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DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (ICRRDS)  
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**URBAN CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS TO THE CITY**

Background Paper for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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April 2005



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**Note**

From 1 September 2005 the *International Centre for Urban Regeneration and Development Studies* (ICRRDS) will be known as the *Centre for the Study of Cities and Regions* (CSCR).

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Ray Hudson, Alan Townsend and Rachel Woodward for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I am grateful to Kurt Iveson and Deirdre McKay for useful discussions of some of the issues raised. Christine Stephenson provided assistance with literature searching.

The writing of this paper was undertaken for, but not directly funded by, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The views expressed are those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the position of the ODPM.

## **SUMMARY**

### ***Citizenship and Rights***

- The issues of citizenship and rights are central to contemporary academic and political debate.
- Citizenship involves practices as well as rights and is 'bottom-up' as well as 'top-down' in character.
- Citizenship involves conflict and antagonism as well as cooperation and solidarity.
- The nature of citizenship is not settled, but is itself the object of debate, conflict and negotiation.
- Even supposedly fundamental rights are never entirely 'beyond politics' and disputes over rights claims are central to citizenship practices.

### ***Urban Citizenship: Cities as Political Spaces***

- The complexity and multiplicity of cities set the conditions and the need for urban citizenship as the process of political engagement between diverse groups and individuals.
- Urban citizenship involves a politics of connection within and beyond particular cities.
- Writings on 'the right to the city' stress the intrinsic worth of cities to their inhabitants, not merely their instrumental or economic value. The right to the city is the right to make full use of the city and to live a richly urban life.
- Access to public space, particularly for marginalized groups, is a fundamental part of the right to the city.
- There are at least three possible forms of urban citizenship: liberal-individualist, communitarian-civic republican, and radical pluralist-dissident.
- Radical pluralist models stress conflict and negotiation between diverse and shifting social groupings as a key element of participation.
- Citizen participation takes many forms, from tokenistic consultation to full involvement in decision-making.

### ***Rebuilding the public realm: towards a pluralist urban commonwealth***

- The vitality of the public realm is a key determinant of the vibrancy of citizenship practice.
- A strategy to rebuild the urban public realm would include:
  - Enhancing access to local media and communication technologies
  - Improving the supply of and access to high quality public space
  - Striking the right balance between civility and social friction
  - Developing resources for creativity and social innovation
  - Promoting play as a key attribute of urban life
  - Supporting the establishment of civic associations.

### ***Conclusion***

- Cities are vital *public* resources, not just concatenations of private wealth.
- Pluralist citizenship can promote diverse and sustainable cities.

## URBAN CITIZENSHIP & RIGHTS TO THE CITY

‘The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what exists, but a right to change it after our heart’s desire. We need to be sure we can live with our own creations [...]. But the right to remake ourselves by creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality is one of the most precious of all human rights.’ (Harvey 2004: 236)

### INTRODUCTION

‘People make cities but cities make citizens.’ So said Richard Rogers, Chair of the Urban Task Force, when he launched its Final Report in June 1999. The remark has been widely quoted since, not least in subsequent government publications, and it certainly makes a good slogan. But what does it really mean, and what are its implications for urban policy? This paper aims to answer those questions.

The objectives of the paper are as follows:

- To review the main trends in recent academic writing on citizenship;
- To outline and explain the concept of ‘urban citizenship’;
- To discuss the relationship between citizenship and participation;
- To discuss the relationship between the social diversity of cities and radical pluralist models of urban citizenship;
- To examine the implications of radical pluralism for the urban public realm.

In accordance with the specification agreed with ODPM, the document has the character of a ‘think piece’ or a reflection paper. It is not a research report summarizing empirical research findings, but is intended to raise questions for debate and to provide background information on current academic thinking on the questions of citizenship and participation in urban contexts.

The majority of the work for this paper was undertaken before the recent publication of the ODPM’s Five Year Plan, *Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity*. It has therefore not been possible to incorporate a commentary on the Plan here, despite its clear relevance to the issues raised in this paper. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the arguments presented here will contribute to the debate about the sustainable communities agenda, and particularly to the question of citizen engagement addressed by the Plan’s supporting document *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*.

For ease of readability, citations in the text have been kept to a minimum.

## CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS

citizen *n.* 1. An inhabitant of a city. 2. A member of a state. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Citizenship has urban origins. The word citizen is derived from the Latin for city and throughout the Middle Ages it was used almost exclusively to refer to an inhabitant of a town. The modern sense of 'member of a state' did not become dominant until the late-eighteenth century when it was particularly associated with the French and American revolutions, and the consolidation of the modern nation-state as the primary form of political organization.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw major political struggles over civil and political rights – over what citizenship meant and who could be a citizen. During this period slavery was abolished in the British Empire and the United States and women and working class men won the right to vote in most industrialized countries. By the middle decades of the twentieth century, with the development of the welfare state and the strengthening of social rights to health care, education, housing and pensions it seemed for a time that the promise of citizenship – full membership in society – had been fulfilled, at least for a substantial majority. The term began to take on a more passive sense linked to a cluster of social and political rights and entitlements conferred by the state and a limited set of increasingly routine (and therefore unnoticed) obligations. Citizenship seemed to be a spent force, at least as a driver of social and political change and a focus of political and academic controversy.

Since the 1980s, however, debates about citizenship have come alive again. Citizenship is now central to contemporary politics and one of the most important and controversial concepts in social and political research. Countless books and articles, numerous academic and policy conferences and the launch of a new specialist learned journal, *Citizenship Studies*, in 1997 are testimony to this development. Why has this happened? According to Derek Heater (Heater 1999) there are six main reasons:

- the New Right's challenge to the welfare state, which called into question the validity of 'social citizenship';
- increasing, and increasing awareness of, the multicultural demographic composition of most states;
- tendencies towards territorial fragmentation in existing so-called 'nation'-states;
- the need to develop new liberal democratic constitutions in post-authoritarian states;
- a growing awareness that for many people, particularly in the global south, citizenship is a hollow sham;
- the emergence of new legal categories of citizenship, such as EU citizenship, that are separate from the nation-state.

These changes have prompted some significant developments in citizenship theory. First, models of *differentiated* or *multicultural* citizenship have been proposed as alternatives to existing universal conceptions of citizenship (Kymlicka 1995, Kymlicka & Norman 2000). These models argue that supposedly universal conceptions of citizenship often exclude certain social groups, such as national or ethnic minorities. Differentiated approaches suggest that if citizenship in diverse societies is to be genuinely open to all *in practice as well as in theory*, then models of citizenship that respect difference are required. In the UK, the legal protection for the Welsh language is an example of differentiated citizenship.

Second is the recognition that there is no simple correspondence between citizenship and national identity. Geographies of citizenship have become increasingly dislocated from those of national belonging. Reactions to this trend include both affirmations of multi-culturalism and transnational identities and, conversely, efforts to reassert close links between cultural identity and political membership. For example there was a lively public debate in Britain in 2004 over whether increasing cultural diversity is compatible with social solidarity.<sup>1</sup>

Third, contemporary citizenship theory recognizes that citizenship is a broader category than just the relationship of an individual to the state. Understood as *full membership of society*, citizenship incorporates cultural recognition and respect, economic and workplace rights, and social welfare rights as well as the conventional emphasis on civil and political rights. This breadth was present in the pioneering work of T H Marshall (1950), which remains a key reference point in debates on citizenship. Marshall stressed that the scope of citizenship extended at least to include social rights. Current work on citizenship has shown, however, that there is frequently a mismatch between *de jure* citizenship (legal membership) and *de facto* citizenship (social practices). Many empirical studies have emphasized that *de jure* citizens frequently find it difficult to access the benefits of citizenship in practice while others who are technically non-citizens can sometimes acquire substantial (though perhaps legally unenforceable) social, cultural and even political rights.

Fourth, work on cosmopolitan, transnational and global citizenship provides insight into another form of disjuncture between citizenship and national belonging. The growth of diaspora communities, new supranational legal and political orders (notably the European Union), and intense interest in the global politics of human rights and humanitarian intervention have all undermined the idea that citizenship is exclusively a nation-state-based phenomenon.

Finally, much recent work has charted the new *geographies* of citizenship, identifying the local, regional and transnational networks through which it is increasingly articulated. These studies map the ways in which conventional

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the essay in *Prospect* by David Goodhart and responses to it in the following issue and in *The Guardian* newspaper on 26 February.

distinctions between the public and private sphere are being renegotiated and examine the new forms of territorial and spatial organization produced by the actions of states and civil society institutions as they engage with contemporary citizenship practices.

Within this large and diverse body of work we can identify a number of key principles that relate directly to cities and city living:

- Citizenship is concerned with *practices* as well as *rights and responsibilities* (Isin & Wood 1999), and in particular with practices of active participation in civic and political life.
- Citizenship has a dual character that can be labelled rather crudely 'top-down'/'bottom-up'. Top-down citizenship refers to rights and responsibilities allocated and practices sanctioned, encouraged or required, by the state. Bottom-up citizenship denotes initiatives and actions undertaken by citizens independently of the state. It includes, but is not limited to, practices that challenge the policies or authority of the state.
- Citizenship involves both cooperation and conflict. Some rights enable cooperation but others may be in conflict with each other. Active participation in civic and political life can bring groups and individuals into relations of antagonism as well as solidarity.
- The scope and terms of citizenship are themselves among the potential objects of debate, conflict and negotiation. The nature of citizenship is never settled for good, but is open to question. New rights can be claimed and granted and new forms of citizenship practice can emerge.

Like citizenship, the concept of **rights** has also been the subject of much discussion and development in recent years. From the French revolution through the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to more recent concerns with group-specific rights (e.g. women's rights, gay rights) and the current highly charged debate over the rights of those suspected of involvement in terrorism, the claiming, granting and denial of rights have been central to modern political thought and practice (Freeden 1991). Many fundamental rights are enshrined in international law and have become widely accepted and largely uncontroversial in societies with democratic systems of government. Although certain effects of incorporating the *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR) into UK domestic law have been criticized by some, the principles expressed in the ECHR and in European Union's *Charter of Fundamental Rights* (now part of the new EU Constitutional Treaty) have widespread support. Among the fundamental rights most closely related to the notion of urban citizenship are those concerning freedom of expression, assembly and association and the prohibition of discrimination.

Establishing a right can be seen as an attempt to place an issue beyond dispute and therefore beyond politics. However, despite general support for fundamental rights, rights remain contentious (and thus political) for two reasons. First, the practical implementation of the abstract principles in the ECHR may result in restrictions on the exercise of rights. Thus Article 11.2, which deals with limits on the freedom of assembly and association reads:

No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This Article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.

Although these restrictions may be necessary, they clearly open the way for considerable dispute over what is required to ensure national security and public safety or to prevent disorder, crime and so on. Indeed even the meanings of terms such as 'disorder' and 'morals' are not self-evident and are thus potential matters for civic debate. Ultimately such disputes may be settled in the courts, but in the interim the public authorities have considerable discretion over whether any particular assembly (for example) should be allowed to proceed. Second, many rights claims (particularly for social, economic, cultural and moral rights) are disputed and remain the focus of conflict and debate, or are second order rights that may be granted by specific legislation, but are not given the status of 'fundamental rights'. It is in this category of contested rights that we find many of the claims associated with urban citizenship, including rights to shelter, access to services, and the use of public space.

## **URBAN CITIZENSHIP: CITIES AS POLITICAL SPACES**

### ***What is urban about urban citizenship?***

The idea of citizenship has become so closely associated with membership of a national state that the notion of a specifically *urban* form of citizenship may seem strange or contradictory. However there are good reasons to reconnect citizenship with cities, especially if we focus on 'bottom-up' citizenship and on citizenship as practice and participation. Contemporary urban theorists emphasize a number of characteristics of cities and city living that reinforce the connection. In non-urban societies kinship relations are paramount but with urbanization new forms of being-in-common emerged involving increased political, social and economic interaction between strangers. The demographic complexity of cities and their attractiveness to migrants established the conditions and the need for citizenship as the process of political engagement between diverse groups and individuals. Cities today are more diverse than ever, strengthening the need for forms of citizenship that are sensitive to difference while promoting engagement.

Engagement is essential because of another attribute of urban life stressed by urban theorists: its density. Cities can be seen as dense nodes in the uneven and widely stretched networks that constitute contemporary social and economic life. This is not simply a matter of quantitative concentration. Maps of population density, for example, may provide a reasonable representation of the geography of urbanization, but they fail to capture what might be called



‘social density’ – the concentration of social interaction in space and time that is central to the urban experience. Urban living necessarily involves numerous interactions with diverse others. Many of these encounters are instrumental – obtaining or providing goods and services for example. Some may be dangerous or distressing. But cities also provide opportunities for a wide range of other kinds of interactions that can add richness and fulfilment to our lives in fields such as artistic and cultural expression; sport, play and recreation; education and learning; economic opportunity; friendship, understanding and solidarity; and community service and voluntary action. This is not to say that these things never occur outside cities, but the greater concentration of such opportunities in cities is one of the distinguishing features of urban life. Moreover such engagements and their outcomes are relevant to citizenship because they are rarely purely private matters, but entail encounters in the public realm involving negotiation or confrontation, cooperation or conflict across axes of social difference.

The third contribution of urban theory to the issue of citizenship is its elucidation of the importance of the prosaic and the everyday. Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002) are among the many writers who stress the role of the everyday in constituting the disparate webs of connections that shape contemporary cities. It is often in these everyday interactions that the politics of the city and thus of urban citizenship are played out. Moreover, for most people in highly urbanized societies cities provide the arenas in which their daily lives are lived – they are the sources of many of the experiences that shape political attitudes and inclinations. Other relationships with greater spatial reach are important too of course, most notably the consumption of media such as newspapers, television, radio and the internet, but direct experiences (and anecdotal reports of the everyday experience of others) exert a particularly powerful influence. The importance of everyday experience is recognized in policy initiatives that target the irritations of daily life, such as those directed to curbing anti-social behaviour. The controversy aroused by such policies is due partly because they seem to assume shared behavioural norms instead of seeing the existence and nature of such norms as themselves matters for debate in a process of citizenship participation, a point that will be discussed further below.

Finally, urban theory highlights the importance of the wealth of cities in the development of citizenship. Cities generate an enormous concentration of resources. Much of this is held in private hands, but some resources are formally or informally public and communal and available to support and promote practices associated with urban citizenship. They include information and communication resources, organizational capacity and the myriad public and quasi-public spaces of the city, as well financial, technological and other material resources of various kinds. Expanding access to such resources can be an important contribution to the promotion of urban citizenship.

There are many vital connections between urban living and citizenship as practice and engagement. However it should be stressed that cities are not closed containers within which urban citizenship is played out as a set of purely local processes. On the contrary, the social, economic and political

webs that produce cities extend far beyond them to connect with their surrounding regions, with other cities (including cities in other countries), and with larger polities: regional governments, nation-states and international organizations. Thus urban citizenship involves, or should involve, a politics of connection both within and beyond the particular city in which it is rooted/routed.

What about rights? Are there specific rights associated with urban living? How might it make sense to speak of 'rights to the city'? An early and influential discussion of rights in an urban context was provided by French theorist Henri Lefebvre (1968). Lefebvre's philosophical arguments in *Le Droit à la Ville* ('The Right to the City') are somewhat arcane, but his discussion contains a number of important points for debates about urban citizenship. He suggested that the city should be considered an '*oeuvre*' – a work of human creation – rather than an economic product. He stressed the use-value of the city over its exchange-value, emphasizing that citizens have a right to make use of the city, and that it is not solely a collection of resources to enable economic activity. The uses of the city by citizens should be seen as valid ends in themselves, not merely as means to produce economic growth. Examples of such uses might include play, celebration, recreation, and other activities to promote human fulfilment. For Lefebvre, then, the right to the city is the right to make use of the city – the right to participate in the creation of the '*oeuvre*' and to richly inhabit the city. The right to the city is the right to live a fully urban life, with all the liberating benefits it brings. He believed the majority of city residents are denied this right because their lives are subordinated to economic pressures – despite being *in* the city, they are not fully *of* the city.

Geographer Don Mitchell has taken up Lefebvre's somewhat abstract arguments and related them directly to the important issue of access to urban public space and to the public sphere (Mitchell 2003). Public space and the public sphere are not the same thing, but they are related, and if the definition of 'public space' is extended to include 'virtual spaces' of communication such as the media and the internet then it may be said that adequate access to public space (whether real or virtual) is a necessary condition for the creation of a vibrant public sphere. Mitchell begins, though, with something more fundamental. This is the fact that, as David Smith puts it, 'human beings have no choice but to occupy a space: they just do' (Smith 1994: 151). While obvious, this has important implications for the use of public space, particularly by those, such as homeless people, whose access to private space is curtailed or non-existent. For some, in other words, there is no choice *but* to occupy public space. This means that conflicts over access to public space and official attempts to regulate it are not uniform in their social effects, but affect different groups in different ways and to different degrees.

Mitchell also emphasizes the *plural* and *political* character of both public space and the public sphere. There is not a singular, unified public, still less a single, unanimously accepted, public interest, but rather many competing publics and conflicting public interests. The public spaces of the city are one of the arenas where such conflicts are played out, but they are often also

themselves the objects of conflict, whether between competing publics or between one or more publics and institutions of the state. This suggests that Lefebvre's 'right to the city' will not be uncontested, but neither will it be moved forward without the active and public participation of citizens. It is to urban citizenship as participation that we now turn.

### ***Urban citizenship as participation***

We have already seen that there is no universally accepted definition of 'citizenship'. A variety of competing normative models has been proposed and scholars studying citizenship disagree about how to characterize and explain the patterns of actual citizenship forms and practices observable in different contexts around the world. Normative models of citizenship can be grouped into three main forms:

- liberal individualist models
- communitarian/civic-republican models
- radical pluralist/dissident models

These three groupings are rather broad categories that conceal some important differences, but they are adequate for the present discussion.

***Liberal individualist models*** of citizenship emphasize individual rights and negative freedoms. These include many of the rights enshrined in the European Convention of Human Rights such as the right to a fair trial, freedom of conscience and freedom from arbitrary detention. The model liberal citizen is principally a private citizen – free to engage in lawful private relationships of all kinds, but under no obligation to undertake or promote public activities. Liberal models have been criticized for adopting a predominantly passive approach to rights and obligations.

***Communitarian and civic-republican models***, by contrast, stress the public and participatory aspects of citizenship. They promote the active performance of civic duties in the context of a strong public sphere. Citizenship in this view requires full engagement in public life, with an emphasis on participation in debate and decision-making. This may extend to include the expectation that citizens should undertake some form of community service.

The principal differences between the liberal-individualist and communitarian/civic-republican models have been outlined by the German theorist Jürgen Habermas (1996). I have summarized Habermas's analysis in Appendix 1. According to Habermas, liberalism reduces politics to a market-like process in which political choices arise from the aggregation of individual private interests and preferences. He suggests that the republican model has the advantage over liberalism in placing the public sphere at the centre of democratic politics, and emphasizing the 'public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens' (Habermas 1996: 23). Habermas argues, however, that because of the communitarian character of contemporary republican thought, it tends to assume that there is a single public interest based on a shared collective identity and common ethical values that will give

rise to political consensus once public deliberation has taken place. But what if there are in fact multiple competing publics, plural identities and disagreement over ethical values – the very situation that characterizes today’s diverse and complex cities?

**Radical pluralist and dissident** approaches to citizenship address this question. They differ from both liberal-individualist and communitarian-civic republican approaches and form the third set of models considered here. (They also differ somewhat from Habermas’s own preferred alternative approach, although the reasons for this are complex and beyond the scope of the present discussion.) Like civic republicanism, radical pluralism insists on the central importance of participation in the public realm as the basis for citizenship. But in contrast to republicanism’s assumption of a single public and a unified ethical community, radical pluralism recognizes that the diversity of contemporary cities gives rise to a shifting multiplicity of social groupings with often divergent interests and potentially incommensurable ethical systems. Some examples of the kinds of groupings found in today’s cities are given in Figure 1.

Bus passengers	Homeless people	Religious moderates
Car drivers	Men	Runners
Children	Musicians	Secularists
Cyclists	Older people	Self-employed people
Diverse ethnic groups	Parents	Skateboarders
Diverse occupational groups	Patients	Tenants
Diverse religious groups	Pedestrians	Transgender people
Employees	People with disabilities	Unemployed people
Gay, lesbian & bisexual people	People in informal employment	Volunteers
Graffiti writers	Pet owners	Women
Heterosexual people	Refugees	Young people
Home owners	Religious fundamentalists	

**Fig. 1 Urban pluralism** (listed alphabetically)

Radical pluralist models of urban citizenship emphasize certain features of the social make-up of cities. First, individuals will be members of more than one (and often of many) groupings. For each person, some groupings will be more important than others, but which these are will vary between individuals. Parenthood might be the most important aspect of life for one person, while another in similar circumstances might feel their occupation to be paramount. Moreover, such priorities will change over time, both over the long term of an individual’s life course and in accordance with the rhythms of daily life. Someone’s status as a car driver may seem the most important thing in the world during the rush hour; the same person may become a committed cyclist at the weekend. It follows that there are no pre-given primary identities that inevitably take precedence over all others. In this respect radical pluralist models differ from some other influential accounts that take a particular set of social relations (such as class, gender, ethnicity, or religion) as the ultimate foundation of urban politics. At the same time radical pluralist models recognize that relations of class, gender, ethnicity, religion and so on are always present, are often highly influential and can be dominant in particular circumstances.

Second, relations between groupings involve changing patterns of cooperation, conflict and indifference. Individuals may find themselves in contradictory positions if they belong to two or more groupings that are in conflict with one another (a car driver who is also a cyclist, for example). In the radical pluralist model, it is the shifting alliances and antagonisms between groupings that are the basis of city politics and participatory urban citizenship.

Third, the groupings exist in cities, but they are not confined within particular cities or necessarily within cities in general. At the same time, as we discussed above, urbanization generates new kinds of groupings, and brings diverse groupings into particularly intense daily contact, producing the conditions for novel alliances and sharp conflicts. The fact that most of the groupings extend beyond city limits to surrounding hinterlands and to other cities within and beyond national borders means that urban politics is never purely *local* politics: alliances and conflicts can reach across and beyond national territories to involve distant others.

Fourth, some members of a grouping may come together in a more formal organized group or association, to promote the interests of the grouping or part of it – a women's group, a cyclists' association or a religious organization, for example. These more formal groups may or may not be representative of the grouping as a whole but they provide one way in which the relations of cooperation and conflict are brought into the open and made explicit through citizenship practice.

Fifth, the tensions and alliances among both the loose groupings and the formal groups are a major source of creativity in urban politics. Conflict is potentially productive as well as destructive, generating ideas, novel compromises and overcoming social and political obstacles to positive change. However generating creativity and innovation requires the active participation by citizens – it calls for urban citizenship as *practice*.

Citizen participation and engagement involves a spectrum of practices with varying degrees of intensity and autonomy. The classic description of this spectrum is the 'ladder of citizen participation' proposed by Sherry Arnstein (1969). Although couched in terms of engagement in the planning process, the ladder can be applied to a range of urban policy situations and more widely. The eight steps in Arnstein's 'ladder' designate increasing levels of citizen participation (see Figure 2)

According to Arnstein the bottom two rungs substitute for genuine participation. In **manipulation** citizens' representatives may be placed on advisory committees to legitimize decisions that have been taken elsewhere. The function of such bodies is primarily public relations. In the case of **therapy**, citizens are involved in order to influence their behaviour, rather than to allow them to influence decisions. Examples include requiring or encouraging parents to attend classes or sessions designed to increase their control over their troublesome children, or programmes that seek to promote particular social norms. With the third rung on the ladder, **informing**, we reach what Arnstein regarded as the 'first step towards legitimate citizen

participation', although she argued that the flow of information tends to be one-way – from officials to citizens. The fourth rung, **consultation** using surveys, meetings and focus groups and so on can also be a legitimate element in participation, though Arnstein notes that there is no guarantee that citizens' views will be taken into account. Arnstein's fifth rung, **placation**, typically involves appointing a small number of citizens' representatives to committees, boards and other agencies. Here there is more potential for influence, although this tends to be stuck at the advisory, rather than the decision-making level. For Arnstein, only the last three rungs of the ladder represent true participation. **Partnership** allows power-sharing through joint boards or similar structures, in which citizens' representatives participate as equals. **Delegated power**, means that citizens are given formal control over an element of the plan or programme. The final rung, **citizen control**, might involve the establishment of a neighbourhood corporation or similar body with full control over a local institution or a specific policy area or activity.

Increasing participation ↑	8	Citizen control	Citizen Power
	7	Delegated Power	
	6	Partnership	
	5	Placation	Tokenism
	4	Consultation	
	3	Informing	
	2	Therapy	Nonparticipation
	1	Manipulation	

**Fig. 2 Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation**

There are limitations to Arnstein's formula, some of which she discussed in the original article. For one thing, it is based on a simple linear model of power in which citizens' power is simply traded off against the power of public authorities. More recent writing on power presents a more complex picture (e.g. Allen 2003). Arnstein also does not discuss how the critical geographical question of the appropriate spatial definition of the communities within which citizen participation might be organized, and how the legitimate interests of those residing beyond the community's limit are to be represented. Finally, the model addresses the American context and uses American examples, so caution is required before applying it elsewhere. Nevertheless it remains useful because it highlights a range of possible forms of participation and the fact that many activities that are commonly labelled 'participation' would more accurately be termed 'legitimation' (see also Pocock & Hudson 1978: 128-46).

Of the three forms of citizenship outlined above (liberal, civic-republican and radical pluralist), the normative model of citizenship implicit in Arnstein's account comes closest to the civic-republican model. For example, Arnstein

treats the category of 'citizens' as given and provides no consideration of differences and divisions among citizens. The radical pluralist approach to citizenship thus requires a slightly different model of participation to that offered by Arnstein, one that emphasizes diversity, autonomy, and the active making of cities by citizens. Whereas Arnstein mainly considers citizens as a single group, radical pluralism stresses their diversity. Power conflicts exist not only between citizens and planners and other public officials, but also between different groupings of citizens. Conventional models of citizenship and democracy give to the state the task of mediating or adjudicating between such conflicts through judicial, political or bureaucratic mechanisms. All of these have their place, but in the radical pluralist approach groupings of citizens also engage directly with each other. The state may have a role to play in providing a forum (whether physical, political or both) within which such engagement can take place, but it is important that citizens participate by negotiating their differences directly.

Arnstein's arguments refer mainly to participation in processes initiated by or otherwise dependent upon the public agencies of the state. Radical pluralist citizenship extends the notion of participation to include autonomous activities undertaken by citizens themselves. For example, a need for a neighbourhood child-care facility might be met in a number of ways. A private business might open such a centre, parents might lobby the public authorities to provide the facility (Arnstein's model), or parents might combine independently of both private business and the state to establish the facility as a cooperative, a voluntary organization, or a not-for-profit enterprise. Equally, the radical pluralist model of citizenship stresses the legitimacy of dissent (hence the term 'dissident' citizenship mentioned above). Indeed an alternative label used by some writers on cities is 'insurgent citizenship' (Friedmann 2002: 75-78, Holston 1998). I have decided not to use the term 'insurgent' here because its use in the current political context is dominated by connotations of armed insurrection. Nevertheless, the idea behind the term 'insurgent citizenship' is an important one: legitimate dissent cannot be contained within the channels of formal state-sponsored participation outlined by Arnstein, but spills over into autonomous forms of protest activity that are often highly creative and carnivalesque

In the radical pluralist approach, legitimate dissent cannot be limited to forms of protest sanctioned by the state such as voting, petitions, press campaigns, and regulated street demonstration. There are two reasons for this. First, it must be possible for citizens to call into question the state's own practices, including its mechanisms for regulating dissent. Second, state-sanctioned forms of protest may not allow the adequate airing of, or attention to, the issues at stake. Central among the 'rights to the city' implied by the radical pluralist conception of citizenship is the right not only to speak, but also to be heard and listened to. Because the radical pluralist model sits at least partly outside the state it also necessarily includes the potential for actions that the state deems unacceptable.

Radical pluralism thus emphasizes the relative autonomy of citizenship from the state and the 'bottom up', pro-active character of citizen participation. This

emphasis is complemented by a stress on the 'active making' of cities by their citizens. In one sense all cities are 'actively made', but in modern Western countries most of this making is undertaken in the private economy and through the formulation and implementation of public policy by the state. The scope for direct influence by citizens is commensurately small and any 'citizenship effect' in cities is marginal to the overall process of urbanization. Radical pluralism's stress on the active negotiation of social diversity, autonomous action to meet wants and needs, and the legitimacy of vigorous dissent, combine to enlarge the room for the active making of cities by citizens.

I argued at the start of the paper that contemporary theories emphasize the importance of participation to the constitution of citizenship. In this section we have examined the three main groups of citizenship models (liberal-individualist, civic-republican/communitarian and radical pluralist/dissident). Of the three, the radical pluralist approach offers the best route to promote enhanced and meaningful participation in the context of social diversity, but following this route successfully will depend on some important conditions, of which the most significant is health and vitality of the urban public realm.

### **REBUILDING THE PUBLIC REALM: TOWARDS A PLURALIST URBAN COMMONWEALTH**

The term 'public realm' refers to a space of collective social interaction in which issues relating to the state and well-being of society as a whole (or a defined part of it, such as residents of city) can be raised, debated, fought out and resolved. It excludes by definition the sphere of private relationships. Private relationships include interpersonal relationships between friends, family and household members, matters covered by the private civil law (e.g. disputes between individuals), and private economic relationships (e.g. employment contracts and investment decisions). However, while such private relationships may take place outside the public sphere, they may be, and often are, a matter for lively debate within it. Private relationships, in other words, may have public effects, and may be matters of public concern. In addition, the boundaries between the public and private realms are not fixed, but change over time. Their location is also contested and a matter for public debate. For example, when rape within marriage was recognized as a crime, rather than a private ('domestic') matter, it moved from the private to the public realm. Feminist writers on citizenship, in particular, have questioned whether it is possible to draw a firm and universal distinction between the public and private spheres.

The public realm is limited neither to the state nor to formal political processes of electoral representation and governmental decision-making. It includes, rather, a wide range of forums, media and activities, some of which operate within the state, some in relation to it, and others independently. Civic-republican models of citizenship tend to assume a single, unitary public realm with shared 'rules of engagement' providing the basis for the rational deliberation of public issues. Radical pluralist models, by contrast stress that the public realm itself is plural – there are many 'publics' with different modes



of interaction and negotiation. These modes might include spectacular events, rhetorical interventions, creative and theatrical activities, small scale and intimate engagements and so on, in addition to the conventional practice of formal political deliberation.

In recent years declining participation in formal political processes and growing cynicism about mainstream party politics and politicians has been accompanied by an increased interest in non-party political activities and issues. People are greatly interested in all kinds of public problems and matters of social concern, but frequently they do not see these as 'politics' (or not as problems that 'politics' can solve). The reasons for this situation are complex and beyond the scope of this paper, but it is worth thinking briefly about some of the implications. First, initiatives aimed mainly at simply increasing electoral participation, while valuable, do not tackle the root of the problem. Second, politics and hence citizenship really is much wider than the formal processes of government, and the promotion of citizenship in its full sense needs to recognize this and enhance the possibilities for its development beyond, as well as in relation to, the state. Third, we need to recognize that politics in the widest sense necessarily involves disagreement, dispute and dissent and that much of this can and does occur outside of the party political system. A healthy democracy and a vibrant citizenship culture depends on enlarging the scope for these expressions of difference, as well as for dialogue, negotiation and collaboration. In sum, addressing the decline in political participation should not mean simply channelling non-party and informal political activities through the formal political system. Rather it should involve both re-invigorating the public realm to enhance the capacity for all kinds of citizenship practices and restructuring the formal structures of political representation, debate and decision-making at different levels of government so that they complement and enhance diverse forms of citizenship engagement

For cities this will entail the development of a strategy to rebuild the urban public realm as a space and a resource for pluralist citizenship practice. Such a strategy would need to address the various different elements of the urban public realm. Some of the most important of these are as follows.

**Access to local media** Local press and broadcast media and the internet provide important spaces for debate and dialogue between plural voices. This provision can be compromised, however, where one media outlet has a de facto local monopoly (as is often the case with local newspapers) and is in any case dependent on editorial and proprietorial decisions. Local public service broadcasting and community-controlled media are thus important elements in the mix. Internet-based media have great potential, although research suggests that the provision of access to relevant technologies is not by itself a sufficient condition for the creation of a virtual space of local public debate. There is also scope for special initiatives to promote debate, such as the Royal Society of Arts 'coffee house challenge' in which individuals take part in public discussions about 'encouraging enterprise, moving toward a zero-waste society, fostering resilient communities, developing a capable population and advancing global citizenship' (Royal Society of Arts 2004).

**Access to high quality public space** Reflecting the pluralist character of urban citizenship, urban public space should itself be multifaceted, and may include parks and gardens, informal green space for games, space to move around the city, space for informal social and cultural activities, space for informal economic activities and meeting spaces. Meeting spaces might include places of informal encounter, visible space for public demonstrations rallies and assemblies and indoor meeting facilities for planning, organizing and holding activities. To guarantee their genuinely public character such spaces should be maintained at public expense, and provision should be of a high standard to encourage citizens to make use of it. As another paper<sup>2</sup> in this series has shown, public space is under constant pressure from a range of current developments in cities including growing numbers of 'gated communities' and semi-private spaces such as enclosed shopping malls.

**A balance between civility and social friction** Much has been written in recent years about the importance of civility in urban life. A minimum level of civility may certainly be necessary, but there is a paradox here. If the state steps in to *enforce* civility, it risks constraining the active exercise of pluralist urban citizenship. This is because acceptable norms of behaviour and what counts as civility are themselves legitimate matters of public debate. Moreover, such enforcement risks of the alienation of particular social groupings (such as young people), rather than their engagement. It may be useful to draw a distinction here between four types of potentially 'uncivil' behaviour:

1. Actions directed at private individuals
2. Actions directed at public figures in their public role
3. Actions directed at collective groups
4. Actions directed at no one in particular, but with an environmental or general social impact

There might be wide agreement that 1 is always wrong and constitutes illegitimate harassment. Reactions to 2 and 3 may depend on context and the precise nature of the behaviour, but should probably not be automatically outlawed. For example, in category 3 we could place both incitement to racial hatred and various forms of direct action that have been taken in the past against slum landlords. In category 4 the issue of a necessary balance between civility and 'social friction' is posed most sharply. Graffiti is a good example of the dilemma. Many regard all graffiti as a blight on the urban environment, but others, and particularly many young people, disagree. As the London Assembly's Graffiti Investigative Committee noted, 'young people feel that used in the right way and with the right facilities, graffiti can be a legitimate and attractive form of self-expression' (London Assembly Graffiti Investigative Committee 2002: paragraph 8.4; see also London Assembly Environment Committee 2004: paragraph 5.8). Community safety is an important precondition of wide participation in urban affairs, but cities cannot be made wholly risk-free without destroying what makes them interesting and lively places to live. While risk reduction certainly has its place, priority should

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<sup>2</sup> See Gordon MacLeod 2004 *Privatizing the City? The Tentative Push Towards Edge Urban Developments and Gated Communities in the UK* (Durham, ICRRDS).  
[www.dur.ac.uk/icrrds/staff/researchpubs/private/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/icrrds/staff/researchpubs/private/)

also be given to enhancing our abilities to live with risk and where possible to exploit it as a source of creativity and innovation.

**Resources for creativity and social innovation** The importance of autonomous citizen action is central to the notion of radical pluralist urban citizenship. Such 'bottom up' activity is potentially highly creative, capable of generating ideas, experiments and sustainable social innovations. The formal public policy process cannot always 'pick winners' from among good new ideas, and a vigorous citizen-driven innovation process can add substantially to the pool of successful initiatives. This process can be supported through the provision of resources of various kinds – seed-corn funding, provision of premises, support networks and so on. In the Nord-Pas de Calais region of France, for example, the regional government makes small financial grants from a 'Residents' Participation Fund' (*Fonds de Participation des Habitants*) to groups of citizens to undertake small scale community projects and social activities across a wide range of fields. The benefits of such initiatives may be qualitative and cannot always be evaluated in terms of quantifiable outputs. Current audit mechanisms thus may not always provide the best assurance of effectiveness and there may be a need to develop new forms of appraisal to ensure that the potential of such schemes is not stifled by a requirement to demonstrate rapid impacts on quantitative indicators.

**The role of play** Much autonomous citizen action will be directed towards instrumental goals, such as environmental improvement, social and community development or campaigning on policy issues. However, autonomous action can also be undertaken for its own sake – the activity is an end in itself. This relates to the importance of *play* as an attribute of urban life. In his commentary on *The Right to the City*, Henri Lefebvre insists that play is a serious business – central to recovering the value of cities as genuinely social spaces in which human lives are not constantly subordinated to economic imperatives (Lefebvre 1996: 171-72). More recently musician and writer Pat Kane has campaigned for the importance of play to be recognized and for the recovery of the seriousness of play as 'the experience of being an active, creative and fully autonomous person' (Kane 2000). He suggests that modern societies have conceded too much to the 'work ethic' and the development of an alternative 'play ethic' is urgently needed (Kane 2004).

**Support for associational life** Autonomous citizen action in the plural urban public sphere varies from spontaneous short-lived events to long-term projects supported by organizational infrastructures. Many commentators have stressed the importance of a vibrant associational life for the health of the public realm (e.g. Hirst 1994, Putnam 2001). One of the reasons for this is that associational relationships are multi-faceted, as may be seen in a simple example. Parents of small children who require a baby-sitter can choose, if they have the money, to pay a commercial agency or an individual to provide the service. However, if a group of parents form a baby-sitting circle – an informal association – the potential benefits are not limited to cost savings. Such an association would be based on reciprocity, rather than market exchange. It may allow for friendships to develop, for knowledge to be shared and for emotional and practical support to be provided. If the association is

also open to members of the public to join, it contributes in a small way to the rejuvenation of the public realm by bringing strangers into contact and communication. It is important not to overstate the impacts of such initiatives, of course, but they can be real nonetheless. However, starting even small projects involves numerous challenges. Access to resources is a problem for the development of many voluntary citizens' associations. Private enterprise has access to private capital markets and profits and the public sector is financed through a combination of taxation, government borrowing and user charges. Voluntary associations, by contrast have no dedicated basis of financial support apart from member contributions and voluntary donations. This means that resources are often very limited and particularly limited in poorer neighbourhoods – where the benefits of a more dynamic associational life would have most impact. Efforts to rebuild the public realm along radical pluralist lines will therefore require imaginative solutions to the resources problem if they are to be successful.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have tried to show that dissent, difference and disagreement are as integral to contemporary citizenship practice as consensus, solidarity and compromise. Moreover, disagreement extends also to the meaning of citizenship itself. City politics is not only about the development of shared visions for our cities but also about the negotiation of the cultural and social differences and political disagreements that make shared visions so elusive.

I have emphasized that citizen participation can involve a range of different activities from tokenistic consultation exercises to full involvement in decision-making and from vocal protests to direct self-provisioning. By definition, active participatory citizenship cannot be instilled from above, but needs to be grounded in grassroots action and everyday experience. At the same time, government decisions have important effects on the environment within which urban citizenship develops and public policy can enhance (or reduce) the scope for its revitalization.

A strategy for rebuilding the urban public realm should be at the heart of any citizenship-friendly urban policy. I have suggested that this should focus on developing access to local media and high quality public space, striking a balance between civility and social friction, enhancing resources for creativity and social innovation, promoting play as well as work, and supporting a pluralist associational life.

This kind of approach faces many challenges. As the ODPM's recent Five Year Plan *Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity* recognizes, 'it is the worst off in our society – those who might have most to gain – who are least likely to get involved'. One current strand of thinking emphasizes the decentralization of power and decision-making to the local and neighbourhood level. Decentralization may encourage participation but there is also a risk of promoting local chauvinism. Neighbourhoods are the key spaces within much of our daily life takes place, and as such are central to urban renewal. But the urban public realm is wider than the neighbourhood

and risks being fragmented unless decentralization is complemented by a strategy to protect and rebuild it.

A successful strategy to rebuild the urban public realm would see the emergence of a plural urban commonwealth in our cities. It would reinforce the role and importance of cities as *public* resources, not just concatenations of private wealth and property. Supporting urban citizenship requires provision for action and interaction and for a stress on autonomy, rather than regulation. Cities need to be opened up as 'spaces of potential' for all kinds of social groupings and activities.

Such a strategy is not without risk, of course. Initiatives aimed at marginalized social groups are liable to 'capture' by middle class interests and where projects do successfully reach their target groups they frequently depend on a small cluster of 'the usual suspects' shouldering responsibility for the majority of the work involved. However, there are also risks if the pluralist model of citizenship outlined here is rejected, leading either to increased regulation and steering of public participation by the state, or to continuing social atomization and erosion of the public realm. Richard Rogers may be right to say that 'cities make citizens', but the reverse is also true – pluralist citizenship promotes diverse and sustainable cities.

## APPENDIX 1

### *Liberal and republican models of democracy compared*

	Liberal	Republican
Purpose of politics	Programming government in the interest of society	The constitution of society and the production and expression of social solidarity
Nature of citizenship rights	Mainly negative: state protects individuals against intervention by government or other individuals; rights of political participation provide means to influence administration in line with private interests	Political rights are positive liberties to participate in the production of a political community of free and equal persons
State's <i>raison d'être</i>	Protection of equal private rights	Guarantee of inclusive opinion and will-formation
Nature of political process	Market paradigm: private voting decisions allocated among competitive politicians, parties and programmes; political questions are questions of preference	Dialogue paradigm: public communication oriented to mutual understanding; political questions include questions of value
Rationality	Private, atomized; political outcomes are the aggregate of individual decisions	Public, collective; political outcomes can be the outcome of the public use of reason
Form of democratic process	Compromises between competing interests on the basis of the general and equal right to vote	Ethical-political discourse on the basis of a 'culturally established background consensus shared by the citizenry'
State-society relation	Democratic process bridges inevitable gulf between state and society; separation of state and society guaranteed constitutionally	Democratic process is the medium through which society constitutes itself as a political whole
Nature of the common good	Common good is non-political and resides in the satisfaction of private preferences through the market	Common good is produced, expressed and pursued through the political process
Nature of political subjectivity	Many isolated private subjects	Citizenry as collective actor
Democracy and legitimation	Democratic will-formation only <i>legitimizes</i> the exercise of political power	Democratic will-formation <i>constitutes</i> the political community
Democracy and popular sovereignty	Popular sovereignty resides in the will of the collective citizenry	Popular sovereignty resides in a constitutional state

**Source:** Author's summary derived from Habermas (1996)

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