first is a rejection of 'equal citizenship' in favour of 'differentiated citizenship' – that is, citizenship predicated on difference (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 370; Young, 1989). Marxist, feminist and anti-racist approaches take different positions on how (dis)advantage operates, but all argue that inequalities undermine the fundamental principle of democratic participation: the opportunity to exercise rights and obligations (Young, 1989: 251). The second challenge concerns the way, structural inequalities and processes of exclusion and resistance cut across the classical dichotomy between public and private sphere. Mouffe (1992: 237), revisions the private/public dichotomy as the civil condition by

which activity is always private but is articulated publicly through the conditions and rules of democratic organisation. From this perspective, a lack of youth engagement with traditionally accepted democratic arenas (political parties, elections, petitions or protests) is seen as collective alienation from public power and decision-making. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue this can also be construed as a conscious 'anti-politics' further challenging conventional understandings of participation and non-participation. For difference-centred theorists, access to the rights promoted by liberals and opportunity to respond to the obligations emphasised by republicans are mutually dependent.

A third challenge is to the idea that political identity develops in a logical and linear fashion and that it is 'fixed'. According to Mouffe (1993), political identity is constituted through an assemblage of subject positions, social relations, participation and membership in communities and collective forms of identification. In other words, citizenship is produced by actions, forms of association and identities whose self-reflexive and emergent practices shape and change models of citizenship and forms of participation. This 'difference-based' notion emphasises a 'thick' conception of citizenship where citizens look beyond the state to other arenas and actors as they define and act on matters of concern. Participation as the articulation of difference can extend to children and young people and encompass actions previously seen primarily in terms of entertainment or even 'silly' cultural expression (Hartley, 2010) such as participating in a flash-mob for climate change or sharing a video of the spectacle online. Difference-centred models of citizenship and participation must also be considered in the context of theories on late modernity and network society which contend that citizens are increasingly participating in networks which traverse old divisions between the state and civil society.

Participation in late modernity

The effects of processes of continuity and change in the economic, cultural and political contexts of nation states and citizens also influence views on the form and substance of political and civic participation. Some authors suggest that the rise of globalisation, restructuring of labour markets, rapid exchange of information via the internet and other digital technologies, the decline of the welfare state and the replacement of hierarchies with markets signal the beginning of a new era in which structural analysis, for example of gender or class, no longer explains social change (for example, Baudrillard, 1988; Lyotard, 1984). For others, the dominance of capitalism and the rise of neo-liberal

ideology in the 1980s and 1990s represent the final and ultimate form of social and political organisation whereby citizens act as individualised, rational, economic agents with minimal intervention by a reduced state (Fukuyama, 1992). However more influential in youth studies and political sociology is the individualisation thesis as developed by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002).

The theory of individualisation hinges on the idea that transformations in contemporary society are characterised by the breakdown of key social institutions such as family and work. Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) argue that the unpredictability and uncertainty associated with changes in these institutions can no longer be managed through increased rationality and scientific knowledge. As new institutional logics emerge in response to rapid change and increased complexity, it is the rights and responsibilities of individuals that are mobilised to manage the consequences of social processes and structures. This 'risk society' is accompanied by a 'freedom paradigm' that shapes the ways in which young people think about – and experience democracy (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue that the 'freedom paradigm' emphasises self-directed participation and organisation in the context of old social and political structures and modes of communication. At the same time, political elites, institutions and communicative regimes often exclude young people, are unresponsive to their concerns and cannot – or will not – manage the uncertainty and risk associated with complex political problems of late modernity and globalisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Dissatisfaction with state and elite responses are combined with other experiences of exclusion and control (Marsh et al., 2007) and new ideas about politics and participation informing young people's views and actions. In the context of a freedom paradigm that emphasises (but does not guarantee) choice and agency, young people are not 'the problem'. Rather, their disengagement from traditional institutions and processes, participation in new social movements, new organisations and even non-participation (for example non-enrolment or spoiling a vote) is a reflection of the way they experience and respond to the 'freedoms' of a risk society (Marsh et al., 2007; Farthing, 2010). Thus, studies of democratic participation must start with young people's views and experiences. This involves paying attention to the way young people construct identities.

As old institutional arrangements fail to deal with pervasive risk, individuals are increasingly required to be reflexive and negotiate the uncertainties in their everyday lives although social policy and structural

factors continue to shape life chances. Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 112–113) have demonstrated that despite a weakening of collective social identities (individualisation) and increased opportunities for personal responsibility young people's lives continue to be shaped by structural forces such as gender and class which affect the distribution of risks, choices and freedoms. They refer to this as 'the epistemological fallacy of late modernity' in which young people take personal responsibility for collective problems (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 114). Epitomised by mutual obligation policies this fallacy might also be observed in more recent empowerment policies emphasising youth social action and appealing to young people's self-reflexive individualism as a resource for managing economic insecurity and social fragmentation.

Networks, governance and participation

One of the characteristics of the approaches to citizenship and participation examined above is that they privilege the role of the state in the development and articulation of citizenship (although difference-centred approaches hold the relationship between the citizen and the state to be contested, indeed often in conflict). However, the rise of networks as an alternative organising principle in society (Castells, 2001) has prompted a rethinking of how networked forms of power and communications shape the ways people think about and respond to politics. Such debates are particularly pertinent to a discussion of youth participation in two respects. Firstly, dynamics of a network society exert force on established institutions and processes of governance, altering the actors and contours of policy processes. Secondly, online and networked media are transforming sociality, political identity and communication.

As domestic and global arrangements have become ever more complex, new modes of problem solving and decision making emerge to address the inability of states alone to address complex policy problems. Governments, leaders and managers have had to involve diverse people, communities and organisations in the production and implementation of public policy (Bang, 2004). Many of the organisations emerging in this new 'participatory space' address the needs and interests of people who have traditionally experienced marginalisation and exclusion, such as young people. These organisations are often characterised by internal participatory practices and cultures, and wide networks of political association. Networks are therefore thought to be energising old institutions and stimulating new forms of public participation (Considine, 2005).

Theories of 'network governance' (Considine, 2005; Rhodes, 1997), or 'culture governance' (Bang, 2004), argue that policy networks have

changed, expanding from functional networks in government departments to include other actors from the private and voluntary sectors involved in new forms of social and political association. Governance, as a process of social and political communication, is creating 'partnerships, joint ventures and team building between elites and sub-elites from public, private and voluntary organisations' (Bang, 2003: 242). For example, the 'Third Way' politics of the UK expanded the opportunities for non-state actors and organisations to participate in the development and delivery of public policy. In the Australian context, contracting of businesses, charities, community groups and social enterprises to deliver social services and a smorgasbord of summits, roundtables, advisory boards, steering committees, commissioned consultations and research, have given expression to a more expansive mode of agenda-setting and policy making. Such experiments have been conducted in a wide range of policy areas relevant to the lives of young people including infrastructure and transport, health, education and welfare as well as the narrower articulation of youth affairs.

The extent to which network governance is actually taking place and the level at which new policy networks have an impact on policy process is a source of great debate. Theoretically, the prospects for network governance are promising in that they can foster more functional and deliberative representation, encourage participatory democracy and engage actors who might otherwise remain on the margins of institutional politics. Yet, empirical research finds that, in practice, the deliberative and participatory potential of network governance is at best 'limited' (Hendriks, 2008: 1010) and at worst, appropriated through processes of 'meta-governance' that surreptitiously reassert hierarchical forms of authority and control. For example, Fawcett et al. (2011) have argued that the limited influence of the Australia 2020 Summit[1] on Australian public policy revealed the ways in which the discourse of network governance and participation were used to craft a public perception of more open and inclusive government whilst legitimising policy decisions that had already been taken. Similar charges have been levelled at mechanisms for youth participation (Bo'sher, 2006). Most significantly, these debates highlight that in general the rhetoric and practice of participatory governance has failed to keep pace with the transformations in digital media practices. The increasingly social, peer-to-peer and open systems technology of social network sites (SNS), public publishing and virtual gaming environments are transforming the everyday practices of people, thus changing their expectations and hopes for socio-political expression.

Neither independently determinative of social practices, nor neutral, technologies reflect assumptions about their potential users and are rooted in the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which they emerge. As Papacharissi (2009: 230) states 'it is not the nature of technologies themselves, but rather, the discourse that surrounds them, that guides how these technologies are appropriated by a society'. Despite being largely harnessed for commercial, social, administrative and criminal purposes, the internet holds significant potential for expanding the spaces and mechanisms for seeking information, connecting with others, expressing opinions, and debating socio-political ideas. The increasingly mobile and personalisable modes in which to consume and produce content and connect with others support self-forming and distributed communities and networks along with engineered spaces for managed dialogue and deliberation. This has widespread implications for the changing boundaries between the public and private self (for example, Harris, 2004; Papacharissi, 2009), the reshaping of publics (boyd, 2011), the expansion of public space (Papacharissi, 2009) and the emergence of new public spheres (for example, Coleman and Blumler, 2009).

Young people's private lives have become increasingly public as the internet and other digital media permeate the boundaries of space, time and various dimensions of social life (such as work, entertainment and politics). Young people deploy unique strategies to create space and express themselves in this new public landscape via private media. Harris (2004) has argued that authoring oneself online is manifest in 'confessional styles' that transform 'intimate details and experience into material for popular consumption' blurring, sometimes inverting, the distinction between public and private. By 'living large' online through membership in virtual communities and the authoring and publication of online content, young people construct and claim new, legitimate spaces in the public sphere (Harris, 2004). These public acts and conversations are increasingly undertaken via social media which constitute and are deployed in new forms of public-ness.

boyd (2008) has theorised these as 'networked publics', arguing that, enabled by technological networks such as the internet, they signal a new kind of public (social formation) and space (locality). Networked publics are distinguished from other kinds of mediated and non-mediated publics by being: persistent (permanent); searchable (individuals and their personal information can easily be located); replicable (information, comments and multimedia can be copied and disseminated); and scalable (extending beyond immediate or physical connections)

(boyd, 2011: 46–48). They are also potentially populated by 'invisible audiences' (boyd, 2008: 126). These affordances shape – but do not determine – the way identities, relationships and practices are performed in networked publics. boyd (2011) stresses that though influenced by the 'architecture' of online and networked environments, users interpret and engage with them according to the social contexts in which they live. These contexts are multiple, diverse, online and offline and their attendant actors and relationships are as dynamic as the technologies.

Networked publics do not assure political communication, but they do open up new locations and social arrangements in which it can take place and highlight the ways in which social life and political life are increasingly coming together. In this context, Vromen (2003: 82–83) has called for the redefinition of participation arguing for a broad consideration of '... acts that can occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in. This kind of approach necessarily sees political institutions, and actions aimed at shaping those institutions, as embedded in broader societal processes.' Digital media as a feature of the convergence of social and political life demands that social research search for and acknowledge new arenas of political participation.

Digital media – or 'private media' as it is described by Papacharissi (2009) – can be understood as offering an expanding array of action for political expression and relations that challenge and expand public agendas. Arguing against the use of the public sphere as a measure for the democratising potential of the internet, Papacharissi (2009) asserts that the power of digital media lies in enhancing democracy by expanding the range of issues and actors that contribute to public opinion. She suggests that individualised media practices such as blogging, expanding online networks and new organisations and the use of commercial spaces, such as YouTube to express political opinions, satire and to capture and distribute politicians 'unmanaged communications' all contribute to diversification and pluralism in democracy (Papacharissi, 2009). For example, in 2014 a group of Australian high school students recorded an impromptu audience with Prime Minister Tony Abbott during a visit to Canberra. The video captured the Prime Minister's responses to questions on gay marriage, asylum seekers and gender representation in national politics; which was then posted to YouTube. The video quickly went viral, attracting national media attention, social media commentary and nearly 500,000 views within a fortnight.

Many agree with Papacharissi (2009) that while the internet has not yet produced a virtual public sphere, expanded notions, expressions

and associations of public views and interests is healthy for democracy. There are, nevertheless concerns for what this means in the context of enduring political institutions and elites. Among others, Coleman and Blumler (2009) argue that the range of experiments in top-down and bottom-up 'edemocracy' in the UK indicate the demand for the internet to improve the spaces and practices by which the state and non-state actors engage in political communication, deliberation and decision making. Coleman and Blumler (2009) advocate for policy and institutional support for such moves, but highlight this is a 'vulnerable' potential because neither the infrastructure nor cultural commitment required has yet been realised. They argue that underpinning this vulnerability are three key challenges (Coleman and Blumler, 2009: 166).

Firstly, democratic institutions and processes need to become sensitised to the fragmented and issue/value-based narratives that constitute the ways most people communicate their views on socio-political life. Secondly, communication between the state and society must be continuous and dialogic – not episodic and instrumental (where governments, political elites or their agents communicate with people when they want something). Thirdly, communication between traditional institutions and elites and the public must be purposeful and impactful. While writing specifically of the democratic potential of the internet, Coleman and Blumler's (2009) charge to improving democratic communication more generally resonates with the literature on network governance. While the extent to which networked governance actually exists remains to be seen, youth political identities and civic cultures are emerging 'in the context' of these debates and highlight the pressing need to better understand the ways in which policy shapes people's views and experiences – about which surprisingly little is known.

How do young people experience the mix of adult managed, top-down youth participation policies alongside the networked, collaborative and often youth-driven forms of participation that characterise the more horizontal emergent partnerships between young people and many youth-facing NGOs? How do young people form opinions about what matters in the context of these complex and often conflicting policy discourses and communicative landscapes? Are youth participation policies now part of a broader shift towards network governance and if so, how do participation policies contribute to the development of youthful political identities and cultures? Do they address or perpetuate processes of inclusion or exclusion?

Policy and youth participation

Over the past three decades concern for young people's participation in decision making has given way to mainstream debates about political and civic participation and more recently, to a focus on civic engagement (Harris, 2009). However, rather than replacing one another, these different concerns (stemming from different constructions of youth and participation) have intermingled. In the process, the concept of youth participation has come to mean different things in different contexts, confusing the definitions and purposes of participation (Sinclair, 2004). In Australia and the UK, it is possible to identify three dominant approaches to youth participation: 'youth development'; 'youth involvement'; and, 'youth self-actualisation'. While there are some overlaps, they generally reflect different notions of 'youth' and 'participation'. These approaches also are implicated in issues of inclusion, exclusion and what Anita Harris has called 'the production of failed citizenship' (Harris, 2012).

Youth development

Interest in understanding how 'positive youth development' occurs has resulted in the identification of participation as a key component of social policy interventions. The youth development approach to involving young people has been particularly influential in the US, and during the 1990s and early 2000s in Australia (for example, through the AusYouth initiative). Youth development models traditionally view youth participation as a key strategy for enabling the development of skills such as initiative and self-determination, as well as emotional, social, cognitive and behavioural competency (Catalano et al., 2004; Jarrett, 1998; Larson, 2000). In the youth development literature, 'youth' is a naturalised concept and programs validate young people's participation in decision making for the benefits it delivers in supporting the developmental needs and goals of young people in their transition to 'adulthood'. This approach emerges from the fields of developmental and social psychology and finds resonance in positivist epistemological positions such as behaviourism and rational choice theories. In the UK and Europe it has also influenced 'functionalist' normative traditions in sociology[2]. This theoretical perspective asserts that behaviour is observable and linked explicitly to clearly identifiable processes which are universal and are age-related (Heaven, 1994). Furthermore, the responsibility for successfully completing the developmental tasks necessary

to attain 'normality' lies with the individual. The focus on age as the core dimension of youth has reinforced a view of youth as a process of transition from childhood to 'normal' adulthood (Wyn and Woodman, 2006: 511).

Developmental approaches also hold to the principle of intentionalism – the intentions and actions of individuals or groups are the focal point for explaining behaviour and events (McAnulla, 2002: 274). Individuals are considered to have a 'pre-social' essence and whilst some scholars recognise that environmental factors influence individuals (Weissberg and Greenberg, 1997), policy informed by the developmental approach creates pathologies of difference and promotes interventions that target the behaviour of individuals and groups. This view accepts that social and economic structures (for instance, work, education and family) have some influence over how individuals are socialised, but these are treated as secondary to individual agency in a social context (Weissberg and Greenberg, 1997). Therefore, the main purpose of youth participation policies is to enable young people to develop skills and knowledge that support their successful transition from adolescence to adulthood – in particular, to manage or avoid anti-social or problematic behaviour associated with drug and alcohol use, incomplete education, unemployment, mental illness, teenage pregnancy and so on.

In terms of citizenship, youth development approaches can be divided broadly into two types: those which promote rights-based conceptualisations of citizenship focusing on young people's participation in education and employment as a precondition to citizenship including mutual obligation welfare policies, such as the New Deal and Work for the Dole; and those aiming to foster civic values and duties through 'youth development' programmes and civic education. Both approaches perpetuate beliefs that young people are 'becoming', rather than 'being', and have enshrined a 'deficit' model whereby young people are situated as 'citizens-in-the-making' and are the subjects of socialisation strategies seeking to create 'good citizens' (Owen, 1996: 21; Thompson et al., 2004: 219; White and Wyn, 2004: 87). The 'naturalness' of these interventions has been challenged by arguments emphasising the discourses which frame young people as deficient (Bessant, 2004; Roman, 1996), and the structures in society that position young people as different from adults, requiring policies that ensure their supervision, surveillance and regulation (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; White and Wyn, 2004; Wyn and White, 1997, 1998). Whether they target young people 'at risk' or 'future youth leaders', this approach constructs young people as apprentice citizens in need of support to successfully transition to full

citizenship. While some approaches to youth development may encompass a thicker notion of citizenship by highlighting the role of youth for transforming broader social and political structures (Wierenga and Wyn, 2011) in general, they embody a minimal or thin approach to democracy and participation because individual young people are viewed as the primary beneficiaries of their participation, and because their views and beliefs are often represented to authorities by adults.

Youth involvement

In contrast to the youth development approach, youth involvement approaches emphasise the rights of children and young people to participate in decisions that affect them (Hart, 1992; Kaplun, 1995; Sidoti, 1998), the broader social and political benefits of youth participation (Sinclair, 2004) and the social justice outcomes of youth involvement, such as strengthening democracy and civic participation (Badham, 2004; Lansdown, 2001; Lister, 2007). Youth involvement approaches promote young people's individual and group involvement in a range of decision-making arenas and for many purposes including: decisions about aspects of their own lives; service development and provision; planning, shaping, delivering or evaluating services; contributing as consultants, commissioners or researchers; and, as members of neighbourhoods, communities of interest and citizens (McNeish and Newman, 2002).

Youth involvement approaches tend to emphasise the cultural and structural barriers to participation embodied in institutions that have authority over young people. Where the developmental approach sees young people as 'becoming' citizens, the involvement approach ostensibly sees young people as 'being' citizens (Holdsworth et al., 2006: 9). The youth involvement approach draws on contextual notions of youth which is understood as a process or experience fundamentally affected by the social, economic and political context in which a person exists and where the subjective experiences of young people '…are simultaneously shaped by institutional processes and social structures' (White and Wyn, 2004: viii). In comparison with developmental theories of youth, the thrust of this realist argument is that youth is not a universal human stage and that individual behaviour cannot be measured independent of other social, political and cultural dimensions such as class, gender and culture. Instead, the opportunities and constraints experienced by different young people affect how they exercise their rights to participate (Bessant, 2003; White and Wyn, 2004: 93–95). In both Australia and the UK, the non-government sector has been particularly prominent in promoting youth involvement in research, policy development,

government decision-making, service and product design and delivery (Kirby et al., 2003; Wierenga et al., 2003). In some areas and jurisdictions this has led to the introduction of statutory obligations for local, devolved and national government bodies to consult with young people (Fleming, 2013; McNeish and Newman, 2002; Tisdall and Davis, 2004: 131) as well as models for participation within existing institutions and organisations. However, this mostly involves consultative mechanisms such as youth representative roles and youth councils (Matthews, 2001). In Australia, state and federal governments have had varying levels of commitment to young people's participation, and involvement is, almost without exception, in the form of formal, structured consultative mechanisms (Bell et al., 2008: 34). These mechanisms can also reproduce deficit-discourses of youth and reinforce, rather than transform, existing power relations that limit and manage the participants, terms, agendas, processes and possibilities of youth involvement (Bo'sher, 2006; Vromen and Collin, 2010). In comparison, research in the UK on the role of youth participation in public decision making (Kirby and Bryson, 2002) found that where meaningful participation takes place and young people's participation is integral to the effective practice of the organisations (government or non-government organisation) there is also enhanced social inclusion of young people (Kirby et al., 2003) although this has been critiqued on the basis that such inclusion is still constructed in terms of economic outcomes (Harris and Roose, 2013). Furthermore, youth involvement strategies most often insert youth participation mechanisms into pre-existing adult-led or dominated decision-making processes. Such strategies have had the benefit of illuminating the cultural, procedural and structural impediments to youth participation, and have contributed to the mainstream uptake of participation discourses. However, concerns persist that such strategies have limited effect on the institutional and power arrangements that minimise the influence of young participants on policy outcomes and broader processes of social change.

Youth-led social action and enterprise

The last decade has seen significant growth in initiatives to promote youth-led social action, and enterprise. Walsh writes that the reconfiguration of state, business and civil society relations and the emergence of open source and social media in particular have created the social and policy environment in which youth action and enterprise has emerged as a powerful discourse (Walsh, 2011a). While encompassing a vast array of programmes with distinct aims and theoretical underpinnings, these

can broadly be understood to include youth-led initiatives, youth-serving NGO programmes and a growing number of corporate-NGO initiatives that train, mentor and seed-fund young people to develop, design and launch social actions. These programmes are distinct from the youth development approach outlined above because they typically emphasise youth action and agency in solving social, rather than personal, problems. Some programmes have emerged from a volunteering paradigm and are intended to respond to youthful ways of thinking about voluntary work and social change (for example TakingItGlobal; Young People Without Borders). Others are influenced by the social innovation and enterprise agendas, and some have roots in political activism. For example, International Youth Foundation, UK charity NESTA, and Social Ventures Australia enable social change initiatives that address structural disadvantage and exclusion through supporting education, work and business skills and youth-led social ventures. Young people are often the target beneficiaries of social enterprise programmes, particularly those targeting local communities using face-to-face delivery modes. However, digital media has also powered an increasingly diverse array of youth-led social change initiatives and enterprises, from volunteer-run online resource hubs, to organisations promoting aid and development, climate education and action and campaign-delivery and consultancy ventures. Many of these can be understood as hybrid organisations encompassing community and network-building, for-fee professional services and training, project delivery, campaigning and advocacy (Chadwick, 2007). The inherently 'youthful' qualities of creativity, energy and innovation are juxtaposed with the 'old world' ways that adults and adult-led institutions conceptualise and respond to the opportunities and challenges of the contemporary world. While questioning the direct impact of mediated social action and enterprise on political decision-making, Walsh (2011a: 116) has argued that the youthful individualised and networked forms of engagement and collaboration that characterise contemporary forms of social action and enterprise do further challenge dominant discourses of youth participation and the institutional and market power of governments and business.

Inclusion, exclusion and 'failed citizenship'

The literature on youth participation quite consistently identifies patterns of exclusion with at least two vectors of concern. First, participation policies are being interpreted in ways that create a few opportunities for a small minority of young people that tends to be made up of young people with good access to social, cultural and economic capital

(as discussed in Marsh et al., 2007: 131–132). The second concern is that participation policies as top-down adult managed processes have the effect of legitimising some forms of youth participation and de-legitimising others (Harris, 2012).

Wierenga et al. (2003: 24–25) find that young people in Australia perceive participation policies to engage with a small, privileged minority. This is a perception echoed by young people in the UK (Matthews, 2001: 316). Some studies question the representativeness of formal youth participation mechanisms such as roundtables (Bessant, 2004: 400; Bo'sher, 2006: 343–344; Bridgland Sorenson, 2007) while others find that structured approaches to youth participation – such as youth advisory boards – usually facilitate the participation of high achieving young people who are well educated and employed (Singer and Chandra-Shekeran, 2006: 50). This has been attributed to the fact that these policies often reproduce the processes and hierarchies of participation found in formal and traditional settings which require young people to understand these processes and have the skills and knowledge to contribute in a structured way (Matthews, 2001; Saggers et al., 2004: 106). Consequently, particular groups, such as young people from new and emerging communities and young people with disabilities are regularly excluded from discussions on participation (Badham, 2004; Francis and Cornfoot, 2007). These young people are consequently less likely to know about opportunities to participate or see themselves as potential participants (Bell et al., 2008: 133; Oliff, 2006). The emerging picture is that participation policies are not engaging with young people from a range of backgrounds and therefore are contributing to processes of exclusion.

This leads to the second, related concern about what is considered legitimate youth participation – who it is defined by, undertaken by and whether or not it is recognised. It is feared that the top-down nature of participation policies reinforces dutiful models of citizenship (Coleman, 2008), stifles bottom-up participation of young people (Hart cited in Badham, 2004: 4) or contributes to patterns of civil society appropriation by setting up, funding and managing a civil society group whose autonomy is then seriously compromised (Maddison et al., 2004; Marsh, 2008). Furthermore, the requirement of network governance for young citizens with 'professional' skills and competencies, may create a bias towards those with the greatest structural advantage (Bang, 2005) alienating 'lay-people' from the political process and creating a more serious problem of exclusion. Yet another problem is the broader construction of the category of 'failed citizenship' (Harris, 2012; Walsh, 2011b).

Harris has argued that the increased currency of notions of 'active' and self-actualising citizenship is manifest in strategies to increase engagement and civic knowledge that target individual risk factors constructed as barriers to self-actualising citizenship. The emphasis on individual behaviour and personal responsibility tends to obscure institutional and structural barriers including socio-economic disadvantage and discrimination, obscure the ways particular 'at risk' groups may already be participating, and erase legitimate forms of resistance to mainstream constructions of 'good' and desirable young citizens (Harris, 2012). Though Black (2010) has suggested that diversity in ways of thinking about participation may be an indicator of a healthy democracy, it remains to be seen how this mix of discourses on participation and youth citizenship intermingle and shape young people's actual experiences, civic cultures and identities. As Lister has argued: 'A key test of participatory initiatives and processes from the perspective of inclusive citizenship is whether they do challenge traditional power relations or simply reinforce them' (Lister, 2007: 439).

Cultivating young citizens: what, how, who?

Youth participation policies therefore, cannot be taken at face value. It is not always self-evident who the policies are aimed at, what the desired outcomes are, what notions of citizenship underpin policies and what roles implementing authorities have. These require investigation into the ways in which young people work within, outside and across institutional and social boundaries. Studies of youth participation invariably focus on the degree of control that young people have in decision-making processes (Kirby and Bryson, 2002; Wierenga et al., 2003). Power is often explored in terms of what Lukes (2005) has described as a 'one dimensional' view. However, theories that acknowledge the relational, distributive and networked dimensions of power bring into view the resources, relationships and communicative practices that constitute young people's participation in a range of institutions. For example, Tisdall and Davis' (2004) concern for how policy networks function refocuses empirical questions on how young people leverage a range of resources. These include information and knowledge required by policy-makers, and networks that can be mobilised for action. Thus, even as 'outsiders', young people can have influence over decision-making processes (Tisdall and Davis, 2004: 140). However, there is a need to move beyond individual studies of adult-led and designed strategies or youth-led initiatives or forms of youth activism and consider the

networked associations that are emerging across and beyond initiatives, state borders and communities of interest. Furthermore, what model of citizenship and what types of citizens are being promoted? How are they configured in a digital, networked society?

Promoting citizenship

Increasingly the approaches to promoting youth participation described above incorporate digital media. Studies of civic websites over the past decade in the US, Europe and Australia demonstrate that the individuals and organisations behind participation initiatives play a key role in determining the form of citizenship promoted (Banaji and Buckingham, 2013; Montgomery et al., 2004; Vromen, 2008). This ranges from defining the architecture of sites, to curating or moderating content, and shaping the discourses of 'youth' and 'participation' that circulate through and around these sites. Despite identifying a diverse range of online activity, liberal (or personally responsible) and communitarian (community-based) forms of participation are far more common than deliberation or direct action online. The reasons for why particular modes of participation and models of citizenship are promoted are varied and complex. In synthesising the findings of a wide-ranging study of the role of the internet for youth participation and citizenship in Europe, Banaji and Buckingham (2013) conclude that local context (culture, status of youth, politics), assumptions about the nature of youth and online participation (having a voice), the political economy of youth participation (including levels of employment and education, funding, and relationship to the state) as well as digital inclusion and literacy play a significant role. They conclude that the internet alone is not likely to promote participation among young people who are not already engaged. Moreover, they point out that offline services and groups that work directly with young people in local communities are most successful in engaging young people who are particularly marginalised.

In a useful simplification of what is a complex interplay of social, technological, cultural and political factors, Coleman (2008) has concluded that youth e-participation initiatives tend to promote either 'managed' or 'autonomous' forms of citizenship. Drawing on interviews with managers and producers of online youth participation initiatives in the UK he shows a direct link between the policy intent and the practical outcomes of participation initiatives in terms of the kind of citizenship being promoted for young people. He argues that that the policy of 'targeting young people' (specifically in relation to e-democracy) can be read as either 'a spur to youth activism or an attempt to manage it'

(Coleman, 2008: 191). He distinguishes between these two policy goals in terms of organisations that aim to promote 'managed' or 'autonomous' citizenship as described in Table 1.1.

Coleman (2008: 203) observes that the projects he has examined define 'the political' in traditional ways and that they are either reacting against, or supporting, traditional democratic structures and actors (politicians, governments, trade unions). He also acknowledges that his typology should be used cautiously – not as mutually exclusive categories, but rather as opposing points on a spectrum with distinct conceptions of youth, digital media and democracy (Coleman, 2008). Indeed, Coleman (2008) goes on to suggest that a 'productive convergence' of

Table 1.1 Forms of e-citizenship

Managed Citizenship	**Difference-Centred Citizenship**	**Autonomous Citizenship**
Receive external funding from governments or charities.	Government funded but independently managed. Young people are 'free' to express themselves and define the terms of citizenship.	Do not receive external funding.
Mainly interested in establishing 'connections' between young people and institutions and political elites.	Include horizontal channels of interaction through which networks and collective associations can be formed including vertical channels linking young people to institutions that have power over them.	Express reservations about having too close a relationship with the state. Less interested in engaging with powerful institutions than forming communities for action.
View youth as apprentice citizens.	Young people seen as legitimate citizens who set the terms of their own political debate and engagement. Clear expectations about scope of influence outlined.	Regard young people as 'catalysts' – independent political agents.
Promote 'habits of civility' and empowering young people to 'have a say'.	Young people are encouraged to define participation and mobilise online however they see fit.	Less interested in 'having say' than actually taking action.
Liberal conception of citizenship	Participatory conception of citizenship	Radical conception of citizenship

Source: Adapted from Coleman (2008).

these two empirically tested models is possible. This would form the basis of a contested or, perhaps difference-centred democracy in which deliberation and debate are fostered as described in Table 1.1. This productive convergence could be encouraged if state actors are willing to: fund but not manage or control initiatives; encourage horizontal networks with vertical channels into institutions and authorities; let young people define the political according to issues that matter to them; promote more transparent and inclusive governance practices; promote difference, deliberation and action for social change (Coleman, 2008: 191). This model will be used in Chapters 2 and 3 which consider policy discourses and NGO approaches to youth participation. However, as Banaji and Buckingham (2013) have highlighted, studies of the relationship between policy discourses, new media and youth civic identities must engage directly with young people's practices and experiences. While Coleman (2008) presents a useful framework for analysing the role of policies for youth citizenship he does not consider who these policies are aimed at. As is often the case in the youth participation literature, young people are treated as a homogeneous group and it is assumed that participation policies are aimed at, and received by, all young people equally. But what kind of citizens are emerging in the context of such policies and their underlying discourses?

Youthful forms of political identification, participation and citizenship

A sizable international literature indicates a shift away from traditional, institutional, forms of political identification and participation to cause- or issues-based participation – what Norris (2003) has called a 'politics of choice' (see also Marsh et al., 2007). Young people care about a wide range of issues that relate to local, national and international concerns (Aveling, 2001; Beresford and Phillips, 1997; Harris et al., 2007; Henn et al., 2002). Their experiences of everyday life powerfully shape their interest in particular issues and the forms of participation they engage in (Roker and Eden, 2002) and this 'lived experience' is structured by experiences of gender, class, age and ethnicity, and adult political domains, in turn shaping young people's views and participatory trajectories (Marsh et al., 2007). As such, structured lived experience contributes to inequalities in youth participation along lines of class and gender (Livingstone et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 2004; Vromen, 2003) and young people's views of citizenship reveal processes of inclusion and exclusion (Lister et al., 2003).

In a more optimistic vein, Bennett has argued against the claim of a decline in civic engagement in favour of a shift towards new forms of political interest and participation due in large part to the increasing uncertainty of the contemporary social, cultural and economic environment (Bennett, 1998, 2007). Consequently, young people are employing 'independent identity management strategies', are increasingly reflexive and self-actualising and consequently find greater satisfaction in defining their own political paths (Bennett, 2007: 61). This 'self-actualising Citizen' is in contrast to previous generations who could be characterised as 'dutiful': guided by ideologies, mass movements, and traditional loyalties to particular parties or government support structures. Dutiful citizens, as Bennett (2007) calls them, consider voting to be the primary form of democratic participation and feel a sense of duty to participate in government centred activities. Their main source of information on issues and government is through mass media and they are more likely to join hierarchical civil society and political organisations that use conventional one-way communications. In contrast, Bennett (2007) finds that actualising citizens are unresponsive to dutiful citizen values: they value individual purpose over institutional loyalties, in place of prescribed forms of political participation. They look for actions that can be personalised and overlap into other aspects of their lives (such as friendship groups) and which transcend geographical, communication and temporal barriers associated with traditional media and forms of organising (Bennett, 2007: 63). In this respect, the internet plays a crucial role in facilitating participatory repertoires that achieve this: 'Various uses of the Internet and other digital media facilitate the loosely structured networks, the weak identity ties, and the issue and demonstration campaign-organising that define a new global politics' (Bennett, 2003: 164). Furthermore, he argues that the internet facilitates wide, shallow networks for action and enables individuals to find multiple points of entry into issues and political practices (Bennett, 2003). This provides 'resource-poor players' with the means to access information and support and it acts as a setting in which to develop 'political strategies outside conventional national political channels such as elections and interest processes' (Bennett, 2003: 144). In this way, digital media enables young people to 'author' citizenship: to express themselves online through cause-related networks, engage creatively with politics and to 'remix citizenship' – define for themselves what is political and what kinds of participatory acts they should engage in (Coleman and Rowe, 2005). However, the internet itself is not enough to ensure engagement – young people want to be agents of

change who have real power to influence decisions and they are savvy to the online spaces where they are able to exercise both creativity and influence – and those where they cannot. The more sites are 'managed' and controlled the less inclined young people are to engage with them. Instead, young people want to be taken seriously as producers and partners in processes of online engagement and deliberation (Coleman and Rowe, 2005).

Bang (2005) has similarly theorised the emergence of new forms of political identity in the context of late modernity. In contrast with Bennett and Coleman, Bang (2005) theorises that 'project-oriented' participation is replacing traditional collective and oppositional organising. He argues that this demonstrates how the political is growing increasingly personal and self-reflexive and participation is becoming structured around choice. Civic engagement is increasingly embedded in political networks rather than positioned against a hierarchy and engagement is driven by a combination of personal interest and perception of necessity and is underpinned by ethics, personal integrity and mutual confidence (Bang, 2005: 163). Bang finds that governance networks encourage general citizen participation, but specifically promote opportunities for a smaller number of individuals to engage in policy discussion and production. Bang (2005) calls these new policy players 'Expert Citizens'. Expert Citizens are often professionals in voluntary associations and their cooperative attitudes towards working with elites in private and public organisations distinguish them from old grass-roots organisers. That is to say that where traditional activists find their purpose in challenging the authority of the state, and party political players find legitimacy in supporting the authority of the state, these new political identities find legitimacy in 'doing' work that was once considered the domain of the state. This includes developing and delivering policy into 'the community'. According to Bang, Expert Citizens take a discursive approach to 'the political', whereby participants create their own political realities through action. This action involves accessing existing processes and structures of governance by assuming professional roles in voluntary and non-government organisations. They are strategic in their pursuit of these roles to inform and take part in decision-making processes because they seek political influence. Expert Citizens have, or can access, the skills and resources that enable them to influence agendas and decisions, so they value collaboration and dialogue over opposition or confrontation (Bang, 2004). Bang warns they represent a new republican elite that may further alienate ordinary citizens from the political process.

Expert Citizens are pragmatic and cooperative. As young people, they include representatives to youth affairs peak bodies, youth councils and representatives to government departments and agencies, and staff or volunteers in youth-serving non-government organisations. However, Bang (2005) finds that the prerogative of the Expert Citizen is challenged by another new political identity: the 'Everyday Maker'. The Everyday Maker is also politically disposed and project-oriented, but engages in political actions directed beyond formal or official policy networks. They are cause-oriented, but are not inclined towards collective action (for instance, as part of a social movement), favouring individualised or micro-political participation instead. They see potential for political participation in everyday activities and seek to effect small, profound change, rather than shift grand narratives or create new spaces in the existing political structure (Bang, 2005:169). Everyday Makers, Bang suggests, might engage in such activities as blogging, sitting on the organising committee for an event, signing online petitions, timing their showers to reduce water usage and riding a bicycle instead of driving a car.

Like the Expert Citizen, the Everyday Maker does not assume an oppositional or legitimising political identity in the 'passive' or 'active' (Turner, 1990) sense. Rather, Everyday Makers react 'against' what they see as the elitist, professionalised politics of the Expert Citizen. Like Bennett, Bang (2005) argues that these project-oriented identities demonstrate how the political has become personal, self-reflexive and about 'choice' and this is amplified in their experience and expectations of digital life. Digital media allows them to express themselves, connect with others and take action in ways that bring together dimensions of their lives that were previously held distinct (friendship, work, learning and hobbies). In the convergence of social and political life, networks play a critical role and the internet is integral to the 'politics of the ordinary', which are at the core of both Everyday Makers and actualising citizens. For example, young people use social network services to promote issues (for example climate change) in their peer networks; connect informally to campaigns and groups (for example, Australian Youth Climate Coalition); publish or share content that blurs the distinction between cultural and political expression such as a digital photo indicating participation in an associated activity (for example, Earth Hour). Loader et al. (2014) have coined the term 'networked young citizen', to capture some of the features described above that enable empirical studies to identify and explain youthful, digital, civic and political practices. They suggest that, as an ideal type, the networked young citizen should be understood as

fluid and always in production, shaped by social structures and norms, and not always entirely distinct from the dutiful citizen, with whom they may share some characteristics (Loader, et al., 2014). This model highlights the empirical questions that arise from these theorisations of contemporary youth political identities: How do institutions and organisations conceive of and position young citizens; what are the processes of inclusion and exclusion that emanate from a networked young citizen model; and what can be done to sensitise and open up democratic institutions to these contemporary developments? The remainder of this book examines empirically how these tensions play out in the lives of young people in Australia and the UK.

Conclusions

Policies for youth participation are shaped by the different theoretical perspectives that inform approaches to democracy and citizenship. The above discussion has demonstrated that there are a number of ways to conceptualise citizenship and participation. Similarly, there is no single agreed purpose or practice for youth participation policies and there are at least three common approaches to youth participation: youth development; youth involvement; and, youth action or enterprise. These different discourses have implications for youth citizenship and raise important issues of inclusion and exclusion that have, to date, not been sufficiently dealt with in any systematic way in Australia or the UK. The language of participatory governance and the creation of mechanisms and roles that link citizens to policy processes is an increasingly prominent feature of current policy in relation to young people. It is now almost obligatory for government and non-government organisations working with or for young people to include a commitment to youth participation in their objectives. Whilst the question of the extent and authenticity of such declarations is an important one, this book is primarily concerned with the relationship between 'the idea' of participatory governance as it is currently presented in policy and how young people view politics and their role as citizens. In this discussion an emergent tension between network-oriented political identities and hierarchical systems of government is apparent and it is this tension that will be explored in the remainder of this book. As actualising citizenship gains currency new tensions arise at the intersections of policy, practice and youth identity. The models of citizenship and forms of political identity discussed above help studies to move beyond engaged/disengaged and state-centred visions of youth participation. Moreover, they

help to illuminate the more mundane, everyday acts that contribute less directly, though significantly, to the emergence of mediated youth civic cultures (Banaji and Buckingham, 2013). Informed by Banaji and Buckingham (2013) this book takes the position that there is no single 'citizenship reality'. Therefore, a more appropriate endeavour is to explore how various modes of citizenship and forms of political identity manifest, and to consider the factors young people themselves identify as influential in shaping how they view institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms of politics, political organisation and action.

2
Cultivating Good Citizens

The rights of children and young people to participate in decisions that impact on their lives has been enshrined in legislation in Australia and the United Kingdom; for example: Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act (New South Wales Government, 1998) and The Children and Young People's Plan [England] Regulations (2005). However, the depth and extent of these statutory obligations vary across jurisdictions, according to the type of public body and the community of children and young people concerned. There are few legal obligations to involve young people and changes in government are often accompanied by significant changes in political commitment, policy and funding (Fleming, 2013). While they lack the binding obligations of statutes, reports, guides and models for youth participation, largely developed by scholars and NGOs have been influential, particularly in the community sector and local government. The institutional location, legislative mandates, models and resources that underpin youth participation policies at various levels of government produce multiple frames in which youth civic cultures and identities emerge. They indicate whether governments at various levels are resisting or engaging productively with new forms of youthful political identity, participation and cultures (Vromen and Collin, 2010). Yet it cannot be assumed that there is coherence in discourses of youth participation and citizenship across sectors, jurisdictions and in relation to diverse groups of young people. As outlined in Chapter 1, diverse theories of democracy and citizenship differently construct the young citizen and ideas on normative forms of participation with varying emphasis on the centrality of the state, the community or individual performativity. This chapter, therefore, examines the dominant discourses of youth participation produced at the national and local level in Australia and the United Kingdom. It beings

with an overview of the policy contexts in each country and examines discourses of youth and participation in key policy documents.

The stories of youth participation policy in Australia and the United Kingdom have unfolded within broader traditions of social policy on issues affecting youth. Anita Harris (2012) has argued that while these policy traditions are marked by a concern with youth as 'apprentice citizens', notions of self-actualising citizenship have become prominent as young people are positioned as a 'resource' for managing the risks and uncertainties of late modernity. The extent, nature and implications of representations of the actualising citizen in policy discourse therefore deserve considered analysis. Are they concerned with engaging with young people as citizens, or is this a new strategy for managing youthful transitions?

Additionally, the role of the internet for participation and governance has been the subject of significant interest and debate in both Australia and the UK. In Australia, the Gov 2.0 agenda has mainly been concerned with electronic and online service delivery with its attendant emphasis on data for understanding citizen-consumer needs (Chen, 2013). Few serious initiatives – let alone comprehensive policies – for policy-maker-citizen interaction have taken place in the Australian context. In the UK, there has been more serious engagement with the idea that digital media can enhance the quality of democratic communication, though Coleman and Blumler (2009) assess the progression of e-democracy policy as fragmented and focused on voting, local government and experiments in public dialogue including e-petitions and blogs. In some respects, the myth that young people are 'digital natives' has led to more initiatives being trialled with young people than with other populations. However, to date these have also tended to focus on delivering information to young people with limited opportunities for online interaction or self-expression. From a 2010 study of (broadly defined) government and NGO youth civic websites in Australia, Vromen has concluded that while civic sites promote a 'youth empowerment' discourse, they maintain a 'dutiful citizen' orientation. How do the distinct threads of youth participation, citizenship and digital media intermingle in policy discourses across government and NGOs and how are these similar or distinct in each country?

Australia

Policy context

The Australian story is riddled with tension between youth as a 'special interest group', broad policy areas (education, health and infrastructure)

and a federated system of government. This is reflected in the shifting ideas about the need and purpose of Ministerial representation for youth affairs and a cross-portfolio Office for Youth (OFY), particularly at a federal level. Since the 1980s, youth affairs has been subsumed in broader portfolios containing education or employment and while largely represented at the Ministerial level, under successive Liberal governments it has been recently downgraded to the status of Parliamentary Secretary. Consequently, the representation of youth affairs at a federal level has been impermanent and the OFY itinerant. Ostensibly responsible for research on youth issues and providing support for the planning and coordination of policy and services that impact on young people, the OFY has been shuffled between different government departments, including Employment and Industrial Relations (during the 1970s), the Department for Prime Minister and Cabinet (during the 1980s), the Department of Education, Employment and Training (into the 1990s) and then to the Department of Family and Community Services (and its later iterations as Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs). Since 2008 it has been based in the department responsible for education. Whilst some commentators argue that the departmental location of the OFY plays a major part in determining its level of influence (Ewen, 1995), others argue that location is not a significant factor (Maunders, 1996: 44). In general there is debate about the effectiveness of the federal OFY. A long-standing critique is that its symbolic power has been greater than its ability to actually shape and implement policy and its predominant location in departments for employment, education and training limit its input into other areas of policy affecting youth such as transport, housing and health (Ewen, 1995).

Youth participation in policy is also shaped by economic and political forces. As regards policy development, Liberal governments consult and outsource: inviting the non-government sector to advise on and then tender to deliver youth policy in the community. Labor governments have favoured a more 'enabling' approach using a broader range of mechanisms to involve a wider group of constituents to direct policy that is then delivered in various forms of 'partnerships' with non-state actors. As stakeholders in this process, opportunities for young people to participate have been limited, as will be discussed below. In general federal level policies have emphasised youth participation as a strategy for delivering youth development programs for 'young leaders' and interventions for young people identified as 'at risk'. Programmes such as AusYouth, GreenCorps and Work for the Dole have utilised participation as a strategy for youth development, particularly for improving

pathways to employment. Programmes delivering skills for 'social action' and 'youth enterprise' have also gained currency as alternative models for delivering on young people's apparent desire to 'create change' in the community and a perceived need to equip young people with skills for self-management of the increasingly complex transitions through youth to adulthood. According to White and Wyn (2004: 84), while opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge enhance the role young people play in the present, the policy focus on youth development is usually concerned with the value young people offer as adults – what they term 'futurity'.

At a federal level, youth peak bodies have also played an important role in the policy process through research, sector coordination and advocacy. The National Youth Council of Australia was established in 1960 as a consultative body for non-government youth organisations, student groups and youth-serving organisations to promote the interests and needs of young people. It advocated at a national level for youth participation in government and community decision making and conducted a range of participatory processes including youth forums and surveys to capture and amplify the views of young Australians. It was succeeded by the Youth Affairs Council of Australia, and then the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition which received some government support until 1998 when it was defunded by the then Liberal-National Party Coalition government. A National Youth Roundtable was funded in its place and ran from 1999–2008. The Roundtable involved a limited number of young people in a highly managed research and consultation process. Ministers were not held accountable to the views of the Roundtable and there is little evidence that it influenced federal government youth policy (Bo'sher, 2006).

In 2008 a wide consultation process with young people and youth-serving organisations resulted in the government re-funding an independent, national youth peak – the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC). It also established a government run national youth involvement program – the Australian Youth Forum (AYF) – which combined a number of strategies including a 12-person youth steering committee, community-based forums and a website with moderated discussions, events and social media (see: Vromen, 2012). Beyond this the OFY has commissioned one-off consultation activities on particular topics by NGOs. For instance, in 2011, ReachOut.com facilitated online and face to face discussions between young people and the then Minister for Mental Health, Mark Butler. Despite initial fanfare that AYF would involve thousands of Australian young people in policy development

at a national level, it appears to have largely depended on the website forums, an annual National Youth Week event and the annually appointed AYF steering committee. There is very little publicly available information about the activities and impact of AYF and activity on the online forums would suggest that despite extensive work by more than 60 steering committee members over six years, there has been limited youth engagement.

Youth affairs and policy is also multilayered across federal, state and local levels of government. The location and role of state Offices for Youth across Australia differs widely (Bell et al., 2008: 35). Although youth policy with regards to education and training has been overseen by the intergovernmental Ministerial Committee for Education, Employment and Youth Affairs, youth participation policies have not been designed and comprehensively introduced across all jurisdictions. As such, a series of fragmented youth policies and programmes across federal, state and local government aimed at young people have been developed with very little coordination in approach (Bell et al., 2008: 35; Maunders, 1996: 44). Furthermore, state-based Offices for Youth face considerable challenges due to being cross-departmental and lacking any substantive budget or other resources (Beresford and Robertson, 1995). The Victorian Government is a notable exception having developed a comprehensive and cross-portfolio Youth Action Plan (Victorian Office for Youth, 2006), and resourced largely local level mechanisms for youth participation in policy processes.

Non-government and community organisations have also played a significant role in youth policy production and implementation for more than half a century. In recent decades, youth participation has been strongly promoted by organisations such as the Create Foundation, PLAN Australia and the Foundation for Young Australians. These organisations have argued broadly for the inclusion of young people in government and community decision making and have highlighted that particular groups of young people are doubly excluded from mainstream mechanisms. Such claims are underpinned by principles of equality and justice and point out that structural barriers can prevent young people exercising their rights to participate in decision-making processes. Approaches to participation have been developed to respond to the contexts and preferences of Indigenous young people, young people in out of home care, newly arrived, culturally diverse and refugee young people (Foundation for Young Australians, Create Foundation, and the Centre for Multicultural Youth). Organisations, such as ReachOut.com by Inspire Foundation (ReachOut), Beyond Blue, Orygen Youth Health

and the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre have similarly developed approaches that are inclusive of young people living with mental health difficulties. Additionally there are also a number of large, youth-led organisations, such as Vibewire.Net, the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and Oaktree Foundation that are built on participatory models and which facilitate the participation of tens of thousands of young people in public discourse, mainstream press and policy debates on a range of issues including poverty and climate change.

Furthermore, despite the challenges of funding, youth peak bodies in the Australian states and territories have also played a long and critical role in promoting youth participation in government and community decision making. State youth peak bodies and Children's Commissioners have worked collaboratively with state governments to support youth participation and have produced handbooks on implementing youth participation strategies in government and non-government organisations and on boards of directors (New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People, 2002; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2004).

Policy discourses arising from these arrangements are not fixed but are fluid and changing and highly susceptible to the party and politics of the government of the day. Yet, an examination of youth policy at a state and federal level does reveal trends and gaps in the way both youth and participation is imagined within policy.

Imagining youth

Over the last two decades there has been patchy development of specific youth policies at a federal level. Rather, youth interests tend to be pigeonholed in policies on education, employment and, more recently, health. Intermittent youth-specific policies, strategies and commitments have entrenched concepts of youth as a transitional stage between childhood and 'adult life' (Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force, 2001). At the beginning of the 2000s, the then Liberal government released a policy paper entitled 'Footprints to the Future' in which the transition to adulthood was closely linked to acquiring 'independence'. Independence is conceptualised as '... a gradient, a gradually enhanced capacity to exercise judgement and make choices' (Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force, 2001: 4). Progress is defined in terms of developmental milestones that indicate successful transition to adulthood.

This individualised, 'futurity' of youth is also reflected in the Labour government policy National Strategy for Young Australians

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). Both policies state that successful transitions require the attainment of individual empowerment, active participation in social and economic life, responsible citizenship and resilience (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010; Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force, 2001: 110). Despite acknowledgement of the significant social, economic, cultural and technological changes that make the experience of youth significantly risky and uncertain, it is the preparation of appropriate skills, confidence and resilience in young people, that is needed to ensure they are able to navigate the challenges and to become involved and productive citizens. Transitions are thereby marked by individual characteristics and behaviours for which the individual is ultimately responsible. There is an entrenched categorisation of young people as 'successfully transitioning', 'at risk' or 'disengaged' whereby 'engaged' refers to participation in education, training or employment (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010; Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force, 2001: viii).

There are a number of implications associated with this view of young people – one that has persisted despite changes in governments. In addition to an individualised and deficit account of youth, it has a narrow view of diversity and the spectrum of factors and experiences that shape a young person's life. This is reflected in youth policy in general which has a limited account of specific experiences of exclusion (Bell et al., 2008). Instead, diversity is framed as a barrier to participation: factors such as gender, Indigenous status, disability, educational attainment, work status, family income levels and health status are identified because they affect outcomes for young people (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010: 5). It is common for the challenges of diversity to be addressed by targeted and 'culturally appropriate' programmes and strategies. In general, these policies assume a developmental approach to youth where young people are valued for the citizens they will become. Policies are focused on 'preparing young people for the future' and enabling individuals to maximise their 'life choices'.

At the state government level, the dominant discourses on youth vary. States such as Victoria position young people in terms of their current and future contribution to society (Victorian Office for Youth, 2006). While others position young people as becoming and requiring positive development and socialisation (Queensland Government, 2013). Many state policies acknowledge diversity – often as a guiding principle – however, responding to diversity has been constructed as a mechanism to facilitate the participation of a wide range of young people in keeping with policy discourses on 'cohesion' and 'inclusion'. Nevertheless, this

rarely translates to creative strategies for drawing on young people's own experiences of negotiating diversity (Harris, 2013). Initiatives tend to target vulnerable groups or advocate priority access (such as creating two positions specifically for young people from 'culturally diverse backgrounds' on the NSW Community Relations Commission). As is the case at the federal level, young people are typically identified as either unproblematic achievers, or as vulnerable and requiring special interventions. More recently these constructions have manifest in state-federal policies targeting rising rates of young people not in education or employment. The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (which includes the 'Compact with Young Australians') was implemented from 2010 to 2013 tying welfare and other support payments to participation in education, training or employment (under National Youth Participation Requirement legislation across Australian States and Territories). This approach to boosting educational attainment and reducing unemployment is problematic for its failure to address structural causes of unemployment and marginalisation (White and Wyn, 2004, 2014).

Imagining participation

Federal and state level policies have had varying commitments to youth participation. At a federal level, these included policies, action plans and guiding principles for young people's participation (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010; MCEETYA, 2004; Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force, 2001). However, there have been limited tangible examples of where policy development has involved – or mandated – the participation of young people across government. In some cases policies draw on purposive direct consultation with young people (for instance surveys or case studies) but youth participation is rarely an outcome or strategy of policies themselves, partly because young people have historically been the subjects, not constituents of these policies. Where declarations to support young people's participation in policy making across different levels and portfolios of government do exist (for example, MCEETYA, 2004) they are not mandated, appear to have had little systematic application and are not monitored or reviewed.

The Rudd Labour Government's National Strategy for Young Australians (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010) included a broader range of commitments to youth participation than previous strategies, though these were largely via managed processes (National Youth Forum; Youth Advisory Group on Cybersafety) and support to programmes for promoting youth development, enterprise and volunteering. While

some of these mechanisms have perpetuated high level participation by a very select and small number of young people, others such as the Youth Advisory Group on Cybersafety (to the Minister for Communications) have expanded a structured face-to-face and online model to involve significant numbers of students (reportedly from 289 schools in 2013 to 2612 students in 2014) (Australian Government, 2014). This is achieved through partnerships with Australia schools and using closed and moderated online forums to facilitate scheduled discussions on topics set by the department. In the absence of evaluations on the effectiveness of this approach from the perspective of young people, communication on the outcomes of the consultations or responses from government it is not possible to say if this is a desirable model. It is, nevertheless, intended to expand the scale of youth involvement in structured and adult-managed policy making.

Notions of young people as being either successful or at-risk are perpetuated through models of participation in decision making that are proposed in federal government policy. With the exception of captive audiences (for example, school students), succeeding young people are expected to put themselves forward for inclusion in adult-led structures of community and government decision making such as volunteering, community service and enterprise training; mentoring programmes and enrolling to vote. The renewed interest at a federal level in the role of volunteering and social enterprise training has delivered policy and funding to agencies, NGO and charitable sectors to reinvigorate and grow these areas of engagement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

However, young people identified as disengaged or 'at risk' are targeted for inclusion in 'leadership' programmes – not decision making processes. They are conceptualised as a sort of sub-second-class citizen who require specific interventions in order to be successfully socialised. The implication is that because they face challenges in the attainment of education or employment, have complex home lives or special needs and experience marginalisation or discrimination, they cannot, or choose not to participate in 'mainstream' youth participation activities.

The National Strategy for Young Australians has shifted from a discourse that positions young people as external to society and requiring 'integration' (for example, Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force, 2001) to one that sees young people as members of communities which will benefit from increased participation. However, forms of participation promoted are still predicated on the need to socialise young people to behave appropriately in institutions and communities. The discourse on participation therefore continues to be institution-centred,

as opposed to youth-centred. The increased interest and funding of 'self-actualising' programmes, such as youth-led volunteering and enterprise, promotes a more expansive idea of youth participation and offers potential to acknowledge where young people are participating 'outside' of formal institutions. Nevertheless, these policies continue to view participation as a desirable strategy because it benefits the individual young person and can improve engagement and effectiveness of programmes and services to young people.

At the state government level it has become obligatory to include an explicit commitment to youth participation. Participation is variously included as a guiding principle, as a policy goal or a government action area in plans. However, the rationales and processes for participation are diverse. For example, in Victoria, youth participation in community and government decision making has featured an as explicit goal of government policy over the last ten years. Victorian state government policy has committed to create advisory mechanisms to various decision making bodies, including Government, school councils and cultural institutions such as Arts Victoria (Victorian Office for Youth, 2006). Victoria has also focused on youth action and social enterprise making major investment in programmes and initiatives for youth-led action (such as the Change it Up program delivered in partnership with the Foundation for Young Australians).

In South Australia, participation is both a guiding principle and a policy goal emphasising the need for young people to be heard and involved in the development of their communities and decisions affecting their lives (Office for Youth, 2010). Like many other states it undertakes to support a Youth Advisory Committee program, develop local council mechanisms for youth involvement, support youth volunteering, leadership programmes and promote youth achievements in the community. Participation flows from young people's status as citizens and as valuable contributors to policy, service and program design.

In contrast, Queensland Government policy emphasises the development of future citizens through participation and volunteering which can help young people 'find their place in society', develop character, resilience, decision-making and leadership skills (Queensland Government, 2013). Managed programmes including Youth Parliament, Indigenous Youth Leadership Program and Duke of Edinburgh Programmes are centrepiece commitments in this policy which imagines participation as a crucial strategy for young people's positive development and socialisation. While other state government policies acknowledge young people's rights to participation and their position as 'citizens' in the community

participation in government and community decision making is ultimately designed to deepen participation in education, training and employment.

Although more diverse forms of participation are presented in the state and local level documents, the 'standard' approach across all levels of government is to create advisory boards, *ex officio* positions to committees, episodic or ad hoc events to inform service, program and resource development and Youth Parliaments that feed young people's views up to adult-led decision making bodies. Some states additionally hold forums and events such as the Victorian events, *Young People Direct,* whereby consultations with young people (often in regional or rural areas) take place on particular and the outcomes are communicated directly to the Minister for Youth. According to the policy and funding plan, developing youth leadership and social action in local communities in partnership with NGOs is a priority. This reflects a broader trend among state governments who have become strong advocates for youth participation at a local community and council level with many developing toolkits, guides and grants mechanisms to support this (for example South Australia; Victoria; Western Australia).

Overall, state governments maintain a commitment to adult-led (policy maker), structured mechanisms although for more than a decade there have been concerns that such models are often inappropriate and can obscure or silence the opinions of many young people (Saggers et al., 2004: 105). Unstructured mechanisms, such as online chat and consultations and use of social media are effectively used as strategies to 'reach' young people with information and provide ad hoc opportunities to have their say, or participate in programmes. The extent to which these mechanisms open up opportunities for young people to set agendas or take part in actual decision-making is not always clear.

Young people's contribution to policy development is contingent on adults asking or inviting young people to contribute ideas and adults interpreting these ideas and making decisions on how they should translate into policy. State governments emphasise the duties and rights of citizenship, but largely assume that rational young people will get involved and that all young people are equally positioned to act on their rights to participate. To either promote diversity – or address those 'at risk' – youth leadership is the preferred paradigm. Leadership is espoused as both necessary and desirable, as it acts as a measure of successful socialisation of young people as 'active citizens' without actually conferring agenda-setting or decision-making power on young people.

State and local level policies often reflect community development and consumer-led policy models. The policies view young people 'in the context of their whole community – where they live, their family situation, their culture and to whom they are connected' (Victorian Office for Youth, 2006: 16). Young people, policy responses, services and programmes are the beneficiaries of youth consultation. These state level policies acknowledge that young people's lives are affected by a whole range of policy frameworks and that their participation in determining the government's approach will contribute to successful outcomes for the whole community as well as young people themselves. A tangible – though isolated – example was a ministerial directorate issued under the New South Wales youth policy *Working Together, Working for Young People 2006* for government departments to 'apply best practice youth participation principles in their dealings with young people'. This led to extensive youth participation in the development of the NSW Youth Health policy (New South Wales Department of Health, 2010).

Despite an increasing awareness of the integral role of digital media in young people's lives, it has primarily been used to help manage 'youth transitions' from childhood to adulthood through provision of information, enhanced learning and education and programmes for skill development. From 1998 to 2007 the web portal The Source (http://www.thesource.gov.au/) was the Australian government's online youth participation strategy. This website provided youth-related information, but did not enable online participation. Opportunities to get involved were advertised but these were limited, infrequent, offline and referred to leadership opportunities (National Youth Roundtable and Ship for World Youth), development programmes (GreenCorps)[1], youth mentoring (Mentoring Marketplace) and programmes for homeless young people (Reconnect). The Labour Government revamped and rebranded the site as Youth.Gov (www.youth.gov.au) and created a dedicated web portal for the Australian Youth Forum (AYF) (http://www.youth.gov.au/sites/Youth/ayf) which incorporated discussion forums and social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. These platforms have struggled to engage young people in meaningful discussion much less deliberation. The AYF website contains highly managed discussion forums, limited content creation and largely communicates the activities of the Youth Steering Committee and other information deemed relevant to young Australians. Used in this way digital media has perpetuated an elitist, managed, top-down approach to youth participation.

At the state level, there is varying commitment to the role of the internet as a setting for participation. State government policy documents

analysed here, acknowledge that young people are increasingly online and that the internet provides new ways for young people to engage with each other and their communities. However, only the state of Victoria has substantively responded to the relationship between information communication technologies (including mobile phones) and political and civic engagement, though there is no mention of the challenges or opportunities that this presents to government (Victorian Office for Youth, 2006). The flagship digital initiative: www.youthcentral.gov.vic.au is pitched as a web-based youth participation initiative, though it has been developed over time as a '"first stop shop" for young people when seeking information about courses and study options, accommodation and jobs and career planning tips' (Victorian Office for Youth, 2006: 21). YouthCentral engages young people as 'roving reporters' who produce website content – text, audio, video and graphic – although this content is moderated by adult staff within the OFY. Thus, the Victorian government can hear from young people about issues that matter to them, but there is no mechanism for discussions amongst young people or between them and policy makers. In terms of participation, the site is highly managed and predominately communicates information to young people. Yet, this is still significantly more than is delivered online by other states. Most youth strategies contain vague commitments to using online and 'multimedia communication technology and tools' (Queensland Government, 2013: 21) and the limited understanding of digital technologies and cultures is evidenced by largely uninspired government youth websites characterised by thin content and limited participatory functionality. The main functions of these sites are to deliver information to young people (including via social media) and to receive feedback.

This brief analysis suggests that the dominant discourse of youth has largely adopted the optimistic and capacity-based frame of the 'self-actualising' young citizen who is simultaneously expected to maximise opportunities for volunteering, social action and enterprise training 'and' engage with structured, institutionalised and adult-led opportunities for participation both on and offline – in bureaucracies, schools and programmes. A subset of this group – 'the vulnerable' – are targeted with leadership and skill development programmes. Youth participation in this policy context is both reinforcing the models of dutiful and expert citizen and seeking to capture and catalyse the self-actualising citizen through youth-led activities which are expected to enhance commitment to normative democratic values and institutions. Rather than becoming more inclusive or open to diverse understandings and forms

of participation, dominant discourses maintain elitist processes of direct inclusion in government decision-making. Alternative, unconventional or contesting forms of youthful politics and action are permitted at the local level. However, the mainstream policy aim is to deliver positive (normative) socialisation and development that equips young people with skills to manage risk and adversity without calling into question the structures and discourses that deny them full recognition.

Furthermore, youth participation in government decision-making continues to be about consultation rather than collaboration – an issue highlighted by Wierenga et al. (2003) more than ten years ago. In terms of actual power to determine agendas and contribute directly to decisions, youth participation has not advanced very far. The absence of efforts to recognise and engage with autonomous youth-led forms of participation is the clearest indication that government policy in Australia continues to be oriented towards Coleman's (2008) notion of managed citizenship. This is most obvious in the way digital media is used by government. Online participation is restricted by limited interactivity in identification of 'youth issues' by government, and by the way content is created and used. There is no scope for young people to autonomously define what content should be created or how it can be produced. Government websites serve primarily as vehicles for information and resources and indicate that the Government imperative to control online agendas mimics that in offline contexts. In sum, this exploration of policy discourses further supports analysis of policy maker accounts of youth participation which reveal a scepticism about young people's capacity to offer meaningful contributions, and the reluctance of policy makers to relinquish control over the policy process (Vromen and Collin, 2010).

The United Kingdom

Policy context

Youth participation emerged as an explicit dimension of public policy in the United Kingdom during the late 1960s and since then campaigns to include children and young people in policy development have drawn strength from the convergence of the consumer rights movement, the new sociology of youth and the child rights movement (Sinclair, 2004: 107). A range of policies and programmes incorporating participation have emerged as calls for youth involvement have been increasingly recognised and responded to by central and local administrations. Legislation for community participation – and specifically

children and young people – has played a significant role in shaping institutional and cultural responses. For example, the Children Act (UK Government, 1989) significantly promoted children's and youth participation in government and community decision making by requiring that authorities ascertain and give due consideration to children's 'wishes and feelings'. And while the implementation of participatory and partnership-models for policy and decision making have been uneven and often limited, significant opportunities for children and young people to influence decision making have been created across many areas and levels of government (Burke, 2010; Willow, 2002). With the election of New Labour in 1997, youth participation policy and practice were key strategies in the government's Social Inclusion agenda and for stemming the flow of young people disengaging from institutional politics. Central and local administrations and agencies came under statutory obligations for increased public consultation, for example, in the area of community planning. Peer-led initiatives, such as the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Youth Affairs established in 1998, were intended to facilitate dialogue between parliamentarians, young people and youth-serving organisations, raise the profile of youth issues and concerns and promote a coordinated approach to youth policy in central government. In just over a decade of New Labour government, a number of apparatus led to the increased presence of youth participation in government decision making. These included a Minister for Children and Young People (becoming the Minister for Young Citizens and Youth Engagement in 2009), Children and Young People's Commissioners, the Children and Young People's Unit and policy such as *Tomorrow's Future: Building a Strategy for Children and Young People* (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001b) and *Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the Involvement of Children and Young People* (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001a).

However, a codified set of 'youth policies' in which to locate youth participation has not been developed. Rather, youth policy has been dispersed across different jurisdictions and government departments resulting in inconsistent and haphazard uptake of principles of youth participation. From 2001, a more concerted attempt to promote youth participation across areas of government was aided by the establishment of the Children and Young People's Unit in the Department for Education and Skills. In 2001, the unit released a policy paper 'Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the Involvement of Children and Young People', to provide government departments with a framework to 'increase the involvement of children and young people in policy and service design

and delivery' (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001b: 1). The unit actively coordinated youth policy development across government departments, with a focus on better coordination of policies affecting young people; measures to widen access to post-16 education; targeting of those perceived to be at greatest risk of social exclusion through early interventions; management of anti-social behaviour through families; and, greater focus on participation and active citizenship (Bell and Jones, 2002). Action plans for youth involvement were developed by eight government departments resulting in initiatives for youth participation in a range of departments covering environment, transport, education, employment and the foreign and home offices (Bell and Jones, 2002). These have included large scale consultations, roadshows, children's Select Committees, youth parliament and including young people in the government delegations to the United Nations special sessions (Willow, 2002; Children and Young People's Unit, 2001b). Furthermore a ten year strategy for children and young people was produced by the Northern Ireland government in 2006 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 emphasised the importance of ensuring that young people have an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. The Welsh Assembly also adopted a set of core aims to ensure that the CROC underpins policy and practice relating to children and young people (Willow, 2002). Making participation and active citizenship a priority policy area increased both the practice and profile of youth participation in government decision making at the central and local level. Positive shifts in the structures and processes of government, and the public service particularly, enabled youth participation at local levels of government.

In 2006, the *Youth Matters* framework was developed to support policy across government to address inequality and social mobility of young people. Efforts to promote 'active citizenship and community engagement by young people' included embedding participation principles in the government's *Respect Action Plan* (UK Government, 2006) and setting up a ministerial committee to support the Russell Commission Implementation Body (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 17). The *Respect Action Plan* (UK Government, 2006) – the Labour Government strategy for addressing anti-social behaviour – proposed action on youth participation proposals outlined in *Youth Matters* (Department for Education and Skills, 2006) including supporting young people to make decisions about how local funds for youth activities and resources should be spent. Government funded commissions have also produced influential reports on dimensions of citizenship and shaping policy outcomes. Most notable recent examples are the Crick Report (Crick, 1998) and the

Russell Commission (Russell, 2005). The Crick Report examined how to support young people's participation in democracy and led to introduction of citizenship education in English and Welsh secondary school curriculum in 2001. Whilst the report acknowledged that young people are increasingly mobilised in relation to issues, it nevertheless made the case for citizenship education to focus on '*social and moral responsibility, community involvement* and *political literacy*' (Crick, 1998: 13). In 2005 the Russell Commission was formed to review and propose a framework to increase youth action and volunteering in order to support community and social change, strengthen opportunities for young people to learn and develop and to promote active citizenship and wider participation in society. Key outcomes of the Commission were the introduction of the Millennium Volunteers project, whereby volunteers received certification according to the number of hours undertaken in formal volunteering; and, the creation of the 'V' charity to administer government and private sector funds to massively increase youth volunteering. This amplified the discourse of youth citizenship linked primarily to ideas of community service and participation in education and employment.

Youth participation also features in the Cameron Conservative coalition government's 'Big Society' agenda in which 'public service reform, community empowerment and social action' are three strategic aims (Conservative Party, 2009). While building on many features of youth policy – particularly educational retention and volunteering – the Cameron government approach is to seemingly reorient power away from the state towards communities and citizens. A central aim is to foster a new culture of civic and political engagement. The mass mobilisation of young people – as volunteers and social entrepreneurs is central to both the rhetoric and reality of the 'Big Society' policy reforms. In executing this strategy youth affairs have been allocated to a Parliamentary Under-Secretary (of State for Children and Families) and moved to the Minister for Civil Society and the Cabinet Office, tasked with coordinating delivery of the Big Society agenda. In 2013 legislative changes under the Big Society were extensive and far-reaching, particularly as they relate to localism. While local authorities have been 'empowered' with greater control over local spending and opportunities – indeed, expectations – to deliver local services, these measures have been criticised in the context of concomitant public spending cuts that have disproportionately affected youth services (Sloam, 2012: 108). Furthermore, the revocation of regulations regarding Children's Trusts and Children and Young People Plans has erased certainty of youth participation in local level planning. Indeed there are plans to remove

the requirement to have a Children's Trust Board altogether, though this is not a high legislative priority (Department of Education, 2012). Instead, funding has been channelled towards youth initiatives such as the National Citizen Service.

Throughout this period, the non-government and community sector has led the promotion of the broader youth participation agenda through research, advocacy and practice. The Carnegie Young People's Initiative, DEMOS and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in particular, have committed significant resources to researching youth participation and funding research on practice and impact (for example, Butler et al., 2005; Coleman and Rowe, 2005; Kirby and Bryson, 2002; White, 2006; Hannon et al., 2008). In the area of advocacy the National Youth Agency, National Children's Bureau, British Youth Council and Children's Rights Alliance for England have all played key roles in advancing the rights of young people to participate and supporting governments and community organisations to involve young people through provision of training and resources. UKYouth, Changemakers and YouthBank are examples of organisations that have long provide resources and funding directly to young people to develop projects and campaigns that address issues they care about. The non-government and community sector has generated a large body of resources including research, evaluations, guides and best practice manuals culminating in the creation of Participation Works (www.participationworks.org.uk) – a network of organisations promoting participation of all sectors of the community, with a focus on children and young people. The Participation Works resources and Hear by Right framework (Badham and Wade, 2010) have been important in the expansion and application of youth participation and emphasise the transformation and change required by organisations and institutions in order to enable young people to influence agendas, decision making and contribute to change.

Imagining youth

The dominant policy approach to 'youth' in the UK is broadly defined by age (14–19). Policy in the first decade of this century described young people as having potential, wanting 'empowerment' and inclusion (Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Young people were regularly referred to as valued members of their communities who also benefit when they are empowered, feel supported and trusted to make decisions. They were described as 'partners' in processes of local level collaborative planning and policy and service delivery involving providers, statutory bodies, councils, parents, educators and

young people (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 26). For example, the requirement of local authorities to create a Children's Trust brought young people, youth services, local authorities, educators and parents together to plan and implement policy that affects young people (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 8). Young people were considered to be part of a community, listed as stakeholders who should be involved in decision making. However, participation in this sense is also constructed as a mechanism to encourage pro-social development of young people to 'act responsibly and to assume an active role in decision-making and leadership in their communities' (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 6). While the policy frames young people as 'capable' the emphasis is on the opportunities and support they require to achieve a successful transition to adulthood and '...to thrive and prosper, and to mature as active, healthy and responsible citizens' (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 5). In this way, there is a distinction between young people 'now' (valued because they are enthusiastic, concerned and able) and young people 'in the future' (successfully transitioned adults who contribute to the community and economy). Local level participation is presented as appropriate, even necessary, for young people while participation in broader, 'big P' politics and policy is something that takes place in adult life. Furthermore, policy discourses differentiate between those who are positively engaged (in education, employment and community-level action) and those who choose not to be and who are, by extension, involved in anti-social behaviour.

Policies identify social processes that can create barriers for young people: disability, sexuality, temporary accommodation and homelessness, race and ethnicity (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 7). However, despite acknowledging that structural as well as individual characteristics shape young people's participation (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 7), young people and local communities are largely positioned as responsible for addressing inequalities in circumstance and opportunity. Universal (general population) and targeted (particular group) approaches are standard inclusions, but little detail is provided as to what such mechanisms might consist of. Policy identifies the social processes that create barriers for young people who have a disability, who are same-sex attracted, who are homeless or who live in temporary accommodation and those from Black and minority ethnic groups (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 7). Commitments to legislate the obligation of local authorities to support young people from all backgrounds to influence the activities and services available

to them have been made (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 7) though these are now the subject of repeal plans under the Cameron Government.

The dominant discourse of youth as either 'responsible and active' or 'disaffected and anti-social' under Labour deepened Under direction from the Cameron Government, in 2011 the Department for Education published the *Positive for Youth – A new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13–19* – a framework that has brought together a number of government departments and policy areas identified as relevant to young people. Positive for Youth (Department for Education, 2011a) presents an optimistic view of the 'positive force' of young people who can 'realise their potential' and have a positive start when they enter adult life. It describes two 'types' of young people: those who are 'already responsible and hard working and want to make the most of their lives and make the world a better place'; and, those who are 'at risk of dropping out of society [and need] to develop a much stronger, clearer sense of responsibility and respect for others and real aspirations and pride for themselves' (Department for Education, 2011a: 4). The 'responsibilised' and 'successful' young person is positioned as an 'asset' whose worth should be further capitalised by augmenting formal learning and employment with volunteering, social action and enterprise. Young people 'at risk' are positioned as both victims (of structural adjustments in the workforce, unsafe families or communities) and as making poor choices. Framing both types of young person is a key theme of individual responsibility to society and individual choice as the key determinant of successful transitions epitomised in the campaign *Step up to Serve* (http://www.stepuptoserve.org.uk/) – a government-sponsored campaign to promote youth social action. The responsible young person is expected to be creative, to be enterprising, to be entrepreneurial, to demonstrate leadership, to respect others and authority, to speak up and to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. This builds on the established discourse of 'active participation' in government policy (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 2).

Imagining participation

Electoral participation has been a significant concern to policy makers in the UK for the better part of three decades. As noted above, civics education has been the primary strategy for boosting the youth vote. However, more recent approaches encourage youth-led and community-led campaigning to motivate people to enrol to vote. Under the Cameron government, the UK Cabinet Office *Democratic Engagement Programme* is

primarily focused on increasing voter enrolment through community-based campaigns to inform and motivate people to register to vote. Young people, along with other under-represented groups (specifically those living in social housing) are the target of two key initiatives to raise enrolment. Firstly, a tailored civics education framework focused on the benefits of enrolling to vote called *Rock Enrol!* is available online to be delivered in schools and other youth-service settings. Secondly, the *Democratic Engagement Innovation Fund* has funded community and small business initiatives to improve election participation. In addition to traditional forms of experiential civics education, such as Youth Parliaments, there is an increasing emergence of youth-led, 'boutique' or social enterprises developing initiatives to foster knowledge, skills and links to vertical forms of power and decision making via digital media, campaigning and gamification strategies. www.bitetheballot.co.uk, www.modelwestminster.org.uk and DoSomething (by vInspired.com) are examples of these diverse, digital and competition-based strategies for promoting youth engagement with the state.

More broadly Labour Government policy contained significant commitments to youth participation in government decision making on policy and services that affect them: 'We will only achieve lasting and positive change for young people if we place them at the centre of our policies and services' (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 6). Through the provision of local and national level mechanisms the policy claimed to support all young people to 'make a contribution'. Specifically, structured mechanisms for community-level institutions (schools, councils) have situated participation as primarily a 'local' level activity. For example, the establishment of Children's Trusts and Youth Opportunity Funds have supported young people to make decisions about how local councils design services and spend funds to deliver initiatives to young people (Department for Education and Skills, 2006: 15). At the national level, supported activities include UK Youth Parliament, building capacity of organisations for youth and ad hoc consultations on policy development (usually by small, select numbers of young people). Since the election of the Conservative – Liberal Democrat government, the discursive commitment to youth participation in government decision-making has been reiterated while the resource and legislative commitments have been rolled back. According to the *Positive for Youth* discussion paper on young people's involvement in decision making:

> The longer term ambition is to embed the principles of involving young people in more formal decision making and governance so

> that it becomes a routine way of doing business. However, it is recognised that a contribution from Government is required to ensure momentum is sustained. Such support would be on a progressively reducing basis, reflecting that public agencies should progressively bear more of the costs as youth participation becomes normal business, and that opportunities should be taken to increase corporate and other sponsorship where appropriate. Whilst we encourage all local authorities and Departments to involve and consult young people, how they do so is for them to decide. They will be able to consider the range of options that are available to them and to put in place the arrangements that most suit their particular needs (Department for Education, 2011b: 4).

In practical terms, central government has reduced the funding and legislative requirements for participation. It has narrowed youth involvement in policy development to use of managed opportunities for significant input by a small number of young people (for example, Youth Parliament, Youth Select Committee and National Scrutiny Group). These mechanisms mirror formal institutional arrangements and enable specific interaction between young people, elected to represent their peers, and politicians and civil servants. It has also created a centralised campaign and delivery platform for a youth development program designed to promote social action and volunteering.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Russell Commission the role of volunteering for promoting 'good' and 'active citizenship' has been the dominant focus in recent decades. Since the late 1990s there has been a sustained policy and funding commitment to volunteering and the third sector generally. The numerous consultations and reviews, policies, programmes and initiatives instigated between 1997 and 2010 have been described as having three key outcomes: creating a positive climate for volunteering; rationalising and improving infrastructure at both national and local levels; and integrating volunteering in institutional arrangements within the public service and welfare arrangements (National Centre for Social Research et al., 2011: 16). Under both Labour and Conservative governments volunteering is central to models for youth participation (Department for Education, 2011a; Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Young people's contribution is lauded for the benefits to the wider community, through injecting 'energy, enthusiasm, commitment and leadership' envisioned as creating positive change in their local communities and environments (Russell, 2005: 15). The benefits are achieved through the promotion of: learning

and skill development; active citizenship; and participation of young people in wider society (Russell, 2005: 15). Under Labour, partnerships for youth volunteering and action were fundamentally with government and community organisations. Under the Conservative – Liberal Democrat government, there is an even bigger role for big corporates and small businesses as government withdraws funding for initiatives and services.

Several policy documents in the last decade have pointed to the opportunity to build engagement with information and online deliberation (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Russell, 2005; White, 2006). Influential reports also argue that the internet must not only be used by members of parliament to contact their constituents or be used to extend traditional forms of consultation, but also to facilitate two-way communication between the citizenry and elected representatives (White, 2006: 222). To a lesser extent, there is recognition that the internet is also a setting in which young people are discussing issues of social and political consequence on forums and social media and that online they exercise forms of political expression such as ethical purchasing and undertaking various forms of cyber activism which target a range of political actors beyond the state and politicians (White, 2006: 107). Despite the opportunities digital media offers for extending democracy and recognising new and innovative forms of participation there is little evidence that British governments have used the internet to involve young people in government decision making. In recent years, the success of online campaigns has prompted enthusiasm in government for campaigns to promote policy initiatives (Step up to Serve) and a number of online participation initiatives have been funded but are largely delivered by non-government organisations. For example, HeadsUp was an innovative online program designed to bring members of parliament and young people together in dialogue (Ferguson, 2007). Managed by the Hansard Society, HeadsUp was sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (formerly the Department for Education and Skills) and in addition to regular discussions, hosted the Government-established Youth Citizenship Commission, tasked to investigate young people's views on citizenship and participation. The Hansard Society now runs two initiatives more concerned with information, data and technologies for policy prediction than deliberation and dialogue: a blogging site for members of the House of Lords (Lords of the Blog); and, a large scale collaborative research project on technology, information and policy production called Sense4Us.

Significantly the Russell Commission recommendation for a national volunteering portal (Russell, 2005: 26) was delivered. Launched in 2006

vInspired enables young people to search for offline volunteering opportunities and contribute to an online community where they can search for volunteering and youth action opportunities, share multimedia content and blog about their experiences. vInspired, along with other NGOs and major charities are increasingly using a range of technology platforms, including social media, to engage with young people. This engagement is focused on garnering youth input and opinion on policy and key issues and for mobilising youth views and participation in digital campaigns.

Contrasting contexts and dominant discourses

An analysis of the discourses of youth and participation in the policy contexts and responses of civil society organisations of Australia and the UK demonstrates some unique and some common characteristics. From an Australian perspective, the youth participation agenda has been promoted haphazardly across levels of government and non-government sectors. A challenge to embedding youth participation in policy development in Australia is the difference in underlying conceptualisations of youth citizenship and participation at different levels of government. Despite advocacy from the non-government sector for a capacity-based approach, at a federal level, citizenship is constructed as something that young people will attain in the future providing they can successfully achieve educational and employment status. This focus on transition from childhood to adulthood proscribes citizenship as something to be realised in the future and to be prepared for through participation in normatively good activities such as volunteering and highly managed consultations with government. In state government policy, young people are considered to have capabilities and views that are valuable to the community and for which they should be afforded an active role in government decision making. However, opportunities to participate are adult-led, emphasise leadership and are often limited to 'having a say'. The commitment to listen and respond to young people's views maintains power in the hands of adults so that while new horizontal forms of governance are being promoted, old hierarchies of government are reinforcing the legitimacy of adult participation and, to use White and Wyn's (2004) term, the 'futurity' of youth. Consequently, the internet is still viewed by governments in Australia as a tool for extending information and government-led processes to young people, rather than as a setting in which discussion and decision making can take place. This is in part because Australian policy discourses predominantly promote

a 'dutiful', if sometimes 'empowered', model of citizenship for young people.

In the United Kingdom, there has been significant investment in youth participation across government. In a pro-community consultation policy environment, the deliberate effort of the New Labour government to better coordinate youth policy across areas of government fruitfully combined with increased pressure from proponents of youth participation in the non-government sector to have these policies mainstreamed. Nevertheless, young people are still largely constructed as apprentices and policies promote managed forms of participation in order to cultivate 'active citizenship'. The relationship between youth participation and citizenship is largely framed in neo-liberal and civic republican terms with a strong focus on volunteering and cultivated social action as 'good behaviour' that promotes and represents, rather than recognises citizenship. The Cameron government has built on the broad investment by the community and previous government in youth volunteering and community engagement but reconfigured this in the Big Society agenda. Personal responsibility has been coupled with freedom, mutuality and obligation – a combination recipe for successful 'self-actualisation' of the young citizen. Young people are encouraged – or required – to take part in programmes that promote skills and capacities for self-reliance and community spirit, while training young people to be the guardians of social change. The radical potential of the self-actualising citizen to author the terms of citizenship and to challenge the power relations embedded in institutions – including the state – is appropriated by a neo-liberal discourse of 'social activism and enterprise' as the solutions to social problems. This discourse potentially compromises the role that young people – and the civil society organisations that serve their interests – could play in policy-making, positioning them instead as empowered citizens and communities 'delivering' public services. As such, this model is better described as one of 'managed empowerment'.

In both countries, youth participation increasingly has 'two faces': youth involvement in adult-led processes that enable young people to engage with traditional institutions; and, 'youth social action' whereby they are encouraged to develop creative solutions to social problems. Where governments create opportunities for youth participation in policy production and implementation of the mechanisms used to promote new forms of network governance these do not challenge the structures and processes of government. While policies are usually developed with some youth involvement, they are still largely top-down instruments whereby the onus is on how to 'get young people involved'.

In the United Kingdom there is less evidence that the potential of the internet to reframe the relationship between young people and government and to open up spaces for participation is being harnessed. Rather, the focus is on how it can be used to reach more young people and 'vulnerable' populations.

In many ways, the invocation of 'active participation' (prominent in both countries) reinforces the ideas of minimal and, more importantly, managed – not autonomous – forms of citizenship (Coleman, 2008). Moreover, the dominant discourses in each country setting, particularly at the state and central government level, fit with liberal and neo-republican notions of citizenship that reinforce the role of the state-as-is and normative function of community as a basis for cultivating the norms and values of citizens. The enthusiasm for managed empowerment – exemplified by programmes that nurture youth-led volunteering, social action and social enterprise – capitalise on trends in youth political views and values, but must also be understood in the context of an expanding political economy of youth. Since the global financial crisis in 2008 and the re-election of Liberal-Coalition Governments in both countries (and in many Australian states) the role of government in setting policy agendas and the allocation of increasingly limited resources for participation remains significant. In both countries, but particularly in the UK, this includes a systematic 'outsourcing' of participation to the non-government, and community sectors while stripping back legislative and policy frameworks for the inclusion of young people in government decision making. While less pronounced, this trend is evident in the Australian context, although the legislative, policy and funding commitments are dwarfed in comparison. Indeed, it can be concluded that the youth policy discourse in the UK is powerfully defined, articulated and operationalised across sectors. Whereas, in Australia, discourses of participation are more muted and inconsistent across the policy landscape. The ways in which these contexts shape NGO and youth approaches to participation is the subject of the following chapters.

3
Civic Organisations in Context

> ... good things can happen when ideas are valued more than power.
>
> – James, Executive, *ReachOut by Inspire Foundation*

Official policy discourses provide a context in which non-government, community and youth-led organisations develop and articulate notions and commitments to youth participation. As NGOs and community sector organisations take on more responsibility for the research, advocacy and service delivery once provided by the state, discourses and practices of youth participation proliferate. Many organisations advocate for youth participation in service and policy development, call for recognition of children and young people's citizenship and for the development of youth-friendly communities, organisations, institutions and service systems. However, it is not always clear what is meant by these agendas, how these play out at an organisational level or how such discourses feature in the actual practices and decision-making processes of organisations. This chapter considers how non-government and youth-led organisations do the work of defining and promoting young people's participation and negotiate the complex and messy relationship between government and community policy discourses and young people's participation. Analysis of staff interviews, reports and website content of a number of non-government organisations examined the following:

- *Aims and key activities:* expressed on the websites, in strategy and programmatic documentation and in interviews;
- *History and operation:* the background and current resources of the organisation;

- *Discourses:* the ways 'youth', 'participation' and 'digital media' framed and articulated in both overt and implicit ways;
- *Mechanisms for participation:* the modes of participation promoted by the organisation both internally and externally.

This section contextualises the approaches of select organisations in each country by looking at their policy positioning on youth and participation, their mechanisms and models for participation and the role of digital media. Four case studies are presented that each illustrates at least one of the two dominant aims of youth participation as articulated in policy discourse: shaping services and policy; and, volunteering and social action. The following analysis specifically explores how organisations are situated in relation to the policy contexts discussed in Chapter 2 and, as such, are organised according to country. However, the organisations presented have been selected because key questions can be examined across all four case studies. How do organisations conceptualise young people and their role in their organisations? What role do they envisage and promote for youth participation in community and government decision making? In the context of network governance, are NGOs and practitioners contributing to counter discourses on youth and participation, further shaping the contexts in which young people confront opportunities and challenges of participation and citizenship?

Australia

Case study: ReachOut.com by Inspire Foundation

ReachOut.com by Inspire Foundation (ReachOut) is an Australian non-profit organisation which uses information communication technologies to deliver programmes to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 14–25 years of age. It has an annual expenditure of approximately AUD 4.5m (ReachOut.com by Inspire Foundation, 2013) and receives funding from government, trusts and foundations, major donors and the general public. The organisation was established in 1996 to address high rates of youth suicide in Australia and launched its flagship programme ReachOut.com in 1998. The first online service of its kind, ReachOut.com receives a reported average of 1.4 million unique visitors per year. It has launched sister sites in Ireland and the US and has won national, international and industry awards for suicide prevention and health-promoting websites and games. The organisation also aims to influence policy on mental health, technology and youth affairs more broadly, supported by programme evaluation, research and

youth-centred advocacy. ReachOut has historically run a range of online and offline programmes to increase the reach and impact of ReachOut.com including: programmes to promote technology infrastructure and digital literacy in marginalised communities; a wiki-based website to promote youth social action; online resources, training and support for teachers and professionals to promote the mental health and wellbeing of young people; an online game and web-based applications to promote help-seeking in young people. In 2010, it consolidated its programme delivery to focus primarily on ReachOut.com, so that all services and tools are delivered under the one brand.

Young people are described as beneficiaries of ReachOut's service, as partners in the organisation's work and as valued members of the community. Official youth involvement began in 1999, although young people had already volunteered on the development of the ReachOut.com prototype and raised AUD $180,000 for the service via a national youth radio appeal. The call to involve young people in the development and delivery of the ReachOut.com service was made by a young staff member (and now current CEO) who argued that young people should be involved in setting the direction of services aimed at them. In addition to receiving online feedback via the service, ReachOut initially used structured youth advisory boards made up of between 12–20 young people aged 16–25 who shared ideas and created content for the site. From 2002 a formal 'youth participation program' was developed over several years to involve young people as advisory board members, youth ambassadors, peer facilitators and mentors, and interns engaging in everything from codesign of organisational strategy to fundraising, community marketing and promotion of ReachOut.com and creating text, video and photographic content for the site. Using a mix of online mechanisms (asynchronous forums, polls, feedback forms) and face to face workshops and events young people have collaborated with staff and other partners. Since 1999, nearly 800 young people have taken part in formal participation programmes, several hundred more have participated in codesign workshops and a recently launched 'casual volunteer' programme has over 500 members. Influenced by child-rights and consumer-rights discourses, the organisation has resourced youth participation over a period of more than fifteen years. This has included dedicated programme staff, committing to 'inclusiveness' as an organisational value and involving young people in staff recruitment. The main objective of youth participation has been to improve the ReachOut.com service and improve community knowledge and attitudes towards youth mental health, but the organisation has also promoted young people's participation in institutionalised

policy making processes by cowriting submissions and policy papers, presenting at conferences, parliamentary inquiries and attending meetings with bureaucrats and politicians.

The organisation has regularly worked with young people to evaluate and redesign the youth participation approach. This has included looking at participation across the organisation in operations, development, marketing and communications, research and evaluation through general volunteering opportunities, internships, special projects and appointment to the organisation's Board of Directors. A participatory design methodology for service design (Hagen et al., 2012) has transformed some of the more formal mechanisms (youth advisory boards) to be less 'routine' and more 'purposeful' – corresponding with organisational and service review, planning and design. Evolving the model with increasingly diverse and flexible modes of participation aims to maximise the number of young people who can be involved, to appeal to young people from a wide range of backgrounds and interests and to meet young people's preferences for both formal and ad hoc forms of participation. Flexible mechanisms also includes increased technical capacity of the organisation to use online forums, social media and web analytics to examine young people's views on what they need to be 'happy and well'.

Traditionally, ReachOut has recruited young people via its web-based services, community partners, universities, youth-serving organisations and online youth networks. More recently, the organisation has used informal mechanisms (social media), campaigns and one-off workshops to incorporate a broader range of youth perspectives in the design and delivery of ReachOut.com, particularly digital applications aimed at particular segments of the youth population (for example, young men). In order to engage young people not currently using the service ReachOut has used commercial marketing agencies and recruitment companies (Nicholas et al., 2012). While this approach is uncommon in the youth participation literature, the organisation claims it has increased diversity and difference and, importantly, engaged young people who would not otherwise participate in formal or adult-led mechanisms. This reflects the organisation's shift in recent years away from the structured mechanisms of advisory boards and project teams to a more flexible 'framework' that is responsive to the changing needs of young people and the organisation; offers a range of options to get involved; targets under-represented groups; is transparent; and, fosters a culture of participation among staff. The organisation invests in the skills of staff and young people to enable them to work effectively together

and take on leadership roles. The current implementation strategy uses a tiered programme, from casual volunteer opportunities to longer-term leadership positions. The aim is to engage young people from diverse communities, to provide opportunities for up-skilling and progression and ensure young people are always recognised for their hard work. The new approach will emphasise the role that young people play as advocates: for the service, and broader reform and systems change on youth mental health.

Case study: Foundation for Young Australians

For over 30 years, the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) has played a leading role in research, programmes, advocacy and philanthropy to increase the participation and leadership opportunities of young Australians for improved wellbeing. Initially a grant-giving and advocacy organisation, FYA also pioneered influential research on the educational and employment status of Australian young people (the *How Young People are Faring*[1] series) and their participation in decision making (Wierenga et al., 2003). In 2008, FYA merged with the Education Foundation, consolidating expertise and knowledge of research, policy and innovative programmes in the youth and education sectors. This brought together the dual aims to improve the learning outcomes and life chances of young Australians under a new, shared goal 'to create generational transformation'. The FYA mission is to create change with generations of young Australians by providing opportunities to: influence and shape their education; transform their worldview through volunteering; and lead social change. FYA draws on research and direct work with young people across its programmes, partners and communities to design and deliver innovative initiatives that foster engagement in learning and the cocreation of better communities. In recent years FYA has moved away from advocating for 'youth participation' in adult-led institutions and organisations, to promoting 'youth social action' and 'social enterprise', whereby young people are supported and resourced to identify and launch initiatives for social good or change. The organisation is funded by a trust, donations, government, corporate partnerships and other income. In 2012, the total expenditure for the year was AUD 6,402,997 (Foundation for Young Australians, 2012).

FYA conceptualises young people as '*learners, changemakers* and *global citizens*'. Emphasis is placed on how young people can emerge as 'future focused', enterprising and employable, resilient global citizens as 'the driving force behind a successful, enterprising and innovative Australia' (Foundation for Young Australians, 2013). The Foundation

is optimistic about the uncertain and rapidly evolving experience of youth in a changing world, emphasising the 'courage, imagination and will' of young people. Within the organisation it creates opportunities for young people to contribute to governance, research and the design and delivery of programmes. This includes highly accomplished young people appointed as directors of the board, ambassadors, volunteer placements and work-place internships for specific capabilities, such as social innovation and philanthropy, and programme steering committees. Furthermore, in 2013, 90 per cent of the 70 staff were under 30. In the community FYA delivers programmes and events that develop young people's knowledge, skills, networks and opportunities to undertake social action, enterprise, structured and youth-led volunteering. These programmes aim to act as catalysts for youth-led responses to social problems, to nurture and amplify leadership and to enable networks and communities for action to emerge among young people, as well as between youth participants, professionals, businesses and policy makers locally, nationally and internationally. FYA also convenes ad hoc and one-off projects to connect young people to government on key policy issues. It also works to overcome structural barriers to participation by partnering with schools and workplaces to deliver experiential learning targeting young people who may experience marginalisation or difficulties in school-work transitions (under-resourced communities; Indigenous young people). Digital media is embedded in everything the Foundation does from its information-rich corporate and events websites (with embedded social media and content-sharing platforms such as YouTube) to programme delivery using innovative digital platforms for social action and volunteering (see Chapter 5). The CEO and many youth participants are vociferous social media users, contributing to the Foundation's public profile and role in community conversations about the status of youth and their role as change-makers.

Youthful capacities as the basis for participation

Evident in the language, positioning and representation of young people in ReachOut and FYA is a capacity-based conceptualisation of young people who are valued for what they contribute in the present *as* young people. At ReachOut, young people are thought to contribute to better service and policy design and as such, 'youth participation' is valued because the unique perspectives, experiences and ideas that young people bring to the organisation are valued. The experience of youth is understood as socially situated – such that the role of each organisation in delivering services and programmes is a response to the

social dynamics of youth – not the 'condition' of youth. As such, young people were seen as essential collaborators in defining, and being a part of social change. According to Nadia, a ReachOut staff member:

> the only way to make long term cultural changes is by the people that you're trying to influence being involved from the very beginning. The funny thing about that is that young people are forever changing. The staff, the people who work at ReachOut and the people who support and fund ReachOut, obviously we couldn't do what we do without them but we come and go and we do our work and that's important, but without young people shaping it and driving it and adopting it, I guess, there's nothing … we're doing nothing.

Young people are described as stakeholders in the work of ReachOut – both as authors and beneficiaries. Greg, a ReachOut board member, reflected that 'There's an acceptance of young people having a say about stuff and that's my thing: staying close, listening and responding. If we ever lost that then we're up shit creek … and that's about building a sense of trust with young people.' Cultivating trust is achieved by building mechanisms and modes of open and transparent communication that demonstrate young people are respected and valued as members of the internal (organisational) and wider community. As James, a ReachOut executive put it: 'Organisations like ReachOut … are important civic institutions. By engaging [young] people; we train them, we build their skills, we give them a voice and that therefore gives them the capability to extend that to other aspects of their lives, you know, whether it be advocating for their community, or advocating for their issues, whatever the kind of scenario is.' Ultimately, young people have a clear role to play in improving organisational strategy and services, but this should contribute to their unfolding citizen biographies. Indeed, some young people who have worked with ReachOut have gone on to high level roles in youth peaks, NGOs in the youth and health sector, government departments and have started up social enterprises and campaigns.

In her extensive research with young Australians on socio-cultural practices, civic and political engagement and living with multiculturalism, Anita Harris has argued that the increased uncertainty of youth has brought about greater concern about young people's capacities to successfully transition to 'good' adult citizens with an increased demand for the demonstration of responsibility before the conferring of rights (Harris, 2006). She warns that without addressing rigid institutional proscriptions and social structures that reproduce inequality, the

youth participation agenda serves to 'responsibilise' young people and blame them for failure to engage (Harris, 2004, 2012). Organisations like ReachOut and FYA are sensitive to these challenges. Sophie, an FYA staff member demonstrated how overt discourses of young people as citizens circulate in their strategy, programmes and broader networks: 'FYA believes in young people as changemakers who can do things now. It's about enabling and recognising young people as citizens and that [citizenship is] a journey.' Yet, there is a concomitant acknowledgement in FYA discourse that the experience of youth is one of rapid change and diversity even within generations and that this diversity needs to be met with expanding views on who counts as a citizen. Furthermore, FYA and Inspire strategies aim to open up existing settings (for example, government and school structures) and acknowledge and promote youth-led arenas of engagement. FYA directly counters what it perceives as negative stereotypes and discourses that position young people as hedonistic, flippant, vulnerable or at-risk. According to Carol, an FYA executive: 'I think actually adults projection of insecurities are really large in young people's and children's lives to their detriment … young people are much more adaptable and flexible and have aptitude and skills that we're not giving them credit for.'

Moving beyond participation 'mechanisms' to cultures of participation

In a major review of organisations in the UK that involved children and young people in their work, Kirby and colleagues identify a 'culture of participation' as central to enabling meaningful participation (Kirby et al., 2003). Meaningful participation, they argue, should be understood as a process whereby young people take part in a range of ways (such as governance, research, programme design and delivery, policy development and advocacy) that is purposeful, engaging and impactful – from the perspective of young people themselves. They show that effective inclusion of young people requires senior management support, dedicated funding, a vision for youth participation that is integrated in the broader mission and values of the organisation, a 'whole of organisation' approach (where youth participation is understood and valued across the organisation) and institutional change (through processes and policies) (Kirby et al., 2003: 7–8). However, on their own, these conditions are not sufficient to enable 'meaningful participation' as they can easily be subject to change in internal and external conditions (such as internal staff and resourcing, and policy environments) (Fleming, 2013). In practice they must be interpreted to suit the individuals involved as well

as the broader social context. Where this contextualising takes place organisations effectively move beyond a focus on the 'mechanisms of participation' to looking at how to cultivate cultures of participation. ReachOut and FYA demonstrate how cultures of participation are underpinned by principles of collaboration and diversity and are concerned with issues and impacts, rather than models and inputs.

Staff and executives at ReachOut and FYA describe how this is enabled at the highest levels of the organisation. Mike, a ReachOut executive described the approach of the founding CEO:

> A lot of CEOs would be quite threatened by the idea of youth involvement. Many times they [the board of directors] could have put a stop to it all. I just don't think that he has been threatened by the idea. He's much more interested in consensus and thinks that if youth involvement is a good way of bringing about consensus and bringing greater input then it's something that should happen.

Young people, along with business, health and education professionals, are seen as constituents and collaborators by these staff and executives. They value diverse perspectives, partnerships and mutualistic modes of deliberation and decision making. Though ReachOut has utilised formal, structured mechanisms, such as youth advisory boards, youth participation has become less a policy or set of activities in which young people come to the organisations and engage, and more a commitment to a process that facilitates the inclusion of the views and contributions of young people in diverse ways. This is manifest in an organisational culture that is open to young people determining how they want to participate and signals a commitment to autonomous citizenship. As Dennis, a ReachOut executive put it: 'Our commitment is to providing opportunities for people to be involved – not to providing 'the model'. So the more you think about opportunities for involvement, the more you find ways to do it.' With a focus on enabling young people's participation in developing solutions to social issues, FYA similarly provides mechanisms to enable young people to access and develop resources, information, skills and networks but does not dictate what issues young people should address, or how.

Both organisations have broadened their approach from structured models of youth participation to flexible and diverse strategies that are driven by the needs, skills and interests of both the organisations and diverse groups of young people. This is described by executives and staff as a shift from an 'operational' to a 'philosophical' commitment

to working in partnership and in ways that are mutually beneficial for the organisation and young people. This philosophical commitment is manifest in the opening up of governance processes (for example, at the board and programme level), mainstreaming youth involvement across all business units and using digital media to engage with, observe and listen to young people. This can be at a programme meeting, a youth event, around the kettle in the kitchen or on SNSs. Where young people are appointed or invited to participate in particular processes, it is on the basis of their knowledge, interests and experience in relevant areas (their communities, youth mental health, social issues, technology) and to promote age diversity in governance and leadership.

Beyond these approaches, organisations fund and collaborate with youth-led organisations and initiatives, supporting founders of social enterprises and campaigns through programmes such as the FYA-sponsored Social Pioneers and the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Academy. While FYA and ReachOut have distinct approaches to cultivating youth leadership both highlight the value of looking to where young people are already acting and speaking from in everyday life. This is enabled through creating dialogic spaces embedded in programmes, events and organisational practices. Informal engagement with young people (for instance, on social media) is described as a strategy for engaging with a diverse range of young people through social networks – including those who would not ordinarily see themselves getting involved. (This claim will be considered in Chapter 4.) At FYA, enabling young people to act and speak from wherever they are is core business, rather than a model for youth participation. All programmes are designed to surface, nurture and amplify the ideas and creativity of young people. The emphasis on supporting self-actualisation is a strategy for challenging perceived inadequacies of formal political systems and decision-making processes to deal with contemporary social problems.

These organisations use a combination of open and structured, youth-led and organisation-led, face to face and online communication, for collaborating and making decisions. At ReachOut, these are fundamentally oriented towards improving youth services, the policy environment, and community awareness and attitudes to youth mental health. At FYA, programmes and participation mechanisms are geared around enabling young people to identify and act on the issues they care about, although the organisation champions the key themes of education and wellbeing. The organisation provides resources and training to ensure that young people can 'do their job' as a contributor to the work of the foundation. By focusing on the views and needs of

young people themselves, a commitment to participation was defined by the issues that mattered to the participants – rather than the structures and processes that would fit with the operation of the organisation. Consequently, the commitment is to ensuring that young people are able to set agendas within the organisation as well as make decisions and take action. Young people are viewed as having unique knowledge, skills and experiences to contribute, but that they are not expected to do this without resources or in isolation from other communities or groups (Wierenga et al., 2003: 13).

Expanding engagement online

Both organisations encourage the radical potential of participation, recognise that young people can occupy multiple positions and identities (citizen, service-user, change-maker, student and partners), use some structured mechanisms for involvement, but do not create limits to participation. Digital media is harnessed to maximise opportunities for young people to identify issues, access and share information, contribute to discussions, undertake micro-actions and document and disseminate their offline actions. One executive, Sam, noted that organisations such as FYA had a role to play in helping to identify, generate and amplify relevant and high quality political content, including that produced and disseminated by young people. While the programmes and digital platforms delivered by both organisations have certain affordances, they encourage but do not deny young people's own views and perspectives on the issues that matter or the forms of action they pursue. As digital media has evolved, both organisations have adapted mechanisms for participation. For example, following young people's enthusiasm for SNSs, in 2007 ReachOut scaled back its formal youth participation process and engaged young people in developing an online participation strategy across platforms such as Bebo, Myspace, Habbo Hotel and Facebook. Participatory and social media has therefore transformed the way the organisation engages with young people, shifting it from using the internet to extend organisation-led participatory mechanisms to utilising the participatory features and cultures of digital media. ReachOut executive, Greg, explained:

> Given our commitment to creating opportunity to participate, then it's logical to use that [internet] functionality. Young people will take it where they want to. The fact that young people are going online all the time to create their own content has nothing to do with us – it's

> not something that we instigated – it's just something that we're responding to and I can only see that it will increase.

A perception that young people are increasingly comfortable in communicating online is driving a move away from formal, structured and organisation-led processes. Specifically, organisations believe that digital media extends opportunities to engage with young people who have no, or relatively little, direct contact with the service via platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Habbo Hotel and Instagram. Different modes of communication ranging from polls, posts, forum-type discussions, Question and Answer and video content all facilitate communication between and among young people and staff. Content is both pre- and post-moderated, largely to ensure respectful communication that is supportive and not harmful. At FYA Sam argued that digital media is seen as embedded in the communicative practices of young people: '… digital technologies are literally built into their everyday lives. They're not seen as a tool or as a learning environment; it's just literally how you communicate and how you are in the world.' Taking for granted that this encompasses diversity in access and use, FYA incorporates a range of strategies for engaging with young people including building digital platforms for campaigning, building communities, and brokering information and opportunities that meet young people's needs and desires to positively influence the world around them. Content is generated by both communication professions and young people – sometime in collaboration. FYA also uses existing platforms (for example, OurSay) for youth involvement. Digital media is seen as an exciting, new frontier for institutions and legal frameworks, but as an already established setting for young Australians.

Youth participation is one of the cornerstones of the philosophy and aims of these organisations. It drives many of the practices that make both ReachOut and FYA participatory institutions and NGOs central to the new processes of participatory democracy (Fischer, 2006). Neither organisation has formal ongoing mechanisms for connecting young people to government, but both encourage young people to engage with the state in various ways to shape system-wide change. For example, FYA invited young people to share their views and ideas for change in public education through the *Student ShoutOut* initiative. Using online and face to face mechanisms more than 4500 students discussed their ideas, formulated and voted on questions to the Minister for Education (and to which he responded). Analysis from this process was undertaken by staff and then communicated directly to government in reports, submissions

and youth representations online, via video and in ministerial and inquiry committee meetings. Similarly, ReachOut has facilitated themed discussions on particular policy issues between Ministers and young people and has arranged for young people to present as expert witnesses to parliamentary inquiries. Yet these organisations are mostly focused on enabling young people themselves to identify the social settings, actors, communities and networks in which to effect change. According to Carol at FYA, it is the institutions that need to 'adapt or die':

> Young people are way more interested in causes and ideas than they are in institutions. They actually don't believe that institutional responses change anything. For organisations like ours [the question is] how do you make it as easy and accessible as possible for any young person to be involved in having a view and input and an engagement?

United Kingdom

Case study: British Youth Council

The British Youth Council (BYC) is a youth-led organisation founded in 1948 to empower young people to have a say and to be heard on issues that matter to them, in government and in community decision-making. In 2014 BYC was made up of more than 230 member organisations. The work of BYC enables young people to have a voice and campaign on issues they believe in, inspire them to have a positive impact, and gain recognition for their contributions to society. As the national youth council of the UK, BYC is governed by a board of trustees comprised of 13 young people aged 25 and under. Trustees are elected by BYC members at the Annual Council Meeting. In addition to ensuring good governance, board members may play an active role in key areas of BYC work, such as campaigns, or convene groups under programme activities (for example, Young People and Faith). Young people can also contribute directly to BYC work as volunteers and trainees across all aspects of the organisation including fundraising, communications and evaluation and reporting. Dedicated placements are sometimes offered to young people who are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). Thirteen BYC staff are responsible for the organisation's operations and programme delivery. The charity is supported by donations, in-kind time or sponsorship and fundraising and delivers several national programmes funded by the Cabinet Office. The budget for 2012/2013 was £1,097,378 (Annual review 2012/2013).

BYC coordinates campaigns and advocacy, programmes, research and training that promote young people's involvement in their communities and in democratic processes at a local, national and international level. Research, advocacy and campaigns are directed by the BYC 'manifesto' – a policy platform proposed, debated and voted on at an annual conference of (young) delegates representing 230 member organisations. BYC then provides information and resources that support young people to design and develop activities and campaigns to address these issues.

Through its diverse membership and a range of programmatic and communication strategies, BYC deepens and broadens youth participation through largely structured mechanisms, training and resources on a range of strategies from setting up participatory mechanisms to negotiation and campaigning skills. It coordinates networks of elected youth councils and young mayors and, in 2011, it was contracted to coordinate the *UK Youth Parliament* (UKYP). The UKYP provides training and resources for members to campaign at a local level on the agreed priorities and are supported to advocate and lobby decision-makers at a local and national level. Each parliament involves up to 600 sitting members and the broader youth population participates by voting for candidates as well as the top five priorities for the UKYP to debate and campaign on. Since 2009 when 721 votes were cast, participation in candidate and topic elections has exponentially increased. In 2012, 595,600 votes were cast to elect representatives, a further 253,637 votes to select the key policy issues and 7,398 young people participated in online discussions to inform UKYP debate. In 2013 participation in the votes on issues for debate by UKYP almost doubled to 478,386. This massive increase likely reflects the growth of BYC networks and levels of trust and credibility it commands with young people.

BYC also manages a number of select participation mechanisms that support young people's participation in national and international governance. They mirror parliamentary processes, scrutinise and advise on policy, and inform parliamentarians and international governance forums on matters of concern to young people. For example, the Youth Select Committee (YSC) is comprised of members representing England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and minority interests. This committee sits in a Westminster Committee room, serviced by a Select Committee Clerk and is broadcast live on BBC. It takes written and oral evidence and its first two enquiry reports were into Transport and Skills for Life. In 2014 the YSC is examining lowering the age of the franchise to 16. Similarly, the National Scrutiny Group (NSG) consists of around 15 young people selected by BYC to serve as scrutineers of policy,

advisers to departments and ministers and advocates for youth perspectives across government with the aim of 'youth-proofing' policy. While Ministers and Departments are not required to engage with the NSG, they are encouraged to through a highly structured process whereby the NSG meets three times a year with Ministers and civil servants. In preparation for these meetings the NSG conducts research and consultations with young people in order to then brief Ministers on priority issues for young people and review and advise Departments on policy proposals. Departments are expected to report back to the NSG on how their feedback has influenced policy and, in turn the NSG is required to provide feedback to young people and report on NSG activities and impact. At an international level, UK Youth Ambassadors are a group of six young people elected by the key national BYC member organisations to represent youth issues at international meetings and forums such as the G20 Summits and Commonwealth Youth Forums.

BYC activities are primarily face to face and the organisation has limited resources to develop or manage digital delivery of its programmes or develop specific digital tools. Nevertheless, BYC websites, social media channels and training and resources for e-learning all form part of its digital strategy. Young people are encouraged to debate via social media and blogs and can have ad hoc participation via BYC online polls and surveys. BYC recognises the significant role of digital in young people's lives and its capacity to scale youth communication, collaboration and action – all aims for future work.

Case study: UK Youth

UK Youth is a leading national youth work charity founded in 1911. UK Youth supports a national network of 39 regional youth associations and three national partners representing more than 5500 youth clubs and 693,000 young people across the UK. The organisation has a mix of funding sources including membership fees, government grants, donations, event-based fundraising and major corporate partnerships. UK Youth works in partnership with community organisations, charities and corporate and public sector partners to deliver non-formal, accredited learning, awards and achievements systems, skills training (for example, in road and community safety, parenting, digital literacy), social action and enterprise training and grants. It has several major corporate sponsored programme including Youth Action (Starbucks), IT Youth Hubs (Microsoft), Music Hubs (Global Radio & BPI), Road Code (UPS), Think Big (O2), and Money Skills (Barclays). This expertise in building corporate partnerships has been engaged by government

to promote business-community partnerships to support youth work (United Futures). UK Youth is also a consortium partner delivering the National Citizens Service. The charity also develops specific initiatives that focus on supporting groups who are at risk of becoming marginalised. These programme are often youth-led from development to delivery and include an annual National Youth Conference, peer mentoring, intergenerational support and training, and youth action grants. Programmes aim to enhance young people's skills, confidence, connection to the community and recognition for their abilities and contributions. They are focused around young people's interests (for example, music, digital media) and are designed to offer personal and career development opportunities, community learning and events.

Young people participate in the governance and leadership of the organisation and its programmes. UK Youth Voice (UKYV) is a group of around 25 young people aged 16–25 elected annually from a national youth conference. The group of is made up of two young people from each region of England, one from the Channel Islands, and two young people from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They meet five times per year to guide and advise the charity and to plan an annual youth conference. Three members of UKYV sit on UK Youth's board of trustees – one holds the vice-chair position and all are involved in all areas of governance. They have played key roles in programme design and delivery, policy, representing the organisation at official events including meetings with politicians and organising the UK Youth annual national youth conference. UK Youth is committed to ensuring young people's voices are heard by government and the major corporate partners who support several programmes. This is often done through representations made by the CEO and Youth Voice members or Trustees. The organisation also works with government, civil service and business staff and executives, encouraging and facilitating visits to project sites and meetings with young people. In this way, UK Youth aims to promote young people's experiences and views in the development of government and corporate policy. It also advocates and promotes youth participation in government and community decision-making and has produced resources to support their members to involve young people in decision making (for example, Ideas in Practice series). More recently this has also included strategies for enabling youth campaigning (Hearing Unheard Voices). Many UK Youth programmes also use a youth participation and peer-led model. For example, the partnership project with Microsoft 'IT Youth Hubs' has a network of around 90 young people who are volunteers as local 'champions' and work directly with UK Youth and local

staff to design and deliver projects. As a community they share information and communicate regularly about the successes and challenges of delivering the programme in their local area face to face and in an online platform.

While the UK Youth corporate website has social media streams, it is largely designed to communicate information and does not have interactive content or community features. However, the organisation does use social platforms and channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) as an additional reach strategy and encourages young people themselves to share opportunities and opinions. These channels enable dialogue between young people and UK Youth staff who regularly use online application forms, surveys and questionnaires to get an understanding about what matters to young people: their cares and passions. Most projects have Facebook groups and twitter profiles but are migrating from these public platforms to closed ones in order to manage safety and build community. For example, projects that involve young people in their ongoing design and delivery (for example, IT Hubs), or where youth social action and enterprise is the goal (for example, Youth Action), have used the online platform Yammer to enable young people and staff to discuss programme activities, develop strategies for individual delivery contexts or projects and network. Successful use of these platforms to foster dialogue, share activities, problem-solve, provide project updates and successes has led to the use of the Yammer platform across other projects and business units of UK Youth, expanding youth participation in decision making within the organisation itself.

Participation as local and institutional change

These UK organisations regard young people as independent social and political agents and legitimate community members regardless of their background or unique context. Brendan, at BYC, was keen to make clear:

> it's not just about transitions, it is actually the potential to contribute in their own right that will make our society better. We will end up with better decisions. A quote from our … one of our previous Chairs was, 'We're fed up being called the leaders of tomorrow. We want to be the leaders today'. And so it's the difference between learning and being joint designers.

Young people are not positioned as passive objects of the organisations' work, or merely recipients of programmes but as active agents

in governance, programme design and delivery. In both organisations, youth participation is embedded in their internal structures, processes and programmes and is promoted through programmes that reach into adult institutions of government (BYC) and volunteering and programmes for youth action and enterprise (UK Youth). Organisationally, both demonstrate a commitment to high level, structured participation in organisational governance as well as a shift towards mainstreaming participation within organisations. Participation is variously seen as an individual and group right, and as beneficial for policy, programme and social outcomes.

These organisations acknowledge that youth experience is broad, encompassing a range of opportunities and barriers to learning, work, participation and recognition. As peak organisations in the UK, both of the cases featured here are made up of networks of youth-serving organisations working with diverse young people. This was seen as significant for working with diverse young people to identify organisational and programme priorities and strategies. Stan at UK Youth said 'We're actually using the network to make sure that every young person does have the chance to do stuff.' The 'equalising effect' of participation (particularly as volunteering) has previously been associated in the UK with promoting a social inclusion agenda and addressing power imbalances between young people and adult decision-making structures. As described by Ava, 'those in a minority – or who lack power- should have access in some way to power and influence. It's the shift from representative democracy to participatory democracy.' However, more common were appeals to the liberal language of rights and neo-republican appeals to community participation reflecting the tone of current political discourse. Nevertheless, there was a strong commitment to positioning young people firmly as already-valued members of a political community and whose views should be sought, considered and used to inform policy and practice:

> So it's viewing it as those junior stakeholders alongside the other disempowered groups not because it's a sort of ... not just because it might be a rights issue but actually it's more to do with ... we believe the quality of the outcome for both parties would be better and it can be from a tiny micro example of where to build a youth club to cyberbullying policy at a national level. (Brendan, BYC executive)

There was some contestation among UK executives as to whether youth participation was a problematic concept, often limited to adult-led and

managed mechanisms and implying that youth interest in government and community decision-making was something new. However, at BYC the intervention of youth participation in formal institutions of government is precisely about highlighting young people's existing interest and commitment to social issues and drawing on this to reshape political institutions and cultures:

> On the specifics of political engagement we want to challenge and reverse those trends [of disengagement] by pointing in two directions. One, [to] the young people themselves and encouraging them to not give up on democracy and engagement in their community and by putting that in the broadest sense democracy isn't just about voting. It could be getting… just generally getting involved. The other [direction] is to current institutions [we're] saying 'it's not good enough to just dismiss young people. You need to look at your role in turning them off and indeed, are you turning off everybody in other age groups? So it's not enough to just say that young people's vote is going down if everybody's vote is going down!' (Brendan, BYC)

This vision for institutional change is specifically concerned with transforming adult-centric, hierarchical governance structures. Whereas, social action as defined by these organisations was primarily associated with youth-led change, principally at a local level. At the Youth Action Network, John, described it in the following terms:

> So a young person who is on a youth forum is wanting to influence – and make thing better for themselves and for young people – but it is mainly about influencing, having a voice. Whereas youth volunteering and particularly youth action it's about doing something new and different that doesn't exist at the moment, is it from your own ideas. So with participation you join something that's existing, whereas with youth action you kind of create your own.

Described as capacity-based and youth-led, youth action was seen by many organisations as a way to counter the legacy of 'developmental' approaches to youth. Nevertheless, the role of youth participation for institutional change was still viewed as important for challenging broader structures and processes of exclusion. At BYC beneficiaries of youth participation (defined broadly) were primarily the organisation – which was then able to better guide and support community level organisations to facilitate youth involvement. Elliot at BYC described

how in order to understand how member organisations could better work, BYC needs to 'understand the kinds of issues that young people face and what they're thinking and what their thoughts might be and what would appeal to them.' From this perspective, youth participation in these organisations is seen as transformative, with the potential to effect social change and as having a positive influence in the general community and inspiring others to create change.

Reaching ordinary people online

Executive interviews revealed that in working directly with young people, the internet must be seen as one of many settings in which young people live their lives. Stan at UK Youth pointed out that 'when we're working with young people there's not really a separation between their offline life and their online life, everything has merged, everything is merged'. There was general support for digital media as a resource for youth participation, but some cautioned that the internet cannot 'solve' issues of youth participation. Some felt that whilst young people enjoyed connecting with others online to socialise, they could more easily be involved in decision making via face to face processes and BYC was able to point to highly effective offline strategies that young people developed to mobilise their peers in the Youth Ballot. There was also some scepticism that organisations should define how young people use digital media to participate:

> The jury is out with me on the Internet to be honest because I think it has massive potential but I think as adults we have a tendency to think that we can understand how young people use the Internet and I think it is a bit presumptuous to be honest. (Helen, YAN executive, UK)

This interviewee suggested that in pursuit of online strategies for participation organisations sometimes replicated the tendency for adults to interpret young people's needs or aspirations, created processes and opportunities that primarily convenience adults and which perpetuated normative ideas about how young people should participate. This interviewee's attitude was that young people's online participation is most effective when it is autonomous.

There was also a general concern about the resources required to build and manage online communities and spaces for discussion and deliberation, though corporate partnerships have played a useful role in developing digital capacities, as in the case of UK Youth. Consequently, these

organisations favour corporate websites that feature curated content (including blogs) and micro sites that provide young people with specific tools and resources, rather than building community spaces. Digital media is predominately framed in terms of a mechanism to extend the reach of organisations, to maximise awareness of issues, campaigns and programmes, but less as a medium through which action is taken. Social media was singled out as the most important communications tool, commensurate with the rise in popularity of campaigning as a form of engaging and mobilising young people. Thus, interviewees felt that the role of the non-government sector is to facilitate young people's skills and opportunities to use digital media in their participatory activities, rather than building particular online environments for participation. There was, however, broad support for online participation and organisations advocated for a culture of digital participation within existing structures of democracy.

Working with diversity and difference

Inequalities in youth participation persist in at least three ways. Firstly, reviews have found that formal participation mechanism tend to privilege those with the greatest structural advantage (Kirby and Bryson, 2002; Wierenga et al., 2003). The discourses and practices of participation often exclude particular young people – such as those who are disabled, from refugee backgrounds and young people not in education, employment or training (Bell et al., 2008; Couch and Francis, 2006; Singer and Chandra-Shekeran, 2006). Secondly, participation policies often distinguish between young people as either 'leaders/representatives' or as 'vulnerable/at risk'. Those experiencing marginalisation are often targeted for programmes that are ostensibly about remediation. Thirdly, formalised participation mechanisms are usually elitist and can de-legitimise other forms of everyday or oppositional participation, producing what Bang (2005) identifies as a problem of recognition. Bang (2005) maintains a concern that the professional political participation of Expert Citizens – enabled by formal participation mechanisms – further alienates ordinary citizens from the processes of democracy, diminishing trust in representative political institutions and exacerbating political exclusion. According to Bang (2005), this problem of exclusion applies to those who cannot – or will not – participate in governance networks. Though Bang's (2005) theory is that 'everyday making' is a reaction against the new authority of Expert Citizens who operate within governance networks and partnerships, the dilemma

posed for youth participation policies is how to promote participation – and institutional change – without obscuring forms of participation that fall outside of formal, structured and often managed participatory activities. In other words how do – or how can – organisations' participation policies simultaneously recognise the 'politics of the ordinary'?

Participation policies are generally focused on structures and linking young people artificially to government processes that they feel alienated from. Policy analysis indicates that governments do not recognise or respond to diversity because diversity categories, such as 'disability' and low socio-economic status are treated as fixed and do not take into account young people's lived experience. As identified in Chapter 2, government policies consistently segment the youth population into those who are successfully transitioning to adulthood (defined as engaged in education or employment) or those who are vulnerable or 'at-risk'. This approach to viewing youth experience neither acknowledges and works with difference, nor does it sufficiently recognise the way that lived experiences shape young people's views on politics or participation. Harris has argued that the key issue for advocates of youth participation is not how to increase opportunities, but how to ensure that diverse groups of young people can participate in meaningful ways (Harris, 2006).

In this respect, the case study organisations took different approaches to participation, including who it was for, and in doing so, presented a counter-discourse to issues of diversity in participation. In Australia, organisations such as ReachOut and FYA have long histories of collaborating with a broad range of schools, community and youth-serving organisations. While they tend to have a universal approach, delivery is undertaken in diverse communities, services and online environments where young people gather. These include Aboriginal employment and health services, drug and alcohol services, youth centres, schools in low socio-economic status areas, alternative education centres and social network services. As already noted, the networks of BYC and UK Youth are similarly diverse and much more extensive. They adopt multiple and diverse mechanisms for youth participation in a range of projects and programmes that attempt to meet young people where they are: in their physical communities, schools, youth-serving organisations, on social media and on their mobile phones.

Rather than actively promoting 'diversity' the organisations champion a participatory approach which emphasises partnering with community and youth-led organisations and groups to connect with young people from a diverse range of backgrounds on issues that matter

to them. Moreover, structured participation mechanisms such as advisory boards, workshops and conferences, where young people are often invited from across the wide and diverse networks of these organisations, serve to bring diverse young people together and promote difference as a resource for social change.

In her wide-ranging research on the role of social media in the lives of young people in the United States of America, danah boyd (2014) argues that inequalities and social divisions are often reproduced online. She shows how in the Unites States of America, teen preferences for particular social network services – specifically Facebook and Myspace – are strongly shaped by their existing social networks. The influence of immediate and personal social ties persist online and are therefore likely to reflect common experiences of class, gender, race and cultural background. While acknowledging that access and use of digital media is diverse, uneven and continues to be structured along lines of class and race, organisations tend to make assumptions about the universal reach of particular platforms, especially Facebook. Similarly, staff and executives commonly believe that all young people are engaged in a specific set of media practices: specifically the production, remix and sharing of digital photos and video. While a great number of young people may indeed be on Facebook sharing selfies, many – and quite specifically, young people from non-Anglo backgrounds and males – are not. Most of the case studies in this book have adapted their digital media strategies, particularly their social media presence, to focus on those services and platforms most popular with young people: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. In doing so, they may be excluding some of the most marginalised young people in both countries who are elsewhere online and doing other things.

Cultivating managed, autonomous or democratic citizens?

The four organisations presented in this chapter are examples of what Fischer (2006) has termed new civil society organisations that have thrived in an emerging context of participatory governance. Their newness is not a reflection of their date of establishment but in two key roles that they play in the context of participatory governance. Firstly, they are increasingly providing the kinds of services and social and economic development once delivered by the state. Secondly, their approach is characterised by participatory, youth-centred, citizen-based activities. From developing the organisational strategy, to working in

partnerships that cut across the community, youth, government and corporate sectors to codesign and deliver programmes, they work with a broad range of constituents – particularly young people. They position themselves as civil society institutions working to serve the interests of young people who are generally marginalised or excluded from many public spaces and policy processes. They conceptualise the diverse capacities, knowledge and creativity of youth as something that brings value to communities in the present. The dominant discourses of youth and citizenship in the policy contexts in each country and case study organisations are summarised in Table 3.1.

In response to narrow, managed, deficit-based approaches to youth participation, both Australian case studies emphasise the role that young people play in defining the issues and playing a hands-on role in the work of the organisations and in shaping community solutions to social problems. FYA clearly presents a counter-discourse to dominant government discourses on youth by positioning young people as active change-makers. Formal mechanisms, such as board and advisory positions, ambassador and leadership programmes and theme-based workshops, are provided to ensure that young participants have resources and access to agenda-setting and decision-making processes within these organisations. However, executive staff and board do not determine how young people participate, but rather act as champions of a participatory approach. This approach allows for individual and local issues, such as mental health, to be framed in terms of the global challenges and opportunities for service delivery and systems reform. These organisations are primarily concerned with enabling ongoing involvement of young people in bottom-up processes of agenda-setting, micro-action, leveraging social networks via digital media and structured mechanisms of skills, knowledge and relationship brokering. They encourage ad hoc

Table 3.1 Schema of policy contexts and civic organisations

	Australia		**United Kingdom**	
	Government	**ReachOut FYA**	**Government**	**BYC UK Youth**
Youth Citizenship	Apprentices Managed	Catalysts Difference-Centred	Apprentices Managed	Catalysts Difference-Centred
Citizens	Dutiful	Self-actualising	Dutiful	Self-actualising
Mode	Institutional	Networked	Institutional	Combination

forms of engagement with the state – usually on the state's terms (structured consultations, official inquiries and meetings) – but their emphasis is on cultivating networks of (young) people to cocreate and support the organisation's mission and aims, and encourage youth capacity for addressing social problems.

The UK organisations featured in this chapter also challenge government discourse that position young people as disengaged, apathetic and/or citizens-in-training. They discursively construct young people as citizens in the present in two ways. Firstly, they are citizens who may require encouragement and opportunities to overcome structural and discursive barriers to participation. Secondly, they are always and already sources of insight and perspectives on their social worlds and should be listened to by decision-makers and political elites, predominantly through structured involvement mechanisms. Both organisations deliver on government policy – particularly on structured participation mechanisms and volunteering – in ways that potentially limit the oppositional role that they might play in outwardly challenging government discourses. In particular, UK Youth exemplifies the ways in which youth social action and volunteering is heavily supported and promoted, but is largely oriented towards local level issues and solutions. As Marsh et al. (2007: 221) have identified young people in the UK are encouraged to participate at the level of 'low' politics, but must fight to be included at the level of 'high' politics. Despite delivering a number of government-funded initiatives, BYC displays a strong commitment to creating vertical pathways into established institutions and political cultures, alongside supporting more distributed, youth-led and bottom-up strategies. This normative alignment of young people's 'action' with existing institutional arrangements represents a desire to work productively with both hierarchical and networked modes of participation.

The organisations presented here view young people as catalysts (Coleman, 2008): in Australia, organisations such as ReachOut and FYA are looking beyond structured forms of participation towards informal, ad hoc, youth-led participation; in the UK BYC and UK Youth are innovating mechanisms that mobilise youth interest and engagement, at the community level, as well as in adult-centred institutions (government, businesses, councils, communities). However the form of citizenship that they promote is less clear when measured against Coleman's schema for two reasons. Firstly, these organisations have moved from using predominately structured and managed processes for youth

participation to mainstreaming youth participation across and beyond their organisations by adopting a more diverse and flexible approach. In most cases this has been developed with, rather than by young people. They adopt a mix of mechanisms from formal board positions, committees and internships through to project-specific collaborations and drawing on discussions in workshops, events and social media to inform organisational, programme or policy perspectives. Furthermore, these organisations advocate a difference-centred citizenship model, by emphasising the ways in which young people and adults should work together to identify and address policy problems. BYC provides the clearest examples of vertical channels that link to the institutions that have power over young people. However, as the FYA *Student ShoutOut* indicates networked mechanisms can also create not only invited entry points for young people to engage in discussion and deliberation with political elites, but also those which are, to use Lyn Carson's (2007) term, 'insisted spaces'. In general, these examples reflect a more nuanced understanding of the dynamic between young people, adults, organisations and institutions.

Secondly, the increased emphasis on training, facilitating and funding youth action and social enterprise appears to be more consistent with Coleman's (2008) notion of autonomous citizenship. These organisations promote issues-based, youth-led participation that challenge dominant ideas about young people and power. This suggests that a more nuanced account of the forms of youth citizenship promoted by organisations must include a type which acknowledges the role that organisations can play in facilitating autonomous forms of youth citizenship. This resonates with Bang's notion of project-oriented political identities – which are inherently distinct from those which overtly oppose or comply with state domination (Bang, 2005). However, delivery of government-funded programmes (particularly the National Citizen Service) by UK organisations presents an interesting problem for understanding the relationship between self-actualising citizens and autonomous models of citizenship in which the role of the state is, supposedly diminished. In the UK there is a clear political economy of youth participation through which particular kinds of youth-led action are promoted, funded and, subversively, managed by the state. Furthermore, increasing corporate sponsorship raises questions about just how 'autonomous' these forms of youth participation can be. While some of these organisations promote youth agency and argue for youth-centred responses to community issues, they also buttress government

policy by reinforcing normative expectations of youth participation as volunteering and (pro) social action. The barriers to youth participation which are perpetuated by the state remain largely unchallenged as the focus of youth participation is placed in the relatively 'safe' setting of 'the community', reinforcing the civic republican and 'responsibilised youth' discourses in policy and practice settings. This conundrum will be further explored in the following two chapters.

4
Youth Perspectives on Participation

Narrow conceptions of politics and limited forums for engaging with young people's views typically present young people as apathetic, frivolous or alienated. However, young people in both Australia and the UK are engaged in a diverse range of individual and group-based activities. These include activities associated with social movements, such as signing petitions, attending rallies and events (Roker and Eden, 2002; Saha et al., 2005; Vromen, 2003), traditional volunteering (Attwood et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2003; Ferrier et al., 2004), formal consultations (Bridgland Sorenson, 2007; Matthews, 2001; Roker and Eden, 2002) and informal and routine activities rooted in local and everyday relationships and organisations (Harris and Wyn, 2009). Furthermore, when a broad view of politics and political participation is taken, young people demonstrate a significant level of awareness and ability to articulate political concepts and issues as experienced in everyday life (Marsh et al., 2007: 210). It is also clear that young people are 'joiners' in local community organisations, activities and online sites and networks (Harris et al., 2007).

As discussed in Chapter 1, citizenship theory typically conceptualises political identities primarily in terms of their relationship to the state: as either legitimating (consenting to state domination) or oppositional (struggling against state domination). It has been well established that young people are sceptical and distrustful of politicians and governments (Henn et al., 2002; Martin, 2012: 186; Print et al., 2004: 21; Saulwick and Muller, 2006: 9) and this has been used to explain low levels of participation in political parties and enrolment or intention to vote. Bennett (2007) agrees that young people experience the world of government and politicians, elections and law-making as distant and

often disagreeable but observes that the reasons for this are rather more complex:

> The pathways to disconnection from government are many: adults are frequently negative about politics, the tone of the press is often cynical, candidates seldom appeal directly to young voters on their own terms about their concerns, politicians have poisoned the public well (particularly in the United States) with vitriol and negative campaigning, and young people see the media filled with inauthentic performances from officials who are staged by professional communication managers. (Bennett, 2008: 1)

As discussed above, whilst some have interpreted this as an indication that young people are disengaged from politics, others have suggested that young people are refocusing their efforts on other political targets. Declines in institutional acts may also be due to the emergence of new opportunities for participation through new activist and policy networks. While the loose networks favoured by actualising citizens mostly exclude the state and its representatives, Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers mobilise in relation to networks and partnerships between private, public and voluntary organisations. They reject the authority of the state, but also engage with it. As such, young people tend not to act against, or turn away from the state, but look beyond it to shape the kind of society they want to live in. Importantly, this does not mean that young people see the state as irrelevant – indeed British research finds young people associate their informal, 'everyday' forms of participation with the state and its representatives, agencies and services, often feeling that politics is something 'done unto' them (Marsh et al., 2007). So, whilst youth political identities may not be founded on loyalty to institutions and processes of democracy, Marsh et al. (2007) argue that the sense of being both marginalised and controlled by the state demonstrates that the state still plays a significant role in shaping young people's views of politics and participation.

This chapter examines what underpins these tendencies for young people associated with civic organisations. What modes of participation do these organisations enable and what kinds of citizens do they cultivate? The chapter aims to understand how young people's practices and perspectives are shaped by their interpretation of the discourses and modes of participation promoted by governments and NGOs. This includes their views on political participation as 'activity aimed at influencing government policy or affecting the selection of public

officials' (Zukin et al., 2007: 51) through to newer repertoires, agencies and targets of participation (Norris, 2002). The analysis considers the actions, motivations to participate and perceptions of different political targets and allies as identified by young people themselves. This is also a search for evidence of Bang's (2005) Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers and aims establish the extent to which these new 'categories' sufficiently explain contemporary youth political identities and practices:

Expert Citizens: have a full-time overlapping project identity; place negotiation and dialogue before antagonism and opposition; have the skills and knowledge and preparedness to work in structured or managed processes if it achieves an outcome.

Everyday Makers: participate in short-term, concrete ways that fit in with their lifestyles; they value self-led participation; and, want to engage and disengage at will.

The chapter begins with brief case studies that outline the mechanisms by which young people participate in two case study organisations: the Australian *Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre* (Young and Well CRC) and the UK *Youth Action Network* (YAN). These are distinct organisations in terms of their aims and resources but they both have sought to promote youth participation across a network of partner organisations. A case study on popular youth-led organisations in each country is also presented. Whilst youth participation is embedded in the values of these organisations the actual mechanisms and approaches to youth participation vary. This is followed by an examination of young people's accounts of participation: why they got involved, what they have done, who they think needs to take notice of their actions, what they feel they have achieved and who they think can help to make a difference. All young people interviewed had some form of connection to an organisation or movement and, therefore, must be understood as 'engaged' at least in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) sub-political sense. Many also meet civic-republican criteria for citizenship in the sense that they 'volunteered' or received part-payment for their contribution to a NGO. However, the forms and regularity of their contributions varied enormously and young people themselves did not relate these actions to a traditional view of volunteering. Moreover, their views and experiences were usually anchored in case study organisations, but in most cases their participatory activities extended beyond these organisations. The significance of their participatory biographies lies in the diversity of

their experiences and the ways these disrupt established approaches to promoting youth participation.

Youth participation in context

Participation tends to be conceived as either individual actions, group actions or as consultation or inclusion in decision-making processes of institutions and organisations (Bell et al., 2008). Individual level participation can range from contacting a decision maker by email, to boycotting, volunteering, blogging or donating money. These acts may be part of a broader campaign and may be directed at the state or other targets (such as a company or supra-national body). Collective level participation includes membership of a political party or union, a community group or social movement. Consultations include taking part in a group or public meeting, an advisory role or youth representative position or contributing to a written submission. While youth participation strategies can promote any or all of these forms of participation, they often favour formal consultative mechanisms such as youth advisory boards or representative positions that insert young people into adult-centric institutions and rarely promote youth-led, creative, digital or project-based forms of participation (Fleming, 2013; Vromen, 2012; Vromen and Collin, 2010). The reliance by governments and many NGOs on consultation has been criticised for being tokenistic, elitist and for delegitimising other, non-institutional forms of participation.

The case studies described here suggest that organisations are playing an important role in facilitating and responding to diverse forms of participation including individual and group actions and formal consultation mechanisms.

Case study: Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre

Founded in 2010, the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (Young and Well CRC) is an Australian-based, international research centre that brings together over 70 partner organisations to explore the role of digital media in young people's lives, and how it can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25. The centre is resourced through cash and in-kind contributions from partner organisations and significant investment from the Australian Government Department of Industry, through the Cooperative Research Centres Programme. The overall cash and in-kind budget (2011–2016) is over AUD 100 million.

Young and Well CRC runs an engaged research programme to generate new data on young people's digital media practices, tools and applications, platforms and service systems, policy recommendations, and professional and community education. Projects are collaborative and involve young people, service and technology providers, policy makers, community organisations and small enterprises in the design, delivery and evaluation of projects. Encompassing a range of disciplines and traditions, it advocates a strengths-based approach to youth and a positive approach to the role that technology can play in promoting young people's mental health and wellbeing. While youth-centred and participatory approaches to research, service and policy design are not new, the Young and Well CRC is notable for the way it promotes youth participation across the organisation and its research agenda. Young people have been involved in the design, establishment, governance and research of the organisation in a range of ways. Young people participated in the application process by informing and reviewing the proposal and taking part in the interview processes. They contribute to the governance of the organisations via a *Youth Brains Trust* (YBT), made up of 18 young people aged 16–25 who are appointed for a one year term. YBT members are nominated through member organisations and a general call for applications. The YBT provides strategic direction to the Young and Well CRC, advising the CEO and Board on strategic directions and reviewing research proposals. YBT members also act as spokespersons for the organisation via blogs, social media, community presentations and in meetings with policy makers and investors. While the YBT does not have decision-making power, it does play a significant role informing the priorities and culture of the organisation through face to face meetings and ongoing work via a closed online platform. A database of over 300 young people who've registered to take part in the work of the Young and Well CRC is regularly encouraged to share ideas about how young people can contribute to the work of the organisations, as well as respond to invitations to participate – such as taking part in a survey, participating in a policy roundtable or joining a project advisory group. By sharing opportunities for participation in a regular newsletter via a network of over 1200 members (many organisations representing tens of thousands of young people), Young and Well CRC contributes to the expansion of recognised forms of youth participation as well as connecting with excluded and marginalised young people via 'on the ground' groups and services.

Youth participation is also a key criterion of research projects which address different research priorities and groups of young people: those

with a mental health difficulty; groups vulnerable to development of mental health difficulties through social isolation and discrimination; and, the general population. Young people are involved in projects as advisers, peer researchers, employed staff and scholars and participant subjects through the use of participatory methodologies. For example, in the *Safe and Well Online* project that investigates the capacity of digital social marketing strategies to promote safety and wellbeing young people have worked as interns and project partners with researchers, digital strategists and marketers. The project uses participatory design to explore young people's views on issues that shape their safety and wellbeing, what positive change should look like, campaign tactics, design and messaging. This is an iterative process with clear decision points – mostly made by adults, but informed by young people's views and creative input. Another research project (*Young People and Game Developers Working Together*) examines video game design for increased wellbeing and self-efficacy. Young people are involved in participatory action research to uncover roles for engaging unskilled vulnerable young people in professional video game development processes and the approach and methods used encourage the positioning of young people as consultants and experts in the game design process. The research project *Link* – a digital service model for self-directed help seeking – has young people on the steering committee alongside technology and mental health experts. Using participatory design young people are involved in research activities for scoping, discovery and codesign of the service and an advisory committee of young people reviews the research insights and recommendations at each stage of the project.

Digital media is central to the operations, communications and research of the Young and Well CRC, particularly the corporate website (promoting research activities and outputs) and social media including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Vimeo and Flickr for connecting and engaging both internal and external stakeholders. Young people can access and generate content for the site and social media platforms, use a closed online collaboration platform to access information, communicate and work together and with other research partners as members of the YBT and individual projects. SNSs, SMS, mobile and social media platforms are also used and participants at all levels – from the board to project coordinators – are encouraged to use digital media to facilitate communication, discussion and community.

Case study: Youth Action Network

The Youth Action Network (YAN) was a UK-wide organisation that promoted a 'youth action' approach to volunteering. It merged into

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) on 9 March 2012. The YAN vision was for all young people to have the opportunity to develop their own solutions to community needs, supported by agencies which provided training and support, resources and recognition for their work. The organisation was set up in 1995 as a network for youth action agencies across the country and to promote the Youth Action approach across local, regional, national, voluntary, statutory and corporate organisations. YAN provided services, training and capacity building, networking opportunities, competitions and awards, and funding to young people and voluntary organisations. It also conducted research and advocated for youth action and participation at a national level.

YAN did not consider itself a Youth Action organisation and, despite developing a youth participation strategy, it did not have dedicated resources for implementation. Nevertheless, young people recruited via member organisations engaged in formal, ad hoc and project-based forms of participation in decision-making, planning and project realisation. Young people sat on the Board of Trustees and at times occupied the role of Chair. These young people were not recruited to the board based on age, but rather, for their expertise in youth affairs and policy, thus enhancing board decisions and enhancing the credibility of the organisation. Young people also attended the YAN conferences and strategic planning days where members discussed and deliberated on the priorities of the network. They were on planning groups for different network activities and advisers to YAN projects. Young people cofacilitated training workshops in the Youth Action approach, were mentors and project coordinators for an online mentoring programme and were media ambassadors, writing media content for YAN newsletters and website and acting as spokespersons for Youth Action. From 2006 to 2009 young people were involved in a major research project in which YAN collaborated with the Centre for Social Action (De Montfort University). The research examined young people's volunteering experience, the impact it had on their lives and their communities and the significance of youth agency in defining, designing and delivering social action projects (Boeck and Collin, 2012). Thirty-five young people were involved in planning, and carrying out the research and eight young people sat on the project steering group. Working with the academic researcher and a project coordinator steering group members codesigned the research and its tools, conducted focus groups and participated in data analysis and the production of an evaluation toolkit. A principle of equal partnership underpinned the research team on the basis that all contributors had unique skills, knowledge, experience and the capacity to be critical and creative (Boeck and Collin, 2012).

Although the YAN was supportive of informal participation, there was little evidence that this was taking place. For example, though a YAN profile was created on www.facebook.com there was little evidence that young people used this to generate discussion around the work of the organisation. Similarly, youth-led community marketing and was endorsed by the YAN, but it was unclear to what extent this actually took place.

Case study: youth-led organisations – Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Oaktree Foundation and UK Youth Climate Coalition

In the last decade, a number of youth-led organisations have been established, attracting tens of thousands of young people and powerfully shaping popular and political contours in both Australia and the UK. These organisations are distinct from youth movements as their policy aims concern large, complex and global issues such as extreme poverty and climate change. In Australia, the two most significant youth-led organisations are the Oaktree Foundation (Oaktree) and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC). In the UK, the UK Youth Climate Coalition (UKYCC) is unique for its size and approach. This case study considers these three organisations and their common characteristics as significant examples of contemporary youth participation in practice.

Oaktree is Australia's largest youth-run organisation with over 150,000 members. Oaktree aims to lead a movement to end extreme poverty worldwide. It was founded in 2003 and today is an established NGO, comprising 300 volunteer staff aged under 26 and seven fully operational state offices with an annual budget of AUD $2.5–3 million. It is supported by a large youth donor base, fundraising activities and corporate sponsorship (for example Delloite and Greyhound Australia). Oaktree has three core areas of activity: awareness and fundraising; delivering community development projects in Africa, Asia and the Pacific; and, policy reform advocacy at a local, national and international level.

Young people are involved in every aspect of the governance and delivery of Oaktree's work through an Executive and Extended Leadership Team. These groups are responsible for developing and delivering on the organisational strategic approach, policy positions and programmes. This includes working in coalition with the aid and development sector. For example, in 2014, the Oaktree CEO was a co-chair of *Make Poverty History*. Leadership training programmes support the development of the core group and are presented as incentives to encourage more young people to become more centrally involved in the work of the organisation.

Young people can apply online to be Community Leaders, accessing a range of online and offline training, networking and project development support to enable them as change makers. Oaktree Community Leaders blog, contribute video, and share other creative content that expresses why they believe in the movement and why they're excited to be a part of it and this content is featured in social media and the Oaktree website. Young people participate in advocacy, awareness and fundraising initiatives including *Live Below the Line*, the *Roadtrips* and the *Schools 4 Schools* education programme. For example, in the *Roadtrip* initiative 1000 young people apply online to be part of a delegation to Canberra to present a petition to end poverty in meetings with 130 parliamentarians. Departing from Australian capital cities in groups of around 80, participants travel through local communities in which they speak about what can be done to end poverty. In 2013, this petition had over 200,000 signatures. More generally, youth participation is supported through Oaktree programmes that deliver skill-to-practice training through which participants work in teams and individually to run events, to run campaigns, to start initiatives, to engage with corporations or the media and to lobby politicians. Oaktree collaborates with organisations across the Asia Pacific, promoting cooperation between young people in Australia and overseas. The Oaktree website and digital media strategy is mainly to promote projects and initiatives, recruit volunteers, increase awareness of campaigns, share relevant information and attract funding. The recently redeveloped site includes a blog with commenting functionality designed to promote discussion and debate, though at the time of publication there was little activity.

The AYCC is a non-partisan, non-profit coalition founded in 2006 by 27 Australian youth organisations. It aims to educate, inspire, empower and mobilise a generation in the struggle for climate justice and a clean energy future. At every level AYCC is led by young people and the organisation has a commitment to overcoming barriers to participation, particularly for Indigenous youth. AYCC empowers young people in their local communities to create change on a national scale. The organisation has approximately 15 staff, 500 regular volunteers and 120,000 online members. They are supported by donations and sponsors and have an annual budget of around AUD 1 million.

The AYCC runs activities, events and campaigns for action to solve the climate crisis such as *Power Shift, Federal Election 2013, Repower Port Augusta*, and *Save the Reef*. Campaign and advocacy work encompasses a rich mix of collective and individual actions, meetings, street and online events. These range from meetings with politicians across the

political spectrum, intergenerational panel discussions with government and civil society leaders, conferences, marches, flash-mobs and video and social media. Each year AYCC sends a delegation to the UN climate talks. AYCC campaigning and advocacy work is underpinned by peer-to-peer training, mentoring and leadership programmes that target school and university students. Over the past five years, AYCC has directly trained over 6000 young people at camps and summits involving skills workshops, information sessions, practical experience and generating networks. Workshops address communicating climate change, campaign strategy, leadership, managing a project, theories of change and sustainable activism among other things. The AYCC website, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube and email are critical mediums for promoting the organisation's projects and campaigns, enabling communication among participants and between AYCC coalition members and other collaborators. Social network sites such as Facebook (over 20,000 members) are used to build a sense of community and support organising among volunteers through the creation of groups and sharing photos, updates and discussion on issues and events pertaining to the movement. AYCC volunteers also blog and have novel strategies for contributing to discussions in diverse online settings, such as contributing articles to Mamamia, a successful Australian women's blog with a readership of over 1.7m.

The UKYCC was founded in 2008 and, along with AYCC, is an affiliate of the international climate movement – an informal network of youth-led organisations across the world. It is supported by a coalition of non-governmental organisations, is coordinated by 30 core team members and relies on fundraising and donations. UKYCC aims to inspire, empower and mobilise young people and youth organisations to take positive action on climate change. UKYCC provides training to young people on communication and coordinates projects, campaigns and events, including youth delegations to the United Nations Climate negotiations. The UKYCC is entirely youth led, and the members are between the ages of 18–29. Young people volunteer in full-time executive roles, as members of the four organisational units (or teams) and as freelancers helping with the organisation's ongoing local engagement work or providing a specific skill for a specific task (legal, financial, web design and so on). Young people are also trained and supported as change makers in their communities, initiating projects and campaigns. For example, the *Share Program* brings together active young people from organisations across the UK four times a year to participate in a peer-to-peer networking and skills training programme. *Local Catalysts* supports

young people aged 18–29 to engage with groups and individuals in their communities to promote cooperation and coordination of resources and activities that support action on climate change. More generally, UKYCC mobilises young people through campaigns. For example, *Youth for Green Jobs*, a campaign that wants green jobs to be accessible to young people across the UK. Its current focus is to make government departments like Department of Energy and Climate Change and Treasury talk to each other about the creation and implementation of green jobs for young people. Young people are encouraged to participate in the campaign through tweeting, emailing their local Member of Parliament or starting a public art board that invites contributions to a questions such as 'I want to be' on a blackboard-style wall installation. Campaigns are coordinated with other web-based campaigning platforms such as change.org and 38degress.org.uk. UKYCC uses digital media and websites to deliver information, (largely static) training resources for volunteers and as a public relations and communication tool to extend the reach of campaigns, particularly via social and network media. The organisation has had significant success with coverage in local and national press.

These organisations are sophisticated and professional. They have developed highly effective strategies for community building, campaigning, lobbying, fundraising, events and community level projects, advocacy and lobbying. Both horizontal and vertical links are cultivated between community members, organisations and decision-makers. They state an overt commitment to non-partisanship and aim to work with grass-roots, community, local, national and international institutions, organisation and networks. These organisations are youth-led and largely, sometimes entirely, volunteer-run. They generally use a concentrated organisational structure (core team with state-based or activity-based team leaders) and focus energy on mobilising members in the community, as opposed to involving them in governance. Pathways exist to enable interested members to contribute to organisational governance as a role or office barer, but most participation takes place in action-oriented forums and events. These organisations largely use digital media to share information and build community, encourage personal and networked promotion of the messages and activities of the organisation, deliver training and resources, and enable groups to organise actions and events.

Distinguishing young citizens

Young people in both Australia and the UK indicated that they thought of participation in terms of projects and issues – not institutions and

processes. They formed loose networks that were punctuated by deep, valued interpersonal relationships. These young people preferred personalisable participatory opportunities with limited or no hierarchical management structures, whereby they could exercise agency and integrate participation into their lifestyles.

Beyond rights and duties

Young people rarely mentioned taking part in traditional political acts such as voting or being a member of a political party or union without being prompted. None were members of a political party and few had union membership. In the UK Tom, a member of UKYCC, saw these institutions as still having a role to play but described the fee-based membership model as a barrier to participation – effectively asking people to 'pay to have a voice' when they believe they can express their views via social media 'for free'. In addition to being highly sceptical about the extent to which parties and unions were concerned with youth experience, the cultures and processes of government and other institutions were described variously as uninspiring, boring, political and lacking commitment and conviction to tackle difficult policy issues. In the UK governments, parties and politicians were largely seen as self-interested, elitist, and tactical – choosing to engage with young people if it served a political end, but lacking genuine commitment to understand young people's experiences and ideas on policy matters. Young people largely attributed these views to a variety of news sources – the main ones being television, newspapers (including online versions), blogs and from friend's posts on SNSs. A number said they were influenced by a parent or other relative who had encouraged them to enrol to vote. In general, British interviewees recognised that electoral participation was important, though some did not want to discuss their voting intentions, emphatic that voting was a personal matter. Others were more open about their views on elections, politicians and political parties. Evan, 21, lived with his parents in a village in the north of England and was occasionally employed when he was in good mental health. In his opinion, youth disillusionment came, not from a lack of interest, but a belief that politicians do not take them – or the issues they care about – seriously: 'The problem is none of the parties – none of the major parties – are engaging with young people apart from politics students. You'd never see your local MP going for a game of pool at the local youth club. And if you do – it's only because he wants to end up on the front page of the Gazette and has taken the cameras with him'. Although Evan was not a member of a political party he had organised events in his local

area to try and bring members of parliament and young people together in debate. Despite expressing distrust and disillusionment with politicians and parties he was passionate about the need for dialogue between elected officials and young people.

Other young people felt formal mechanisms, such as the Youth Parliament and meetings sponsored by organisations, helped young people to 'get in front' of the politicians. But they voiced concern that these mechanisms then became the default for politician-youth engagement. Cynicism characterised the views of many of these young people towards institutional mechanisms who did not see 'what difference it would make' to vote, although these views often disguised a lack of confidence in understanding political issues. Lily, an unemployed 19 year old from Leeds told me:

> My Dad's girlfriend always goes at mad at me for not voting. But I ask her 'what's the point?' ... But when she spoke about it and how it can change things then I thought it was a good idea. So I probably will vote next time. I don't know if I know enough about the different parties to vote. So I guess I'll have to find out more and then make my decision – instead of just voting on anything.

Despite her lack of confidence as a voter, Lily did believe that her work with the local youth agency had a positive impact on youth issues in her area – unlike her local member who she felt did little to improve outcomes for her community. Her views were echoed by other young people in the UK who saw their role in different participatory activities as 'filling the gap' created by lack of government interest or action on the issues that mattered to them.

Some demonstrated how forms of non-participation were a legitimate way to express political opinion. Will, 16, a student in Birmingham, pronounced: 'If things stay as they are now then I'll probably spoil my vote to make a point. I don't want to waste my vote, but there isn't a political party that I would vote for now.' Will reflects a wider pattern of conscious non-participation underpinned by a rejection of what is on offer or intense feelings of alienation identified in other qualitative research on young people's political participation (for an expanded discussion see: Marsh et al., 2007; O'Toole et al., 2003). University student Yebon, 20, who had been on a vInspired advisory board, noted that, based on popular views that voting or otherwise engaging with politicians are 'true measures' of participation, young people were at a double disadvantage. More was expected of them, but when they

decided not to vote or were excluded from elite institutions and processes they were constructed as ignorant or antisocial.

Comparatively, the attitudes of Australian interviewees were more homogenous. Given the compulsory voting laws in Australia it was not surprising that Australian interviewees took for granted that they would vote in government elections, though it was largely viewed as uninspiring and procedural. Many were knowledgeable on a couple of particular current issues. In a regional town in Victoria, university student Louise, 22, discussed in detail the platforms of candidates in an upcoming state election, but said she felt the candidates had sidelined issues that mattered to young people. Like Louise, other Australian interviewees were cynical of politicians and governments and dismissed party membership as a way to influence party platforms. They communicated a strong sense of 'us and them'. Most agreed that governments were fundamental to addressing key policy issues but felt that civil society and business were also critical and that NGOs were most likely to enable young people to play a meaningful role.

There was a common perception that young people were not taken seriously within government. In Brisbane, 22 year old worker Belinda pointed out: 'Devoting time and resources to [youth issues] doesn't seem to be something that governments really want to do, or will readily do. It's all about diverting young people who are in trouble or are at risk away from courts. It's not about engaging them before they get to that point.' Belinda argued the construction of youth as 'a problem' and the role of political parties and governments as 'solution finders' created an adversarial relationship between young people and formal political institutions. This was exacerbated by a perceived lack of accessibility to elected representatives. University student, Ruth, 22, in Brisbane exclaimed: 'One time I tried to get in to see my local councillor and the lady was like "he's booked up for the next six months!" So that wasn't very encouraging. And like, he's just the local guy. Why would you bother writing to the Prime Minister when the friggin' man down the road is booked up for six months?' Ruth articulated a common view that trying to engage with politicians was not only frustrating, but a waste of time and effort. Yet despite this Ruth acknowledged the importance of voting and decried her peers who 'donkey vote' for being ill-informed or disillusioned. Nevertheless, she argued that political cultures that kept young people at an arm's length presented a significant barrier to engagement.

While the kind of electoral system (compulsory or voluntary) influenced the extent to which young people in each country were prepared to vote there were some consistencies in the views and experiences across

both countries. Many young people expressed uncertainty about their understanding of party policy platforms; cynicism and distrust of political leaders; and, a belief that institutional politics are not concerned with youth views. In the UK, job-seeker Joan, 25, spoke at length about the difficulty in knowing what politicians and parties stand for. She felt that the media played a big role in creating confusing and distracting messages about politicians and parties who were largely self-interested or insincere:

> To be honest, I mean I'm not really into politics. It's just that when I'm talking about it I do have ideas but – I don't know, because I always see politicians as people who just stand up and want to win and it doesn't matter whether they make a good speech or not, people are just going to cheer and I don't really agree with that sort of [thing]. So I'm not actually really into politics that much.

Notably absent from most people's narratives was reference to political ideologies or philosophy. When asked about politicians and the major parties, few interviewees distinguished different candidates, ideologies or political platforms. Where they did refer to politics, it was in the context of an issue and often associated with a project. Will told me his student newspaper sometimes published articles on political issues such as the war in Iraq, racism on Big Brother and the debate on the minimum wage for young people under 18. He identified political issues but did not discuss them in terms of political ideology. Whether participation was articulated as traditional 'repertoires' of action aimed at traditional 'targets' or something else, it was almost always framed by an issue – or series of related issues. In fact, many claimed to be non-partisan when it came to particular issues of concern because they were prepared to work with decision makers across the political spectrum. For example, young people involved in the Young and Well CRC, AYCC and Oaktree Foundation were emphatic that issues of mental health, climate change and extreme poverty cut across political and civil society divides. Moreover, they argued that solutions to these complex issues required collaboration between parties, businesses, communities, industry and civil society.

Project-based and issues-driven

Projects were most frequently at the heart of British young people's stories of participation. These ranged from high level national projects with large charities, such as vInspired, to a major research project at the

Youth Action Network, to transnational campaigns for climate action, to youth-led community projects. For example, in Bristol, Matt a 17 year old college student got involved in the organising committee of a youth music and arts event because he played in a band and was involved in a youth theatre: 'We're trying to show that young people do good things. Not just to themselves and their parents, but also to the community and the government'. He wanted to contribute to an event that showcased youth talent and promoted positive images of young people in the community. Such events are seen to challenge popular perceptions of young people, particularly those presented in the media, which focus on antisocial behaviour. Other local-level projects included an anti-racism football tournament, a girls group focusing on safety and safe sex and a radio programme to challenge media ownership. Some started their own projects to address local issues (access to sport, knife crime), encouraged by a community organisation to access a grants programme, such as those run by UK Youth. A few young people had specifically sought out a 'leadership' role such as appointment to a Board of Trustees (Table 4.1).

Several young people were directly engaged through structured volunteer programmes. Financially supported by her parents while at University, Eliza, 19, believed it was important to make a contribution to the community. She saw her participation in decision making in local organisations and the Youth Action Network as an extension of this obligation to contribute to the community. Eliza mainly undertook traditional volunteering such as working with the elderly and disabled. In contrast, Jaz, 19, from Leeds, was required to volunteer through the

Table 4.1 Reasons for participation (multiple responses)

Reason for getting involved	***British respondents***		***Australian respondents***	
Attracted to the organisation	2		11	
Cared about the issue/cause	1		17	
Sought involvement in a project	9		6	
Sought opportunity for youth participation/ representative	3		4	
Participation in formal programme	(Volunteering programme) 3	(New Deal) 1	(Work for the Dole) 0	(Volunteering programme) 0
Introduced by friends	1		2	

New Deal[1] programme but had reconceptualised her participation in terms of benefits to the community, rather than as a condition of her welfare benefits.

By comparison, Table 4.1 shows that in Australia young people mainly cited issues or an inspiring organisation as the primary reason for their involvement. The distinction between 'volunteering' and 'participating, contributing or being a representative to a board, organisation or project' was less significant than the nature of the organisations, groups and activities in which they took part. Although in Australia there has been an increase in official volunteering by young people aged 18–24 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) popular press and policy makers frequently criticise young people for being less engaged with their communities and more interested in entertainment or having fun. An examination of the activities that Australian interviewees reported having undertaken and their attitudes to civic engagement suggests these judgements are neither useful nor accurate. For example, dismissing traditional 'volunteering' roles university student, Harry, 21, wanted to get involved in a project that would make a difference to other young people: 'I was looking to do something in volunteering but I never had an opportunity – oh, well, until [*ReachOut*] came along.' Taking direct action, fundraising, engaging in discussions on the development and delivery of services or campaigns, working or speaking at events, producing creative content for websites, participating in research and marketing activities were all examples of activities young people wanted to be involved in. Traditional volunteering was commonly described as rigid, adult-dominated and boring, whereas opportunities to participate or 'take action' offered agency and control. Interviewees in both countries indicated that the most appealing aspect of working with organisations such as ReachOut.com, the Youth Action Network, British Youth Council, Oaktree Foundation and Australian Youth Climate Coalition was that participation was youth-led and self-directed. Nevertheless, in the UK, 'participation' was generally associated with formal policies and structures, whereas volunteering was seen as a way to take action where, when and how they wanted to. Furthermore, young people were attracted to opportunities that could be 'personally defined' and where they could play a hands-on role. For more overtly political youth, working with organisations, coalitions and networks was still very important. Evan, told me: 'I strive for political change'. He listed a range of campaigns and movements with which he associated. For example, he described how he had worked with UNICEF to develop a response to the United Nation's Report Card #7, a review of the implementation of

the Convention on the Rights of the Child in countries across the world: 'I know that that's going to influence policy, because we have backing of the government minister and the three big parties are all on board with it. So when I read that they'd all signed up to it, I thought "that's amazing, I did that" – not on my own, but I had a hand in that'. Evan talked about 'addressing injustice' and 'making the world a better place' and while working with UNICEF and identifying other targets (media, community), he also acknowledged politicians and governments as allies. Being politically active and resisting the status quo was an integral part of his identity. However, many other UK interviewees de-politicised their involvement, preferring to stress the social or community benefits as 'above' or 'beyond' politics.

Australian interviewees spoke in more general terms about their participation. Some had been involved with different groups and activities often associated with activism, but did not expressly identify with being an 'activist'. University student, David, 20, had grown up in a low SES southern coastal town in Victoria. He felt that popular discourses delegitimised many forms of youthful politics – particularly those associated with traditional activist, social movement and online activities. In his view, governments value youth participation that is:

> hierarchical and structured and non-political. I don't think they see the young person who's just joined the Greens as 'participating'. I think they recognise young people 'planting trees' as participation, but not going to a protest about climate change. Or a blog about current affairs or, anything really – climate change or what's happening to refugees.

David criticised the official push towards managed forms of participation for delegitimising other forms of political action. His strategy for challenging this was to seek a broad range of organisations and actors to collaborate with including large charities, youth-led organisations, government offices, members of parliament and non-government youth peak bodies and youth social enterprises.

Young people identified a vast range of issues that underpinned their interest in particular organisations or activities as listed in Table 4.2.

These issues connected them to organisations, to opportunities for change-making, self-expression, relationship-building and creativity. Issues-based participation is the clearest demonstration of how the political has become 'personalisable' and self-reflexive, creative, network

Table 4.2 Issues that young people wanted to address

Australian interviewees	***British interviewees***
Depression	Mental health provision
Youth suicide	Teenage pregnancy
Mental illness in young men	Sexual health
Women's equality	Artist rights and monopolies in music industry
Violence against women	Refugee rights
Human rights	Child rights
Racism	Racism
Environment, recycling and climate change	Poverty
How politics is taught in schools	Media ownership
Local planning	Democratic process and voting
Indigenous rights	Negative images of young people (in the media and wider community)
Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia	Internet safety
Youth representation in the community and government	Local crime and safety, knife crime
Extreme poverty	Care for the elderly
Social justice	Youth wages
Binge drinking and alcoholism	Education issues
Obesity	Youth participation in politics
	Participation in sport
	Heritage and local history

driven and structured by a perception of 'choice' (Bang, 2005: 163) . For example, Melbourne university student, Stevie, 22, explained how he'd got involved with ReachOut.com after looking for support for a friend:

> She was going through a bit of shit, and I just, well I didn't so much as feel helpless as want to get out there are find out a bit more about what she was going through ... ReachOut is just young people getting involved in things that, well, that they're into or passionate about, or see it as a problem with society that they want to fix up.

Many had a personal experience that had connected them to an issue such as visiting poor communities in other countries, losing a relative to alcoholism or having a mental illness.

For some, age-based exclusion 'was' the issue. Youth participation policies mobilised some of these young people, precisely because they promised a platform, resources and responses to young people's perspectives on social issues. Young people in Australia and the UK had specifically sought opportunities to participate in decision making or take on leadership roles to challenge issues of youth exclusion. These young people discussed processes and structures to access the state and other authorities.

Relating to others and belonging

Relationships featured prominently in youth narratives of participation. Young people deploy relationship-building as a strategy to counteract exclusion and to manage the challenges of balancing participation with other aspects of their lives such as family, work and friendships. Interpersonal relationships associated with their issues-based participation were often fluid, networked, traversed organisations and characterised by both professional relations and friendships with adults and peers. Case study organisations – especially those which were adult-run – were described as challenging traditional power relations precisely because they encouraged processes of relating to others and building a sense of belonging.

In both countries, young people named personal relationships among other individual and collective achievements. They characterised these relationships as respectful and empowering, and motivating their continued engagement. Anjali, a 19 year old university student in Leicester, was involved in a YAN research project. She described a respectful relationship as one where she was asked for an opinion and that view was acknowledged and valued: 'If we've got something to say then we sit down and listen and respect what each other has to say. We've all got individual opinions and there's no right or wrong answer, there are just different points of view and [the adults] try to bring all of that together'. Anjali contrasted her involvement and recognition in the YAN research project, with home, university and local politics where she was often expected 'to listen but not contribute'. The sense of belonging, and connectedness associated with being heard underpinned commitment and feelings of empowerment expressed by these young people.

Relationships with peers and adults were tightly woven into the experience of participation and as a consequence, some young people did not see their lives broken up into a series of 'activity' or 'setting' silos, such as home, school, the street, online or volunteering. Rather, their participation was an integral part of their lives, activated where possible

at school, university, home or in the workplace, when hanging out with friends (face-to-face or online), and when participating in sporting or cultural activities. These young people participated in a particular organisation or event because the activities on offer and the people they associated with were culturally relevant and could be articulated in the context of other aspects of their lives. Participation was seen as a way to create change in a lifestyle-relevant way, consistent with their interests and where they engaged with people they liked and felt respected by.

In both countries, working with other members of the community – young and old – to achieve common goals was a key theme in their stories of participation. In the UK, casual youth worker, Joseph, 19, felt that a strong community is one where '... people come together to solve problems'. Interviewees held a broad concept of 'community' – for some it was their local area, for others it was around common interests or experiences. For example, Evan was an administrator on a peer-support, mental health online community.

> There are people from England, Ireland, Lebanon and a girl from Australia. We run the site and we have members from all over the world come to talk about their problems with schizophrenia, bi-polar, depression ... stuff like that. We don't offer advice because none of us are qualified to offer advice, but we do say what we've done or what we think. We've helped a lot of people and it's amazing that we have no money – we're not even official – and we're doing more than most governments in the world. Mental health service in this country lets people down.

Evan felt that the community he was a part of addressed a perceived failure of government authorities and services to meet the community's needs through collaboration and building community online. In Australia, interviewees also articulated a strong sense of unity and connectedness and a common set of goals that would benefit the wider public.

Personalisable participation

Of critical interest to many researchers are the implications for democracy of an apparent trend towards individualised forms of participation (McDonald, 2006; Vromen, 2003; Vromen, 2007). Bang (2005: 159) finds that many scholars '... describe how political participation as a collective action has fallen prey to globalising market forces, transforming virtuous citizens into atomised individuals who are exploiting the state

as a means to realise their own interests and values'. In civic-republican accounts of democracy there is a normative assumption that group or collective activities are necessary for strong democracies and that a trend towards individualism must be countered with policies for communitarian renewal. However, the young people interviewed described a preference for personalisable (Lichterman, 1996), rather than individualised, participation. Respondents referred to personal choice and individual achievement whilst, as discussed above, emphasising the importance of belonging, community benefit and shared values. Many participants claimed that the experience of being shut out of decision-making processes on the basis of age – or herded into adult-led, structured processes – inspired them to 'take matters into their own hands'. They sought spaces in which they perceived a sense of ownership over the processes and outcomes of their actions, specifically organisations that had a strong commitment to youth participation or were youth-led.

Many described the appeal of organisations where young people were able to control how and when they were involved. They described organisations where they were offered opportunities, but were also supported to pursue their own ideas and projects, and where they played valuable – or central – roles in the strategic, programmatic and cultural directions of the organisations. Australian interviewees felt that they had a say over what organisations did, that they could 'opt into' activities and projects, such as writing content for websites or speaking at an event. They could also design their own community fundraising or awareness raising projects such as road trips and photographic blogs, or contribute to existing campaigns. For example, Harry described how the approach to youth participation at ReachOut responded to his need for flexibility and variety in the range of participation opportunities. His participation was driven by his interests – not the skills or knowledge that he possessed. Others in Australia and the UK echoed Harry's view that in NGOs, young people were able to influence agendas and make decisions that had real consequences.

For some young people, their involvement was short-term and finite, but for others it was sustained because it could be constructed as multiple small projects that fitted in with their lifestyle. They could participate when it suited them. In case study organisations in both countries, this was made possible because young people were positioned as legitimate contributors who could participate in a diverse range of ways. Moreover, they held a significant degree of control over many processes and the content of the decisions they made. In Australia, interviewees indicated that many activities were appealing because they were designed and

undertaken in their own time and on their own terms. For example, Louise, 22, described how ReachOut provided a broad structure in which she could choose what activities she engaged in, including autonomous forms of participation. She had previously instigated small projects in her community, for example, researching commercial recycling options and then raising these issues with her boss (a nightclub owner) and the local council. She saw involvement in ReachOut as an opportunity to link up with other like-minded people, maintain her autonomy and ability to organise and take action that fit with her interests and lifestyle – and disengage from whenever she felt like it. Louise reflected an Everyday Maker (Bang, 2005) identity in that she wanted to take action herself, when she felt it was opportune, that would make a difference and be fun (Bang, 2005: 169).

Similarly, in Leeds, job-seeker Kathryn, 19, told me she had been closely involved at times in the steering committee for a YAN project, attending meetings and developing project concepts and tools. She had also been a peer researcher on the project and conducted focus groups and analysis of data. But she had often taken time out because of family issues or when she had paid work, but she always found ways to stay connected or to re-engage. For Kathryn, the flexibility and commitment of staff to have young people involved made her participation possible. In contrast with regulated or set requirements, the flexibility and responsiveness of the YAN project team to her personal context and needs kept Kathryn engaged.

Personalising participation also enabled young people to be creative in their support for causes, campaigns and projects. Phillip, 22, who was studying multimedia at university in Melbourne, used his skills in communications and media to contribute to a range of organisations and causes he was linked up with through ActNow.com.au. Phillip had a particular interest in education issues and had used these skills to produce resources for a school-based social action project, one of several discrete projects that he undertook. He also created a small web-based game to raise awareness about obesity and worked with another young person to develop a creative workshop to run at a national youth affairs conference. Phillip sought out opportunities where he could use his creativity to make a difference.

However, conceptualising participation as cultural practice, or as a pathway to professional goals, doesn't mean that young people fail to understand or value the political implications of their activities.

University student Paula, 20, from a rural town in Victoria, said her participation wasn't political but added: 'I think that if something

political happens, like funding is cut to mental health services, then we can use ReachOut to stand up for what's right.' Paula understood how policies are shaped and believed that ReachOut could influence government policy. But she distanced her own beliefs and actions from 'the political'. She considered 'knowing as doing' and participation was her way of addressing issues '…concretely and personally rather than abstractly and ideologically' (Bang, 2005: 167). Although few young people in this study reported participating in traditional forms of collective action (such as rallies, membership in a union, or community clubs and associations) their personalised forms of participation were linked to wider community interests.

Participation policies in practice

> Compared to what governments claim to be – I think we're more representative than them. Democracy is where the people rule and take part in things. But the reality is that the government doesn't always allow people to take part in decisions high up, or policy making. (John, 25, Birmingham, UK)

Young people are sensitive to the discourses that circulate in policy, organisational, media and popular discourses of youth participation. In the UK young people often associated 'youth participation' with institutionalised, adult-managed opportunities, usually located within existing decision-making structures, whereas 'youth action' or 'volunteering' was seen as a way to directly influence change. Australian young people took a wider view in which, 'youth participation' could refer to formalised, adult-managed processes as well as an approach that underpinned a more open, flexible, youth-centred or led approach within organisations. Despite these distinctions, there was a great deal of commonality in the views of young people in both countries towards participation mechanisms promoted by government, compared with those of NGOs. Table 4.3 presents a summary of these views and helps to explain why young people are turned off by government initiatives for youth participation, but are engaged by those in the case study organisations.

In both countries, there was a strong perception that governments and politicians were old, exclusive and hierarchical. In Birmingham, volunteer, George, 22, argued that young people feel shut out of political processes: 'They say all these things, but when it comes to actually talking to us, no one wants to actually talk to us…I think they've still got that mentality "oh they're just young people, they don't know much about

Table 4.3 Interviewee perspectives on participation policies

Youth participation policies	
Systems of government	**Non-government organisations**
Old, exclusive, closed decision-making processes, irrelevant.	New, open, discursive decision-making, relevant.
Deficit-based approach.	Capacity-based approach.
Tokenistic and makes no difference.	Makes a difference and is essential to the organisation's success.
Target 'school captains' as representatives or youth at risk of social disengagement – 'not me'.	Target young people based on what they're passionate about – cause oriented and project-based.
Engagement focuses on bringing young people into adult decision-making structures and processes	Engagement is focused on addressing issues

it" ... in my experience the government doesn't really take much notice of us.' George was dismissive of government-led participation mechanisms on the basis that they were tokenistic and ineffectual. The experience of exclusion motivated George to participate in community and non-government organisations. The feeling of being 'dismissed' or ignored altogether by politicians was also common amongst Australian interviewees. According to Phillip, 'I don't think they're trying hard enough to talk to us and their approach [to alienate young people] is working.' Table 4.3 identifies that this feeling of being shut out of policy-making processes leaves a lasting impression on young people. Though their commitment to social change seems unaffected, many indicated a deep distrust and sometimes outright rejection of government-led participation based on a perception that such processes are highly elite, closed and inaccessible. Attempts by government to involve young people are considered insincere and tokenistic, linked to the perception that government processes are impenetrable and preclude any real influence or decision-making power. In Australia, David, 20, viewed influencing policy through formal channels as slow, disempowering and demoralising.

> I think it's often a discourse that involves a deficit approach to young people, 'we can help young people contribute' rather than recognising that lots of them are contributing already. I think it's a discourse that is often with a limited goal and therefore limits how young people can be involved – like, 'we want to make this website or promo gear

> look 'youthy' ... so we'll engage with young people on this one occasion. So I think it's often limited and restricted, both in terms of time during which they can participate and the things that they can do when they participate.

Having participated in a number of different organisations and government youth participation initiatives, David spoke from experience and displayed a high level of critical thinking around issues of youth participation. Along with many others, he felt that government participation strategies were based on a deficit view of youth. The kinds of young people perceived to be targeted by government participation policies were described by other interviewees as:

- 'Young people who are in trouble or are at risk away from, say courts or criminal justice';
- 'Maybe those people who just hang about on the street'
- 'Hoodies'[2];
- 'The "'poster children"' who are from really good backgrounds. I don't think they'd want drug users or anything';
- 'People who went were from the school councils, the representative councils';
- 'Young people who do get involved in politics and really get into it';
- 'High school students'.

The two main groups identified were: (1) troublesome, disengaged or 'at risk' youth; and, (2) high achievers and the already 'politically engaged'. Few identified themselves as fitting within either of these categories. Young people felt that 'adult' assumptions of what they can and should be doing limited the ways young people could express themselves and get involved. Jade described this: 'I think they're genuine in so far as they want to fulfil their own agenda. But I don't think they're interested in feedback. I actually don't know when they try and include young people – you hear about roundtables and stuff. But you never hear about what that involvement means – like is it considered in policy? I don't even understand what they do – which I think tells you something anyway.' As a consequence, Government initiatives were viewed as highly controlled, tokenistic and limiting in terms of what influence or difference a young person can make. The critical point in Jade's statement is that she does not believe that youth participation makes any difference to policy making. Comparatively, participation in NGOs is associated with new spaces for debate, influence and change. Young

people see themselves as stakeholders, rather than 'program recipients' and this plays a central role in their experiences and attitudes. Phillip simply stated:

> I think you should start a fashion ... graffiti. So putting up anti-war messages. Those things can catch on easily and they can be seen everywhere and they're usually quite blunt and to the point and make people think. It's still a form of vandalism, but there are other ways you can get your point across like music for instance. I'm a fan of the John Butler Trio[3] – some people might think he's a bit of a tree hugging hippie, but I think his lyric are great!

Phillip epitomises the 'remix' culture identified by Coleman and Rowe (2005): a broad, creative, pluralistic approach to politics. Phillip felt that governments were not the only players in the process of policy production and that people should look to other parts of the social, cultural and commercial world to communicate their beliefs and influence decision-makers. By participating in non-government organisations, these young people are creating political realities, rather than mirroring or representing or acting in the name of 'objective interests' (Bang, 2005: 165) . As well as having a legitimate place either 'inside' or 'alongside' governance networks, these young people wanted to 'determine' the structure of these networks (who is involved and how). By being involved in defining the actual processes, these young people felt they were valued for who they are, not for what they will become. This approach to participation – reflected in NGO approaches – also went some way to overcoming structural barriers such as cultural background, unemployment or limited education, disability and living with a mental health issue. For many of these young people their experience of difference also underpinned their involvement in particular organisations and forms of participation. They reflected civic republican discourses that strongly associate 'socially constructive participation' with citizenship status (Smith et al., 2005). They were sensitive to the discourses of 'difference' and 'deficiency' prominent in narratives of youth and participation and the forms and sites of participation chosen by these young people were influenced by the extent to which they felt positioned as capable and valued. These young people were conscious of the ways that mainstream political institutions and mechanisms for political engagement at different levels of the community could be exclusionary. Far from being 'non-participants' they saw participating in NGOs, such

as the Youth Action Network and ReachOut as an alternative and legitimate way to have a say and make a difference. What this suggests is that the critical issue for youth participation is not one of representation, but of recognition.

As a refugee and student, Serger, 21, was more dismissive of governments and politicians than other interviewees. He made a clear distinction between engaging with government and politicians and working with local community groups, enabling him to retain personal integrity and assume greater agency and control over local-level social change. Through volunteering, Serger was consciously making claims to citizenship:

> It's very important to me to volunteer to show that I am wanting to contribute to this country so they will give me a visa to stay.

While Serger had met with politicians – including Tony Blair, when he was British Prime Minister – he placed greater emphasis on the transformational potential of 'everyday' participation than on one-off meetings with powerful decision-makers. Student, Kylie, 16, also summed this approach up saying: 'Well, I find that the government don't really do a lot for young people. So running "Creative Daze" and "Youth on the Green" brings more young people from the streets into a safe environment'. Kylie demonstrated an attitude that 'taking matters into her own hands', through tangible, everyday actions, is the most effective way to achieve change.

Despite the often strong views on government-led youth participation policies, few young people were entirely dismissive of traditional institutions and agents of government. While many in the UK were open to engaging with decision-makers they were not clear about how this should ideally happen. Australian young people were prepared to engage with government but preferred to lead the interaction. For instance, university student, Amanda, 22, from a regional town in West Australia, spoke about how she and 999 other young people had travelled to Canberra to meet with parliamentarians to discuss aid funding.

Expert citizens or everyday makers?

Young people in both countries are cynical about formal institutions, actors and processes of government. Politics in this sense is viewed as something that is 'done to' young people, whereas, politics as issues-based participation was something that young people actively cocreated

and viewed positively. As Bang (2005) suggests, whether described as individual or group/collective action, project-based participation is not isolated nor does it take place outside the political system. What distinguishes the political identities and practices of these young people from other conceptual models is a rejection of the role of traditional hierarchies, a commitment to action over ideology and valuing of the cultural and interpersonal dimensions of participation. Personal goals as well as 'political' goals feature in these young people's conceptualisation of 'participation'. In fact, young people may be motivated by multiple goals that are framed, or achieved, by focusing on taking action around particular issues: meeting new people; generating networks; and, doing something that would provide them with experience 'for the future'. Wyn and Woodman (2006) point out that young people have increasingly high expectations and levels of personal responsibility for their lives. They find young people are pragmatic and view many aspects of life, such as school, work and leisure as sites in which they must assume control (Wyn and Woodman, 2006: 508). Activities such as volunteering, spending time in membership-based communities, and other activities such as sport, were seen as mechanisms through which to build resources, networks and skills that help them to achieve their desired outcomes – be they economic, political or cultural. The British young people were more likely to be engaged in and express higher levels of political efficacy in relation to local participation, as opposed to that at the national level – an orientation reinforced by neo-liberal and civic-republican policies which tie youth citizenship to volunteering, social action and enterprise. Local volunteering is seen as a legitimate way for young people to make citizenship claims by fulfilling the 'duties' of citizenship. In Australia, young people were tactical and strategic, willing to engage with political institutions and elites if it could be on their terms. Across both country settings there was strong evidence that young people had adopted a discourse of 'change makers' reflecting particular policy discourses.

Traditional political targets, agents and repertoires, such as political parties, politicians and voting are seen as elitist, hierarchical and adult-centred. Young people believed them to be about structures and processes, rather than the issues which motivate their actions. Conversely, in describing their participation through the case study organisations, young people demonstrated the way that issues are the foundations on which they build networks for action. These networks were meaningful because they are viewed as effective, but also because they allowed for a high degree of agency through choice and they involved valued and

equal relationships between adults and young people and amongst peers. This nuanced account of young people's attitudes and experiences of participation demonstrates the multiple and varied ways in which individual young people participate and explains why certain environments foster or discourage their engagement. Young people were not mobilised explicitly in relation to the state or government-centred activities, nor were they content with simply being informed about political issues, or engaging in one-way communication with political elites. They demonstrated many of the characteristics of actualising citizens: a diminished sense of government obligation; mistrust of politicians and government; favouring loose networks for community action that are established or sustained through friendships and peer relations; and, a preference for personalisable forms of participation (Bennet, 2008: 14). Moreover, the actualising citizen manifests in Bang's (2005) Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers, though these categories cannot be easily applied in a simple or exclusive way.

Participation policies can provide impetus for the emergence of Expert Citizens amongst some actualising young people. At least some of these young people took part in NGOs as a way to access other networks and opportunities to engage with political elites. They clearly articulated political goals and often saw themselves as different to other youth participants who they felt had distinct motivations and capacities to participate. This was far more common in Australia where 14 participants had gone on to paid employment within youth-serving organisations, compared with one in the UK. For these young people the *cause* was not only mental health, racism or obesity, but 'youth participation'. Being able to navigate the structures of governance networks and hold a legitimate role within these systems was important to these young people. Generally, young people in this study reflected Everyday Maker characteristics. They valued the flexible and self-directed nature of their participation, opportunities to take action on issues over formal positions (of power) within organisations and were happy to work with other adults and allies – including political elites. They adopted a 'personalised' approach to participation (Lichterman, 1996) and reflected many of the characteristics that Bang (2005) identifies in Everyday Makers.

One of Bang's (2004: 24) central concerns is how the Everyday Maker can overcome the 'un-coupling of laypeople' from political elites. Organisations are increasingly playing a critical role in fostering communities and networks that recognise 'everyday making' – or, as Bang puts it, 'the politics of the ordinary'. They also actively work to create vertical links between young people's politics and political elites and in

the process raise an interesting problem for Bang's model. Many young people engaged in individual, collective and consultation level activities depending on the issue and as such reflected attributes of both Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers. Thus, Expert Citizen and Everyday Maker may not be distinct political identities, but rather, different subject positions which individuals adopt according to the issue, context, resources at their disposal and strategic value of engagement. This disrupts common models for participation utilising 'ladders' or a continuum that privilege sustained involvement and youth-control of decision making processes. A diverse range of mechanisms including ad hoc, structured and adult-managed as well as youth-controlled may all contribute to and reflect more hybrid organisational practices and individual preferences. While this may bode well for an expanding notion of youth citizenship and participation, it does not resolve another of Bang's concerns: the extent to which participation policies can coopt the Everyday Maker, cultivating empowered but managed citizens (Bang, 2005). British young people's narration of participation demonstrates how new relationships emerge between the state and Everyday Makers when the resources, networks and sites of everyday making are colonised by the state through policies that promote youth social action and enterprise, as exemplified in the Big Society agenda. Diversity alone does not overcome issues of cooptation or assure that young people's participation is necessarily a 'good thing'– for example, NGO practices are not necessarily more democratic or 'good' (see: Farthing, 2012). However, increasing diversity does appear to afford more opportunities and agency, and therefore, present the possibility that young people have greater control over how and why they participate.

5
Mediated Participation

> So let's say 300,000 conversations go on – face to face conversations but they might also be a post on Facebook that sparked a conversation where people started going back and forth with a friend, it's like oh all the money goes to corrupt dictators when you donate to these sorts of charities, and then the person has the conversation about where the money goes and why it's important to provide education as the way to break the poverty cycle in developing countries and whatever the conversation may be. It's not something that we are, like, here's digital media and here's real world because for young people it's just one and the same. It's just, like, it's the way that we have conversations.
>
> – Olivia, 23, Oaktree, Australia

Young people use the internet in diverse ways for political and civic engagement. This includes searching for and sharing information, peer-to-peer communication and content creation as well as online petitioning, blogging and contacting decision makers via SMS (Stanyer, 2005; Vromen, 2007). While there are many possible ways for the internet and other information communication technologies to transform citizenship by revolutionising conventional processes and institutions of democracy (for example, Chen et al., 2007; Coleman and Spiller, 2004; Gibson et al., 2004; Ward et al., 2009) the evidence is that traditional political institutions and actors are struggling to connect with young people – particularly those whose faith and trust they have lost. Coleman has argued this is because policies for using digital media to enhance political and civic engagement are constrained by a number of binary perspectives: young people as apprentices or catalysts; the

internet as anarchy or enclave; democracy as existing or aspirational (Coleman, 2008). Government-led approaches typically use closed systems, requiring young people to go to a specific online environment, often at a designated time, and respond to the set agendas of adult moderators and the government of the day. No small wonder then that so many top-down initiatives to promote online participation struggle to engage young people 'on their own terms', much as they struggle to justify the costs of promoting and running heavily managed online spaces. While this is often constructed as 'a problem of youth', it can be more usefully configured as a challenge for governments, NGOs and content producers. How can they better understand and respond to the diversity of young people's digital media preferences, practices and the meanings they attach to mediated socio-political life?

The failure of traditional institutions to keep pace with rapidly evolving communication technologies and to conceive of ways to meaningfully understand and respond to young people's online and networked practices may be addressed by examining innovative approaches to online youth participation – grounded in the narratives of young participants themselves. This potential rests on how the relationship between digital media and socio-political life is conceptualised. Often studies look at what young people *do* online and what mobilises them in these actions paying attention to the main ways the internet is used: as an information source; as a communication medium; and, as a virtual public sphere (Vromen, 2008). While usefully demonstrating the predominance of particular modes of practice (information gathering and communication) over others (online deliberation), Vromen (2008: 95) contests the normative ideal of deliberation as a goal for online e-citizenship initiatives:

> Setting up a normative ideal of youth-led Internet spaces as a democratic public sphere is possibly another benchmark that will interpret young people's political engagement and behaviours as deficient.

The more useful pursuit, as Vromen (2008) sees it, is to study the diversity of young people's internet use for political participation, expression and community-building. However, the literature tends to focus on whether or not young people are mobilised in specific, civic, ways online with an emphasis on the highly visible and spectacular. This is despite evidence that the internet and digital media are embedded in young people's routines and practices (including their consumer, interpersonal, educational and work activities) in everyday and often

mundane ways (Itō, 2009). This chapter therefore takes a granular look at the diverse ways in which digital media features in young people's participation in NGO and youth-led organisations. While it considers the various ways young people used digital media as an information source and a communication medium the analysis problematises these neat categories by drawing on the notion of 'convergence' in which new and old media, time, space and social relations are increasingly intersecting, overlapping and one and the same (Papacharissi, 2011). It does this by considering what young people value in mediated public space. The key aim of the chapter is to identify the modes and modalities, the meaning-making and institutional constraints on mediated participation. In particular, it considers how young people interpret and engage with policy discourses and organisational approaches to digital media. Do they 'manage' the participatory activities of young people, facilitate 'autonomous' citizenship or enable a 'productive convergence' that is more radically democratic (Table 1.1) (Coleman, 2008)? Moreover, is there evidence that organisations respond to key challenges outlined by Coleman: to acknowledge and work with everyday and non-traditional forms of participation; engaging in innovative use of the internet to expand the democratic features of e-citizenship projects; and, challenge dominant discourses and stereotypes of youth?

Mediating participation

Livingstone et al. ask (2005: 289–290) 'what exactly must young people do online before society will judge them "politically active" or "engaged in civic participation"'? This chapter inverts this question to ask how do young people describe mediated participation, its meaning and value? Analysis explored how young people go online for information, communication, deliberation and expression without using fixed categories to judge whether or not any one action is 'political' or not. Instead, the practices, meanings and relationships young people associated with mediated participation emerge from young people's accounts of their views and approaches to participation. This exploration is foregrounded by two case studies that present novel approaches to the use of digital media for youth participation (vInspired; Foundation for Young Australians) and one (ReachOut) that has successfully evolved from a highly structured online programme to one with considerable ad hoc and personalised participation. The aims and approaches of organisations are then considered in light of young people's views on how they use and value digital media for participation.

Case study: vInspired

Following the Russell Commission report (Russell, 2005), the UK government funded the establishment of 'V' charity as 'a dedicated, youth-led and independent' body to increase the quantity, quality and opportunity for youth action and volunteering. Subsequently rebranded *vInspired*, the organisation has an overarching aim to 'inspire young people to volunteer' primarily by linking them to local opportunities and communities. In corporate communications, research reports and blogs it describes young people as capable, creative and knowledgeable. The diversity of youth experience, contexts and interests is reflected in the variety of ways in which young people are conceptualised: as community assets, as change makers, as at risk of becoming 'a lost generation'. On the one hand young people are positioned as agents of change, community revival and democratic renewal: as social entrepreneurs; as volunteers and volunteering champions; as campaigners; and, as leaders. On the other hand they are students, the unemployed or the hard-to-reach, who require structured learning and guidance on how to actualise opportunities for self-improvement, community service and successful transition to education, training and employment. Despite this contrast, across all programmes and branding vInspired emphasises the capacities and potential of young people as individuals, members of communities and networks who are positioned as legitimate and valuable citizens.

Young people have participated in directing the terms and priorities of the organisation via a youth advisory board (YAB). Mainly meeting face to face the YAB also had a Facebook page on which they communicated with vInspired staff, as well as an 'unofficial' YAB group where they discussed and debated different issues related to youth issues as well as organisational issues. vInspired recently reviewed the approach in favour of a more flexible and diverse model that will mainstream youth participation across all areas of the organisation. A digital platform will support broader involvement of young people to be recruited from across all vInspired programmes and networks as advisers and advocates. Advisers will work across organisational teams in planning, decision making, delivery, generating content, promotion activity, recruitment and evaluation on a project or ad hoc basis. Advocates will have a more external role, acting as spokespeople, campaigners and ambassadors.

vInspired has funded organisations to design or enhance youth volunteering programmes and structured placements linked to formal education and training qualifications and welfare. More recently it has prioritised initiatives to combine digital and face-to-face delivery to

facilitate and seed-fund youth-led action and enterprise, youth-centred campaigns, and online brokering of volunteer opportunities. This includes the www.vinspired.com website, where young people browse and register for volunteering opportunities, build a profile with hours logged, impact, badges and share digital content (images and text) about their actions. This system allows young people to earn awards and recognition for their volunteering. In addition, the organisation offers a number of free web applications to support volunteering including an application to browse vInspired on mobile devices and an online community and crowdsourcing platform, *Igniter* to help young people aged 14–25 set up their own projects, campaigns or events about issues that matter to them.

vInspired has also run novel 'mass engagement' initiatives that use a combination of live events and digital strategies to capture and amplify the views of young people. In 2011 an online community, *Big Society's Big Mouth,* was created to capture young people's views on politics and policy. The platform enabled users to start discussions, blog, vote in polls, add comments and upload videos and photos. It successfully attracted large numbers of participants, hosted 19 forums with volunteers, entrepreneurs, a government minister and a celebrity, but was discontinued in 2013. Since then a web-based campaign to identify causes called on young Brits to nominate a cause and vote online before taking part – live or online via a stream – in the music event, *vInspired Live*. During the event over 1000 people voted for a cause-based campaign concept resulting in the *#mypoweris* campaign.

The increased emphasis on digital campaigns led to the set-up of Do Something UK (vInspired is the UK affiliate of the US charity Do Something). This initiative seeks to harness the creativity and energy of young people and engage them with causes that they care about. In 2012, the first campaign, *Reverse Riots*, aimed to challenge negative perceptions of youth one year on from the 2011 riots in England. Young people were asked to upload a picture of themselves with a written message about something positive that they do to the Do Something website. They were encouraged to spread the message by sharing online and speaking to people offline. An online visual gallery of positive messages and images was created to counteract the negative perceptions of young people as a result of the 2011 riots. Over 5600 young people uploaded photos with a further 2600 engaging with the campaign via social media. The campaign generated a social media reach of almost nine million people, trending on Twitter. *Reverse Riots* received significant national and international television, radio, press and digital

coverage including BBC London, Channel 5 news and a double page spread in the Metro (a free national newspaper), the Wall Street Journal, MSN and Yahoo. The campaign received supportive messages from members of parliament including the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and from celebrities including Plan B, Paloma Faith and Stephen Fry. The campaign generated a public discussion about the negative portrayal of young people in the media. On the anniversary of the riots over 4000 of the images collected throughout the campaign were used to completely cover the House of Reeves furniture store in Croydon, made iconic during the riots due to a devastating arson attack. A current campaign, *#swingthevote*, invites people to upload short films (which can be created on a smart phone) to Instagram for inclusion in a 'people powered film … to challenge politicians to work for you'. The organisation also has Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube accounts. Their YouTube channel presents an extensive library of videos, produced both by young people and vInspired staff.

Case study: Foundation for Young Australians

The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) creates opportunities for young people to influence and shape their education and learning experience, to transform their worldview by giving their time and talent to others in Australia and overseas and to lead their communities in innovative responses to social, environmental and cultural issues (see full case study in Chapter 3). Digital media is a key component of the organisation's communications and programme strategies and many of its programmes utilise digital media to facilitate young people's learning, creativity, connectedness and action on issues they care about. Still in its infancy, the *Young People Without Borders* (YPWB) programme provides a structured journey into volunteering and global citizenship for young Australians aged 13 to 20. Delivered in partnership with schools, youth-led and youth-serving organisations and enterprises, *YPWB* connects young people to opportunities for local, national and international volunteering and social action. It also utilises an online community platform that combines curated content and links to 'social action' and volunteering opportunities, a blog-style commenting function linked to 'challenges' and social media integration for cross-platform communication. The digital elements of the programme aim 'to build a community of volunteers making a difference in Australia and beyond' (www.ypwb.org.au). Young people are called to 'join the movement' by taking on challenges and sharing their experiences in blog posts on the *YPWB* site. Similar to previous online initiatives developed in

the Australian context, such as www.actnow.com.au, *YPWB* combines offline partnerships with community and youth-serving organisations to up-skill and broker participation opportunities for young people with the digital platform that delivers information, brokerage, self-expression, networking and communication. Though there is little evidence of resources or functionality to enable discussion or debate on the many issues featured on the site, FYA plans to roll out further digital features to enable and encourage discussion and deliberation.

FYA also uses digital media to engage young people in initiatives to voice their opinions, deliberate and engage directly with politicians and decision makers. In 2010 FYA used an online platform *Tell Us* to enable young people to shape their education and lead positive change in their schools and communities. This initiative asked students around Australia what success at school looked like, aiming to capture young people's voices and ensure that their views were heard by decision makers. Endorsed on video by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, *Tell Us 2010* used an online platform and social media to capture the views of over 7000 students via online survey. Young people were encouraged to communicate the survey findings via a report, video and social media, and youth campaigns supported by FYA. Based on the success and learnings of *Tell Us,* FYA's Centre for New Public Education launched *Student ShoutOut* (SSO) in 2012. Inviting young Australians to have their say on education issues, *SSO* brought together over 100 students in workshops in six capital cities and 4500 students joined them via the online social platform *OurSay* to propose questions and comments on the education issues that mattered to them to be put directly to the Minister for Education. The findings of *Tell Us* and *SSO* have been disseminated in reports, submissions, presentations and infographics.

In 2013, *SSO* utilised a competition and campaign approach, inviting young people to submit video applications to win a place at an exclusive youth event in Sydney where they took part in master classes for developing digital campaigns on education issues. Supporting young people to design and launch effective social campaigns is a strategy that features in other FYA initiatives. The Foundation has built a bespoke online campaigning platform (*Mobilise*) and many of its initiatives deliver training and networking opportunities for young people to build campaigns and teams and to find supporters for issues that matter to them. These range from campaigns for constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians by emerging Indigenous youth leaders to a campaign to raise resources for a local sporting club by a student who

'didn't want to be seen as one of these wanky change people' (Carol, FYA executive). Digital tools for campaigns for social change are seen within the organisation as having special democratising potential precisely because they enable people to engage, communicate and connect with others on their own terms.

FYA partners with young people, professionals and with digital technology companies (Samsung) to enhance young people's own creative use of new digital technologies and in the development of platforms for action. For example, from 2014 FYA will run a 'hackathon' style competition to win an internship to develop an app to address social and environmental challenges. Similarly, a video-sharing platform that focuses on spreading young people's ideas, stories and resources for community change so that great ideas can be celebrated and repurposed for social good. The Foundation draws on the expertise of diverse constituents to codesign of the online platforms and inform how programme strategies are delivered based on young people's digital media practices, preferences and aspirations.

Case study: ReachOut by Inspire Foundation

As described in Chapter 2, young people have worked with ReachOut to design and deliver its programmes since 1998. Initially the organisation was characterised by a formal, structured programme revolving around a tiered ambassador and advisory board; later it adopted a more flexible and diverse framework for youth participation. Digital media has played a central role throughout, particularly the use of asynchronous forums on which young people discuss and debate ideas with staff, and make decisions about programme content and direction, mentor peers and moderate public discussion threads. Over time this has expanded to include email exchanges (for example on staff recruitment or developing site content), creating user-generated (moderated and un-moderated) website content and social media activity. Mediated participation can be distinguished by whether or not the activities and their constitutive relationships were 'formal' or 'informal'. 'Formal' activities tend to be structured, and resourced directly by ReachOut. Whereas 'informal' activities are ad hoc, often initiated and undertaken by young people or as communication with staff in third-party social media and network sites, particularly Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

The formal and informal modes of participation can be categorised into two kinds of activities: those that create content; and, those that create community. In contrast with other organisations that build bespoke platforms for participation, ReachOut focuses on engaging with

Table 5.1 Formal and informal online participation at the Inspire Foundation since 1998

Formal (structured) participation	Informal (unstructured) participation
Email, IM, content-sharing platforms such as YouTube and Dropbox to: – work with staff to create text and multimedia content for the websites. – organise activities associated with research, evaluation and policy projects (for example, peer research).	Produce (post-moderated) text and multimedia content for *ActNow* via a wiki; Commenting and posting content to social media pages;
Discuss programme development with peers and staff in closed online forums	Contribute to online discussions on ReachOut.com and social network sites; Participate in structured discussions and consultations with politicians on ReachOut.com; One-off, public structured consultations on SNSs
Moderate a peer-support online forum; Moderate user generated site content for www.actnow.com.au	Complete online polls, surveys and feedback forms via ReachOut and social network sites.
Online peer mentoring	'Word of mouth' and 'viral' promotion of Inspire initiatives and related issues.
Create and build foundation profiles on social network sites and virtual worlds (MySpace, www.bebo.com, facebook.com, and Habbo Hotel)	As part of a 'crowd' respond to calls for creative content, particularly video

young people in existing online social and networked media environments (specifically Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), and leveraging developments in devices, tools and digital skills and literacy.

Meanings and value of mediated participation

Networked: information, opportunities and new issues

Using the internet to search for information is usually considered a limited form of participation. However, these young people demonstrate that this activity is part of a more elaborate process of learning about issues and opportunities, linking to organisations and networks

and forming interests and connections to other issues and concerns. Moreover, searching for information helped young people overcome a range of barriers to participation.

Interviewees in both countries talked about the important role of the internet as a source of information for initiating participation. For Stevie, 22, one of these issues was men's mental health. He had heard about ReachOut.com on a popular Australian youth radio station, and via ReachOut, linked to other sources of information and other organisations. The range of issues that young people were concerned about were reflected in the diversity of sites they used to seek information related to matters of concern. These included a wide variety of websites, platforms, devices and practices for seeking information and participatory opportunities. For example, search engines (Google), news sites (BBC UK, The Times, The Telegraph, and Sydney Morning Herald), issues-specific sites (The Red Cross), cultural sites (bands, community arts), wikis (Wikipedia) and SNS (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter) were all commonly used. Podcasts and mobile applications were occasionally mentioned as was traditional media. Very occasionally youth-specific government sites, such as the Victorian Government's Youth Central[1], were identified as sources of information.

In a south east coastal city in the UK, student, Will, 17, described how he used MySpace to search for bands to play on his independent music show on community radio. He hosted the show to challenge what he described as industry monopolies by promoting local and independent music. The internet was an important source of information on new music for limited venues for live music and age restrictions on attendance. Almost universally, young people used SNS to find out what other people were doing, and to connect with groups and individuals with similar interests. In the process they found out about existing campaigns and disseminated information about their own projects.

The websites of organisations such as vInspired and ReachOut.com were not seen as defining issues for young people, but interviewees described how they linked to other organisations, campaigns, individuals and communities. As they pursue these links young people are accumulating knowledge about issues, organisations, processes, actions, individuals and groups and are building network capital in the process. Searching for information online led to exposure to new issues and ideas. Browsing sites such as vInspired (with embedded social media feeds), as well as organisation profiles and channels on sites, such as Facebook or YouTube, these young people learn about social issues and what action others are taking. And while these young people sought

out specific information and opportunities on the issues they already cared about, many discussed what Xenos et al. (2014) refer to as 'incidental exposure' to issues and opportunities for action via social media. Such incidental exposure also occurs as young people follow leads to information and opportunities, although in London, 19-year-old Yebon described this as a process of deciding for herself what matters and what she can do to address a particular issue. By checking out volunteer opportunities on vInspired she came to develop interest in new issues. Sites such as those run by vInspired, ReachOut.com and FYA were among other NGO-sponsored online resources that were seen as trustworthy and engaging on a range of issues and opportunities for taking action.

Being online enables young people to stay 'up to date' and access valuable resources. Serger, 21, was passionate about refugee issues. He used search engines like Google for general information but said he regularly logged onto the websites of certain organisations including the Refugee Council and Save the Children because they were trustworthy and had information about ways to take action. Feeling informed was important to maintaining his activism on refugee issues and for building his networks for action. As a function of searching for information, Serger connected with these organisations, the groups and individuals associated with them and took part in projects and actions for change. For example, he had been part of a project involving people from different organisations which produced a short documentary film on refugee young people. This mode of 'knowing as doing' was often underpinned by a sense of purpose, but also urgency. George, 20, from a south-western regional city in England explained how he kept a constant eye on his social media and key websites, such as vInspired to stay abreast of opportunities to participate in youth advisory positions. 'The most effective way to seek other opportunities is online nowadays, that it's much harder to, say, go to your volunteer centre or to clearly alone just use word of mouth to find out from friends or colleagues if there's opportunities coming up. It's much slower and the internet seems to be a much faster and more immediate way of finding some of these new opportunities before it's too late' (George, 20, vInspired, UK).

Bang (2005) identifies a perception of need as a quality of the project-oriented political identity. However, for young people in the UK, like George, the 'necessity' was often related to developing personal skills, knowledge and experience to improve employability. The sense of individual purpose and commitment these young people expressed towards 'issues' was oftentimes mixed up with anxieties about getting

a job and making something of their lives. Volunteering was associated with needing to get experience, make up for 'being lazy' at school or university and an alternative form of education and training for those who had left school early. Others who had started their own projects or social enterprises were more likely to have used the internet to find information on resources, funding and networks to support their ideas. For young people in the UK, knowing as doing is as much an expression of a project-oriented and self-actualising political identity, as it is a matter of economic self-preservation.

Comparatively, Australian young people tended to talk about the importance of online action in order to do something about the issues; meet new people; generate networks; and gain experience 'for the future'. Nevertheless, across both country settings the internet was seen as a highly valued resource for these young people's participatory activities because they were largely unfunded or relied on micro-grants. Online they could access information on issues and opportunities (projects, programmes, campaigns, training), training and resources – especially for developing a project or campaign – that were otherwise unattainable. Furthermore, going online for information was a strategy to overcome a diverse range of challenges. For example, Kate, 23, got involved with ReachOut when at school in a country town in NSW. She highlighted how the information, networks and resources available via the ReachOut.com website had benefited her personally, provided her with opportunities to be involved from a remote location:

> I could contribute whenever I wanted, whether that was at 2am, or after I'd been thinking about something for 24 hrs to get my thoughts straight and type it so it felt like what I was doing was meaningful. So it was on my own time, and terms.

Other young people indicated searching online helped them overcome: a lack of resources and knowledge; limited connections and networks; living in a geographically isolated location; a lack of time due to multiple commitments such as work, study, caring for a relative, a mental or physical disability that impeded their movement, confidence or time; and provided them opportunities to search for information or connections in other ways.

Communication and relationships

In both countries, where young people were involved in formal participation mechanisms, such as advisory boards, ambassador roles, trustees,

interns or peer researchers, digital media featured prominently as a communication medium. Email, instant messaging services, VoIP calls and discussion groups on open and closed SNS (Facebook, Yammer) were commonly used. Organisations were seen as increasingly flexible in their approach to communication, including using social media to informally seek views and inputs of young people not connected to the core services or programmes. Young people emailed their peers and staff, contributed to online discussions, responded to online polls, created or contributed to social networking site profiles, created site content and moderated the online contributions of site members. These modes of communication for participation are important to young people in a number of significant ways. Firstly, online discussions are convenient for young people negotiating a wide range of pressures and responsibilities in their lives which encroach on the 'free time' they have to take part in extracurricular, familial, work or caring responsibilities. In Melbourne, job-seeker, Rob, 19, told me the online forums were one of the reasons he was able to participate in ReachOut: 'I thought it was really good, you could get on there any time, day or night, everything was in order and you could just read what others had written and then write what you think'. Using the internet as a communication medium also means that young people can engage and disengage as often as they liked. They emailed, posted to forums or SNS, created content and took on more or less responsibility as, and if, they wanted to.

This convenience and control enables young people to organise and build networks, but most importantly to foster relationships that build their commitment to a campaign, event or project. In the UK, Matt, 17, described how he used MySpace to promote opportunities for young people to get involved in an event he was organising. '... if you've got a band and you want to play on the day you can go online, fill out a form and post an MP3. Also stewarding, you can apply online, also for the Y-Factor [competition]. You can apply online for that and send it in and we can reply really quickly – like within two days'. Matt and other members of the organising committee utilised MySpace to disseminate information about the event, but also to build a community of young people who could bring the event to life. Online, young people could personalise their roles in the planning and execution of the event. Matt also felt that the profile on MySpace helped the event to gain momentum as young people logging on and offering to get involved had the sense that they were part of a movement or group. Matt said being able to see other people's views or commitments to the project helped to create a sense of community around the event.

While managed groups on public network services and bespoke platforms were often viewed as most successful from the perspective of organisation staff, many young people developed work-arounds to create spaces of autonomy and to manage reputation. One youth advisor told me the group he was involved in had both an official and unofficial Facebook page. The unofficial page had been created so that young people could discuss concerns or problems they were having – with the organisation, or in their personal lives – independent of staff. This young man wanted to be genuine and respectful but not lose face in his (online) communication. Many young people who discussed the cross over between their social media and online community presence and their involvement in organisations, campaigns or projects were very conscious of etiquette and of being seen to be a 'good citizen'. This meant managing their profiles, the images they shared, the way they looked in photos as much as it did the substantive content of comments or blogs on social issues.

Other young people felt that being respected by peers and staff, and being able to have influence over community and organisation decisions was not a matter of technology, but of the intent and the principles underpinning the interaction (either online or offline) that created a space in which they can genuinely contribute and be heard. Reflecting on her role as a peer-researcher in a national project in the UK, 19-year-old Anjali said 'we each listen to what we have to say. The adults listen to what we have to say. If we've got something to say then we sit down and listen and respect what each other has to say'. Anjali emphasised that it is not the technology that makes it possible for her to direct a project, but the genuine commitment of the adults involved to dialogue with and share power with her. She, like many of the interviewees, felt that engaging in a constant process of defining and redefining youth participation was a central feature of meaningful involvement. She felt her role was to ensure that 'adults' understood and took into consideration the views and experiences of young people. Other young people, like Nadir, a 25-year-old university graduate in Sydney, described how it is the relationships constituted through digital content that matter:

> there is this really mistaken view, particularly amongst older… or people who are less familiar and comfortable with the technology that the medium is the message. But they're just totally missing the point because it's content and content is not just about tag lines or information. The content is actually imbedded in the relationships that form out of whatever is being communicated.

While the primary function of the digital presence of most organisations studied here was to transmit information, they also enabled conversations that are one-to-one (email, feedback forms); aggregation of many-to-one communication (polls); broadcast from one-to-many (blogs, social media feeds); and, group dialogue (forums and online chat). Featured content on projects, user-generated profiles, images, video and stories featuring members and participants contribute to a sense of being connected to a community for action. In regional Victoria, Paula, 20, told me how she'd had issues with her internet connection and since starting university had not taken part in ReachOut for some months: 'when I first got involved I was a massive poster – I was on every day. But now I've dropped off the radar because I've lost that connection. But at least once I get it back I can go and check out what's been happening. I can see what others have been doing and maybe get back into it. For now, I just check Facebook and sometimes there's a ReachOut post there that I like or share. So that's good'. Micro actions (updating a profile, posting a comment, sharing an idea or opportunity in and beyond the corporate sites of organisations) also constitute conversations: aggregated in the presentation of member profiles and other content submitted via social media applications.

These communicative practices take place across and beyond organisation websites, encompassing SNS and social media (especially photo and video), web applications, bespoke online campaigning and crowdsourcing. In this way, digital media plays an important role in mediated communication *as* participation.

Mini-publics and creative public spaces

Young people value opportunities to go online to discuss and debate ideas with others, express themselves through creative digital media, across platforms and networks, such that various aspects of their lives converge: work, study, volunteering, friendship.

Some organisations enable mini-publics using online forums to facilitate discussion and deliberation on matters both internal to the organisations as well as external and related to policy issues. Advisory boards and projects often combine community forums alongside email, SMS and face-to-face meetings to bring people together to discuss ideas and make decisions. While in some ways the online forums and Facebook groups run, for instance, by ReachOut, would fail to meet Habermasian criteria of informed, rational debate and decision-making, these forums do bring together individuals, who generally do not first know each other offline, in dialogue and discussion. Furthermore, they are valued

by young people precisely because they are seen as less adversarial and more explorative than other public spaces, particularly by young people who are less confident or unsure about voicing an opinion. In Brisbane a full-time worker, Jade, 24, explained 'I couldn't be right or wrong because I was giving you my opinion. And then, if I was asked about something I didn't know anything about, well, I wasn't under any pressure to respond then and there'. Jade's strong preference for online participation was based on feeling safe to explore ideas and express an opinion – or stay silent – in ways she couldn't offline, a view held by other young people. She made clear comparisons between traditional, offline and new online sites for participation:

> it was so flexible and it didn't involve, like, walking into an Amnesty International meeting [where] there was a formal agenda which, as a young person who'd never come across that stuff, can be quite confronting. And when they ask you a question, at a meeting, in front of people you might have a moment of, you know, 'I've got no idea!' But with ReachOut it wasn't like that.

Young people like Jade understand they are often constructed in organisational and policy discourse as either capable of nothing or capable of everything. For this reason, they reflect positively on experiences of participation in organisations and networks where they are positioned as, to use Moosa-Mitha's term, 'differently-equal' citizens (Moosa-Mitha, 2005: 369). They don't want to be judged, but they do want their views to be recognised and responded to.

Over the five years that Kate had worked with ReachOut.com the site had developed from a static text-based information service to a multimedia platform with a range of interactive components. Kate said that young people's input was evidenced by the acknowledgement of ideas, posting of content recommended or created by young people and the development of the service based on suggestions made by young people. While staff are largely responsible for service delivery and advocacy work, interviewees described how the content of these activities is produced through collaboration between staff and young people – often occurring online. At ReachOut this is manifest in a youth-led approach where young people are encouraged and resourced to directly participate online. For example, young people described creating service and campaign content such as an online game about obesity, video blogs, images and written stories for distribution on the ReachOut.com website and social media pages. They also, used email and forums to collaboratively draft a

proposal to appoint young people to the Board of Directors and created SNS profiles and online community forum avatars that promoted issues and campaigns to their peers. Rather than establishing one mode – such as online forum discussions – as the most desirable or important, many diverse forms of participation are encouraged and valued. Interviewees talked positively about the value of producing digital content and using social media to spread information and promote the service, blogging about personal campaigns and fundraising activities and contributing to online discussions with ministers and professionals. The organisations profiled here actively encouraged young people to develop ideas, collaborate with others and use digital media to express themselves and influence decision-makers within and beyond organisations.

These organisations take an increasingly flexible approach to mediated participation to encourage more diverse and greater numbers of young people to take part in more informal and ad hoc forms of participation. While dedicated online deliberation processes are few, discussion and deliberation does take place on SNS platforms and via social media. Furthermore, campaigns with prominent digital strategies are proliferating. Coalitions between young people, groups, communities and NGOs increasingly manifest in campaigns creating horizontal networks of young people as well as direct vertical links with political elites and decision-makers. Examples in the UK include the BYC/broad coalition campaign to fund youth services *Choose Youth* and vInspired's *Big Society's Big Mouth* and *Swing the Vote*. Though not the primary purpose, discussion and deliberation are aspects of these campaigns. For example, in Australia, the FYA *Student ShoutOut* involved a combination of activities including face to face workshops on education issues, online crowd-sourcing and voting on questions to put to the Minister for Education which encompassed varying degrees of learning and 'rational debate'.

More generally, vInspired and FYA campaigning initiatives are interesting for two reasons. Firstly, young people's participation in these campaigns – usually submitting micro-media of varying degrees (from an image with accompanying tweet-length 'opinion' to a short video) as a show of support – can be interpreted as what Harris (2004) has called 'living large online' or, in Papacharissi's (2009) term, 'an effort to connect the self to the public'. They are often an expression of young people's concerns. They are youth devised and led – supported by programmes that mentor, provide skills and resources. These activities are part of young people's emerging participatory biographies and are mechanisms to cultivate creative public spaces that exist beyond

and across the social media and social network sites that young people enthusiastically populate.

Secondly, the targets of these campaigns are not always specified by the organisation or coalition. They are often young people as in the case of *#mypoweris* (by vInspired) or school authorities, as in *Empower Your Education* (youth-led supported by FYA). Particular Government ministers can be targeted, such as by the *Student ShoutOut* (coordinated by FYA) or politicians in general, for example *votes at 16* (BYC coalition) or even the general public, as was the case with *#reverse riots* (by vInspired). This form of campaigning is explicitly designed to leverage young people's digital media practices to foster horizontal networks 'and' vertical links between young people and authorities. They are highly valued by young people who see them as a way to amplify their voice and send clear messages to authorities. As Tom, 19, an intern from London put it:

> It's important for us to continue to lobby government through campaigns such as the Votes at 16 that we have at the moment which is largely run by BYC. It's a good way to say that we are using our voice to ensure that government does take us seriously, that we can articulate some of our views and opinions.

The experiences of these young people and the strategies employed by organisations demonstrate their contribution to the expansion of public space in which young people experience agency, creativity, voice and community.

Young people's networked participation is constituted by a wide range of overlapping or parallel activities including study, work, volunteering and other participatory actions, connecting with others, socialising, getting news and information and accessing music and other hobbies. Regardless of background, employment or study status, interviewees described how digital media enabled them to manage the diverse, separate and intersecting aspects of their lives. In a regional town in Victoria, Chris, a 21-year-old university student, described to me how these activities were often undertaken at the same time: 'It's weird how you actually use the internet, you don't really sit and look at it, you just have it open. So if I'm doing an assignment I'll have two or three pages open, so that when I get bored I can just flick to something'. With a number of devices, sites and applications open, Chris would be chatting with friends, coordinating an activity with ReachOut, studying and checking out a film and sending SMS via mobile phone to friends. Other interviewees described the ways aspects of their lives were integrated via

digital media practices, breaking down the silos of family, friendships, education, employment and health. Stevie described how he combined his interest in young men's mental health with study requirements and volunteering for ReachOut to develop a proposal for a young men's digital mental health tool. He described a process of online and offline discussions with young people and ReachOut staff to turn his personal interest into a proposal for a project. Furthermore, Stevie saw the internet as a space where this unmet policy challenge could be addressed – and saw himself as a legitimate and key player in the development of this online solution. His personal relationship with the subject matter was the catalyst for action, driven by the internet which both facilitated and formed the setting for his proposal.

Connecting to institutions and political elites

Very few young people in either country mentioned government-run youth sites. When young people in the UK were asked, few even knew of relevant civic or government-run sites to support youth participation. There was some awareness that at a local government level councils were creating profiles on social networking sites as a strategy to reach young people, though this was met with some cynicism on the basis that young people go onto MySpace and Facebook to connect with their communities – not to seek out public officials or offices. And while young people in the UK generally thought that politicians and governments took more notice of social media campaigns than they did of street protests, in Australia young people felt that political elites dismissed youthful forms of online communication and participation. Olivia, told me:

> Something that I find frustrating is a propensity I think to dismiss what happens in the digital realm as opposed to what happens offline – as if offline is more credible. When actually online conversations have been shown, through a lot of social change research, as one of the most powerful ways to change someone's mind and to influence social change.

Young people recognise that political elites frequently dismiss autonomous forms of youthful activism and organising as 'clicktivism' or as non-representative of broader youth or public views. At the same time they see governments, parties and politicians reaching out to young people through networked, online spaces – an irony that is not lost on these young people. They also pointed out that digital media alone

do not provide young people with power to influence institutions or political elites. However, they felt that where real opportunities exist for young people to define, design and undertake action on issues, digital media can enable greater numbers of young people to engage in more diverse and self-directed ways.

Australian interviewees felt that this potential was exemplified by organisations that delegate significant responsibility online for setting agendas, participating in decision making and actioning decisions made by the community. Young people felt they had a legitimate right to occupy and be heard in online spaces on issues that mattered to them. They expressed a degree of confidence in taking part online – except where they were unfamiliar with technical skills required for certain forms of online interactivity (such as writing code). In contrast, Jade felt that political elites and institutions were unwelcoming and dismissive of young people and their issues: 'I don't think they've got an interest in what I've got to say. I think they're interested in being able to say they've talked with young people, but I don't feel like anything I could say is going to make its way to policy writers.' Jade felt that as a young person she had no legitimate place in more formal or state-oriented participatory spaces – regardless of whether they were online or offline.

Australian interviewee reflections on government youth sites indicated they are not inclined to use sites that 'speak at them' by only providing information and communicating policy *to* young people. Interviewees were dismissive of initiatives or sites that restricted the ways in which they could express their views and ideas, strongly rejecting dutiful (Bennett, 2007) and managed (Coleman, 2008) citizenship models. Alana, 22, from Perth even described a popular youth site run by the government as highly controlled:

> It's is a good example of using some online surveying and having young people involved in writing actual content for a website. But it is incredibly limited and there are a lot of restrictions on what young people can and can't have a say on. For instance young people can write opinion pieces but they can't write fact sheets. And when we suggested that young people could write fact sheets that was way too scary, couldn't do it. So, young people could never write a fact sheet on drug use! It was just too risky for government.

These young people clearly distinguished between the use of digital media for youth participation mechanisms managed by government (or government agencies) and those of NGOs. These included NGO-led

online discussions and debates, online research and advocacy and campaigns targeting politicians and governments.

Table 5.2 builds on Table 4.3 (Chapter 4) of interviewee perspectives on youth participation policies, by including summary notes on their perspectives on the role of the internet for participation. Because no UK interviewees named any government-led online initiatives, the views captured below only reflect those of Australian participants.

There was a general consensus that governments and politicians viewed young people as apprentice citizens and that their use of the internet to engage with young people reinforced this approach. In Alana's statement above, it is evident that she views government use of the internet as an extension of the control that governments exercise offline over youth participation. Though some of the interviewees had taken part in government youth participation processes, many were dismissive and cynical about government use of technology to involve young people.

By comparison, NGO digital practises were seen as new, inclusive and discursive. Bang (2005: 165) suggests that by participating in non-government organisations, young people are creating political realities, rather than mirroring, representing or acting in the name of 'objective interests'. Interviewees saw themselves as playing a valuable, legitimate

Table 5.2 Interviewee perspectives on participation policies: online and offline

Youth participation policies	
Government	**Non-government organisations**
Old, exclusive, closed decision-making processes, irrelevant.	New, open, discursive decision-making, relevant.
Deficit-based approach.	Capacity-based approach.
Target 'school captains' or youth at risk of social disengagement – 'not me'.	Target young people based on what they're passionate about – cause oriented and project-based.
Tokenistic and makes no difference.	Makes a difference and is essential to the organisation's success.
Use of the internet (Australian interviewees)[2]	
Governments control the space and terms of use.	Young people can define the space and terms of use.
Reinforces institutions.	Responds to the 'community'.
Communicate to young people.	Communicate with young people.

role in NGOs, rather than as 'program recipients'. According to these young people, difference-based citizenship is fostered online when young people, staff and other professionals speak *with* each other and work *with* each other. By contrast, government participation initiatives are associated with being spoken at, exclusive or elitist processes, and controlled by adults: qualities that are perpetuated online.

Although many of these young people felt turned off by government digital strategies, their responses were not reactionary or anti-state, rather, they looked beyond government to influence decision making. For example, Phillip, 22, described how he started with identifying an issue, developing a creative and catchy way to get his message across, and then aligning himself with those he believed would help him succeed. He attempted to engage with government, but was turned off by what he experienced as a website that was difficult to navigate and get information from, and a phone conversation in which the public servant was even less helpful. For Phillip, the ReachOut online initiative, *ActNow*, connected him to these networks, including organisations, individuals and campaigns. In some instances these were new networks. For instance, via *ActNow* Phillip had built a new network for taking action. He also described how he used other internet functions such as email and MSN to connect with friends and generate discussion on issues, get feedback on ideas and campaign tools he was developing. As such, the internet was central to the way he engaged with and created networks and reflexive communities for action.

Managed, autonomous or difference-centred e-citizenship?

The organisations profiled here received funding from governments and most got additional support through trusts, foundations and, increasingly, corporate partnerships. But contra to Coleman's schema on managed citizenship (Coleman, 2008), none were primarily interested in establishing connections between young people and institutions and political elites. Whilst they acknowledge that such communication is valid and have initiatives or activities to promote interaction between political elites and institutions and young people, they were more focused on fostering horizontal relationships and networks. In the UK these relationships were most likely to be between young people and community and grass roots organisations with existing participation opportunities. There was also a strong push to provide young people with 'tools' and resources to develop social change projects and enterprises. In Australia, a more common focus is to create opportunities for

young people to build online communities and loose networks that transcended the online/offline divide. In both countries, organisations valued young people as citizens and endeavoured to create circumstances in which young people are able to express themselves and define the terms of citizenship.

ReachOut, FYA, Oaktree and AYCC (profiled in Chapter 4) use the internet to enable young people to create and share content, communicate with each other and staff, form communities for action, and access information relevant to their roles. In this way, these organisations used the internet to facilitate the communication of staff and young people engaged in formal participation processes, and provided opportunities for young people to communicate with the foundation in informal and ad hoc ways. These structures were designed in collaboration with young people and were designed to facilitate their participation – not manage it. Participants shape the evolving form that the model takes and have created 'spin-off' mechanisms for participation via SNS and by branching out from organisations, such as ReachOut, to connect with other agencies for participation, including campaigns, other non-government organisations and state peak advocacy bodies.

Organisations in the UK primarily used digital media to encourage young people to participate offline (either in the organisation or the community), although there were some examples where online platforms expressly support youth participation. This was clearly expressed by Ava, a vInspired executive:

> We very much approach digital as a means to get people interested online, which we know is how to reach out to a wide range of young people and get them then to … that to be an impetus to take offline action. So to stimulate interest and ideas in taking … not only doing things online, which obviously they can do, which is great, it's spreading messages and ideas, but also then to do things in the real world. And we've found that when we've talked to young people that, yes, they're living in all sorts of different social media but actually they keep telling us that real world, face-to-face interaction is often the way that they get a lot of their reward for the things that they're getting involved in. So I think it has … we think it has to be both.

The internet was utilised in many different ways to connect young people to organisations, issues and networks. For example, vInspired has a number of sub-sites designed to connect young people to information, resources and opportunities to take action. vInspired used campaigns

in innovative ways to generate vertical links between young people through social media, and provide a loudspeaker for youth views, and the results of these campaigns were sometimes communicated directly to government.

All organisations were self-consciously 'participatory' and represent a diverse spectrum of approaches delivered both on and offline. In each country setting, organisations utilised the internet to facilitate youth participation, primarily via websites run for young people by adults, but in very different ways. A key difference was whether or not the primary driver was to support people coming together online (to engage in dialogue and group decision making) or to link individuals with online and offline opportunities to get involved. Use of digital media in this way still constitutes 'mediated participation' in that digital media plays a significant role in the pathways and connections between young people and opportunities for participation. And yet, the internet did not feature in British interviewees' accounts in the same way that it did for Australian interviewees. This may be in part because many young people link through and to local organisations where their participation is largely face to face. Many of these young people had close connections with local, grass-roots groups and many were networked into other policy processes, but did not require or utilise the internet as a strategy to achieve this. In contrast, many Australian participants came across organisations for the first time online.

Towards mediated difference-centred citizenship

How NGOs work with and promote mediated participation, and the ways in which young people respond positively, creatively and enthusiastically to these approaches demonstrates that successful alternatives to top-down, managed e-citizenship initiatives are possible. Innovations in digital media practices complicate and expand opportunities for youth participation. For governments and other institutions of authority, the preferences that young people express for agency, creativity, community and transparency afforded by digital media are not so easily translated to processes for policy making. And yet, the organisations and young people profiled in this chapter demonstrate that young people's online participation can achieve many of the goals Coleman (2008: 202–204) has proposed realising a more democratic approach:

- be funded, but not controlled, by government (or government agendas);

- promote partnership and new forms of decision making between young people and the people and institutions that traditionally have power over them;
- construct young people as citizens who can author the terms of their political engagement;
- recognise the ways that young people are already participating in a diverse range of settings and forms;
- emphasise difference-centred conceptions of citizenship and the role of online participation for contesting power relations and structures that construct young people as marginal or second-class citizens.

Moreover, young people's online participation does not take place within the confines of a single site, but rather across many different sites, communities and networks, as an information source, communication medium, an expanding public space in which mini-publics can emerge. Importantly, the ways in which young people use digital media as they explore information, networks, connections, express themselves, engage in discussion and political expression contribute to their emerging participatory biographies. Furthermore, youthful forms of mediated participation present interesting and diverse strategies for creating, sharing and accessing content and building networks and reflexive communities for action. Indeed, this discussion tells us that young people find particular forms and sites of participation meaningful because they can exercise agency, build respectful relationships and often see the impact of their participation. They use the internet to 'find multiple points of entry into varieties of political action' (Bennett, 2003: 144). The implication of this is that digital participation initiatives can flex and change depending on how young people interact with them. In other words, these projects are neither static, nor independent of other forms of youth action both on- and offline.

The views and experiences of Australian young people presented in this chapter reflect a rather different picture to that of the young people in the UK. ReachOut and FYA consciously used the internet to facilitate young people's participation and there is an emphasis on creating spaces for young people to determine how they want to participate both on- and offline. These organisations use digital media to encourage young people to engage and disengage at will and play a central role in programme and organisational strategy. This supports Coleman's (2008: 201) thesis that there may be a productive convergence between autonomous and managed forms of youth e-citizenship.

Many young people who have worked with ReachOut felt they had autonomy 'within' managed processes. They described this as an effective approach to enabling participation within and beyond traditional policy making institutions. The purpose of the managed space was to ensure that young people were supported and resourced to participate – not to dictate where and how that participation would occur. From this perspective I suggest it is more useful to consider the role of the organisations, such as ReachOut, to facilitate difference-centred citizenship. Moreover, these organisations encourage young people to build online networks for action.

However, in the UK, the internet plays a more instrumental role, primarily supporting offline participation. The internet was rarely seen as an alternative to existing social and political spaces for action. Innovative social campaigning strategies provide micro-mechanisms for individualised collective action, but where the primary aim is, most frequently, to inspire young people to take action offline. In this way, online strategies can link young people to communities for action. As such, Coleman's spectrum might usefully be expanded as per Figure 5.1.

Organisations like ReachOut and FYA largely promote forms of participation that build communities for action, whereas organisations such as vInspired use digital media to engage and link young people to organisations and back into their local communities. These are equally valid and important models because they challenge dominant discourses and stereotypes of youth by practicing and promoting a capacity-based approach. They also encourage everyday and non-conventional forms

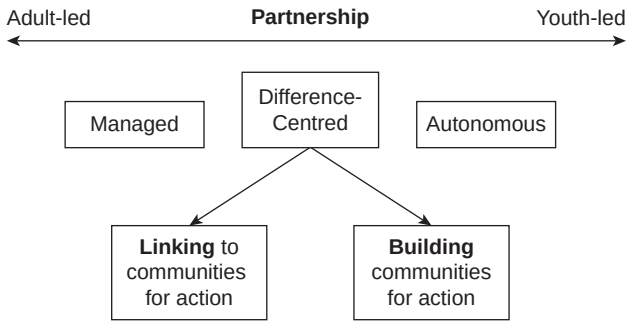

Figure 5.1 Approaches to youth e-citizenship

of participation. The novel ways in which these organisations incorporate or work with youthful digital practices is evidence that mediated participation policies enhance the democratic features of these initiatives and could be a model for such expansion in other institutions, organisation and programmes.

6
Addressing the Democratic Disconnect

> We are giving people a chance to think through what is the community that they want to live in. In 50 years what is the world that they want to leave their kids. And then once we've had a chance to articulate that, we actually give them opportunities and skills so they can start making it a reality, and I think that there is a lack of that in our democracy at the moment for young people.
>
> – Kira, 24, part-time university student, AYCC

In Australia and the UK ordinary young people are identifying and acting on issues that matter, and in everyday ways they are shaping the kind of society they want to live in. This book has sought to engage directly with their views and experiences of participation, to explore how they reflect on and respond to the dominant discourses of youth participation that underpin concerns and hopes about the future of democracy. The experiences of the young people in this study unfold at the intersections of policy, new organisational practices and everyday life. These intersections illuminate the dynamics underpinning the democratic disconnect: a gap between institutional understandings and expectations of young citizens and the nature and substance of youthful forms of political identification and action. This gap – or disconnect – is widely seen to be a 'problem' of youth disengagement with democracy, a problem that tends to be viewed as either one of 'civic deficit' or 'new forms of engagement' (Harris et al., 2007: 20–21). However, the young people in this study demonstrate that the multiple and varying ways they identify and relate to issues that matter and attempt to shape the communities and society they live in are part of an unfolding process of being political. This is fundamentally a dynamic process, the uncertainties of

which require more engagement on the part of traditional institutions and political elites. Young people's networked, often mediated, practices are not simple, nor are they simply acts of engagement, but rather, these practices are part of their life-work of coming to know, to contest, to define and to shape the political contours of society.

This is not to idealise or homogenise all young people – there is great diversity and difference in the experience of youth. It is beyond the capacity of this book to explore, in a comprehensive way, how social structures such as gender, class and disability shape young people's politics and participation. Further, many people – not just the young – experience a sense of alienation from mainstream politics. The politics of exclusion and misrecognition extend well beyond age as a social structure, and a purposive sample of young people in two country settings cannot claim to produce knowledge about all young people or the prevalence of the kinds of attitudes, orientations or acts presented in this book. However, by taking a 'social generation approach' to youth (Wyn and Woodman, 2006, 2007) this study has sought to consider how particular social conditions – not just age – underpin broader changes in the way people conceptualise politics and engage in non-traditional ways with democracy. This final chapter discusses the key characteristics and implications of young people's experiences of policy discourses and participation in a digital age and considers how the democratic disconnect might be overcome through individual, network and institutional efforts.

Self-actualising, project-oriented and mediated participation

Young people today are living in a world of great uncertainty and complexity in which there is significant diversity and pluralism in everyday political practice. As Norris (2003) has identified, youthful political participation indicates a shift from the 'politics of loyalties' to the 'politics of choice', and yet policy discourses create conflicting expectations that young people will be both dutiful and increasingly actualising citizens. These conflicting messages contribute to the cynicism that young people feel towards formal institutions of democracy. Despite this, they do not dismiss the role of governments and political elites, but rather wish to define the terms on which they engage with the state and other actors in order to effect change. The remoteness with which they mainly view political institutions is in stark contrast with their often passionate commitments to particular issues and personally defined acts incorporated in their everyday lives. The

diversity of their approaches reveal that a mix of expanding repertoires of ad hoc, often digitally mediated activities, self-led projects, and involvement in organisations and national campaigns and initiatives are the basis on which participatory biographies are built. Their rejection of traditional hierarchies, commitment to action over ideology and value of cultural and interpersonal dimensions of participation is manifest not in direct resistance to the state, but rather, in an openness to a range of other political arenas and actors. The range of arenas and actors demonstrate how young people increasingly take a pluralistic approach to participation, seeking to maximise their impact by partnering with and targeting a diverse range of allies and targets. Young people respond to the mixed expectations of policy discourses by personalising participation, seeking out opportunities with – and often beyond – groups, NGOs and youth-led movements. The predominant principle underpinning their participation is collaboration – not conflict. This raises more important questions about the ways young people understand and engage with power and whether or not networked participation in NGOs, social movements and community can challenge traditional forms of authority.

Unlike previous generations, young people are more likely to be mobilised in relation to projects and issues, than structures and processes of government. They see themselves as legitimate authors of the political and take a broad collaborative approach to politics and reflect Henrik Bang's Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers (Bang, 2005). Some young people take on the professionalised, full time participatory identity of the Expert Citizen. However, more common is the Everyday Maker: pragmatic, focussed on action, uninterested in official roles or connecting with political elites unless it furthers their cause. Young people view participation as something that is part of their lifestyle, and is an expression of their identity in so far as they seek out forms of participation that are culturally relevant and overlap with other aspects of their lives, such as their friendships and hobbies. However, Bang's theory of project-oriented participation and associated citizen types can be more usefully understood not as fixed, but fluid – some young people move between the two depending on the issues they want to address (and possibly experience periods of complete disengagement, or maybe interest in party politics). Additionally, amongst the Expert Citizens identified in this research, were several young people who were self-reflexive and critical of what they saw as the implicitly elitist nature of their roles. They described how they lobbied government and NGOs for more open and inclusive participation models.

The extent to which this reflects a nuanced or emerging understanding of power warrants further consideration. Arguably the initiatives profiled here, have their emphasis on empowering young people through provision of information, resources, opportunities and experiences to engage in traditional and networked governance processes. However, greater emphasis on ensuring an understanding and focus on the nature and forms of power will enhance the reflexive capabilities and potential of difference-centred citizens. Indications that some young people shift between Expert Citizen and Everyday Maker modes suggests a greater awareness of the nature and workings of power accords with demanding recognition and representation in traditional institutions and processes – still crucial if young people's exclusion from official policy-making processes is to be fully addressed.

That said, many Everyday Makers, when compared to young people not engaged at all in participatory organisations, might be thought of as Expert Citizens as they all have opportunities to influence policy at the organisational level, as well as connect to other decision makers through their roles in these various organisations. They would, however, almost certainly reject that proposition. Expert Citizen roles were generally described as unrepresentative, targeting 'leaders' or 'problem youth' – with whom few in this research identified. Instead, these young people favoured what they saw as more authentic, everyday and ad hoc approaches to participation as well as formal mechanisms in case study organisations. These were valued because NGOs combine structured mechanisms with flexible delivery, through which young people experienced a sense of autonomy, control, influence and power over the substance and nature of their involvement.

Young people are subject to a certain genre of participation policies which form part of the context in which their ideas about politics and participation form. There are many studies which report that young people see formal participation mechanisms to be tokenistic and disempowering (for example, Bridgland Sorenson, 2007; Matthews, 2001). Some participation policies have drawn attention to the multiple barriers that young people face in being recognised and involved as full citizens. Yet, they can reinforce some of the barriers by requiring that young people act like 'adults' and participate in processes that are no longer seen as relevant. They also legitimise some forms of participation and delegitimise others. Consequently, participation policies, in their present form, tend to exacerbate, rather than remedy problems of elitism and further alienate young people from conventional political institutions and elites. However, young people are self-reflexive and

manage the constant threat of cooptation by seeking out participatory opportunities in organisations, spaces, initiatives, collectives, networks and events where they can exercise a high degree of agency.

Rather than simply increasing individualisation, many forms of youthful participation are driven by a desire for personalisation and belonging to networks of action. These networks are constituted by loose and tightly knit sub-networks or communities which facilitate both individual and collective actions for change. Furthermore, youthful networks for action extend beyond formal links on a set of policy issues to other aspects of their everyday lives including family and friendship groups, work, study and hobbies. The young people in this study displayed a high level of interest in a range of issues of importance to the wider community, but for most, the strategies they used to address these issues led them further away from government and traditional spheres of political power and influence.

Finally, the way that networks feature in the political identities of self-actualising citizens is both a cause and effect of the kind of communication made possible by digital media. Many young people did not differentiate between the ways they used digital media for participation, for socialising, for study and for entertainment. For many, digital media practices were associated with a convergence of the political, cultural, social and economic dimensions of their lives. For instance the mediation of participatory activities, friendships, study, hobbies and consumer activities were often interwoven as young people discussed participation. In the UK, it was common for young people to talk of digital media in instrumentalist terms and to conceptualise participation largely in offline and face-to-face formats. Whereas, Australian young people, whose participation in various organisations took place largely online, the internet was a setting in which there was a convergence of political and everyday life. In both country settings, digital media features in the ways that young people explore and express their views on issues, and connect to and build political communities and networks for action.

Non-government organisations and the new networks of youth participation

By adopting increasingly flexible and diverse approaches to promoting mediated participation, NGOs play a key role in contesting policy discourses and promoting diversity in youth participation. They are also adapting more readily than traditional institutions to the preferences of the networked young citizen. The examples explored in this

book indicate that a 'productive convergence' between managed and autonomous models of citizenship as envisaged by Coleman (2008: 202) is possible. While providing digital infrastructures for participation (including online forums, online tools and applications), these organisations encourage, but do not prescribe, particular uses of digital media for participation. They promote, amongst other things, a view of young people as citizens who are already participating in non-institutional settings and practices, as well as forms of partnership and decision making between young people and the institutions and adults that traditionally have power over them. What sets these organisations apart from the projects that Coleman (2008) has studied is that they encourage horizontal communication between young people and staff and vertical links to political elites, though there were differences in organisational approaches according to country context.

In the UK, digital media were predominantly viewed as a mechanism to reach and engage young people and to inspire 'offline' action: as volunteers, youth representatives and leaders and participants in social action projects and enterprises. In Australia, organisations approached digital media as a feature of youth experience and encouraged young people to build communities for action online. They recognised that young people would weave networks beyond the boundaries of the organisation. Organisations clearly play an increasingly important role in the ways young people build and link to communities for action (Figure 5.1, Chapter 5). This can help to further rethink the kinds of questions that are typically used to frame studies of the role of the internet for youth civic engagement and political participation – moving beyond questions of how digital media can engage young people in civic or political participation. As Banaji and Buckingham (2013: 165) have argued:

> it is a question of how the Internet might engage with other movements and modes of participation within society, and how those other movements might use technology in their wider efforts to bring about social change. This becomes a question not primarily about technology or even about young people but about much broader social and cultural processes.

Indeed, the very same point can be made in relation to participation policies in general: it is not merely a question of how policies can promote engagement of or with young people, but what institutions might do to respond to broader processes of social and cultural change. One of the consequences of change is the increasing complexity in

both the nature of issues and policy processes to address them. The challenge of how to impact policy in contemporary society is one for the whole community – not just young people. Conceptualised as a process, policy-making implies there are various and multiple impacts that are constantly emerging and shifting, problematising efforts to identify and assess the impact of youthful forms of participation. For example, in 2007, Oaktree succeeded in securing a commitment from then, Labor leader Kevin Rudd, to increase Australia's aid funding. This was the result of a range of advocacy and lobbying activities, including those with broader coalitions, such as the Make Poverty History coalition, and including influential individuals like Tim Costello. But this commitment was never enacted and has been consistently delayed by subsequent federal governments. Should this example be heralded as a success or failure of youth participation? Much more thinking needs to be done. But what is striking in this example, and others provided in this book is the way 'young people' and 'older people' are collaborating for change. Moreover, young people are clearly concerned about 'big P' politics and issues that extend well beyond the suite of 'youth affairs' that are generally demarcated as the policy concerns for 'youth participation'. The many examples in this book demonstrate that young people are building networks for action that combine individual, personalisable and collective actions including demanding 'a seat at the table'. In various ways these young people participating in Oaktree, AYCC, ReachOut, Young and Well CRC, BYC, YAN and vInspired have shaped public conversations, corporate practices, government agendas, policy and funding priorities. Organisations like FYA are seeding, mentoring and networking young people who are then engaging in micro-actions and local level change, as well as going on to spearhead independent policy and advocacy organisations such as the Australian Left Right Think Tank.

By comparison, while NGO-delivered, government-funded programmes such as the National Citizen Service may benefit individuals, they may also decouple young people's interests and agency from 'big P' politics. Despite the theorising, there's no evidence that civic education – even of this kind – actually promotes traditional forms of participation (Manning and Edwards, 2013). The young people interviewed for this book believe their demands are most powerfully made from commercial, NGO and community spaces, rather than within political traditional institutions. This is where they are acting in everyday ways, and where some are seeking to obtain positions of greater power, influence and directly participate in agenda setting and decision making.

And yet, what young people value contrasts starkly with government approaches that favour structured, managed, prescribed processes for youth participation both on- and offline. The persistent tensions between policy discourses, the operationalisation of youth participation policies and young people's experiences of these policies provide rich insights into the nature of the democratic disconnect and potential ways for it to be addressed. It is self-defeating for institutions to persist with policy and political arguments that reinforce the failure of citizens to sufficiently comprehend and productively engage with the state. Similarly, proclamations that individualised, everyday and cultural forms of political participation are insufficient to support a healthy democracy leave us nowhere. However, policies that promote participation and partnership, but which have no real substance or relationship to policy development are counterproductive at best, disingenuous and deceptive at their worst. If we are to accept – as this book argues we must – the mainstream emergence of actualising citizens and, more specifically, Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers, then there is a need to identify ways to advance the institutional transformations required to keep pace, and benefit from youthful modes of political identification and participation.

Policy contexts, institutions and opportunities

Young people in both Australia and the UK are directly impacted by policy discourses on participation. In both countries, liberal conceptions of citizenship are evident in the emphasis on 'good' youth transitions through participation in education, training or employment. While underpinned by civic republican conceptions of the role of community participation for fostering civic values and virtues, volunteering and social action have gained currency as strategies to manage young citizens in a time of economic restructuring and increasing youth unemployment in both countries, particularly the UK.

Despite a significant history in the UK of advocacy and policy for the incorporation of youth participation principles across government and the NGO and community sectors, young people tend to talk about participation in terms of their personal responsibility for individual and community outcomes. Digital media is largely seen as a communicative medium to enhance access to resources and networks for the actualisation of offline activities. Some significant vertical links to powerful institutions and actors are encouraged, particularly around key institutional acts (such as voting and policy review) and these tend to be offline, elitist

and emulate adult-centric institutions and processes. Prior to the election of the Conservative–Liberal coalition in 2010, Marsh and colleagues argued that neo-conservatism underpinned duties-based conceptions of citizenship for young people in the UK (Marsh et al., 2007). More recent government policies, including the restructuring of funding to the youth sector, reflect a further move away from a rights-based social-inclusion agenda. While a new acceptance of diverse, informal and youth-led political practices may represent a step forward, sites of youth social action and social enterprise also represent the new frontiers of state cooptation of actualising citizens. Rather than enhancing capacity and recognition of youthful politics, central government channelling of funding to youth development programmes (for example, The National Citizens Service) may reinforce notions that young people are citizens-in-training and represent an effort to manage the actualising citizen. As such, despite the significant advances of youth participation, the dominant discourse of youth citizenship in the UK is one of apprenticeship, and peer-to-peer community-level action on local issues.

By comparison, Australian young people experience significant inconsistencies in approaches to youth participation, particularly between the federal and state-level governments, but also between different states and territories. The social rights paradigm is frequently overshadowed by neo-liberal and neo-republican notions of democracy that emphasise narrow interpretations of rights and duties (particularly to become economically independent individuals through participation in the workforce). Australian policy continues to construct young people as apprentice citizens, despite widespread adoption of the rhetoric of participation. With the re-election of a Liberal-National Coalition government in 2013, youth services and peak bodies now face uncertain futures as the government rolls back funding and support.

With few exceptions, the young people in this study reflected participatory conceptualisations of democracy and sought out spaces and opportunities where they could define the terms of their participation. However, in both country contexts, governments largely defined the purpose, nature and scope of participation. Whilst young people's views may have been gathered in the research for participation policies, these were then interpreted and embedded in policy that is fixed and must be 'delivered upon'. This contrasts markedly with young people's desire to not only 'have a say', but to define the issues at stake, the course of action to be taken and play a hands on role in delivering on decisions. The fluidity, flexibility and control that are highly valued by young people are rarely present in policy discourses in either country. Government

participation policies reproduce adult-led, hierarchical and elitist modes of participation. They fail to recognise the shift from membership-based to network-based society and they attempt to orient young people in ways often dependent on 'membership-type' relationships. In response, young people insist on spaces for dialogue and discussion, as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5. When young people communicate their views in reports, mass meetings and social media and email campaigns they are calling for governments to hear and recognise their views.

Governments are yet to adapt and respond to the digital and networked approaches of young citizens. In Australia, young people view government online participation strategies as replicating offline approaches: focused on delivering information to young people, engaging young people on government terms, requesting young people's views and contributions, but not demonstrating how these have, or have not, fed into policy. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, and suggested above, the power of network-based participation is that it is not containable by any one authority. The way young people use the internet and the ways in which they conceptualise participation means that their participatory trajectories are ever-expanding networks of organisations, individuals, campaigns, activities and events that spiral out and provide multiple entry points for action on issues. Government efforts to contain and control participation appear to have one result: to repel young people who want to see change on issues that matter to them. Where institutional efforts at youth participation do attract young people they are most likely to produce Expert Citizens and therefore contribute to the problem of elitism.

There are no easy fixes to this problem, but the case study organisations presented here demonstrate the potential for participation policies to contribute to a model of difference-centred citizenship precisely because they value and encourage diversity in participation. Furthermore, the organisations studied here embody participatory spaces where young people felt empowered and where they experienced a high level of trust. Rather than being coopted, they experienced the kind of participatory governance that is unattainable in most traditional institutions.

Translating practices, transforming policy

The extent to which the democratic disconnect can be addressed depends on the willingness of institutions and political elites to adapt and change. It will also require the continued insistence of young people for cultural and procedural changes that are open to their involvement in setting

agendas and decision making. Arguably this requires new approaches on the part of both institutions and young people in creating appropriate spaces for dialogue and decision making. When asked in interview what governments should do, young people put it in very simple terms. According to Shane, a 19 year old university student from Adelaide, governments too often are insincere when engaging with young people: '... it's that token young person sitting on their committee or board so that they can justify that they are being inclusive. I think that governments do have to step up and include more young people in all facets of their processes'. As already argued, NGOs and social movements can play a deeper role in enabling more young people like Shane to play a role in establishing what inclusive processes look like and how they can be established.

This final section presents a synthesis of young people's views, in particular the responses they gave when asked what they thought the implications – or insights – of youthful forms of participation might be for governments and other decision-makers. Their views can be summarised in a number of actionable policy implications that offer potential ways to enrich and expand a more inclusive form of democratic governance.

In the first instance, institutions need to adopt a conception of all young people as differently equal citizens who can determine the form and substance of participation. Sofia, 20, in Perth argued that all young people's experiences and views were valid and valuable regardless of age or education or ability: 'I don't have to be qualified to lose someone from suicide. I don't have to be qualified to have a disability.' Difference-centred conceptions of citizenship must be embedded in the artefacts, cultures and processes of institutions and organisations. These young people were critical of approaches that overtly distinguish between those young people who are successfully transitioning to adulthood and those who are at risk and argued for approaches that are rooted in principles of diversity and difference. For instance, Sofia felt strongly that an inclusive approach needs to acknowledge structural barriers and power relations. But she also argued that government could learn from the ways young people make sense of diversity and the various challenges in their lives. Additionally, some young people argued that an understanding of youthful politics involves understanding non-participation as an expression of political views.

Efforts to renew institutions and processes to be more inclusive should target structures and processes that exclude young people from forms of community and government deliberation and decision making.

Institutions should focus on the capacities of adults, organisations and institutions to understand and work with young people, rather than the capacity of young people to operate in the 'adult world'. This can usefully shed light on persistent institutional barriers: for example, defining what is a 'youth issue' and defining participatory processes that favour those who are economically stable, healthy, and who are skilled and understand the expectations, norms and practices of adult-centred institutions and policy processes. The organisations profiled here highlight the value of focusing on developing participatory cultures, skills and processes.

To enable this, policy frameworks should more comprehensively address how governments, authorities and communities can comprehend and respond to young people's needs and views (not what is required from young people). Policy frameworks tend to focus on how to support young people in transitions to adulthood: finding paid employment, staying at school, joining a programme, leading a project. While they capture what governments will do in terms of funding, projects and procedural reform, more often than not the focus on how to get young people to engage in pro-social activities and desist from those considered harmful or placing them 'at risk'. As such, they produce discourses that construct young people as both the problem and the solution. More mutualistic approaches to policy – considering what is required from institutions – present ways of thinking about the existing and future relationship that authorities can have with young people. Non-government and youth-led organisations provide ample examples of the values, cultures, processes and practices that expand, rather than limit, conceptions of youth and forms of participation.

Political elites and policy makers should prioritise dialogue and policy-making 'with' young people as members of networks and communities. Governments must develop mechanisms by which they continuously negotiate the terms of participation with young people. This can be effectively enabled where Government institutions and agencies provide infrastructure and support to expand the work of successful youth-centred organisations to include developing bridges and spaces for regular engagement on young people's terms. Hybrid models where governments enable (through provision of funding and resources) and work with, but do not coopt, autonomous forms of youthful organising and communication should be prioritised.

Policies for participation should require pluralism and multiplicity – including forms of youthful fun-making and individualised action that is oriented towards self-improvement and better social conditions – when working with young people. Institutions, organisations and youth

networks should promote diverse forms of listening to where young people are already speaking from. This can include forms of online and networked communication and can include, but not be limited to, consultation, collaboration and policy-making within institutions. This can be achieved by emphasising participation and opportunity as mechanisms for building the civic knowledge and capacities of political elites and those working within institutions. This should include supporting youth-led organisations, partnerships with youth-serving organisations and acknowledging autonomous participatory spaces. It should also involve acknowledging and seeking to understand where young people choose – or are unable – to participate.

Civics and citizenship education programmes remain on the policy agendas of both Australian and UK governments. Approaches tend to retain a narrow view of citizenship as a relationship between citizens and the state, and programmes focus on the transmission of knowledge and skills for youth 'development' rather than 'actualisation'. And yet, the case study organisations presented here, and the narratives of young people who work with them demonstrate that participation as a process of defining issues, identifying allies, taking part in, and designing ways of thinking and acting is a model for realising citizenship. Reconceptualising citizenship education in what Gusheh and Powell call 'citizenship engagement' provides a dynamic lens for working with and building on a notion of citizenship 'as inherent, rather than aspirational, and as embedded within a personal context' (Gusheh and Powell, 2013: 113). This highlights the value in working with young people to re-engineer civic and citizenship education as 'citizenship engagement'. Whether in schools, in NGOs or in the community, government can fund collaborative processes to develop youth-centred, experiential learning opportunities that build young people's capacities for authoring citizenship. As Jay, 25, a Malaysian migrant to Australia said: 'I really don't know half the time when I'm doing things whether it's going to create change or not, and I don't believe that young people doing [these] things actually think that they can create change. [But] they really want to try.' Investing in 'citizenship engagement' is an investment in opportunities for young people to try and create change. But more importantly, this is an investment in their participatory biographies. Existing organisations, programmes and processes that build horizontal, as well as vertical links in knowledge and practice are likely to both better meet the contemporary orientations of young people as well as render more dynamic relationships between young people and the institutions and adults who have power over them.

These are not straightforward changes and require significant structural, procedural and cultural renewal. But the organisations profiled in this research demonstrate that they are achievable if such proposals are taken seriously and undertaken in partnership with young people. As they stand, the current participation agendas of the British and Australian governments are about managing young citizens, rather than embracing participatory democracy. These participation policies reinforce, rather than remedy 'elitism' and contribute, as Bang argues, to an ever increasing de-coupling of the politics of the everyday from contemporary forms of governance. However, traditional actors and institutions can usefully learn from youth-led, youth-serving non-government organisations and social movements to stem the tide of alienation and cultivate new kinds of relationships between young citizens and the institutions and political elites that still play a central role in the governance of their society. The organisations and networks profiled in this book create spaces for the recognition of Everyday Making – or, as Bang puts it, 'the politics of the ordinary' (Bang, 2004). This suggests a more promising democratic future that harnesses the views and participatory practices of young people today. But it requires genuine institutional reform and a rethinking on the part of political elites as to the way they engage with young citizens. It is not enough to support youth-led social action, organisational facilitation of youth participation or innovative youth participation mechanisms in government (for example, *Student ShoutOut* or Youth Select Committee) if the policy making process remains impermeable to young stakeholder inputs.

Rather than prescribing how young people should participate, policies should address how governments and other authorities should respond. As Bang has argued, the key problem for democracy is not that young people are disengaging and 'free riding on the efforts of others', but whether or not their participation is recognised. As discourses of participation are becoming more prevalent in the non-government, community and even corporate sectors, young people are increasingly oriented away from government towards other actors and public spaces. As such, young people are likely to become more, not less, alienated from formal politics as they find more resonance in non-government processes and feel more excluded from the processes of government.

But the way is not entirely clouded by doom and gloom. As demonstrated in this book, a productive convergence is possible, but it is reliant on renegotiating power and recognising the ways that young people conceptualise and enact citizenship through everyday life. Participation

policies can challenge elitism if governments, organisations and networks recognise and respond to difference. What is for sure is that young people are already looking out and beyond conventional institutions of democracy. The question is whether traditional institutions and political elites will recognise this shift and respond:

> So it used to be everyone who wanted to make a better society, became, like, politicians and staffers. But I think now so many people who are going to be huge change makers are coming from NGO's. So we're just creating power in a different way, and it's a much more grass roots way, and it's much more democratic, and I think it's much more, like, truly representative of communities, which I think is really, really exciting. (Belinda, 22, AYCC, Sydney)

Notes

1 Conceptualising Young Citizens

1. The 2020 Summit was convened in 2008 by the, then, Rudd-led Labour Government and involved 1000 hand-picked experts from across industry, community and academia.
2. Here 'functionalist' and 'developmental' will be used interchangeably.

2 Cultivating Good Citizens

1. Green Corps is a youth development program structured around environmental education and action was part of the mutual obligation Work for the Dole and then the Labour Government 'youth attainment' program Learn or Earn program.

3 Civic Organisations in Context

1. *How Young People are Faring* is an annual report drawing on secondary sources to provide point-in-time and trend information on the nature of education and training participation and outcomes of young people in Australia. Each edition also examines related factors in the broader social context for young people, such as trends in independence, marriage, fertility, home ownership, wellbeing and life satisfaction.

4 Youth Perspectives on Participation

1. The New Deal for Young People formed key part of the Labour government's welfare to work strategy from 1998 to 2009. Young people receiving Jobseeker's Allowance were obliged to take part in training and work experience opportunities while seeking paid employment.
2. Young people who wear hooded jumpers and are assumed to be 'up to no good'!
3. The John Butler Trio is an Australian group well known for using music to address social injustice.

5 Mediated Participation

1. Youth Central is a Victorian Government website that provides young people with information on topics including health, education, arts and culture. Young people can participate as content producers through a formal program

and the website shares links to opportunities to participate in other formal mechanisms, programs and campaigns.

2. As none of the United Kingdom participants had heard of a government e-citizenship initiative I have not made any comparison between their views on government and the Youth Action Network use of information communication technologies.

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