Issues of Participation: Exploring Ideals of Participation Through a Digital Design Project with a Public Library

by

Theresa Anne Costantino

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Information
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Weak forms of ‘user involvement’ are often conflated with ‘participation’, eroding the personal, social and political potential of participation. In this thesis, I explore ideals of participation in the context of a digital design project to understand why digital teams that engage users in conventional human-centred design (HCD) may not adopt a more participatory approach such as Participatory Design (PD) that engages users in authentic participation based on mutual learning.

As a foundation, I traced the parallel but distinct trajectories of HCD and PD, identifying tensions between them based on differences in ideals of participation. Drawing on a range of participatory practices, I also derived the Issues of Participation framework comprised of seven issues: goals, representation, power relations, context, effectiveness, transformations, and sustainability. I demonstrate that these issues can help distinguish PD from HCD.

In my fieldwork, I took a Participatory Action Research approach by engaging digital designers on the Account Redesign Project (ARP) at the Toronto Public Library (TPL) as co-researchers. Through a series of workshops, we reflected on participation generally and within ARP. Our reflections shed light on differences in ideals between HCD and PD as well as some of the barriers to moving beyond HCD to engaging library members in more participatory ways.

I found that my co-researchers adopted HCD’s pragmatic goal of involving users as informants in order to improve the digital product and had little awareness of PD’s democratic goal of engaging users in authentic participation that gives them a say, not just a voice. Nonetheless,
within TPL, they were champions for the inclusion of library members in the design of services. My findings suggest that by addressing personal and organizational barriers, designers practicing HCD may adopt and champion PD.

My thesis addresses deeply held concerns within PD about “how participatory a design project has to be so as to ‘qualify’ as a PD project” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 117). I argue that distinguishing PD from HCD is valuable in raising awareness of the democratic goals of PD, reclaiming an authentic meaning of participation, and enabling users to achieve more ‘say’ in their future.
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Chapter 1

1 Exploring ideals of participation

In participatory practices, including Participatory Design (PD), there are often concerns about the authenticity of participation (Anderson, 1998; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Robertson & Simonsen, 2012). Sharing this concern, in this thesis I explore ideals of participation in the literature and in the context of a digital design project.

My research is particularly timely as ‘design thinking’ and ‘human-centred design’ are reaching beyond design schools and boutique design agencies – and beyond digital design – becoming a management trend in business schools, businesses, governments, and other organizations (Brown & Martin, 2015; Kolko, 2015; Liedtka, 2015; Nussbaum, 2011). Without a clear understanding of the distinctive value of genuine participation as espoused and practiced within PD, weak forms of ‘user involvement’ are often conflated with ‘participation’, eroding the personal, social and political potential of participation. I argue that, while PD is sometimes considered part of a family of human-centred design (HCD) approaches, distinguishing PD from the more dominant practice of HCD emphasizes PD’s commitment to democratic goals and authentic participation.

In this thesis, I examine issues of participation and, specifically, how differing ideals between HCD and PD contribute to tensions between them. Both HCD and PD emerged during the 1970s in relation to computers in the workplace, before personal computing had developed (Grudin, 2008). Amongst other roots, PD grew out of workplace democracy efforts by academics, unions and workers in Scandinavia in the 1970s, referred to collectively as the Scandinavian approach to systems design (Bannon & Ehn, 2012, p. 42). Rather than a top-down, managerial imposition of computers into the workplace as was the norm at that time, Scandinavian approaches advocated for the involvement of workers in determining the organization and tools of their work. HCD, on the other hand, with its roots in human factors, ergonomics, cognitive science and computer science, focused on improving productivity from a managerial perspective.

My investigation of HCD and PD focuses on ideals of participation. ‘Participation’ is a contested and complex term that I will explore from various perspectives in subsequent chapters. For my research, the most relevant historical roots of ‘participation’ began after the Second World War,
with the evolution of new forms of research, particularly Participatory Action Research (PAR). In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of ‘participatory practices’ developed from PAR – participatory democracy, participatory education, participatory development – as well as the precursors of Participatory Design (Cornwall, 2011). In the ensuing years, academic and mainstream interest in participation has ebbed and flowed. Currently, we are in a period of relatively intense focus on participation, as evidenced by open-source software, open data, crowdsourcing, open innovation, and most broadly, calls to reform the vision and mechanics of democracies. Much of this interest is fuelled by the democratizing potential of the Internet and, more specifically, online social media.

Another important concept that I consider in this thesis is ‘ideals’. Within PD there are explicit and implicit ideals related to participation about the degree, the form, and the impact of participation. As an academic studying PD and a professional practicing HCD, I have felt a number of tensions between the two fields and wanted to explore them. I began my exploration by investigating a range of participatory practices to identify some key issues that are common to these practices. Based on my findings, I formulated the Issues of Participation Framework (Costantino, 2014) with seven issues: goals, representation, power relations, context, effectiveness, transformations and sustainability. Throughout this thesis, I examine ideals of participation generally but also as they specifically relate to these issues.

To study participation, I decided to situate my research within a cultural institution that was created to support democratic participation – public libraries. By making information available to ‘the people’, public libraries are intended to help citizens be knowledgeable participants in their democracies. From inception, there has been (and continues to be) tension in the library profession between ‘neutrally’ providing access to information and actively exercising social responsibility (Samek, 1996). Additionally, there are current concerns about the role of the public library in the evolving information environment (Dorner, Campbell-Meier, & Seto, 2017). Rather than providing access to information, some librarians have advocated for a change of focus from libraries to librarians and from collections to connections. David Lankes, a Library and Information Science scholar, suggests a new mission for librarians, i.e. to help their communities create, access and evaluate knowledge. Lankes currently calls this ‘New Librarianship’ but his former term ‘Participatory Librarianship’, better places his proposed
reconfiguration of the relationship between librarians and library users in the context of other participatory practices such as PD and PAR (Lankes, Silverstein, & Nicholson, 2007).

With its prescribed role in democracy and an espoused commitment to participation, a public library seemed to offer a promising site for research regarding participation. I was able to form a relationship with my local public library system, the Toronto Public Library (TPL). As the focal project, together we chose the Account Redesign Project (ARP) – a project to redesign the digital account management functionality for library members¹. TPL assembled a design team to undertake what I refer to as the ‘design activities’. The design activities followed a fairly typical human-centred design approach, including a multi-disciplinary design team, iterative design and prototyping, as well as usability evaluations with library members.

Because I believe participation enriches experiences and outcomes, I wanted to adopt a participatory approach to my exploration of participation so chose Participatory Action Research (PAR) as my research methodology. I invited the design team to join me as co-researchers in a series of ‘research activities’ in which we reflected on participation within the Account Redesign Project (ARP) design activities. Through these reflections, we deepened our self-awareness regarding participation and created knowledge that could be shared with people outside the project team. In the spirit of PAR, we shared that knowledge informally as well as more formally – through conferences and papers – in both practitioner and academic settings (Costantino et al., 2014a, 2014b). My co-researchers were important collaborators in the research activities and were also asked to review this dissertation for further contributions and, more importantly, to ensure that I’ve represented our experiences faithfully.

1.1 Background and motivation

In this section I discuss my personal connection to the foundational elements of this research. Through a series of questions, I describe why I am interested in the topic of participation, the

¹ Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms ‘library members’, and ‘library users’ interchangeably and broadly. In these terms I include residents and visitors to Toronto who could take advantage of library services, from visiting a branch to checking out materials or participating in a program. I’ve chosen these terms over “library patron” or “library customer”, which imply an economic relationship that I feel is inaccurate and harmful to understanding the roles library members play, and could play, in relationship to public libraries.
practice of Participatory Design, and the setting of a public library. In addition to explaining my motivation, this section confirms why I was uniquely positioned to undertake this research.

1.1.1 Why participation?

When I speak of participation, I mean the power of people working together, which has long been a fascination of mine. When I was 11 years old, my classmates and I wrote a book collectively as a school assignment. At the University of Waterloo, I chose to live in a student-run residence. As I started my independent life in Toronto, I joined a co-operative grocery store. But my most fulsome and fulfilling experience of participation came from my experience working at an artist-run photography centre to collectively run exhibition, education and production programs. This was the first time that I helped ‘design’ participation and I feel very proud of the outcome – a robust participation process that has endured for over 20 years (Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography, 2018).

As my career evolved toward the design of digital products, human-centred design methods naturally resonated with me. While I loved being a designer of digital products, what I really loved most deeply was designing the process of participation. I enjoy getting people involved in the design process so we can have those marvellous moments of participating in collective decision-making, where no individual owns the decision – but everyone does. Nothing stirs me as deeply as those moments. At the same time, in my experience, those moments are the result of good participation design and, even with good design, are rare. Nonetheless, they are always worth the effort and even when those perfect moments are not achieved, the imperfect moments are also better with participation, in my estimation.

While directing the artist-run centre, I believed strongly that all the member-artists had a right and an obligation to be involved in the decision-making. At the same time, I recognized that the members made all types of contributions to the collective and I valued the differences. I watched as people became more and less involved in particular activities and over time, depending on their other responsibilities, their self-interest, their drive, and their vision. Working with an ever-

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2 As I will discuss later, Participatory Design is a human-centred design method but has historical roots and principles that distinguish it from the mainstream of HCD.
changing group of diverse personalities was always challenging and always stimulating. I was hooked.

1.1.2 Why Participatory Design?

While studying for my Masters degree in Library and Information Science, I was introduced to Participatory Design (PD) through a course entitled “User-Centred Information System Development”. The workplace democracy stance of PD appealed to me and I supported the idea that workers have the right to be involved in developing the tools of their work.

When I moved to designing digital products in a commercial setting, the rights of the product users were not as clear to me as the rights of the members at the artist-run centre and the rights of the workers at a workplace. Like many practitioners, I used a mainstream human-centred design process in my professional work but I longed to explore a deeper, more sustained, relationship between designers and users.

In 1996, while I was a Masters student, I co-wrote and presented a paper at the 4th Biennial Participatory Design Conference (McPhail, Costantino, Bruckmann, Barclay, & Clement, 1996). It was a wonderful way to be introduced to the PD community that was building around the conference, referred to as PDC. When PDC was in my home city of Toronto in 2004, I reconnected with PD by assisting with and attending the conference. It was then that I started to consider pursuing a PhD and, in 2006, I started that journey, and have attended every PDC since that time.

One of the things that has struck me over the years is the tension in some PDC papers regarding ‘genuine’ Participatory Design. Sometimes that tension is about the goals and outcomes of the projects – and whether there are intentions to address power relations in the shorter or longer-term (Beck, 2002; Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014). Sometimes the tension is about the degree to which “users” have been involved in the project – and whether they are merely informants or actually have the power to influence the course of development and its outcomes (Halskov & Hansen, 2015; Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012; Robertson & Simonsen, 2012). These concerns echo my own tensions between my use of human-centred design processes in my professional work and my personal interest in more meaningful, sustained, and transformative relationships between users and designers that are aspirations of Participatory Design.
1.1.3 Why a public library?

While my main interest is participation and, more specifically Participatory Design, I chose public libraries as a research site for a number of reasons. I did my Masters degree in Library and Information Science and, like many trained librarians, I have a strong personal attachment to public libraries stemming from childhood. I have also spent most of my working life in the cultural sector and have a strong appreciation for cultural institutions, particularly museums, archives and libraries. Despite my fond feelings and appreciation for libraries, I am aware of the economic and political constraints they face (Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, & Sarin, 2014). Nonetheless I remain optimistic about the role public libraries can play in “promoting a renewed and democratic public sphere” (Blewitt, 2014, p. 96).

From my investigation into participation, I was invigorated by aspects of participatory democracy, in particular, Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) (Fung & Wright, 2003), which informed my discussion of power relations in Chapter 3. However, I mention EPG here because it focuses on engaging institutions and finding ways to use their power and resources to change the institutions themselves as well as their surrounding society. While I understand the value of working outside institutional structures, I agree with EPG that lasting change happens when institutions change, and this happens more readily by working with institutions (often after much struggle and groundwork by people working outside institutions). I believe public libraries play a unique role in our society intersecting information, education and entertainment. In addition I think their arms-length relationships with local governments position public libraries to play a leadership role in supporting social and economic development through programming (for example, innovation hubs) but most importantly through community engagement.

While I considered a number of public library systems within my region, I was able to forge a relationship with my preferred research partner the Toronto Public Library (TPL). TPL is my life-long library, starting with the North York Public Library when I was a child. Through amalgamation of North York plus six other library systems in 1998, the Toronto Public Library has become “the largest public library system in Canada, and the world's busiest urban library”, based on visits and circulation (Toronto Public Library, n.d.-a).

I was also attracted to the extreme diversity of people and organizations that TPL serves. The National Household Survey reported that 46.0% of the Toronto population was foreign-born.
and the City of Toronto currently provides services in over 180 languages (City of Toronto, n.d.-a). The Toronto Public Library actively engages new Torontonians through all their services as well as specific programs such as English language conversation groups, citizenship classes, and one-on-one counselling through partnerships with settlement organizations. Like most public libraries, TPL also provides their constituents with access to the knowledge and technology that can help them play an active role in their society. Furthermore, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, TPL has a stated and demonstrated commitment to participation when it comes to evolving their practices and programs.

1.2 Key concepts

Espousing ideals of participation is much easier than achieving them in practice. My central focus in this dissertation is the exploration of the gap between ideals and experience when it comes to participation, particularly within digital design. In this section, I introduce the key concepts that form the foundation of this inquiry.

1.2.1 What is participation?

As mentioned previously, ‘participation’ is a complex and contested term. While a dictionary definition is “to take part”, in practice our understanding of participation is much richer. To characterize participation, many scholars and practitioners have constructed scales that define forms or degrees of participation while others have identified key facets of participation. Rather than adopting a definition of participation early in this study, I built on scholarly work within a range of participatory practices to derive my Issues of Participation Framework, which I discuss at length in Chapter 3.

Although there isn’t a single, prescriptive definition of participation, there is much concern amongst participatory practitioners regarding the concept of authentic or genuine participation (Anderson, 1998; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Robertson & Simonsen, 2012). The many scales and facets of participation I alluded to previously are often created to help practitioners, and others, judge the quality of participation. These judgements are further aided by descriptions of genuine and authentic participation, as well as inauthentic participation.

In the Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design, Robertson and Simonsen refer to genuine participation as “the fundamental transcendence of the users’ role from being merely
informants to being legitimate and acknowledged participants in the design process” (2012, pp. 5, emphasis in original). This distinction leads to one of the tensions between HCD and PD that I will elaborate on in Chapter 2 – that users are typically informants in HCD and acknowledged participants in PD.

HCD and PD are part of the broader field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). Within HCI there is no single, accepted definition of ‘participation’. However, the over-riding concern is not the lack of a general, shared definition of participation, but rather transparency regarding the form of participation within a particular project or initiative (Bergvall-Kåreborn & Ståhlbrot, 2008; Halskov & Hansen, 2015; Vines, Clarke, Wright, McCarthy, & Olivier, 2013). I share this concern and it is one of the reasons I created the Issues of Participation framework – so I could be very specific about participation along a number of key dimensions.

1.2.2 What are ideals?

Across the various meanings of participation, ideals play an important role but the specific ideals differ. To aid in my discussion of participation, in this section I define ideals and distinguish them from relevant related concepts. To do so, I turned to the writings of John Dewey since his ideas regarding democracy and participation have been influential on me as well as many others interested in participation (Anderson, 1998; Bjögvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2012; Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014; DiSalvo, Lukens, Lodato, Jenkins, & Kim, 2014; Fung & Wright, 2003; Hakken, Teli, & Andrews, 2015; Hayes, 2011; Pateman & Williment, 2016).

Three key and related concepts from Dewey are ideals, principles and standards of approval. Both HCD and PD have stated principles published in key reference works, which I will discuss in Chapter 2. However, ideals and standards of approval associated with HCD and PD practices are less explicit which, in part, motivates this dissertation. I seek to provide encouragement, as well as method, for making ideals and standards of approval regarding participation more explicit through tools such as my Issues of Participation Framework, which I discuss at length in Chapter 3.

To work towards a definition of ideals, I turn to Dewey:

(…) true ideals are the working hypotheses of action; they are the best comprehension we can get of the value of our acts; their use is that they mark our
consciousness of what we are doing, not that they set up remote goals. Ideals are like the stars; we steer by them, not towards them. (Dewey, 1897, p. 40)

For this dissertation, I adopt the position that ideals are ideas that guide action rather than a fixed set of goals. Further, in the phrase, “mark our consciousness of what we are doing” we see Dewey’s influence on Schön’s “reflection in action”, a concept influential to participatory practice (Schön, 1983).

Closely related to ideals is the concept of principles. Dewey describes principles by distinguishing them from rules:

Difference between a principle and a rule; former a method for action, latter a prescription for it; former experimental, latter fixed; former orders in sense of setting in order, latter in sense of commanding. (Dewey, 1897, p. 5)

So, in Dewey’s terms, ideals are ‘working hypotheses of action’, principles are ‘a method of action’. Put in my own terms, ideals are aspirational ideas that guide action (which includes reflection) while principles are ways to act that are guided by ideals. For example, when it comes to power relations within participation (an issue I will examine in Chapter 3), we may have an ideal that ‘everyone’s voice is equal’. Guided by this ideal, we may act according to one of the principles of Participatory Design, i.e. “we seek to equalize power relations by finding ways to give voice to those who may be invisible or weaker in organisational or community power structures” (Greenbaum & Loi, 2012, p. 82).

In outlining Dewey’s ideas, Elizabeth Anderson describes the value of a third useful concept, standards of approval:

Standards of approval enable us to take up the standpoint of observers, who approve and disapprove of our conduct not just for its consequences but on account of its underlying motives as well. (Anderson, 2014, para. 51)

In Deweyian terms, standards of approval allow us to judge the consequences of our conduct as well as our motives so that we may adjust our future conduct. Dewey and Tufts delineate a “double sense” of judgment:
In respect to knowledge, the word has an intellectual sense. To judge is to weigh pros and cons in thought and decide according to the balance of evidence. This signification is the only one recognized in logical theory. But in human relations, it has a definitely practical meaning. To "judge" is to condemn or approve, praise or blame. Such judgments are practical reactions, not coldly intellectual propositions. They manifest favor and disfavor, and on account of the sensitiveness of persons to the likes and dislikes of others exercise a positive influence on those judged. (Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 258)

Assuming that we are reflective in our participatory practices, we would “weigh pros and cons” to decide upon a course of action and, after the actions, judge the consequences and our motives based, in part, on the “favor and disfavor” of others whom we esteem.

Contrary to common notions of judgment, Anderson declares,

Praise and blame are tools for enabling people to assume responsibility for their conduct — to enable them to regulate their conduct in view of their consequences for others. Hence, the presupposition of praise and blame is not that the individual held to account could have done otherwise at the time of acting. It is rather that praise and blame can induce people to be more conscientious — to govern their conduct in light of the responsibilities ascribed to them, to act out of a sense of their own responsibility, and thereby to take notice and mastery of the motives by which they act — in the future. (Anderson, 2014, para. 50)

Continuing my example, we may judge that our particular efforts at equalizing power relations created consequences that we would like to repeat or avoid in future efforts. We would arrive at this judgment through our own reflection, taking into account any praise or blame we have received from others.

Finally, Dewey and Tufts also emphasize the need for reflection in order to systematize reactions, such as praise and blame:

Upon this view, the problem of reflective morality is to discover the basis upon which men unconsciously manifest approval and resentment. In making explicit
what is implicit in the spontaneous and direct attitudes or praise and blame, reflection introduces consistency and system into the reactions which take place without thought. (Dewey & Tufts, 1932, pp. 257-258)

This ability to improve our judgments in advance of actions, as well as after our actions, is the reason I created the Issues of Participation framework. The Framework provides a series of lenses we can use to make our choices and compromises more explicit to ourselves, our co-researchers, and other esteemed individuals. I will describe the Framework fully in Chapter 3 but wanted to note this motivation for creating the Framework and being drawn to Dewey’s ethics.

To close this section, I give the last word on the value of ideals to Dewey:

The very fact that an ideal is present in consciousness, is, as far as it goes, its realization; it is the self moving that way; in so far as it modifies conduct, it is directive and effective. (Dewey, 1897, p. 39)

1.2.3 What are ideals of participation?

Having defined ideals as ideas that guide action, it follows that participation itself could be considered an ideal. In PD and other participatory practices, participation is a fundamental concept that is passionately debated and continually refined – and is often defined by the ideals associated with it (Anderson, 1998; Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014; Cornwall, 2011; Vines et al., 2013).

Rather than a singular ideal of participation, I contend that there are ideals associated with the many facets of participation, which I’ve referred to as “issues of participation”. I explore differing ideals associated with each of these issues, particularly between HCD and PD. I explore how differences in ideals within the issues of participation contribute to tensions in participatory practices regarding authentic participation.

Although the ideals of participation are rarely named as such in PD, it may be that we use them to judge the quality of participation in our work and in the work of others. While ideals are not often mentioned, the related concepts of values (Iversen, Halskov, & Leong, 2012) and utopias (Bardzell, 2014; Ehn, 2014) are part of the discussion in PD.
While the following quote is about PD in general, note the inclusion of “rules that ensure participation”:

… there is a strong sense in the PD community that there are ‘right ways’ of practicing PD. There are different types of ‘rules’ at play in the practice of PD: rules that govern the organizing of the design process as such; rules that ensure participation; rules that support the collaborative imagining of a future design in use; and finally, rules that enable joint decision-making. We use the term ‘rule’ in the sense Wittgenstein used it: ‘descriptively, to indicate regularity or as a criterion of correct conduct’ (Schmidt 2011, p. 372). (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 6)

Through this dissertation, I encourage participatory practitioners to make ‘rules’ or ‘standards of approval’ more explicit in order to help address tensions regarding participation within PD. The reason I want to address these tensions is so we can more clearly distinguish PD from other forms of HCD and, hopefully, attract more people to its ideals, principles and standards of approval for participation.

1.3 Research approach

Like many participatory practices, early Participatory Design (PD) was influenced by Participatory Action Research (PAR), sharing its goal of “changing a situation, not just studying it” (Bannon & Ehn, 2012, p. 41). Like PAR, PD seeks to engage people that are affected by a situation in order to change it. In PD, the ‘situation’ is often the introduction or improvement of a digital system and, ideally, the people engaged become co-designers.

Typically in PD projects, the co-designers contribute to design activities but there are very few cases in the PD literature in which participants are engaged as co-researchers, contributing to the knowledge generation activities (Luke et al., 2004).

In this section I make a distinction between action-research, which is most commonly practiced within PD, and Participatory Action Research, which is the research method I followed for my study.
1.3.1 Participatory Action Research

Based on the prestige and recognition associated with the success of the natural sciences in pursuit of the ‘truth’, the social sciences emerged in the late 19th century with strong allegiance to empirical approaches and the scientific method (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007).

Not satisfied with simply observing, theorizing, and hoping for change, social scientists in the early part of the 20th century conceived ways to have a more immediate impact on the situation under investigation; one of the approaches developed was action research.

Although the origins of action research are many, Kurt Lewin is generally credited with coining the term ‘action research’.

Kurt Lewin (1946) generally receives credit for introducing the term ‘action research’ as a way of generating knowledge about a social system while, at the same time, attempting to change it. (Elden & Chisholm, 1993, p. 121)

Underpinning this early form of action research were positivist philosophical assumptions, as was the case with most social sciences at the time (Cassell & Johnson, 2006). Cassell and Johnson explain:

…positivists assume that any social science researcher, provided that they follow the correct methodological procedures which derive from those used in the natural sciences, can neutrally collect data from an independent social reality so as to empirically test causal predictions deduced from a priori theory. (Cassell & Johnson, 2006, p. 787)

Cassell and Johnson refer to this approach to action research as the “experimental tradition” and go on to outline a range of action research types based on differences in their philosophical underpinnings. According to Cassell and Johnson, what makes action research a family of types is “an iterative cycle of problem identification, diagnosis, planning, intervention and evaluation of the results of action in order to learn and to plan subsequent interventions” (2006, p. 784). In other words, it is the “action” that distinguishes action research.
Cassell and Johnson make a strong argument against using ‘action research’ and any of its variants and relatives without being explicit about the philosophical foundation that supports the research aims, knowledge claims, validity criteria, as well as the relationships between researchers and participants (2006). Although all forms of action research include collaboration with the ‘subjects’ of the inquiry, Cassell and Johnson identify a family of “participatory forms of action research” in which “the researchers role begins to move away from one of expert to that of enabler” (2006, p. 796).

As PAR is related to a constellation of action-oriented inquiry methods, it is also related to an array of participatory inquiry methods. In an invitation to the “Quality in Human Inquiry” conference held in 1996, Lincoln and Reason characterized the family of participatory inquiry methods, including co-operative inquiry, appreciative inquiry and participatory action research, as sharing “the intention of moving away from the traditional separation of roles between researcher and subject and moving toward working with the other protagonists in the inquiry endeavour as co-inquirers” (1996, p. 5). They further distinguish participatory research approaches from “the orthodox positivist paradigm” because they “reject an epistemology based on simple objectivity and embrace an experiential, constructivist, and action-oriented worldview” and “rather than rely on methodology as the sole guarantor of validity, they build on the human capacity for critical reflection as the basis of their work” (1996, p. 5).

In The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, Gaventa and Cornwall identify three ways that PAR challenges conventional notions of knowledge:

- By involving those affected by the research in knowledge generation
- By asserting that knowledge is socially constructed and embedded
- By recognizing multiple potential sources and forms of knowledge (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015, p. 469).

While PAR is related to a family of action research approaches as well as a family of participatory research approaches, it is distinctive by encompassing participation, action, and knowledge generation. I chose PAR for my doctoral study because I wanted to involve the participants in the action as well as the knowledge generation, taking the role of co-researchers.
1.3.2 Research questions

As is appropriate to PAR, I started this inquiry with broad research aims and iteratively developed the research questions throughout the course of the research. My overarching aim was to explore participation – both on my own and in fieldwork with co-researchers. Prior to my fieldwork, I researched concepts, definitions and issues associated with participation. From this investigation, I created the Issues of Participation Framework as a series of lenses through which people, such as myself, can make the choices and compromises necessary in participatory practices.

Since HCD and PD are my main areas of interest, expertise, and experience, for my fieldwork I sought a digital design project in which I could study participation. For my fieldwork site, I wanted to find an organization that had a demonstrated commitment to participation, had constituents that have a stake in the organization beyond being consumers and, finally, an organization that might be open to involving their employees and constituents in a research project exploring participation. The Account Redesign Project (ARP) at the Toronto Public Library met all of these aspirations and, fortunately, 7 people involved in ARP agreed to be part of the research activities.

As we set out to explore participation, certain concepts were shaping the research from the beginning, namely participation, issues of participation, and differences in the ideals of participation between HCD and PD. As I analyzed the data from our research activities, I formed the following research questions that are central to my thesis:

RQ1. What, if any, are the significant tensions between HCD and PD, especially related to participation?

RQ2. What are the key issues of participation, within PD and related participatory practices?

RQ3. How do ideals related to the issues of participation help clarify tensions between HCD and PD, especially within the ARP?

RQ4. Why did the HCD practitioners on ARP not adopt a PD approach?
While this research is broadly about participation, the main focus is on participation within Participatory Design (PD), with the hope that the findings of this exploration can contribute to the theory and practice of PD. However, the research may have value beyond PD since this dissertation is about the design of participation, more than participation in design.

1.4 Chapter overview

In this chapter I introduced my personal and professional motivations for this research, including my life-long connections to participation and public libraries as well as my more recently cultivated knowledge and experience with Participatory Design and Participatory Action Research. To lay the foundation for my research, I briefly introduced the key concepts, the research approach, and the questions that frame this research.

In Chapter 2, I investigate the significant tensions regarding ideals of participation between HCD and PD (RQ1). To support my investigation, I provide background on human-computer interaction (HCI), human-centred design (HCD) and Participatory Design (PD), outlining their historical roots, development and prevailing principles. I argue that, because HCD and PD are often conflated, there are underlying tensions between the fields regarding their differences in purpose, degrees of user participation and more. By acknowledging the tensions, I argue that PD has an opportunity to highlight how PD differs from HCD, particularly regarding participation.

These tensions motivated me to investigate similar concerns in related participatory practices such as participatory democracy, participatory development and participatory education. In Chapter 3, I address RQ 2 by discussing how I derived the Issues of Participation Framework and then present each of the issues: goals, representation, power relations, context, transformations, effectiveness and sustainability. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I use these seven issues as a series of lenses through which to reflect on participation with digital designers, demonstrating that they can be helpful in distinguishing PD from HCD.

In Chapter 4, I introduce my fieldwork, which was undertaken as part of the Account Redesign Project at the Toronto Public Library (TPL). I start by discussing how TPL has previously involved their members in supporting and directing the organization. I then outline the two levels of activity in the Account Redesign Project (ARP). The ‘design activities’ are the human-centred design activities undertaken by a cross-functional team assembled by TPL. The ‘research
activities’ are the activities that I led with a group of co-researchers to reflect on participation in the context of the Account Redesign Project and more generally.

Chapter 5 is the core of the dissertation in which I respond to RQ3 by examining the ideals of participation based on my analysis of the fieldwork materials. Organized around the Issues of Participation Framework, I present the data generated by the research activities, as well as my interpretation. Most importantly, I analyze the role that ideals of participation played in the tensions between HCD and PD on the Account Redesign Project.

In Chapter 6, I address RQ4 and highlight the main contributions of this research by discussing how using the Issues of Participation Framework (IPF) to examine the tensions between HCD and PD created a mutual learning opportunity amongst the co-researchers. I consider other ways that the IPF could be employed at various stages of an engagement to help make choices and compromises regarding participation more explicit. I close by looking forward to future work that can address some of the limitations of this study as well as open areas for further investigation.
Chapter 2

2 Acknowledging tensions between HCD and PD

HCD and PD are approaches to digital technology design and research, although these approaches are sometimes practiced in other fields such as architecture, urban planning and community development (Bannon & Ehn, 2012, p. 41). As I outline in this chapter, HCD and PD are part of the historical development of the broader field of human-computer interaction (HCI) and share some roots in that field. However HCD and PD also have distinct origins and trajectories that set them apart.

One of the key ways that PD practitioners differentiate themselves from the mainstream of human-centred designers (HCD) is through their commitment and attention to the practice of ‘authentic’ or ‘genuine’ participation, as described in the Routledge Handbook of Participatory Design:

> Participatory Design as an emancipatory approach has little regard for approaches that solely involve users as informants through interviews, focus groups or other one-way techniques in a process otherwise controlled by information technology designers and their clients/managers. Such one-way data-gathering approaches we do not consider to be genuine participation [emphasis added]. (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012, pp. 26-27)

Despite their distinctions, HCD and PD are often conflated because both practices encourage the involvement of users in the design of information and communication technologies (ICT) and share some techniques for involving users, such as iterative prototyping. These similarities and differences have led to ‘tensions’ between HCD and PD, as I describe at the end of this chapter.

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3 Throughout this dissertation, I use ‘human-centred design’ to include the closely related term that is often used interchangeably: ‘user-centered design’ (UCD). I will discuss the origins and differences in the upcoming section on HCD.
As HCD has become the dominant digital design practice, awareness of PD has been limited and so too attention to the politics of design.

### 2.1 Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)

The field of human-computer interaction (HCI) began to develop in the late 1970s, as an outgrowth of several fields, most notably human factors, ergonomics, and software engineering (Grudin, 2012). In addition, there was a strong intertwining of HCI and cognitive science (Carroll, 2003).

As academic and professional interest in HCI grew, the need for a professional society emerged. The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), formed in 1947, is the largest and most influential professional association in computing. In 1980, its Special Interest Group on Social and Behavioral Computing (SIGSOC) was re-named and re-focused to become ACM’s Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction (SIGCHI). In commenting on the name change Marilyn Mantei Tremaine, one of the key figures in early HCI, said “We came up with ‘SIGCHI’ because ‘SIGCHI’ sounded easier to pronounce than ‘SIGHCI’” (Beasley, 2016, para. 17). Unfortunately, this name selection put the emphasis on the computer rather than the human, a situation that persists at CHI conferences, in my experience.

In 1988, the SIGCHI Executive Committee provided support for the development of an HCI curriculum (ACM SIGCHI Curriculum Development Group, 1992). Early in their mandate, the Curriculum Development Committee recognized the need for a working definition of HCI to guide their efforts and settled on the following:

> Human-computer interaction is a discipline concerned with the design, evaluation and implementation of interactive computing systems for human use and with the study of major phenomena surrounding them. (ACM SIGCHI Curriculum Development Group, 1992, p. 5)

The recommendations that emerged from this initiative were primarily aimed at university computer science departments but the authors also wanted to “consider human-computer interaction broadly enough that other disciplines could use [their] analysis and shift the focus appropriately” (ACM SIGCHI Curriculum Development Group, 1992, p. 7).
Influenced by psychology and cognitive science, as well as the emerging fields of human factors and ergonomics, early HCI (sometimes called the first generation or first wave) relied on a view of humans as “another system component, with certain characteristics, such as limited attention span, faulty memory, etc. that need to be factored into the design equation for the overall human-machine system” (Bannon, 1991, p. 27). Based on rudimentary concepts of human cognition, models and methods were developed in HCI practice, such as task analysis and GOMS (goals, operators, methods and selection), which are still used in HCI research and practice today (Carroll, 2013).

The second wave of HCI was strongly influenced by sociology and anthropology, particularly ideas of reflection in action (Schön, 1983) and situated action (Suchman, 1987). Rather than reducing humans to system components or imbuing machines with human attributes, the second wave emphasized “the holistic nature of the person acting in a setting” (Bannon, 1991, p. 28). These ideas helped shift the focus of many in HCI from human cognition to communities of practice, computing ecologies, context of use and theories of situated action, distributed cognition and activity theory (Bødker, 2006). Leading the shift were academics associated with the emerging fields of Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) and Participatory Design (PD). While these fields had roots in HCI, they also drew from other fields that I will discuss shortly.

Bannon, an early and consistent contributor to the fields of CSCW and PD, contrasted the first and second waves of HCI in “From Human Factors to Human Actors” (1991). He discusses the shift from thinking about individuals to groups, from looking at use by novices to experts, from a focus on the product to the process, from investigation in the laboratory to the workplace, from disembodied analysis to collaborative design, from gathering requirements to iterative prototyping with future users, and from user-centred to user-involved. Many of these tenets are central to PD and still distinguish it from much of mainstream HCI.

In 2006 Bødker, a leading scholar in participatory IT at Aarhus University, revisited the first two waves of HCI outlined by Bannon in order to juxtapose the characteristics of an emerging third wave, including “multitudes of hardware and applications, context and use across contexts and communities, and use beyond work” as well as emotions and experience-based design, and
reflexivity (Bødker, 2006, p. 2). She identifies the contemporary dominant conceptual and theoretical influence as cultural – specifically aesthetics, emotion, and experience.

There is, perhaps, a fourth wave underway in HCI looking forward (and back) to designing the future – drawing on economics, ethics, environmental studies, archaeology, and more. In their book *Beyond Capital: Values, Commons, Computing and the Search for a Viable Future*, Hakken et al. make a case for transforming human values and the role computing professionals could play in leveraging digital technology to encourage alternative futures (Hakken et al., 2015). Hakken et al. align themselves with other HCI scholars grappling with envisioning the future including utopianism (Bardzell, 2018; Ehn, Nilsson, & Topgaard, 2014), participatory infrastructuring (Pipek & Wulf, 2009) and public design (Ehn, 2008; Le Dantec & DiSalvo, 2013; Teli, Bordin, Blanco, Orabona, & De Angeli, 2015). In ACM’s *Interactions* magazine (widely read by HCI scholars and practitioners), Nardi discusses emerging literature within HCI relating to representations of the future including speculative design (Dunne & Raby, 2013), multi-life span design (Friedman & Nathan, 2010), collapse informatics (Tomlinson et al., 2013; Tomlinson, Silberman, Patterson, Pan, & Blevis, 2012), value-sensitive design (Friedman, 1996) and more. As Nardi describes it, this “generative fringe” is essential to injecting new ideas into the mainstream of HCI scholarship and practice.

While HCI has been shaped by successive waves of influence from fields that seek to understand human cognition, social dynamics, cultural output and visions of the future, it has also been shaped more directly by the fields in which it has its roots. In his introduction to the 2012 edition of *Human-Computer Interaction Handbook*, Grudin looks at the development of HCI covering “major threads of research in four disciplines: human factors, information systems, computer science, and library & information science” (Grudin, 2012, p. 4). He provides an overview of the origins and development of these fields from “the dawn of computing” into the early 2000s, outlining key authors, books, journals, conferences and movements that have helped shape HCI (Figure 1).
Grudin’s timeline shows that the field of HCI started to coalesce in 1980 (2012). He places “socio-technical & participatory design” within the Information Systems stream in the mid-1970s and places “POET” (The Psychology of Everyday Things) (Norman, 1988), a key text in HCD, in the Computer-Human Interaction stream in the mid-1980s. While Grudin’s timeline is a simplified and tidy way to present the origins and development of the HCI field, it helps to demonstrate that the fields of HCI, PD and HCD have their own developmental trajectories, which helps in understanding some of the tensions that are external and internal to HCI.

Within computer science, HCI emerged as an antidote to the dominant practice in information system development, which can be characterized as ‘system-centred’. Over 40 years since its inception, HCI is still struggling to have a greater impact on the practice of information system development. In a recent survey of researchers, practitioners, educators, and students regarding

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**Figure 1. Four fields with major HCI research threads.**

HCI education, Churchill et al. confirmed that the struggle continues, an assertion supported by comments such as these:

A closely related tension exists between computer scientists and non-computer scientists, or “people who program and those who study people who program (i.e., because they can’t program).” According to one computer scientist, HCI “doesn’t always get respect from traditional CS faculty; it’s still viewed as a question of (inessential) aesthetics.” (Churchill, Bowser, & Preece, 2013, p. 51)

The struggle of HCI within the computer science discipline spills over into a struggle internally within the HCI community. HCI is now taught outside of computer science, in departments such as psychology, design, communication, cognitive science, information studies, science and technology studies, management information systems, and industrial design and engineering (Carroll, 2013). Drawing on this rich array of perspectives is a strength of HCI, especially when it comes to academic research, where the array of beliefs and values amongst researchers can be acknowledged but need not be bridged. However, in practice, this disparity of beliefs and values must be bridged as HCI practitioners work together amongst themselves as well as with software engineers. HCI practitioners with a first-wave mindset may be inclined to move the field in an engineering direction – embracing “usability engineering” and its prevailing view that ‘users’ are subjects to be “studied, questioned, observed, and their performance on tasks measured” (Marti & Bannon, 2009, p. 8). Contrary to system-centred approaches, are human-centred approaches embraced by many HCI practitioners. In the next two sections, I will provide a brief overview of the history and principles of HCD and PD so that in the final section of this chapter I can detail the tensions between these two approaches based on some fundamental differences.

2.2 Human-Centred Design (HCD)

In this section, I give a brief overview of the history of HCD, demonstrating that it is part of the history of HCI but not synonymous with HCI. I then discuss the benefits, rationales and principles that are core to HCD, focusing on elements that overlap and contrast with PD.
2.2.1 From UCD to HCD

As mentioned, the terms human-centred design (HCD) and user-centred design (UCD) are often used interchangeably. A few distinctions between the two have been suggested. For example, Gasson argues that user-centred information system design methods “are targeted at the closure of technology-centered problems, rather than the investigation of suitable changes to a system of human activity supported by technology” (Gasson, 2003, p. 29). Sometimes HCD is considered the broader term, encompassing a range of stakeholders, not just those typically considered users (International Standardization Organization, 2009).

Rather than a meaningful distinction between HCD and UCD, it may be that the interchangeable use of the terms is largely historic – with UCD preceding, and now overlapping with, HCD. Like many practitioners in the 1990s, I first became familiar with user-centred design (UCD) through Donald Norman and Jakob Nielsen, two figures who have influenced successive waves of UCD practitioners for over 20 years.

Norman co-edited one of the earliest books on UCD: *User Centered System Design; New Perspectives on Human-Computer Interaction* (Norman & Draper, 1986b). In the introduction, Norman & Draper describe their purpose for engaging in user-centered system design:

> To being with, we do not wish to ask how to improve upon an interface to a program whose function and even implementation has already been decided. We wish to attempt User Centered System Design, to ask what the goals and needs of the users are, what tools they need, what kinds of tasks they wish to perform, and what methods they would prefer to use. We would like to start with the users, and to work from there. (Norman & Draper, 1986a, p. 2)

Norman incubated his influential ideas while working on his PhD in mathematical psychology and ultimately reached HCI practitioners through his book the *Psychology of Everyday Things* (POET). This book has become seminal within UCD, as evidenced by its inclusion in Grudin’s timeline (Figure 1) as well as by the thousands of citations of POET and subsequent editions entitled *The Design of Everything Things* (Norman, 1988, 2013). In POET, Norman focuses on the usability of the system, offering the following guidelines for designers:
- Make it easy to determine what actions are possible at any moment (make use of constraints).

- Make things visible, including the conceptual model of the system, the alternative actions, and the results of actions.

- Make it easy to evaluate the current state of the system.

- Follow natural mappings between intentions and the required actions; between actions and the resulting effect; and between the information that is visible and the interpretation of the system state. (Norman, 1988, p. 188)

Like Norman, Nielsen also developed his influential ideas in academia, particularly his now well-known heuristics for evaluating web pages and his “discount usability” approach, which involves early, iterative usability testing with small numbers of participants (Nielsen, 1993). These approaches, as well as other design guidance, came to the attention of practitioners through Nielsen’s e-newsletter Alertbox, which has influenced and enlivened the conversation amongst practitioners since 1995.

Since 1998, Nielsen and Norman have run Nielsen Norman Group (NNG), a user experience consulting, training and research company (Nielsen Norman Group, n.d.). In 2004, Norman published Emotional Design (2004), which is part of the third wave of HCI characterized by Bødker in which design encompasses the user experience more fully, including emotional responses. In 2010, Nielsen and Norman were listed amongst the world’s most influential designers in Bloomberg Business Week (Walters, 2010) but, in acknowledging the accolade, Norman notes that while they have influenced digital design, they are not designers (Norman, 2010).

The move toward the term “human-centered design” started in the early 1990s (for example Rouse, 1991). In 1999, it was the term chosen for the first international standard for HCD: ISO 13407 Human-centred design for interactive systems, and that term has been retained in the subsequent standard ISO 9241-210 (International Standardization Organization, 2009). In the introduction to ISO 9241-210, human-centred design is defined as “an approach to interactive systems development that aims to make systems usable and useful by focusing on the users, their
needs and requirements, and by applying human factors/ergonomics, and usability knowledge and techniques” (International Standardization Organization, 2009, p. vi).

The standard also notes that user-centered design and human-centered design are used interchangeably. Despite the fact that some have argued that UCD and HCD have differences, there is little tension between the two approaches. More significant is the tension between mainstream computer science and UCD/HCD, as I mentioned previously. So, while the terminology shift from UCD to HCD may be largely historic, the rise in the use of HCD may have an impact – as optimistically suggested by Bannon.

...just as the label “user-centered design” in the field of human–computer interaction hit a chord in the 1980’s, it may be the case that the “human-centred computing” label will have a similar re-orienting effect on the field of computing in the early decades of the 2000s. (Bannon, 2011, p. 182)

This optimism stems from what seems to be a greater awareness amongst digital designers of HCD and the value of participation, fuelled, at least in part, by organizations such as IDEO, well known evangelists of design thinking and champions of human-centred design. Their rhetoric, in particular that of their non-profit arm, bares a striking resemblance to PD, as pointed out by Bjögvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren (2012). Their open and inclusive approach to sharing their HCD toolkit, to soliciting collaboration, and to creating a ripple effect within and beyond design, is impressive.

2.2.2 HCD benefits, rationales, and principles

One of the ways that HCD has been successful in influencing digital designers, is through the existence of the international standard in ISO 9241-210: Human-centred design for interactive systems (International Standardization Organization, 2009). While some designers may not be aware of the standard or use the term HCD, the ideas encapsulated therein are foundational to the digital design profession and are perpetuated through an informal community of practice (Wenger, 1998). In Exploring Digital Design, Wagner et al. describe a community of practice as “a shared repertoire of ideas, commitments, and memories, as well as common resources (tools, documents, routines, vocabulary, symbols) that in some way carry the accumulated knowledge of the community” (Wagner, Bratteteig, & Stuedahl, 2010, p. 42). Largely unwittingly, new
designers become part of this community of practice through contact with their peers within education and work environments, through professional development opportunities such as conferences and training programs, and through online articles and discussion groups that reinforce the ideals of human-centered design. However, the ideals of HCD remain aspirational for many designers, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5.

The introduction to ISO 9241-210 summarizes the benefits and rationale of HCD: “This approach enhances effectiveness and efficiency, improves human well-being, user satisfaction, accessibility and sustainability; and counteracts possible adverse effects of use on human health, safety and performance” (International Standardization Organization, 2009, p. vi). This list of benefits draws on the roots of HCD, particularly cognitive engineering, human factors and ergonomics. The rationale for adopting an HCD approach, according to ISO 9241-210, is to improve the quality of the system by:

a) increasing the productivity of users and the operational efficiency of organizations;

b) being easier to understand and use, thus reducing training and support costs;

c) increasing usability for people with a wider range of capabilities and thus increasing accessibility;

d) improving user experience;

e) reducing discomfort and stress;

f) providing a competitive advantage, for example by improving brand image;

g) contributing towards sustainability objectives.
(International Standardization Organization, 2009, p. 4)

Looking at this list, it is clear that an assumed system is at the core, rather than being driven by human needs that may or may not be met by the introduction of a digital system. It seems that designers are no longer being counselled, as they were in early UCD, to “start with the users and work from there” (Norman & Draper, 1986a, p. 2). This becomes even more pronounced in the guide outlining example activities and outputs from an HCD approach (Figure 2), which starts
with the context of use, rather than “the goals and needs of the users”, as suggested by Norman and Draper (1986a, p. 2). I will elaborate on this discussion in the last part of this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs from human-centred design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand and specify the context of use</td>
<td>Context of use description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specify the user requirements</td>
<td>Context of use specification User needs description User needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce design solutions to meet these</td>
<td>User interaction specification User interface specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the designs against requirements</td>
<td>Evaluation results Conformance test results Long-term monitoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: More detailed information on each output is to be found in ISO/IEC/TR 25060.

Figure 2. Examples of outputs from human-centred design activities
Reprinted from Ergonomics of human system interaction-Part 210: Human-centred design for interactive systems (pp. 18), by International Standardization Organization, 2009, Switzerland.

However, most pertinent are the espoused principles of HCD that I will contrast with PD later in this chapter. According to ISO 9241-210, an HCD approach should follow these principles:

a) the design is based upon an explicit understanding of users, tasks and environments;

b) users are involved throughout design and development;

c) the design is driven and refined by user-centred evaluation;

d) the process is iterative;

e) the design addresses the whole user experience;

f) the design team includes multidisciplinary skills and perspectives.
(International Standardization Organization, 2009, p. 5)
Because these benefits, rationales and principles permeate the common resources of the HCD community of practice, I have found that design teams aspire to follow these principles. In particular, there is a strong desire on the part of organizations, agencies, and designers to involve users in requirements gathering and usability testing. Despite this desire, in many digital design projects, users are not consulted at all, often because of perceived time and/or budget issues as well as lack of experience bringing users into the design process. Nonetheless, these digital design teams often consider their approach is user-centred or human-centred because the designer (or the entire team) acts as a ‘user advocate’, standing-in for users throughout the design process.

In this section I have briefly outlined the history and principles of HCD. In the next section I will take a similar approach to introducing PD. With these two sections, I lay the foundation for the culmination of this chapter in which I contrast HCD and PD, arguing that their differences lead to tensions that inhibit recognition of the politics of participation and of design.

2.3 Participatory Design (PD)

Like HCD, PD is part of the development of HCI. As per Grudin’s timeline (Figure 1), the foundations for what later became PD were ‘socio-technical and participatory design’, which I will discuss shortly. By highlighting aspects of PD’s history and politics, I will demonstrate that the distinctions between PD and mainstream HCD are more significant than their similarities.

One fundamental distinction of PD is the acknowledgement of its values:

Participatory design makes explicit the critical, and inevitable, presence of values in the system development process. To predominant values of product quality and work productivity are added broadened participation and skill development. The premise is that these values are closely related; that the productiveness of our work is tied to the extent of our involvement, and that product quality is a matter of technology support for the continually expanding and developing work practices of skilled practitioners. (Suchman, 1993, p. viii)

As stated by Suchman, and as evidenced in the definition of HCD, the predominant goal in mainstream information systems development was, and continues to be, improving the product
and productivity. The fact that PD shares these goals with mainstream HCD, but that HCD
doesn’t share PD’s other values, has caused much concern within PD (Beck, 2002; Bjerknes &
Bratteteig, 1995; Brereton & Buur, 2008).

While some people consider “Participatory Design” a form of human-centred design, in this
section I lay further groundwork for arguing that HCD and PD have distinct trajectories that have
led to current tensions between them.

2.3.1 PD history

While the field of Participatory Design by that name is recognized to have started with the first
Participatory Design Conference (PDC) in 1990 (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012, p. 22), looking at
the antecedents of PD gives important insights into its parallel and overlapping development as
part of HCI and alongside HCD.

Formed in 1947, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, U.K. became a focal
point for some of the group and organizational research emerging from WWII. Eric Trist, one of
the key figures at the Tavistock, was influenced by German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin
and his work on action research, group dynamics and experiential learning (Trist, Murray, &

In the 1950s, Trist’s study of work groups led to his development, along with Fred Emery, of the
socio-technical systems approach to work design, which recognizes the interrelation of people
and technology (in the form of skills, processes and/or materiality). Unlike the traditional
Taylorist view that the goal of a system is productivity, the goal from a socio-technical systems
perspective is the health of the system – optimizing for not only the technical components of a
system but also for the human components in order to achieve productivity and wellbeing
(Asaro, 2000, p. 268).

In the 1960s, researchers from the Tavistock and Norwegian Work Research Institute adopted
the socio-technical systems approach in a series of projects as part of the Norwegian Industrial
Democracy Project (Asaro, 2000, p. 264). The four field projects investigated the conditions for
personal participation regarding production technology and related reformation of jobs and
wages for workers (Emery & Thorsrud, 1976, p. 2). These projects led to two research directions
as outlined by Asaro:
Scandinavian researchers focused on union empowerment through ‘collective resources’ and British researchers focused on autonomy in work group organization through ‘socio-technical systems design’ (Asaro, 2000, p. 265).

Pelle Ehn, an early pioneer of the Collective Resources Approach (CRA), describes the development of CRA as a reaction to the early socio-technical approach, which exhibited “questionable assumptions of the harmony of social forces and a lack of sensitivity to the asymmetrical distribution of power” (Ehn, 1993, p. 105).

In the early 1970s, computer scientist Kristen Nygaard laid the groundwork for CRA and other ‘Scandinavian approaches’ to system design. Nygaard and economist Olav Terje Bergo worked with the Norwegian Iron and Metal Workers Union (NJMF in Norwegian) to build up the knowledge of workers regarding technology so that they could be prepared to ‘have a say’ at the bargaining table (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012, p. 24).

The NJMF project laid the foundation for other iconic projects with trade unions such as DEMOS and DUE (Bjerknes & Bratteteig, 1995, pp. 75-77). All of these projects sought to redress power imbalances between workers and management by strengthening the position of the workers with knowledge, particularly regarding technology (Bjerknes & Bratteteig, 1995; Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012, p. 24).

In the 1980s, the next wave of Scandinavian projects went beyond sharing knowledge with workers by introducing technological alternatives to address issues of the dehumanization of work, the deskilling of workers and the imposition of rigid work routines (Asaro, 2000, p. 267). Engaging directly with workers, the researchers on the UTOPIA project designed alternative computer “tools” for skilled workers to practice, and protect, their craft. In the Florence project, rather than collaborate with skilled industrial workers and their unions, the researchers focused on the creation of a computer system for professionals working in a specific work situation, taking into account the work of other occupational groups and emphasizing the organizational and physical context of use (Bjerknes & Bratteteig, 1995). Influenced by UTOPIA and Florence, other “design and intervention projects” followed through the 1980s and 1990s (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012).
Another thread woven into Participatory Design was the research by Lucy Suchman and other anthropologists in the work practice and technology group at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC). Using ethnographic methods and analysis, they closely studied people at work and, amongst other things, revealed the complexity of work, arguing that it cannot be encoded into a set of simple steps. This research, and in particular Lucy Suchman’s book *Plans and Situated Actions* (1987), demonstrated that plans do not direct action, but rather are resources for action in situ.

In the late 1980s, the ethnographic work at Xerox PARC was also influential in another area closely related to HCI known as Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW). Lucy Suchman was the program chair of the second CSCW conference in 1988 and invited many of the researchers working in the Scandinavian approaches (Grudin, 2012). At that conference, it became clear that some of the CSCW researchers were concerned with the “political nature of work and its power relations” (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012, p. 23). These researchers formed a sub-group that created the first Participatory Design Conference in 1990. Since 1990, the biennial Participatory Design Conference (PDC) has been one of the main focal points for the PD community.

### 2.3.2 PD politics and principles

Circling back to Grudin’s outline of HCI development (Figure 1), we find “sociotechnical & participatory design” within the Information Systems stream, which is secondarily entitled “Managerial Use”. In the text, he distinguishes the two, based on Nygaard (1977), as follows: “Sociotechnical design took a managerial perspective. Participatory or cooperative design, rooted in the Danish trade union movement, focused on empowering hands-on users” (Grudin, 2012, p. 42). Likewise, the other works included in the Information Systems stream, such as group decision support systems (GDSS) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), take the managerial perspective, focusing on managers’ use of information to improve products and productivity.

Participatory Design is the exception in Grudin’s managerial stream, acting in cooperation with workers to advance their interests. This redressing of power relations, particularly between management and labour, is the political basis of PD. It is in service of this ideal that the strategies I discussed in the previous section on PD history were conceived, i.e. preparing workers for
technology discussions with management (knowledge strategies), involving workers in the
design of their tools (design and intervention strategies), and creating ways for designers to learn
about work practice (ethnographically-inspired approaches) (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2012, p. 30).

Drawing on the history and current practices within PD, the guiding principles underpinning
Participatory Design have recently been codified by Greenbaum & Loi as follows:

• equalising power relations – finding ways to give voice to those who may be invisible or
weaker in organisational or community power structures (Mulder & Wilke, 1970), which
is embedded in;

• situation-based actions – working directly with people and their representatives in their
workplace or homes or public areas to understand actions and technologies in actual
settings, rather than through formal abstractions, which in part can give rise to;

• mutual learning – encouraging and enhancing the understanding of different participants,
by finding common ground and ways of working, which hopefully is fostered by;

• tools and techniques – that actually, in practical, specific situations, help different
participants express their needs and visions, which does require;

• alternative visions about technology–whether it be in the workplace, at home, in public or
elsewhere; ideas that can generate expressions of equality and;

• democratic practices – putting into play the practices and role models for equality among
those who represent others. (Greenbaum & Loi, 2012, p. 33)

This set of principles underscores the political nature of PD and its emancipatory goals, which is
the basis for the tensions between HCD and PD, as I will elaborate shortly.

2.3.3 PD tools and techniques

From the early trade union projects until the present day, PD has borrowed, adapted and created
tools and techniques to help designers learn about work (and non-work) practices and to involve
‘non-designers’ in envisioning and designing new future practices. With greater understanding of
the work and workers, along with their involvement in defining new systems, the techniques developed by PD practitioners proved helpful in producing more useful and usable computer systems, which has led to their application by mainstream HCD practitioners (Brereton & Buur, 2008).

Some familiar techniques developed within PD include low-tech prototypes produced with simple materials such as markers, paper and cardboard boxes; storyboard prototyping based on realistic use scenarios; and envisioning exercises such as future workshops. All of these techniques and many more were included in a taxonomy of PD practices (Figure 3) by Muller et al (1993, p. 27) as part of a special issue on Participatory Design published in Communications of the ACM in 1993.

Figure 3. Taxonomy of PD Practices

Muller et al. created the taxonomy to provide practitioners with some guidance when looking for techniques and also to dispel misconceptions that PD could not successfully be extended to commercial products or outside the Scandinavian context (Muller et al., 1993).

Similarly, in an exploratory conference paper in 2010, Sanders et al. presented a framework for “Organizing the Tools and Techniques of Participatory Design” intended to help practitioners “decide which tools and techniques are most relevant for specific situations” (Sanders, Brandt, & Binder, 2010, p. 196). To this end, the framework groups the tools and techniques into one of three “forms”, i.e. making, telling or enacting. The tools and techniques are then mapped against their possible purpose, i.e. probe, prime, understand or generate (Figure 4). In a second diagram, the tools and techniques are mapped against elements of their context, i.e. group or individual and face-to-face or online (Figure 5).

In these diagrams Sanders et al. intermingle tools and techniques but in their text they distinguish them as follows:

\[\text{Tools} = \text{the material components that are used in PD activities.}\]

\[\text{Toolkit} = \text{a collection of tools that are used in combination to serve a specific purpose.}\]

\[\text{Technique} = \text{Technique describes how the tools and toolkits are put into action.}\]

For example, many different techniques can be used with a deck of image cards. They can be sorted, categorized, prioritized, used to make a collage, tell a story and/or used to spark conversations. (Sanders et al., 2010, p. 196)

Building on their brief exploratory paper, Brandt, Binder, and Sanders elaborate on their tell-make-enact framework in the *Routledge Handbook of Participatory Design* (2012), emphasizing the value of engaging “people’s minds, hearts and bodies in imagining and expressing future situations of use” (Brandt et al., 2012, p. 176). As is fitting for a handbook, they also describe many of the tools and techniques in greater detail, helping students and practitioners learn about, adopt and customize these approaches.
### Figure 4. The tools and techniques of PD organized by form and by purpose

Figure 5. Current applications of the tools and techniques of PD described by context
Reprinted from “A framework for organizing the tools and techniques of participatory design,”
by E. B.-N. Sanders, E. Brandt, & T. Binder, 2010, *Proceedings of the Tenth Participatory
Design Conference*, 197.
While PD researchers pioneered many of the early tools and techniques for involving ‘non-designers’ in design, there is now widespread sharing of tools and techniques between HCD and PD. However, some well-known techniques used frequently, and for decades, within HCD, such as usability testing based on cognitive walkthrough, are largely absent from the landscape of PD techniques. This is indicative of the difference in mindset between HCD, which is focused on receiving input from ‘users’, and PD’s aim of mutual learning.

2.4 Tensions between HCD and PD

In this brief overview of the history of HCI, HCD and PD, I’ve demonstrated that, while HCD and PD share some roots in HCI, the two fields also have significant historical differences. In many ways, HCD has continued science-inspired trajectories from human factors, ergonomics, and engineering while PD continues to be rooted in democratic ideals. In this section, I look at how these historical and political differences have resulted in tensions between HCD and PD. By tensions, I mean the strain that arises from the conflation of the two fields when they hold different views on the value of participation and who should gain from this value.

2.4.1 Differences in purpose

The key difference between HCD and PD is their purpose. From its roots in ergonomics to the present day, HCD focused on optimizing the ‘man-machine interface’ – what has come to be called ‘usability’. PD, on the other hand, has its roots in workplace democracy and has emancipatory goals intended to address power relations. This pragmatic/political split is at the centre of the tensions between HCD and PD.

Consequently, HCD is viewed as a problem-solving design methodology while PD is viewed as an approach to inquiry and social justice. This contributes to a professional-academic tension I discuss below.

2.4.2 Differences in who is practicing

The landscape for digital design has changed, and continues to change, at a rapid pace. As characterized by first, second, and third waves of HCI (Bannon, 1991; Bødker, 2006), there are changes in disciplinary influences, technology, and use of technology, that are shifting research
and practice within HCI. While these changes affect both HCD and PD, they do not always affect them in the same ways.

The early proponents of HCD such as Donald Norman and Jakob Nielsen reached beyond academia and strongly influenced professional design practice. Since that time, awareness of HCD has snowballed, with it becoming the dominant digital design approach for practitioners and attracting an enormous amount of research in academia (van der Bijl-Brouwer & Dorst, 2017).

By comparison, there is less awareness and, consequently, less adoption of PD. For some practitioners, PD is viewed as an academic pursuit rather than a viable design approach in practice. PD’s strong historical ties to workplace settings meant that the users were known (i.e. the workers) and their use of a particular technology was “non-discretionary”, to use Grudin’s term (2012). It has been more difficult to extend PD to discretionary use outside of workplaces, where who the users will be, and what their roles and rights might be in relation to the technology, are hard to know and where users are ostensibly free to select an alternative. On the other hand, HCD has flourished in application to these settings because it is readily applied within the development of commercial digital products.

2.4.3 Differences in ideals and principles

The differing purposes of HCD and PD have led to different ideals and principles that guide each practice. In pursuit of improved usability, HCD principles suggest that users be “involved” and that design be based on “an explicit understanding of users” and “user-centered evaluation” (International Standardization Organization, 2009, p. 5), as discussed earlier in this chapter.

While PD shares the pragmatic concerns of HCD, it has democratic ideals that drive why and how users are involved in digital design. HCD does not share the political concerns of PD exemplified in principles such as “mutual learning”, “equalizing power relations”, and contemplating “alternative visions about technology” (Greenbaum & Loi, 2012, p. 33).

2.4.4 Differences in degrees of user participation

The role of users in the design process is quite different between HCD and PD. HCD principles call for users to be “involved throughout the design and development” (International
Standardization Organization, 2009, p. 5). In practice, this often amounts to requirements gathering near the beginning of the design process and usability evaluations toward the end – or neither of these for the many teams that consider users, but do not involve them directly. As is typical in requirements gathering and usability testing activities, the information flows in one direction, from users to designers. The type of information that is elicited from users is often narrowly focused to their perceived needs in relation to the proposed digital product and their ability to perform the tasks the system requires.

On the other hand, PD principles call for a deeper engagement of designers and users leading to mutual learning. Users’ needs and tasks are part of the discussion but, ideally, these will be enriched throughout the engagement so that designers have greater insight into the motivations and implicit knowledge users possess. Completely missing from HCD is the information flow from designers to users. In PD, this ideally includes educating users about the technological possibilities so that they can truly participate in how, when and whether technology will be inserted into their lives. Mutual learning is part of another PD principle: equalizing power relations. Mutual learning helps prepare users to participate in decision making within the digital design process, going beyond influencing the decision-making of designers, as is the case in HCD. In PD, this is sometimes referred to as moving from “having a voice” to “having a say” (Bratteteig, Bødker, Dittrich, Mogensen, & Simonsen, 2012).

2.4.5 Differences in tools and techniques for participation

As mentioned previously, many of the tools and techniques used within HCD, such as low-tech prototyping and iterative design, were pioneered within PD. However, while similar tools and techniques are adopted, it is the reason for using these tools that is different between HCD and PD. True to their focus on usability, HCD practitioners use these tools and techniques to improve the product. While this may be part of the purpose for PD practitioners, the focus is on improving users’ ability to participate more fully in contributing to design decisions.

2.5 Chapter Summary

PD is sometimes considered part of a family of HCD approaches that seek to involve users in the design of ICTs (Abras, Maloney-Krichmar, & Preece, 2004). However, in this chapter I have
demonstrated that PD and HCD have parallel but separate trajectories, as well as different ideals and principles, that make them distinct.

However, HCD and PD share a pragmatic purpose – to create better, more usable, digital products. But PD also has a political purpose that is not shared by HCD – to create a better, more democratic, society. Regarding ideals and principles, PD includes principles not shared by HCD, such as mutual learning, equalizing power relations, and contemplating alternative visions of technology. To enact these principles, PD seeks to involve users in a sustained, two-way exchange, through innovative tools and techniques, so that users can have a more meaningful role that leads to users “having a say”, not just “having a voice” (Bratteteig et al., 2012).

However, the principles of PD are not easy to accomplish and, when it comes to the participation of users, there are always choices and compromises for digital design teams to make. In the next chapter, I introduce the Issues of Participation Framework, which I derived in order to make these choices and compromises more explicit in academic and professional work.

In this chapter I have explicitly acknowledged differences in purpose, in ideals and principles, and other differences between HCD and PD and contend that these differences have resulted in tensions between these related fields. These tensions are consequential because the dominance of HCD practice, and its weak form of participation aimed at product improvement, obscures the power and value of authentic participation that recognizes and strengthens the ability of people to design their future. I argue that by acknowledging the differences and tensions, PD has an opportunity to distinguish itself from HCD and to highlight PD’s democratic aspirations.
Chapter 3

3 Delineating Issues of Participation

‘Participation’ is a complex concept. On the surface, there are simple definitions of participation. By delving below the surface, it becomes clear that there are many ways to characterize participation, and that these characterizations lead to richer understanding.

In this chapter I collect some definitions and characterizations of participation, from across several participatory practices related to PD, to lay the groundwork for my own Issues of Participation Framework. I created the Framework originally to help me make my choices and compromises regarding participation on digital projects more explicit.4

3.1 Defining participation

At the heart of participatory practices, such as PAR and PD, is the concept of participation. Looking at the etymology of the word ‘participation’, it means “to take part” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2009b). However layered on top of this basic definition are many ideas about the forms and issues of participation. Perhaps the most familiar and well-considered form of participation is democracy – although the definition of democracy goes further than “to take part”. According to its etymology, its basic meaning is “common people rule” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2009a), which defines who is participating and the form of their participation.

In the preface to their early collection on Participatory Design, Schuler and Namioka define democracy and identify it as the motivation that links a range of “participative endeavors” (Schuler & Namioka, 1993, p. xii), including participatory design and participatory education.

The most basic motivation is the idea of democracy. To be more concrete: People who are affected by a decision or event should have an opportunity to influence it. Participation is the key element in democracy. (Schuler & Namioka, 1993, p. xii)

4 Much of this chapter is taken from a published paper “Issues of Participation: A Framework for Choices and Compromises” (Costantino, 2014).
So, although the basic definition of the word ‘participation’ doesn’t necessarily include ‘by whom’ or ‘how’, as the above quote demonstrates, our current understanding of participation has been intertwined with the ideals of democracy.

But democracy is not all or nothing. There are many forms or degrees of influence that participants can exercise. In her seminal paper “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”, Arnstein adopts a well-recognized definition of democracy as “participation of the governed in their government” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). As a civil servant, Arnstein had first-hand experience of citizen participation and proposes a ladder (Figure 6) “with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens’ power in determining the end product” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

Figure 6. Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation

She is careful to stress that the ladder is overly simplistic in a number of ways, most significantly in the juxtaposition of the “powerless” and the “powerful” as homogeneous blocs in direct opposition (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). Nonetheless, the ladder illustrates a key quality of participation – the degree of power of the participants to influence outcomes.

The following quote from Midgley, a leading scholar in social welfare, underscores how democracy is intertwined with participation:

> Although there are different views about what participation entails, many writers quote the United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 1929 (LVIII) when discussing this issue. The resolution states that participation requires the voluntary and democratic involvement of people in “(a) contributing to the development effort, (b) sharing equitably in the benefits derived there from and (c) decision-making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies and planning and implementing economic and social development programmes” (Midgley, 1986, p. 25).

Like Arnstein, this description of the requirements of participation includes decision-making and goes further to clarify decision-making throughout the process from goals through policies and planning to implementation. It also provides two more aspects to the definition of participation: that it must be voluntary and beneficial to the participants.

A few paragraphs later, Midgley goes on to state:

> Several writers have distinguished between authentic participation which involves all three criteria mentioned previously and pseudo-participation which limits community involvement to implementation or the ratification of decisions already taken by external bodies. (Midgley, 1986, p. 26)

Here, Midgley raises two notions that have preoccupied many discussions and practices of participation: authentic participation and pseudo-participation.

In a paper grappling with participatory reforms in education in the United States, educational leadership scholar Anderson raises issues of authentic participation:
To speak of authentic participation is to ask: Who participates, in what areas and under what conditions, and to ask: Participation toward what end? (Anderson, 1998, p. 575)

He answers the first question by stating that “participation is authentic if it includes relevant stakeholders and creates relatively safe, structured spaces for multiple voices to be heard” (Anderson, 1998, p. 575). Drawing on Dewey’s notion of democratic community (1927), Anderson refutes that greater organizational effectiveness leading to greater student achievement is the goal of participation, stating that “the ultimate ends of participation should be the constitution of a democratic citizenry and redistributive justice for disenfranchised groups” (Anderson, 1998, p. 575).

In traditional PD, with its focus on workplace democracy, participation is similarly defined to include democratic principles:

The employees must have access to relevant information; they must have the possibility for taking an independent position on the problems, and they must in some way participate in the process of decision making. (Kensing, 1983, p. 223)

Again we see the emphasis on decision-making power in definitions by previous writers in multiple milieus. Also highlighted is the need for independence of the participants – similar to the need for voluntary participation but more nuanced. Here the need is not only for voluntary participation but also for independence of participation and of thought throughout the process. The first point, access to relevant information, is also nuanced by what is relevant, who decides and who is sharing information.

In the management arena, Dachler and Wilpert suggest that the definition of participation is value-dependent.

The pervasive value bases underlying topic labels like industrial democracy and power equalization are not usually made explicit and are therefore rarely systematically questioned. But different value systems imply different definitions of participation, so that the term participation has a variety of meanings across investigators. (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978, p. 1)
In their paper published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, they offer a framework to integrate work on participation from a variety of disciplines and from a variety of value systems. According to the model (Figure 7), contextual factors (such as characteristics of society, organizations, groups and individuals) form the boundaries for the potential of participation. The potential is then determined by the values, the properties, and the outcomes of participation. They identify four value orientations and their associated goals, pointing out that these are not mutually exclusive: democratic, socialist, human development, and productivity. The structural and operational properties in the model include the degree of formality, the range of people involved, the degree of decision-making and types of decisions.

**Figure 7. Overview of the defining dimensions of participation**

Because the goals of participation are determined by the value orientation(s), the outcomes are identified by level, i.e. individual, group, organization and societal. According to Dachler and Wilpert,
...democratic and socialist theories concentrate on societal issues, paying little attention to the organizational and group factors implied by their arguments, whereas the human-growth and development, and the productivity and efficiency orientations emphasize organizational and group factors, with little attention to the societal implications of their arguments (Nord, 1974). But a view of participation which integrates the major questions contained in all the theoretical orientations is what is needed to provide a more complete or realistic definition of participation. (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978, p. 9)

In this section, I explored what defines participation, outlining some of the definitions, forms, and elements that together can amount to an understanding of participation. Since I wanted to explore the meaning of participation further through my fieldwork, I decided not to adopt a definition of participation at this stage. Instead, I investigated issues that are associated with participation, which I discuss in the next section.

3.2 Issues of participation framework (IPF)

To better understand participation conceptually and practically, I decided to investigate whether there are some issues common across participatory practices. I felt that by developing a framework of recurring and related issues of participation, I could address these issues when designing, conducting and reflecting on participation, making my choices and compromises more explicit. I chose the term “issues” because I wanted a neutral word and the dictionary definition fit my purpose: “an important topic or problem for debate or discussion” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017).

In this section I discuss how I derived the Issues of Participation Framework (IPF) and then provide detail on each of the seven issues: values, representation, power relations, context, transformations, effectiveness, and sustainability.

3.2.1 Deriving IPF

I looked at Participatory Design as well as Participatory Democracy, Participatory Management, Participatory Education and Participatory Development. Like Participatory Design (PD), these practices share a commitment to participation, have roots in Participatory Action Research, and continually grapple with the realities of practice.
In addition to these commonalities, these participatory practices share particular relationships to Participatory Design. PD’s original focus on workplace democracy makes links to Participatory Democracy and Participatory Management perhaps most clear. As PD has moved outside the workplace, links to Participatory Education and Participatory Development have emerged. There have been wonderful cases of PD in a development context (Dearden & Rizvi, 2008a; Puri, Byrne, Nhampossa, & Quraishi, 2004). In addition, Dearden and Rizvi (Dearden & Rizvi, 2008b) have provided a rich comparison of Participatory Design and Participatory Development and how they might be used together.

In international development, participation moved from the margins to the mainstream during the 1980s (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Through the 1990s, a backlash built and in 2001, a collection of articles was published entitled *Participation: The New Tyranny* (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Focusing on Participatory Rural Assessment (PRA) – a specific form of participatory development – the provocatively titled volume criticized, in particular, the descent of PRA into a technical approach, failing to engage issues of power and politics. This failure echoed similar concerns within PD. However, an antidote seemed to be at hand in the form of a response book entitled *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation* (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Rather than refuting the first book, the editors of the second book, Hickey and Mohan, agree with the key underlying concern about issues of power and politics. Still committed to participatory approaches, the authors in this volume try to tackle these issues directly, mostly through thoughtful reflections on their own practices, including trying to draw on and create relevant theory.

In the introduction to the book, Hickey & Mohan identify a series of “thematic priorities” that “contemporary approaches to participation must engage in order to (re)constitute participation as a viable and legitimate approach within development” (2004, p. 13). From the priorities they identify – transformation, temporal and spatial aspects, and representation – I derived the first three issues of participation in my framework: representation, transformations and context (combining spatial and temporal aspects).

To confirm and elaborate on the first three issues, I selected and read extensively within six related literatures, namely participatory endeavours in *action research* generally and more specifically in *design, democracy, management, education* and *international development*. As mentioned
previously, I chose these fields because they have current and historic relationships with PD and have practices related or overlapping with PD.

I searched within these literatures for abstracts that mentioned one or more issues of participation, looking particularly for articles that had a list of issues or related a number of issues to each other in the form of a framework. I assumed I would find many such lists or frameworks that I could decide to adopt or adapt. I reviewed well over 100 articles and chapters and was surprised that I only found three that suggested a framework (loosely defined) for understanding issues of participation and their relationships. Although the other articles I reviewed didn’t suggest a framework of issues of participation, the issues these articles examined provided additional support as I began to build my framework. They also provided insights into these issues as well as strategies for addressing them, many of which I have incorporated into my discussion of the issues which I will present shortly.

From the Hickey & Mohan “thematic priorities”, and the three additional frameworks I found, I started to build the Issues of Participation Framework. Table 1 shows the four inspirational articles and the participatory fields they principally speak to along with the terminology they adopt for their key issues. The leftmost column shows the specific terminology I chose for seven issues in my framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues of Participation</th>
<th>Hickey &amp; Mohan (Development)</th>
<th>Dachler &amp; Wilpert (Management)</th>
<th>Elden &amp; Chisholm (PAR)</th>
<th>Stohl &amp; Cheney (Management)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Representation</td>
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<td>Participation in the Research Process</td>
<td>Agency Identity</td>
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<td>Power Relations</td>
<td>By implication</td>
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<td>Power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Temporal aspects</td>
<td>Contextual Boundaries</td>
<td>Contextual Focus</td>
<td>Structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spatial aspects</td>
<td>Properties</td>
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<td>Transformations</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Knowledge Diffusion</td>
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<td>Effectiveness</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Change Based Data and Sense Making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>By implication</td>
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As mentioned, I started with the thematic priorities from Hickey & Mohan: representation, temporal and spatial aspects, and transformation. In addition, while not stated explicitly as “thematic priorities”, values and power relations underlie the discussion of all of their other priorities and I have chosen to identify these as separate issues (marked as “by implication” in Table 1).

Within Dachler and Wilpert’s (1978) model discussed in 3.1 Defining Participation, the key issues could be considered the contextual boundaries, the values, the properties and the outcomes of participation.

In Emerging Varieties of Action Research, Elden and Chisholm (1993, p. 126) identify five characteristics of “classical action research”:

- “Purposes and Value Choice”, i.e. a key purpose is change that has positive social value
- “Participation in the Research Process”, i.e. those who supply the data participate to some degree in certain phases of the research process
- “Contextual Focus”, i.e. the inquiry is set in a specific context, often defined by the participants
- “Knowledge Diffusion”, i.e. knowledge is generated and disseminated, usually by the researchers
- “Change Based Data and Sense Making”, i.e. data must be collected, interpreted and made sense of over time to track the consequences of change

In their paper Participatory Processes/Paradoxical Practices, Stohl and Cheney identify a number of paradoxes drawn from the literature and their own experiences with employee participation and workplace democracy, for example the paradox created when management mandates grassroots participation. Stohl and Cheney organize the paradoxes under four broad headings:
While the paradoxes themselves are interesting, it is the categories these authors used to organize the paradoxes that are useful here because they represent a way of thinking about participation. Their categories of power and structure map readily to power relations and context, as I have done in Table 1. Agency and identity refer to a participant’s ability to act on their own behalf but also as part of the group, which I have considered issues of representation.

In most cases, the writers that inspired my framework did not intend to be exhaustive in itemizing issues of participation nor did they intend to create a framework. Despite my redirection of their purpose, the elements that the various writers provided were extremely helpful in expanding beyond the original issues from Hickey & Mohan, but also in validating the similarities in themes and concerns across the literatures I selected. Several authors consider values and goals central (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; Elden & Chisholm, 1993). The main goals identified are transformation (Hickey & Mohan, 2004) and effectiveness (Elden & Chisholm, 1993). Some of the “properties” of participation are embedded within representation (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Stohl & Cheney, 2001) and context (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; Elden & Chisholm, 1993; Hickey & Mohan, 2004). And, while not addressed independently within any of the frameworks, power relations pervade Hickey and Mohan’s discussion of transformation and are also strongly tied to issues of representation and context. Hickey and Mohan mention sustainability but it is not a strong focus in their text and was not included by any of the others. However, power relations and sustainability are addressed within several of the literatures reviewed, most particularly within PD (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014; Clement & van den Besselaar, 1993; Ehn, 1993; Törpel, 2006).

Notably absent from Table 1 is a framework from Participatory Design. In PD, a number of writers address issues of PD but less so issues of participation specifically. For example, in a special issue of Communications of the ACM on PD, Greenbaum makes a personal statement defining three perspectives on the need for Participatory Design: pragmatic, theoretical and political (1993b). The pragmatic concerns goals to improve systems and productivity. For the theoretical, she offers one example of creating prototypes for better communication between
developers and users. The political need for PD is the belief that users must have influence over the technology they use.

In *Participatory Design: Issues and Concerns*, Kensing and Blomberg (1998) outline the following issues most frequently addressed by PD researchers:

- The politics of design
- The nature of participation
- The method, tools and techniques for participation
- The transfer of results to workers, user groups and design professionals
- The sustainability of PD

Regarding the nature of participation, Kensing and Blomberg itemize some requirements for participation:

Clement and Van den Besselar (1993)…reiterate three basic requirements for participation outlined by Kensing (1983): (1) access to relevant information, (2) the possibility for taking an independent position on the problems, and (3) participation in decision making. They add two additional requirements: (4) the availability of appropriate participatory development methods and (5) room for alternative technical and/or organizational arrangements. (Clement and Van den Besselar cited in Kensing & Blomberg, 1998, p. 172)

More recently Kyng suggested a framework for PD that brings attention to elements that “fill the gap” between politics and methods, such as company roles, funding, and project outcomes (Kyng, 2010). He posits that addressing a larger range of elements will make PD more relevant to future ICT design. While some of Kyng’s elements map to my framework, they are focused on PD specifically while my framework is focused on participation more broadly.

Although the perspectives (Greenbaum, 1993b), the issues (Kensing & Blomberg, 1998), the requirements (Clement & van den Besselaar, 1993) and the elements (Kyng, 2010) identified within PD do not represent a framework for issues of participation specifically, they certainly address one or more of the issues outlined in Table 1. In addition Bratteteig and Wagner have grappled more directly with participation in *Disentangling Participation* (2014), drawing on some of the same authors (e.g. Arnstein and Gaventa) I consulted while deriving the framework.
In Chapter 7 entitled Participation, they mention a number of elements that map readily to my framework including “purpose or goal” (goals), “representativity” (representation), “space” (context) and “power issues” (power relations) (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, pp. 96-97).

Beyond the inspirational articles represented in Table 1, many articles reviewed in the selected literatures address the issues in the framework to varying degrees, including literatures that are not represented in the table (as mentioned, Participatory Design but also Participatory Democracy and Participatory Education). In the sections that follow I use articles from the selected literatures to provide a better understanding of each of the issues in the framework and to identify insights that can be used to tackle each issue.

While closely related, I believe these seven issues are distinct and address different questions. Goals answers the question Why use participation? – but with the sense of purpose rather than tangible outcomes. Representation addresses the question Who will participate? with all its underlying complexity. Who can participate freely? is answered and mitigated by discussions of power relations. Context addresses What is the setting for participation? encompassing many dimensions including time, space and their relation to power.

In terms of outcomes, transformations responds to Who will be changed by participation? Effectiveness considers What will be affected by participation? and sustainability addresses the question How will the outcomes of participation be sustained and sustainable?

3.2.2 Goals

In their model of participation (Figure 7), Dachler and Wilpert link values and assumptions with the goals of the research. They identify four value orientations: democratic theory, socialist theory, human growth and development theory, and productivity and efficiency orientation. These orientations are based on Greenberg’s paper “The Consequences of Worker Participation: A Clarification of the Theoretical Literature” (1975). While Dachler and Wilpert’s list of “orientations” mixes theories and goals, Greenberg makes a clearer distinction between theories (schools of thought) and goals (desired consequences), thereby strengthening the distinction between the “schools of thought”. In (Figure 8), Greenberg outlines the four schools of thought, associating them with the intensity and scope of participation as well as two sets of goals:
attitudinal and behavioural consequences for the individual worker, and social and political consequences for the wider society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School of Thought</th>
<th>Participation (by workers) Intensity</th>
<th>Consequences Attitudinal and Behavioral (for individual worker)</th>
<th>Social and Political (for society)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Management             | Low NarroW                          | • Enhanced morale, efficiency, enthusiasm for work and identification with enterprise goals.  
• Decreased absenteeism, sabotage  
• Decreased support for work stoppages and “wild-cat” strikes | • Improved industrial efficiency, stability and productivity |
| Humanistic Psychology  | High Narrow                          | • Enhanced mental health (happiness, creativity, self-esteem, ego, strength, etc.)  
• Increased sociability and cooperativeness  
• Decreased hostility, anxiety  
• Greater maturity, independence, self-confidence and sense of responsibility | • Improved industrial efficiency, stability and productivity  
• Creation of a mentally healthy workforce  
• Decreased support for extremist political movements |
| Democratic Theory      | High Wide                            | • Increased knowledge and interest in public affairs  
• Growth in public-spiritedness at the expense of private self-interest  
• Greater rationality and less emotionalism in decision-making  
• Greater tolerance for viewpoints of others  
• Greater facility in use of democratic skills | • Realization of a Democratic Society  
• Development of a civic-minded citizenry |
| The Participatory Left | High Wide                            | • Development of a more healthy human personality (subsumes humanistic psychology list)  
• Enhancement of productive skills and collective efforts  
• Radicalization (growing hostility to capitalist order)  
• Growing desire for worker control over higher levels of economic activity  
• Increased self-confidence as member of a class in action  
• Hostility to bureaucratic centralization and hierarchy | • Non-elitist, mass-based revolution |

**Figure 8. Comparing the Four Schools of Thought / Predictive Claims About Worker Participation.**

According to Dachler and Wilpert (1978), the four orientations in their model (Figure 7), which is based on Greenberg (Figure 8), are not mutually exclusive. However, reviewing Greenberg’s model, I would argue that, while some of the desired outcomes may overlap, the dominant value orientations do not. For example, in Figure 8, "The Participatory Left“ subsumes the consequence of “enhanced mental health” from the Humanist Psychology school of thought but not to create “improved industrial efficiency, stability and productivity”.

Like other participatory endeavours, early PD grew from a strong set of values. As I will demonstrate in the section on Transformations, retaining these goals and values in current PD practice is of great concern to many in PD. The key problem is the use by HCD practitioners of tools and techniques (and terminology) pioneered in PD, without adoption of PD goals and values. The same concern is shared by other participatory endeavours, for example, in participatory education.

…the current discourse of participation has absorbed – and been absorbed by – other discourses that promote a variety of goals, values, and interests, some of which may actually be nondemocratic in practice. (Anderson, 1998, p. 573)

In a well-documented argument, Anderson (1998) suggests four “sources of inauthenticity” that result in negative uses of participation. **Legitimation** is the use of participation to deflect criticism regarding a process and outcome. As a **control** mechanism, participation can be used as a way to have participants regulate one another’s behaviour. **Collusion** is a way to support the status quo while looking progressive. And finally, participation can be used as a **distraction**, keeping participants focused at the micro-level to distract from the macro-level.

From the management arena, Greenberg provides an example of this last point:

   Participation to date has been confined, by and large, to the shop floor – to issues such as work schedules, pace, lunch breaks, and the like, thus excluding any participation in enterprise-wide decisions. (Greenberg, 1975, p. 175).

So, although Anderson is talking about education reform, it is easy to see how these negative uses of participation apply to other participatory practices.
While there is no quick remedy, it would seem that, as Greenberg called for in 1975 and many have done so since, it is imperative that we identify the value orientation of our endeavours and encourage others to do the same in order to distinguish authentic participation.

3.2.3 Representation

In early PD, the emphasis was on ensuring that workers were involved in technology design in a meaningful way. However, it was recognized that:

> In many PD projects it is not possible for all those affected by the design effort to fully participate. In these cases the choice of user participants and the form of participation must be carefully considered and negotiated with relevant organizational members, including management and the workers themselves.

(Kensing & Blomberg, 1998, p. 173)

While Kensing and Blomberg offer some direction for the selecting of participants (e.g. representatives of various roles and skills, those identified by existing worker organizations, etc.), we are left with little in the way of guidelines to draw on, here or elsewhere in the PD literature. Furthermore, issues of representation are rarely addressed explicitly perhaps because of the early focus on workers. However, these issues will be difficult to avoid as PD moves beyond the workplace.

In Participatory Development, the need to address issues of representation seems fundamental and urgent. However, according to Hickey and Mohan, surprisingly little has been written on the subject (2004). In their volume *Participation: Tyranny to Transformation*, Gaventa states that work on political participation has focused on “critical questions dealing with legitimate representation, systems of public accountability, policy advocacy and lobbying, rights education and awareness building, and party formation and political mobilization” (2004, p. 29), but these have been underplayed in community development. At the same time, “the political participation literature has paid less attention to issues of local knowledge, participatory process, or direct and continuous forms of engagement of marginalized groups” (2004, p. 29), issues that have been considered within community development.

Regarding legitimate representation, Gaventa discusses direct vs. representative participation, the role of individuals vs. “representative” organizations, the use of existing representation
structures, empowerment of local elites, and the desire by some to be represented rather than participate directly (2004).

Gaventa also brings our attention to more progressive ideas of participation through an introduction to Empowered Participatory Democracy as conceptualized, and practiced, by Fung and Wright and others, and explicated in their book *Deepening Democracy* (2003).

Specifically on the issue of representation, Mansbridge, one of the contributors to *Deepening Democracy*, suggests “thinking of the individuals who do attend deliberative assemblies as informal representatives of those who do not attend” (2003, p. 193). But, also states that, like formal representatives, informal representatives should a) “… meet the criterion for adversary democracy that conflicting interests be represented in proportion to their numbers in the population”; b) “… meet the criterion for deliberative democracy that useful perspectives be represented in sufficient critical mass and internal variety to inform the deliberation on relevant issues”; and c) “… meet the participatory criteria that the arrangements of the polity give all citizens an opportunity to develop their faculties and that inequalities in participation do not generate, or map heavily onto, inequalities in respect” (2003, pp. 194-195).

Mansbridge suggests we apply this three-part analysis to understand whether a particular deliberative assemblies “advance an acceptable form of informal representation or whether they reproduce and amplify harmful underlying inequalities”, warning that judgment and diligence are required in evaluating the effectiveness of representation on a case-by-case basis (2003).

Greater understanding of issues of representation will become increasingly valuable within Participatory Design, both inside and outside the workplace. In a interesting PD example, Hess, Offenberg and Pipek (2008) do a good job of heeding advice offered by Kensing and Blomberg:

In making these choices, it is important to be clear about the motivations for participation, the scope of participation, and the resources allocated for the project. In addition, the relationship between those taking an active part in the project and those who do not should be carefully considered and attended to throughout the project. (Kensing & Blomberg, 1998, p. 174)
As part of their Community Driven Development process, Hess, Offenberg and Pipek (2008) created an elaborate representational governance structure within a software user community. All users were considered part of the “User Parliament”, providing input to the “Central Committee” who was charged with making the final decisions. The Central Committee seats were filled by vote of the users and developers.

Although the formality and details of the representation structure in their project will not be appropriate for many other PD endeavours, Hess, Offenberg and Pipek’s paper is one of the rare occasions in the PD literature in which the approach to representation is made transparent.

3.2.4 Power relations

Early in PD two sets of power relations were identified and addressed: those between users and designers and those between management and labour. Some techniques used to mitigate these were the explicit acknowledgement of the need for mutual learning, using low fidelity materials to create prototypes, and separating labour and management during learning and design activities (Ehn, 1993; Törpel, 2006). Other power relations, specifically gender, have also been addressed to a lesser extent (Ehn, 1993; Törpel, 2006).

When PD is practiced outside the workplace, user-designer relations as well as gender power relations continue to be present and potent in most environments. In addition, other differences may also affect the power relations, such as the economic arrangement, role on the project, subject matter expertise/experience, rhetorical skills – just to name a few. There may also be differences based on hierarchy (explicit or implicit) amongst the designers/developers. However in recent PD literature, power relations between users and designers, amongst designers, and amongst all participants, are seldom addressed explicitly and few ways to identify and address power relations are given.

By contrast, very sophisticated examination of power relations is underway within Participatory Development. Drawing on multiple conceptions of power, several writers in Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation use their experience with development initiatives to illustrate some of the complexities of power.

Those with a structuralist view see power as somewhat fixed and stratified while those with post-structuralist perspective look at power as fluid and potentially useful. One writer, Masaki, brings
these two conceptions together to account for the renegotiation of ongoing power dynamics by Tharus peasants in Nepal. He provides the following guidance for those engaged in external interventions:

…it is imperative to start out by considering how the daily flow of social interactions can potentially play a part in ameliorating potential bias in ‘participatory’ processes. It would only then be feasible to devise strategies that build upon opportunities arising from daily social interactions, as well as make up for limitations of local struggles to overcome entrenched inequalities. (Masaki, 2004, pp. 136-137)

Similarly, another writer in the book reminds us that transformation need not involve a reversal of power relations and may, instead, be achieved through strengthening bargaining power within existing relations (Williams, 2004).

This is demonstrated within Participatory Design in the early trade union projects in which negotiation models were developed to ensure democratic negotiations between workers and management on technology issues (Bjerknes & Bratteteig, 1995). Through the use of these models workers had greater influence in the negotiations process, thereby creating a shift in the power relations, but there was no goal or expectation that a balance of power between workers and management would be achieved.

While issues of power relations seem muted in recent PD literature, there is a rich history within PD as well as some new work on power, particularly by Brattetieg and Wagner (2014). Drawing on PD, and significant reconceptualizations of power relations in neighbouring participatory practices, provides a starting place for fruitful examinations of power in our participatory practices.

3.2.5 Context

Since the conception of the socio-technical nature of systems in the early 1950s, the value of accounting for the context of technology use has been clear (Trist & Bamforth, 1951). Scholars from a range of fields have introduced approaches to studying context including situated action (Nardi, 1996b; Suchman, 1987), distributed cognition (Flor & Hutchins, 1991; Nardi, 1996b),
activity theory (Bødker, 1989; Kuutti, 1996; Nardi, 1996a) and locales framework (Greenberg, 2001).

However, in this dissertation, I am interested in the context of participation in system development – not particularly in the context of use for the system – although it could be argued that development (and redevelopment) is part of the context of use.

In a paper about using actor-network theory in PD, Gärtner and Wagner (1996) developed a conceptual framework to analyze the political and organizational context of design and participation. The framework identifies four concepts used in the analysis: networks of humans and artifacts (actor networks), technical systems as mediators of social interaction (intermediaries), system design and associated negotiations (practices) and the space-time contexts of activity (social arenas). While the actors, the technical systems and the practices are also part of the context, it is the last concept – the arenas – that is most relevant in my narrow definition of ‘context’. As you will see shortly, it maps very closely to a similar concept in Participatory Development.

Like Gärtner and Wagner, Hickey and Mohan identify temporal and spatial aspects of context (2004). Regarding temporal aspects, they suggest “understanding histories, overlapping temporalities, and the unfolding of political processes”. For PD these aspects could be extrapolated as understanding the organizational and political landscape as well as “the identity of the actors involved” (Gärtner & Wagner, 1996, p. 191), attending to the timelines within and outside the ‘project’ or other social arena, and being aware of initiatives and events that may impact the current endeavour and vice versa.

While Hickey and Mohan briefly discuss the spatial aspects of context, it is Gaventa (2004) that identifies three intersecting continuums: power, place, and space. He reminds us that power relations are not fixed but can be shifted by spaces and, vice versa:

> Power relations help to shape the boundaries of participatory spaces, what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests. (Gaventa, 2004, p. 34)
To assess the transformative possibilities of a political space, he encourages us to look at each continuum.

For spaces, he suggests the following continuum: closed spaces, invited spaces, and claimed/created spaces. Closed spaces are those in which decisions are made by specific people behind closed doors. Invited spaces are those in which all people are invited to participate by authorities (e.g. government, NGOs, etc.). At the end of the continuum are spaces that are claimed or created by the less powerful, such as gatherings in public or private spaces.

Regarding places – also referred to as “arenas” or levels of engagement – he suggests local, national and global as one possible continuum. It is notable in PD that Kensing and Blomberg (Kensing & Blomberg, 1998), referencing Gärtner and Wagner (1996), use “arenas” in a similar way to create a similar continuum, i.e. individual project arena, company arena, and national arena. However, Gärtner and Wagner’s original continuum focuses on what is being designed:

- Arena A: Designing Work and Systems
- Arena B: Designing Organizational Frameworks for Action
- Arena C: Designing the Industrial Relations Context

For power, Gaventa suggests a continuum based on the degree of visibility. Visible power is exercised in public space and presumed to be relatively open in terms of who can participate. With hidden power, who can participate, and how, are limited and generally unstated. Invisible power is when dominating ideologies, values and forms of behaviour have been internalized.

In his commentary near the end of *Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation*, Bebbington draws this conclusion:

The point of framing not just participation, but also the sites from which it is advocated and promoted, in relationship to structural context is to be realistic about what is more and less possible, and also – and this is more important still – to be clearer about the obstacles to social transformation and increased levels of meaningful social inclusion. It means that participation events – in projects, research cycles, planning processes etc. – should never again be considered
Without considering the “immanent” conditions under which they occur.

(Bebbington, 2004, p. 280)

While context is a huge issue, the edges of which are hard to delineate, it is clear that accounting for relevant aspects of context is vital to understanding conditions of participation.

### 3.2.6 Transformations

Perhaps the most fundamental principle of Participatory Action Research (PAR) is the inclusion of actions throughout the research process, especially actions aimed at social change (Morris & Muzychka, 2002). In fact, PAR strives for three types of change, which can be considered the overarching goals of PAR: “development of critical consciousness of both researcher and participants”; “improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process”; and “transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships” (Maguire, 1987, p. 208).

Proponents of participatory approaches in all practices continue to identify transformation as key to participation, particularly in Participatory Development:

> There remains a strong sense in the literature on participatory development that the proper objective of participation is to ensure the “transformation” of existing development practice and, more radically, the social relations, institutional practices and capacity gaps which cause social exclusion. (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p. 13)

Those committed to transformation are often concerned that this goal is lost with the mainstreaming of participatory practices that use “participation as a technical method of project work rather than as a political methodology of empowerment” (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p. 11).

The roots of PD were embedded in the notion of transforming the workplace but also of transforming work relations at the state and national level (Bjerknes & Bratteteig, 1995). Also of great importance was transforming participants through mutual learning and improved skills (Ehn, 1993).

As Participatory Design has moved outside the workplace and PD “techniques” have been mainstreamed, many PD practitioners are calling for a renewed commitment to some form of
democratic intervention. The discussion of these concerns reached a peak with Beck’s paper “P for Political: Participation is not enough” (Beck, 2002) and the many response papers it sparked (Bødker, 2003; Christiansen, 2003; Dittrich, 2003; Kanstrup, 2003). In it, Beck provides a rally cry for Participatory Design:

… this paper aims to inspire reflection on what 'political' means or could mean in a systems development context. While this continually needs rethinking and recontextualising, in my own use in this paper 'political' means concern about dominance patterns … (Beck, 2002, p. 78)

Similarly, in Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation, Hickey and Mohan summarize the rally cry of many of the writers in that volume, calling for a reframing of participation as citizenship within Participatory Development.

First, participation must be ideologically explicit and tied to a coherent theory of development. Second, the locus of transformation must go beyond the individual and local and involve multi-scaled strategies that encompass the institutional and structural. We argue that a radicalized notion of citizenship – derived in part from alternative development theories of participation – provides the intermediary analytical and strategic basis upon which this project can be pursued. (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p. 12)

Drawing on Participatory Democracy debates, Anderson also points to a reconceptualization of participation based on “the existence of local social spaces in which human actors can learn and exercise the skills of dialogue and debate necessary for the development of a democratic citizenry” and “greater attention to the economic and structural constraints on participation” (Anderson, 1998, p. 575).

While there are concerns about the other common issues of participation, transformation stirs the most passion because, for many, it is the main purpose of participation.

3.2.7 Effectiveness

Participatory approaches are often offered as a remedy to the failure of current ‘non-participatory’ practices. For example according to Anderson, participation gained support in U.S.
school reform “as an antidote to entrenched bureaucracy, hierarchy, and excessive specialization” (Anderson, 1998, p. 572). Similarly, participatory democracy is seen as a viable alternative to representational democracy, which is “increasingly ill suited to the novel problems we face in the twenty-first century” (Fung & Wright, 2003, p. 3). In Participatory Development, major donors and development organizations started to use participatory approaches when “the ineffectiveness of externally imposed and expert-oriented forms of research and planning became increasingly evident in the 1980s” (Cooke & Kothari, 2001, p. 5).

In systems development, participation by end-users has been seen by some as a solution to problems encountered in the traditional life cycle or waterfall approach to information systems design. System developers have often found it difficult to gather and understand system requirements and end-users have often been frustrated by the resulting system (Asaro, 2000).

Asaro compares and contrasts Joint Application Development (JAD) and Participatory Design as two approaches that involve end-users in the system development process. Asaro raises concerns that JAD, and other similar approaches that focus on system effectiveness, prescribe the involvement of users in terms of scope and timing, and that this “limits the voice of the user through explicitly management-dominated organization meetings” and “serves to protect and promote the authority of technical experts”. By contrast, Asaro characterizes early “European Participatory Design” as “focused purely on democratic participation and overcoming various difficulties in achieving this”\(^5\). He describes “the current heterogeneous field of participatory design” as having “the twin goals of increasing efficiency (of both technical experts and users) and increasing democracy (primarily for users)” (2000, p. 271).

‘Increasing democracy’ is part of the goal of ‘transformation’ discussed in the previous section. In this section, I am interested in the other goal ‘increasing efficiency’. From the PD literature, ‘efficiency’ seems a bit narrow for the types of outcomes desired, therefore, I’ve used what I consider a broader term: effectiveness.

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\(^5\) Asaro’s use of “focused purely” is an overstatement, since there were other elements of focus in the forerunners of PD, as discussed in the section on Participatory Design in Chapter 2.
By effectiveness, I am grouping together ‘product quality’ and ‘work productivity’ (Ehn, 1993; Greenbaum, 1993a; Suchman, 1993) as well as the notion of ‘improved process’ in terms of user satisfaction with the process, and improved commitment to the successful implementation and use of the system. When these goals are the only goals, there is often a sense of cynicism about the process and the outcome, as discussed previously under “Goals”. However, even those that seek transformations generally want to improve the product and the process (Greenbaum, 1993b), and may also seek to provide a sense of satisfaction for the participants, if not productivity from management’s perspective. In addition, a heightened awareness on the part of participants regarding issues of technology and increased confidence in addressing those issues would be considered by many as an ‘effective’ outcome (Clement & van den Besselaar, 1993).

In Clement and van den Besselaar’s (1993) survey of PD researchers, many report that some aspects of the participation process continued after the end of the project. This is one example from their questionnaire:

... Friis describes how users moved from their traditional passive roles into analyzing, designing, and evaluating roles. EDP specialists changed from being traditional experts into "teaching and consultative experts." (Clement & van den Besselaar, 1993, p. 34)

For many PD practitioners, the goal is not just to leave behind a better product and satisfied users but also to leave behind the values of participation. But what if we don’t leave behind a better product and satisfied users? As Asaro states:

A system will be a failure if it cannot achieve the intended design goals, if it is unreliable or breaks internally, if it never gets used as intended or at all, or if it actually impedes the jobs of workers. (Asaro, 2000, pp. 277-278)

Participatory practices are seen as one way to improve the process and the product and, not surprisingly, there are calls for ‘evidence’ of the success of participation. The HCI literature tends to focus on two outcomes of effectiveness that can be ‘measured’: user satisfaction and user productivity. Based on this narrow scope and approach, the evidence in the HCI literature is mixed. While several studies and meta-analyses report at least a moderately positive outcome with regards to user productivity and/or user satisfaction, there are still many that report a neutral
or negative outcome (Jun & King, 2008; McKeen & Guimaraes, 1997; McKeen, Guimaraes, & Wetherbe, 1994). However, for the most part, mainstream HCI accepts that user participation has a generally positive effect, especially on user satisfaction but also on user productivity, as evidenced by the many user participative approaches and activities that are currently in use (Jun & King, 2008).

While it is true that PD generally includes aspects of ‘effectiveness’ as a goal, that goal is defined more widely than the ‘measurable’ aspects of user productivity and user satisfaction.

### 3.2.8 Sustainability

Both in the Participatory Design and Participatory Development literature, sustainability is mentioned as a desirable, even vital, outcome (Brown, 2004; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Kensing & Blomberg, 1998). However, little guidance is given on what is meant by sustainability and how to achieve it.

In “A Retrospective Look at PD projects”, Clement and van den Besselaar discuss some of the difficulties of creating “self-sustaining” PD activity, including the short-term nature of projects and the withdrawal of resources once the project is over. Their research also indicates that:

> … successes according to the usual criteria of PD projects -- active involvement of users, increased learning and communications, and more effective, better adapted systems -- can be achieved, but are by themselves not sufficient for local self-sustaining processes of participation to continue. (Clement & van den Besselaar, 1993, p. 35)

Based on the survey responses they received from PD researchers, Clement and van den Besselaar (1993) suggest two things that must occur for a participatory design process to become self-sustaining. Amongst the participants, there must be users who are able and willing to become the “animators”. In addition, there must be external support for the survival of the process based on an awareness of the achievements. It seems that sustainability can refer to the sustained use of the “product” of the participation but also to the sustained commitment to the processes and goals of participation.
Transferring “ownership” of the product and the process from the “change agents” to the “users” can be vital in Participatory Development. In a case study of a project in Ethiopia, Henry provides a rather extreme example through a quote from a development partner:

“We get them to feel ownership by forcing them to invest their own money so they will take care of the project”. (Henry, 2004, p. 153)

Kensing et al. touch on another type of sustainability as part of their Participatory Design approach called the MUST method – sustainability in the ecological sense, i.e. as a balance between utilization and protection of resources. Rather than wasting valuable resources such as money and users’ skills, they encourage identifying and protecting these resources during the project but also producing a sustainable basis for the organization’s future decision-making and its’ ongoing technical and organizational development (Kensing, Simonsen, & Bødker, 1998).

Part of sustainability is the concept of re-use, which is gaining traction in software development as a way to maximize the use of human resources and capital. From another perspective, sustainability can be looked at as “making do” with the skills and resources available, as noted here by Bannon:

There is a renewed interest in understanding bottom-up innovative practices in general, where people are taking a closer look at such vernacular expressions of “making-do” with resources at hand in areas with resource scarcity, such as Jugaad in India and Riquimbili/Rikimbili in Cuba (Jana 2009; Ortosa 2009). (Bannon, 2011, pp. 186, emphasis in original)

Like the other key issues of participation, sustainability has multiple facets, many of which we are only beginning to understand and explore.

3.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have looked at literature from PD and some related participatory practices to provide an understanding of participation and to determine key issues that seem common not only to these participatory practices but, perhaps, to participatory practices more generally. To recap, the issues are: goals, representation, power relations, context, transformations, effectiveness, and sustainability.
From these issues I derived a framework so that people engaged in participatory practices can be more conscious and explicit about the choices and compromises we make while designing, conducting and reflecting on participation – and so that we can share this decision-making power with participants.

When I created the Issues of Participation Framework, I hadn’t decided what role, if any, it might play in my PhD research. I wanted the research to be exploratory and give more space to my co-researchers so I decided against shaping the research based on the IPF. Nonetheless, the issues in the IPF certainly shaped my thinking about the project and towards the end, I decided to explicitly introduce the IPF to my co-researchers and use it to frame our final reflective workshop, as I discuss in the next chapter.
Chapter 4

4 Studying participation in the Account Redesign Project

To understand issues of participation, and associated ideals, I set out to explore concepts of participation within the realities of a digital design project. Having worked on many digital projects that employ a human-centred design approach, I wanted to understand what might move digital teams to go beyond conventional human-centred design (HCD) to a more specific approach that deepens the role of users in the design process, such as Participatory Design (PD).

In finding a setting for the research, I looked for an organization, and a group of people, likely to be interested and supportive of working alongside users. Having a strong interest in public libraries, and knowing that the Toronto Public Library has engaged library members previously for selected projects, my intended research seemed like a good fit with the library’s existing commitment to participation.

In this chapter I introduce the Toronto Public Library (TPL), specifically how they engage their members in creating and refining their services. This provides an understanding of the TPL organizational environment that underpins my later discussion of how the team on the Account Redesign Project did – and did not – involve library members in the design process.

I then outline the Account Redesign Project (ARP) and delineate two levels of activities: the “design activities” are the professional activities and the “research activities” are the academic activities. During the design activities, the design team engaged TPL stakeholders and library members through typical HCD approaches such as periodic usability testing. In the context of the design activities, I conducted a number of research activities, such as an online forum and in-person workshops, in order to reflect on participation. I describe the design and research activities in this chapter as a foundation for my analysis in Chapter 5.
4.1 Introduction to Toronto Public Library

In 1998, the City of Toronto, Ontario, was amalgamated, bringing together seven municipalities and all of their services. At this time, the amalgamation made the new Toronto Public Library the largest public library system in North America (Toronto Public Library, 2017a).

In 2015, Toronto Public Library (TPL) was ranked first in North America in circulation, visits, and electronic visits per capita among libraries serving populations of two million or more. There were more than 18 million visits to the 100 branches of TPL and 31 million visits to its website tpl.ca. Over 70% of Torontonians use TPL and 1.2 million people are registered TPL cardholders (Toronto Public Library, 2017b). TPL serves an extremely diverse population. Of the 2.6 million people in Toronto, 46% are foreign-born (Statistics Canada, 2011) and the City of Toronto provides services in over 180 languages (City of Toronto, n.d.-a).

TPL provides a wide array of in-branch and online programs across the city, such as talks, book clubs and computer training, as well as programs for newcomers, including settlement and English-language support. Books and other materials are provided in 40 languages at specific branches throughout the city to best suit the local population (Toronto Public Library, n.d.-c).

TPL is governed by the Public Libraries Act R.S.O. 1990 (Government of Ontario, 1990), which provides direction on the establishment and operations of public libraries in Ontario. As per the Act, TPL was established through a municipal by-law (City of Toronto, 1998) and is an agency of the City of Toronto. A Board comprised of 12 members appointed by Toronto City Council governs it: eight citizens, three city councillors and the mayor or mayor’s designate. Of the eight citizen members, the Nominating Committee of City Council tries to include up to three members with publicly recognized achievements in the disciplines of Literature and Literacy; Arts and Culture; Science and Technology; and Business (City of Toronto, n.d.-c). The Board “is responsible for effectively managing library resources and providing quality library services to the people of Toronto” (City of Toronto, n.d.-b) and does so by setting policies as well as hiring and evaluating the City Librarian (referred to as the Chief Executive Officer in the Public Libraries Act).

The City Librarian directs the operations of the library and its staff. In addition to 110 full-time equivalent (FTE) management staff, TPL has a unionized workforce of 1620 FTEs (Toronto
According to the Toronto Public Library Workers Union, they represent 2300 people in full and part-time roles such as Librarian, Public Service Assistant and Page (Toronto Public Library Workers Union, n.d.). At the time of this research, TPL had eight divisions, each run by a Director. Each division had specified areas of responsibility for the day-to-day operations of TPL as follows:

- Branch Libraries
- Research & Reference Libraries
- Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement
- Collections Management & City-Wide Services
- Planning, Policy and E-Service Delivery
- Information Technology & Facilities
- Human Resources
- Finance

In addition, TPL has a very robust internal committee structure that brings staff members together from across divisions for ongoing support or enhancements to TPL services and operations. Some are standing committees that meet regularly to oversee particular processes and tools. Others are ad hoc committees formed to undertake a particular effort in a particular time frame. The committees provide a structural approach to participation by TPL staff at various levels but are often dominated by participants at the Director level, creating problematic power relations, which I will discuss in Chapter 5.

### 4.1.1 Participation at Toronto Public Library

Like many public libraries, TPL traces its roots to subscription libraries, first established by wealthy patrons for their own use and sometimes developed into mechanics institutes for the education of workers (Toronto Public Library, 2017a). While early public libraries were shaped by patrons and politicians, in recent decades public libraries have engaged their constituents through community needs assessments, consultations and other forms of public engagement.

In June 2005, TPL adopted a “Public Consultation Policy” that goes beyond the commitment required by the Public Libraries Act R.S.O. 1990 (Government of Ontario, 1990). The policy outlines a number of ways that citizens, as well as other stakeholders, will be involved in decision-making processes and also states that:
The Library is committed to removing barriers to effective citizen participation. The Library will use flexible and creative public consultation and communications techniques to reach communities, taking into account the nature of the project, composition of the community and the time and resources available.

The Library is committed to ongoing learning about innovative and creative ways of fostering public consultation to build on its consultative practices. (Toronto Public Library, 2005, pp. 2-3)

One of the ways that TPL fulfils its Public Consultation Policy is by engaging the citizens of Toronto in an intense strategic planning process every four years. In the resulting strategic plan document, there is always an outline of the vision, mission and values of TPL. Since the first strategic plan in 2000, each plan includes a commitment to participation by citizens in the values section, as evident under “Inclusion” in Figure 9. This organization-wide commitment to participation, as well as openness and transparency (under Integrity) is an important part of the context for the ARP project that I will discuss in Chapter 5 and 6.
In addition to broad consultations conducted as part of the strategic planning process, TPL has made efforts to learn how to work closely with individuals and groups over time in order to better meet their needs. One example is the Working Together Project in which TPL and 3 other Canadian public libraries worked with traditionally under-served communities with the following objective:

… to use a community development approach to build relationships and partnerships with community individuals and groups so that the library could better understand what they wanted and needed from the institution. The hoped for result was a model for library services that emphasized community consultation, collaboration and a willingness to change in order to meet community needs. (Working Together Project, 2011, para. 5)

Each library chose a focus community as follows: Vancouver (low income), Toronto (new immigrants), Regina (Aboriginal) and Halifax (African Nova Scotians). Through their work, the
group created the “Community-Led Library Services Toolkit” (Working Together Project, 2008), which was distributed to all public and school libraries in Canada.

An important part of the toolkit is the Public Involvement Continuum (Figure 10) that outlines levels of participation from “giving information” and “getting information” to “engaging” and “partnering/collaborating”. In the toolkits, the writers acknowledge that “There is a role for each of these ranges of engagement in library services and libraries will need to think strategically about when and where each technique is best used” but also “strongly advocates the partnering/collaborating model when developing services for socially excluded communities” (Working Together Project, 2008).

Figure 10. Public Involvement Continuum from the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit
TPL services are free to anyone who lives, works, goes to school or owns land in the city of Toronto (Toronto Public Library, n.d.-d). While some services require a library card, many Torontonians as well as physical and virtual visitors, can take advantage of some services without a library card, such as visiting the website, visiting a branch to use materials onsite or getting wireless access to the Internet (Toronto Public Library, n.d.-f). People who use TPL services, with or without a card, are generally referred to by library staff as ‘library users’.6

In addition to using services, some library users also contribute to TPL in a number of ways. Some of their contributions are ongoing, such as serving on the Library Board, while others are periodic, the largest of these being the strategic planning process. Regarding specific issues and projects, the TPL also engages library users in one-off consultations.

Within each of these different modes – ongoing, periodic and one-off – there are different levels of involvement. In Table 2, I have used the Public Involvement Continuum to differentiate some of the ways that TPL has involved library users. In addition to consultative roles, I’ve included volunteer roles in which library users provide services to the library. It is important to note that volunteer roles are limited to non-union work as outlined in the collective bargaining agreement (2016 – 2019 Collective Agreement, 2016).

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6 As per footnote 1 in the introduction, I have used the phrase ‘library users’ and ‘library members’ interchangeably throughout this thesis. I have avoided using “library customers” and “library patrons” because of the implied economic relationship. Although all terms are inadequate, I personally prefer the term ‘library members’ to denote the sense of ownership many ‘library users’ feel, whether they hold a library card or not.
### Table 2: Levels of public involvement in TPL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner/ Collaborate</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
<th>Periodic</th>
<th>One-off</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Example: Working Together Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage/ Participate</td>
<td>Community Partners</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Advisory Groups</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss/ Debate</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Strategic Plan consultations:</td>
<td>Project-based consultations regarding:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Focus Groups</td>
<td>• Facilities / Renovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Public Meetings</td>
<td>• Service Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Strategic Plan consultations:</td>
<td>Patron comments received:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Survey</td>
<td>• At branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform/ Educate</td>
<td>Service roles such as:</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Programs such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TPL Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends of TPL</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Settlement services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Communications including:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Brochures and posters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Website</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Social media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through this loose characterization, I offer a lens for considering how TPL is currently involving library members that I will use again when discussing public involvement in ARP.

### 4.1.2 User involvement in E-Services

Within TPL, the E-Services team has been a strong voice for inclusion of library users in shaping services, advocating human-centred design practices that go beyond periodic consultations. In this section I briefly outline some of the history of user involvement in digital design at TPL.

Like many Ontario public libraries in the mid-1990s, TPL had a public website, in-branch workstations, and a few electronic information services, some available only in-branch and others on the blossoming World Wide Web. In 1998, TPL began to build the Virtual Reference Library (VRL). According to Kathy Scardellato, the Manager of the VRL:

The stated goal of the VRL was to utilise advanced information and communication technologies and the collection resources and staff expertise of the TRL [Toronto Reference Library] to develop cost effective mechanisms for
Ontarians to access the information they need to compete in the global economy.
(Scardellato, 2001, p. 169)

In addition to provincial and municipal funding partners, TPL engaged private sector technology partners, including Digital Renaissance (later known as ExtendMedia) and Helios/Oceana (Daniels & Scardellato, 1999). These partners, along with Scardellato, encouraged a “user-centred approach” (UCD) to the design and development of the VRL (Scardellato, 2001). The project team drew some of their inspiration from influential UCD writers, including Jakob Nielsen and his previously mentioned e-newsletter Alertbox (Scardellato, 2001).

As the team developed each of the subject gateways that make up the VRL, they improved their processes and skills. Their UCD approach started with user needs analysis that included consultations with current users and/or subject matter experts, sometimes forming discussion groups with “experienced library staff and representatives of the user community such as teachers for Science Net, and career counselors, employment resource centre staff, and job club facilitators for Career Bookmarks” (Scardellato, 2001, p. 174).

During the design phase, the project team created the initial concepts, regularly referring to the user needs document from the previous phase. According to Scardellato, “continuous evaluation and revision was one of the most difficult techniques for our teams to adopt” because the teams had been used to producing polished analysis documents that left little room for variance (Scardellato, 2001, pp. 174-175).

During the development phase, revision and change were built into the processes of their technology partners and into TPL’s contracts with those partners. Many of the revisions and changes were based on usability testing, described by Scardellato as follows:

Our projects usually included at least four testers at each stage of development and revision. The testers included members of the team, because they understood what was expected, and ‘outsiders’ because they didn’t know what was expected! We found that both groups were able to identify usability problems very quickly and we were able to incorporate changes and fixes into the development.
(Scardellato, 2001, p. 175)
The Virtual Reference Library was launched in 1999 (Figure 11) along with an integrated online catalogue, including the “Your Account” functionality that allowed users to find, hold, and renew library materials. These two elements were central to the TPL website along with listings of programs and contact information for branches. From 1999 to 2005, many new elements were added such as licensed databases, digital collections, and the ability to reserve a computer.

![Virtual Reference Library](image)

**Figure 11. TPL's online services launched in 1999**

Reprinted from “History of Toronto Public Library,” on Toronto Public Library Website.

In 2005, my business, Usability Matters, was engaged by TPL to evaluate its web services and elicit a vision for future development. As part of that engagement, my colleague and I reviewed web metrics, administered a user survey, and conducted a usability test of six key areas of the website. We also consulted with TPL stakeholders in small and large groups, including facilitation of a Vision Workshop based on the Consensus Workshop Method, an approach I later used in my doctoral research and will discuss under 4.3 Research Activities.

Our engagement also included knowledge transfer to selected TPL staff, in which we demonstrated the consultation methods we used (i.e. web metrics review, user survey and usability testing) and then did a follow-up workshop on how to plan, conduct and analyze these
consultation methods. The TPL staff members that we worked with most closely throughout the entire engagement, including the knowledge transfer, were Kathy Scardellato, the Manager of the VRL, and Sandra, who later became one of the first members of the newly-formed E-Services team and also participated as a co-researcher in my doctoral research.

Our recommendations from the web services evaluation included a redesign of the TPL website, making it more unified since it had become a hodgepodge of disparate third-party and internal web services with no overarching organization. In 2006, TPL issued an RFP for services to design a new website. Due to a minor procurement blunder (we forgot to seal the proposal envelope), the Usability Matters submission was rejected and never considered. The project was awarded to one of our colleagues and, based on discussions with them as well as TPL staff, I understand that they followed a typical human-centred design approach, including testing the organization and labelling of the website with audience members using a card-sorting exercise and, later in the design, employing paper-prototypes to garner feedback from representative users regarding the overall interaction design. The redesign effort began in 2007 and, in that timeframe, Sandra became part of the E-Services team, and Dara joined TPL as Manager, E-Services.

In November 2008, the E-Services team launched the “Web Team Blog” with the following description: “Staff from the Toronto Public Library's eServices team talk about recent changes, future plans and ideas and issues you raise about the library's online and mobile services” (Toronto Public Library, n.d.-e). One of the first posts was an invitation to beta test the new catalogue and then another post in 2009 to invite feedback on the new faceted search that was in development. Finally, in 2010, the new website was launched and announced on the Web Team Blog. From 2011 to 2013, there were further site enhancements and consultations with library members both on the blog and in-person, including an invitation to participate in usability testing of new online payment functionality and a survey of wireless users.

During the Account Redesign Project (2013 to 2017), the blog was a key communication tool for the E-Services team, as I will describe under Design Activities shortly. In December 2014, the Web Team Blog was replaced by the Digital Library Services blog. The mandate for the new blog was similar to the former one but a little broader, encompassing library staff and services beyond the E-Services team. Under “About this Blog”, it is described as: “Digital Library
Services staff from the Toronto Public Library talk about recent changes, future plans and ideas and issues you raise about the library's online and digital services” (Toronto Public Library, n.d.-b). The blog continues to be an important two-way communication tool with library members, used by the E-Services team as well as their colleagues in other service areas.

### 4.1.3 Engaging with Toronto Public Library

Toronto Public Library was my first choice for a library to work with on my doctoral research because of my personal and professional relationship with the library and because it is a large, complex organization with many progressive programs. I began discussion about the possibility of engaging TPL for my fieldwork with someone in the strategic planning department at TPL but ultimately decided their timing and requirements wouldn’t suit my research. During this time I was also in discussion with representatives of other public library systems in my region but none of those opportunities came to fruition.

In 2012, as I continued to look for a public library partner, TPL issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a digital design and research vendor. Having enjoyed our work with TPL in 2005, my business partners at Usability Matters and I were excited about the possibility of working with them again. When we won the two-year engagement, I started to consider whether there was an appropriate opportunity for me to include my PhD research in one of the many projects outlined in the RFP.

I discussed my thoughts with my PhD Supervisor and we agreed that it could be messy, but was possible to make an arrangement such as this work. My next discussion was with my two business partners. We outlined some possible parameters for my involvement, chiefly the degree to which my academic and professional responsibilities could/should overlap on the chosen project. Having laid out the possibilities, we decided the next step was to approach TPL.

I convened a meeting including my PhD Supervisor, the Managing Director of Usability Matters (who is one of my business partners), as well as key representatives of TPL, the Director of Planning, Policy and E-Service Delivery, and the Manager of E-Services. Using a PowerPoint presentation, I outlined my proposed research aim and approach. I then laid out the assistance I was requesting of TPL and Usability Matters, which were the same: staff time to participate in the online forum, workshops and conference papers, as well as meeting rooms for the
workshops. Regarding staff-time commitments that I anticipated, I estimated 12 – 24 hours over three months for the online forum and workshops plus any time beyond that timeframe to contribute to or review conference papers and my dissertation, both of which were entirely optional. In terms of benefits to the organizations and the staff members, I included experience with practitioner-led research, improved relationship with communities (in this case library members), and potential contributions to professional and scholarly communities.

We then discussed the benefits and risks of me conducting my PhD research in the context of a project with Toronto Public Library versus with another public library. In general, public libraries very generously share their knowledge and expertise amongst their colleagues at other libraries but I wanted to underscore that, by allowing me to study a project at the Toronto Public Library, TPL would get the benefit of my research expertise as well as that of others at the University of Toronto iSchool, particularly my Supervisory Committee.

Regarding the risks of having me play both an academic and professional role, we discussed possible confusion about when I was playing one role vs. the other and whether this posed any financial risk to either TPL or Usability Matters. However, since I had a strong relationship with TPL as an Account Manager, we agreed there was more risk for both organizations if I were not assigned to the project professionally. Ultimately we decided that I would play a dual role on the project: Account Manager from Usability Matters and PhD researcher from University of Toronto, which I will discuss shortly under “Researcher’s Role”.

Finally, we talked about several upcoming projects worth considering for my PhD study. Together we decided that the “Account Redesign Project” (ARP) would be a good fit because it was expected to start soon, the design phase was expected to last about three months, and the project was focused on end-user functionality that was very important to library members.

4.2 Design Activities

The stated goal of the ARP was to redesign the user experience and underlying technology used by library members to manage their library account. For ARP, the library hired two vendors to join them on the project: a ‘design vendor’ (Usability Matters) and a ‘development vendor’ (Normative). To form the core user experience (UX) design team, the library provided a subject-matter expert while the design vendor provided a UX designer/researcher and a visual
designer/researcher and the development vendor provided a front-end (HTML) developer. TPL engaged the core design team for 3 months (4 people approx. half-time each) to complete the design phase. Within this dissertation, I refer to the activities that took place as part of the design phase as the “design activities”.

With TPL’s permission, I invited the library and vendor staff members involved in the design activities to participate as co-researchers in an exploration of participation. This exploration included an online forum, workshops, conversations, and conference presentations, reflecting on the participation of library staff, vendors and members in the Account Redesign Project (ARP). In this dissertation, I refer to these opportunities for reflection as the “research activities”, which I will discuss at length shortly.

The two levels of activity happened concurrently between September 2013 and May 2015, as detailed in Figure 12. The initial, intense phase of design activities was completed in early 2014 and additional design continued into 2015. Development began in 2015 but progress was slowed by other IT priorities. The closed beta began in September 2016 and the open beta began in January 2017. The rollout continued incrementally throughout 2017.

The design activities followed a conventional human-centred design approach i.e., a cross-disciplinary team created an interactive prototype and iteratively refined the prototype based on input from stakeholders. As the design was iterated, it was usability tested with library members, some of whom use assistive technologies to access the web. Some of the testing was done in scheduled one-on-one sessions while others were casual walk-up sessions in the lobby of a local library. In both cases, the call for participation was announced on the web team’s blog and the library’s Twitter account.

In addition, the design team posted updates, and invited design feedback, on the library’s web team blog. The design team also provided regular updates to relevant committees comprised of key library stakeholders.

The research activities also began in September 2013, starting with an online forum. Workshop 1 (Vision) was held in November 2013 with the other 3 workshops spread across the next 18 months, ending in May 2015.
Figure 12. Timeline of Design Activities and Research Activities
4.2.1 Teamwork

The TPL web team was leading the ARP and wanted the two vendor organizations to help them institute best practices for web design and development. The three organizations had not worked together previously so it was important to establish good working and communication practices.

There were essentially two phases of the project, design and development, but as is typical of such web projects, these were not entirely sequential. The foundational work regarding development was underway throughout the design phase. Usability Matters was the design vendor and led the design phase. Normative was the development vendor and led the early part of the development phase, consulting with both the TPL web team and the TPL information technology group (IT). Ultimately, TPL IT was responsible for development.

During the design phase, the Usability Matters team consisted of a Design Director (Steven), an Art Director (Simon), a UX designer/research (Linn) and a visual designer/researcher (Heather). I was cursorily involved as an Account Manager. I attended the initial meetings to ensure the responsibilities were clear, particularly between Usability Matters and Normative, the development vendor. After those initial meetings, the design team established a frequent meeting schedule, for status updates and working sessions. In general, I did not attend these meetings and my responsibilities on ARP were light and infrequent, focused on negotiating the relationship with TPL and supporting the Usability Matters team. However, the overlap in my professional and academic role included risks, which I will discuss shortly under “Researcher’s Role”.

At the start of ARP, a core design team was established. It was led by the UX designer/research from Usability Matters and also included the visual designer/researcher from Usability Matters, the front-end developer from Normative, and the User Experience Specialist from Toronto Public Library.

Once ARP was underway, Usability Matters suggested the core design team work onsite at TPL two days per week. This routine was established and continued for several weeks. During this period, a working prototype was created and iteratively reviewed and revised with organizational stakeholders and then with library members, as I will discuss below.
4.2.2 Involving organizational stakeholders

In addition to the core design team, there were a number of other organizational stakeholders involved in ARP. The prototype was reviewed and revised based on input from what we later called “the extended design team”, which included the Manager of E-Services (a.k.a. the web team) and the Director of Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement from TPL, the Design Director and Art Director from Usability Matters, and the Design Director and Development Director from Normative.

Beyond direct input to the design, other organizational stakeholders from TPL were kept up-to-date on project progress, directly or through committee meetings. The Director of Planning, Policy and E-Service Delivery acted as the Project Sponsor and she was updated informally on a weekly basis by the Manager of E-Services. The Project Sponsor, sometimes assisted by the Manager of E-Services, kept the Library Board informed, especially the City Librarian (head of the library) and the Director of Information Technology.

The Manager of E-Services also updated various committees throughout the project including the Circulation Policy Committee, the Digital Innovation Committee, and the Symphony User Group (Symphony is the underlying software for the account functionality).

4.2.3 Involving library members

Prior to the start of ARP, the TPL web team was continually gathering concerns about the account functionality, as well as ideas for improvement, based on usage data (web metrics) and directly from library members. The direct input was informal through emails and social media. In addition, members of E-Services conducted usability testing sessions prior to the start of ARP regarding specific improvements to the account functionality, such as online payment of fines. During these testing sessions, library members often discussed their concerns with the account functionality and the improvements they would like to see. For example, the number one request consistently over many years was the ability for members to see their account history – the books and other materials they have checked-out in the past.

During ARP, the TPL E-Services team wanted to involve library members throughout the design phase to improve the usefulness and usability of the Account Management features but also to project openness and transparency, which I will discuss more fully in Chapter 5. The team
involved library members chiefly in two ways: online discussions on the web team blog and hands-on usability testing.

At the start of ARP, the TPL web team posted a message on their blog inviting library members to become part of “an advisory group of interested Toronto Public Library members who would like to share their opinions and shape the future of the TPL website.” (Figure 13).

Figure 13. TPL Web Team Blog Post, Sep 2013

Over 200 library members joined the group via a short online survey within the first few weeks. In the coming months, they were invited directly by email to participate in several rounds of usability testing but many of these invitations were also announced publicly via the TPL Web Team Blog, encouraging all library members to participate.

As the design vendor, Usability Matters led the “intense design phase” from September 2013 to February 2014. During this time the design team made frequent blog posts including updates on the team’s progress, solicitation of input on particular designs, and invitations to participate in usability testing. Since the team had adopted a ‘mobile first’ design strategy, the mobile interface
was tested in the first three rounds of usability testing, in rapid succession during November and December 2013. They conducted a review for accessibility with people using assistive technology during this time. They conducted the first test of the desktop version (Round 4) in February 2014.

Due to unexpected slowdowns and competing priorities, TPL IT wasn’t able to begin development on ARP in March 2014. Since Usability Matters contract on ARP had concluded, Normative and TPL used the period from March to October 2014 to make some refinements to the design, which I have referred to as “the extended design phase”. In October 2014, Normative conducted Round 5 of usability testing on the desktop version of ARP (Figure 12).

For the next year, development of the new ARP functionality continued to be stalled. As development was slated to begin in late 2015, TPL engaged Usability Matters to conduct Round 6 of usability testing in September 2015. This round incorporated testing of both the mobile and desktop interfaces.

A year later, in September 2016, the new design was rolled-out as a closed beta to approximately 800 library members, with an additional 800 members brought on in November 2016. In January 2017, all library members were invited to join the open beta via a blog post entitled “Account Beta Update”. Once a library member uses the “New Account Design”, it becomes their default; however, they can use the “Back to Old Account” button to switch back (Figure 14). There is also a “Feedback” button that is a mailto link, i.e. it launches the default email client on the user’s computer. This provides the E-Services team with unstructured feedback. As of March 2017, an estimated 85% of the feedback had been positive about the functionality and the visual design (aka the “look-and-feel”), with another 10% lukewarm and about 5% expressing dislike.
Throughout 2017 library members were encouraged to opt-in to the new account design. Once there is a critical mass of members using the new design, and very few continuing to use the old design, TPL will announce a date on which the old design will be shutdown.

4.3 Research Activities

The aim of my research was to explore various facets of ‘participation’ with a group of co-researchers in the context of a digital design project. I conceived of the research activities as a way for the co-researchers to reflect on participation as we experienced it during the ARP design activities and also more generally in our lives.

Entwined with my research aim is my research methodology, which is Participatory Action Research (PAR). I selected PAR because it is a participatory approach, which involves people affected by the outcomes of the research to participate in the research as co-researchers, and it is

Figure 14. TPL Account design during open beta, April 2017
also an action-oriented approach, which is intended to generate knowledge that can be used by the participants to change their immediate situation but that can also be shared with others.

For my fieldwork with the co-researchers, I planned three main research activities that are reflective but can also lead to action: an online forum, in-person workshops, and contributions to conferences. I selected these activities because I thought they would generate intensive discussions, both in-person and online, both synchronous and asynchronous. I was also confident these activities would generate rich results while making good use of the co-researchers’ time, not requiring them to do much in the way of preparation or follow-up. These three methods also suit a wide range of participants, those who are more introverted and prefer to consider and write their thoughts as well as those who are more extroverted and prefer to verbalize spontaneously.

While I discuss each of the three main research activities in detail in the sections that follow, the in-person workshops became central to my fieldwork both in approach and outcome. Therefore, as an introduction to the workshops, I outline the two workshop methods I used: the Consensus Workshop Method and Focused Conversations developed by the Institute for Cultural Affairs (Stanfield, 2000, 2002).

I close this section by outlining my approach to analysis of the data we generated through the research activities and how I support the validity of the data and my interpretations.

4.3.1 Researcher’s role

As mentioned, in a PAR approach the researcher’s role is not to be a detached expert or observer but, rather, to be an “enabler” as well as an active participant – one of the co-researchers. However, the nature of this particular project meant that I was more than an enabler – I conceived of the research aim and approach, negotiated the engagement of the participating organizations and individuals, led the research activities, and shaped our exploration of participation into this thesis. However, while I facilitated the process, it was the co-researchers that contributed their ideas and experiences through the research activities, which is the foundation upon which this thesis is built.

Within the research activities, I played the role of a facilitator. Sometimes this role was very informal, such as during the online forum in which I seeded the conversation with contextualizing statements and questions but then participated similarly to the other co-
researchers. Within the in-person workshops, my role was more formal. Rather than participating similarly to the other co-researchers, I led the workshops using the Consensus Workshop Method and Focused Conversation Method (Stanfield, 2002), which I will describe in detail under “Research Activities”. Traditionally within these methods, the facilitator strictly focuses on the process and the participants do the work of brainstorming and interpreting the content of the workshop. For the most part, I followed this approach but when I wanted to interject an idea, I declared that I was stepping out of the facilitator role briefly, which is the approach suggested as part of these methods (Stanfield, 2002, p. 117). I also tried to keep in mind the many opposing ideas that help a facilitator guide a workshop effectively (Figure 15), as outlined in The Workshop Book (Stanfield, 2002, p. 117). While there is an inherent tension between these opposed ideas – and as a facilitator I didn’t always balance these as well as I might like – by doing my best as honestly and openly as possible I tried to convey to the co-researchers that I was engaged, curious, and eager to hear their ideas.

![Figure 15. Facilitators' paradox: holding opposed ideas in mind while operating from them](image)

Reprinted from The workshop book: from individual creativity to group action (p. 117), by B. Stanfield, 2002, Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Publishers,

In addition to my role as researcher, I also played a professional role as the most senior member of the Usability Matters team assigned to ARP. My role was that of Account Manager, which
means that I negotiated the scope, timeline, and budget that resulted in Usability Matters’ contract with the Toronto Public Library and renegotiated our agreement when there was additional work or an extension to the timeline. I also advised the Usability Matters team from time-to-time and, on a few occasions, when the Design Director was unable to attend status meetings, I stepped into that role.

Besides being the Account Manager on ARP, I was one of three principals at Usability Matters. So, throughout this project, I had a position of authority and power over the members of the Usability Matters team and attended to the interests of our client (TPL), ensuring that we met and exceeded their expectations.

As a PhD researcher, I had a set of academic interests. I engaged TPL and Usability Matters in my doctoral research, as well as staff members from both organizations. I had my own ideas and aspirations for both the design activities and research activities on ARP. However, I decided in advance to characterize our professional scope of work as the design activities and, therefore, I supported the design team’s approach to the activities, providing advice but not exerting a strong influence. For example, I would have been excited to have the design team engage library members in the design activities in more sustained and significant ways but I did not impose this view.

Regarding the research activities, as mentioned, I planned and conducted these activities, fitting them into the design activities when it seemed appropriate and advantageous, as I will discuss in the upcoming section on Workshops. I had a strong vested interest in completing the research activities in timely manner but they were purposely tied to the timeline of the design activities so when the design phase was extended, this slowed my progress on the research. I also needed to ensure that the research activities generated data that could be analyzed and made coherent in the context of a PhD dissertation. From this standpoint, I had an unwavering belief that we would learn something interesting, useful, and unique because I believed in the research activities, my chosen workshop methods and, most importantly, my co-researchers.

4.3.2 Co-researchers

As mentioned, I sought an organization that might be open to exploring participation and the role of users in the design process. In seeking approval to conduct research within ARP, it was agreed
that all of the library and vendor staff members involved in the design activities would be invited
to participate but would not be obligated to do so. We did not discuss whether the research
activities would influence the design activities so this possibility remained open but was not
mentioned in the invitation. The email invitation was sent to 13 people (see Appendix A), which
included an informed consent letter as an attachment. Below are some relevant excerpts but the
entire letter can be found in Appendix B.

In the consent letter, I described the purpose of the research in a way that indicated an open,
exploratory approach:

   This study will explore the experiences of public library staff, members and
   contractors when they work together to envision and design one or more library
   services delivered via the Internet (e-Services).

In addition, I outlined the types of activities:

   If you choose to take part, you will be asked to attend 2 or 3 half-day workshops
   and participate in an Internet discussion forum periodically throughout the study.
   During these activities, you will be asked to engage in discussions about your
   individual, and our collective, experience of being part of a collaborative design
   group.

As mentioned, I selected these research activities, an online forum and in-person workshops, as
well as conference papers and presentation, because they would provide a range of ways for the
co-researchers to be involved, they would be time-efficient, and would generate rich results.

In the spirit of transparency, and also in the hope that potential co-researchers would be attracted
to taking part, I also outlined the risks and benefits as follows:

   There are no known risks to you in participating in this study. While there is no
   financial compensation offered for your participation, I believe that you will find
   the process enjoyable and you will build useful skills. You won’t just be part of
   this study, you will be a co-researcher and, as such, your contribution will be
   substantial and, I hope, satisfying.
Of the 13 members of the design team that I invited, three people from the library and four from the design vendor agreed to become co-researchers. While there was some interest expressed by one staff member from the development vendor, ultimately no one from that organization chose to participate.

The people who agreed to be co-researchers, and named as such in this research, held the following positions at the time of the research activities:

- Dara, Manager E-Services, Toronto Public Library
- Sandra, User Experience Specialist, Toronto Public Library
- Ian, Web Librarian, Toronto Public Library
- Steven, UX Designer/Researcher, Usability Matters
- Linn, UX Designer/Researcher, Usability Matters
- Heather, Visual Designer/Researcher, Usability Matters
- Simon, Art Director, Usability Matters

In the invitation email and in casual conversations, I emphasized that no one should feel obligated to participate but my personal and professional relationship was certainly a factor encouraging invitees to agree to participate. This is evidenced by the fact that those who knew me best are the ones who agreed. However, when it came to participating in each research activity, it seemed that availability and interest were the factors that determined who participated. Consequently, each co-researcher participated to widely varying degrees. While I expressed gratitude when people did participate, there were no negative reactions from me, or others in the group, when people did not participate. I believe it was clear that every opportunity to participate was completely voluntary, as evidenced by the wide range of participation.

I tried to create a very open atmosphere for the research activities, encouraging independent, critical thinking, but it is likely that certain thoughts were tempered or remained unvoiced. For example, most of the co-researchers were aware of my bias toward Participatory Design and my aspirations for the design team to engage library members more deeply in the design process.
In addition to my influence on all the co-researchers, there was a special dynamic for the four co-researchers from Usability Matters. They are my work colleagues and, since I am one of the principals of Usability Matters, they are my employees. Among other things, I have influence over their job compensation, their assignment of work, and evaluation of their performance. While this may have made them more likely to agree to participate in the overall research, it did not stop them from deciding not to participate in some (or many) of the research activities.

### 4.3.3 Online forum

When I was planning the research activities, I wanted the co-researchers to have a number of ways to interact with one another, to suit their personal preferences and personalities, use their timely wisely, and let our individual and collective ideas develop over time. I conceived of an online forum and a series of workshops as complementary approaches that would provide opportunities for contributions that were: written and verbal, synchronous and asynchronous, individual and group, time-bound and open-ended.

For our online discussions, I created a website about the project and included both a public and a private online forum (Costantino, n.d.). From September to December 2013, I introduced a series of probes into the discussion forum, such as “What do we mean by ‘participation’?” and “Please tell us about a time you participated that was particularly memorable.” My probes elicited a few responses but not very many and some co-researchers didn’t appear to be engaging in the forum at all.

At the time of Workshop 1 (Vision) in late November, I took the opportunity to remind everyone about the forum and suggested that we continue the discussions started in the workshop on the forum. I continued to post a probe every few weeks until February but since there was little activity on the online forum, I stopped. While the forum had not become the hub of engagement that I had hoped, there was some useful discussion there that became part of my data analysis.

### 4.3.4 Workshops

With considerable experience working collaboratively throughout my career, I had taken several workshops, seminars, and courses to enhance my facilitation skills. One of the first facilitation techniques I learned was taught by ICA Associates in Toronto (ICA Associates, n.d.). The ICA techniques are based on phenomenology (Oyler & Harper, 2009) and have been refined over 40
years of practice globally. During this period, they have evolved to include ideas from Osborn’s work on brainstorming, Piaget’s writing on gestalt, and Boulding’s thoughts on the power of self-image (Oyler & Harper, 2009; Stanfield, n.d.).

The grounding in sociology and psychology, the evolution through use, and my experience using the methods, are some of the primary reasons I chose them to guide the key research activities. But the main reason was my experience of the power of the methods to deepen discussions, as alluded to in this quotation: “The methods have always served to immerse people in the reality of their own situation and their own depths at the same time” (Oyler & Harper, 2009).

While these methods are often used for action planning, there are examples where they have been used for individual and group research (Stanfield, 2002, pp. 9-12). From my past experiences, I believed these methods would be well suited to this project for the reasons noted above.

The workshops I conducted during this research followed the two key ICA methods: the Consensus Workshop Method (Stanfield, 2002), which has many similarities to Future Workshops (Kensing & Madsen, 1991; McPhail, Costantino, Bruckmann, Barclay, & Clement, 1998), and the Focused Conversation Method (Stanfield, 2000). Like all ICA methods, they have four phases that are “built on the same surface-to-depth pattern” (Stanfield, 2002, p. 22), as outlined below.

**Phase I** deals with the objective stuff of life: what is there, what we are up against, the empirical factual data, the situational parameters, the internal and external observable data. The focused conversation method calls this stage the objective phase. The workshop method names it the brainstorm.

**Phase II** moves to a sensing of the internal relationship to the content of Phase I. It covers interior reactions, initial intuitive responses, emotional states or tones, feelings, memories and associations, a precognitive sense of things. It is a second “take” on the data. The focused conversation method names this phase the reflective. In the workshop method it is the clustering, the association of ideas.
Phase III relates to the data from Phases I and II. It sifts the data from those two levels for clues to meaning, insight and learning. It concerns itself with the significance of the data for the individual or group. In the focused conversation method, this step is referred to as the interpretive. In the workshop method it is the naming of the data clusters.

Phase IV gathers up the data from the previous three phases and projects it forward into the future. It generates the implications or new directions flowing from the data. It is often a process of stating the consensus, decision, implementation and action. It is the “so what?” phase. The focused conversation method refers to this phase as the decisional step. In the consensus workshop method, this is the resolve step. (Stanfield, 2002, p. 22)

In the remainder of this dissertation, I have used ‘workshop’ as a collective term to refer to both Focused Conversations and Consensus Workshops. As part of the research activities, I conducted four workshops, which I’ve named for their temporal and topical aspects as follows: Workshop 1 (Vision), Workshop 2 (Participants), Workshop 3 (Obstacles) and Workshop 4 (Framework).

As is appropriate to the ICA methods, I acted as facilitator, planning and leading the workshops, but I did not contribute to the content that resulted from the workshop. In the sections below I describe briefly the two methods, then provide details about how I used these methods as part of the ARP research activities.

**Consensus Workshops**

In the ICA methodology, the Consensus Workshop method is the foundation for several workshop variations. In ARP, we used two of these variations. Workshop 1 (Vision) was a “Practical Vision” workshop and Workshop 3 (Obstacles) was an “Underlying Obstacles” workshop (Stanfield, 2002, pp. 153-154).

Both workshop variations followed a similar format wherein the participants (in this case the co-researchers) wrote responses to a focus question individually on sticky notes and then worked in small groups to enrich and evaluate the responses, providing their collective responses to the large group. The large group then clustered the sticky notes and gave each cluster a meaningful
name that captured the underlying insights. From each workshop, a diagram was created on the wall with the sticky notes in their named clusters. In the ICA methodology, the individual cards are the fodder from which the cluster names are derived and it is the cluster name that represents the gestalt created by the group (Stanfield, 2002, p. 16). While this holds true for our use of the method during this research, I have used both the cluster names and the individual sticky notes as part of my data set, as I will discuss in detail in Chapter 5.

**Focused Conversations**

The Focused Conversation Method relies on the same underlying phases as all ICA methods, as mentioned previously. Rather than a single focus question, as in the Consensus Workshop method, the facilitator leads a conversation as a series of related questions that move the group through the generation of data, reflection, interpretation, and resolution. Although artifacts may be produced during the workshop, the method doesn’t necessitate that the participants create a diagram of their individual and collective work, as is the case in the Consensus Workshop method. As I will elaborate shortly, during ARP I conducted two Focused Conversations: Workshop 2 (Participants) and Workshop 4 (Framework).

In the invitation to participate in the research activities, I stated that there would be 2 – 3 workshops. While I planned to use the Consensus Workshop and Focused Conversation methods, I purposely did not determine in advance the exact number of workshops nor the format or questions for each workshop. Instead I decided the timing and approach for each workshop based on the progress of the design activities, and the aspects of participation I felt were relevant for reflection at that stage, as I will discuss for each workshop below.

In addition, I was considering the workshops cumulatively, ensuring that a wide range of issues of participation would be raised, particularly through the first three of them. Based on these workshops, I began to formulate research questions about the relationship between issues and ideals of participation and decided to plan Workshop 4 (Framework). I crafted that workshop specifically to introduce and scrutinize the IPF, which I discuss below.
Workshop 1 (Vision)

I scheduled Workshop 1 (Vision) for early in the design phase. Although I wasn’t part of the day-to-day design activities, I had heard from some of the design team members that there were some challenges in getting people from the three separate organizations to coalesce. This seemed to me like an opportune time to get the co-researchers together, face-to-face, for a Consensus Workshop. While only some members of the design team agreed to be co-researchers, I invited the entire team to participate in this first workshop. The attendees included: 5 of the 7 co-researchers (2 from TPL and 3 from Usability Matters), one web developer from TPL and one independent contractor hired by TPL.

As per the Consensus Workshop method, I planned the workshop in advance (for details, see Appendix C: Workshop 1 (Vision) Facilitator’s Guide). The key element in planning this type of workshop is determining the “focus question” (Stanfield, 2002, pp. 102-105). I considered some very direct questions such as “How could we improve our working relationships on the Your Account Project?” or “How do we envision a positive working environment on the Your Account Project?” But, true to my research aim of exploring participation, I wanted to craft a more open question that was not so clearly tied to improving the current situation – but could have that effect. In the end, I decided on this question: “How do we envision an ideal participation process for the Your Account Project?” I used the word ‘ideal’ as a way to address sensitive issues without specifically critiquing the current situation, since this was intended to be a vision workshop. I didn’t realize at the time that ‘ideals’ would become a central concept in my research.

The workshop followed the Consensus Workshop method in which I acted as facilitator, guiding the steps but not participating in them directly. I started by setting the context for the workshop, including a brief presentation reminding everyone of the aims of the research as follows:

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7 At the start of the project, the website feature that was the focus of the design activities was labelled ‘Your Account’ on the TPL website and so the project was referred to as the “Your Account Project”. Mid-way through the project, between Workshop 2 (Participants) and Workshop 3 (Obstacles), the team decided the redesigned feature would be labelled ‘Account’, dropping the ‘Your’, so they began referring to the project as the “Account Redesign Project”.
• To involve library staff and members in envisioning and designing e-Services for a public library

• To use our shared experience of the Your Account project to explore issues of participation

I then provided an overview of the steps and timing of the workshop and outlined the working assumptions (part of the Consensus Workshop Method):

• Everyone has wisdom

• Everyone’s wisdom is needed for the wisest result

• There are no wrong answers

• The whole is greater than the sum of the parts

• Everyone will have the opportunity to hear and be heard (Stanfield, 2002, p. 54)

For the brainstorm step, I introduced the focus question (“How do we envision an ideal participation process for the Your Account Project?”) and asked everyone to individually make a list of about 12 ideas addressing the focus question. I then created small groups with 2 or 3 people per group, mixing people from different organizations in each group. In the small groups, I asked the participants to share their ideas and then agree on approximately 12 responses from their group and write these on sticky notes (Figure 16).
To begin clustering the ideas, we reassembled as the entire group. Through several rounds, I asked each small group to give me one of their sticky notes that seems the ‘wildest’, ‘scariest’, ‘most obvious’, and ‘most fun’, which gets the participants to reflect on their sticky notes individually and as a group and is a stepping stone to interpretation. Next we started to pair sticky notes, associated additional sticky notes to the pairs, and eventually created 12 clusters. Once the large group was satisfied with the clusters, I assigned each of the three small groups to four clusters and asked them to name them using a noun and a ‘juicy’ adjective (See Figure 17). The ‘juicy’ adjective is important because it gets the groups to think about the important qualities of the nouns they are considering. For example in this workshop one of the cluster names is “Transparent Communication”. While this name is open to wide interpretation, it captures an important quality better than ‘communication’ alone, which is simply a category.
To bring the workshop to resolution, I asked everyone to review the entire workshop consensus chart and then asked some reflective questions such as “Which idea disturbs you?”, “Which idea seems exciting?” and “What’s the biggest obstacle?”

From Workshop 1 (Vision), the data generated was the workshop consensus chart, supported by a few photos and my personal notes. The chart consists of individual sticky notes grouped into columns with headings, which I transcribed into a digital version (see Appendix D). The data generated from this workshop became part of my analysis.

Workshop 2 (Participants)

A few months after Workshop 1 (Vision), the intense design phase was nearing completion. I decided to convene a workshop so we could discuss how participation had worked on ARP so far, while there was still time to enrich participation by library members if the co-researchers wished to do so. I thought a Focused Conversation would be a good method for this workshop.
because it allows the facilitator to probe deeply on particular issues using a list of prepared questions but also allows the facilitator to pursue interesting threads that emerge during the discussion, much like a semi-structured group interview.

I held Workshop 2 (Participants) in February 2014. In addition to me, four of the seven co-researchers attended (2 from Toronto Public Library and 2 from Usability Matters). I prepared a list of questions in advance (for details, see Appendix E: Workshop 2 (Participants) Facilitator’s Guide) and facilitated the session. For the most part, I asked questions and did not contribute to the answers, although this was not as strictly delineated as in Workshop 1 (Vision).

To provide context, I gave a quick recap of some things we discussed during Workshop 1 (Vision) and then described the procedure for Workshop 2 (Participants). To produce objective grounding for our conversation, the first question I asked was “Who are the participants in the Your Account project?” To answer this question, each of the co-researchers wrote individual names on separate sticky notes and I posted them randomly. I then asked “What roles do they play?” and the co-researchers moved the sticky notes around until we had several clusters.

We named the clusters from the centre out starting with “UX design”, flanked by “Extended Design” and “Technical”. Next to “Technical” was “IT” and then near the edges was “Management”, “Library Members” and “Business”. I discuss this process in greater detail in Chapter 5, accompanied by Figure 22: Diagram of ARP participants.

Having established a shared understanding of the participants and their roles in ARP, I then asked some questions to help the participants reflect on ARP so far. I asked questions such as:

- What are you most proud of achieving as part of the Your Account project?
- Have you had any a-ha moments when consulting library members on the Your Account project?
- How do you feel about the idea of involving library members in design?
- Do you have any concerns about how eServices staff and other library staff been involved so far?

I then asked interpretive questions to help the group consider the significance and implications of their actions so far. The questions built from foundational questions like “What is design?” to more circumstance-specific questions like “Are there any personal or organizational barriers to including library members in design?”
The data from this workshop included a diagram of participants (Figure 22), and my notes taken during and immediately after it. I also recorded the audio digitally but, unfortunately, the recording failed during the workshop and I was unable to recover the corrupted file. Because of this, I asked the co-researchers to send me their notes or recollections and their additions became an important part of my analysis.

**Workshop 3 (Obstacles)**

Shortly after Workshop 2 (Participants), the Usability Matters contract on ARP ended and this marked the end of what I have referred to as the ‘intense design phase’ (Figure 12). Rather than going directly into the development phase, which was the expectation of the design team, there was a delay in starting development due to other priorities within the TPL IT team. Therefore, the period from March to September 2014, became an ‘extended design phase’ in which TPL staff made minor design changes with input from their vendor Normative, whose skills include strategy and design as well as development.

During this ‘extended design phase’, I thought it would be a good time to discuss what worked and didn’t work regarding participation on ARP, after the intense design phase was completed but while the experience was reasonably recent. I scheduled the workshop for May 2015 and all seven co-researchers attended (3 from TPL and 4 from Usability Matters).

For Workshop 3 (Obstacles), I employed a variation of the Consensus Workshop Method called “Underlying Obstacles” (Stanfield, 2002, pp. 153-154). Like the Practical Vision workshop, the Underlying Obstacles workshop starts with a focus question and then moves through individual and small group brainstorms before the large group does clustering and naming (for details, see Appendix F: Workshop 3 (Obstacles) Facilitator’s Guide). The focus question for this workshop was “What stopped us from realizing our ideal vision of participation?” Similar to Workshop 1 (Vision), I was the facilitator of the workshop, moving the group through the process but not contributing to the content.

I introduced the workshop by reminding the co-researchers of our previous two workshops and how this workshop fits into the overall PhD research. In particular, I said that Workshop 3 (Obstacles) builds on Workshop 1 (Vision) but is often more difficult because it requires us to evaluate a lived experience rather than envision an ideal one.
To set the context, I printed a large version of the chart from Workshop 1 (Vision) and we (the co-researchers) reviewed the chart briefly together (Figure 18). I left the chart on display throughout Workshop 3 (Obstacles) so we could easily reference it as needed.

Figure 18. Co-researchers reviewing Workshop 1 (Vision) chart during Workshop 3 (Obstacles)

Similar to Workshop 1 (Vision), we went through brainstorming individually, then working in small groups to prioritize and, finally, working as a large group to cluster and name. Rather than a chart of columns, as in Workshop 1 (Vision), the Underlying Obstacles diagram is a wheel shape with spokes, creating 5 – 7 wedges (Figure 19).
To close the workshop, I read all the title cards aloud and then stimulated a discussion with questions such as “Which do you experience as the heaviest?”, “What elements of the vision would be released by removing this block?” and “What is something you can do to deal with one of these blocks?”.

The result from workshop was captured in the final chart, which I recreated electronically (Figure 20) and a more readable version in Appendix G.
As mentioned, Workshop 3 (Obstacles) occurred at a time when the development was expected to be underway but had been halted for several months. There was a lot of consternation about the slow-down on the project, which is evident in many of the sticky notes written to answer the focus question. I discuss results of this workshop in detail in Chapter 5.

Workshop 4 (Framework)

Since the intense period of the design team working together had ended, I had no plans to conduct another workshop but had not ruled out the possibility. The design phase had taken longer than expected – and the development was on hold – so I decided to start data analysis. I reviewed the data we had generated through the online forum as well as the three workshops and shaped this into a submission for the upcoming 2014 Participatory Design Conference (PDC), which I discuss in the next section. However, from this preliminary analysis, I decided to conduct a fourth workshop with the co-researchers to involve them in the analysis as well as to enrich the data.
In particular, I decided to introduce the co-researchers to the Issues of Participation Framework (IPF) and use it as a series of lenses through which to reflect on our experience on ARP. I structured Workshop 4 (Framework) as a series of Focused Conversations with each conversation addressing one of the issues in the Framework, including ideals associated with the issue, and how those ideals were relevant to our experiences on ARP.

I set the context for Workshop 4 (Framework) by sending an email to the co-researchers in preparation for it, attaching a provisional extended thesis abstract (approx. 800 words) as well as a pre-press version of my paper “Issues of Participation: A Framework for Choices and Compromises” (Costantino, 2014).

Four of the co-researchers (2 TPL, 2 Usability Matters) attended the workshop and most indicated that they had read or skimmed the extended abstract. I started the workshop with a brief PowerPoint presentation (9 slides) in which I recapped the research activities to date, outlined the agenda for Workshop 4 (Framework) and introduced the IPF (Figure 21). When writing about the IPF, I had associated each issue with a question as a way to quickly distinguish the issues and make them more tangible to myself and to readers (Costantino, 2014, pp. 48-49).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Goals, values, and interests</td>
<td>Why use participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Representation</td>
<td>Who will participate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Power relations</td>
<td>Who can participate freely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Context</td>
<td>What is the setting for participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Effectiveness</td>
<td>What will be the effect of participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Transformations</td>
<td>Who will be changed by participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sustainability</td>
<td>How will the outcomes of participation be sustained and sustainable?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 21. Overview slide of the Issues of Participation Framework with associated questions presented at Workshop 4 (Framework)**
During most of Workshop 4 (Framework), I led the co-researchers through a series of Focused Conversations, each with some objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional questions (for details, see Appendix H: Workshop 4 (Framework) Facilitator’s Guide). I started each conversation with a question from the framework such as “Why use participation?” For the issues that we had discussed quite a bit at previous workshops (i.e. representation, power relations, context, and effectiveness), I used a flipchart to write the co-researchers responses to questions such as “What are the ideal power relations”. I then asked a reflective question such as “Which of these ideals are relevant to the Account Redesign project?” and put a star next to those on the flipchart. An example of an interpretive question was “How do you think that affected the project?” And, finally, I ended each issue discussion with a decisional question: “Would you do anything differently on a future project?”

I decided to conduct Workshop 4 (Framework) early in my analysis of the previous data, as my ideas about the ideals associated with issues of participation were starting to form. I formulated my approach to this workshop based on my desire to explore these ideals with the co-researchers, rather than on my own. My focus and area of interest was the ideals of PD and it was only after Workshop 4 (Framework) that I started to consciously connect these ideals to the tensions between PD and HCD.

Workshop 4 (Framework) was a particularly rich conversation and has become central to this dissertation. Fortunately I was able to capture it in an audio recording, which I later transcribed. This discussion is the basis for much of the data and analysis in Chapter 5.

4.3.5 Conferences papers and presentations

Although this was not a typical PAR project aimed at action to immediately adjust a current situation, the way I conceived this project included action through dissemination of our experiences through conferences and publishing directed to practitioners, academics, or both.

As part of the Research Activities, we made submissions to three conferences: Computer-Human Interaction (CHI 2014), Participatory Design Conference (PDC 2014) and Ontario Libraries Association (OLA 2015).

For each submission, I drafted the proposal or paper and then the co-researchers were encouraged to review the draft. I drafted the CHI 2014 submission after completing only
Workshop 1 (Vision) and so, while the results were very preliminary and the submission was ultimately rejected, it was a valuable exercise to start analyzing the data we were generating, forming that into a submission, and engaging in review and revision cycles.

Building on the CHI submission, in March 2014 I prepared three submissions for the Participatory Design Conference (PDC), all of which were accepted for presentation and publication in the conference proceedings. I based the paper for the Industry Case track on the CHI submission, discussing four issues: design reviews vs. co-design; trust, openness and communication; accountability; and power relations (Costantino et al., 2014b). I drew on the comments from the CHI reviewers to deepen my reflection on these issues.

For the Short Paper track, I concentrated on the results from Workshop 2 (Participants), discussing barriers to involving library members in the design activities such as the desire to protect library members from arcane library decisions and fears of ‘design by committee’ (Costantino et al., 2014a). In the paper I also provided background on the ICA workshop methods and related these to the PD literature.

Since the doctoral consortium submission was largely taken from the Short Paper submission, I declined to have it published in the proceedings. However, I displayed a poster at the conference that included a timeline of the design and research activities with brief introduction to the ARP.

As with the CHI submission, the PDC submission was a catalyst for analysis of our activities and the data we had generated. While I had always envisioned iterative cycles of data generation and analysis, having concrete deadlines such as conference submissions were helpful in prioritizing this analysis.

In May 2014, I proposed the idea of a joint presentation at OLA 2015 to the co-researchers. Dara, the Manager of E-Services, and I decided to make a proposal for a 40-minute session entitled “Managing Digital Projects: Staff, Vendors, Stakeholders, and Library Members”. Our intention was to provide an introductory overview aimed at library staff that had little experience, or had encountered challenges, in managing digital projects. Between the time of making the submission and the presentation, we had completed Workshop 3 (Obstacles) and were able to draw on this in our presentation.
In February 2016, I decided to make a submission to PDC 2016. At the time of this submission, we had completed Workshop 4 (Framework) and I was starting to consider the tensions between HCD and PD that were present in ARP, in my experiences more generally, and in the PD and HCD literature. I prepared a full paper discussing two barriers to involving library members more meaningfully in ARP from my perspective: the design team’s satisfaction with HCD and lack of trust in the library and in the library members. Although my submission was strongly supported by one reviewer, ultimately the submission of this paper was rejected. Nonetheless, the submission had served an important purpose in terms of being the first opportunity for me to analyze the data generated by Workshop 4 (Framework) and to move forward in shaping my thoughts regarding the tensions between HCD and PD.

4.3.6 Analysis approach

For my analysis, I took the data generated from each of the research activities and organized it based on my Issues of Participation Framework.

The largest data sets were generated during the four workshops. In the ICA Workshop Method, it is the cluster names that hold the consensus of the participants. However, for my analysis, I dismantled the Results Charts created in Workshop 1 (Vision) and in Workshop 3 (Obstacles), separating the cluster names and the individual sticky notes so that I could regroup them by ‘issue’.

Similarly, for Workshop 2 (Participants) and Workshop 4 (Framework) (the ICA Focused Conversations), I took the diagrams we created and dismantled them into their components parts so I could regroup them by ‘issue’.

As mentioned above, due to a malfunction, I was unable to audiotape Workshop 2 (Participants). However, I shared my notes with the co-researchers who had attended and they added extremely useful detail. I broke the notes into discrete chunks (sentences and paragraphs) that were added to the other materials for my analysis.

Fortunately, I was able to do an audio recording of Workshop 4 (Framework). I transcribed the 2-hour discussion and then broke the transcript into discrete chunks, similar to the approach I used for Workshop 2 (Participants).
Between Workshop 3 (Obstacles) and Workshop 4 (Framework), Dara the Manager of E-Services, and I prepared for our presentation at the Ontario Libraries Association (OLA). My notes, and the presentation we created, also became part of the analysis.

I had hoped that the online forum would be an active part of our ongoing discussions but it was not. Nonetheless, all entries made in the forum were included in the overall data set as entire posts, since each post was responding to a particular question I posed in the forum.

After disassembling the data into discrete chunks, I grouped the data according to the Issues of Participation. This was challenging because the data from sticky notes or flipcharts written during workshops resulted in fragments of text that are vague and open to interpretation. Consequently, it was extremely important for me to enrich these fragments by keeping their original context in mind – what other sticky notes were they clustered with, the name of the cluster, and any details of the discussion that I might have noted. From Workshop 4, I had sticky notes and flipcharts as well as a transcribed audio recording so had more context to use in my interpretation.

Once I had the data from all of the research activities grouped by issue, I looked for themes within each issue – continuing to keep in mind the original context of the data as well as the new relationships I had created spanning the research activities. I knew I was re-interpreting the results we had created together in the workshops but I kept those results and our discussions in mind in order to interpret in a way that I felt would resonate with my fellow co-researchers – and they were given the opportunity to comment on this as I will discuss in the next section on validity.

As I began my re-interpretation, I was open to the fact that I might not discern any themes at all, or might not for every issue. However, I did form a few themes (2 – 4) for every issue. I formed the themes by creating paper versions of the data fragments and clustering the fragments when I saw relationships – much like the clustering activities during the workshops. I continued this until most of the fragments were clustered and then named those clusters – which became the themes. I also reviewed the fragments that were not clustered to evaluate two things: were they indicative of another theme or of another issue of participation. I could see some additional themes but considered them minor in the scope of our experiences on ARP, so did not include
them. I did not find any fragments that I thought were suggestive of additional issues of participation.

The themes that I discuss in Chapter 5 are specific to this project, grounded in the data and our experience, but they also seem relevant to many digital design projects, and will be the basis for my discussion of HCD and PD in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.3.7 Validity of the data

In keeping with my qualitative, participatory approach to this research, I conducted data generation activities that are specific to a particular group of people at a particular moment in time. Although different from quantitative research, qualitative research has checks and balances to ensure its validity. According to Creswell “Validity… is seen as a strength of qualitative research, but it is used to suggest determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account” (Creswell, 2003, pp. 195-196).

Validity is achieved through making conscious and explicit choices about the data and how it is generated, as well as through the data analysis approach taken. In some qualitative research reliability and generalizability are also possible and appropriate (Creswell, 2003, p. 195). However, these qualities were neither intended nor achievable in this participatory research.

Appropriate to my participatory approach, I have focused on data generation and analysis approaches that include ongoing validity checking by the researcher, co-researchers and learned reviewers including: data triangulation, member-checking, clarification of researcher bias, peer debriefing, and inclusion of discrepant information (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

**Data Triangulation**

In order to achieve data triangulation, this research included several sources of data that would allow for cross verification of findings. Data was generated directly by the co-researchers who contributed to the online discussion forum. During each of the four workshops, the co-researchers collectively created charts and/or diagrams that were open to immediate and ongoing scrutiny. In addition, the recording of Workshop 4 (Framework) captures the views and ideas of several people in their own words. While preparing conference submissions or papers, the co-
researchers were invited to review and comment on the drafts before they were finalized, which several did. I kept a journal of my personal reflections, which were used to jog my memory but were not added to the data set directly. The number and consistency of contributors, the range of data types as well as the long timeline for data generation has allowed for data triangulation.

**Member-checking**

In addition to multiple data sources, my participatory research approach included the involvement of my co-researchers both in generating and interpreting the data. Because of the research activities I selected, the co-researchers were able to see the data generated during the online forum, the workshops, and the conference papers, and had the opportunity – and were encouraged by me and each other – to ensure the data reflected their ideas accurately. In addition, each of the research activities included opportunities for interpretation. For the workshops, immediate interpretation, by individuals and the group, is built into the process and Workshop 4 was an opportunity to reflect on our entire experience on ARP. For conference papers, the co-researchers responded on several occasions to my invitation to check the accuracy of the data and provide comments on my interpretation of that data. For this dissertation, the co-researchers were invited to comment on a near-final draft and four of seven did so. Two responded with a general endorsement of the content. Two identified particular passages where they felt I had misunderstood their intended meaning or a circumstance in which they made a different interpretation. After a brief and productive discussion, I decided to revise particular sections to reflect our common understanding and interpretation.

**Clarification of researcher bias and interests**

Researcher bias is a key part of the context of all research projects. However, in PAR approaches, the researcher’s ability to address their biases and interests is central to the methodology. Throughout the research activities, I acknowledged my perspective and values, and I encouraged my co-researchers to do the same. For example, I made my interest in Participatory Design clear to the co-researchers during discussions at the workshops, in casual conversations, and through the writing of the conference papers.

As I’ve mentioned previously, my professional work is driven from an HCD perspective and my academic work is focused on a PD perspective, which creates a tension within me. For my
doctoral research, I designed an exploratory study of participation in which I tried to stay as open as possible - during the research activities as well as during my analysis and writing. However, it is not a surprise – in hindsight – that I’ve formed a dissertation that focuses on the tension between HCD and PD. While I’ve taken steps to mitigate my influence on the outcomes of the research activities and to ground my interpretation in the evidence of our experiences, there is no doubt that I have shaped this dissertation.

Bias and interests are also inherent in the multiple roles I played during this study. Throughout the study, including the writing of this dissertation, I’ve tried to be explicit about these roles for myself, for my co-researchers, and for readers. As I discussed under Researcher’s Role, at various moments I was: co-researcher advocating a PAR approach, facilitator endorsing ICA workshop methods, Account Manager supporting a successful outcome of the ARP design activities, Principal of Usability Matters trying to satisfy my client, my business partners, and my staff, and PhD researcher with an agenda to complete the research activities and this dissertation.

At the start of this study, I discussed with representatives of TPL, Usability Matters, and University of Toronto, the pros and cons of my explicit involvement on ARP as Account Manager for Usability Matters. Together we decided that it made sense for me to play both roles. However, in an effort to delineate these two roles, I found it useful to separate the “design activities”, as the professional activities, from the “research activities”, as the academic activities. I decided that it would be most beneficial for both the design and research activities for me to defer to the core design team regarding the design activities, rather than trying to lead them in a particular direction (for example, I did not impose a PD approach). The separation of the activities and my decision not to lead, gave me and the co-researchers the opportunity to reflect, during the research activities, on the decisions we made as part of the design activities. If I had played a stronger role or led the design activities, my research approach, our reflections, and the focus of this study would have needed to be different.

During this study, I underscored the separation of the design and research activities by planning the research activities as discrete events focused on a single purpose. I never included research activities as an adjunct to design activities or vice versa. For the online forum, rather than using Basecamp or Slack, the communication tools used for the design activities, I used a completely separate communication platform that was part of my research website. For the workshops, I
booked a meeting location and sent invitations well in advance, signalling that each workshop was a planned activity – apart from our day-to-day responsibilities. Through the research activities I selected, the facilitation methods I used, the planning I did, and the contexts I chose, I reinforced the separation of the design and research activities.

Because our experiences and ideas were so intertwined throughout this study, it has been particularly important in this dissertation for me to distinguish between ideas and values associated with an individual and those that were shared with others in the group. I have tried to be even more diligent about identifying my own thoughts and biases in the interpretation of our experiences, particularly in Chapters 5 and 6.

**Peer debriefing**

As a PhD student, my work was subject to review and questioning by my supervisor and committee members at particular milestones throughout the research design, execution and writing. These experienced researchers helped ensure that my approach was sound and “will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

**Acknowledgement of discrepant information**

Acknowledging unexamined, negative, and discrepant information is a valuable practice that contributes to the credibility of the research. In my analysis in Chapter 5, I acknowledge information that lies outside the core themes identified through this project or provides counter-evidence.

**4.4 Chapter summary**

In this chapter I introduced the Toronto Public Library and showed that they have a stated commitment to participation and have contributed to exploring participation with community members through the Working Together Project. I also traced the use of Human-Centred Design within the E-Services team back to the Virtual Reference Library project they undertook in 1998 during which they drew some of their inspiration from usability guru Jakob Nielsen. This supports my argument that the design team on the Account Redesign Project (ARP) employed HCD – at least in part – because it was familiar.
For the ARP, I made a distinction between two levels of effort: the design activities and the research activities. I outlined the design activities and showed that they followed a conventional HCD approach including iterative design leading quickly to a prototype and further iterations to the prototype based on input from stakeholders as well as usability testing with users. To support my close examination of participation on the ARP in Chapter 5, I introduced the design and development team, the organizational stakeholders, and library members, and how they were involved in the ARP design activities.

For most of the chapter, I described the research activities starting with a discussion of my multi-faceted role as researcher in this Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the role the ARP design team members played as co-researchers. I outlined the activities we undertook as part of this exploration of participation, particularly the four workshops that generated most of the data I present and analyze in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5

5 Examining ideals related to issues of participation in the Account Redesign Project

In this chapter, I present and analyse the data generated during the research activities to assess whether ideals related to issues of participation helped clarify the tensions between HCD and PD on the ARP project (RQ3). I also present some of the reasons that the design team on ARP did not adopt a PD approach (RQ4).

As mentioned previously, the data consisted of messages in the online forum, the sticky notes and flip-chart notes written during the four workshops, the transcription of the audio recording of Workshop 4 (Framework), conference submissions as well as my personal notes throughout the project. As discussed in Chapter 4, I mapped all the data into the seven issues in the Issues of Participation Framework (IPF) and created themes by looking for topics and points of view that arose from multiple research activities across time and, for the most part, were addressed by multiple co-researchers. In this chapter I focus on the issues and themes that were most prevalent during ARP and provided insights into tensions between HCD and PD regarding participation.

In the first section of this chapter, I relate the issues of goals, effectiveness, and transformations from the IPF under the question “Why use participation?”. I start by discussing the goals of participation as a central tension between HCD and PD. In HCD, the key goal is the creation of a better product – a perspective that the co-researchers expressed often on ARP and which relates to ‘goals’ but also to the issue of ‘effectiveness’, as I have defined it in the IPF. Another theme from ARP was the desire of the co-researchers to ‘have a lasting impact’, which I relate to the issue of ‘transformations’. In the case of ARP, the co-researchers were focused on having a lasting impact on their TPL colleagues, rather than transforming themselves and library members – which would be more aligned with a participatory approach such as PD.

In the second section, I discuss “Who can participate?” by addressing two additional issues from the IPF: representation and power relations. Another central tension between HCD and PD is captured in Bratteteig et. al.’s differentiation between users “having a voice” and “having a say” in the design process (2012). In ARP, library members (i.e. users) were involved directly through
blog comments and usability testing sessions but were also represented by proxy voices, which I
discuss in “Inviting users to have a voice (Representation)”. In “Enabling users to have a say
(Power relations)”, I delve into the issue of power relations, which is a focus within PD but
largely ignored in the HCD literature.

In the data we generated on ARP I identified several themes related to the final two issues from
the IPF, i.e. “context” and “sustainability”; however, they were not sufficiently rich to warrant
detailed analysis, so I chose not to include them in my discussion.

5.1 Why use participation?

In the IPF, I’ve described goals as the reasons to engage with others in a participatory process,
essentially addressing the question ‘Why use participation?’ In addition to ‘goals’ in the sense of
motivation, there are three other issues in the Framework that are related to goals as intended
outcomes: Effectiveness, Transformations, and Sustainability. As indicated in Chapter 2, the
principles of HCD point most obviously to the goal of effectiveness of the product while the
principles of PD speak more of the effectiveness of the process of participation and the
transformation of the participants. I elaborate these fundamental differences in this section.

5.1.1 Better product or emancipation? (Goals)

Because the goals of participation are inherent in HCD and PD practice, they often go unspoken
amongst designers, researchers and participants. In the case of ARP, the stated goal of the project
was to replace the aging technology with something more flexible and create a user interface for
the existing “Your Account” functionality that is responsive (i.e. works well on all device sizes).
The goal of participation, on the other hand, was not explicit and was not discussed as part of the
design activities. However, as part of the research activities, I asked the co-researchers on several
occasions to reflect on possible reasons for participation.

I first touched on the issue of the goals of participation in my first post in the online forum when
I asked “What do we mean by participation?” To start the discussion, I provided a dictionary
definition of participation: “to be involved with others in doing something; to take part in an
activity or event with others” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2013). In the same post I asked
“Does the dictionary definition adequately convey what we mean when we use the term
participation? How do you define participation?” One co-researcher responded with his support for the dictionary definition.

Since no one suggested a richer definition of participation that would be considered authentic within PD and other participatory practices, I used the online forum to introduce the co-researchers to the Public Involvement Continuum from the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit (Figure 9). I thought this continuum would be useful in distinguishing degrees of participation and, because of its origins in library practice, that it would resonate with the co-researchers. However, my post did not generate any discussion in the online forum. I also thought it might influence the ARP design team to move along the continuum from “Getting Information”, which aligns with typical HCD activities, towards “Engaging”, which includes a greater degree of participation that aligns more closely to PD. However, this was not the case.

In Workshop 4 (Framework), one of the questions I posed early on was “Why use participation?” When the co-researchers finished writing their responses on sticky notes, they briefly questioned aloud what we mean by ‘participation’.

Linn: I guess it depends on how you define participation. Like Dara said … in the broadest sense of participation.

Dara: If we talk about users as opposed to internal participation, more user participation – through user testing – obviously the product is better, that's what I would say.

Sandra: Is user testing what we mean by participation?

Steven: Probably not in its fullest sense but certainly that’s part of it.

Dara: It’s not the only thing.

Steven: You did open the door there to other types of participation.

Dara: Maybe you didn’t mean that …

Steven: No I think we …
Terry: We haven’t defined it.

Dara: From the library’s perspective, even if people weren’t knowingly participating, the comments and complaints through the years sort of built up the internal knowledge of what user expectations are, how they want to work with stuff. That wasn’t truly participating in the project but it was years of participation through input.

While overall the co-researchers had previously expressed satisfaction with the type and level of input they sought from library members, in this exchange we can see some recognition that user testing is not participation “in its fullest sense”. At the same time, we can see that any form of input from library members – usability testing, comments and complaints – is considered participation “in the broadest sense”.

As mentioned, we never settled on a specific, shared definition of participation to guide our discussions or behaviours on ARP. While I introduced artifacts and ideas that could have contributed or shaped a definition, I purposely did not lead the group to a resolution. So, in the absence of a definition, it seems that the co-researchers interpreted participation broadly throughout the research activities but also recognized that there were depths of participation that we did not plumb on ARP.

During Workshop 4 (Framework), most of the sticky notes the co-researchers made in response to my question “Why use participation?” related directly, or by implication, to improving the quality of the product:

- “Better answers when others’ views are considered”
- “Better product by including user testing”
- “To ensure the product matches a real need”
- “To ensure broadest possible input”
- “It has to happen – it is a default/symptom of making complex things (we don’t really have a choice)”
These responses, along with our ensuing discussion, indicated a general belief amongst the co-researchers that broad input ensures a better product that meets a real need – which is the promise of HCD. However, the parenthetical comments in the last three bullets above indicate that there was also some skepticism about the efficacy of participation but also the belief that participation is a requirement of complex design. As I have discussed elsewhere, HCD is aspirational for these digital designers so it is interesting to see that they also express some skepticism about its effectiveness in achieving “a better result”.

There were a few additional responses on sticky notes that alluded to more democratic reasons for involving others in design such as:

- “To recognize and value varying perspectives & contributions”
- “A sense of shared ownership/empathy”

However, these points were not picked-up in our discussion, which focused on the design team’s desire to create a better product.

When it comes to the goals of participation, the design team on ARP adopted HCD’s pragmatic goal to “improve the quality of the system” (International Standardization Organization, 2009). Since all three organizations represented on the ARP design team (TPL, Usability Matters and Normative) have routinely used an HCD approach driven by its pragmatic goal, this is not surprising. HCD also provided familiarity for the designers that could help them work together quickly and efficiently, which is another pragmatic goal. Therefore, the design activities on ARP followed a typical HCD approach, including library members as sources of information and evaluation, mainly through usability testing.

Through the research activities, we had the opportunity to consider going beyond “getting information” from library members to truly “engaging” them, to use the terminology of the Public Involvement Continuum. However, as I discussed in Chapter 4, the co-researchers were
focused on getting the design team working well together, keeping the many stakeholders informed throughout the project, and validating their designs with library members. So, without a compelling reason or strong desire amongst the co-researchers to move toward “engaging” library members, pragmatic goals dominated on ARP.

5.1.2 Better process for better product (Effectiveness)

While creating the Framework, I used the term ‘effectiveness’ to encompass attempts to improve the end product, productivity, the process, and participants’ ‘ownership’ of the product and process. It is an important issue because, on the surface, HCD and PD share some of the aspirations of ‘effectiveness’ but also diverge on their intentions for effectiveness.

‘Effectiveness’ is a difficult term because it implies a judgement and, therefore, requires a definition and, possibly, a measure. I purposely did not provide any of these on the ARP project, preferring to see how the co-researchers would interpret ‘effectiveness’. However, within the Framework, I have tried to capture the breadth of ‘effectiveness’ by associating it, originally, with the question “What will be affected by participation?” and then, subsequently, adjusting the question in the hope of creating greater clarity. For example, in Workshop 4 (Framework), while we were examining the Framework in its entirety, I asked questions about the clarity and distinction between the issues. I then asked if there were any issues missing, as described in following exchange:

Terry: And what about - this is the hardest question so I'll say it and I don't expect an answer but you can percolate on it and then answer it - Is anything missing?
And that's hard because what does it mean? I've specifically used “issues” of participation, because it is so fuzzy. Like what's an issue?

Steven: Maybe for me what might be missing, and maybe it's a flavour of effectiveness, is how successful was the product that we were creating and how was that process [effective] in leading towards a successful outcome of the product.

Terry: Yup. And I think you are right that I've thought of it as part of effectiveness. And I don't love that question because it's not how we usually think
about effectiveness. "What will be the effect of participation?" isn't quite the right question.

Steven: Um hmm. Right.

For Workshop 4 (Framework), I changed the question slightly but, as I say in the exchange above, the question isn’t quite right. Nonetheless, we shared a reasonably similar understanding of what “effectiveness” could mean, as part of the Framework. It is the issue most closely associated with the HCD goal of using a better process to create a better product.

As mentioned, there was a lot of emphasis early in ARP on getting the team working well together - which was intensified because the individuals on the design team were from different organizations and had not worked together previously. Once the design phase was underway, I convened Workshop 1 (Vision) in which we addressed the question “How do we envision an ideal participation process for the Your Account Project?” Below are the cluster names produced by the co-researchers during this workshop, most of which are about how they could work together more effectively. For the complete results chart from Workshop 1 (Vision), please see Appendix D.

- “Accountability”
- “Base Camp” [also referred to as “project headquarters”]
- “Love & Respect thy Team”
- “Customer Centred”
- “Respect”
- “Practical Vision”
- “Communal Tools”
- “Well-defined Governance”
- “Transparent Communication”
- “Context Awareness”
• “Iterative & Flexible Process”

• “A Window In”

Focused on getting the representatives of the three organizations working well together, the clusters of sticky notes expressed a desire for clarity of goals, process, and roles; effective communication channels; and camaraderie and respect amongst the team members. One cluster entitled “Base Camp” captured a number of ideas about co-locating and creating a “headquarters”. There was a strong belief that this would help coalesce the UX design team. Shortly after Workshop 1 (Vision), the UX design team started to co-locate at the library on designated days each week, working very closely together to iterate the design.

During Workshop 4 (Framework), the co-researchers were reminded of their ambition to co-locate when we talked about the issue of the ‘context’ of participation.

Steven: If we were to bring the ideal word back into this, there was an expression of a desire for a real designated, intense, shared team space. That didn’t quite come to full fruition.

Linn: Maybe not full fruition but actually I think we got really pretty close.

Terry: I think you got there a number of times. It just wasn’t as sustained maybe.

Dara: There was a good, sort of, 6 weeks.

Linn: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Dara: Leading up to the first couple of rounds of testing. A lot of intense, highly good … that was good

Linn: Yeah. It was really good.

The formation of a multi-disciplinary team, in this case from multiple organizations, along with a rapid, iterative design process, meant that the team realized two of the HCD principles. In fact, when we talked about the issue of ‘transformations’ later in Workshop 4 (Framework), it seems some of the co-researchers got closer to the ideals of participation than they had in previous projects, as discussed in the following exchange.
Dara: I think I know more about how it could be in terms of the collaborative design process. But full execution of the project - there’s just so many layers to that. But just the way that we worked together in those 6 weeks I thought was something I hadn’t experienced.

Steven: If change includes professional growth, I would say I was changed by the process.

Linn: Yeah. I totally was.

For the most part, their ideal vision of a “participation process” was about the participation of the design team in the design process. However, the sticky notes in the cluster named “Customer Centred”, indicated that they intended to involve library members through a fairly typical HCD approach:

• "Regular User Input
  - testing
  - workshops
  - blog"

• “Regular usability test & iterations”

• “Clear understanding of user need & wishes”

• “User focused”

Many months later, when the design phase had been finished for several months, I gathered the co-researchers for Workshop 3 (Obstacles). I posted the chart from Workshop 1 (Vision) so we could reference it and then posed the question “What blocked us from realizing our ideal vision of participation on the Account Redesign Project?” Looking at the clusters of sticky notes (see Appendix G for full results chart), the cluster names from this workshop indicate that effectiveness within the design team continued to be a concern:

• “Unclear process impedes expected progress”
• “Decentralized team prevents participation”

Additionally, they identified some organizational challenges within TPL.

• “Diffuse leadership blurs vision”
• “Pause in project sponsorship prevents overcoming organizational issues”
• “Professional insecurities lead to inappropriate priority shifts”
• “Defensiveness prevents examining new approaches”

Much of the concern expressed by the co-researchers at Workshop 3 (Obstacles) came from their frustration about the lack of progress during the development phase. In discussion at the workshop, the co-researchers attributed the slow-down to a lack of “organizational buy-in” manifested in two ways: a) lack of buy-in by IT meant they did not prioritize development for this project and b) after the departure of the original project sponsor, the role remained unfilled for many months. This meant there was no one to champion the project at the senior management level and, consequently, no one to pressure IT to move forward on the development. The frustration was exacerbated by the knowledge that the project scope had already been constrained and, therefore, would not include several features long-desired by library members. For the co-researchers, this meant that the new interface would be late as well as lacking.

5.1.3 Have a lasting impact (Transformations)

In addition to creating a better product, the co-researchers on ARP wanted to have a lasting impact on TPL by demonstrating to their colleagues the value of openness and transparency with library members by engaging them differently than is typical at TPL. These ideals – openness and transparency – are more closely associated with PD than HCD, specifically the issue of Transformations in the Framework. In Workshop 1 (Vision), the co-researchers produced several sticky notes about the openness and transparency the design team wanted to have through ARP.

• “Open & transparent to the public”
• “Open beta”
The team wanted to be open and transparent to library members but also to TPL stakeholders – so stakeholders could be informed about the progress of the project but could also learn about a more open way to engage library members. At several points during ARP, the co-researchers expressed their feelings that E-Services is an anomaly within TPL because they solicit input from TPL members more frequently and regularly – primarily through their blog and usability testing sessions. In Workshop 2 (Participants), in response to my question “What are you most proud of achieving as part of the Your Account project?”, the TPL user experience specialist said:

Sandra: During testing, a user [library member] was really grateful that we were testing and said that we were really different, more open, than other parts of the library.

In Workshop 3 (Obstacles), two sticky notes referred to the estrangement from the rest of TPL sometimes felt by the E-Services staff (a.k.a. “digital”):

- “Not a shared vision of participation within the organization”
- “Cultural differences: digital/non-digital”
During Workshop 4 (Framework), most responses to my question “why use participation?” were about a better process for a better product but two responses alluded to the design team’s desire to provide a model of openness:

- Brings people along
- To challenge internal preconceptions

“Brings people along” resonated particularly strongly with the co-researchers.

Steven: One of the points up here that’s really interesting from the ‘who’ perspective is “Brings people along”. Yes we want to bring the community of library users or members along and keep them informed of what the process is and what to expect. But we want to bring people internally along by setting an example for a process, we want to bring governance along so that they are informed, and people in the outside communities, politically. In the context of the public library, we want city hall to see that money is being well spent and we want the community to feel like there are good things that are happening for good reasons - it’s not just happening in the dark. Bring people along has many different flavours.

Terry: Who wrote that one?

Steven: Dara did I think.

Dara: That’s what I meant. I meant it in every way. People hate being side-swiped by change, in every way. That’s a challenge. It’s hard to bring people along in every way. It is really challenging. Certain audiences it is okay but others …

Steven: It’s a lot of work to accomplish that.

In addition to referring to the goals of openness and transparency that surfaced during Workshop 1 (Vision), “brings people along” provides context for one of the successes felt by the Manager of E-Services when I asked during Workshop 2 (Participants) “What are you most proud of achieving as part of the Your Account project?”
Dara: The meeting at the Circulation Policy committee last week. It went really well and they were really supportive of what we’ve done.

While the Manager of E-Services was happy with the design work and pleased to present it, this comment is also about the success of her efforts to “bring along” the Circulation Policy Committee.

On the flip side, when the project lost its executive sponsor, efforts to “bring along” the IT department broke down, causing a halt to the development effort for several months.

Dara: I do think a number of things happened last year that can’t be understated. The City Librarian checked-out and my boss checked out.

Steven: Right. So organizational change?

Dara: There was just major senior organizational change. Not to say that … I don’t know if it would have helped but those are big changes and they take a long time for you to get pointed back in the right direction.

Steven: Right.

Dara: Jane [City Librarian] announced her retirement in June and was gone in the beginning of the year. So you know - you really didn’t have her effectively.

In a large organization like this public library, there are a lot of people “to bring along”, through formal means such as reports and presentations to executives and committees as well as informal means such as blog posts for library staff and members.

The need to ‘bring people along’, which is more at the ‘giving information’ side of the Public Involvement Continuum (Figure 10), was a high priority so people wouldn’t be “side-swiped by change”. This meant that engaging library members at the ‘collaborating’ side of the continuum was a much lower priority.

In Workshop 4 (Framework), when we discussed the issue of ‘transformations’, we struggled at the beginning to consider who could be changed and how. Most of our focus was on the transformation of the design team and TPL colleagues.
Terry: Was that one of the goals we identified, do you think, upfront? Any level of transformation on any level … as individuals, as organizations?

Linn: I think as much as design is itself, right? You’re trying to change something. In this case, at a fundamental level, we are redesigning something for a new technical platform. It’s a clear transformation we’re aiming for.

Terry: So there’s a transformation of the thing that we’re designing.

Steven: Um hmm

Linn: Um hmm

Terry: And people would say that by inserting this into the world you are making a change to the world as well, right?

PAUSE

Terry: What about by using a more collaborative or participatory approach? Because any design, as you said, you are in essence making a transformation. But is it different when you use a participatory approach to design? Maybe there are more layers?

Steven: Well, if part of the participatory process is the transparency of that process then it transforms perception. It transforms perception of how things are done and why.

Whenever we discussed the goals and intended outcomes of participation on ARP, the desire to ‘transform perception’ within TPL was raised by the co-researchers. Those from TPL, in particular, expressed that they felt a gap between themselves (the E-Service team) and the rest of their TPL colleagues, particularly regarding involvement of library members. On many occasions, I was told anecdotes about decisions that would directly affect library members being made within TPL without any consultation or validation with library members. So, by comparison with their TPL colleagues, the senior members of the E-Services group, Dara and Sandra, see themselves as champions for library members.
The digital designers on ARP believed that traditional HCD activities, such as usability testing, would improve the digital product, which would have benefits for them, for TPL and for library members. However, when the digital designers went a step beyond traditional HCD to demonstrate greater openness and transparency with library members, they became the public face of a project that was not fully within their control. This became a professional risk for the digital designers from TPL, who felt compromised when the project was greatly delayed.

During Workshop 4 (Framework), to open our discussion of the issue of ‘transformations’ I asked “Who has or may be changed by being involved directly or indirectly in the Account Redesign Project?” The first response was a painful revelation:

Terry: [READING ALOUD FROM A STICKY NOTE]

- “E-Services – made a ‘laughing stock’ (lost credibility) due to failure to deliver project after openly communicating about it”

Terry: In any particular circle?

Dara: All

Sandra: We were told this directly by a Director a couple of weeks ago so …

Terry: I’m sure that wasn’t easy. So, inside the organization? Was there a loss of credibility inside?

Sandra: Yeah.

Terry: And what about outside?

Sandra: That was my next one.

Terry: Ah. [READING ALOUD]

- “Customers & internal stakeholders – lost trust, became cynical”

It was difficult for the TPL participants to recount the experience and to verbalize it. And it was difficult for the co-researchers from Usability Matters to hear of this, since they knew
‘transforming perception’ was one of their goals for the project, as captured in the following sticky note:

- TPL (big) stakeholders - seeing a process - may change approaches/opinions

To have their goal backfire so dramatically by having their colleagues consider ARP an example of why openness and transparency is professionally risky was deeply disappointing to everyone.

This experience demonstrates a common gap between the ideals of an organization, represented here by the values stated in TPL’s Strategic Plan (Figure 9), including participation, openness and transparency, which are aspirational, and the lived experience of staff members being guided by those values in their work. It isn’t a leap to imagine that being criticized by someone at the Director-level for openly communicating with library members on ARP could have a dampening effect on similar future efforts by these staff members and, perhaps, some of their colleagues.

5.1.4 Differing ideals regarding goals

While the goals of a project are often discussed in a digital design project, in my experience the “goals” of participation (particularly of involving end-users) are rarely considered. During Workshop 4 (Framework) when I asked “why use participation?”, one of my co-researchers wrote in a sticky note about ARP, “I don’t know. I’m not sure what we hoped to achieve. The problem was maybe that we didn’t explore the ‘why’ up front”. However, in the ARP, we talked about participation earlier, more often, and more openly than I’ve experienced with this group of people (or any other design team) on similar projects.

During Workshop 1 (Vision), we addressed the question “How do we envision the ideal participation process for the Your Account Project?” I posted our results chart from this workshop during Workshop 3 (Obstacles), which addressed the question “What blocked us from realizing our ideal vision of participation on the Account Redesign Project?” Some of the sticky notes generated by the co-researchers were:

- “Ideal participation not a goal”
- “Didn’t have an ideal vision of participation”
These sticky notes reveal resistance to the idea that we had an ideal vision of participation, despite the fact that our vision was displayed on the wall. I think this indicates that the vision was not shared by everyone and may have felt like a hypothetical exercise for some of the co-researchers. Nonetheless, the ARP team had a vision of participation – the participation of themselves, of their TPL colleagues, and of library members – all of which aligned with the ideals and principles of HCD. Throughout the design process, they solicited approval from their TPL colleagues, and input from library members, when they felt it was appropriate. And, they used the input they received to refine their vision and iterate the design. Library members were sources of information.

Additionally, the design team wanted to demonstrate the value of openness and transparency to their TPL colleagues, which reaches beyond the traditional HCD goal of improving the product. The efforts of the design team were intended to “bring people along” so they wouldn’t feel “sidestep by change”, which can be seen as a step along the path to mutual learning and equalizing power relations, principles of PD. However, these efforts could also be construed as attempts to deflect criticism of their process and outcome (legitimation) and/or to look progressive while supporting the status quo (collusion). This is akin to engaging in participation to create “buy-in”.

By contrast, a PD approach would advocate for library members as co-designers, engaging them in two-way information sharing, i.e. mutual learning. In PD, a measure of effectiveness might be how well the designers helped non-designers participate in design activities, contribute to decision-making, and, by extension, increase their ability to contribute to envisioning their future.

5.2 Who can participate?

In the Framework, the issue of representation addresses the question “Who will participate?” Aspects of representation were raised during all four workshops. During Workshop 1 (Vision), four groups of people were identified in the sticky notes – the design team, TPL stakeholders, library members and the general public – and these groupings carried through the other workshops. In Workshop 2 (Participants), I asked the co-researchers “Who are the participants in the Account Redesign project”. Each person wrote a few sticky notes and started posting them, which prompted others to write additional notes. I then asked “Who are the designers?” One of
the co-researchers immediately started to group the sticky notes, with input from the others, which resulted in Figure 22.

Figure 22. Diagram of ARP participants produced during Workshop 2 (Participants)

Recognizing that there are many kinds of design activities, the group put user experience (UX) design in the centre since it is the first design effort and shapes the subsequent technical and IT designs. This was also the first time that the co-researchers made the distinction between the UX design team and those considered part of “extended design”, a concept and phrase that reappeared in later workshops. Much as the design team is differentiated here, TPL stakeholders are split into two sub-groups: Business and Management. The third grouping, Library Members, focused entirely on their role within the established design process and not at all on their
representativeness of library members. The main criteria for “test participants”, for example, was whether they were active users of the library account functionality and willing to participate in a usability test session. Other demographic and behavioural dimensions of representativeness were, for the most part, not considered.

5.2.1 Inviting users to have a voice (Representation)

In my many and varied experiences with TPL staff, they have exhibited a deeply held conviction that library users, and non-users, are the key stakeholders in their daily and long-term efforts. And, as I mentioned previously, the senior members of E-Services are often champions for the inclusion of library members in the development of programs, services, and tools. Having practiced elements of user-centred design since 1999 (Scardellato, 2001), E-Services had invited library members to have a voice in the design of digital user interfaces – as sources of information and ideas through formal and informal feedback as well as through usability testing.

In Workshop 1 (Vision), several participants wrote sticky notes envisioning the role that library members (a.k.a. “users”) would play in the design process, as follows:

- “Clear understanding of user needs & wishes”
- “Accessible & visible work space – library members can see work”
- “Regular User Input
  - testing
  - workshops
  - blog”
- “Regular usability test & iterations”
- “Effective use of participant’s time”

Briefly during Workshop 1 (Vision), we discussed whether the design team would involve library members more deeply in the design process, perhaps inviting one or two to be ongoing members of the design team. While there was some interest in the idea, as far as I know this was not discussed further.
By the time of Workshop 2 (Participants), some of these visions of user participation from Workshop 1 (Vision) had been fulfilled and “library members” were added to the diagram of participants (Figure 22) as “Blog commenters”, “Test participants” and “Web metrics”. Later in the workshop I asked about involvement of library members.

Terry: Are there any personal or organizational barriers to including library members in design?

Dara: Yes. The organization is just not ready.

Terry: What about the idea of not starting at the top but, rather, doing it in a little pocket over here? Bottom up rather than top down.

Dara: No – I’m sick of bottom up.

Terry: There needs to be will in the organization – at all levels, right?

Dara: Yes, I guess so.

In this exchange, Dara expresses the distance the E-Services staff felt between themselves and the larger TPL organization, as I discussed earlier in this chapter. The E-Services staff wanted to demonstrate the value of consulting library members but, at the same time, were sometimes disheartened by their role as champions for a human-centred approach to program design.

This exchange led to a discussion about why the design team hadn’t involved library members more deeply in the design process, as had been briefly discussed by some design team members early in the project. And, although the design team had the power to decide how library members would be involved, without a clear understanding of the benefits of greater participation by library members, it may have seemed less risky to engage library members in more familiar ways.

Nonetheless, there was a strong feeling amongst the co-researchers that users’ needs and perspectives were well represented throughout ARP, as evidenced in the following exchange during Workshop 4 (Framework):
Steven: I think Sandra and Dara were excellent proxy voices where there weren’t actual library members at the table.

Linn: Yeah - it is insane what a fountain of knowledge there is … amazing.

Steven: More than subject matter expertise, it was actually representing people and their needs.

Linn: Yeah.

Terry: And also, though, understanding the needs and values inside the TPL so proxy from that standpoint as well.

Linn: Uh-huh.

Steven: Uh-huh.

By the time of Workshop 4 (Framework), the design phase was finished and development was expected to start within a couple of months. When we talked at that workshop about representation, I presented the diagram from Workshop 2 (Participants) and described it as an artifact of that time in the project that could be continually updated. So, rather than focusing on “who participates?”, I focused the conversation about representation on the question “What are the ideals of representation?”. This question encouraged a broad, explicit reflection by the group on representation and the notion of ideals. Below are the ideals of representation raised by the co-researchers, in chronological order to show some of their conceptual connections:

- “democratic – egalitarian”
- “diverse - different types of people/perspectives are represented”
- “freed of political imbalance”
- “proxy voices”
- “transparent – understood process”
- “accessible”
When I asked “how do these ideals relate to the Account Redesign project?”, the participants identified “diverse” and “proxy voices” as the most relevant.

The types of diversities identified in Workshop 4 (Frameworks) echoed what we had discussed in Workshop 1 (Vision), i.e. organization, skills and role.

Linn: I think diverse is an easy one to start with. We had representation from various vendor groups, stakeholder groups, users. Maybe we didn’t achieve the perfect or exact right diversity but there was a diversity of role and you know all those sorts of things, at the table.

And, while demographic diversities such as gender and race were mentioned in Workshop 1 (Vision), this was only in relation to the design team – and the design team was envisioned to include just members from the three organizations. The many other types of diversity that could be considered were not discussed.

For representation from the public, in general the distinction between library users and non-users is the most common consideration. However, since ARP was a redesign of the interface used by members to manage their TPL account, in general, active members were sought to participate in usability test sessions. To test a particular feature, sometimes members who matched a defined use-profile were selected, since they would be more representative of people likely to use that feature. In addition, people who use assistive technologies or accommodations were engaged at particular points in the design process to ensure the website met our goals for accessibility.

As mentioned, the second ideal that the co-researchers identified as relevant to ARP was proxy voices. Picking up on the earlier discussion of how the library staff were “excellent proxy voices” for library members, the discussion continued:

Terry: How do you think these things [ideals] affected the project? We mentioned that the proxy voices meant that we had insight.

Steven: Yup. We had expertise and empathy at the table.
Linn: Yeah. Having access to the built-up knowledge that you were mentioning both of user needs and wishes and the organization’s.

Steven: Often in the business context, a subject matter expert is an expert in the business and has no insight into the people.

Linn: Yeah.

In HCD end-users are typically involved in generating user requirements and evaluating designs. As indicated above, in the ARP the TPL design team members felt they knew the requirements well, based on their recollection of library member comments and feature requests over several years prior to starting the project. In addition, they knew that the main purpose of the ARP was to migrate the current functionality to the new technical platform so getting members and the design team excited about new features that wouldn’t be included in the first phase seemed counter-productive, as discussed in this exchange during Workshop 4 (Framework).

Terry: Would there have been any value to getting library members involved in generative activities, at the start of design, before we had something to evaluate?

Dara: I’m going to say in this case, only because of the context - no - because we wouldn’t have been able to meet their needs. They would have said we want this, we want borrowing history. But we aren’t really working on that. We are just trying to migrate to a new platform [Steven interjects with “yeah”] and do everything we are doing. And anything that’s in the reach of that, that is capable of being slightly better, we’ll do that too. This wasn’t a project about making the perfect online account for customers. This was a project about shifting a technical platform and making the global experience work. In that context, if you’d gone out to people … We’ve done that and it is a bit of a lunch-bag letdown. They tell you all their great ideas, and they are great and you want to do every one of them, but we wouldn’t have been able to do them.

However, from the beginning the design team planned to involve library members in multiple rounds of usability evaluation of the new design – and that happened during the Design phase
Beyond diversity and proxy voices, the co-researchers did not consider the other ideals of representation identified at Workshop 4 (Framework) as relevant to ARP. Nonetheless, I think these ideals demonstrate a solid understanding of key aspects of representation including “democratic/egalitarian”, “diverse”, “transparent”, and “access”. The inclusion of “freed of political imbalance” and “free of judgement” reveals a more nuanced understanding of representation amongst this group. In addition, their articulation of diverse as “different types of people/perspectives” rather than focusing on demographic quotas, was extremely astute. Interestingly, it seems they judged their own efforts at getting divergent voices at the table as successful albeit in a rather narrow way. During the wrap-up of this section of the workshop, I asked if anyone would do anything differently regarding representation in the future. There was no response from those in attendance so we moved on.

5.2.2 Enabling users to have a say (Power relations)

In the Framework, the issue of power relations is closely related to representation but distinct. Representation is about who will participate (and who has the power to choose who will participate), whereas power relations is about the relationships of the participants and their ability to impact the process and outcomes. In the Framework, I’ve characterized this with the question “Who can participate freely?”

On ARP, discussions of power relations focused mainly on the relations amongst the design team and within the TPL organization. Some of the power relations were structural, such as the client-vendor relationship between TPL and Usability Matters, and between TPL and Normative. Another structural power relation was the rank that each person held within their own organization, which influenced their rank within the project. The core design team answered to the extended design team, which included senior colleagues from all three organizations. However, the person with ultimate decision-making power was the Manager of E-Services, who was responsible for assembling the design team, hiring the vendor organizations, and assigning members of her staff to the project. Other power relations were based on factors outside the structures, such as ability to influence the key decision-maker. Both types of power affected the process and outcomes.
Workshop 4 (Framework) was our first explicit discussion of power relations so I asked the co-researchers to define it and two participants spoke up:

Steven: In any group you have some people’s voices that are louder and tend to be more heard. You also have some voices that – you go in saying all voices are equal but some voices are more equal than others.

Linn: Power relations is also the relative power people have to each other.

We then discussed “What are the ideal power relations?” I purposely posed this question to create a more comfortable atmosphere to discuss power relations somewhat abstractly, knowing that power relations within ARP would surface during the discussion. I took notes on the flipchart during our discussion (Figure 23).

Figure 23. Flipchart image for Power Relations during Workshop 4 (Framework)
Some of the responses were about power relations amongst TPL staff and the design team, for example “Sr. people push down to other levels”, “Exec. Champion”, and “Clear-clarity – who decides”. However, the focus of our discussion became the relationship between library staff and library members as represented by two related responses “Put aside delivery to listen to the message” and “Listening – not be clouded by voice/tone”, which started with this exchange:

Dara: Just thinking about participatory design … we have some squeaky wheels at the library and I’m sure you could think of a name if you really put your mind to it.

Steven: Um hmm

Dara: And when I first arrived at the library, I was forewarned of said squeaky wheel.

Linn: Um hmm

Dara: And squeaky wheel touched many aspects of the library and he was generally dismissed outright in every instance and every case … just because of his squeakiness.

[laugher]

Terry: All they could hear was the squeak.

Dara: All they could hear was the squeak … exactly. And I would say 60 - 80% of the time, he had a point and it was valid and it should have been listened to. And I think that sort of notion of putting aside the delivery and listening to the message is a challenge in this type of a situation because the delivery can often take many shapes and forms and be unpleasant or unpalatable or unfriendly or you know. I think delivery overwhelms decision-making more than it should.

What’s particularly interesting in this exchange is that it is not about whether the “squeaky wheel” is saying things that TPL staff don’t want to hear, but, rather that they may have trouble separating the message from the delivery. Since the E-Services team has more experience than
most of their colleagues when it comes to consulting library members, they have honed their listening skills:

Dara: In the case of facilitating participation, you have to have that sort of like … you’re listening … better listening … you really do have to listen and not be clouded by a situation, people, a voice, a tone, you really have to let go.

Steven: That’s a real skill

Dara: Yeah, and I don’t think a lot of people have it.

The blog posts generally, and particularly during ARP, provide further evidence of the skill of the E-Services team when it comes to engaging library members. The E-Services team responds graciously and meaningfully to all comments, regardless of the message, the delivery, or the messenger.

After some further discussion of separating the message from the delivery, one of the co-researchers from Usability Matters circled back to the subject of power relations:

Linn: So that reminds and connects to “having a say, having a voice”, right? Is the ideal power relation where people’s voices are acknowledged even if they don’t have a say?

Dara: Sure. Part of what they say - some of it is just having a say and some of it is having a voice.

Linn: Right

Dara: Because they are raising an important point and maybe there is other stuff where you are like “ok” [meaning you do not agree with their point].

In this exchange, Linn brings up “having a say, having a voice” because I introduced this phrase from Bratteteig et al. (2012) in the paper I provided as optional preparation for Workshop 4 (Framework) (Costantino, 2014). The phrase resonated with Linn and she used it a few times in the workshop. It quickly became an easy-to-understand conceptual distinction used by the co-researchers in the workshop.
Linn uses this phrase to inquire from the group whether acknowledgement of voices is an important part of their ideal of power relations. And, while Dara agrees that both having a voice and having a say constitute ideal power relations, this is made somewhat ambiguous by her last phrase “where you are like ‘ok’”, meaning that some comments may be dismissed if they don’t resonate with the design team, which is common practice within HCD.

In general, the co-researchers were not familiar with PD practices or principles and we did not have an explicit discussion of democratic ideals until Workshop 4 (Framework). When I mentioned that some organizations have rearranged their structure to have their constituents drive decision-making, a concern about undue influence arose immediately:

Dara: The ILS [integrated library system] software vendors are an interesting example of over-influence possibly from libraries. You end up with these bloated, big software applications that deliver so many different features and functions - some of them quite similar; none of them really awesome. I think that’s an interesting [issue]. A small library will have some unique need and that will drive [development of a new feature].

This comment encompasses many concerns about participation, some regarding democratic decision-making and others more specifically about design. Concerns about “over-influence”, over-representation (of small libraries and their needs), and more generally about the challenges of large-scale decision-making are well known in the literature on democratic decision-making (Mansbridge, 2003). Dara’s comment reflects her experience of a process considered ‘participatory’ that she feels had an adverse affect on the resulting software, diminishing its overall quality, effectiveness, and relevance. These types of negative experiences of ‘participation’ are common and often shared amongst designers, without discussing the possibility that a better process could have a better, more participatory, result.

5.2.3 Differing ideals regarding participants

In *Disentangling Participation* (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014), Bratteteig and Wagner explore power, decision-making and participation in the context of Participatory Design. Underpinning the book is a useful distinction borrowed from Pitkin (1973):
‘Power over’, getting another person to do something, very much depends on organizational resources: position (e.g. being the project leader), access to resources but also the capacity to resolve ambiguity, to set the agenda or to enrol. ‘Power to’ means agency: the capacity to shape action, which partly depends on access to organizational resources, partly on ‘power/knowledge’ in the Foucauldian sense: the power of defining issues, that means of ‘normalizing’ them so that they can be recognized and resolved; of translating them into a language that makes them amenable to particular interventions (at the expense of others).

As the key representative of TPL, Dara had ‘power over’ the ARP design team based on her position and access to organizational resources. The design team had the ‘power to’ influence the design. Using the definitions and characterizations of power above, library members had neither ‘power over’ nor ‘power to’ on ARP. While feedback was solicited and received from library members, they had no say in how their input influenced the design. In Bratteteig et. al’s parlance, they had a voice, but not a say (2012).

However, most of the co-researchers were proud that library members had a voice, seeing the alternative as not having a voice. But, when we discussed ‘having a say’ as an alternative, they did not embrace this idea and used well-known rationalizations for not involving library members more deeply in ARP, saying that they already knew what members want and didn’t want to raise expectations that could not be met in the first release.

The co-researchers defended the right of library members to be heard and felt that they were providing an example for others within TPL to follow, in terms of engaging library members. However, they also defended the right of the design team to interpret and select amongst the feedback they received. In the case of the blog comments, sometimes the E-Services staff responded directly, providing rationale for considering or not considering certain feedback. In their responses, they were very careful not to appear defensive, presenting the constraints in ways that would cause the least amount of embarrassment to themselves and their TPL colleagues.

At least one co-researcher expressed the desire to shield library members from project constraints, particularly technical and policy issues. These are areas where E-Services staff can
exert influence but have no direct decision-making power. They often don’t agree with or understand decisions made in these areas and they don’t want to be put in the position of rationalizing these decisions to library members. It is perhaps not surprising then that they don’t trust library members to understand the constraints and can’t imagine how library members might help mitigate some of those constraints.

However, from a PD perspective, engaging in a more authentic form of participation to align the interests of the E-Services staff and the library members would be a powerful way to question constraints, adjust priorities and, ultimately influence decisions regarding policies and allocation of resources at the TPL.

5.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I analysed data generated from the research activities and demonstrated that the co-researchers on ARP had ideals related to issues of participation, particularly the issues of goals and power relations, that align with HCD as it is commonly practiced. In my discussion I highlighted how the ideals of participation on ARP differed from those associated with PD.

In response to the question “why use participation?”, I contrasted HCD’s goal of creating a better product with PD’s goal of furthering an emancipatory agenda that helps people have a greater say in their future. I linked the co-researchers’ focus on a “better process for a better product” to the issue of effectiveness from my Issues of Participation Framework (IPF). Regarding the issue of transformations, I discussed how the co-researchers tried to demonstrate the value of openness and transparency for their TPL colleagues – to transform the organization. I noted that the issue of transformation of library members was not considered, as it would be in a PD endeavour.

I showed that two issues from the IPF, representation and power relations, are related to the question “who can participate?” Using Bratteteig et al.’s distinction, I linked “having a voice” to having library members provide input during the ARP design process, as well as being represented by the “proxy voices” of the E-Service staff. Being represented in the design process, and only marginally present, is characteristic of HCD. I then linked “having a say” to the issue of power relations and specifically to a PD approach. I discussed how, despite being champions for the inclusion of library members in program design, the co-researchers were reluctant to move from helping library members “have a voice” to helping them “have a say”.

Throughout this chapter, I’ve clarified tensions between HCD and PD when it comes to ideals related to key issues of participation in the IPF, specifically goals, effectiveness, transformations, representation and power relations (RQ 3). By doing this, I have brought to light some of the reasons why the HCD practitioners on ARP did not adopt a PD approach (RQ 4). To summarize these reasons, the co-researchers were satisfied with HCD and didn’t feel compelled to involve library members more substantively. Aware only of HCD as the alternative to approaches that are more technology-centred, they aspired to HCD and felt they rarely get to practice it fully. The E-Service staff members felt that their TPL colleagues did not always support their openness with library members and they were disheartened by their role as champions for HCD. They were wary of involving library members more deeply because they felt the “organization is not ready” and also have personal concerns based on past experiences, making them fear “design by committee”, disappointing users, and being placed in the uncomfortable and untenable position of being an apologist for TPL policies and constraints. Without an awareness of PD principles, they didn’t consider the possibility of altering the power relations by having E-Services staff align with library members to question and influence TPL priorities.

My research suggests the involvement of users may be considered “participation” in a typical HCD approach but is not authentic in ways that are central for participatory practices such as PD. In the next chapter, I discuss how looking at ideals associated with issues of participation, as delineated in the IPF, can help foster better understanding of the distinctions between HCD and PD, and what constitutes authentic participation.
Chapter 6

6  Reclaiming participation

In this thesis, I have provided a rare glimpse into the tensions experienced by designers regarding participation of users in the design process. I began with a very broad research aim to explore participation – both on my own and in fieldwork with co-researchers who are digital designers.

Like others in PD, I had concerns about weak forms of user involvement being considered ‘participation’. In my research we demonstrated that some people – specifically the digital designers on ARP – who follow a traditional HCD approach consider their own involvement in design, as well as any involvement of their colleagues and their users, to be ‘participation’ – regardless of whether power is shared with users. This research reconfirms that there is vital work to be done in order to reclaim a more authentic meaning of ‘participation’ within HCI and raise awareness of the ideals of PD that distinguish it from HCD.

In this exploratory study, I developed four research questions to help better understand participation in digital design projects, particularly within ARP. To address these questions I examined the literature to outline tensions between HCD and PD and to develop the Issues of Participation Framework (IPF). I then proposed the IPF as a way to focus on ideals of participation and their importance in driving our thinking and behaviour. By discussing ideals of participation using the IPF, the digital designers who were the co-researchers in this research started to make connections between their espoused ideals and their exercise of those ideals on ARP. By raising awareness of and engagement with PD ideals and principles at a time when “design thinking” is being adopted by businesses and organizations, I contend that we have an exceptional opportunity to attract like-minded designers and other people to further the democratic ideals of PD, which starts with reclaiming the authentic meaning of participation.
6.1 Key findings

In this section I discuss the key findings related to each of the four research questions.

6.1.1 Differences in purpose and degrees of participation

In Chapter 2 I addressed RQ 1: “What, if any, are the significant tensions between HCD and PD, especially related to participation?” Drawing on core texts, I demonstrated that the tensions between HCD and PD emanate from their differences in ideals and principles based on their distinctive historical roots and trajectories.

While this is not a new claim, I went further by outlining the differences between HCD and PD more systematically than previously published. Currently, PD is largely a scholarly pursuit while HCD has a strong following of practitioners. This leads to a tension regarding the reasons to engage people in the design process, with PD focused on research and democracy and HCD focused on product improvement. And, finally, the degrees of participation are different, with PD eager to collaborate with people as co-designers and HCD involving people as sources of information and validation.

While some scholars have considered PD part of a family of human-centred design approaches (Abras et al., 2004), I argued that distinguishing PD from the more dominant practice of HCD emphasizes PD’s commitment to democratic goals and authentic participation.

6.1.2 Issues of Participation Framework enriches reflection on participation

Differences in purpose and degree of participation are often expressed through models such as Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation (1969) and the Public Involvement Continuum from the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit (Working Together Project, 2008). However, to examine participation more closely, I developed RQ 2: “What are the key issues of participation, within PD and related participatory practices?” To respond to this question, in Chapter 3 I investigated a range of issues across various fields that all share a commitment to participation, including Participatory Development, Participatory Democracy, Participatory Education, Participatory Management and Participatory Action Research. By identifying issues that recurred across these fields, I developed my Issues of Participation Framework (IPF) with seven issues: goals, representation, power relations, context, effectiveness, transformations, and sustainability. These
issues are distinct but highly related. Taken together, they form a comprehensive structure for investigating participation.

In addition to providing a series of lenses through which to closely examine participation, in Chapter 3 I highlighted some of the strategies used within PD and other participatory practices to reflect on each issue. For example, drawing from Participatory Development, the issue of power relations can be looked at from both a structuralist and post-structuralist viewpoint. Based on Participatory Education, we can analyze inauthentic forms of participation with goals of legitimation, control, collusion, and distraction. Using the IPF, and looking within and beyond PD, we are better able to unpack the rich, faceted concept of participation in order to enrich our research but also to guide our practice.

Although I did not design my fieldwork as a means to test the IPF, I did take the opportunity to see whether the terminology is clear and the issues are distinct and comprehensive, in addition to investigating whether the IPF helped foster a productive discussion. As I discussed in Chapter 5, I led a brief discussion about the IPF in its entirety at the start of Workshop 4 (Framework). In particular, the co-researchers raised questions about my intended meaning for the terms “context” and “effectiveness’, which confirmed to me my own concern that these two words are not clear enough. However, their interpretations of these two words matched my intentions so the issues seem clear, but not the word chosen to represent the issue.

I also enquired whether the seven issues seemed distinct from one another and whether anything seemed missing. On both points the co-researchers agreed that it was a “great, clear structure”. To further investigate this, during my analysis I looked for data that was difficult for me to associate with an issue in the Framework – and did not find any. I did this to see whether the Framework is reasonably comprehensive as it is my intention that it be encompassing enough to help surface most issues relevant to participatory practices generally, and PD specifically. This preliminary research suggests that the IPF is comprehensive and the issues are distinct, but the terms “context” and “effectiveness” lack clarity. However, more rigorous testing across multiple projects would be needed in order to validate and refine the IPF.
6.1.3 Relating ideals to issues of participation supports mutual learning

Early in my fieldwork I began exploring the concept of participation with a group of co-
researchers within a digital design project. Through our discussions, I became aware of
differences in our ideals of participation, which led me to formulate RQ3 and RQ4: “How do
ideals related to the issues of participation help clarify tensions between HCD and PD, especially
within the ARP?” and “Why did the HCD practitioners on ARP not adopt a PD approach?”

Before responding to these questions, in Chapter 4 I introduced my fieldwork and the Account
Redesign Project (ARP), focusing on the ways the digital designers chose to involve library
members in the design activities. In their role as co-researchers, the digital designers reflected on
the design activities through a series of research activities that I initiated, including an online
forum, in-person workshops and reviewing conference papers. I provided details of the workshop
approaches I employed – the consensus workshop and focused conversation – because they may
be of interest to other researchers due to their ability to encourage rich discussions, while making
efficient use of participants’ time.

In Chapter 5, I analyzed the forum posts, workshop results and conference papers, focusing on
differences in ideals related to the five of the seven issues of participation in the IPF that were
most evident in my fieldwork, i.e. goals, effectiveness, transformations, representation, and
power relations.

6.1.3.1 Goals, effectiveness and transformations

In devising the IPF I used the term “Goals” in the sense of the motivation for adopting
participation while I used “Effectiveness” and “Transformations” in the sense of planned
outcomes of participation. While these three issues are highly related, they are also distinct.

On ARP, the designers’ main goal for involving library members was to create a better product.
They sought to do this by adopting an HCD approach, which was familiar to them but also
aspirational, since they often expressed the feeling that their use of HCD had been compromised
by circumstances beyond their control, such as time, money, and managerial support.

In Workshop 1 (Vision), the designers envisioned ways they could create an effective working
relationship within the design team. Later, when we reflected on the issue of “Effectiveness”
during Workshop 4 (Framework), they felt they had succeeded. They got close to their ideal vision of HCD by assembling a multi-disciplinary team, moving quickly into prototyping, iteratively refining a prototype with input from stakeholders and involving library members in multiple rounds of usability testing. They were particularly proud of the “6 weeks” in which they achieved their vision and, overall, were satisfied with the process and the resulting user interface.

In addition to creating a better product, the designers had a secondary goal on ARP: to demonstrate to their colleagues the value of involving library members in the design of TPL services. Because they frequently consult library members and the general public, mainly through usability testing, they see themselves as champions for user involvement. In Workshop 1 (Vision), they discussed their desire to model openness and transparency with library members, the general public, as well as TPL stakeholders. The main way they did this on ARP was via the Web Team Blog to provide updates and request design input.

Satisfied with striving for HCD, and modelling it for their colleagues, the designers had little reason to consider additional goals for participation. When I asked “why use participation?” as part of our discussion of goals during Workshop 4 (Framework), their responses were dominated by pragmatic reasons with only vague allusions to democratic motivation. They seemed unaware of the stronger democratic ideals of participation associated with PD such as equalising power relations, engaging in mutual learning, and exploring alternate visions of technology.

When we discussed “Transformations” in Workshop 4 (Framework), most of the co-researchers stated that they had personally been changed – in a general way – through their experiences on the project. However, their focus for transformation was at the organizational level through their ambition to nudge their colleagues towards greater understanding of the value of involving library members in the design of services. By being more open with library members than is generally the case, the co-researchers hoped to effect a subtle transformation of the relationship between TPL and its members. However, there was no discussion of engaging library members in mutual learning that might improve their personal capabilities and, perhaps, their potential influence on library services, which would be more typical of PD.
6.1.3.2 Representation and power relations

Regarding issues of representation and power relations, most of the co-researchers’ attention was on the design team and the TPL stakeholders, not library members and the general public.

Because the design team was comprised of specialists from three different organizations, there was a lot of energy and effort put into getting the design team working well together. When we considered representation during Workshop 4 (Framework), the two ideals that the co-researchers deemed to be relevant on ARP were “diverse” and “proxy voices”. In discussing “diverse”, they focused exclusively on the design team – their diversity based on which organization they work for and what role they played on the team. Since the design team was comprised of subject matter experts, designers and developers, it fit their model of a “multi-disciplinary team”, as guided by HCD principles (International Standardization Organization, 2009, p. 5).

Another principle of HCD is “the design is based upon an explicit understanding of users, tasks and environments” (International Standardization Organization, 2009, p. 5). In the case of ARP, the co-researchers felt strongly that the library staff members on the design team had deep knowledge of users and their needs, and referred to these as “proxy voices”. Because they had the proxy voices, and past research with users regarding some of the account management functions, they did not feel it was necessary to include library members in the discovery phase before detailed design began. In particular, the library staff members on the design team did not think it was desirable to have the library members envision new features and functionalities that could not be delivered in the first release of the ARP. Their key concern was disappointing library members but, also, putting themselves and their library colleagues into a difficult position, as I will discuss shortly.

Although not discussed explicitly, looking back over the data and conversations, it is clear that the designers wanted to protect their design decisions on ARP from what they consider undue influence from their TPL colleagues based on negative past experiences. The main way they did this was by keeping key stakeholders across the organization informed and involved, as the Manager of E-Services deemed necessary in order to “bring people along”. While “bring people along” had an altruistic intention – not to “side-swipe” people with change – it also had a legitimation intention, deflecting criticism and resistance.
The design team also wanted to “bring along” the library members and did so mainly through posts to the Web Team blog. This was a way to keep interested library members updated on the progress of the project as well as to solicit input on design issues and find volunteers for usability testing. When the development phase of the project was significantly delayed, keeping library members informed was deemed by some managerial TPL colleagues to make E-Services lose credibility within TPL and with library members. Unfortunately, this made the design team feel that their secondary goal of ARP – to demonstrate the value of openness and transparency – had backfired. This, perhaps, deepened some concerns raised by library staff on the design team expressed earlier in ARP. In addition to expressing their concerns that the organization is not ready to engage library members in a more meaningful way, one of the library staff itemized her personal concerns. She recounted past experiences of “design by committee”, in which colleagues swayed decision-making in ways that she felt were detrimental to the quality of the design. She also made it clear she did not want to be put in the position of explaining, or defending, the technical and policy constraints of the TPL. Although another co-researcher mentioned that there are ways to help participants understand, and work within, constraints, there appeared to be little appetite on the part of the library staff at this point in the discussion.

Overall, these designers did not feel compelled to involve library members in a more participatory way. As I mentioned earlier in this section, they were satisfied with their familiar model – HCD – and didn’t feel the need to find an alternative model, such as PD. They also felt they were champions for HCD within their organization and strived for their ideal vision of HCD on ARP. Their role as HCD champions frequently puts them at odds with their TPL colleagues and subject to criticism from management, which has left them wary and weary of change from the “bottom-up”. Finally, they were skeptical of the value of involving library members more deeply in design, citing concerns such as “design by committee” and not wanting to be an apologist for TPL.

6.2 Contributions

My thesis addresses deeply held concerns within PD about how participation has been devalued and misunderstood within HCD (Simonsen & Robertson, 2012). My work provides a number of ways to help distinguish PD from HCD specifically regarding ideals related to participation. This distinction is particularly timely as ‘design thinking’ based on HCD is rapidly being embraced by
private and public sector organizations (Brown & Martin, 2015; Kolko, 2015; Liedtka, 2015; Nussbaum, 2011). Without awareness of PD, organizations are likely to adopt a weak form of ‘user involvement’, misunderstanding it as ‘participation’.

HCD and PD are often conflated or grouped together because they share some roots in HCI and seek to counter the technology-orientation of mainstream software development by involving users in the design of information systems. However, as I outlined in Chapter 2, HCD and PD have distinct histories that are the foundation for their ideals and principles. Their differences are often characterized as a matter of the degree of participation of users, based on their decision-making power or influence (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014). Based on my personal experience, I believed participation had other dimensions that would be valuable in distinguishing PD from HCD.

Within the HCI or PD literature, I thought I might find one or more lists of dimensions, facets, or considerations of participation that would help me in planning, conducting, and reflecting on a participatory endeavour, whether undertaken in an academic or professional realm. While I identified several key issues of participation in the PD literature, I did not find a comprehensive list so I turned to related participatory practices including Participatory Development, Participatory Democracy, Participatory Education, Participatory Management and Participatory Action Research. Within these practices I found confirmation of my previously identified issues as well as some additional issues, but I did not find a framework – a comprehensive set of lenses through which to examine participation. So, in Chapter 3, I synthesized my findings into the Issues of Participation Framework with seven issues: goals, representation, power relations, context, effectiveness, transformations, and sustainability. In ARP we used the IPF as a tool for reflection, examining our ideals related to each of the issues. Using the IPF retrospectively provided a powerful mutual learning opportunity amongst the co-researchers – including discussions of differing goals for participation. Our experience suggests that the IPF could be used throughout a participatory endeavour to make choices and compromises regarding participation more explicit amongst the researchers, other participants, as well as those who review the results of our research.

When it comes to issues of participation, traditional HCD does not provide models or encouragement to bring people into the design process in a substantive way and offers little
guidance when it comes to key issues such as power relations. PD, however, has addressed many of the complex issues of participation, particularly power relations and individual and organizational transformations (Simonsen & Robertson, 2012). By drawing on related participatory fields, my IPF offers a starting place for addressing other issues of participation such as goals as addressed in Participatory Education, representation as studied in Participatory Democracy, power as characterised in Participatory Development, and so on. Additionally, the IPF provides a means for PD scholars to situate their work in the broader context of related participatory fields.

Bratteteig & Wagner’s *Disentangling Participation* (2014) is a recent example of scholarship that draws on a range of fields to make a rich contribution to PD that is relevant beyond PD. Bratteteig & Wagner utilize concepts of power from political theorist Hanna Pitkin, combined with their own model of decision-making in Participatory Design, to address the question “how participatory a design project has to be so as to ‘qualify’ as a PD project” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 117). They conclude that if users “can see their position represented in the participatory result (i.e. one that increases users’ agency, expressed as ‘power to’), they know that they have participated” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 117). They also state “even a process with limited user participation can result in a design that increases the ‘power to’ of users” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 114).

Using Bratteteig and Wagner’s approach, it could be argued that ARP qualifies as a PD project. It had a participatory result i.e. it improved the “power to” of library members to manage aspects of their relationship with the library. And, because library members were consulted through usability testing and blog posts, it is likely that if asked, at least some of the library members who contributed in these ways would “see their positions represented in the participatory result” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 117). It is also likely that the designers on ARP would judge that their consultations with users influenced the design and increased the “power to” interact with the library for all library members.

Based on my experience on ARP, I posit that focusing solely on the participatory result will not answer Bratteteig and Wagner’s question “how participatory a design project has to be so as to ‘qualify’ as a PD project”, in a sufficiently strong way that helps clarify the distinction between HCD and PD. So, in addition to asking “can the users see their influence in the participatory...
result?” I propose we also ask “have the designers engaged the users in mutual learning?” Rather than focusing on the user-result relationship, this question reframes the designer-user relationship and more clearly distinguishes PD from HCD, setting an expectation for what it means to adopt a PD mindset. For example, in ARP, I believe it would be clear to the designers that they did not engage the library members in mutual learning and, therefore, they would not judge ARP to be a PD project.

Historically, PD scholars have taken a staunchly non-prescriptive stance to PD, which is admirable as well as appropriate to a PD mindset. However, this may also have contributed to the confusion of HCD and PD, since there were few tools to guide scholarship and practice. More recently, PD scholars have produced tools such as a comprehensive list of PD principles (Greenbaum & Loi, 2012, p. 33) and the concept of a “participatory result” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014), which can help distinguish PD from HCD. My IPF also contributes to distinguishing PD from HCD but does so in a non-prescriptive way. It provides a rich, constructive guide for discussions of ideals associated with each of the issues, encouraging researchers and other participants to engage in mutual learning – a cornerstone of Participatory Design – and ultimately to make their choices and compromises regarding participation more explicit.

My IPF also makes a contribution to efforts to increase the visibility and distinction of PD. In 2010, Kyng suggested a “framework for understanding, discussing and doing PD research with the aim of increasing the influence of PD research on the next practices of ICT design” (2010, p. 50). His framework recommends paying attention to some of the pragmatic elements of a project that “bridge the gap” between politics and methods, such as company roles, funding, and project outcomes. From my experience on ARP, I agree that these are elements that need to be addressed but, in order to increase the influence of PD research, they need to be addressed in a way that strengthens the distinction between PD and HCD. Using the IPF, project elements such as company roles can be discussed as part of “power relations”, funding as part of “context”, and project outcomes as “effectiveness” and/or “transformations”, for example. My framework elucidates seven issues that are relevant to both HCD and PD, thereby helping to distinguish them from one another, perhaps raising the awareness and influence of PD. And, because my framework is about participation generally, it helps link PD to other related participatory endeavours, opening an avenue of mutual learning between domains, as discussed previously.
By being more explicit about ideals of participation, the PD community can strengthen the
distinction from HCD and we can better judge our own efforts and the efforts of others. In
Deweyian terms, we can make our ideals and standards of approval explicit, not just our
principles. As I’ve demonstrated on ARP, the IPF can be extremely useful in helping us make
decisions about participation more explicit amongst the participants and allowing us to report
more nuanced details about the choices and compromises we made, and why. This will allow us
to better judge our actions and find ways to improve.

When it comes to why designers might resist sharing power with users, there is very little
empirical work to draw upon and very rarely are designers engaged directly to help answer this
question. An exception is Steve Woolgar’s (1990) analysis of a team as they planned, conducted
and reported on a series of “usability trials”. He identified some reasons for resistance to
involving users or – in his case – to taking their views too seriously. For example, he reported on
tensions between stakeholder groups as they decided who should participate in the trials, with
some groups claiming superior knowledge and expertise about the users. Without a shared
understanding of the users, the results of the usability trial were easily dismissed by those who
disputed who the users are and also disputed the decision to have employees stand-in for “naïve
users”. Another facet of the resistance that Woolgar identified was the belief that users don’t
know what they want and don’t have an understanding of future possibilities – two concerns
amply addressed by PD through inventive tools and techniques for collaboration between
designers and users (Sanders et al., 2010).

On ARP, we identified different barriers to involving library members in a more participatory
way. The co-researchers from TPL linked their resistance to recollections of previous bad
experiences of “design by committee” in which the most powerful rather than the most
experienced voices prevailed. In a similar vein, there was a desire to protect library members
from organizational constraints such as policy decisions, resource availability and technology
(and skill) limitation. This is linked to other concerns such as a fear of disappointing library
members and being put in the position of being an apologist on behalf of TPL – because of the
organizational constraints and the likelihood that key features desired by library members would
not be available in the foreseeable future. While these constraints are certainly not
comprehensive, they are empirical evidence of particular concerns that we need to address in
order to overcome resistance amongst designers and the organizations they work within.
Overall, my work suggests that, as management within organizations start to embrace ‘design thinking’ and HCD, digital designers may be our best allies for increasing the influence of PD research and practices. In order to do this, we will need to distinguish PD from HCD and also address the personal and organizational concerns held by designers about sharing their power with users. Using a tool such as my Issues of Participation Framework can provide a series of lenses through which to examine participation closely, helping us reclaim a more authentic meaning of participation.

6.3 Future work

As I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, I have a life-long fascination with participation – which will continue to guide and motivate me, professionally and academically. I’m interested in being a participant, guiding participatory endeavours, and continuing to investigate the relationship between ideals of participation and our lived experience of participation. For my doctoral research, I took a studious approach to mining literature within and beyond Participatory Design and then took a very exploratory approach to my fieldwork. Both approaches have opened up many avenues for further investigation.

My most immediate aspiration is to further study and refine my Issues of Participation Framework (IPF), ideally in collaboration with other researchers. On ARP, I employed the IPF in a very limited way, introducing it to my co-researchers late in the project as a tool for retrospective reflection. While it worked well in this capacity on this project, I would like to experiment more rigorously with its application on additional projects, using it for planning, conducting and reporting on participatory endeavours – both within and beyond digital design. It is my sincere hope that other researchers and practitioners will find the IPF useful and that their experiences with the IPF will contribute to its refinement.

While many PD scholars take an action research approach, very few have engaged users not only as co-designers, but also as co-researchers. On ARP, I decided to take a participatory approach to knowledge generation engaging co-researchers through Participatory Action Research (PAR). I knew it would be challenging to get and keep the attention of the co-researchers since they were busy and only cursorily interested in issues of participation. Therefore, I defined a set of research activities that I thought would be stimulating and effective, suit different kinds of people, and not require a lot of time, i.e. an online forum, 2 or 3 workshops, and conference papers. I did not pre-
conceive the topics for the research activities, preferring to react to what was happening in the design activities. My approach was quite successful as four of the original seven co-researchers stayed actively engaged throughout the research activities, while the other three participated occasionally. And, together, we were able to generate knowledge that has been shared through professional and academic conferences, as well as through my thesis. While some ‘actions’ emerged from our PAR approach, such as the decision to co-locate the design team, for the most part my approach focused on research over action. I believe PAR is an excellent methodology that is well suited to public institutions such as public libraries and a powerful accompaniment to PD. I look forward to continuing my exploration of collaborative knowledge generation by engaging participants as co-researchers on future projects and would encourage others in public institutions and in PD to consider adding this important dimension to their work.

In the field of librarianship, I touched on two concepts relevant to my research: participatory librarianship and community-led libraries. Akin to other participatory practices, participatory librarianship aims for library staff to engage library members in shaping library services. As conceived by Lankes, it also suggests that the goal of librarians is to facilitate knowledge generation in their communities (2011). These are two areas that my research can inform, including how library members can be engaged in more authentic participation by adopting a PD mindset and the suitability of PAR to generate both knowledge and action.

In my research I referenced the Public Involvement Continuum (Figure 10), a small part of the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit produced by the Working Together Project (2008). Two library staff participants in that project, Pateman and Williment, have gone on to elaborate on their ideas and experiences in a book entitled Developing Community-Led Public Libraries: Evidence from the UK and Canada (2016). Within the confines of this thesis, I wasn’t able to connect my research to this important movement within librarianship but feel there is much to learn by doing so.

On ARP, I was able to study the tensions between HCD and PD when it comes to participation. However, because we didn’t involve library members deeply in the design process, there are many elements of PD that we didn’t address. In Disentangling Participation, Bratteteig and Wagner break down the design decision-making process into: creating, selecting, implementing, and evaluating choices. They identify “creating” and “evaluating” choices as the arenas in which
users can make the strongest contributions, while “implementing/making is the arena, in which the technical skills and competencies of designers dominate” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 117). Accordingly, PD has more tools, techniques and experiences to share regarding “creating”, “selecting” and “evaluating” choices than for “implementing/materializing” the design. Similarly, in HCD users are commonly sources of information for generating system requirements near the beginning of a project and then, once a prototype is created, users are test subjects for usability testing the new system – so contributing to “creating” and “evaluating”, rarely to “selecting” or “implementing”. I believe there is a lot of fruitful work to be done to create more tools, techniques, and experiences that can help users contribute to materializing the design.

While ideals of participation are at the heart of this thesis, I was only able to touch briefly on my investigation into Dewey’s concepts of ideals, principles and standards of approval. I would like to elaborate my thinking on these concepts as they relate to Participatory Design. Other threads that I would like to weave into this line of enquiry are the relationship of ideals to some of the work within HCI and PD envisioning the future, such as concepts of utopianism (Bardzell, 2018; Ehn et al., 2014); value-sensitive design (Friedman, 1996; Iversen et al., 2012); speculative design (Dunne & Raby, 2013); and multi-life span design (Friedman & Nathan, 2010).

At this stage of a thesis, it is humbling to think of the work done and the work that could have been done. Nonetheless, I am proud of having engaged my co-researchers in a reflective process in unique ways that allowed me contribute to the body of literature about PD. By tracing the parallel but distinct trajectories of HCD and PD, providing a framework of issues of participation, examining the ideals of participation along the dimensions of these issues within ARP, and identifying perceived barriers to involving library members in a more participatory way, I have addressed deeply held concerns within PD about “how participatory a design project has to be so as to ‘qualify’ as a PD project” (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014, p. 117). I argue that distinguishing PD from HCD is a useful step toward raising awareness of the democratic goals of PD and reclaiming an authentic meaning of participation.
Appendices

Appendix A: Exploring Participation Invitation Email

Subject: How does participation impede or enhance the design and development process?

Hi <NAME>

We live at a time where a lot of “participation” is expected but we rarely question whether participation is always the best approach.

In addition to my work at Usability Matters, I am working on my PhD at the University of Toronto. I am just starting my thesis research and looking for people closely or loosely involved in the TPL Your Account redesign project to be part of my research. Your involvement is entirely voluntary and you can contribute as much or as little as you like throughout the timeframe (primarily Sep to Dec 2013).

This is exploratory research about participation. Most of the research will be conducted as an online discussion. Each week or two we will focus on a particular question or topic related to participation, for example, what are our expectations of participation and how do these relate to the outcomes? I will introduce the first few questions but as time goes on, you may want to introduce your own questions or topics for discussion. To complement the online discussion, there will also be 2 or 3 in-person workshops held at a TPL location. You can learn more about the research project, process, benefits, and expectations at http://terrycostantino.com/.

I hope you will consider becoming involved – especially if you have ambivalent feelings about participation (and about this research). You will part of an extended conversation with a stimulating bunch of people, some with lots of experience in participatory processes and some with very little. Together we will learn about participation (a hot topic!) and hone our research skills. Some of us may want to share our new-found knowledge through conferences, papers, blogs, etc. However, while it is designed to be an inspiring and rewarding process, there is no expectation that everyone invited will have the time or inclination to become involved – it is entirely up to you.

If you have questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me. While you can join the research at any time, the first online discussion topic will start September 23. In order to get involved, please read the blog post at: http://terrycostantino.com/2013/09/research-consent-form/ and complete the consent form.

Thanks for considering,

Terry

------

Terry Costantino, PhD Candidate
Faculty of Information, University of Toronto
Information and Consent Form

Research Study: Exploring participation by staff and members in the development of e-Services in a public library

You are being asked to take part in a study about participation. This study will involve several participants such as you, drawn from Toronto Public Library staff and members as well as staff of vendors organizations (the contractors).

This study will explore the experiences of public library staff, members and contractors when they work together to envision and design one or more library services delivered via the Internet (e-Services). This project is part of my doctoral studies looking at issues of participation, which I am doing through the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto.

If you choose to take part, you will be asked to attend 2 or 3 half-day workshops and participate in an Internet discussion forum periodically throughout the study. During these activities, you will be asked to engage in discussions about your individual, and our collective, experience of being part of a collaborative design group. Workshops will be in-person and will be held at a central location within Toronto that is easily accessible by transit, most likely at a Toronto Public Library branch. The initial part of the study will be up to 3 months in length (Sep to Dec, 2013). If time allows, there may be an additional part of the study from Jan to Apr, 2014. Approximately one year later (Dec 2014), you will be invited to review and discuss a draft of my thesis.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate, or to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. You can choose not to answer any questions or engage in any discussion, at any time. Any comments you do make (in workshops and online discussion, for example) will be associated with your “study name”, chosen by you below. You may choose to use your real first name or a different name, if that
would make you more comfortable. While your “study email address”, will be shared with the other participants, all other personal information, including your name and phone number, will not be shared with anyone. Only the researchers named below will have access to this information.

If you take part and then choose to withdraw from the study, your past contributions will continue to part of the study. Your comments in workshops and online discussions, for example, will continue to be associated with your study name.

If you and other participants agree, workshops may be recorded on audio or video, to help with notetaking. This is completely optional, and if you do not want to be recorded, you will not be.

There are no known risks to you in participating in this study. While there is no financial compensation offered for your participation, I believe that you will find the process enjoyable and you will build useful skills. You won’t just be part of this study, you will be a co-researcher and, as such, your contribution will be substantial and, I hope, satisfying.

The results of this study will become part of my PhD Dissertation. You will be invited to comment on draft findings prior to completion of the dissertation and you will be notified when the dissertation is completed at the personal email address below.

In addition, the results of this study may be published as journal articles and presented at conferences. You will be referred to exclusively by your study name unless you choose otherwise. As a co-researcher, you may want to find and participate in some of these publishing and presentation opportunities.

If you have any questions about this study now, or at any time in the future, you can contact the researchers:

Terry Costantino
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Information
University of Toronto
terry.costantino@mail.utoronto.ca
(416) 998-0665

Andrew Clement
Professor
Faculty of Information
University of Toronto
andrew.clement@utoronto.ca
416-978-3111

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.
Information and Consent Form

Research Study: Exploring participation by staff and members in the development of e-Services in a public library

Consent to Participate

- I agree to take part in this study and participate in in-person workshops and online discussion forums
- The researcher has explained the study and I have had a chance to get answers to any questions I may have had
- I agree that the researcher can record workshops and interviews in which I participate (OPTIONAL)
- I understand that I will have an opportunity to contribute to, review and discuss the findings of this study but will not be able to alter the findings that are included in the thesis or other disseminated research findings.

Date: _________________________________________________________

Name (please print): ________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________________

Personal phone number: ________________________________

Personal email address: ________________________________

My study name will be: ________________________________ (first name only)

My study email address will be: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:00 pm</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10 pm</td>
<td>PhD Research: Introduction</td>
<td>• Research Domains&lt;br&gt;• Research Aims&lt;br&gt;• Research Benefits&lt;br&gt;• Levels of Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20 pm</td>
<td>Vision: How do we envision an ideal participation process for the Your Account Project?</td>
<td>• Please list 12 ideas addressing the focus question&lt;br&gt;• Let’s not forget the basic things we are already doing.&lt;br&gt;• Think about some participation processes you’ve heard about or experienced – what made them good or bad?&lt;br&gt;• Review your list and mark the 4 clearest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>• 12 clearest ideas from the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45 pm</td>
<td>Share ideas (5 cards per group)</td>
<td>• Mix cards as they go to the board&lt;br&gt;• Give me your wildest, favourite, scariest, obvious, fun&lt;br&gt;• Individual gets to clarify ideas, group gets to cluster ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:55 pm</td>
<td>Pair ideas</td>
<td>• Put the more specific card of the pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm</td>
<td>Cluster ideas</td>
<td>• Mark where each card belongs. &lt;br&gt;• Give me the ones that do you not obviously fit into one group&lt;br&gt;• Where is this card most needed to illuminate something?&lt;br&gt;• Where does it help to broaden the cluster?&lt;br&gt;• Any cards beyond your 12 that you would like to add?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20 pm</td>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm</td>
<td>Name groups</td>
<td>• Read cards out loud&lt;br&gt;• Identify key words on card&lt;br&gt;• Explore the insight behind the cluster – how does it answer the focus question&lt;br&gt;• Summarize the insight in a name that answers the focus question (noun and juicy adjective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:40 pm</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>• Which idea disturbs you?&lt;br&gt;• Which idea seems exciting?&lt;br&gt;• What’s the biggest obstacle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45 pm</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>• What should we do differently on the Your Account Project?&lt;br&gt;• Will we involve library members differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm</td>
<td>PhD Research: Next Steps</td>
<td>• Have any particular issues of interest emerged from today?&lt;br&gt;• How will we explore these further?&lt;br&gt;• What role, if any, should library members play in this research?&lt;br&gt;• Online forums? One-on-one interviews? Anonymous survey? Follow-up workshop in February or March?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D: Workshop 1 (Vision) Results Chart, November 2013

**Focus Question:** How do we envision an ideal participation process for the Your Account Project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Base Camp</th>
<th>Love &amp; Respect thy Team</th>
<th>Customer Centred</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Practical Vision</th>
<th>Communal Tools</th>
<th>Well-defined Governance</th>
<th>Transparent Communication</th>
<th>Context Awareness</th>
<th>Iterative &amp; Flexible Process</th>
<th>A Window in Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open &amp; transparent to the public</td>
<td>Project Headquarters - team sets up camp</td>
<td>Working team is bonded</td>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Team member diversity (race, gender, etc.)</td>
<td>Clear goals</td>
<td>Apple™ products for all</td>
<td>Established decision making process</td>
<td>Close collaboration of the working team around a real or virtual space at the same time</td>
<td>Understanding of the peer &amp; competitor landscape</td>
<td>An iterative process (tweak as we go)</td>
<td>Involves stakeholders (to observe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open beta - analytics - comments &amp; feedback</td>
<td>Co-locate</td>
<td>Working team bonds over beer, food, pranks, jokes</td>
<td>Regular User Input - testing - workshops - blog</td>
<td>Core working team with “power” - decentralized decision-making</td>
<td>No politics!</td>
<td>Shared tools &amp; resources</td>
<td>Director/executive championship to help push beyond obstacles</td>
<td>Solid communication between teams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open code base</td>
<td>Pair programming</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Regular usability test &amp; iterations</td>
<td>Effective use of participants time</td>
<td>Realistic plan</td>
<td>Project updates &amp; timelines</td>
<td>Closer integration of UX and technology sides of the project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible &amp; visible work space - library members can see work</td>
<td>In person</td>
<td>Highly skilled and motivated project team</td>
<td>Clear understanding of user need &amp; wishes</td>
<td>No ego’s</td>
<td>One team</td>
<td>One dream</td>
<td>Decision making clearly guided by something agreed on (design templates, data)</td>
<td>Transparency!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular blogging (one a week) that is honest</td>
<td>Office space better designed for collaboration</td>
<td>Core team members dedicated to the project full-time</td>
<td>User focussed</td>
<td>Values evidence (qualitative and quantitative)</td>
<td>Understanding of long term strategic objectives</td>
<td>Progress tracking</td>
<td>Decision tracking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team members are open to all ideas</td>
<td>Minimum number of high level stakeholders</td>
<td>Shared vision - everyone working towards same goal</td>
<td>Collaboration cross discipline with clearly defined roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone in working team feels heard</td>
<td>People listen to each other</td>
<td>Remember &amp; stick to the design tenets</td>
<td>Inclusion of beauty &amp; pleasure as key influencers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Focused Conversation: A Reflection on Participation on the Your Account Project

The Situation:
The co-researchers are reflecting on how participation has worked (well and not-so-well) on the Your Account Project.

Rational Objective:
To share insights about participation emerging from our experiences on the Your Account project.

Experiential Aim:
To find insights that are worth sharing with our colleagues in libraries and HCI, particularly in PD.

Opening:
In our previous workshop, we used a process called The Workshop Method to answer the question “How do we envision an ideal participation process for the Your Account Project?”. At that time, we identified 4 areas that we would like to work on: having a Base Camp, a shared vision (One Team/One Dream), well-defined governance and transparent communication. We also talked about exploring ways to involve library members in the design process and that is what I would like to focus on today.

I’m going to use a method called Focused Conversation to move through questions in stages. First we are going to get out some facts, then reflect on them, interpret them and, finally, make some decisions about them. It should flow like a normal conversation but there may be times where I suggest we move on to a new question or hold off on a particular question until we get to a later stage. Okay?

Objective (external reality):
- Who are the "participants" in the Your Account project?
- What roles do they play in the project?
- Who are “the designers”? Who are the “users”?
- What roles have library members played in the Your Account project so far?
- What other roles could we imagine them playing?

Reflective (internal response):
- What are you most proud of achieving as part of the Your Account project?
- Have you had any a-ha moments when consulting library members on the Your Account project?
- How do you feel about the idea of involving library members in design?
- Do you have any concerns about how eServices staff and other library staff been involved so far?

Interpretive (meaning, values, significance and implications):
- What do we mean by participation?
• What do we mean by design?
• What, if any, are the differences between collaborative design and design reviews?
• What would be the value, if any, of involving library members (specifically non-designers) in the design?
• Are there any personal or organizational barriers to including library members in design?
• Does Agile and/or Responsive Design make a difference to involving library members in design?

Decisional (resolution, consensus):
• Would we recommend to library colleagues that they include library members in design?
  If so, in what ways?
• How will we include library members in the rest of the Your Account Project?
• Has the Your Account project used a “Participatory Design” approach to date?
• Do we think certain types of projects are better suited to Participatory Design?
• Do we think certain stages of a project that are better suited to Participatory Design?

Closing:

This has been a long and valuable conversation. However, we could go deeper or broader on many of these topics and not everyone was able to join us today. I’m hoping we can keep the conversation going. Is the online forum the best way or do we prefer another method? Also, I would like to share a draft of the short paper for PDC, capturing some of the insights that arose today – for your comments. Would the forum be the best place for this type of sharing and commenting?

Focus Question: What blocked us from realizing our ideal vision of participation on the Account Redesign project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rational Aim:</th>
<th>Experiential Aim:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To identify the obstacles to our vision</td>
<td>Confidence that we can deal with the real issues facing us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Brainstorm</th>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Resolve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline the process</td>
<td>Brainstorm individually Each person list or sketch <strong>8 to 10 blocks</strong> that stopped us from achieving our vision. Try to cover all aspects of the vision.</td>
<td>Gather cards from each group • 1st and 4th (random) • 3rd and 6th (random) • 10th (random) • <strong>Approx. 15 cards</strong></td>
<td>Begin with the largest cluster; discuss for clarity and insight O – read cards aloud R – Which do you experience as the heaviest? The lightest? I – Clues to the root cause. What is going on that causes or sustains the blocks?</td>
<td>Discussion O – Read title cards aloud R – Which do you experience as the heaviest? The lightest? I – Choose one. If we deal with it, which elements of the vision will it release?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight focus question and sub-questions</td>
<td>Select your best ideas Each person put a star next to the <strong>5 most important blocks</strong> on your list</td>
<td>Develop 5 – 7 clusters • Which two have a similar root cause? (4 – 5 pairs) • Add cards to the pairs</td>
<td>Name each cluster D – Name underlying contradiction with a short phrase, e.g. block, how it blocks, what it blocks</td>
<td>Resolve D – What is one thing you can do in future to deal with any one of these obstacles? (one answer from each person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the outcome</td>
<td>Brainstorm as a small group Choose the <strong>12 most important blocks</strong>, eliminating overlap but honouring diversity. Write each on a card.</td>
<td>Relate extras • Put symbols on the clusters • In small groups, mark remaining cards with a symbol</td>
<td>• Write on a card and put it with the cluster • TEST: Is it real? Do we participate in it? Can we do something about it?</td>
<td>Rock image (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are looking for concrete social issues that are both obstacles and doorways to the future.</td>
<td>• Gather cards that do not have a symbol (some new clusters may emerge) • Put all marked cards up</td>
<td>Repeat for each cluster</td>
<td>Next steps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>2 – 2:15 pm</th>
<th>2:15 – 2:30 pm</th>
<th>2:30 – 3:00 pm</th>
<th>3:00 – 3:30 pm</th>
<th>3:30 – 4:00 pm</th>
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<td>2 – 2:15 pm</td>
<td>2:15 – 2:30 pm</td>
<td>2:30 – 3:00 pm</td>
<td>3:00 – 3:30 pm</td>
<td>3:30 – 4:00 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Workshop 3 (Obstacles) Results Chart, July 2014

**Issue: Goals**

Method: STICKY NOTES

Objective: Why use participation? Answered individually or by flipchart

Reflective: Anything unclear? Anything missing?

Interpretative: Which of these are relevant to the Account Redesign project? How do you think that affected the project?

Decisional: Would you do anything differently in on a future project?

**Issue: Representation**

Method: FLIPCHART

We answered the first question in Workshop 2 – and there have been some changes and additions since then but do we agree that the groupings still hold?

So, let’s answer the second question together, what are the ideals of representation (*Openness* (everyone can participate) and *transparency* (clarity about who was invited, who participated and how)

How do these ideals relate to the Account Redesign project?

How do you think that affected the project?

Would you do anything differently in on a future project?

**Issue: Power Relations**

Method: FLIPCHART

Can someone describe the meaning of “power relations”?

So what are the ideal power relations? (transparency, equality, etc.)

Which of these ideals are relevant to the Account Redesign project?

How do you think that affected the project?

Would you do anything differently in on a future project?

**Issue: Context**

FLIPCHART
How would you describe the context or setting for the Account Redesign project? (Location, time, related initiatives, culture, tools)

Were any of these particularly important on the Account Redesign project? How so?

What affect did this have on the Account Redesign project? (became the focus of Workshop 3)

**Issue: Effectiveness**

FLIPCHART

By using participation, what are we trying to effect? Product, productivity and process (became the focus in Workshop 1)

**Issue: Transformation**

STICKIES

Please write 3 answers on separate stickies to this question. (users, team, management, TPL, society)

Who has or may changed by being involved (directly or indirectly) in the Account Redesign project?

Can anyone tell us how they were changed?

What do you think of transformation as a goal or outcome of participation? Was that one of the goals we identified?

Do you think you would consider transformation as an explicit goal for future projects? Why/why not?

**Issue: Sustainability**

STICKIES

Please write 3 answers to this question, each on a separate sticky (product, productivity, process)

Have there been (or do you anticipate) any lasting outcomes from the Account Redesign project?

How is this different than any other projects you’ve worked on at TPL?

Besides lasting outcomes, what could sustainability mean in the context of digital projects? (conservation of resources)
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Figure 3. Comparing the four schools of thought predictive claims about worker participation. Adapted from "The Consequences of Worker Participation: A Clarification of the Theoretical Literature" by E.S. Greenberg, 1975, Social Science Quarterly, 56, p. 206 - 207.
References


