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Kalandides, A (2018) *Citizen Participation: Towards a Framework for Policy Assessment*. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 11 (2). pp. 152-164. ISSN 1753-8335 (In Press)

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Version: Accepted Version

Publisher: Emerald

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMD-02-2018-0017>

Please cite the published version

<https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk>



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Journal:	<i>Journal of Place Management and Development</i>
Manuscript ID	JPMD-02-2018-0017.R1
Manuscript Type:	Academic Paper
Keywords:	participation, policy, Berlin, public sphere, citizenship, civil society

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Citizen participation: towards a framework for policy assessment

Introduction

Citizen participation is of growing interest across several disciplines, albeit with divergent meanings (s. for example Healey, 1997; Hickey and Mohan, 2004a; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Cornwall and Coelho; 2006; Cornwall, 2008a, 2008b). The task of tracking those meanings becomes more difficult when one considers that other concepts (engagement, involvement, collaborative planning, inclusion) are also used to denote something rather similar. Also, 'participation' has been used with different attributes: "community", "civic" and "citizen" participation in "planning", "development", "urban development", "governance", etc. Beside different geographical trajectories in the conceptualization, development, and implementation of participation (revealed through a 'genealogical' and 'critical historical' perspective, as attempted by Huxley, 2013), there is an additional difficulty inasmuch as the term is used both in vernacular and academic language. Finally, there is always an inherent conflict in the way a concept is used in theory creation and policy design (Jessop, 2002).

The above considerations of concepts, attributes, keywords and phrases open a vast semantic field with several possible meanings and connotations. It is not my intention in this paper to present an argument for a 'correct' use of the concept of 'citizen participation', but rather to contribute to conceptual clarity through a reading of its different uses while considering what each variation of the term *does*. Arnstein's "Ladder of citizen participation" (1969) is often considered a seminal text in the relevant discussion in the US, as is the Skeffington Report of the same year in the UK (s. Huxley, 2013). While the latter approaches participation as a planning procedure, Arnstein, who calls for a 'redistribution of citizen power', demands a more radical approach:

"It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future. [...] Participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows [...] only some of the sides to benefit." (Arnstein, 1966:216).

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3 Arnstein permits us to expand our reading of participation and extend our
4 consideration beyond purely procedural matters towards more basic concepts of
5 power, its (re)distribution and claims to it. It also begs the question of who benefits
6 from participation and in what ways.
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11 The aim of this article is to contribute to the above academic debate on participatory
12 urban development in two ways: firstly, by proposing a methodological framework
13 though which urban policies can be assessed; and secondly through a case study
14 which applies the framework, delivering an analysis of the policy intentions of the
15 current Berlin administration. After this short introduction, the first section of the
16 article introduces the case study, placing it in the political context in Berlin and
17 suggesting an initial reading of the relevant documents that frame policy in
18 participatory urban development today. Section two includes an attempt at
19 disambiguation, a conceptual and an analytical framework, followed by a preliminary
20 assessment of the Berlin participatory policy. The final part of the article draws
21 conclusions and sets a possible future research agenda.
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30 At this point I would like to propose a provisional definition of *participation as both*
31 *a democratic right and a process through which citizens engage in the public sphere*
32 *to shape policy*. Although certainly incomplete, it is useful as a first approach through
33 which relevant passages in official documents can be identified.
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38 A short methodological notice: The way the document proceeds is from an initial
39 description of the case study, to theories that can help understand it and back to the
40 case study, performing the analysis. The consequence of this procedure is that the
41 choice of theories is guided by the case itself. Had we looked at a different example, it
42 may have revealed a different set of useful theoretical tools. In that sense, the
43 theoretical part of the paper, funnelled through the case study, can be both eclectic
44 and incomplete.
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51 **The politics of participation in Berlin**

52 German planning law includes formal participation in urban planning. Failure to
53 comply can lead to an annulment of planning results. Alongside such formalised
54 participation, the State of Berlin has experimented with other forms of citizen
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3 involvement in urban development since the 1980s, e.g. the “gentle” urban renewal
4 during the International Building Exhibition (IBA) in 1987 (Bernt, 2003).
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7 Ongoing privatization of state assets after 2000 led to a rekindling of protest
8 movements, some of which led to successful contestation. “Media Spree versenken”
9 (Scharenberg and Bader, 2009) or “100% Tempelhofer Feld” (Kaschuba and Genz,
10 2014), both ended in successful local referenda, which not only managed to stop
11 planned developments, but strengthened the movements themselves and confirmed
12 an already existing public consciousness in Berlin, that urban social movements can
13 indeed shift policy making (Novy and Colomb, 2013). In brief, citizen participation as
14 an active claim has a long history in Berlin and is engrained into local politics.
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22 A new coalition government (henceforward “Coalition”) between the Social
23 Democrats (SPD), The Greens and The Left was formed as a result of the September
24 2016 elections in the State of Berlin. The three parties signed an agreement of
25 cooperation for the period 2016-2021, known as the Coalition Agreement
26 (*Koalitionsvereinbarung*, henceforward “Contract”). One of the provisions in the
27 Contract is for citizen participation as one of the guiding principles of urban
28 development. This document forms the basis for analysis in this paper. Whereas it is
29 too early to assess its results, it is possible to critically consider its *intentions*.
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36 The foreword to the Contract opens with a series of framing concepts, that act as
37 guiding values behind the document: (1) The Coalition stands for social justice; (2)
38 Governmental policy in Berlin puts people from all social milieus at its core; (3)
39 Berlin respects diversity and all people “independent of ethnic background, religion,
40 skin colour, sexual orientation and identity or gender and age”
41 (*Koalitionsvereinbarung* 2016:9); (4) Everybody should have the possibility to
42 participate equally in the success of the city; (5) Good work for everybody allows self-
43 determined participation in society. Good education is the basis for social
44 participation; (6) Housing is a basic right.
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52 The Contract consists of 5 chapters and participation is present in several sections in
53 more or less explicit ways: Chapter I (“Investing in the city of tomorrow”), first
54 section “Best education opportunities for more participation”; part of the section on
55 urban development, “Urban development in Berlin – intelligent, sustainable and
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3 participatory”. In chapter III (“A liveable Berlin close to the citizen”) there is a full
4 section on “Civic involvement and participation”. Participation is also present in the
5 content, if not in the title, of other sections.
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9 Chapter I (“Investing in the city of tomorrow”) begins with a section on education as a
10 condition of participation in society [1]. In this chapter, “supporting democratic
11 understanding” from a young age where young people can experience and test
12 democratic practices is an expressed goal. By strengthening political education and
13 student representation, the Coalition intends to help the creation of a democratic
14 culture at school.
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20 “Affordable housing for everybody” is a further goal in the same chapter, based on the
21 principle of housing as a basic right for all Berliners, a provision already integrated in
22 the constitution of the State of Berlin. It includes the safeguarding of the social and
23 functional urban mix, the protection of tenants from displacement, avoidance of
24 homelessness and social exclusion, investments in affordable housing, participatory
25 planning and active tenant associations. Regarding the latter, state (Berlin)- owned
26 housing companies shall be role-models in applying citizen participation procedures
27 in new construction projects. The coalition explicitly supports tenants’ participation
28 in decision-making.
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36 “Urban development in Berlin – intelligent, sustainable and participatory” opens with
37 the goal of “strengthening citizen participation and planning culture” and states the
38 motivation behind it: “urban development is successful when it is designed together
39 with those with stakes in it” (Koalitionsvereinbarung, 2016: 31). The Senate (i.e. the
40 Berlin government) promises to develop guidelines for participation to strengthen it
41 [2]. Procedures shall become lower-threshold, more flexible and more representative.
42 A new online platform (mein.berlin.de) [3] will inform citizens about all development
43 plans, so that citizens can participate. Online participation will be further developed,
44 and contact points for participation will be created, both at a state (Berlin-wide) and
45 municipal (borough) level. The existing event series Stadtforum [4] will continue to
46 inform public debate. Berlin will also examine the possibility of changing the law on
47 planning implementation (AGBauGB) to include more participation in it. Public
48 enterprises shall consider participatory processes in their building plans.
49 Participation appears at every aspect of planning: green planning, new
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3 neighbourhoods, public transportation, etc. Combating inequality, strengthening
4 social cohesion and civic involvement as well as the creation of integration
5 management for refugees are further goals expressed in this section.
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9 In the section about energy (“Berlin – A pioneer for climate protection and energy
10 transition”), the integration of citizens for the success of energy transition appears in
11 the very first paragraph: new forms of participation, real transparency, active control
12 and financial participation. The communal energy provider shall be largely controlled
13 by the Berlin parliament. A steering committee on energy transition shall be
14 constituted with actors from the environmental, housing and consumer protection
15 associations as well as from businesses, unions and academic institutions.
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22 Social cohesion and proximity to citizens are goals to be found in the section on
23 “Budget and financial policy”, together with transparency and the extension of citizen
24 budgets. Regarding the latter, the contract states that an expressed goal of the
25 Coalition is to strengthen participatory democracy. Giving citizens the possibility to
26 co-decide on how to use budgets will strengthen Berlin’s political culture.
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31 Chapter II (“Strengthening social cohesion”) opens with a section on work. Different
32 lines of exclusion are mentioned, together with goals to overcome them: people with
33 disabilities, the elderly, the poor, and the homeless are explicitly mentioned. In the
34 case of the elderly, the Contract provides for a participatory design of guidelines in
35 relevant policy. In the same section the goal is expressed to strengthen volunteering
36 by opening a dialogue on the Berlin Charta of Civic Involvement, which has been in
37 operation since 2004. A strategy on how to strengthen volunteering networks shall be
38 developed in a participatory method.
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46 A section is dedicated to gender parity (“Half of the power to women”) and one to
47 sexual diversity (“Rainbow Capital Berlin”). Instruments such as gender
48 mainstreaming and gender budgeting are discussed, feminism and sex workers are
49 also explicitly mentioned. Civil society and the parliament shall be included in the
50 further development of a gender equality policy. Women’s projects as forms of self-
51 organization and spaces of feminist deliberation shall be protected and strengthened.
52 Sexual diversity shall be protected, and LGBTTTQ* rights strengthened.
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3 “Metropole Berlin – open to the world, diverse, just” stresses the need for a law
4 against discrimination, in particular in relation to refugees and migrants and a
5 further development of the law on Participation and Integration [5].
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9 Berlin’s policy as a “Cultural and Media Metropolis” is based on the principle that
10 participation in culture is a condition for social participation. Cultural policy shall be
11 based on participation and dialogue with artists. As free and independent media are
12 indispensable for the functioning of democracy, opinion-making and deliberation, the
13 Coalition shall support the independency of media and further develop public media
14 corporations. The coalition shall fight for a free and open internet as the basis of
15 social, economic and democratic participation.
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22 The development of citizenship and suffrage rights is acknowledged in a section on
23 justice (“Berlin Judiciary in an effective state governed by the rule of law”). Here, the
24 Coalition will put forward an initiative to change the German Basic Law, to give
25 voting rights at a state level for EU citizens and, under certain conditions, at a
26 municipality level for third state citizens. The Coalition shall also introduce an anti-
27 privatisation clause in Berlin’s constitution, which will make clear that substantial
28 parts of public companies can only be sold if the majority of Berliners agree in a
29 referendum.
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37 “Civic involvement and participation” states the strong relationship between civic
38 involvement, social integration and participation: social businesses, welfare
39 organizations, religious communities, political participation, etc. The Coalition shall
40 strengthen direct democracy and introduce new formats of participation and
41 communication between Senate (government) and citizens. All participation
42 processes shall be found on the new online platform “mein berlin”. Citizens will have
43 the possibility to codetermine neighbourhood funds and citizens’ budgets.
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49 **A methodological framework**

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52 Examining the context where the term ‘participation’ appears, can add to the
53 clarification of its use. By context I mean both the broader theoretical concepts it fits
54 into, but also all the words that seem to accompany participation: civil society, public
55 sphere, governance, planning, placemaking, civic engagement, etc.
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4 The concept of civil society seems intrinsically linked to that of participation. Indeed,
5 for many authors, a strong civil society is a precondition for democracy (s. Cohen and
6 Arato, 1996; Putnam, 1993; Tester, 1992; Walzer, 1995). Uses of the term ranges from
7 a synonym for “citizenry” (i.e. a collective noun for citizens); to a Marxist and
8 Gramscian understanding where it is juxtaposed to the political society; an
9 understanding that equates it with a “privately-ordered capitalist economy” (Frazer,
10 1990:74); and finally, to the ‘associational’ view, arguably the most common form in
11 use today. The latter can be found in its politicized variant (which includes political
12 party organizations and trade unions) or its more apolitical one, that concentrates on
13 voluntary organisations and NGOs. Civil society may refer to “a third sector of private
14 associations [...] autonomous from both state and economy” that are voluntary and
15 do not work for profit. (Young, 2000:158); or “the nexus of nongovernmental or
16 ‘secondary’ associations that are neither economic nor administrative” (Frazer,
17 1990:74). Such a distinction (i.e. of the civil society separate from state and the
18 economy) “helps define [...] the role of civil society in promoting social justice”
19 (Young, 2000:158). A critical approach to the civil society and the public sphere
20 ought to “render visible the ways in which social inequality taints deliberation” and
21 how different publics “are differentially empowered or segmented” and some
22 subordinated to others. (Frazer, 1990:77). A discourse grounded in a homogenous
23 understanding of *the* “civil society” obfuscates its internal contradictions, as well as
24 the way that power fault lines are drawn and redrawn constantly. This homogenizing
25 discourse then tends to reproduce existing hegemonic relations (Walzer, 1991).
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41 In a different view, a strong ‘civil society’ is not an alternative to the state, but rather
42 complements it. State and civil society have different functions and operate at
43 different scales (Young, 2000). Civil society can promote social justice as self-
44 determination, overcoming domination and the institutional conditions that prevent
45 people “from participation in decisions and processes that determine their actions”
46 (Young, 2000:156). It may however be less effective than the state in promoting
47 social justice as self-development, i.e. in countering oppression and the systematic
48 institutional processes that prevent people from developing skills or freely interacting
49 with others in social life. Parliament which “functions as a public sphere within the
50 state” and whose discourse encompasses both opinion-formation and decision-
51 making is a ‘strong public’ (Frazer, 1990:75).
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4 Social movements, acting in a space of “noninstitutional politics” (Offe, 1985:826),
5 seek to politicize the institutions of civil society, beyond the “representative-
6 bureaucratic political institutions” thereby constituting a civil society not dependent
7 upon regulation, control, and intervention (Offe, 1985:820). They often build upon
8 the Lefebvrian “Right to the City”, whereby rights are not there to be taken, but are
9 *created* through social and political action (Marcuse, 2014; Mayer, 2009).
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Citizenship is a recurrent term in the political vocabularies of social movements and
has been expanded beyond the acquisition of legal rights, to include concepts of
citizens as active social subjects, struggling for the recognition of such rights.
(Dagnino, 2011; Vaiou this issue). There is however a reading of citizenship, that
moves away from collective rights, where it is understood primarily as the integration
of individuals into the market. Both readings rely on a “vibrant and proactive civil
society” and use the concept of participation albeit with different meanings (Dagnino,
2011: 419).

Participatory citizenship, directly linked to the struggles of social movements,
challenges the definition of what constitutes “the public arena – its participants, its
institutions, its processes, its agenda and its scope” (Dagnino, 2007: 419). As “a right
to have rights”, it can be conceived as “a struggle for the expansion of democracy”. It
goes beyond the recognition of legal rights and demands a new sociability – a
different way of living with each other, a different public sphere in which rights
determine the parameters of the negotiation of conflicts. Asserting something as a
right (e.g. the right to housing), agency and the capacity to struggle are all projects of
participatory citizenship. The direct participation of civil society and social
movements in state decisions carries with it the potential of radical transformation
(Dagnino, 2007).

The creation of a *public sphere* is a function of an active civil society, through which it
aims “to influence or reform state or corporate politics and practices” (Young,
2000:163). The public sphere is a tool through which organized citizens can limit
power and hold powerful actors accountable (Young, 2000:174). It can influence
policy (ibid: 177) and can “change society through society”, by proposing alternative
norms and practices (ibid: 178).

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4 The existence of a public sphere is often considered a precondition for a functioning
5 democracy, indeed as a 'space' of deliberation and public debate (Habermas, 1965
6 and 199; Arendt, 1958), where citizens control state and corporate power (Fraser,
7 1990; Young, 2000). In its Habermasian understanding, there is a basic distinction
8 between the institutions of the state apparatus from public arenas of citizen discourse
9 and association (Habermas, 1965; 1983). "Talk" and "deliberation" are the central
10 features of the public sphere, a space distinct from the state and the "official-
11 economy". There exists however another theorization of public *spheres* as plural, as
12 spaces where societal groups engage in issues that may contest the hegemony of the
13 bourgeois public sphere – thus producing "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser, 1990);
14 and there is the viewpoint that connects the two, seeing democratic deliberation
15 functioning in public sphere understood both as singular and plural, whereby the
16 penetrability and exchange between them defines the quality of the democratic
17 process (Young, 2000). It has also been argued that practices of collective action and
18 solidarity can also constitute public spheres, with claims to participation by excluded
19 groups, and thus with a potential to challenge hegemonic power structures (Vaiou
20 and Kalandides, 2017). Public spheres are constituted at "various social geographies
21 of urban space" (Fraser, 1990:69); deliberation takes place beyond the formal spaces
22 of parliament or town hall, they include the street and the square: public space
23 becomes a privileged site of the public sphere (Young, 2000; Vaiou and Kalandides,
24 2009). Media, as the primary circulators of ideas, plays a central role in the creation
25 of the public sphere. What happens if media are privately owned and the concerns of
26 subordinate groups have no access to them? (Fraser, 1990).

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43 Participation can also be seen as an aspect of urban governance (Jessop, 2002). It
44 then refers to the institutional setting as well as the formal and procedural
45 mechanisms of co-ordination – or more specifically to the part of the decision-
46 making process in urban planning (s. Skeffington Report, 1969). This general shift
47 "from government to governance" has often been interpreted as a part of a broader
48 shift towards a more "entrepreneurial" approach to urban space (Harvey, 1989); or it
49 reflects worries that neither "top-down state-planning [n]or market-mediated
50 anarchy" can manage and resolve major new problems that emerge in the
51 "governability of economic, political, and social life" (Jessop, 2002:43), so that citizen
52 participation is seen as a more efficient process in societal coordination. The concept
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of governance is based on the idea that conflicting parties can identify mutually beneficial outcomes and work towards them (Jessop, 2002). It can also be surprisingly blind to structural power inequalities among governance actors and to the fact that conflicts may produce losers and winners (ibid).

Direct citizen participation in terms of practices is central in the concept of “placemaking” (s. Strydom *et al.* this issue). Here it is citizens in bottom-up practices that make places (understood mostly as a public space of social interaction), as opposed to planning by politicians, urban planners and other experts. Placemaking places citizens in the position of experts and considers methods of participation, where citizens directly transform space through concrete (cultural) practices, moving beyond deliberation or decision-making.

In order to assess participation in the Berlin Contract– and, it is suggested, other similar policy documents – there is first a need to clarify how participation is explicitly or implicitly conceptualized in the document and second, to articulate a possible set of questions relevant to the analysis. I call the former the ‘conceptual framework’ and the latter the ‘analytical framework’.

Conceptual framework

There have been several attempts at classifying participation: Arnstein’s ‘ladder’ (Arnstein, 1969), Pretty’s classification (Pretty, 1995), White’s “typology of interests” (White, 1996), up to more evolutionary approaches (Hickey and Mohan, 2004b). Farrington and Bebbington (1993), propose to assess practices of participation along two axes, *depth* (engaging participants at few or all stages of a given issue) and *breadth* (involving a narrow or wide range of people). There seems to be a convergence on a basic distinction between participation as an *institutional setting* versus participation as a *right* (Corwall 2008b). Distinctions are not mutually exclusive as there is significant overlapping. The above is however a good starting point for an attempt at classification:

(a) Participation as institutional arrangement: Participation can be understood as an element of governance or more specifically as a part of the decision-making process in urban planning. Here, emphasis is placed on institutional frameworks, methods

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3 and formats, procedures, the spaces and times of participation as well as on its
4 formalization. Participation mostly moves inside institutionally defined limits.

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6 (b) Participation as rights: Participation is more than a procedure; it is a right to be
7 claimed by citizens themselves and is thus linked to citizenship. Social movements
8 are then a particular form of participation, where collective action leads to claim-
9 making. 'The right to the city', in its more radical reading, challenges the status quo,
10 going beyond the given spaces for participation, demanding fundamental political
11 change.
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17 The short review of concepts above suggests that we could add two more approaches
18 to participation which I propose to call *participation in the public sphere* and
19 *participation as practice*.
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24 (c) Participation in the public sphere: Being in and constituting the public sphere(s)
25 means to participate. Exclusion from participation can refer to different fields
26 (exclusion from work, public space, the public realm, etc.); it can take place along
27 different fault lines (gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, etc); or it can be seen
28 negatively in spatial terms, as segregation. "Subaltern counterpublics" can challenge
29 a hegemonic public sphere, claiming not only participation in it, but rather the
30 constitution of another public sphere on their own terms.
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35 (d) Participation as practice: Participation can be something that takes place even in
36 the absence of or even against institutional frameworks. People participate in a more
37 or less explicitly politicised way through their practices – from humble practices of
38 the everyday to political practices of solidarity or engagement. This includes different
39 types of ad-hoc participation, practices of collective action, volunteering work and
40 placemaking.
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46 *Analytical framework*

47 Civil society, the public sphere, social movements, citizenship and placemaking all
48 point toward the question of the *subjects* of participation (Young, 2000): who are
49 those people who participate in the public sphere? Do they do so collectively or
50 individually? Are they represented, or do they need to find their own voice?
51 (Cornwall, 2008a). The actual locus of participation is crucial to the possibility to
52 speak out: There are spaces where people speak out and others, which are
53 intimidating or even actively exclusive (Cornwall, 2008a). Under what circumstances
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3 is the public sphere accessible? Different resources (whether it's time, education,
4 language, etc.) will influence the way people can access the spaces of deliberation
5 (Young, 2000). Equally important as the actors in participatory processes, is the
6 question of who is excluded from participation, either out of choice or because of the
7 institutional setting where it takes place (Cornwall, 2008a). Inclusion and exclusion
8 in participation could be related to *what* people participate in, the issue and the stage
9 of the process in question, raising questions of place and scale. Furthermore, the
10 motivations of those who adopt the approach – manipulation, co-optation, reducing
11 costs, etc. – matter to our conceptualization and the outcomes of participation (Pretty
12 1995). Finally, whether citizens and organizations of the civil society participate
13 through invitation or whether they claim that right for themselves, is an important
14 distinction (Cornwall, 2008a).
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23 I propose to use a spatial lens to systematically analyse participation, with a focus on
24 two basic spatial categories, *place* and *scale*. Place here is conceptualized both as
25 “formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular
26 location” and as having the potential to generate new social relations (Massey, 1994:
27 168). The questions will then need to be on the one hand about the location of
28 interaction and about the social relations that interact on the other: the actors
29 involved, their power relations, their motivations, their history, their ideology, their
30 institutional embeddedness, etc. Such an analysis is also spatial in the sense that it
31 asks the question of the *scale* of participation – understood as a social construct of
32 interconnections *between* places (Marston, 2000).
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41 An analytical tool that assesses participation may need to ascertain the following:

42 (a) Subject: Who is meant to participate, who really participates as well as who is
43 excluded from participation.

44 (b) Intentionality: Why do power-holders yield part of their power? Also, what are the
45 motivations of those who participate?

46 (c) Object: What is the participatory process about? Is it about a project (i.e. an urban
47 renewal decision) or does it involve broader political issues (i.e. privatization of state-
48 owned facilities)?

49 (d) Scale: The issue at stake can be local, at a neighbourhood level, it can pertain to a
50 city-wide decision or can involve a national or even supranational matter. It is also
51 about the scale of the polity and of citizenship rights.
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(e) Form: How participation takes place matters. What is the institutional setting? What methods and formats are used? How is participation designed, organized and implemented?

(f) Locus: What is the actual physical spatial setting of participation? Where does participation take place?

(g) History: Where does participatory culture come from? Political relations are embedded in places through a historical process, whereby conflicts, compromises and institutionalization co-develop over time, creating a political culture that encompasses both state institutions and citizens.

(h) Interconnections: How are subjects, objects, ideas, institutions, etc. interconnected across places?

Assessing policy intentions on participation in Berlin

The two frameworks provide a methodological tool to consider (a) the ways in which participation has been conceptualized in the Berlin Contract and (b) the specific questions that need to be asked to perform its assessment. By applying them on a text analysis of the Berlin Contract we get the tables below:

Table 1: Applying the conceptual framework to the Berlin Contract

Conceptualisation of Participation	Participation in the Berlin Coalition Contract
Participation as an institutional setting	Planning administration currently preparing guidelines on participation; participatory planning; Participatory budgeting; participatory neighbourhood funds; State-owned housing companies preparing a handbook on participation; online platforms; Stadtforum; commissioners; points of contact; low threshold; more flexible; more representative; transparency; gender mainstreaming
Participation as rights	Housing as a social right; right to (political) education; right to work; Change in suffrage rights for non-German citizens; Direct and representative democracy
Participation in the public	Social justice; Anti-discrimination; gender parity;

sphere	sexual diversity; access for people with disabilities; inclusion of refugees; anti-austerity; role of media and internet; “combatting inequality”; “promoting social cohesion”; role of parliament
Participation as practices	Volunteering; civic involvement

Table 2: Applying the analytical framework to the Berlin Contract

Analytical tools	Presence in the Berlin Coalition Contract
Subjects	The Berlin Senate; all state-affiliated institutions; tenants; citizens; organizations of civil society; artists; non-German citizens; migrants and refugees
Intentionality	Efficiency
Object	Cultural policy; housing; budgeting; neighbourhood funds; privatization; green planning; new neighbourhoods; public transportation
Scale	Housing estate; neighbourhood; borough, city-wide; national
Form	Guidelines and guidebooks under preparation
Locus	Not specified; Locational plurality; in and out of formalized spaces
History	Tradition of social movements; direct democracy
Interconnections	Berlin’s responsibility to the world; policy examples from other cities

Conclusions and a possible research agenda

Participation is present throughout the Contract in surprising frequency. Whilst never explicitly clarified as a term, the analysis performed in this paper shows that the focus lies mostly on the institutional framework. Participation as rights and participation in the public sphere are mostly underlying principles, that however permeate the whole document and are repeated regularly. Participation as practice remains weak, as there is no mention of how the Senate will deal with non-institutional or even anti-institutional forms of participation such as social movements.

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3 In the Contract participation takes place in different public spheres – housing,
4 cultural policy, urban planning, privatization policy – and at different scales – the
5 housing estate, the neighbourhood, the borough, the state. But it even considers
6 Berlin’s responsibility beyond its borders, in Europe and internationally. This is a
7 geographical responsibility that, as stated in the Contract, stems both from Berlin’s
8 (and Germany’s) past and from its current hegemonic position in a globalized world.
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14 Social justice, equality, anti-discrimination and social cohesion as values behind the
15 Contract, are meant to allow all citizens to participate equally in the public sphere.
16 Underprivileged groups are explicitly mentioned several times: the poor, women,
17 LGBTQ, Roma, migrants and refugees. Austerity as an exclusionary ideology is clearly
18 rejected. The document refers to several power fault lines – class, gender, sexuality
19 and ethnic origin. Whereas participation is not directly present as a right in itself,
20 suffrage rights as well as the rights to housing, education and work are explicitly or
21 implicitly addressed. The Contract considers the extension of voting rights to
22 European citizens and non-European migrants at different polity scales. It also
23 addresses the relationship between direct and representative democracy.
24 Participation is seen as necessary for the success of urban development and
25 institutional transformation is needed to accommodate it: possible change of law,
26 development of both online and offline procedures as well as structures such as
27 participation commissioners and points of contact in the borough. Participation is
28 anchored in institutions and thus the appropriate institutional setting for it is
29 considered: guidelines for the work of government and for state-owned housing
30 companies. A working group for the design of these new citizen participation
31 guidelines has been installed and is expected to deliver results by the end of 2018.
32 This is probably why practices of participation are only marginally present in the
33 document, with mentions of volunteering and civic engagement at the centre of it.
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47 At this point it is only possible to assess the Contract by identifying the principles
48 upon which it is based and the aspects of participation that are included as well as
49 those that are not. In the document, focus is placed mostly on the institutional
50 framework in a wide range of areas: participatory budgeting, neighbourhood funds,
51 housing, cultural policy, etc. Whereas the former is to be expected from a policy paper
52 (whose main function is to set institutional frameworks), the latter is both a strength
53 and a potential risk: it is a strength because a culture of participation, as shown
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3 above, needs different public spheres for different publics; it is also a potential risk
4 because it demands a complete overhauling of processes in many areas
5 simultaneously. Participation, taken seriously, means giving up power. Here, we
6 should expect to see backlash, even from inside the administration.
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11 More broadly however, the Contract opens up the potential for a radical
12 reconsideration of participation as a citizenship right, based on the principles of
13 inclusion, social justice, equality, right to housing, right to education, right to work,
14 etc. By proclaiming to put an end to austerity and raising the threshold for
15 privatizations it also makes a political claim against neo-liberal economic policies, as
16 profoundly exclusionary and thus, inherently anti-participatory.
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22 It must be stressed here that the document is not an exact blueprint for the
23 government's work for the next years, as it is not detailed enough for it. It does
24 however state its political intentions and will need to be assessed on implementation
25 and results. Research that assesses implementation alongside the mere intentions of
26 participatory policy will have to go beyond values, principles and institutional
27 arrangements. It will have to look on the one hand at how participation has been
28 ingrained into Berlin society through a combination of strong social movements,
29 institutional adaptation, key actors, etc. On the other hand, it will need to delve into
30 the 'nitty-gritty' and the everyday: examine the people who participate (and those
31 who do not), their concerns and their motivations and analyse the places and the
32 scales where participation takes place. The analytical framework may be a useful tool
33 in this endeavour, but this needs to be shown in further research practice. And finally,
34 comparative work, between Berlin and other cities, may reveal place-specific
35 particularities that define not only the width, depth and form, but also the outcomes
36 of participation.
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46 47 **Endnotes**

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49 [1] The German language contains different words for participation, which do not
50 necessarily overlap with their English equivalent: 'Teilhabe', 'Teilnahme',
51 'Beteiligung', 'Partizipation', 'Engagement'.
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54 [2] The guidelines were under development as this article was being written.

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56 [http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/leitlinien-
57 buergerbeteiligung/index.shtml](http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/leitlinien-buergerbeteiligung/index.shtml)
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[3] Already functioning at the time this article was being written.

[4] Stadtforum is a series of public events on urban development organized by the Berlin planning department, which has taken place in irregular intervals since 1991. It consists of presentations and debates between members of the administration, experts and citizens.

[5] The law regulating integration and participation (PartIntG) in Berlin went through parliament in 2010. Its goal is to allow persons with a migration background to participate equally in social life.

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