

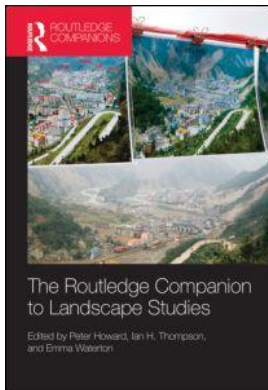
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Publisher: *Routledge*

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## **The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies**

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### **Landscape and participation**

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203096925.ch29>

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**Published online on: 06 Dec 2012**

**How to cite :-** Maggie Roe. 06 Dec 2012, *Landscape and participation from: The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies* Routledge

Accessed on: 30 Sep 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203096925.ch29>

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# Landscape and participation

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The ancient Greek landscape of Athens provides some clues as to the concept of interaction between landscape and people which is of key importance in relation to the focus of this chapter. The Pnyx (the assembly) is often identified as the inspiration for democratic government around the world. The Acropolis, on the higher ground, was regarded as a sacred site long before the ancient Greek temple that still adorns it was built; it has provided a focus for spirituality in the community, and is still the main focus of attention in the landscape drawing thousands of visitors every year. Looking out from the Acropolis to the Pnyx, one can't help being struck by the landscape relationship between these two important aspects of ancient Greek life (see Figure 29.1).

The enhanced natural auditorium of the oratory and open space on Pnika Hill was the official meeting place of the Athenian democratic assembly (*ekklesia*). No speaker could have avoided looking both at the Acropolis and out towards the wider city and its inhabitants; the onlookers would have seen the orator as a performer silhouetted against the sky. The concept and practice of democracy is said to have become established through the practice of discussion and decision making in this space. However, Sennett (1995) has suggested that democratic ideas and practice developed primarily as a result of interactions that occurred in the ancient Agora. This was a large open square situated at the foot of the Acropolis hill. It was surrounded by public buildings and is a space often described as a market place open to a larger part of the population than the Pnyx, which was only open to selected well-to-do native-born Athenian men.<sup>1</sup> The indication from such analysis is that the nature of spaces and places that people inhabit can have considerable affect on how democracy develops in society. Landscapes can provide opportunities – or ‘affordances’ – for interaction with other humans and activities within the landscape, and with the landscape itself. It is these two aspects of human participation or involvement with the landscape that are considered here.

Overall, participation and landscape as an area of theory is somewhat fragmented. In the past, research into landscape participation fell fairly squarely in the bracket of social science research, but is now emerging as a cross-disciplinary area of interest. Thus theory that is now drawn from a number of disciplines is crossing over into the ‘hard sciences’ and much has emerged from applied participatory work. There is an assumption that through the interaction with landscape, ways of more sustainable and democratic living can be learned and achieved. This has in turn



*Figure 29.1* The Athenian landscape: Looking towards the Acropolis from the location of the Athenian democratic assembly on Pnika Hill

led to discussion about how participation can create more sustainable landscapes and about the nature of democracy in the landscape (see Roe 2007). There has been a general assumption that participation in landscape decision making is a ‘good thing’ with little questioning of an alternative view or robust assessment as to what difference participation makes in the longer term. However, there is also a view that embodied within what we regard as ‘human’ is the need for interaction with the natural world; that we are an integral part of the natural ‘system’, not separate from it, and that our own nature, culture and many understandings spring directly from this relationship.

This chapter provides an overview of the key theoretical areas relating to participation and the landscape, and in particular highlights these two sub-areas of increasing interest which are now, most importantly, recognized and supported by the European Landscape Convention (ELC); that landscape is a reflection of human interaction with natural forces, and that people’s participation in the landscape has a potential role in relation to democracy, decision making and justice (see Figure 29.2).

### **Participation 1: landscape as a reflection of interaction**

This concept supports the notion that landscape springs from interactions between culture and nature or humans and the land. Humans are a part of nature and both the mental and material aspects of exchange between humans and the land are important. This view is partially a reaction to what has been seen as a dominant ‘mechanistic’ view of the world where humans are regarded as masters of the environment and separate from it. The renewed interest in this

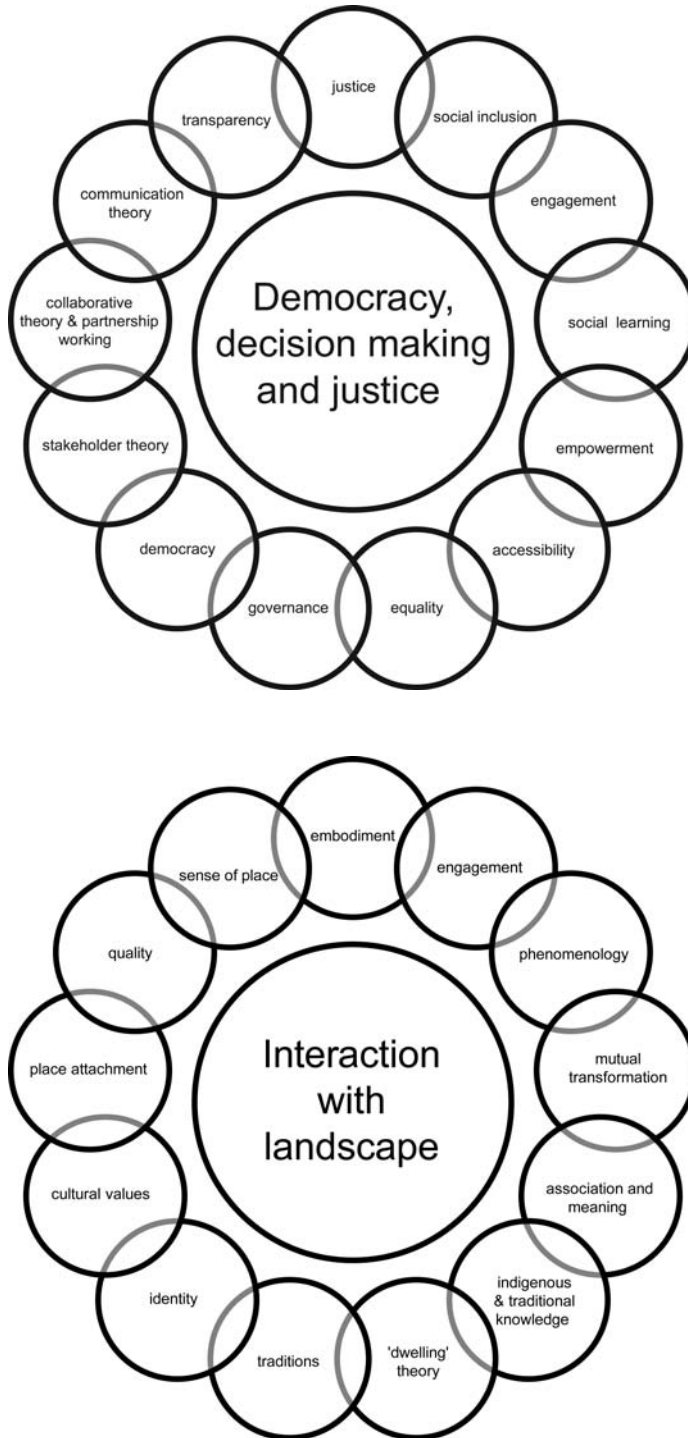


Figure 29.2 Diagram showing aspects of the two key areas of participation as featured and discussed in this chapter

phenomenological approach to landscape is well set out by Wylie (2007). Ingold's (2000) 'dwelling' theory has had considerable influence over the embodied approach where the mental and material exchange between humans and landscape is seen as participation where interaction and integration or exchanges are key characteristics. The influences of anthropological thinking here are clear and these are now being expressed in various ways through experiential research and practice approaches (e.g. Simkins and Thwaites 2008; Macpherson 2009; Scott et al. 2009). Wylie (2007: 159) provides a useful summary of the development of Ingold's theory which 'involves a vision of nature and environment as active forces and participants in the unfolding of life, as both agents of change and that which is changed – as simultaneously both the object and subject of dwelling'. The concept of both human societal and landscape change underwrites this theory. Wylie suggests that Ingold's view of landscape is not a volume, or something quantitative and physical as 'land' but qualitative; something with emotional investment, association and meaning. Most importantly interaction with or 'living' the landscape removes all hint of a separation between the physical landscape and its meanings. Such thinking also references eco-feminist theories which see humans as having moved away from a strong connection with nature as a result of industrialization and capitalism (Merchant 1980). Such theories were stimulated partly as a result of environmental activist texts of the 1960s such as Rachel Carson's (1965) *Silent Spring* and Aldo Leopold's (1968) *Sand County Almanac*.

Engagement is another term now commonly used to express the desirable participatory relationship between humans and the landscape in both a socio-political and a cultural-knowledge sense. This idea is about something more than being simply a spectator, but it does not seem to have the transformative quality that is indicated by the term interaction. The idea of interaction makes reference to the recent scientific concepts which identify non-linear feedback mechanisms as a means of correction in dynamic systems. Although Skrbina (2001) suggests that the concept of participation lies primarily outside the bounds of conventional science, he uses examples such as chaos theory and quantum theory which indicate the literal interconnectedness of matter itself, and superconductivity where particles are seen to 'dance' together or participate in a common action. His thesis is that the universe is fundamentally participatory and interconnection is thus always seen to be present. Skrbina observes that such examination shows that 'interaction becomes participation: such a complex process of participation evidently goes far beyond what is meant by a merely mechanical interaction. It is therefore not really correct to call what happens a measurement ... Rather, it is a *mutual transformation* of both systems ...' (Skrbina 2001: 124) or, in landscape terms, the mutual moulding (participation) that creates cultural landscapes that are so highly valued (Roe 2012).

Following from these concepts, we can see the importance of thinking about the extent of human 'involvement' and experience of landscape, of notions of cultural and social identity as embodied within landscape and of landscape as cultural expression. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) methods and their spin-offs have become particularly useful tools to try and understand how ordinary people's way of life, experience and ideas are encapsulated within the landscape. These assessment processes are also changing to include a more participatory and consultative process. Such change reflects realization by politicians and policy-makers of the need to widen participation in decision-making processes but also an increasing focus on the value of local and indigenous knowledge which is gained from years of interaction between communities and the landscape. The importance of such knowledge has been long appreciated in other disciplines, particularly in anthropology and development work. For example, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), the poet and philosopher, is also regarded as a pioneer of rural development in India. He placed considerable emphasis on the holistic understanding of the way of life of local communities, their traditions and their relationship with the

environment as the basis for rural development. He emphasized knowledge dissemination, and cooperation and the use of traditional activities such as fairs and performances within the landscape to spread indigenous knowledge and promote democracy at grassroots level (Ray et al. 2005; Gupta 2008).

Cultural identity as expressed within and through landscapes is an area of increasing research interest around the world, but has particularly had a boost following the enactment of the European Landscape Convention which stresses the importance of recognizing 'landscape in law as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity' (Council of Europe 2000: Article 5a). Pedroli et al. (2007) provide a number of useful illustrations of this relationship between sustainable landscapes, cultural and landscape identity and public participation in landscape decisions. These indicate the importance of identity in considering landscape change, development and management. The two ideas of interaction are generally conflated in this book as in many texts dealing with landscape issues. They are seen as symbiotic or dependent upon each other: having a say in decisions about landscape and identifying and being identified by it.

However, although 'closeness' or some kind of symbiotic relationship between humans and the landscape is now often promoted as an ideology for more sustainable living, historical evidence suggests that human communities may not naturally create sustainable relationships with the land. Diamond (2005) documents numerous examples of the way communities fail as a result of ecological crisis brought on by unsustainable practice, lack of care for the land and exacerbating factors such as climate change. Archaeological and historical examinations of landscape thus provide critique on the humans-as-part-of-ecosystem theories and the often idealized picture of indigenous and nomadic hunter-gatherers' relationship with the land. However, there is also an increasing literature concerned with the way community values relating to the landscape are embedded with the way of life and interactions with particular landscapes, and how these are built up over generations. Such ideas are also helping to develop new concepts of landscape management that help to conserve not only material heritage, but associative heritage of landscape and the way of life that has grown up as a result of interactions over many years. One such example is that concerning the potential of ecomuseums (e.g. Perella et al. 2010; Davis 2011). Thus issues of group and individual interactions, place attachment, reading the landscape and emotional attachment (Manzo and Perkins 2006) have become increasingly important in landscape research. In applied research these ideas have had considerable influence over landscape planning approaches and landscape assessment techniques in particular (e.g. see Swanwick 2004; Ahern 2006; Fairclough and Møller 2008). Cantrill and Senecah (2001) have extended the sense of place concept commonly discussed as important in landscape to theorising about a collective community 'senses of selves-in-place', which can affect the processes of landscape management practice. An important point is that sense of place is 'socially constructed upon an edifice of the environmental self that, in itself, is a product of discourse and experience' (Cantrill and Senecah 2001: 188). Thus local settings are important in defining a sense of place, but this work emphasizes the complexity of the issue, particularly in relation to group or communal perceptions and landscape interaction.

Much of the concentration on landscape and societal renewal in the 1980s and 1990s focused on urban areas and the belief that part of the problem lay with the disassociation between urban humans and natural processes. This led to the idea of using landscape to help raise environmental awareness and self-reliance within communities in a number of ways such as the establishment of community gardens and forests, and signified by the growing popularity of allotments. Coleman (1985) and Newman (1972) suggested that antisocial behaviour could be

remedied through better design ('design out crime'), indicating that the configuration and nature of urban landscapes had something to do with the way people behaved, further fuelling nature versus nurture arguments, which have often been on the boundaries of the landscape-identity theoretical debate. Recent research related to genetic determinism indicates that 'nature' can now be considered to have more influence than previously thought in relation to 'nurture' in human behavioural terms. There has been considerable interest in the physical and psychological health relationships of people and landscape, including obesity and stress recovery, which emphasize the interaction aspects of human participation for the good of humans, not necessarily the good of the landscape (Lake et al. 2010; Ulrich et al. 1991; Ward Thompson et al. 2010). Thus the theories concerning methods by which communities become involved in changing and improving the quality of their landscapes and their interactions with the landscape have also encompassed ideas relating to changes in social learning and behaviour, and social structure. The main issues perhaps in relation to research is that these are extremely complex areas and have not been clearly delineated; there is much assumption concerning the way humans connect with landscape at the emotional and psychological levels.

## Participation 2: democracy, decision making and justice

This area of research relating to landscape and participation is characterized by strong links to social sustainability theory, governance and democracy (political and social science theories) (see Roe 2007; Wilson 1997). Much of the instigation for the theory has come from practice. A key text in this regard is Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder' of participation, which is still much-referenced and, along with the Skeffington report (1969) *People and Planning*, had considerable influence in the UK leading to the embedding of the principle of participation in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1971 in the approval of structure and local plans (Barlow 1995). The added value of participation was further recognized by the European Commission (1997) and there was considerable exploration of the theory, particularly relating to methods at this time. In the 1980s and 1990s much discussion was focussed on the nature of consensus and consensus building, on the disagreements of stakeholders and the power relations between participants (e.g. Renn et al. 1993). A more sophisticated view has now emerged which suggests that constructive or productive disagreement can lead to the revelation of the complexity and range of issues that need to be addressed and should not necessarily be seen as a problem. Thus communication is now seen as an important part of improving democratic processes and there are a number of useful theoretical/methods texts that analyze relationships in participatory processes (e.g. Kaner et al. 1996). Many scholars refer to both Dewey (1954) and Habermas's (1989) theories in theorizing the importance of communication. Much of the literature providing case studies relating to participatory processes emphasize this as a way of achieving desirable outcomes. Ventriss and Kuentzel (2005) review critical theory and the role of decision making in the environment. They concentrate on social conflict and change and suggest that in spite of the intuitive appeal of public participation in decision-making processes, such participation under existing institutional and political conditions may simply reinforce existing boundaries and barriers to change. They document the assumption that a more communicative, collaborative 'turn' in theory that incorporates concepts of reflexivity and communication (e.g. Healey 1997; Dewey 1954) does not necessarily address the central issues of inequality in decision-making processes concerning the environment.

The justice aspect has been examined in particular by Olwig (2007) and although much relevant theory comes from social sciences in relation to social capital, empowerment, exclusion etc. (e.g. Rydin and Pennington 2000), the cultural geographical concepts of 'insiders' and

‘outsiders’ are also useful (Cloke and Little, 1997), and theories of social inclusion in the landscapes (e.g. Macfarlane et al. 2000; Rishbeth 2001; Sibley 1995). A considerable body of work has built up around research relating to excluded groups such as children and disadvantaged groups (Chawla and Heft 2002; Hart 1997; Matthews 2003; Roe 2006, 2007; Woolley et al. 1999). Some of this now overlaps with research that examines the different ways landscape can be experienced, e.g. visually impaired groups (Macpherson 2009) and immigrant cultures (Macfarlane et al. 2000). Research from development studies and developing countries has surprisingly been somewhat slow to cross the disciplinary boundaries to the landscape field but provides useful theories and methods relating to a range of different groups giving opportunities for participants to express their relationships with landscape and gain empowerment over landscape decisions (e.g. Payton et al. 2002; Eade and Williams 1995). Other important influences are from the planning field relating to partnerships, stakeholders, governance and deliberative methods (e.g. Healey 1997; Fischer 2000) and in relation to environmental management where the participatory process is often regarded as important as the product, or outcome of the project (e.g. Margerum and Born 1995; O’Riordan and Ward 1997; Roe 2000b).

Thus the link between democracy and public spaces or landscapes is not simple or clear and it is impossible to define the nature of a ‘democratic space’ or design a landscape that is truly democratic, although many landscapes have been identified as having characteristics which facilitate democracy. Miles (2010) suggests that it is the idea of the Agora which is important – the idea of facilitation of interaction creating better communication as the basis for democracy – rather than a close examination of the physical space itself and its use in a particular societal context.

### *Power and control in the landscape*

The increasing recognition of considerations of power and control in the landscape has considerable importance for the study of landscape and participation. There is a new emphasis on examining power and control embedded within the structures that determine participative action, in relation to landscape issues. Arnstein’s ladder remains a useful way of thinking about power structures and this concept of participation is still often used as the basis for assessing the spectrum of participation. It has been reinterpreted many times (e.g. Davidson 1998; Hart 1997). There is still a debate on *how* to provide an inclusive participatory process as well as the ethical dimension of who to include. The ladder says little about the character of the required action itself since it does not take into account the nature of the landscape. The ladder concept says nothing about participation in relation to interaction, attachment and meaning as already described above. Such engagement with landscape is not about the *organization* of participation or the way participatory process may help to increase education, awareness and self-expression in relation to landscape, but a more deeply embedded or intrinsic part of the self which interacts with the natural world. But are these two aspects of participation (organization and embeddedness) actually separate? Can power relations be separated from the character of the landscape? Landscape develops law and law develops the landscape (Olwig 2002). Landscape is a ‘substantive material reality, a place lived, a world produced and transformed, a commingling of nature and society that is struggled over and in’ (Mitchell 2003: 792). Such difficult questions are often touched upon, but generally different disciplines tend not to address the interactivity of humans and landscape and concentrate on one or other aspect.

In democratic theory there is a fundamental belief in the goodness of the human individual and the ability of individuals who come together to make decisions in choosing the right option



for the communal weal. There is a similar assumption that decisions made on a democratic basis about landscape will not only be beneficial to humans, but also by extension to the landscape. There is, however, little or no evidence to support such ideas and there are a number of related theories which contradict such assumptions. The well-known views of Dawkins ('selfish gene') and Adam Smith ('invisible hand') suggest that humans simply make decisions on a personal and individual basis. Smith's suggestion is that such individual decisions are invisibly programmed to benefit the whole community (in economic terms). However, Hardin's (1968) classic paper uses the example of the management of common land to describe how self interest leads to a 'Tragedy of the Commons'. There are now many examples of instances where communal participation has both destroyed the landscape (e.g. Diamond, 2005) and provided greater sustainability (e.g. co-management regimes in developing countries and with indigenous peoples).

Hardin's metaphor along with other influential ideas such as the prisoner's dilemma, and the logic of collective action has been critiqued by the Nobel Laureate, Elinor Ostrom (1990, and Ostrom et al. 1994) who suggests that such theory cannot be easily applied in reality because of the complexity of the problems and the interactions between people and renewable environmental resources. Applying economic principles, Ostrom's research indicates that individuals working rationally for their own best interests may not always have the result of producing an outcome that is not rational from a group point of view or would necessarily destroy group resources such as fisheries, forests and freshwater systems. However, a number of impacts may occur including resource depletion. Overcoming such problems requires the participation of users of the resource in the establishment of co-operative institutions to manage the common pool resource (CPR). Ostrom identifies eight 'design principles' from studies over many years in a co-ordinated strategy to adopt contingent self-commitment of the users to resolve conflicts and to alter the rules. This theory is important because landscape can itself be considered a common pool resource, along with the components of the landscape (e.g. forests, rivers, pastures). Many lands throughout the world are managed by local people who hold traditional rights in common, but these are also being generally eroded as Queiroz (2006) shows in the Portuguese uplands, and the result is impact on landscape dynamics, biodiversity loss and changes in social and economic conditions. Ostrom's theory is useful primarily in relation to collective and participatory decision making about such resources. The key issue raised by this kind of work is the importance of the relationships between the individual and the group. Ostrom puts much emphasis on trust and communication to reach acceptable agreements to share the resources. Learning and development are also important in individual and group development which will result in improved CPR management, reflecting Tagore's ideas behind his rural development experiments of eighty years ago.

Empowerment is an important – although somewhat over-used – term which indicates how communities gain the ability to act together and take on decision making. It is often used in relation to decisions concerning local people and local landscapes and was particularly used in relation to the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) initiative, which grew from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED the 'Earth Summit', which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (see UNCED 1992). Prior to global concern with climate change, this was a key environmental initiative put forward as the way to achieve a new direction in local government towards local sustainability. Many community landscape initiatives in the UK were pulled under the LA21 umbrella. Empowerment was not seen as necessarily anti-traditional democratic structures, but as a challenge to them and the objectives were to help open up the decision-making processes and make those in power more accountable. Some of the earliest useful examples of the empowerment of communities to participate in decisions with the aim of

creating more sustainable residential landscapes from the 1970s include the middle-class residents of Village Homes in California, USA (see Thayer 1994; Corbett and Corbett 2000) and Byker in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. The Byker design approach, led by Ralph Erskine, was based on an understanding of the dynamics of the community and the strong connection local people had with the physical landscape.<sup>2</sup> A multi-disciplinary team of architects and landscape architects set up office on the site and worked with the community to provide a network of private, semi-private and public spaces which could be policed by the community and were low-rise enough so that children could play within what was considered a safe distance from the home.

Some of the interesting research questions here are about how you enable what is assumed to be a group action that is beneficial to landscape and whether such action is actually *more* beneficial than single or individual small actions which are *assumed* to be conflictual. There is no clear evidence that a piecemeal approach is *always* less beneficial, but the general focus in the literature is to gather examples of where communal and collaborative action provides solutions to landscape change problems. Important considerations in this argument are:

- landscape change scale (power over large landscape areas is often in the hands of more than one person);
- expertise (an individual may not have the kind of understanding of landscape issues that a group can provide);
- timeframes (landscape changes over many years).

Fischer (2000) suggests that although environmental or public interest groups have had considerable impact in the past on policy and thus change in the landscape, they should not be confused with citizens, from which they may be somewhat removed. The way landscape becomes an enabler or focus for expression of power and protest is now apparent in the actions that have been occurring recently in countries in the Middle East, as well as within Europe. Miles (2010) identifies the importance of power and control within spaces which have ostensibly been used for democratic protest such as Trafalgar Square, but are on a closer examination, spaces where protest can be controlled by ‘an enlightened state guarding what it perceives as the public interest’ (Miles 2010). A recent analysis of the demonstrations that took place in a public space in Seville indicated the importance of the development of interpersonal relations within the crowd that enables democracy to exist (Canales 2011). Miles (2011) suggests the work of Arendt indicates that ‘[i]n public, a growth to a mature self is possible through the self’s perceptions of others and others’ perceptions of the self, and the continuous interaction, like parallel mirrors, this invokes.’ The landscape has long played the backdrop to the performance of democratic rights, particularly direct action (e.g. ‘Swampy’ the environmental activist who was involved in the so-called Third Battle of Newbury against the Newbury Bypass, UK, in 1996) and most recently the exertion of supposed human rights in the form of occupation of land (e.g. the travellers at Dale Farm in the English Midlands, and protests around the world in key collective spaces in capital cities).

The term ‘stakeholder’ has become commonly used to indicate those who have an interest or stake in a particular issue. The literature on stakeholder participation in general is large and it is suggested that stakeholders are primarily defined by their differences (Ventress and Kuentzel 2005). It is suggested that by characterizing citizens as stakeholders, opposing ‘stakes’ in the landscape are intimated and stakeholders are defined by whether they can see the view of others who also hold a stake; a key problem being that not all stakeholders hold an equal stake (see Roe forthcoming) and certainly not equal power within the decision-making process.

Ventriss and Kuentzel (2005: 520) thus see the usual objective of achieving consensus as a 'transitory mirage, contingent on the constellation of actors who happen to rise to the surface of ongoing public conflict and debate'.

### *Social and landscape justice*

This recent focus on democracy and justice in the landscape reflects wider issues of current concern. Public participation in environmental decision making became a right in 1998 under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, commonly known as the Aarhus Convention. This provides for access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision making and access to justice (UNECE, 1998). However, recent disillusionment with politicians and large institutions (banks and newspapers), the so-called economic crisis, global warming and other problems test the robustness of concepts of democracy in existing democratic structures and our willingness to accept decision making based on representative democracy. Dewey (1954) describes how democratic society has to rely on representatives to conserve and protect their interests and the *res publica* or common weal, because not all people can be involved in all governance decisions. Dewey's analysis is one that seems particularly pertinent in the present political climate. He suggests that there is a difference between people's personal and private roles '[w]hen the public adopts special measures to see to it that the conflict is minimized and that the representative function overrides the private one, political institutions are termed representative' (Dewey 1954: 76–7). While the focus of this chapter is not concerned with the wider structures of democracy, Dewey provides an important and useful analysis of the structures of democratic institutions and governance, both of which have relevance to the discussion relating to the demand and significance of participatory movements in landscape. Olwig (2007) also refers to the *res publica* as a political community shaped through discourse in his argument that a convention (such as the ELC) does itself capture the idea of public discourse. He emphasizes the importance of deliberation in the process of agreement. In more recent work, Arler (2011) discusses the importance of personal autonomy, which has been a basic tenet of western ideas of democracy since antiquity and whether aggregate values of those acting in the individual good can be as beneficial in the landscape as those specifically acting in the common good. Arler, like Dewey, examines the private–public interpretations of responsibility, and the implications for landscape management. This is an important issue in participatory practice. Are those participating in the decisions professing to act in their own or in the common good? Does the outcome of such involvement make a difference in landscape sustainability terms? Arler's analysis suggests there are considerable difficulties relating to the importance of impartiality and respect for arguments.

His solution is for further deliberation, free exchange of arguments and mutual learning as the key to problem solving and achieving democratic decision making on environmental issues. Dewey emphasizes the need for better communication:

the ties which hold men together in action are numerous, tough and subtle. But they are invisible and intangible. We have the physical tools of communication as never before. The thoughts and aspirations congruous with them are not communicated, and hence are not common. Without such communication the public will remain shadowy and formless, seeking spasmodically for itself, but seizing and holding its shadow rather than its substance. Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication can alone create a great community.

(Dewey 1954: 142)

There is still much criticism over the ‘top-down systems [which are] disguised under a gloss of community-based rhetoric’ (Daugstad 2011: 77) in both developing countries and European arenas. A difference has been identified between legitimization of an apparently democratic process and ‘real’ participation in decision making over landscape.

### *Knowledge, communication and transdisciplinarity*

Planning interests in participation primarily reflect governance and power aspects of public involvement in decision making and environmental learning, while landscape interests include those derived from more anthropological research areas such as the interaction aspects or that related to the nature–culture debate, indigenous knowledge, meanings and significance. However, in relation to the implementation of landscape projects, landscape planning and design depend on the character of social structures, institutions and systems which have control over landscape change. Thus questions of democracy, governance and the individual versus the collective responsibility for landscape change are under discussion and much of relevance can be found in the planning literature. More participation and collaboration between professionals, policy-makers and the public are seen as essential prerequisites for creating more sustainable landscapes with an emphasis on partnership working, the theoretical basis for which comes from collaborative planning such as Healey (1997) and the policy framework for the ELC. Fischer (2000) relates how the practice of participatory research became prominent in developing countries in the 1970s as a result of the failure of conventional approaches to relieve poverty and address inequality. The *Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief* (Eade and Williams 1995) and Max-Neef’s (1992) ideas developed from experiences in the 1980s were both influential. Research projects involved scientists, social scientists, agriculturalists, foresters and others working together with local people on agricultural projects. While, as Fischer (2000) notes, the political objectives of participatory research have diminished somewhat, the label ‘participatory action research’ is commonly used in relation to environmental projects where environmental change with community participation is the objective. Fischer (2000: 191) raises important questions in relation to knowledge in such research: ‘How do we analytically integrate empirical and normative knowledge? How do we combine the professional’s scientific knowledge with the citizen–client ordinary knowledge? ... How do we actually know about the ability of clients to collaborate intelligently in technical decision making?’

Some of the theoretical perspective for this work is based on social science which suggests the desirability for researching *with* people as the subject rather than *on* people as the object of research and that people have a right and ability to determine their own decisions in local landscape matters, as they have the right and freedom to choose how they live their lives. Sillitoe (2002) suggests that this bottom-up development paradigm has taken over from top down ‘modernization’ approaches, characteristic of the political right, and ‘dependency’ approaches, characteristic of the political left within anthropological study. Sillitoe divides the new approaches to the ‘market-liberal’ or ‘market-technical’ approach, associated with the political right, and the ‘neo-populist’ or ‘populist-empowerment’ approach, associated with the political left where local knowledge is given prominence in the participatory process. Both feature technological and socio-political issues. Sillitoe expresses a view that is shared by many working in the field: ‘participation, facilitated by outsiders, does not necessarily accommodate cultural diversity but may rather encourage people to enter the contemporary capitalist world, here sharing modernization’s assumptions, albeit shifting responsibility locally for decisions and ultimately, project failure’ (Sillitoe 2002: 4). The diagnosis for these difficulties is differences in values and priorities between the researcher and the researched. It mirrors the long-held tension

in environmental projects between the ‘expert’ and the lay person, not only in relation to expert versus lay knowledge, but also in relation to power in the political arena. Gorg (2007: 954, 964) develops a concept of ‘landscape governance’ that deals with the interconnections between ‘socially constructed spaces ... and the “natural” condition of place’, which he suggests demands ‘intensive inter- and transdisciplinary co-operation’. While this begins to get at the root of the lack of consideration of the holistic nature of landscape and emphasizes the local rootedness of landscape issues, it still does not really acknowledge the importance of the interactive aspect of humans and landscape.

Communicative action as the basis for more democratic decision making is much discussed in the literature, particularly that based on Habermasian theory (Habermas 1989; Miles 2011). The relevance for landscape is in decision making about landscape. However, the shape of the landscape can be seen to facilitate non-verbal communication and Bridge (2005: 6) suggests the importance of communication through performance and ‘bodies and gestures, as well as speech and thought’. Arendt (1958) provides a picture of a public realm where interaction and mutual perceptions are facilitated and ‘where a mature self arises and where freedom emerges through the interruptive force of interaction’ (Miles 2010). Communicative thinking in particular has influenced the formation of transdisciplinary and collaborative theory and practice where each party is assumed to share equal opportunity in the decision-making process. Fischer notes that collaborative work has some resemblance to Glaser’s ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Transdisciplinary practice is rapidly becoming highlighted as the desirable way of working on participatory projects in many different disciplines (Sillitoe 2002; Tress et al. 2006; Roe 2011). However, this raises questions, not only on whether disciplines have the skills to work in different professional cultural contexts where group-working and communication are essential, but also whether there is good evidence to show that better results are achieved from such working. Each discipline, or each sector involved in landscape policy, research and practice has a different framing of landscape, along with a different language. These can help reveal the variety of emphasis that is given on different aspects of the landscape, but it can also make achieving successful interdisciplinary working extremely difficult. There seems to be a long way to go before such working is the norm. However, it is clear that the political context has much to do with how participatory working has developed, and is still developing (see Roe 2007).

### **Toolkits and participatory methods**

There are now innumerable guidelines for participatory working that have emerged from a number of different disciplines. Much of this has been influenced by anthropological experience which aims to reveal indigenous knowledge and has been adapted, for example, by planners who are more concerned with democratic ideals of decision making. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and associated methods provide a variety of ways to involve people in projects (e.g. Pretty 1995; Eade and Williams 1995; Sillitoe 2002; Roe and Rowe 2007) and there have been numerous similar initiatives such as parish mapping in England. The use of such tools depends on the nature of the project and the characteristics of the community involved. In landscape projects the most successful seem to be those that combine the landscape experience with participatory methods such as participatory mapping, photograph mosaics etc. (e.g. the Kent Downs Jigsaw Project; Bartlett 1999). Feedback is considered a particularly important part of such processes, as is self-evaluation. The ability of communities to organize and run such projects themselves with minimal involvement of ‘outsiders’ is regarded as an indicator of true empowerment. There seems to be an ongoing thirst for the reporting and refinement of participatory action research tools by both doctoral candidates and practitioners from various

disciplines who seem often to reinvent the wheel in the production of guides to participatory working. This may be partly because much participatory research is not commonly published within the standard academic literature (Fischer 2000) although the advent of the European Landscape Convention encouraged the writing up of case study approaches primarily in relation to participatory decision making (e.g. Jones and Stenseke 2011). In Swaffield and Deming's (2011: 40) review of research strategies, they identify a number of categories of engaged action research in landscape architecture including 'Pedagogy, Participatory Action Research, Service Learning and Transdisciplinary Action Research'. Such research, they suggest, 'is one of the most controversial of research strategies because it accepts and legitimates the subjectivity of all experience, including the experiences of learning knowing and doing'. This remark perhaps captures why the recognition of the two aspects of participation within the development of theory and practice-led tools is generally so thin.

### Participation as an unstable process

In a review carried out ten years ago there appeared to be an assumption in the literature that participation in landscape change decisions could achieve a stable and ultimately beneficial outcome and that processes that are more inclusive would provide numerous other benefits in terms of social structure and social learning (see Roe 2000a). However, the present global environmental and social uncertainty has led to a rise in theories and methods which hope to explain and deal with ambiguities. Resilience theory indicates that perhaps 'basins of attraction' or semi-stable states may be achieved in complex systems, but that natural processes will then mean that these become unstable and further change occurs until a new semi-stable state is achieved. This concept can be useful in various ways in relation to landscape. Responding to such ideas suggests that participatory processes in landscape need to be flexible, long-term and that a single solution may not be achievable; concepts of participation in landscape need to develop in response to risk and uncertainty in both process and outcome, whether it is about the interaction that communities and individuals have with landscape, or participation in democracy, decision making and justice in the landscape.

### Conclusions

There are a number of areas within research relating to landscape and participation where evidence is still lacking. A gap would seem to be in the theoretical development of what is peculiar to *landscape* participation and in the integration of the two key areas of interaction identified in this chapter. For example, does participation actually provide more sustainable landscapes? As awareness of the critical environmental impacts grow, particularly in relation to climate change (see Holstein 2011), it becomes clearer that whole populations need to be galvanized into action if any serious response is to make a difference to the speed of degradation in the landscape. Continuing efforts to engage communities in taking action on this most critical of problems has reinforced the understanding of the considerable problems that participation in landscape has always had, that individuals have lost and continue to lose any connection with local landscape, that communities often do not feel empowered to take action, and they have difficulty in visioning a long term future for landscape where such action may have an impact.

Fischer suggests that citizen participation can contribute to environmental sustainability through three goals: first to give meaning to the practice of 'strong' democracy, secondly to legitimize policy development and implementation particularly by transforming ways of organizing and knowing through collaborative process (see Healey 1997), and thirdly as a contribution to science

or knowledge. My own research has indicated there is still a considerable problem in relation to knowledge deficit which can be described as a *participation inhibitor*. Such a deficit means that the knowledge and the skills to participate do not presently lie within communities and thus the potentially useful indigenous knowledge cannot be liberated, and interaction with (or participation in) the landscape cannot be built. These, in addition to the constantly changing structure and composition of communities, the changing values in planning practice, which remain rooted in a protectionist stance in the UK, and a low potential degree of influence (Holstein 2011; Selman 2004, 2007) provide rich areas for the researcher to examine. Participation in landscape has to be seen in the wider context of participation in the political system and in relation to cultural experience and understandings. The research focus on landscape is under considerable threat throughout the world from the political concentration on economic growth and financial development where landscape tends to be regarded as a simple resource to be exploited. While understandings of landscape participation can become more sophisticated through cross-disciplinary working and experience from practice, there are many pitfalls to transdisciplinarity and the remedies to these are not yet well articulated in theoretical perspectives.

The fashion is to gather examples of where communal action provides solutions for landscape change problems, but do such solutions address really large scale problems such as climate change enough to make a real difference? Are the timescales and problems with expertise really addressed? What evidence is there that such initiatives actually provide more sustainable communities or landscapes?

There seems to be a growing recognition that any system is imperfect and perhaps this is a more useful starting point for examining participatory theory and practice. There is no ideal or single solution and the key to considering landscape issues is about trying to deal with complexity.

While we need the outcomes that provide us with more sustainable landscapes and communities, the process of participation has for some time been recognized as at least as important and more difficult to measure (e.g. Margerum and Born 1995; Roe 2007). It is important when researching landscape participation that both the aspects identified in this chapter are considered in order to gain the more holistic understanding of landscape as a 'nexus of community, justice, nature and environmental equity' proposed by Olwig (1996: 630–1). In doing so, the scholar will find enormous opportunities to explore new areas of research interest.

## Notes

- 1 Athens was a slave economy (Miles 2011) and the democracy demonstrated there can be described as proto or partial. The relationship between democracy and the spaces that encourage or restrict democratic interaction is much discussed (e.g. Sennett 1995, 1999; Miles 2011). The idea that the Athenian Pnyx was the seat of democracy is contested since it was a space where activity was highly disciplined; a space for oratory where the public had to wait patiently to take turns to speak. The Agora was a place of much more varied activity (commerce, legal affairs, religious rites and amorous encounters) (Canales 2011). Here the free Athenians were expected to participate in everyday or 'common' activities as a duty, a privilege and an honour, with those not taking part described as '*idiotis*'. The term can be translated in various ways to indicate someone who acted on his/her own (a private individual) and was not concerned predominantly with public affairs; to denote an unskilled worker; to indicate an individual, someone who was not educated as was a 'citizen'.
- 2 See images by Sirkka-Liisa Kontinen, the Side Photographic Collection at <http://www.amber-online.com> (accessed 10 May 2012).

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