

**Changing Contexts of Children and  
Young People's Participation in  
Evaluation:  
Case Studies in Nepal and the UK**

by

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of how significant features of context are linked to process in children's participation in evaluation, using case study research. The cases vary in political and cultural contexts, institutional setting, timeframe and my own positionality in the evaluations. The rights-based evaluations revisited include: DFID funded Rights through Evaluation research in Nawalparasi in Nepal; evaluation of Phase 1 of the Saying Power scheme, run by Save the Children across the UK; and evaluation of the Croydon Children's Fund in London. In addition to issues of context and timeframe, the cases were chosen for the author's intimate knowledge of the evaluations, and access to participants who had been involved at different levels and roles. Issues of bias are therefore specifically addressed in the revisits and a dual approach of reflexivity and critical inquiry taken. The initial reflection builds on theoretical perspectives in children's participation and historical perspectives of rights-based approaches, providing a personal perspective that forms the basis of the questions for the critical inquiry. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with children and young people, project workers/ staff, and managers/ commissioners, all of whom previously participated in the evaluations. The critical inquiry was conducted in order to find out under what conditions participatory evaluation with children resulted in positive outcomes for children and transformational change.

Critical realism, realist revisits and socio- and cultural ecological theories form the basis of a framework or model called 'Change-scape' that helped to explain the links between process and context in this thesis. How decision-makers responded to children's evidence depended on the context. Stratifications of context suggested in this analysis arose from realist revisits that incorporated external drivers, such as the political economy and dominant cultural practices, and internal drivers including the commitment and capacity of stakeholders in the evaluation process. Mechanisms of communication and collaboration were identified that helped to translate actions identified in the evaluations into outcomes for children and young people. Dimensions of power were also examined in terms of how they related to different aspects of the structure put forward. A final discussion reviews the progression from an emphasis on rights and individual behaviour change and action, to how context has to be taken into account to achieve more relational objectives that are incorporated in achieving improvements in children and young people's wellbeing.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AR	Action Research
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCF	Croydon Children's Fund
CF	Children's Fund
CRIN	Children's Rights Information Network
DFID	Department for International Development
DVD	Digital Video Disc
ECM	Every Child Matters
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GOL	Government of London
HICODEF	Himalayan Community Development Forum
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IIED	International Institute of Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Office
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
JYIP	Junior Youth Inclusion Project
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PA	Participatory Appraisal
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PB	Partnership Board
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RER	Rights through Evaluation Research

RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SC	Save the Children
TIW	Together in Waddon
UCLan	University of Central Lancashire
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VDC	Village Development Committee
WeD	Wellbeing in Developing Countries Research Group, University of Bath
WIDER	World Institute of Development Economics
YISP	Youth Inclusion Support Panel
YOT	Youth Offending Team

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

This thesis seeks to enrich theoretical understanding of the links between process and context in relation to children and young people's participation in evaluation, called for by Kirby and Bryson (2002). The research also intends to contribute to the better integration of children's rights and participation into broader international development, as children have long been seen as almost a 'separate sector' or 'add-ons' in broader analysis of poverty and exclusion (Bartlett 2001 and 2005, Marcus *et al.* 2002, Theis 2010). Recognising that while governments and non-governmental institutions in the UK and overseas highlight participation of service users as a requirement of funding and delivering services and projects, more needs to be done to ensure that implementation of children and young people's participation can lead to improved outcomes for their wellbeing. Moving from tokenism to more meaningful participation will require exploring how academic discourses on children's participation can contribute to linking processes of rights-based evaluation to the way in which children and young people's evidence is received and acted on in different contexts.

Three case studies of evaluations previously conducted with the participation of children and young people were revisited in Nepal and the UK. Cases were chosen for their differences in context, having also been carried out at different periods of time. The research included both my own reflection, as I had been involved in planning and implementing the rights-based evaluations, and a critical inquiry examining the perspectives of children and young people, staff and researchers, and managers who had taken part in the different cases. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using a fundamentally qualitative approach. Issues of bias were addressed as, although the revisits relied on the participants' intimate knowledge of the processes and context, the analysis needed to reflect learning from positive and negative aspects of the evaluations, and honesty about the outcomes that had arisen as a result of children's evidence.

Two evaluations, one in Nepal and one in the UK, had been conducted almost decade ago (around the year 2000) within the context of non-governmental and community based organisations, and the third more recently in the UK with statutory and voluntary sector involvement. The key research question explored links between the process of children's participation and significant features of context. In order to answer this question, it was important to assess how different stakeholders had regarded their participation and that of other stakeholders including children. The critical inquiry examined whether the perspectives and contributions of children and young people had been valued, and explored interviewees' perspectives on key factors in the process that had influenced the outcomes for children and young people's wellbeing and transformational change at an individual, organisational and broader societal level. The revisits were conducted for a period of 2-3 weeks for each case over the course of 2009.

The thesis seeks to contribute to theory on children's participation and explores how evaluation with girls and boys, young women and young men, could move from tokenism to becoming a more meaningful process, where children and young people's perspectives are taken seriously to inform decision-making and resource allocation, and how this in turn may lead to improved outcomes. Case study research proved an ideal way to reflect on and revisit 'real world' evaluations conducted with children, in terms of how the process related to the different contexts in which they had been conducted and to further learn from each setting through interviewing a cross section of participants from previous evaluations. Input from interviewees proved analytical, critical and motivating, leading to further analysis identifying comparisons and learning across cases and inductive theorising. This comes at a time when in the UK, children's participation has been included as a requirement in key statutory processes, and has been advocated internationally since its inclusion in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly by non-governmental and civil society organisations. The research explores whether in reality, people in positions of power were listening to and acting on children's perspectives that were often so painstakingly collected.

The case studies were selected where participatory approaches with children and young people were systematically applied in impact evaluation over a period of time, all feeding into ongoing projects and services, with examples from the global North and

South (see Chapter 3 on methodology and Chapter 4 on case study selection). I had intimate knowledge of the processes and access to participants, as I had been the lead researcher for these evaluations. Therefore, despite having to address issues of bias carefully, I felt the research offered an opportunity to explore in depth the power dynamics and outcomes for children in the different settings. As a practitioner for many years I felt that my experience in the practice of evaluation could contribute to theory on children's participation. James and Prout (1997, p. xv) refer to a gap between practice and theory:

*What remains, however, is a gap between on the one hand research and innovative policy thinking and on the other frameworks for action which practitioners in given localities and contexts can use and develop.*

Revisiting projects and services in different cases where I had applied largely qualitative participatory appraisal (PA) visual methods, allowed me to explore how the data collected had been valued by service providers and decision-makers in comparison with data collected within a more positivist paradigm, and how policy and practice had or had not been informed. In some cases, quantitative methods had been mixed with qualitative, both within the participatory appraisal visual methods through matrices, counting and coding, and by mixing methods. This was relevant to the recent acknowledgement of the role that 'numbers' may play in participation (Chambers 2007a) and the call for valuing mixed methods approaches in addressing children's wellbeing (Jones and Sumner 2009). Kirby and Bryson (2002) have commented on the lack of mixed methods approaches to evaluation of participation of public decision-making with young people: most are currently qualitative, highlighting young people's voices.

Although at first I had thought that the visual participatory methods used with children in evaluation would be a focus, in reviewing the literature and planning the research, the emphasis shifted to exploring how issues of context and power influence the application of children and young people's participation in evaluation in real world settings, and how the evidence had or had not been accepted by decision-makers. The cases were therefore chosen to explore children's participation in developing and developed countries that had very different policy and cultural contexts, with varying institutional settings and timeframes. I also examined the varying capacity, skills and positionality of the facilitators and different stakeholders in the evaluative process to

explore how this had influenced process and outcome. This also led to further analysing approaches that had worked *with* children, rather than *on* children (Mayall 2002), and the requirement for new skills and capacities, highlighted by Guijt (2007, p.54) in ‘infusing assessment processes with political consciousness’.

Transformational change as a result of the evaluations was explored at different levels of influence, in terms of: individuals (Lansdown 2005); organisations, including the attitudes and behavioural culture within them, the spaces for participation, and in encouraging more intergenerational dialogue (for example, Cornwall 2004, Shier 2010 and Mannion 2010); and in broader processes of social change (Guijt 2007) and context (Bronfenbrenner 2005).

The new paradigm of reconstructing childhood (for example, James, Jenks and Prout 1998), although revolutionary in terms of children being treated as active participants in micro-studies to understand childhoods from the perspectives of children in different cultural contexts, needs to be seen in the broader political and policy context (Thomas 2000, and Hart 2008). This research seeks to understand how processes of children’s participation in evaluation are influenced by context, drawing on the theories of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, 2005) and Tudge (2008) that explain how different systems interact to provide the context for child development. These theories helped to structure the model presented later in this thesis, which emerged from inductive theorising alongside realist understandings of how context and mechanisms combine to translate outcomes into action. Realism, including the importance of context in determining realistic explanation, was taken as the epistemology for the thesis (Bhaskar 1986, Archer *et al.* 1998, Pawson and Tilley 1997, Sayer 2000, Robson 2002).

Analysis of power dynamics helped to explain how children’s participation had led to positive outcomes for children in the evaluations. This included an analysis of the political, cultural and institutional context as well as understanding relationships between children and researchers that can influence our understanding of childhood (Mayall 2002 and Wyness 2006), and encouraging inter-generational dialogue both within the process, and on a broader level in society (Percy-Smith 2006 and Mannion 2010). I also found it helpful to relate the emerging model to Lukes’ (1974, 2005) dimensions of power employed in gender analysis, action research and participatory

appraisal (Kabeer 1994, Crewe and Harrison 1998, Chambers 2007, Cornwall and Gaventa 2006).

Raising a number of future challenges for evaluation with young people's participation in public decision-making in the UK, Kirby and Bryson (2002) suggest that more evaluation is needed; that evaluations themselves need to be evaluated; and that there is a lack of theory including understanding the relationship between process and context:

*Many evaluations include analysis of process and impacts, but there is insufficient theorising about how process and context inter-relate to produce outcomes. (p. 60)*

Issues of adequate resources for evaluation, training and support, and whether the expectations of different stakeholders are met are also explored further in the thesis.

It is with an interest in learning lessons and exploring the politics and power dynamics within different contexts that I explore 'children's participation in evaluation' with participants in the research. The thesis research is not carried out to validate what I have done in previous evaluations, nor to advocate a certain approach (which was applied in some cases many years ago), but to take the positive messages forward and learn from further analysis of what did and did not work. Chambers (2004, p28) supports this combination of reflecting, interrogating practice and academic critique.

## **1.2 The Key Research Question**

During the reflexive process of research, the emphasis of the key questions changed from a focus on the application of participatory visual methods to an emphasis on how context is linked to the process of children's participation and what determines whether positive outcomes for children are achieved, including transformational change on a personal, organisational and broader policy level. This encompassed analysing whether changing power dynamics could lead to evidence from children and young people being taken more seriously by policy makers and service providers to develop services and projects/ programmes.

The key research question is as follows:

*How can linking processes of children's participation in evaluation to significant features of the context contribute to our understanding of children's participation?*

Here the context was not tightly defined, but developed through conducting the research and exploring the way in which process was influenced by different factors in the case settings. By selecting case studies in developed and developing countries, rural and urban settings, non-governmental and statutory institutional contexts, it was hoped that the most significant features of context that contributed to change could be explored in revisiting the evaluation cases.

The following questions then relate to different aspects of exploring the past processes of children's participation in evaluation through the case study research in these varying contexts:

1. In the revisited evaluation cases, has evidence from children and young people informed and shaped services and projects/ programmes and fed into policy?
2. Has children's evidence led to positive outcomes for children and transformational change?
3. How was this affected by the political/policy, cultural and institutional context?
4. How did aspects of process (relating to children's roles in evaluation, capacities and commitment in organisations, and power dynamics) influence the way in which different stakeholders valued children's participation and their evidence?
5. What was the value of visual 'participatory appraisal' (PA) approaches and visual methods, developed in the South<sup>1</sup> in helping to understand the impact of projects and services on children's lives?
6. How could a more theoretical understanding be applied to the implementation of action-orientated and rights-based evaluation with children and young people?

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'South' has been used in this document as shorthand for countries that may also be referred to as developing, and may also be referred to as the Majority World. The North is then used as shorthand for countries that may also be referred to as developed or industrialised.

## **1.3 The Structure of the Thesis**

The following sub-sections provide an introduction to each of the chapters of the thesis.

### **1.3.1 Chapter 2 - Literature Review on Children's Participation and Child Rights in International Development and the UK**

A background is given to child rights and the development of a rights-based framework or approaches where children are treated as active participants. The evaluations revisited were fundamentally rights-based, although when implemented in different contexts, each case methodology was applied in different ways. As the aim of this thesis is to analyse how the process differed in the varying contexts and settings to contribute to theory, an introduction is given to a range of current theoretical and practical perspectives on children's participation. The acknowledgement of power aspects in research is coupled with a discussion of how different approaches such as participatory action research and participatory appraisal have been used with children to understand their realities and give voice to those who are usually less powerful in decision-making processes. Participatory monitoring and evaluation with children, and evaluation recognising the ways in which evidence is received by decision-makers are also introduced. Finally, ecological theories on child development are presented; these have been increasingly influential as the links between context and process in this study have continued to develop.

### **1.3.2 Chapter 3 – Methodology: Realism and Case Study Research**

The methodology includes describing my own journey from a practitioner in international development to transferring participatory methodologies to the UK. Children's participation was applied following an approach which on reflection, could be determined as interpretivism, under an umbrella of constructionism, forming an understanding with participants of the realities of children's worlds and conducting evaluation in a responsive and participatory way. Working through a pragmatist approach, I have then adopted a realist epistemology for the thesis, to examine how a similar mind-set of rights-based approaches had been applied and received by decision-

makers in three evaluations revisited in Nepal and the UK. Qualitative case study research was undertaken, using a dual approach of reflexivity and critical inquiry, followed by inductive theorising (Stake 2003). Reflections on the research process for the thesis are also offered in this chapter. Appendices include the information sheet and ethical consent forms provided for participants and the format for the semi-structured questionnaire.

### **1.3.3 Chapter 4 – The Three Case Studies and their Selection**

Three case studies in children's participation in evaluation were selected to explore differences in timescale, political/ policy, cultural and institutional settings, and my positionality as the main facilitator in the evaluations. They were also selected following criteria suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1995), including: to provide a richness of data on which to base my reflection, alongside good access to the setting's participants. One was in a developing country context with a community based and an international non-governmental organisation, both working to alleviate poverty in community development in Nepal; the next, conducted at a similar time, also managed from a non-governmental setting, involved excluded youth across the UK; and the last more recent case study was located in a mixed statutory and voluntary sector Children's Fund in England. Appendix 4 shows further detail of the original methodologies for the evaluations revisited.

### **1.3.4 Chapter 5 – Reflection on the Three Case Studies**

Initial barriers and factors that facilitate children's participation in evaluation were explored. The subsequent themes arising from this reflection and the literature included: the political, cultural and institutional context/ setting; transformational change occurring on individual, organisational and broader levels as a result of the process; methodological issues relating to impact; the use of visual participatory methods in evaluation; internal and external evaluation; children's participation in the process; and issues of logistics and power that included timeframe, resources, capacity, roles and position. The chapter is structured according to these themes, drawing on the literature and reflecting on my personal experience as a practitioner. This forms a basis from which to further examine these themes by formulating more specific questions for the critical inquiry.

### **1.3.5 Chapter 6 – Critical Inquiry Findings**

The findings for each of the cases are presented in detail, drawing heavily on the participants' interviews and providing an embedded analysis for each setting. The perspectives of each setting's participants were first analysed separately: children and young people; researchers, mentors and staff; and managers and decision-makers. Perspectives were then compared and key learnings arising from each case presented under themes. The detailed reaction from different groups of participants are included in Appendix 6 and outcomes in response to children from different groups and a table showing the initial reactions of the groups of participants is included in Appendix 7. Interviewees responded to being asked about positive and negative aspects of the evaluations and the analysis could be double for bias. The participants all agreed that they would share positive and negative aspects of the processes in the spirit of learning lessons to be shared, as is apparent from the wide spectrum of views reported throughout the thesis.

### **1.3.6 Chapter 7 – Learning Across Cases and Emerging Change-scape**

Comparisons across cases based on the evidence from the critical inquiry across the cases are presented in this chapter. Findings are discussed under the following areas: transformational change; context – policy, cultural and physical; institutional setting and associated methodological issues; and building a participatory process and children's participation. The inductive theorising from the case study research continues with the emerging 'change-scape'. This helps to structure the analysis and take into account structural and contextual issues and mechanisms to turn outcomes into action. It therefore helps to take into account the context in a more systematic way when trying to achieve more meaningful children's participation in evaluation. Theories of ecological approaches to child development and realist theories inform how the 'Change-scape' is structured and then components are discussed in the context of Lukes' (1974, 2005) dimensions of power and theorists who have built on this.

### **1.3.7 Chapter 8 - Conclusion**

The conclusion reflects on the rationale for the thesis and the inductive theorising and key learning around linking children's participation to context. Also discussed are the implications for theoretical debates on children's participation, together with the value of the research in potentially informing practice in more meaningful participatory and illuminative evaluation in order to achieve improved wellbeing for children.

### **1.4 Originality of the Thesis**

Exploring the links between process and context in relation to children's participation has been identified as a critical aspect of contributing to theory of children's participation (Kirby and Bryson 2002). The thesis also challenges the separation of programmes to work with children separately rather than them being seen as integral to the broader development process (for example, Bartlett 2005). It seeks to move away from tokenism and achieve more meaningful participation through a broader understanding of how power dynamics are played out in communities and institutions, identified as critical to addressing child rights and improving the wellbeing of boys and girls (for example White and Choudhury 2007),

As improving the lives of people and children is one of the main aims of a rights-based approach, Theis (2003) suggests that measuring changes in their lives and their changing priorities must be part of that approach. Participatory appraisal (PA) and participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) have been developed over the past two decades. Visual methods in anthropology and PA have now been applied with children extensively to further understand the lives of children, and in some cases in needs analysis and project planning, but there is often an absence of children's participation in international development processes more generally and more specifically in evaluating effectiveness (Chawla and Johnson 2004). Therefore, the application of participatory visual methods in evaluation is explored as this has evolved over the past decade, including investigating both children's perspectives and the value of the resulting data to decision-makers.

There is criticism that in conventional monitoring and evaluation, the participation of stakeholders has remained tokenistic at the level of involving them as enumerators, rather than active participants in planning, gathering, analysing and using the evaluative evidence (Estrella *et al.* 2000). The thesis also therefore examines how children's participation is understood by different participants in the cases and how children's visual participatory evidence is valued in shaping services and in strategic decision-makers. The complexity of how adults and children participate together, is raised by Percy-Smith (2006) who calls for more research to contribute to theory. In understanding the perspectives of children and young people, researchers, staff and managers it is hoped that insights into how these intergenerational processes work in evaluation may contribute to this. Originality also develops with the inductive theorising of case study research which may be seen against a backdrop of a more general call to develop new theories of children's participation (Tisdall *et al.* 2006 and Thomas 2007).

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Despite the rhetoric of rights being well versed in international debates supported by the wide ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in reality children and young people are not always treated as active participants in the development process, and amplification of their voices can be tokenistic. Even when processes have included children's participation as a central component in evaluation, whether children's views have been taken seriously depends on their standing in the different cultural contexts and the attitudes of adults and people in positions of power towards children and young people and their evidence.

This Chapter introduces some theoretical perspectives on children's participation, and models and debates that have been relevant in informing practice. This includes the role of researchers and researched, and discussions of power relationships that may need to be taken into account in processes of children's participation in evaluation. The analysis has drawn on some of the parallel debates around children's agency in development studies and childhood studies and literature is presented addressing how rights-based approaches in response to the Convention on the Rights of the Child have overlapped with participatory and action research with children.

The following questions are raised: how participatory appraisal visual methods were applied in the evaluations revisited; and to what extent the evidence produced using these methods with children was acceptable to people in positions of power, compared with other kinds of evidence. Useful discourses on gender and power dynamics are introduced, as they are relevant to the analysis of findings. The section on children's participation concludes with a brief account of recent debates in theory and practice.

This literature review provides theoretical underpinning for the participatory evaluation approaches taken in the case studies. The intention in all of the evaluations was to feed

into decision-making processes and inform practice in the programmes and services being evaluated. As there were also attempts to address existing power dynamics and create spaces for communication and collaboration between different stakeholders in the processes, they may be seen as participatory action research. There is also a review of different approaches to evaluation relevant to exploring how decision-makers respond to evaluation and how evidence is translated into action.

Ecological approaches to child development contributed to the inductive theorising in the thesis. They offer a way of placing children in the centre while maintaining a focus on how children and young people relate to different contextual systems. In conclusion, the literature review looks at how context, power and position influence process.

In summary, the literature is presented under the following headings:

- Background to child rights in international development and the UK;
- Children's participation including children as active participants, participatory appraisal with children; transformational change, gender and power, rights-based research with children, and some recent theoretical thinking;
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation and assessment of social change, utilisation and realist evaluation;
- Ecological theories of child development;
- Summary to the key themes in the literature.

## **2.2 Background to Child Rights in International Development and the UK**

Debates about children and young people's participation in the policy arena have implications for how children are regarded in processes of programme or service delivery, implementation and evaluation. Over the past decade the 'invisibility' of children in broader programmes of social development has been highlighted. Since countries ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, many organisations, coalitions and networks working on children's rights in the non-governmental sector came into the centre of debates regarding children's rights and their participation (Boyden 1997). Save the Children, for example, called for more

child-specific information and a greater recognition of their productive contribution in a 'New Agenda for Children' (Save the Children 1995). Children's perspectives were highlighted during this period as needing to be better integrated into policy planning and all aspects of decisions relating to their lives (Van Beers 1995 and Van Beers *et al.* 2006), largely amongst child-focused organisations.

Child rights need to be seen within the broader context of human rights as proclaimed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and although 'rights' were taken on board by humanitarian agencies earlier, translation into broader development policy took some time to be realised with many donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) starting to address rights-based approaches in the late 1990s. Some donors attempted to clarify what was meant by a 'rights-based approach' to development: the publication of the UK White Paper on International Development (DFID 2000) raised three key points for consideration in a rights-based perspective: participation, inclusion and fulfilling obligations. In a more detailed discussion document (Ferguson 1999), there was an attempt to differentiate between needs and rights based approaches by suggesting a framework of individual agency and participation within a context of state responsibility to realise the rights of citizens. During this period however, many development NGOs had a change in emphasis in their in-country programmes by moving from dependence to empowerment, with advocacy often replacing direct delivery of services, and increased devolution of governance in international NGOs and working more through local partners.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been used as a benchmark that has also validated children's participation more officially as it is expressed as a right within Article 12. Children's participation has, however, been most visible internationally in child focused agencies, such as Save the Children (for example, Theis 1996, Boyden and Ennew 1997) and in anthropological studies with street, working and urban poor children, and children in difficult circumstances (for example, Ennew 1994, Nieuwenhuys 1997, Hinton and Baker 1998), where children were treated as active participants rather than passive victims in the development process (Johnson and Ivan-Smith 1998). Internationally, donor support for children has been targeted through programmes to address infant and child health and education, and a focus on elimination of the worst forms of child labour in response to International Labour

Office (ILO) conventions, with support for non-governmental participatory approaches with, for example, child clubs or programmes with street children.

In a broader development context, however, children's participation has been poorly understood (Theis 2010), and children's perspectives have largely been neglected and at best children's voices have been heard and not necessarily acted upon (Chawla and Johnson 2004, Bartlett 2005). This attitude towards children has been criticised by Bartlett (2001 and 2005) in that the interests of children in broader development processes are often sidelined rather than integral and children are treated as a 'special interest group'; Marcus and colleagues (2002) suggest that children's issues are 'add ons' to poverty analysis more generally. Continued discourse has shown a way forward: focusing on the social, economic and political contexts that affect childhood poverty, and on how children need to be seen as integral to a broader analysis of poverty, and more recently wellbeing and broader governance issues (Bartlett 2001, Harper 2002, Harper *et al.* 2003, Williams 2004, Bartlett 2005, Jones and Sumner 2009).

The concept of well-being has been discussed as useful in both developing and developed country contexts to frame impact using a broad lens, addressing the wide range of factors or issues that face children in their everyday lives (Jones and Sumner, 2009). Wellbeing has gained ground in international development in recent years, taking into account the interrelated domains of material, subjective and relational, which relate to how children's participation is seen in this thesis. Wellbeing builds on the work of Sen (1999), to go beyond material possessions and to include notions of entitlements and capabilities. It is central to this thesis as it also draws on learning from right-based approaches, women's empowerment and recent thinking on more relational participation, in that it not only addresses issues of power, including relationships and entrenched inequalities, but also confronts issues of agency and ownership. The approach to wellbeing taken by at the University of Bath takes on board the perspectives of the Psychosocial Assessment of Development and Humanitarian Interventions (PADHI) and explains how 'the experience of wellbeing' is discussed as 'actively becoming', influenced by a range of power dynamics potentially raising conflict, which may in turn require support to an individual in dealing with this (White, 2009b). White discusses how wellbeing and identity differ between cultures and

between people within the same context. She also stresses the importance of change, but also how change is brought about.

Sumner and colleagues (2009) show how the wellbeing lens can be useful in understanding intergenerational transmissions, and also discuss how the approach builds on Sen's (1999) focus on the interactions between beings, doings and feelings. It is those relational aspects of wellbeing that include 'personal and social interactions' and those subjective aspects that include 'values, perceptions and experience' (White, 2008). Inclusive and participatory appraisal approaches to measuring change can help to understand relational and subjective aspects of wellbeing (White and Petite, 2004) and how these are affected by services, although expectations of different stakeholders using evidence from the evaluation would also need to be taken into account.

The focus of wellbeing on agency can also help to understand how evaluation needs to take into account not only the ways in which children may act and respond to services, but also how people in positions of power respond to them (Sumner *et al.* 2009, referring to Lister 2004, p128). Relevant here is therefore the context in which the evaluation is taking place so that cultural norms are understood, as well as policy and institutional context. This is not always static and can depend on changing attitudes and behaviours and on building the capacity of different stakeholders. Individual agency of children and others in the process can also be key to how evaluation can translate into improving services and in turn the wellbeing of children. Copestake (2008) argues that the wellbeing perspective also provides a discursive space across different development approaches, such as rights and local-led, that is relevant to the policy environment.

Sumner and colleagues (2009) raise the issue of wellbeing and context:

*"...human beings are very much influenced by their context and respond to that context or their choice architecture or the organisation of that context in which people make decisions."*  
*(Sumner et al. 2009, p25)*

Cooper (2010, p. 292) working on issues of unhappy childhoods in the UK also highlights the need for acknowledgement of 'socio-cultural context within which young people's experiences are constructed'. This emphasis on context in which wellbeing is

seen is relevant to the emphasis in this thesis on exploring children's participation in different contexts and how this has changed over time.

Promoting wellbeing cannot replace 'politics', and central to promoting wellbeing is transforming the way in which stakeholders engage with other (White, 2009b), also advocated in discussion of creating space for intergenerational dialogue (for example, Percy-Smith, 2006, Mannion, 2010), further discussed in Chapter 7:

*"Promoting the wellbeing of poor and excluded people will thus mean transforming the terms on which they engage with others and others engage with them, at structural as well as more immediate levels"* (White, 2009b, p20)

Providing different levels of continued support for children's agency influences attitudes and aspirations amongst children and also adults, and agency can therefore be regarded as a key factor in poverty transmission (Harper *et al.* 2003, Moncrieffe 2009, Sumner *et al.* 2009). Harper and colleagues also highlight the importance of institutional context and capacity within processes. The extent to which children's perspectives were heard in broader contexts of international development, and in the analysis of children's poverty and wellbeing, is a central part of the critical inquiry in this research.

Whilst the UNCRC provides an international framework to safeguard the rights of children and a basis for rights based work, it has however been criticised for reinforcing an image of childhood that is western in concept and content (Pattnaik 2004). Translating the rhetoric of rights into reality has therefore engendered a range of responses and internationally there are different interpretations of how the convention has been implemented nationally and even locally; for example, a separate charter has been drawn up to address the rights of children in an African context. Burr (2006) discusses how in Vietnam the articles of the Convention are often unsystematically applied, and makes the point that the resources for implementation are unlikely to become available in many developing countries and therefore the national political and economic context must be taken into account. She also discusses the importance of support for the implementation of the UNCRC coming from:

*Popular local support and influence-changing values from within a society, rather than being externally imposed.*

*(Burr 2006, p. 15)*

The conflicting ideas of different organisations on the ground are relevant to the way in which rights and participation in evaluation are seen in this thesis to be interpreted differently, depending on the cultural, political and institutional settings.

Western concepts of childhood have been revealed as inappropriate to transfer in their entirety to the developing world. To an extent, the emergence of the constructionist approach in the new sociology of childhood (James and Prout 1997) can help to address these concerns by constructing childhood through local perspectives and supporting children's agency. Thus, discussions of social construction of childhood help in broadening the views of childhood and how children are treated in research (James and Prout 1997), and the exploratory typology developed, together with conceptual themes identified (agency-structure, universalism-particularism, local-global and continuity-change; James *et al.* 1998), have implications for how children are seen in international development (see Section 2.3 on children as active participants in research in childhood studies). Thomas (2000) and Hart (2008) amongst others, however, have suggested that this paradigm in childhood studies needs to take more account of structural and contextual issues, and of the power dynamics that are prevalent in UK and international development.

Ecological research with children (for example, following the theories of Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1986, 2005) offers an approach that takes into account the ways in which children, as individuals, develop through their evolving interaction with their surroundings or environment, and has been used in developing as well as developed country settings. Tudge (2008) builds on this ecological approach to explore children's participation in everyday activities across cultural settings and in different cultural groups within one society (see Section 2.5). This contextualist approach is used in this thesis to contribute to understanding how children participate in processes of evaluation, including how they develop their identity and capacity throughout the process, and the importance of their communication with other stakeholders at different levels of decision-making.

A rights-based approach has been criticised, especially by anthropologists, for being grounded in western concepts of *individual* children's rights, rather than seeing children as part of a collective of the family and the community (Kellett *et al.* 2004). Despite these concepts arising from largely developed country contexts, the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child has also not had the positive impact that was expected for the poorest children in the UK, based on evidence from organisations like Barnardos, National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Child Poverty Action (Franklin 2002). Whilst statistics have revealed that the situation is worsening for children and young people living in poverty, there has been increasing emphasis on service user involvement in policy in the UK. Legislation has confirmed the need to consult with children, such as the Children Act 1989 and the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs, Department of Education, 1994 (Kirby and Bryson 2002). It has, however, taken policy and institutional changes to address the reality of realising children and young people's rights, for example appointing Commissioners for Children in the four nations and restructuring children's services in the UK. Legislation has focused on ensuring that the voices of children are heard and advocating for the rights of children at a national policy level. Policy and institutional change has been primarily to meet the basic needs of children, including those at risk, to make sure children do not fall through the various safety nets of different agencies, and to protect them from abuse.

Many non-governmental or voluntary sector organisations have picked up the advocacy role for children's rights and their participation, including: larger and more established organisations, such as Barnardos, Save the Children and the Children's Society; networks such as the Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN); organisations run by and for children, for example, 'Article 12', a young persons' agency lobbying for children's participation, and 'Children's Express', a news agency led by children and young people; and organisations that have advocated for issues such as play and leisure that may otherwise be forgotten in an agenda that is often dominated by child protection.

Franklin's categories (2002, p. 3-5) sum up how rights have progressed in the UK and he identifies themes, such as policy and institutional context and the way in which children are seen in society that are central to this thesis. *Intellectually*, children's rights are treated within a social rather than scientific paradigm and it has become 'politically correct' rather than marginal to talk about children as being active participants in research. *Politically*, children's rights are integrated into mainstream politics, with the Labour government having first instituted a Unit for Children and Young People and

rolled out a programme of Children's Funds.<sup>2</sup> *Legally*, Franklin highlights how the Children Act 1989 tries to satisfy both the more paternalistic side of child rights in protecting 'the best interests of the child', and the right for children to express their opinions in decisions affecting their lives. More significantly, he also raises the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into English law in the Human Rights Act 1998, operational in 2000. *Institutionally*, the appointment of Children's Rights Officers locally and Children's Rights Commissioners nationally across the UK is significant, as are the local youth councils and forums, and the inclusion of 'citizenship' in the national curriculum. Lastly, *internationally*, the UNCRC has been accepted by very disparate groups that communicate and join forces to advocate for and implement child rights in the UK and internationally.

Placing children within the context of their personal social relationships and the challenges and constraints of British society, Hill and Tisdall (1997) discuss how children's rights need to be examined in a diversity of household settings, acknowledging the importance of peer relationships and understanding the increasingly prominent issues of drug misuse, crime, child abuse and protection. They also critique the UN Convention definitions of 'children' as under 18 years, although many young people do not regard themselves as children. In considering how children's activities evolve over time they recognise the 'concentric circles of influence' in the immediate and wider social context around the child, in a similar way to ecological social theories. Issues of context and the ages of the children in evaluation are further explored in this research by selecting case studies that cover a range of ages and a range of settings.

There has been a growth of children and young people's participation in the UK, particularly in the area of governmental activity (Thomas 2007). According to Sinclair (2004, cited in Thomas 2007), this may be seen to relate to: the growth in service-user involvement (also discussed in relation to participatory research using ideas from Cornwall 2000 in Section 2.3); the children's rights agenda (specifically Article 12); and the new sociology of childhood. Thomas goes on to discuss (p. 201) how many examples have been confined to the level of consultation, often filtered through organisations such as youth forums and youth councils, although there are also some

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<sup>2</sup> Later introducing the Every Child Matters Framework and, having followed an ecological approach to child development in the area based initiatives of the children's funds, introducing restructuring to achieve a more child centred and holistic approach to children's services.

projects working in community consultation that encourage dialogue (also raised by Percy-Smith in suggesting a model of community learning, see Section 2.3.6 on recent thinking on children's participation below). Flaws in participation arise because participatory methodologies may be imposed because of external purposes, for example to gain service-user perspectives, and children and young people's participation initiatives may end up often being adult-led or imposed (Thomas 2007). The exclusion of some of the more marginalised children, in favour of those who are vocal and invited, is also raised in this analysis, commented on by Tisdall and Davis (2004) in UK contexts. Whether participation is meaningful, how different stakeholder participation (including that of children) is described by participants, whether participation and resulting evidence translates into action, and how processes progress and involve different children are all aspects that resonate with the issues that are explored in revisiting the evaluation case studies.

## **2.3 Children's Participation**

There is increasing recognition of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that emphasises participation and a child's right to be heard in all aspects of decisions relating to their lives (Van Beers *et al.* 2006).<sup>3</sup> What different stakeholders in a process mean by children's participation, however, varies (Percy-Smith and Thomas 2010). In the following sections I will identify the different strands of children's participation that have come from both childhood studies and development studies and which have informed this thesis. Starting with discussions of children as active participants in research processes and models of participation that have been applied in practice, different ways of constructing children's participation are presented. A discussion of participatory appraisal visuals used with children follows, raising issues of power and transformational change. Conceptual frameworks used in gender studies employing different dimensions of power are also presented, as these have been applied to children's participation in this thesis. A rights-based approach to research and evaluation had been followed in the evaluation cases revisited

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<sup>3</sup> Other articles of the Convention, such as 13, 14, 15, 17, 23, 29 and 39, are also relevant to participation and are nicely summarised in a box: 'Children's Participation as recognised in the UK Convention on the Rights of the Child', R. Hart 1997, pp. 12-14

and, although using predominantly visuals in the first cases, the advantages of mixed methods as used in one of the evaluations are also introduced. The section concludes with some of the recent thinking on relational approaches to participation and how the framework of rights and citizenship needs to move forwards.

### **2.3.1 Children as Active Participants in Research**

As discussed in the previous section, working in a more participatory way with children in the global South has set the scene for children being treated as active participants in the development process, positioning children as capable and resourceful members of society who need to have their views respected (Ennew 1994). A shift has been made to advocacy that uses children's voices to make their roles as active participants in society and in development interventions more visible in order to counteract their past treatment as passive victims in society. Arguments to make children more 'visible' in international development are in line with the parallel developments in childhood studies. In constructionist approaches in the new sociology of childhood, children are made more 'visible' in research as they are seen as active participants and social subjects, so research has shifted to seeing more work 'with' children rather than 'on' children (Mayall 2002). This development establishing childhood studies during the 1990s is widely known as the 'new sociology of childhood' and is often referred to as more significant than any particular innovation in methodology due to the reappraisal of researcher relationships with children:

*Children viewed as research subjects, rather (than) research objects captures a new epistemological interest in children's understanding, prioritising the idea that children have subjective worlds worth researching.*  
(Wyness 2006, p. 185)

The ethical status of children in research helps understanding power differences in children's status in research. Alderson (2004, p. 100) classified the following levels of involving children in research: 'unknowing objects of research, aware subjects and active participants'. This can be likened to Cornwall's (2000, p. 78) recognition that in participatory programmes people may be seen as beneficiaries, consumers or active participants. Cornwall states that inviting people to participate as beneficiaries or consumers is not enough and moving towards more 'optimal' participation involves confronting exclusion and discrimination. Ensuring participants can exercise control in

a process and that agency can be exercised means that participatory spaces have to be created in which those people can help to shape themselves. In children's participation, Robinson and Kellett (2004) extend the active participation of children in their discussion of power, especially adult-child power relationships in the research process, and go beyond children being treated as social actors to include children participating as co-researchers. This is important in this research in the consideration of whether evaluations are adult or child-led, or a collaborative approach between adults and children.

When researchers draw on a range of techniques for understanding children as social actors, they face a range of challenges in terms of decision-makers being reluctant to accept and act on 'qualitative' research, compounded by the scepticism surrounding the participation of children in the research process. Access to children has to be gained through gatekeepers who may also silence or seek to exclude their perspectives (Alderson 2004). There are also difficulties in carrying out ethnographic research in families: whilst still being a dominant setting for children, this can be a private and impenetrable domain, especially in a Western setting (Wyness 2006). This has not been the case in educational ethnography where analysis can take place in situ to understand teacher/ pupil dynamics, and thus more seems to be known about children in school than in their homes. However, Alderson (2004) suggests that in schools children may sometimes not even be consulted about their involvement, an example of children as objects of research. In the past, parents have sometimes acted as gatekeepers or proxies in research that omits the voices of children, thus professing to learn about children's world from the perspectives of adults (Alderson 2004, Wyness 2006).

Researchers have also opted to study the separate worlds of children and in the way that James, Jenks and Prout (1998) have discussed the 'tribal' child, they need to understand the different rules, values, language and thinking of children in order to bring meaning to children's worlds. The different areas of tension (raised by Wyness 2006, p. 190) include how the role of the adult researcher in relation to children plays out in the application of different research methodologies. If an ethnographer is to enter the world of children and be seen as an ally, then they need to build trust and empathy with the children who are being researched, thus conflicting with a role of 'dispassionate observer' where the researcher may seem to the children more distant. Different tensions may be addressed by adults carrying out ethnographic research with

children, playing the 'least adult' role (originally identified by Mandell 1991) in trying to get a closer view of what children experience (Wyness 2006, p. 188).

Inevitable power relationships between adult and child researchers cannot be ignored. In facilitating research Mayall (1996) attempts to redress the power imbalance and tries to distance herself from the authority structure of the school, for example, by sitting on low chairs, addressing the children's own agendas, letting them choose companions and finishing sessions when they got bored. Her discussion of researcher/ child relationships and positionality has parallels with the recognition of power imbalances in research in participatory appraisal approaches and how facilitators have to be flexible and aware of preconceptions they hold, their perceived power within communities where the research is carried out, and the style of facilitation they adopt, including body language. Thus, the way in which research is facilitated and the way in which children and young people and researchers, have classified participation of children in an evaluation process are important to take into account in understanding how to address these issues in evaluation methodology. These issues are central to the analysis of this thesis as the way in which children participate needs to be seen within a context of power relationships between children, facilitators of evaluation, and decision-makers who receive, and potentially act on, children's evidence.

The evaluations scrutinised in this study may be regarded as action research as they involved children and young people in communities and services in determining how their lives might be improved through the support that they received from the adults around them and through action which they could also take themselves. Action Research generally lies in a 'pragmatic philosophy' supported and articulated by Dewey who believed that democracy was an ongoing collective process of social improvement (Greenwood and Levin 1998, p. 72, Reason and Bradbury 2006). It has been suggested that action research may be seen as unscientific or 'soft' which has led to a tendency for academics and policy makers to ignore the results. On the other hand, it has also been argued, by Greenwood and Levin (1998, p. 55) that, despite marginalisation in academia, action research is more likely than conventional social science to 'produce reliable and useful information and interpretations of social phenomena'. Being 'scientific' they argue, is often aligned to being objective and impartial; however, they see science as 'a disciplined form of repeated cycles of testing the relationship between thought and action', (Greenwood and Levin 1998, p. 53).

Social sciences, however, they perceive as striving for impartiality and a more 'scientific' process, and therefore sometimes placing too much stress on the disengagement of the researcher from the phenomenon under study and too much distance between thought and action (Greenwood and Levin 1998).

Reason and Bradbury (2006, p. xxiv) argue from within social sciences and highlight the synergies between qualitative methods and approaches. They discuss how qualitative constructivist approaches overlap and are sometimes 'inseparable' from qualitative approaches used in action research, although they also point out that a mix of methods may be chosen depending on their suitability or appropriateness in meeting the aims of the people involved. The key differences they discuss between qualitative constructivist approaches and action research concern the ways in which researchers and research subjects work together, and blurring the distinction between who can and cannot be a researcher, thus bypassing a more traditional and constructed separation between research and application (Reason and Bradbury 2006, p. xxv). This idea of working with those being researched parallels discussions of power relationships in the new sociology of childhood as discussed above. The way in which evidence produced using qualitative action research methods and by children is regarded by decision-makers is further explored in this thesis by revisiting evaluations and interviewing the managers and decision-makers who had been receiving evidence. Research in development agencies is often regarded as a specialised activity carried out only by so-called experts (Pratt and Loizos 1992, p. 1-3). How research is initiated and defined is also raised in considering whether children are involved in determining the agenda of the research (Robinson and Kellett 2004) or how initiation is also included in the nature and level of children's participation (Hart 1992, discussed in Section 2.3.2 below). How children's perspectives have fed into project planning as well as monitoring and evaluation is also relevant to this thesis in exploring how children, as well as the different people involved in the evaluation processes, regarded children's participation in evaluation and whether children's evidence led to follow-up action.

Participatory action research (PAR) has been applied with children as a way of building their experiences into knowledge and influencing decisions that affect their lives for many years (for example, Niewenhuys 1997). This has been developed alongside approaches using ethnographic and participatory appraisal with marginalised children in the developing world (see background on child rights in Section 2.2 and for further

discussion of participatory appraisal visual methods see Section 2.3.3). Particularly relevant to this thesis is how in respect to PAR with urban poor children, Neiuwenhuys (1997) noted the additional marginalisation of action research carried out by children, and how participation requires mediation. She suggests that responsibility needs to be taken by the researcher to negotiate more spaces for children's agency in their local contexts, and to help shift the power relationships between children, the state and society. This is relevant to recent discussions raising issues of negotiation, dialogue and space in children's participation showing the value of sharing perspectives across disciplines and contexts (themes that are analysed in further detail in Chapter 7).

### **2.3.2 Models of Children's Participation Applied in Practice**

Models of children's participation that are easily accessible to practitioners have been widely used in child focused organisations and have helped to give some structure to define levels or types of participation. Hart's ladder of children's participation (Hart 1992) has been broadly applied, for example, in project evaluation by Plan International to gain an understanding of levels of participation that can be achieved in social development interventions. It is also often used as an introduction to practitioners on participation, offering a reference point on how to assess the nature of participation in operational projects. Referring to research carried out with Save the Children by Barn and Franklin (1996), Shier (2001) points out that the two most widely used models that informed participants' practice were the ladder of participation and the theories of Paulo Freire (for example, Freire 1972), although practitioners Shier interviewed also often referred to principles, such as empowerment and respect.

Hart's ladder is based on Arnstein's ladder of citizen's involvement (Arnstein 1969). Both have highlighted how so-called 'non participation' on the bottom rungs of the ladder is tokenistic, manipulating citizens or children, while levels at the top of the ladder indicate how children can start to take control in a process. Hart (1997) distinguishes between child initiated and adult initiated processes and refers to how decisions are shared, therefore acknowledging the need to take into account adult-child power relationships. The ladder of children's participation has, however, been criticised, especially in the context of societies where participation of children is low and projects that encourage greater participation still remain on the bottom rungs, despite a considerable amount of progress (for example, Abrioux 1998, working in

Afghanistan). The context or starting point within different institutions and communities therefore needs to be taken into account in order to understand the degrees of participation that can be achieved in any process (Johnson 1998).

Criticisms of the ladder, and seeking to address participation in different ways to feed into practical programming and evaluation, has resulted in interesting modifications in thinking about a different range of participatory approaches (West 1998), circles of participation (Treseder 1997) and a spectrum of participation (for example, International Association of Public Participation's training manual, IAP2 2006). I have employed the spectrum of participation in prompting participants to discuss their participation in the previous evaluation processes (see Chapter 3, especially question 5 in the interview). Also informing this discussion were the different ways in which participants expressed children's roles in the evaluation, taking into account the power dynamics of participatory processes (see Section 2.3.4).

Another tool that built on Hart's ladder and grew out of the practice of the Article 31 Action Network in the UK was 'Pathways to Participation' (Shier 2001). This identifies five levels of participation: children are listened to; children are supported in expressing their views; children's views are taken into account; children are involved in decision-making processes; and children share power and responsibility in decision-making (Shier 2001, p. 110). Commitment is also addressed at each level. Three stages of commitment are considered: *openings* where there is individual commitment; *opportunities* when the worker or organisation has the resources to work at that level; and *obligations* when policy is formed to enable the level of participation to become more established or sustainable. This then enables a worker or organisation to analyse where in the model they lie and what action needs to be taken to move forward. This is relevant to this thesis as it takes into account the way in which individuals and organisations and their changing capacities form the conditions that are needed for children's participation to be taken seriously in decision-making. However, drawing on his more recent work with child coffee workers in Nicaragua, Shier (2010) recognises that:

*'Pathways to Participation' and other models like it, are inadequate to conceptualise the complex and multidimensional reality of children and young people's participation in society, covering, as they must, every conceivable setting from the family home to national and global*

*institutions and within these settings levels and styles of engagement as unique and diverse as the children and young people themselves.*

*(Shier 2010, p. 25)*

### **2.3.3 Children's Participation and Visual Participatory Appraisal Methods**

Largely from a developing country perspective, although also including some UK examples, in 1997 a group of organisations (the Institute for Development Studies, Save the Children and the Institute of Education) jointly organised an international workshop of academics and practitioners to address some of the issues that had confronted them in applying children's participation in practice. This led to a publication called 'Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process' (Johnson *et al.* 1998). Some of the issues highlighted included: ethical frameworks and dilemmas; cultural influences on attitudes and perspectives; institutions and power dynamics; children as active participants; and examples of how children's participation had been applied in a range of contexts, including in crisis situations. It was intended that this would broaden the scope for children being treated as active participants in international development processes, as well as bringing up different dimensions of participation with children and young people that needed to be addressed when planning processes.

A strand of this workshop built on visual participatory appraisal approaches with children. In the ongoing development of participatory rural appraisal (PRA), participatory appraisal (PA) or participatory learning and action (PLA), aspects of attitudes and behaviour of the facilitators and many ethical issues arising in the research process, such as how the process of research should lead to tangible outcomes for the participants, were set centre stage in the methodological discussions around the use of visuals in participatory research and development work. Chambers (1997) refers to how the application of PRA addresses the power dynamics existing in processes and organisations, by creating the space for reflection and allows for different views to emerge and to be articulated. Chambers reflects on this transition in development of the methodology over time:

*The attitudes, behaviours, roles and mindsets of researchers and then of facilitators emerged as key dimensions, shifting as they did from extracting information from local people to empowering them to do*

*their own appraisal, analysis, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation.*  
*(Chambers 2006, p. 99)*

The emergence of ‘issues of difference’ within PRA (notably Welbourn 1991) and gender analysis of participatory practice (for example, Guijt and Shah 1998) is relevant to this thesis as it paved the way for the development of more child sensitivity in the use of visuals within PRA. Over the past years there has been more acceptance of the issues of poverty, inequity and social justice in the ‘North’ or developed world some of which is summarised in the 50<sup>th</sup> issue of ‘PLA notes’ (Flowers and Johnson 2004) and reflected by the multiplication of articles from the North in this journal. As much of this work has been conducted in urban areas, the term PA rather than PRA is generally more acceptable in this setting and is therefore more applicable across the cases in this thesis. Whilst recognising the value of including action in the term ‘participatory learning and action’ (PLA), I have found as a practitioner that people are familiar with ‘participatory appraisal’.

There has been a proliferation of visual methods in overseas development, through the application of applied anthropological, participatory action research (PAR) and participatory appraisal (PA) approaches that became increasingly popular throughout the 1980s and 90s. Visual methodologies, applied by anthropologists have helped to understand the lives of street and working children (as mentioned above) and recent examples of ethnographic approaches remain rooted in anthropology (Reynolds *et al.* 2006). Some ethnographers have adopted a multi-method approach including visuals to gain a better understanding of children’s worlds, including using maps, friendship networks and diaries, similar to some of the techniques employed in participatory appraisal.

There have also been many different approaches to the application of participatory methods, including participatory appraisal visuals. This originated with visuals being applied in a quick and extractive way developing into an empowerment approach acknowledging diversity and power. The methods themselves having been developed and applied in different and innovative ways (Brock and Pettit 2007) which has in turn caused concern about quality of research applying PA approaches. Alongside acknowledgement of the need for flexibility and diversity rather than standardisation or imposition of an approach, PA methods have to be judged by the merits of the different processes in which they are applied (Cornwall and Guijt 2004).

Chambers (2007c, p. 183-6) discusses the conditions for success in applying participatory methods, including: continuity of institutional support; organisational responsibility for dissemination; matching time and resources to scale of impact; and coordinating the different requirements of donors or funders. Disabling conditions include: discontinuation of funding; inappropriate indicators and evaluations; and the dislocation of relationships and trust. It is just these sorts of enabling and disabling conditions that are relevant to the research question in order to understand how context can influence process and outcomes in the evaluation cases in this thesis. The fact that Chambers also identifies inappropriate evaluation and indicators of success as disabling is also pertinent.

There have been critiques of participatory appraisal for its lack of attention to power and politics on the one hand and the potential for the approach to be used to manipulate power dynamics (for example, Cooke and Kothari 2001). Initially referred to as rapid rural appraisal in the 1970s and 1980s where a set of techniques were applied to gain a quick understanding of rural poverty, there has been an ongoing development of participatory appraisal influenced by a long tradition of participatory action research (PAR), Paulo Freire's pedagogy of empowerment and debates from anthropology. To some extent, however, the developments within the participatory appraisal approach have left practitioners at various stages of application from simplistic application of a set of techniques through to a rigorous analysis of power, recognition of potential for manipulation and the impact of action research on political leverage, institutional and community dynamics.

Responses include developments on how to move to more transformative development: Hickey and Mohan (2004) suggest building on historical perspectives of participation and positive aspects of what they refer to as populist participation in development as advocated by Chambers (for example, 1997, 1983) and development professionals during the 1980s. This can be combined with ideas put forwards since the 1990s of social capital, participatory governance and citizenship participation, where participation is primarily a right for citizenship (Hickey and Mohan 2004). This parallels the recent debates within children's participation that emphasise participation rights and achieving children's civil rights as a broader process of citizenship, taking into account the broader politics and power dynamics in international development (for example, Theis 2010 and Lansdown 2010) or encompassing both social and political

dimensions of participation (Thomas 2007; see Section 2.3.6 below). There is a need to further reflect on how participatory approaches are applied, especially with children, whilst capturing empowerment and creativity of participants and transformational changes in a participatory process. This applies to the question of whether participatory evaluation might result in transformational change at different levels (from individual to a broader societal level) that is explored in the evaluations revisited in this research.

Thus, although participatory methods have been criticised for being a set of methods that can be applied in a positivist way, they can also be applied in a way that can create space for the expression of differing worldviews and perceptions of reality. Allowing creativity and drawing on forms of expression such as pictures, drama and song can be valuable in giving people marginalised from decision-making a say (Cornwall 2004, p. 86). In this thesis, the types of visuals referred to, whilst including some role-play, photography and video, are predominantly drawings and diagramming including maps, transects, grids, matrices and charts, influenced by both participatory appraisal (PA) and ethnographic approaches (referred to in the thesis as PA visuals for shorter reference). The use of PA with children has, however, only gradually been developed and accepted within the broader approach. The initial recognition that groups needed to be split into age and gender came from a gender analysis and also a desire to gain the perspectives of the older people within communities. Facilitators such as Welbourn (1991) raised attention to the analysis of difference that was needed in applying rapid rural appraisal:

*There is a deeply ingrained assumption amongst many development workers that rural communities are fairly homogenous groups of people, who have similar outlooks, problems and needs. It is also assumed that female headed households and people with disabilities are even poorer and more vulnerable than others and are in need of special help.*

*Neither of these statements is necessarily true. Rural communities are rarely homogenous and the poorest do not always have the same characteristics. RRA methods can help us to recognise these fallacies.*

*(Welbourn 1991, p. 14)*

This issue of RRA Notes, Number 14 (1991), was seen by many as a landmark in understanding ‘issues of difference’ in participatory appraisal approaches. The importance of issues of gender and ethnicity were acknowledged, and community groups split into old men, old women, young men and young women, thus also recognising generational issues, although at this point there was also a focus on ensuring the perspectives of the elders was not lost. There was and still is a tendency in PA, as in broader development processes, to cluster women and children together (as discussed in Section 2.2). Guijt and colleagues (1994), however, highlighted the importance of listening to children’s views, demonstrating how otherwise their unique concerns would be missed in their work for Redd Barna and the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) in Uganda. International child focused agencies largely took the lead in using visual methods with children, also building on the anthropological and rights-based approaches employed with street and working children (also raised in Section 2.2). From here, the use of visuals with children have been employed in a number of different studies, most of which have been led from within child-focused non governmental agencies, although more recently they have also been applied within the statutory sector. Earlier examples of PA visuals being used with children are provided by: Guijt *et al.* (1994) in Uganda, Johnson *et al.* (1995) and Sapkota and Sharma (1996) in Nepal, Theis (1996) in Vietnam, and in the UK West (1998), O’Kane (1998) and Thomas and O’Kane (1999).

Other strands of work have also been influential in the broader acceptance of the use of visuals with children in PA and internationally. In addition to visuals applied in ethnographic research, the development in the 1990s of the participatory approach ‘Reflect’,<sup>4</sup> linking PRA, literacy and empowerment in the developing world, inspired by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (Archer 2007); and the ‘Growing Up in Cities Programme’ (Lynch 1977), built on work on urban renewal in Britain and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s to include youth perspectives in planning that was carried out in developed and developing country settings (Chawla and Johnson 2004). The entry point for the use of PRA visuals into practice is marked by special issues of the journal ‘PLA notes’.<sup>5</sup> The historical perspective of this account of children and PRA is at least partially documented in the 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the journal (Chawla and Johnson 2004).

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<sup>4</sup> Originally developed within ActionAid and known as ‘Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques’, now simply referred to as ‘Reflect’.

<sup>5</sup> Volume 25 (1995) edited by Johnson; Volume 42 (2001) edited by Chawla.

Again, there are parallel debates in childhood studies. Bridging the communication gap between disciplines as she has worked in the UK and internationally with Save the Children, O’Kane (2000) writes about how the development of participatory techniques fits in with the new sociology of childhood, and in talking about the visuals used in the decision-making study carried out with Thomas (Thomas and O’Kane 1999), she concludes:

*Thus, while reinforcing that children’s lives are structured by boundaries regulated by adults, in discussions surrounding the participatory techniques the children provided clear illustrations of their own active attempts to negotiate and push back the boundaries, thus demonstrating they are social actors in their own right, with their own agendas.*  
(O’Kane 2000, p. 157)

Whilst verbal and conversational techniques can allow the respondent a degree of autonomy in giving their own perspectives on their social world, Wyness (2006) suggests that the use of different methods including visuals has also allowed power differentials in research with children to be addressed (also discussed in Section 2.3):

*...researchers ... have produced innovative methods as a way of engaging with young people and alleviating power differences between researcher and researched.*  
(Wyness 2006, p. 193)

These different visual and innovative ways that ethnographers have started to use also raise tensions arising from child-centred research methods, such as the assumption that children can only express themselves using drawings, role-play and games rather than more conventional verbal techniques (Wyness 2006). This assumes a hierarchy in verbal and visual techniques where the visual is seen as a means of engaging children and having fun, and not necessarily a set of methods that could be used with adults as well as children. Visual data, for example, photographs, sketches, maps and signs, have long been regarded as raw materials for anthropological ethnography, but despite this, Emmison and Smith (2000) argue that visual researchers have for many years been ‘ghettoised’ in some social science disciplines, such as sociology. Rather than accepting claims that visual data are marginalised and neglected, they hope:

*....to show the visual is a pervasive feature not only of social life, but of many aspects of social inquiry as well.*  
(Emmison and Smith 2000, p. 2)

They take visuals to include not only two-dimensional but also three-dimensional material, such as objects, body language and signs. Whilst many maintain that visual data are inherently qualitative in nature and come from a constructionist perspective, there are people who analyse visuals in a more quantitative way. Pole (2008) suggests that there is an epistemological shift from pictures of childhood, to the use of visuals to contribute to knowledge about childhood. He also questions whether ethical practices may be compromised through collection, especially in child-focused research, of large amounts of data that are intimate and personal in nature. Despite becoming more accepted in some areas of social sciences and used extensively in participatory processes, depending on how visuals are applied in practice and evidence analysed, they could be seen in quite a positivist way. This highlights the need to look at different routes and epistemologies that may determine how visuals are developed, applied, analysed and accepted in different disciplines and contexts, and how important ethical issues are in their application.

#### **2.3.4 Gender, Power and Children's Participation**

The analysis of power that has been helpful in transforming 'women in development' to 'gender and development' has informed the theoretical approach taken in this thesis. The increased visibility of women moving to a gender in development approach can be compared to transforming 'children in development' to an cross cutting analysis by generation or age. That is moving from regarding children as beneficiaries, often seen as separate to broader development processes and as objects or passive recipients of services and change (see Section 2.2), to valuing perspectives from children as active participants. Within development studies, the integration of children's perspectives leading to more effective poverty reduction strategies has been likened to integrating the perspectives of poor women and men into participatory poverty strategies (Marcus *et al*, 2002). Interesting parallels have also been drawn between women's studies and gender, and the changes in childhood studies (for example, Alanen 2005).

Alanen (2005) likens childhood studies to the beginnings of 'women's studies'. She discusses how following the 'invisibilisation' of children in both science and social science, the development of child-centred research and the social construction of childhood has treated children as active participants, recognising children's

competencies in their everyday lives. Moving from treating children as victims in the development process to prioritising children's perspectives and their agency may therefore come to be seen as similar to the 'feminist standpoint'. This has been an approach prevalent in the 'women in development' movement, taking the vantage point of 'the poor Third World woman' and thus constructing knowledge of the world by 'the location of the knower in the social world' (Kabeer 1994, p. 80-81). Here, the focus was on the empowerment of individuals or groups of women that, in theory, had previously lacked further analysis of power dynamics of the structural and political nature of gender. According to Alanen (p. 41), children can also be seen as 'knowers' within a generational system in which 'they gain practical knowledge of what it is to be a 'child' in the kind of society in which they are positioned as 'children'': they have their own understanding based on social location, thus beginning in theorizing 'the social' from a children's standpoint.

Alanen suggests that taking an approach of children's standpoint would not stop at child-centred research, but would also analyse social processes and practices that affect their everyday lives and the changes needed in social relations between generations. Kabeer (1994) discusses how transformation can only occur when structures and institutions that have embedded inequity are challenged and hierarchies of knowledge reversed:

*Transformed possibilities for development come into view if we undertake a process of expanding conventional categories of analysis, revealing their interconnections and reversing the hierarchies of values embedded within them.*

*(Kabeer 1994, p. 79)*

Gendered approaches to power (Kabeer 1994, built on Lukes 1974) can also help to understand children's participation in development and can be applied to evaluation (also raised by Mannion 2010 and further discussed in Chapter 7). Kabeer (1994) uses a three-dimensional analysis of power from Lukes (1974) to understand gender in development: 'Power to', 'Power over' and 'Power within' (see Table 2.1 for a summary of these terms). Lukes (1974, 2005) takes power through three-dimensions. The first he suggests as being based on a behavioural model where there is observable conflict on which decisions are based. The second adds to this, structural and contextual issues of values, beliefs and institutional procedures. Luke's third 'radical' or more political dimension addresses the underlying potential or latent issues of

conflict that recognises differences in interest, ideology and influence of those who exercise power and those who are excluded from political processes.

**Table 1: Three Dimensions of Power**

Dimensions of Power	
Power to	Capacity of individuals to make decisions and act
Power over	Takes into account the influence of institutional rules and procedures, including in the household
Power within	Recognition of conflicts of interest that may deepen with awareness

The table is constructed from phrases taken from Crewe and Harrison (1998, p. 58), where they discuss Kabeer's (1994, p. 229) modification in relation to gender of Lukes' (1974) analysis of power.

The radical view of power put forward by Lukes (1974, 2005) is also analysed in action research (AR) by Cornwall and Gaventa (2006, p. 71-73) in discussing how power and knowledge are 'inextricably intertwined'. They, however, critique Lukes' three-dimensional approach in that it seems to concentrate on 'power over' and does not recognise that power can be used in a beneficial way. They also refer to gender analysis (for example Kabeer, 1994) to further explore the 'power within' that helps to shape identity and agency, but continue with an analysis of power around the theories of Foucault, as they suggest that, rather than conceptualising power as a resource, it could be treated as more productive and relational. This criticism can also be addressed by modifying and expanding on the dimensions to incorporate the gendered analysis and developing an approach that locates power in place, recognising that power is 'exercised' rather than 'held' and relational with the additional dimension of 'power with', as put forward by Allen (2003), VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) and Chambers (2006); see paragraphs below.

Lukes himself recognised this criticism, and in revisiting his radical view of power he (Lukes 2005, p. 109) identifies an ability or capacity that may or may not be exercised, moving away from only thinking of power as domination and instead recognising the way in which power over others can be 'productive, transformative, authoritative and

compatible with dignity'. Chambers (2006) also highlights the need for a complementary agenda to working to empower marginalised groups, thus influencing how people in positions of power may use their 'power over' in a more positive and inspiring way:

*Seeing things from the decision-maker's point of view, and analysing how they can be influenced and helped, needs a leap of the imagination.*

*(Chambers 2006, p. 103)*

Chambers recognised how power has to be addressed from the perspective of empowering poor and marginalised rural people, but also in changing the way in which people in positions of power affected the application and outcomes of participatory research processes. Having referred to 'Putting the last first' (1983) he then also reverses this concept to 'Putting the first last' (1997), where hierarchies of power, dominance and subordination are considered and the roles of people in positions of power in decision-making are challenged to examine what changes may be needed to their own personal, professional and institutional practices. Chambers (2006, p. 100) has then used what he refers to as one of the most useful ways to describe power in participatory processes, drawing on VeneKlasen and Miller's (2002) four following categories:

1. Power over, meaning the power of an upper over a lower, usually with negative connotations such as restrictive control, penalising and denial of access;
2. Power to, also agency, meaning effective choice, the capability to decide on actions and do them;
3. Power with, meaning collective power where people, typically lowers, together exercise power through organisation, solidarity and acting together;
4. Power within, meaning personal self-confidence.

Mannion (2010) refers to Kesby's (2005) application of Lukes' power dimensions, specifically 'power over' and 'power within', and relates this to children's participation, also including the concept of 'power with' that is added by Allen (2003) and discussed by Kesby (2007). Mannion suggests a conceptual change with regard to children's participation that is helpful to this thesis and complements my analysis from the case study research (see Chapter 7). Whilst recognising children's voice as having perhaps been a useful starting point, participation would thus be framed in spatial and relational terms and be conceptualised as 'intergenerational performance', taking into

account the power dynamics at play and the negotiation that takes place for spaces in which to participate. Lundy (2007, cited in Mannion 2010) argues that ‘voice’ needs first for children to have the space to express themselves, then to be listened to (audience) and to be acted upon (influence). Rather than regarding an individual as an autonomous rational agent who is empowered, we must work with the role of self, agency and identification; seeing power as relational, reciprocal and lateral (Mannion 2010).

### **2.3.5 Rights-Based Research and Children’s Participation**

A framework of rights-based research has been suggested by Beazley and Ennew (2006) as a way to address some of the shortcomings in applying a purely qualitative participatory approach, or being dominated by numbers: the ‘tyranny of the quantitative’ and the ‘tyranny of participation’. ‘Tyranny of participation’ was a phrase coined by Cooke and Kothari (2001), as discussed above, who referred to reinforcement of oppressive structures through participatory research and Beazley and Ennew discuss the emphasis that they question in participatory research:

*.....on generating knowledge from the perspective of those being researched, rather than the perspective of the researcher.*

*(Beazley and Ennew 2006, p. 191)*

They emphasise the role of the researcher as well as the researched, and there have also been discussions in participatory appraisal about the power dynamics between researchers and participants and the importance of facilitation. Beazley and Ennew (2006) emphasise the role of the researcher and suggest that if people studied are not involved in all of the stages, from initial definition of the research questions to collecting and analysing the data, to designing and implementing intervention, then that approach is not participatory, in a similar way to action research. A rights-based research approach advocates the importance of different stakeholder perspectives and the use of mixed methods, both of which are explored in this thesis. Cornwall (2003), in critiquing the practical application of PRA, suggests that incorporating the challenge of inclusion would shift towards a rights-based approach, thus enabling issues of inequity, exclusion and discrimination to be addressed.

Beazley and Ennew (2006) argue that there are key differences in research design between participatory and rights-based approaches, despite the two approaches not being mutually exclusive and some of the methods being the same. In a rights-based approach they stress the importance of: a whole range of stakeholders and interested parties being involved in the definition of the research question; a protocol being followed that is designed by the research team that can result in large-scale data collection of robust information; a staged approach to the process where methods are ordered depending on how appropriate they are for that stage; and adherence to an ethical strategy which is written into the protocol (see Chapter 3). Although it may be argued that these are components of any good process of research, there have been many questions about the quality of the ever-increasing participatory research, some of which was too focused on visual methods, carried out in many parts of the world, as discussed by Cornwall (2003) and Cornwall and Guijt (2004).

Questionnaires, for example, can be carried out in a participatory way as is shown by West (1998) in child-led research carried out with Save the Children in England where children had decided not to use participatory appraisal techniques due to the low credibility that these methods might have with the adults that they wanted to influence. The research was totally controlled by the children, and the way that they addressed power dynamics with the adults receiving the information and making the decisions was to involve them throughout the process from developing the research aims at the outset. Beazley and Ennew (2006) argue that questionnaires can be, for example, placed, not at the first stage, but at subsequent stages of the research when there is more familiarity with the issues to be explored in a questionnaire. Also, in order to analyse the data in a rigorous way then a protocol should be adhered to so that the data is collected in a systematic way.

Where a protocol for rights-based research was put forward in work carried out for Save the Children Sweden, it was advocated that data could be collected in a systematic way and be of a numerical (quantitative) and descriptive (qualitative) form, feeding into both programme planning and monitoring and also comparative studies (Boyden and Ennew 1997). This rights-based approach to research, which mixes the qualitative and the quantitative and addresses some the criticisms related to participatory research, has been put forward as a way of tackling the complex realities

that face researchers in practical on-the-ground development programmes. The concepts expressed here are particularly relevant to the analysis of case studies chosen for this thesis, as many of the same issues were identified in carrying out the case studies. I was trained by Judith Ennew in my early work on 'Listening to Smaller Voices' (Johnson *et al.* 1995) and have drawn on the work carried out by Boyden and Ennew (for example 1997) in subsequent participatory training and evaluation: hence influencing the methodological approaches taken in the case studies revisited in the thesis.

Discussing research approaches for Save the Children, Laws (2003) refers to the importance of reflexivity in a researcher acknowledging their own point of view and how this influences perception and advocates the strengths and weaknesses in different traditions and, in an example taken from research with refugee children, explains that the constructivist approach may be more likely to result in action by the refugees themselves, whereas a more positivist approach may be more likely to attract funding to a particular programme of action. Laws acknowledges that most research for practical purposes contains elements of both and that 'this is how it should be'. In presenting different traditions of research, she suggests that constructivist epistemologies have in common:

*...the ideas that people generate themselves. (Laws 2003, p. 27)*

She then goes on to say how important it is to take a realistic approach to research:

*...research is all about the power to define reality. (Laws 2003, p. 26)*

This concept is discussed further in the epistemology of realism and the methodology taken for this thesis (Chapter 3). This is explored in the research as, even when going into an evaluation taking a similar rights-based approach to evaluation, the cultural, policy and institutional context in which the evaluation is taking place influences the way in which the evaluation methodology is applied and how research findings are received by people in positions of power and by the participants themselves (discussed further for each case in Chapter 6).

This pragmatic or realistic approach to research and evaluation is one that seems more prevalent in the realm of practitioners working on the ground than in many academic disciplines and, despite growing exceptions, there is a concern amongst academics involved in action and participatory research that their work can be marginalized

within their own institutions.<sup>6</sup> Within a rights-based framework, the evaluations revisited had used participatory appraisal visuals, and also in some cases a mix of the qualitative and quantitative, to measure impact of services on the lives of children. As well as debates around mixed methods being relevant to rights-based research, Chambers (2007a) has also documented some of the ways in which numbers have been used in participatory appraisal approaches and how quantitative research can be carried out alongside qualitative. Jones and Sumner (2009) also call for a mixed methods approach in addressing child wellbeing and Kirby and Bryson (2002, p. 6) suggest that evaluation and research to ensure that young people are meaningfully involved in public decision-making should ‘adopt a mixed methods approach’. As most evaluations Kirby and Bryson reviewed were qualitative, they suggested also including ‘quantitative, longitudinal and control studies’. Thus, there needs to be a balance between gaining the perspectives of youth and adults, and getting other complementary objective measures. This is also pertinent to the findings of the critical inquiry, and is discussed in more detail in the analysis of generalisations across the cases (analysed further in Chapters 6 and 7).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) define mixed methods as being a distinct methodology with philosophical assumptions, whereas some researchers (including Creswell and Plano Clark) previously tended to talk about mixed methods only at the level of the techniques and methods of collecting and analysing data:

*Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007, p. 6)*

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<sup>6</sup> Discussed in open space at the People, Places and Participation Conference held at Durham University in January 2008.

They do, however, recognise the time and resources it takes to conduct mixed method research and that researchers then need to be trained in both traditions. There is now not only international interest, but also interdisciplinary interest in mixed method research (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007), (see the comparisons across cases in the findings, Chapter 7).

### **2.3.6 Some Recent Thinking on Children's Participation**

Recently, conceptual thinking around children's participation has moved towards establishing how: children's rights and citizenship can be addressed in the broader dynamics of governance and the changing political economy (for example, Bartlett 2005 and Theis 2010); creating spaces for participation and transformational change (Shier 2010, building on Cornwall 2004, and Mannion 2010, building on, for example, Kesby 2005, 2007 and Mannion 2007); and how power dynamics need to be addressed through creating opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, both in the everyday lives of children and in processes of participation (for example, Percy-Smith 2006, Mannion 2010). These debates are relevant to trying to understand the preconditions that led to more inclusive processes of participation with children that may then be relevant to the broader debates that have been drawn on in this literature review, as they have been to the inductive theorising and modelling in this thesis, discussed further in Chapter 7.

*More experimentation with new procedures and processes may help in getting a more practical, context specific, understanding of pre-conditions for more inclusive and deliberative democracy.*

*(Cornwall 2004, p. 87)*

Dialogue is a key theme emerging within discourses on children's participation in terms of how children's and adults' roles have to be considered as they evolve, and Mannion (2010) suggests a reframing that incorporates an understanding of the outcomes that emerge as both spatial and relational:

*I suggest that, through what we call children and young people's participation, knowledge does not emerge from individuals, but rather emerges within intergenerational and interpersonal dialogues within spaces that are also 'part of the action'. (Mannion, 2010, p. 388)*

This concept is harnessed in the research undertaken in this thesis as children, young

people, service staff and managers are asked about children's and their own roles and what changes they had noticed at individual and organisational level. This is also discussed more fully in the analysis of results and conclusions in Chapter 7.

The research considers two ways of looking at participation in terms of political or social relations, identified by Thomas (2007 p. 206), where the social 'speaks of networks, of inclusion, of adult-child relationships, and of the opportunities for social connection that participatory practice can create', while the political 'speaks of power, and challenge, and change'. These discourses may be used to describe the same practice or to advocate different types of participatory practices, but what needs to be highlighted is the lack of children's participation in processes that 'actually produce important decisions, or in contributing to defining the terms of the policy debate' (Thomas 2007, p. 107). In this thesis, I explore issues that may be conceptualised as social as above, but also which are political in that they contribute to understanding how the context may determine different opportunities for participation and indeed how, through a participatory process, that context could be changed.

Building on the progress of Franklin's (2002) UK based handbook of Child Rights, the 'Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation' includes many contributions from the UK and internationally. In its conclusion, Percy Smith and Thomas (2010) raise the idea of participation as a variable construct and go beyond institutions and policy to examine issues of values, self-determination and autonomy: negotiations with adults will be needed in order to reach more meaningful participation. Rather than children's participation being seen within the mindset of the right of an individual child to 'have their say', the concept of agency is central to children, acting as citizens within the context of decision-making in everyday settings. Local level interventions with children using different participatory methodologies and building intergenerational collaboration and dialogue, has to be linked to the need to understand and create participatory space in context of the broader political structures (Percy Smith and Thomas 2010). Looking at children's participation in a broader political context is also advocated by White and Choudhury (2010) who also stress how researchers and practitioners should go out to where children are rather than inviting them into adult spaces to advocate in a rather tokenistic way (White and Choudhury 2007).

In public decision-making, Theis (2010) suggests that children's participation has become meaningless and is often met with increasing criticism due to children's negative experiences in high-level events and the lack of a sufficiently strong theoretical basis:

*As a concept, participation is an empty vessel that can be filled with almost anything, which is one of the reasons why it has enjoyed such widespread popularity amongst development agencies.*  
(Theis 2010, p. 344)

Where the focus has been on amplifying the voice of children, a framework of rights and citizenship may therefore be seen as a way forward. A rights-based research framework had helped in the application of mixed, including participatory, methodologies with children in evaluation in the cases revisited, although even with the involvement of different stakeholders throughout the process there is still a question of who is listening, and this became a focus of this research. Taking a starting point of understanding citizenship as a 'collection of rights and responsibilities that define members of a community', if we are to see more meaningful participation where children can start 'to take on more active roles in their communities and to demand and defend their rights', children's civil rights will have to be achieved as a prerequisite (Theis 2010 p. 344-345). Even if processes take into consideration the different ways to support children in different levels of governance and ensure that their perspectives feed into decision-making processes, the way in which this will vary depending on local context and capacities of different stakeholders needs to be understood. Action for policy and legislative change will not be reached or linked to broader governance agendas unless the starting point for research is understood more fully including a full understanding of both context and existing capacities:

*What is possible depends to a large extent on the political systems of civil society in a country, and on the local context and capacities.*  
(Theis 2010, p. 351)

Linking broader rights to participation also includes holding Government to account for their responsibilities (Lansdown 2010): an important point in considering how evaluation might be carried out, whilst offering more accountability to children:

*Children's participation will never become a reality without holding governments fully to account for introducing the necessary legislation,*

*policy and practice to ensure that children are enabled to claim their right to be heard and taken seriously in all decisions affecting them.*

*(Lansdown 2010, p. 11)*

In calling for better definitions of participation as an integral aspect of addressing child rights, it needs to be recognised that there are national contexts in which there is a lack of opportunity for marginalised adults as well as children to meaningfully participate (Lansdown 2010). In many developing country settings, advocating for children's voices to be heard has been done in the absence of giving a voice to their sometimes poor and marginalised parents or adults in the communities in which they live. Thus, whilst children's capacities and interest in participating in decision-making need to be more broadly recognised, creating opportunities for children to participate in national or international advocacy has to be balanced with development processes in children's own communities for which they feel ownership, taking into account power and cultural change (Lansdown, 2010):

*Real Participation does involve a transfer of power to children. Achieving that transfer can only be achieved through the introduction of legal rights, means to redress and wide-ranging cultural change towards respect for children as rights holders, entitled to active participation in all the decisions that impact on their lives.*

*(Lansdown 2010, p. 11)*

The primary purpose for participation, whether it is to improve the sense of self worth of children, to influence public decision-making or to strengthen democratic citizenship, will determine how participation is planned and evaluated (Thomas 2007, p. 200). The ideal process may not be in place at the start, as other aspects shape the process throughout, such as the values held within institutions and by different stakeholders; professionals acting as advocates; and building capacity as part of the foundations of a more participatory environment. These themes are important; in this thesis I hope to explore how the conditions in the institutional setting and the starting point in terms of capacity and commitment to children's participation shape the process, and how the evidence from participatory evaluation eventually links to positive outcomes for children (see Chapter 5 and 7 for further analysis of these themes).

## **2.4 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and Assessment of Social Change**

In practice, evaluation has sometimes been seen as an activity to be done when a project or programme has been completed; however in this thesis, evaluation is regarded as being carried out throughout a project, programme or service in order to inform and shape ongoing delivery, also providing evidence for strategic and funding decision-making processes. In a more classic project cycle, assessment, monitoring and review and evaluation are presented as parts of a continuous process that help project workers to systematically think about the action they are planning and to reflect on what has been done before taking further action; however, this can be thought of as a more continuous process of learning and change (Gosling with Edwards 1996):

*....development work is never straightforward and in reality does not always follow the ideal project cycle. Since all development work involves learning and change at every stage, it is useful to think in terms of a spiral rather than a cycle. (Gosling and Edwards 1996, p. 5)*

In a Save the Children toolkit, first produced in the mid 1990s (since updated, 2003), Gosling and Edwards suggest that children should be considered amongst the stakeholders participating in evaluation and also in terms of who uses the results. They strongly recommend that staff and management should be involved in all of the assessment, monitoring, review and evaluation activities, otherwise ‘nothing will be gained from the exercise’ (1996, p. 20). The familiarity that programme staff members have with programmes has to be balanced with the amount of time they have available and the fact that they have to interact with beneficiaries. In addition, staff may have entrenched ways of working and need to have the space to explore new ideas and the consideration of different points of view, especially when hierarchy in a programme is well established. This raises issues of internal and external evaluation processes and how to get the right balance, which was explored in the critical inquiry and discussed for each case in Chapter 6. There are benefits in participatory approaches that involve different stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation process, but non-participatory approaches may be valuable when a quick external assessment is needed, for example in an emergency response or in response to a requirement from a donor (Gosling and

Edwards 1996). This idea that not every evaluation need be participatory is important, and could be considered in terms of what approaches may be meaningful in different contexts and how participation may change and be built through the process. Participatory approaches may be important in social development projects, where objectives may be evolving and aims may include building capacity and enabling local groups. Participation may also be appropriate where the professional community are trying to understand, for example in the area of health, where the active participation of different groups of people may be essential to understand the problems and solutions required (Gosling and Edwards 1996). Meeting expectations and considering the usefulness of evidence in evaluations are some of the issues raised in applying evaluation in real world situations.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) has become a key element of the debates and literature around participatory appraisal (PA). Estrella and colleagues (2000) criticise conventional monitoring and evaluation for its 'top down' nature, reliance on quantitative data and emphasis on objectivity through external consultants. PM&E has therefore been developed to shift the emphasis from controlled data collection to the recognition of stakeholder-based processes of gathering, analysing and using information (Estrella *et al.* 2000). There are many variations of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E), but generally the approach seeks to include stakeholders in the different stages of the evaluation process including the determination of what data need to be collected and the design of the review process, rather than them merely acting as enumerators for external consultants. The necessity for flexibility in PM&E is also identified so that processes are adaptive to local contexts and changing circumstances: evaluation should be a learning process that promotes self-reliance in decision-making so that local people's capacity to take action, negotiate and promote change is strengthened (Estrella *et al.* 2000).

The following table was developed during the evaluation of the Saying Power Scheme, one of the cases selected for this research, to show the differences between more conventional processes of monitoring and evaluation and participatory monitoring and evaluation. It shows that rather than external experts being brought in, young people can be treated as both holders of knowledge and as facilitators in PM&E. Instead of regarding evaluation as merely satisfying funders, it may be seen as a way to empower children and young people and to promote their control over their ongoing action in

projects. The type of method is then chosen to fit with the rationale for why the evaluation is carried out. This is a relevant starting point when considering the balance between external and internal evaluation, and different participants' perspectives in this research.

**Table 2: Differences between conventional and participatory monitoring and evaluation**

	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	<b>Participatory monitoring and evaluation</b>
<b>Who does it?</b>	External experts	Young people and others involved in the scheme, some facilitation by project workers/ evaluation facilitators
<b>Why is it done?</b>	To satisfy requirements of funders as one way of ensuring accountability	To promote young people's control over their own projects and enable them to critically appraise their progress and refine objectives/ direction as a result
<b>What is monitored?</b>	Pre-determined and externally driven indicators of success	Young people identify their own indicators and ways of monitoring them
<b>When is it done?</b>	Usually at the end of a programme or scheme	Frequently, throughout the lifetime of the project
<b>How is it done?</b>	Focus on scientific objectives; distancing evaluators from young people, uniform and complex procedures, delayed and limited access to results	Self-evaluation by young people, participatory and visual methods, open and immediate sharing of results.

(Johnson and Nurick, 2001, also in Johnson 2010; table adapted from Narayan-Parker 1993 and Jobs 1997)

Theis (2003) puts forward improvement in the lives of people, including children, as the main aim of any rights-based approach; thus, measuring changes in people's lives and their changing priorities are key aspects of rights-based monitoring and evaluation. The potential for social change and institutional transformation would then also be included as part of a process of assessment and learning. This is not, however, always

the starting point for different stakeholders in different institutional settings for evaluation. One aim of the research will be to explore what was expected from monitoring and evaluation in the different case studies in this thesis. Guijt (2007, p. 4) qualifies social change, as discussed by a group of development professionals called the ‘assessing social change’ group, as concerning ‘transformational processes related to (re)distribution of power’. She (Guijt 2007) suggests that a critical methodological aspect is to be clear about an ideological starting point and to understand the changing power dynamics in assessment of social change:

*Assessing a pro-poor social change effort effectively requires building a shared, context-specific understanding of how power inequities may be challenged and in which diverse actors and strategies are located.*

*(Guijt 2007, p. 6)*

This gives a rationale for exploring the links between context, including institutional setting, and process in this thesis. In discussing frameworks, concepts and methods in assessing social change, Guijt (2007) suggests upwards accountability changing to accountability moving downwards and being more interactive. There has been a growing demand for new approaches and tools, but amongst social change groups working on rights-based initiatives, there is a move to look at experiences of social change over time, recognising that approaches have to be flexible to the context and have transparency in the process of assessment:

*In practice, creating an appropriate assessment and learning process requires mixing and matching and adapting from a combination of frameworks, concepts and methods – to ensure that they address information and reflection needs, and match existing capacities.*

*(Guijt 2007, p. 5)*

The role of different donors, intermediaries and facilitators, as well as the influence of scaling up processes is important to recognise in terms of their influence on assessment and learning, especially if social change is to be strengthened. In ‘infusing assessment processes with political consciousness’, Guijt (2007 p. 54) highlights the requirement for new skills and capacities; a finding that resonates with the ‘Rights through Evaluation’ research in South Africa and Nepal (Johnson *et al.* 2001, one of the cases revisited) and is discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

Capacity building is highlighted in the ‘illuminative evaluation’ approach applied by Richards (1985) in the evaluation of cultural action in Chile and is relevant to this thesis as all of the cases included a capacity building element. Richards’ main emphasis is on the perspectives of local people gained by working with the participants using hermeneutical approaches in conducting conversations or open interviews, alongside observation of the situation. The illuminative evaluation is flexible in that it follows or responds to issues that arise during the course of the evaluation, and evidence is triangulated with data from different sources relating to changes in the broader context that make the findings more acceptable to a range of stakeholders. He creates a fictional character, ‘the reasonable social scientist’ with whom he discusses issues relating to what the social scientist calls the ‘real world’ of decision-makers who are waiting for the evidence from his evaluation. Despite wishing to agree with the more illuminative evaluation, this ‘reasonable social scientist’ struggles with the way in which information might be received and acted on by commissioners of the evaluation and other decision-makers.

Richards’ (1985) ‘illuminative evaluation’ can be applied to children’s participation in evaluation and compared to the approach taken in the cases revisited for this research. The key elements of illuminative evaluation that Richards discusses are further explored in the critical inquiry by examining the differing perspectives of participation and transformation at individual and organisational level, and establishing how methods were both appreciated and received and/or acted upon by different stakeholders. The three key elements are as follows:

- *Democratic control - the extent to which the participants strengthen themselves and their organisations by conducting research;*
- *Method - the extent to which research is done in a way that ascertains important truths about the programme;*
- *Credibility - the confidence in outsiders (or insiders) who use the report in the preparers of the report. (Richards 1985, p. 228)*

Illuminative evaluation thus has many similarities to the evaluations revisited in this research that were conducted in the ‘real world’ of programmes and services. Democratic control relates to strategies employed in creating participatory space and strengthening capacity throughout an evaluation process, and to the transformational change at individual, organisational and broader levels that was explored in the case

study research for this thesis. The next key element – the method – implies that as long as the evaluation is done in a way that shows the ‘truth’ about a programme, then the actual methods used do not matter as much. Despite differences in methods adopted in Richards evaluation and those used in the cases re-visited that employed participatory visuals, both approaches used observation, interviewing and discussion, were flexible and responded to the perspectives of participants. Richards describes his approach as fundamentally hermeneutical,<sup>7</sup> and my epistemology when conducting the original evaluations was ‘interpretivism within a constructionist paradigm’, as discussed in Chapter 3. Thus the evaluations have not only a similar underlying theoretical perspective, but also have many aspects of methodology that are similar in terms of valuing local perspectives, triangulating evidence and evaluating programmes or services in a flexible and responsive way within ‘real world’ settings where different stakeholders have varying expectations. The question then is how to create conditions where this type of illuminative or transformative evaluation is possible.

The way in which different stakeholders, outsiders and insiders to the process, gain confidence in those conducting evaluation processes and preparing the report is similar to the confidence across cases in this research that different stakeholders had in children’s perspectives and their participation, and in the evaluators’ reports: perspectives can change through an inclusive and participatory style of evaluation. Richards uses mixed methods and triangulates local perspectives with different sources of statistics in order to add to credibility. Issues of credibility and confidence are at the heart of this research, including the inductive theorising and considering which issues can help guide illuminative evaluation with children and young people.

Illuminative evaluation is discussed as an evaluation model by Patton (2002), alongside responsive and sensitive or naturalistic evaluation. These forms of evaluation are described as fitting in with a constructivist epistemology and as being based on the values and perspectives expressed by the participants of the evaluation. A responsive approach to evaluation was taken by Stake (1995); this seeks to understand actions and reactions based on observations and negotiations about a programme that provide

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Hermeneutics’ refers to an approach that uses texts and language, but also in its more modern guise ‘human practices, human events and human situations’, to interpret, explain or bring understanding (Crotty 1998, p. 87, 88). This approach comes under the umbrella of ‘interpretivism’ that looks for ‘culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world’ (Crotty 1998, p. 67).

differing perspectives, then by verifying findings with programme staff. This was built on by Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1989), with naturalistic inquiry to improve the usefulness of evaluation, seeking differing perspectives, including those of people not always heard, and later to propose a 'responsive constructionist evaluation'. Patton (2002, p. 172) goes on to refer to transactional models where subjectivity is emphasised, and the perspectives of evaluator and participants are taken into account, with the 'transactions' between them contributing to 'perception and knowing', with all entering as active participants in the process. These transactional models build on the theories of House (1978, cited in Patton 2002) and include responsive and illuminative evaluation. The application of illuminative evaluation may involve applying a complex set of questions relating to innovative programmes and transactional evaluation, as described by Patton, includes the following assumptions:

*... the importance of understanding people and programmes in context; a commitment to study naturally occurring phenomena without introducing controls or manipulation, and the assumption that understanding emerges most meaningfully from an inductive analysis of open-ended, detailed, descriptive data gathered through direct interactions and transactions with the program and its participants.*

*(Patton 2002, p. 172)*

The above forms of evaluations have informed my classification of the evaluations chosen as case studies as being originally carried out within a broad epistemology of constructivism. Patton's own model of utilization-focused evaluation (1997), however, also discussed in relation to the findings, seeks to inform theory and the planning of more meaningful children's participation in evaluation (see Chapter 7). 'Utilisation-focused evaluation' takes into account how the evidence from evaluation may be used and accepted. This notion is explored further in the critical inquiry carried out as part of this research through examining how evidence from children's participation has been valued by different decision-makers in services and programmes in the case studies. Utilisation-focused evaluation as put forward by Patton (1997) is succinctly summarised:

*Utilization-focused evaluation, then, is a process for creatively and flexibly interacting with intended evaluation users about their information needs and alternative methodological options, taking into*

*account the decision context in which the evaluation is taking place.*

*(Patton 2002, p. 175)*

Illuminative and empowering evaluation combined with a utilisation-focused approach (Patton 1997, 2002) could satisfy the complementary agenda put forward by Chambers (2006) where decision-makers can also be helped to value more empowering processes. This combination is discussed further in Chapter 7.

An interesting source of evaluation of children's participation in public decision-making in the UK for practitioners is a study carried out for the Carnegie Young People's Initiative by Kirby and Bryson (2002), 'Measuring the Magic'. Using Shier's (2001) model of participation (discussed above in 2.3.2), most of the consultation work that they examine included young people 'expressing their views' and only sometimes are 'their views taken into account'. Young people did not often seem convinced of the power that they held and felt that youth forums can be tokenistic. In reviewing the evaluations that had been undertaken of youth involvement in public decision-making, they found that many were qualitative, with some having a small sample of quantitative data and that many were small-scale. The evaluations were often a mixture of 'formative, to identify a programme's strengths and weaknesses with a view to improving the programme' and 'summative', judging a 'programme's overall impact or effectiveness' (p. 12-13). Most were a mixture and relied on stakeholder perceptions of change rather than quantitative objective measures. They also conclude that there should be more evaluation so that 'young people are more meaningfully involved in public decision-making and that youth organisations should also self-evaluate.'

*Evaluation and research into young people's participation should be youth focused; include young people's views, redress power imbalances and use appropriate methods. Other stakeholders' views should also be included.*

*(Kirby and Bryson 2002, p. 12-13)*

These issues of internal and external evaluation, inclusive processes including different stakeholder perceptions, the level of participation and whether power dynamics have changed and evidence has fed into decision-making processes, both within organisations and in public policy, were explored in the research for this thesis.

I end this section with ‘realistic’ evaluation as this came to my attention during the inductive theorising and modelling stage of the case study research. ‘Realism’ is discussed further as the epistemology that is adopted for the research (see Chapter 3) and the realist explanation is further explained in this and in the analysis of findings (Chapter 7). Outlined in this chapter are the ‘new rules of realistic evaluation’, proposed by Pawson and Tilley (1997), to outline how they are relevant and to clarify some of the issues that were raised in reflection, as well as informing the modelling in the thesis. Pawson and Tilley (1997) recognise evaluation as applied research and therefore suggest realist concepts in a way that will fit with existing evaluation language. They address programmes (p. 215) as containing ‘certain ideas which work with certain subjects in certain situations.’

*Generative causation* is put forward as the first rule by Pawson and Tilley (1997, p. 215), where they suggest that ‘evaluators need to attend to how and why social programmes have the potential to cause change’. Such causation has to be understood through some of the internal processes that include the causal powers of individuals and communities and the capacity for change, but in the context of the conditions that can release the causal potential and how this has translated into practice. *Ontological depth* means that any evaluation has to go beyond the surface of inputs and outputs of a programme and understand how a process is embedded in the attitudes and processes at different levels of influence from individual to institutional to societal. An important part of this is how different changes may affect the individual choices of the settings’ participants. *Mechanisms* are put forward as the range of potential ways in which programmes will influence the choices and capacities that lead to changes in social patterns within a given set of resources. Mechanisms here refer to aspects of the programme to be evaluated, whereas I refer later to mechanisms within the evaluation process itself which can help to change choices and capacities of different stakeholders’ participation in the process and their acceptance of children’s participation and utilisation of the evidence that is produced in decision-making processes. *Contexts* are seen as influencing the way in which mechanisms operate at different levels and should include understanding ‘the norms, values and interrelationships’ within the ‘spatial and institutional locations’ (p. 216): this chimes with some of the contextualised theories put forward in child psychology (see Section 2.5).

*Outcomes* are understood in the realistic evaluation rules put forward by Pawson and Tilley (1997) to be related to the outcomes evaluated; however it is suggested in this thesis that there can also be outcomes as a result of the evaluation process itself that result in transformational change (see Section 7.2). *CMO configurations* stands for context-mechanism-outcome configurations (the basis for realist explanation) that Pawson and Tilley suggest need to form the basis for any evaluation with a statement of what the programme being evaluated is trying to achieve for whom and in what context. They suggest that being open to what this relationship might be can result in abstractions and generalisations that can form the basis of theory. This CMO configuration is also discussed in terms of how realism informs the emerging model from this thesis in Section 7.3.2.

*The teacher-learner processes* have great relevance to this thesis; Pawson and Tilley acknowledge the facilitation role in understanding insider perspectives and what they refer to (p. 218) as ‘individual and institutional forces’ and what is discussed as agency and power dynamics in Sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.4 below. They discuss a two way process of learning from stakeholders and feeding back and verifying. In referring to *open systems*, Pawson and Tilley recognise the changing nature of the context in which an evaluation is carried out in the real world and suggest that changes in ‘causal powers’ or contexts may be unanticipated, so that the evaluator has to be pragmatic and responsive. In a sense, the research on the case study evaluations in this thesis has applied some of the realistic rules for researching how processes work in achieving outcomes for children who participate.

## **2.5 Ecological Theories of Child Development**

There have been limitations and contradictions highlighted in the new sociology of childhood relating to the role of developmental psychology. In these debates, psychologists have tended to be branded with theories explaining how the competencies of children follow fixed or universal stages of childhood development at different ages, for example drawing on the work of Piaget in the middle of the last century. This dominant age-constructed view of child development strongly influenced the practice of involving children of different ages in research and programming and did not seem to fit with the emerging consensus in childhood studies of children as social actors and childhood being constructed from the perspectives of children living

very different lives in different countries. The dominant paradigms of childhood contributed from psychologists were largely developed in a western context, although ironically there is an imbalance also within childhood studies with calls for more focus on the developing world.<sup>8</sup> Despite followers of the new sociology of childhood attempting to counteract the influence of child psychologists in research and policy, recently questions have been asked about whether there is some synergy and for child development to have a more accepted place within childhood studies.<sup>9</sup> Roger Hart (1998) notes that the history of application of theory in child development has been problematic:

*We should not hope to establish universal developmental schemes for children from different cultures or even for children surrounded by the very different social and economic circumstances within a culture.*

He, however, highlights the need to:

*....be aware of the support that children of different ages and in different circumstances need to be able to participate.*

*(Hart 1998, p. 27-28)*

The more ‘contextualised’ theories of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner have led to ecological theories of child development that take account of the different layers or systems in the environment that affect a child’s development, and the interactions between them, thus accounting for some of the complexities of context. This may be relevant to addressing the complexities of children’s participation in evaluating services that are meant to improve their wellbeing. The emphasis in this thesis, however, is on later theoretical perspectives of Bronfenbrenner (2005) and of Tudge (2008) that take into account children’s agency and how they can influence context as well as visa versa, as historical and cultural perspectives change over time. I therefore concentrate on these socio-ecological and cultural-ecological perspectives, but also give a historical perspective.

Sometimes these contextualised theories have been applied in a deterministic way so that deprivation is directly linked to the particular area where a child or young person

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<sup>8</sup> There was a Symposium on ‘Global Childhood’ at the Sheffield Conference on Childhood and Youth in Transitions (4-6<sup>th</sup> July 2010) calling for a network of researchers to address this gap.

<sup>9</sup> A symposium was held on this issue by Alison James, Adrian James, Jim Block and Martin Woodhead at: The Conference on Childhood and Youth in Transition in Sheffield (4-6<sup>th</sup> July 2010).

comes from, ignoring the agency and capabilities of the individual, but this does not have to be the case. Area-based policies have been developed as a response, but there has sometimes been oversimplification of these theories where the emphasis has been on them being contextual rather than also taking into account two-way interactions between children and their different levels of context. This misinterpretation has then limited a more detailed analysis of how they may be developed in the context of childhood and child-related studies and more specifically children's participation.

Vygotsky and Piaget were contemporaries (both born in 1896), although Vygotsky's work was much later in being recognised. Whereas Piaget studied child development as a series of 'universal' stages, Vygotsky puts child development in the context of broader social and cultural interactions. His theory is described clearly and concisely by Woodhead and Montgomery (2003) who describe, when studying the 'historical child':

*....any particular child's development – their social relationships, sense of self, ways of thinking and so on – are embedded in social and cultural contexts of their life at a particular point in history.....The environments that children inhabit and the ways they are treated are shaped by generations of human activity and creativity, and are mediated by complex belief systems including the proper way for children to develop and learn..... Vygotsky placed great emphasis on the idea that psychological development is not something that happens within the child. Development of human skills, knowledge and beliefs during childhood takes place through relationships between the child and others able to guide, communicate and scaffold their learning.*

*(Woodhead and Montgomery 2003, p. 113-114)*

It is this acknowledgement of context and more specifically social relationships, sense of self and complexity of the belief systems that govern how children learn, that is important to deduct from Vygotsky's theories. When interpreted broadly as 'contextual theories', broader historical and cultural context, individual characteristics and interpersonal factors can sometimes be ignored (Tudge 2008, p. 62-66). Individual factors may include how children change as a result of their experiences: this is relevant to the way in which transformational change is described in this thesis as experienced by individuals or at a broader level. 'The zone of proximal development'

describes the interactions between the child and parent or teacher and takes into account the roles of these more competent people in providing ‘scaffolding’<sup>10</sup> for the child. Tudge (2008) interprets Vygotsky’s theories with the suggestion that poor translation from Russian may account for an emphasis on instruction and learning rather than a more two-way interaction and co-creation of this zone of proximal development through interaction that may be created for other people as well as for the child. This bi-directional influence is also present in Bronfenbrenner’s theories, and is relevant to this thesis as children’s agency is recognised as key to a truly participatory process of evaluation where children can be valued actors in decision-making.

Vygotsky’s inclusion of culture and history is also raised by Tudge (2008), including historical events that affect context, but also the individual history of the child, and the development of activities and interactions.<sup>11</sup> The way in which historical social events influence behaviour, developing and creating new forms of behaviour, is referred to as cultural. Thus, culture is regarded as a product of social life and public activity. The development of mental processes is therefore seen as a product of the interaction and cooperation between people, their social experience and collective cultural behaviour. In discussing social development he goes on to say:

*..the zone of proximal development.....is not something that occurs in school contexts between teacher and child but deals with the development of new forms of awareness that are created as societies develop new social organisation, such as schooling.*

*(Tudge 2008, p. 65)*

Interpersonal factors, as well as individual and historical-cultural factors, are relevant to children’s participation in evaluation: a participatory process needs to be co-created taking into account the roles of different players in the process, and broader processes of social development and cultural change that also influence the way in which evaluation can be carried out in a participatory way with children, and what the outcomes may then be.

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<sup>10</sup> Term also used by J. Bruner (1983) *Child’s Talk: learning to use language*, Oxford University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Tudge (2008) refers to these as ‘ontogenetic development’ and ‘microgenetic development’ respectively.

Bronfenbrenner built on Vygotsky's theories and in his classic theoretical contribution, 'the ecology of human development' (Bronfenbrenner 1979), 'Ecological Systems Theory', presented different levels or concentric systems of contextual influence in a child's development where each system has its own set of norms, rules and roles depending on the setting. The *microsystem* encompasses relationships and interactions a child has with the immediate surroundings, including for example, the household, family, peer group, classroom, and can include a person's own biology. In the microsystem there are, what Bronfenbrenner refers to as 'bi-directional' influences; for example, a child can be influenced by, but also influences context, such as, parents' beliefs and behaviours (Paquette and Ryan 2001). The *mesosystem* takes into account interactions or interconnections between structures and settings of the microsystems, for example, between school and home. The *exosystem* in Bronfenbrenner's model covers the external environments that indirectly influence development, for example the community, school systems, and media. The *macrosystem* is based on the overarching patterns of ideology and institutional structures common to cultures or the broader socio-cultural and political context (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Time was later incorporated (referred to as the *chronosystem* by Bronfenbrenner from 1986), which is crosscutting and accounts for changes and transitions over the course of life and also takes into account events or shifts in the family or household, that influence the way in which children relate to the environment. The then missing dimension of the broader environmental context changing over time and influencing development was added in later theories (Bronfenbrenner 2005).

Bronfenbrenner later re-emphasised the links between context and individual development that were sometimes lost in translation to practice, and he presented a newer theoretical model that links 'Process, the Person, Context and Time' (Tudge 2008 and Lerner 2005). These dimensions are considered of the utmost importance in the evaluation processes with children in this thesis. In Bronfenbrenner's later bioecological perspectives, rather than being seen as passive in change depending on others' reactions to them (based on for example age, gender etc.), individuals are regarded as active and engage in changing their environment depending on the physical, mental and emotional resources that are available to them. Proximal processes, the interactions in the immediate environment of the child with people, symbols and objects over a period of time, vary depending on the context and are central to Bronfenbrenner's theories. Their form, power, content and direction depend

both on the environment and the individual characteristics of the developing child. The context in his later publications is represented not in the form of concentric circles of systems, but rather depicted as a more complex set of direct and indirect ways in which the systems inter-relate with each other, although still using the microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem that he refers to as culture, and still showing that time changes the individual and the context. Bronfenbrenner (2005) thus started to refer to these as interconnected systems. *Time* is also conceptualised into categories: micro-time that incorporates changes for an individual during specific activities and interactions; meso-time that examines whether these events and interactions reoccur with any consistency; and macro-time that takes account of historical events and changes in culture that influence and are intertwined with a child's development (Tudge 2008, p. 66-73).

Bronfenbrenner believed that, both individually and collectively, citizens and academics can work to improve the relationships between people and their multi-layered environment, and that they can create intellect and capacity to improve and promote improved human development (Lerner 2005). Lerner (2005, p. xxiv) highlights the 'fragile ecosystem that supports our existence' and concludes that Bronfenbrenner's evolving bioecological model provides 'a frame within which human decency and social justice may prosper'. Bronfenbrenner describes the way Kurt Lewin discusses development as relevant to his theoretical perspectives, also showing how people transform their context as well as vice versa:

*Development is defined as the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment and his or her reflection of it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain or alter its properties.*

*(Bronfenbrenner 2005, p. 55)*

The link that Bronfenbrenner (2005) makes between people and settings in action research through the work of Lewin also has great relevance to this thesis, especially as Bronfenbrenner also emphasises his goal throughout the book of achieving healthier societies, including improved development for children and their families. This was seen as the aim of the community development programme evaluated in Nepal in this research. He suggests that gaining improved knowledge relating to linking of biological, social, economic and ideological forces that shape human development has huge implications for public policy, where changes in the nature of the environment

can directly and indirectly affect the development of children in different settings. The links that Bronfenbrenner makes between child development and social policy show how pertinent his theories are to this thesis as the policy context is shown to affect the way in which children participate in evaluation:

*Knowledge and analysis of social policy are essential for progress in development science as they alert the investigator to those aspects of the environment, both immediate and more remote, that are most critical to the cognitive, emotional and social development of a person.*

*(Bronfenbrenner 2005, p. 55)*

Ecological theories developed from Bronfenbrenner's theories have been applied in different settings, for example: Jack (2000) in parenting and informal support systems in situations of poverty; Boothby *et al.* (2006) in war zones; Tudge and Hogan (2005) and Tudge (2008) in exploring the everyday activities in the lives of children in a range of settings. Taking context into account in child development goes some way to counteract the widespread criticism in developing countries that concepts of childhood have been exported from developed country contexts to be imposed universally (e.g. Burman 1994, Woodhead and Montgomery 2003). Defining the norms and rules of the systems in Bronfenbrenner's theory is, however, criticised by Tudge (2008) as not necessarily being appropriate to different cultures.

The emphasis on children's experiences being influenced by context is also relevant to those theoretical perspectives that place importance on subjective understanding of wellbeing, the construction of childhood, and the analysis of local power dynamics and local decision-making processes in action and participatory research in relation to social and cultural contexts. Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner are cited by Tudge and Hogan (2005), advocates of ecological approaches to working with children, as 'ecological theorists' who have informed their methodological approaches to working with children where context and the initiation of tasks by adults and children, and the power relations and interaction between them, are seen as key to understanding children's activities.

Application of an ecological framework in social work by Jack (2000) helps to explain a complex set of interactions between systems affecting children and young people and their life chances in adulthood. Coping strategies used by children and their families,

including informal social support in high-risk situations of poverty, social inequity and exclusion in different parts of the world, are examined within this framework. Thus, an ecological approach that acknowledges the agency and resilience of the individual, whilst also allowing analysis of support mechanisms and interaction between different levels of context that affect the development and the activities of a child, has assisted in inductive theorising and modelling for this thesis. Acknowledging agency and linking this to different aspects of context can help to contribute to theoretical perspectives on children's participation (see Chapter 7).

Boothby and colleagues (2006), writing as psychologists, also apply socio-ecological theories in a culturally integrated approach and discuss all the other factors, as well as events associated directly with the war, that influence how a child grows into an adult. They highlight how children's lives are affected by material, social and cultural contexts and discuss (p. 5) how the ecological theories of Bronfenbrenner have helped to understand how proximal interactions or long term relationships in systems of interaction affect both short and long-term developmental outcomes for children who have experienced conflict situations.

*What emerges through the social ecology lens is how children develop amid changing social, political, economic and cultural worlds that offer a mixture of protection and risks to children's rights and well-being.*

*(Boothby et al. 2006, p. 5)*

Using an analysis of external factors, the approach that they take also focuses on how children can be actors, rather than passive victims (as was emphasised in the work of anthropologists with street and working children in addressing children's rights discussed in Section 2.2). It also includes domains of subjective wellbeing and feelings of empowerment in a similar way to discussion of wellbeing in international development at the University of Bath, also influenced by psychologists (White 2009).

The Psychologists Working Group (PWG) conceptual framework, used by Boothby and colleagues (2006) is based on theories of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986), and has evolved to help examine coping, resilience and recovery in war affected areas. The model shows attention to the wider context of communities, including understanding their values and beliefs and the meaning that a child and those around them might attach to different experiences. It is a resource based rather than a deficit model: that is,

taking into account and building on human capacity, including physical and mental health as well as skills and knowledge. This lies alongside understanding the social ecology that is comprised in social and institutional relationships and networks, also referred to as social capital. The approach also examines active engagement as a principle where those that are most directly affected are the primary actors, recognising that transformation can help them to cope with the challenges of the future. All of this is situated within the boundaries of economic, environmental and physical resources that may be severely affected by war and form the broader context. Examples from this research are how conflict in Nepal and change in policy framework in the UK affected processes of children's participation in evaluation. Issues that are raised by Boothby and colleagues (2006) including context, capacity, communication, power, resources, agency and transformation run through this research. These issues are further explored and linked in the analysis and therefore the association between ecological theories with children's participation grows stronger and is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Tudge (2008) has described the implications for research of cultural ecological theory that is based on the contextualised theories of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner. He suggests that the paradigm<sup>12</sup> that someone chooses in research needs to be one they feel comfortable with: his choice of 'contextualism', he describes as fitting with his background and PhD thesis on developmental psychology. The question is then how the paradigm of contextualism fits with the growing worldview of participation that I have been working within over the past years and the epistemology of realism chosen in the thesis (see Chapter 3). Tudge reflects on the way in which the world is viewed in contextualism:

*.... a contextualist ontology, or view of reality, is one that sees a multiplicity of realities rather than a single reality. Or perhaps there may be just one reality, but people's perceptions of reality are necessarily constrained or shaped by their specific circumstances. These circumstances change with time, power and local situation.*

*(Tudge 2008, p. 59)*

Considering a constructionist perspective, the new sociology of childhood and the multiple views of reality that are constructed showing attention to local context can be

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<sup>12</sup> Paradigm is taken to mean basic belief system or worldview, as described by Guba and Lincoln, 1994

considered. A realist epistemology, in contrast to this constructionist view, acknowledges that there is a reality with different perceptions of this, although it also includes context as critical to how people view the world and act within it. Issues of time, power and local situations are raised in this thesis through the methodological perspectives that have informed the evaluations including participatory action research and the power relationships between researcher and researched, discussed within the context of childhood studies. All of these are frameworks within which participation can be seen to function, whether it is facilitated/ encouraged or constrained/ tokenised by the conditions or context in which research is carried out.

Discussing ecological theories with regard to communication, Tudge (2008) considers how communication is possible where people have different perceptions of reality. He concludes that if the perceptions are close enough, then there can be communication, but acknowledges that people in positions of power may impose their view of reality, for example, in a community or a family. He also states that researchers cannot be separated from the researched, acknowledging the influence and power of researchers being present in the context influencing the way in which knowledge is co-constructed. (Considered in Section 2.3 earlier in this chapter). The historical perspective of each participant in an activity or process is also important in creating their reality, as is the historical process in the broader context of society and culture.

Tudge's (2008) criticism of the theories of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner is that culture is not specifically addressed in enough detail and he therefore puts forward a theoretical perspective that builds on their work: 'Cultural-Ecological Theory'. Thus, he emphasises, not only the contextual aspect, specifically the cultural influences on development, but also the importance of the interaction with the individual in everyday activities and everyday life. The theory he outlines provides a way of studying across cultural groups and across cultures and he thus aligns himself with cultural psychologists, as opposed to cross-cultural psychologists who may be trying to find some kind of unity presumed to exist across cultures. He links the contextualist paradigm with the idea that the mind and the context or cultural settings are intertwined with each other. He also emphasises an explanatory process when working to understand development in different cultures at a societal level, but also within different cultural groups in the same society. This emphasis on cultural aspects of context and how they impact on the way that individuals interact in activities and

processes is relevant and has been taken through to the modelling stage of this thesis (see Chapter 7).

Woodhead and Montgomery (2003) identify three broad perspectives to understanding childhood: a scientific approach, a social constructionist approach and an applied approach. The social constructionist and applied approaches may both be seen as being contextualist, if Tudge's view of a contextualist ontology is followed. The constructionist approach was used in understanding the roles of children in society and the development process in, for example, the research undertaken with children in household in the hills of Nepal (Johnson *et al.* 1995) and the evaluation in Nepal that is one of the cases revisited in this research (Chapter 4). The applied approach is, however, particularly relevant in this thesis as all the evaluation cases were conducted in the domain of statutory and non-governmental agencies employing rights-based approaches with a mix of different approaches and methods. This required a better understanding of children's participation within different contexts taking into account the power dynamics and interactions between different systems and levels of influence, and how, within these contexts, outcomes for children can be understood (also see Chapter 3 as this is relevant to the epistemology of realism taken in this thesis).

## **2.6 Summary of Key Points from Literature**

This chapter has placed the literature on historical, theoretical and practical perspectives relating to children's participation in a broader rights-based framework. Despite child rights having proved to be a useful tool at an advocacy level, and having provided an important legal framework for prioritization of children's wellbeing at different levels of governance, it has not proved so helpful in going beyond rhetoric in children's participation. While being an important, some may say vital, starting point for children's participation in article 12 of the UN Convention, rights-based approaches have met with varying interpretations; this could be compared with the different meanings that are given to participation.

In attempting to operationalise rights-based frameworks on the ground, different organisations have varying interpretations of the implications for practice. Therefore, alongside addressing rights at a national and international level of legislation and

policy, frameworks in children's participation (such as Hart 1992 and Shier 2001) have been utilised by practitioners. Despite these frameworks or models encouraging the consideration of who initiates action and the autonomy or shared nature with adults of different types of participation, they have been criticised by academics for oversimplification and lack of attention to context. In the new sociology of childhood children are acknowledged as active participants and childhood seen as not imposed, but constructed through children's varying perspectives. Children therefore started to be treated more often as individual actors able to contribute to change, rather than as passive recipients in development processes. There has also been acknowledgement of the power dynamics between adults and children in research and a movement towards more relational notions of participation that takes account of both children's and adults' roles in processes. This is central to how processes of participation can start to take power dynamics between children and adults, and in institutions and broader contexts in society, into account.

Also relevant to this acknowledgement of context and power as being central to children's participation in this research have been the parallels drawn in the literature with 'women in development' moving to gender studies. Where previously children have been seen as separate to their environment and context, in relational approaches children are seen as interacting with different systems or dimensions of power. Lukes' (1974, 2005) analysis of power, as used in gender analysis and suggested in children's participation, is therefore also relevant to the analysis of this thesis.

The use of visual participatory appraisal and mixed methods employed in the right-based evaluations revisited has also been reviewed. Literature addressing how power dynamics and communication are central to applying these methods in an empowering rather than extractive way is relevant to discussion of how actions can be translated into outcomes through different mechanisms. How evidence of a visual nature collected using participatory appraisal approaches inform decision-making is also seen within ongoing debates around participatory methodologies more generally.

Evaluation here has been understood as one type of participatory process with children, where the importance of power relations with adults taking decisions and action in response to children's evidence is heightened. The thesis limits the final analysis to evaluation, although learning from this may be relevant to other theoretical and

practical aspects of children's participation. The literature in evaluation has been useful in showing how in this process issues of whether decision-makers can respond has been raised in utilization models and how evaluations are responsive to participants' perspectives in illuminative models. The emerging model from the case study research can be seen in the convergence of these different evaluation models or agendas.

There has been a criticism of the new sociology of childhood promoting construction of childhood based on children's perspectives for neglecting a broader analysis of context including macro-economic and political environments. It is the different levels and structures of context linking to process that this thesis further explores. A growing area of interest in literature relevant to this lies in socio-ecological and cultural-ecological theories that link children to their different systems of context. To a large extent psychologists' perspectives were initially rejected from within childhood studies as having dominated processes through attention to universal stages of development according to age and in relation to the ecological theories there was concern about children's agency not having been recognized. To a certain extent questions are being revisited about the synergies between childhood studies and child psychology. This thesis concentrates on how later representations of ecological theories of child development explain children as agents of change influencing their contexts or surrounding environments as well as existing power relationships, so affecting the way in which they participate in everyday activities.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter an account is given of the research design, methods of data collection and analysis deployed in the study. This is framed within statements about the study's aims and its theoretical context. In terms of introducing the methodology, my practitioner entry point to this research and historical perspective are an important part of 'the story' and have been key to the development of the participatory 'worldview' within a 'contextualist' paradigm, and the epistemological perspective of critical realism taken in this thesis. Fitting to this epistemology is the case study methodology adopted and developed for this research into children's participation in evaluation including the inductive theorising and modelling.

The chapter gives a background to case study research and an insight into the range of disciplines that it spans. The theoretical background and terminology is then discussed with reference to this thesis. The two-pronged approach of reflexivity and critical inquiry is presented in more detail, highlighting issues of process, such as the ethical framework that has been developed and addressing issues of bias in revisiting evaluations that have been conducted by the author. The stages of the methodology are presented in detail and include: selection of case studies; determining key phenomena, themes or issues; analysis through reflexivity and critical inquiry; analysis through further development of themes; and by comparing perspectives and examining assertions and generalisations (following Stake 2003).

Lastly, the chapter demonstrates some of the more detailed planning that was required to carry out the research, further discussed in chapter 4, and reflects on the successes and hesitations regarding the application of the case study methodology.

### 3.2 Worldview and Epistemology

Having worked as a practitioner for many years, largely within the non-governmental sector, also acting as a consultant and advisor to government and donor organisations, including the UN, my overarching worldview is participatory. The ‘emergent participatory worldview’, as described by Reason and Bradbury (2006), encompasses and values a range of differing orientations among researchers who engage in action research. Much of my previous research may be referred to as action research and rights-based, carried out in the following key areas of work: to develop community-based action plans on poverty and environment; to address issues of social justice; and to work with children and young people on their rights and participation. Research carried out for ActionAid, on child labour and children’s roles within households and the broader society in the Sindhuli District of Nepal, led to the publication *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change* (Johnson *et al.*, 1995), and has informed much of my subsequent work. This participatory worldview and rights-based approach to research has also transferred from international experience to my work in the UK, having had the opportunity to pilot some of the visual participatory methods (see Chapter 2) developed in the global South within the non-governmental sector in a developed country context (for example, Johnson and Webster, 2001).

Much of this participatory work with children and adults in communities was situated within a ‘participatory’ worldview. On reflection, the epistemology comprised interpretivism within a constructionist paradigm, where the aim was to understand the perspectives and roles of those participating in the research and how they constructed their reality. An understanding of human and social reality was constructed and presented based on the views of children that were ‘*culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world*’ (Crotty 1998, p. 67).

Through the development of the thesis and the emerging model, it also became evident that I was in agreement with the ontology that Tudge (2008) puts forward in describing a ‘contextualist paradigm’ relevant to cultural and socio-ecological theories of child development. Here, the constructivism of the evaluation cases that have previously been conducted may be seen within this paradigm with multiple realities, but also being

relevant to many perspectives of one reality: both with the understanding that circumstances change with time, power and local situation (see Section 2.3).

The opportunity to undertake this thesis has given me the support and time to reflect on the application of these participatory and rights-based approaches in ‘real world’ contexts. Initial reflection and indeed the incentive to do this research led to the initial expression of my epistemology as being ‘pragmatic’ within a ‘constructivist’ paradigm (from definitions in Crotty 2003 and Creswell and Plano Clarke 2007). With further thought and with reference to the growing literature on ‘real world research’, I have redefined my epistemological approach in this thesis as being one of ‘Critical Realism’. Robson (2002) links this journey through practitioner research to taking a pragmatic approach to real world situations with realist theories. This also fits with a contextualist view, as structure and agency are important in the realist analysis according to Archer (1998). Within social sciences, linking how people relate to their context may be thought of within a realist perspective in the following way:

*There are properties and powers particular to people which include reflexivity towards and creativity about any social context which they confront.*  
*(Archer et al. 1998, p. 190)*

Critical realism can offer a path between post-positivism and relativism and may sometimes be aligned with pragmatism; thus both recognising a ‘reality’ regardless of our own perspectives, whilst also acknowledging the causal role of agency. Sayer (2000) describes how critical realism has been developed from philosophical debates in both natural science and social science, through the writings of Roy Bhaskar (for example, 1996, and with colleagues, Archer *et al.* 1998), and building on the earlier work of Rom Harré. He highlights how realism can help us to understand open systems and how causal systems work in different contexts. Rather than trying to find regularities, he suggests that a realist philosophy can find *explanations* of change. He also raises the issue that social systems:

*.....evolve.....not least because people have the capacity to learn and change their behaviour*  
*(Sayer 2000, p. 5)*

Realism has been criticised for ‘claiming privileged access to the Truth’ (Sayer 2000, p. 2), however realism actually admits fallibility of knowledge by combining our

construction of reality with the acknowledgement of an independent world: identifying both the necessity and the possibility or potential of the world. 'Critical realism' may also be confused with 'empirical realism' that identifies the real with the empirical and assumes that all outcomes are observable. Realism cannot just be referred to as post-positivism without acknowledgment that critical realism can overlap with some views on constructionism. This Sayer refers to as 'weak' social constructionism, as while there is scope for causal explanation, there is also 'recognition of the necessity of interpretive understanding of meaning in social life' (Sayer 2000, p. 3).

Critical realism has been described by some (for example Guba and Lincoln 1994) as post positivist, although this interpretive understanding could be seen to move on a spectrum towards constructionism, and is also described as having roots in Marxism: it therefore potentially has critique from different philosophical perspectives. For example, in Sayers (2000, p. 62) discussion of critique, while aligning critical realism with 'weak constructionism' (as discussed above), he suggests that 'strong constructionists' would argue with critical realists that 'describe external circumstances which are either not constructions or are the constructions of others'. On the other hand, Hammersley (2009), despite recognising the value of realist perspectives in social science, gives reasons to question the 'critical' aspect of 'critical social science'. Having also questioned the potential for critical realism in emancipation (2007), Hammersley, in 2009 (p. 8), suggests that it is important 'that the appropriate limits of what social science can offer are recognised' and that critical realists have tried to go beyond these limits. In his view, in criticisms of explaining social phenomena through explanatory models, value assumptions are not adequately explained by critical realists, and value conclusions are drawn from evidence without enough justification. Given that there is an explanation of the world put forward as fact, it is not clear to him why others should believe this, or how what is regarded as good or bad affects what 'ought' to happen.

One of the critiques levelled at critical realists, acknowledged by Sayer (2000), is that they have not engaged enough with postmodernism and stated their openness to different perspectives being recognised in constructing knowledge. In working with the complexity of the open systems of the world, critical realists do, however, consider it possible to develop reliable knowledge through rigorous research employing a wide range of research methods. Sayer goes on to argue that, despite many realists being criticised for not taking into account fully the constructed and situated nature of

knowledge and for underestimating how idealism needs to be taken into account in social theory, there is a spectrum of realism, and that critical realism includes reflexivity. In effect, critical realism recognises that the social world is constructed by different people in it including the researcher.

In ‘critical realism’ a stratified ontology is described by Sayer (2000) where the ‘real’ signifies powers that may be activated or may remain dormant, and differs from the ‘actual’ (the exercising of these powers), and the ‘empirical’ (the experience of both which only takes into account observable outcomes). Social systems also rely on dependencies and combinations of different aspects that lead to emergent properties. Thus, the combination of different features may give rise to new phenomena and there is an acknowledgement of interaction between the physical and the social (also acknowledged by Marx). An example in the social world given by Sayer (2000) is that the formation of peoples’ roles and identities are moulded by their relationships with others, as well as aspects of the context, such as education (Sayer 2000, p. 13). A key issue raised by Sayer that mirrors more recent bio-ecological theories (discussed in Chapter 2) is that people are not just moulded by their context but that situations are interpreted and changed, and that change in social systems is variable over space and time. This stratification and bi-directional influence of people and their context fits in some ways with the analysis in cultural and socio-ecological theories of child development. The idea that powers may or may not be activated and that only some outcomes are observable leads us to understanding how different mechanisms work in different contexts. Whether potential powers are exercised depends on different conditions making this particularly relevant to this thesis.

Realist theorists, such as Baskhar, in developing the ‘critical realism’ perspective, embodied the idea of emancipation in the process of gaining a greater understanding of a situation and identifying associated actions which may be an impetus for change: thus challenging existing power dynamics as in feminist and Marxist approaches. From a realist perspective, the *context* is important to how *mechanisms* work to facilitate or hinder the effect of an *action* resulting in an *outcome* (Robson 2002). In a similar way, Sayer (2000) suggests that in the open systems that we are investigating in the social world, casual mechanisms can result in different outcomes, depending on conditions or context, which in turn depends on the relationships between different objects or features. He also notes that the same outcome may result from different causal

mechanisms depending on the context. This approach to social research is relevant to this thesis and chimes with my views as it seeks to understand processes in context and is concerned with actions and how they translate into outcomes, particularly relevant to revisiting the evaluations. The discussion of mechanisms and context and how they are key to action and outcome is raised in the analysis of findings from this research (see Chapter 7).

Burawoy (2003) has contrasted constructivist theory in original ethnographic research with his 'focused revisits' that he categorises in his development of a theory of 'reflexive ethnography' and expresses revisits in either 'constructionist' or 'realist' terms. In the 'constructionist' focused revisits, he suggests concentration on the advancement of 'knowledge of the object', thus offering alternative *description* of relationships and structures through 'refutation' or 'reconstruction'. In the 'realist' focused revisits, he suggests that the emphasis is on the 'object of knowledge', attempting to *explain* change through understanding either internal processes of change or the dynamics of external forces. He goes on to develop a broader classification of revisits that can combine some of these elements. This research (although not strictly ethnographic) could be seen as a 'valedictory revisit' from a realist perspective:

*Where the purpose is not to undertake another in-depth ethnography, but rather to ascertain the subjects' responses to the reported research and, perhaps, to discover what has changed since the last visit.*

*(Burawoy, 2003, p. 672)*

Relationships, dynamics and theory and *explaining* change in the chosen case studies were reassessed, through both examining internal processes and acknowledging and gaining a greater understanding of external forces. Even though deeper insights can be gained, Burawoy (2003, p. 673), acknowledges this type of revisit can be '*confrontational*' and '*painful*' as the researcher is re-engaging with their own conclusions and re-evaluating results and theory.

Real world research can be seen as fitting in with the concepts of naturalistic research that includes attention being paid to context, an emergent research design and inductive theorising. Gillham (2000) suggests that, unlike natural science or an experimental approach, naturalistic approaches are better suited to complexity, and the specific and embedded nature of real world enquiry. From this perspective, case study research can

be seen as one of the methodologies that attempts to find underlying reasons behind the way in which people act and to understand the way in which the process of how outcomes are achieved is key to effective action.

A case study approach (which can be either qualitative or quantitative) was chosen to be suitable as naturalistic, and incorporating both a reflexive element of analysis and critical inquiry to explore different perspectives of participants in the evaluation case studies in the real world, also fitting with the theoretical and epistemological viewpoint of the author. In revisiting evaluation cases that had been conducted taking a participatory and rights-based approach, I decided that the overall methodology for this research should not be predominantly participatory and visual, as the value of these methods would form part of the research questions and analysis; instead, qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews was used in order to gain depth of perspective from participants in the research.

### **3.3 The Case Study Approach**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction to Case Study Research**

As the case study is a preferred approach in examining contemporary issues, the difference in technique to a historical approach is that it adds together at least two sources of evidence: ‘direct observation and systematic interviewing’ (Yin 1989, p. 19). Also, according to Yin (1989), the strength of the case study is the use of a variety of evidence, including documents, interviews and observations and range of perspectives.

There is a range of theoretical arguments around case study research and there is a strong history to the approach across a range of disciplines and a growing body of evidence to show that this approach has a solid theoretical grounding (Creswell 2007, Simons 2009). The term ‘approach’ is used here ‘to indicate that case study has an overarching research intent and methodological (and political) purpose, which affects what methods are chosen to gather data’ (Simons,2009, p. 3). There is a rich literature covering the different applications of the approach and emphasis is given to the detail that needs to be paid to design. Case study research has been referred to by Robson

(2002, p. 89), as a flexible design in research strategies in which the design typically ‘emerges’ from the data collection and analysis. Many advocates of case study research, such as Yin (1989, 2003) and Stake (1995, 2003) have a more structured approach to how case study research should be conducted. Stake’s framework has been used in what follows, together with ideas from other case study authors (such as Yin 1989, 2003 and Creswell 1998, 2007). Stake (2003) sets out the responsibilities of a researcher to develop the stages of the methodology to be conducted and I have followed these for this thesis (see Table 3 in Section 3.3.4).

There is a history of case study research across a range of disciplines (Creswell 1998; Hamel *et al.* 1993) and for this reason, amongst others, it seems to fit in with the multi-disciplinary nature of the evaluation work that is being examined in this thesis. Case studies are seen, for example, in law, education, history, medicine, anthropology, and sociology. In a historical perspective on case study research (Hemel *et al.* 1993), an account is given of how, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Chicago School of American Sociology took the lead in the case study approach, with researchers such as William I. Thomas and Robert Park inspiring a series of case studies on poverty, delinquency and deviance, relevant to social workers. The case studies subsequently derived in a theoretical perspective Hemel *et al.* (1993) refer to as *urban ecology*, that examines the interaction of human community with the ecological resources at their disposal, were inspired by the ‘pragmatist philosophy’ of Dewey through the writing of George H. Mead. These roots of the case study approach also seem to chime with my background as a geographer and ecologist, and fit with the issues addressed in the evaluations being researched in the thesis, which lie between the disciplines of childhood and youth research and development studies.

The importance of choosing cases and defining the nature of cases is set out Section 3.3.2 below. In terms of the generation of theory, case study research is suited to inductive theorising. If one imagines a spectrum of approaches to generating theory from data, from grounded theory where researchers inductively build theory and ‘one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge’ (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 23), to testing hypotheses by investigating around pre-determined questions, a case study approach could be seen to lie in the middle of this spectrum. Themes and assertions arise from the analysis, but the researcher also scrutinises the case(s) with questions and themes to explore, although, as suggested by

Yin (2003) the researcher can also enter the research with propositions that can be tested and developed.

### **3.3.2 Theoretical Background and Terminology in Case Study Research**

This chapter seeks to place the methodology for this thesis in the rich context of discussion around qualitative case study research and to show that the approach has been chosen as a way to learn lessons from a range of cases that have been a result of intense and detailed field research, around the issues of children's participation in evaluation (Johnson *et al.* 2001, Johnson and Nurick 2001, Johnson *et al.* 2008). Stake (2003) suggests that, rather than just choosing a case study approach as a methodology, the important issue is what case(s) are being chosen to study; and that, in order to identify appropriate methodology, the purpose of the case study approach needs to be determined and the different ways of representing and interrogating cases understood.

The case study approach has a place in evaluation research (Robson 2002); however, in this thesis, evaluations previously conducted are chosen as the case studies or cases for the research (see Chapter 4 for selection and introduction to the cases). The evaluation cases in the thesis were revisited to explore outcomes, and to explore how the context, the processes of evaluation and the evidence from children had informed subsequent decision-making processes and broader transformational change of individuals and institutions. Its application can help explain causal links in real life interventions and their context, provide descriptive account of an intervention and explore those interventions where there were no clear outcomes (Yin 1989, p. 25).

A two-pronged approach of reflexivity and critical inquiry is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.4 below, in terms of planning the stages of the research within the case study methodological framework. The reflexive element of case study research lies alongside critical inquiry, which can also be interpretative in nature. The key reasons for scrutinising the case studies through critical inquiry is to enhance the analysis and provide data sets obtained from the different perspectives of the settings' participants (Lofland and Lofland 1985). This thesis will explore different perspectives of participants or stakeholders in the evaluations that have involved processes of children's participation, and also how context affects change.

Case studies draw upon both qualitative and quantitative research data and, although the approach is not exclusively qualitative in nature (Stake 2003), in this thesis a primarily qualitative approach was taken<sup>13</sup>. The choice of case study research also allows for reflection by the researcher on the cases to be explored:

*Case study can (also) be a disciplined force in public policy setting and reflection on human experience.....The methods of qualitative case study are largely the methods of disciplining personal and particularized experience.*  
(Stake 2003, p. 156)

Storytelling is also an important part of case study research and seeking the perspectives of participants that had been involved in the evaluations was important to the author. According to Stake (2003, p. 135):

*...the ethos of interpretative study, seeking out emic meanings held by people within the case, is strong.*

Case study research has been classified in different ways at different times (Simons 2009), but according to Creswell (1998, p. 61), a case study is ‘*an exploration of a bounded system*’, that is a system that is bounded by time and place. This research focuses on three evaluations that are unique processes bounded by time and place, and may therefore be described as multi-case study or collective case study research (Stake 1995, in Creswell 1998). In the scrutiny of the cases, the outcomes for children other individuals and in organisations and the broader context were explored. These can be further reaching than the original boundaries for the evaluation case when it was conducted.

Gillham (2000, p. 1) refers to a case as ‘*a unit of human activity embedded in the real world*’ and goes on to say that this should be studied or understood in context. Stake (2003) refers to the case as a ‘*system*’, be it simple or complex. Even where a case study refers to the study of, for example, a child, rather than a group or children, an organisation or an incident, Stake (2003) refers to the child as having working parts and being an integral system. The evaluation cases in this research are processes that have

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<sup>13</sup> It was important to the author, however, to get enough respondents for the critical inquiry stage of the research in order to triangulate the perspectives of the author, especially as the case studies chosen were evaluations that had been previously carried out by her (as described in stage 5 of the methodology later in this chapter).

taken place with partner organisations and with children and their families. The three separate evaluations can be seen as systems, although also each being distinct and bounded in time and place. Other features may lie outside the case, but affect the process and results of the evaluation, such as the public policies or cultural settings of the case, so it is important to carefully define the boundaries and the external influences that affect the case(s). Case studies may use multiple sources of information; describing the context of the case is important in terms of situating it within a bounded setting (Creswell 1998). This context may be defined in terms of physical and/or socio-economic and/or cultural contexts.

Cases in this thesis are instrumental as they are used to explore issues, rather than an intrinsic case that through its uniqueness requires study (Stake 1995 in Creswell 1998). Stake (2003, p. 137) describes the intrinsic case study as being studied in order for the researcher to gain a better understanding of that particular case; even if ordinary or particular, it is the case itself that is of interest. The instrumental case study, however, provides an insight into an issue or helps the researcher to facilitate an understanding of an interest or to redraw a generalisation. Stake explains this distinction as, not a difference in case studies, but a difference in purpose. This can be compared to the distinction that is made in scientific inquiry between ‘descriptive’ and ‘inferential’ research: ‘descriptive’ is where the purpose is to describe a particular group, and ‘inferential’ research is the desire to make generalisations from a group to a larger population (Hancock and Algozzine 2006).

In this research, the case study approach may therefore be referred to as instrumental; although each is unique in its place, context and time-bounded processes, the purpose is to explore wider issues around children’s participation in evaluating services. The selection of a number of cases in order to investigate phenomena and issues also means that this research can be referred to as a collective case study.

The exploration of *how* to approach children’s participation in evaluation and whether and *why* visual methods are or are not effective in different contexts is suited to a multi-case study approach. According to Yin (1989, p. 13) case studies:

*...are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events or when the focus is on contemporary phenomena within some real life context.*

Such cases studies may be referred to as '*explanatory*' as opposed to '*exploratory*' or '*descriptive*'. The evaluation processes or case studies are also within real life situations, where events and barriers to implementation of different approaches and methods are not always in the control of the researcher (or partner organisations working on the evaluation).

In this research, analysis will be 'embedded', where specific aspects of a case are examined, as opposed to 'holistic', where a case is examined as a whole (Yin 1989). It is aspects of the context and process, and links between them that are explored, including how the visual data influenced different stakeholder decisions and outcomes.

To summarise, the case study approach to be taken in this thesis has the following characteristics:

- It is essentially informed by a critical realist perspective.
- A qualitative approach is taken that disciplines personalised and particularised experience with a strong ethos of interpretative study.
- The purpose is to learn more about the application of children's participation in evaluation with children i.e. to explain real life interventions.
- It is multi-case study or collective case study research, although each evaluation case may be also be viewed as a unique bounded system.
- The context of the case is important in situating the case within a setting, whilst the boundaries of the case are clearly defined, the influence of policy and culture are understood to be important.
- Multiple sources of information may be used to illustrate the case studies.
- The case study research is instrumental and embedded, rather than intrinsic and holistic, as it is used to provide insights into key aspects of the cases and to explore issues further.

### **3.3.3 Addressing Bias in the Research**

Bias is an important issue to address, especially as I was examining cases that I had previously conducted with others, and this is considered both in reflecting on the cases and in the critical inquiry. The first point is that all of the evaluations were already

completed at the point when the PhD research commenced, and therefore vested interests are considered to be minimal. The evaluation cases are not written up in detail in the thesis or put forward as best practice, but rather they are re-visited in order to learn lessons from positive and negative aspects of the process and so to share those lessons more broadly. In interviews with participants in this research, it was made clear that I wanted to learn from mistakes as well as successes, and questions were specifically asked to address bias directly and to draw out the negatives, for example, asking directly about both successes and challenges in the process, trying to draw out any areas of improvement, and how with hindsight participants would have carried out the process differently (see section on critical inquiry in the next section for more detail). The analysis and writing up of findings also takes into account bias, as the reactions of participants by group are fully reflected in appendices in order for readers to ensure that issues have not been left out of the analysis, with a discussion and analysis of the findings presented in the main body of the text. The findings for each case were also verified with most of the participants who took part in the critical inquiry, even though the results have been presented generically, so that they could check that I had not misinterpreted their views

The above steps helped to address some of concerns Yin (1989) raised in case study research regarding bias; however, there were also issues in addition to these that were specific to both carrying out the research with children, and to settings where translation had to be used, that is in Nepal in this research. Working with children highlighted power dynamics between myself as a researcher and the interviewees, so different styles of interview were conducted that the children felt more comfortable with, such as using video and allowing them to video and asking the project worker to join us when the children expressed a desire to do some research afterwards with digital audio tapes and video so that they could work out how to take this forward. This changed the power dynamics, making the children not only feel more comfortable, but also more engaged with the process. I felt it was more important for children and young people to feel comfortable and relaxed in the interview by using different forms of media and having other people present if they wanted them than to have a rigid format where not enough depth was reached and negative issues could not be probed. Time had been spent in training with the staff in this case so that they appreciated how it was important to learn from what hadn't worked as well as what had been successful. I also

felt it was important to respond to what children said that they wanted in the process so that they felt more comfortable and that the power dynamics were broken down.

In Nepal translation had to be used, and bilingual researchers from the evaluation accompanied me to discuss young women and men's memories of the research. This had been necessary due to language so that interviews could be conducted in a mixture of Nepalese and the local Magar language. Although this could have influenced the results through their bias in selecting what was translated, a day of planning and training was done in order to specifically address this issue. In addition, in previously working with these researchers they had been very willing to raise areas of their community development work that had not been appropriate or worked for girls and boys in the villages. Interpreters being present may always raise the issue of whether participants' views are fully or correctly translated, but this had to be balanced with practicalities. I also felt more comfortable with bilingual professional development workers familiar with reflexive participatory approaches and recognising power issues that arise because of language and ethnicity in the context of Nepal. They understood the purpose of the research and were more skilled in probing for depth than a process of direct translation where there is no understanding by an interpreter of the aims of the research, which leads to a more formal and more structured way of interviewing. Commissioning translation from a completely disassociated interpreter in Nepal can also be biased due to issues such as ethnicity, caste and gender whereas at least this could be fully discussed with the community development workers who had been researchers in the evaluation revisited.

I acknowledge that bias is linked to my own positionality in the research in that I had more 'cross-over' in characteristics of identification, such as age and cultural context, with the participants from UK, including young people and the adults in Croydon, but recognising this and analysing it as part of the research is important and is part of the reflexivity of the case study approach. The results probably appear stronger for the case study across the UK, and I would recognise that working with translation can be challenging, although in my experience in international development improved by training and planning with development workers that have ownership of the research. The Nepalese researchers also acknowledged this as none of them were Magar, although one spoke the language, and discussing this together decided that other issues of bias may also arise with the involvement of local people as interpreters. In Croydon,

the issues of power dynamics in research with children (as discussed in Section 2.3.2) were taken on board and discussed with children and workers as part of the interviews and analysis. Contributing to the analysis being relatively limited in the interviews was the fact that only two individuals, one from each of the groups that had worked together on the evaluation, turned up for the interviews due to the timing of the research with the start of the term and a new school year with other commitments in the project and for the children. They had been used to working in groups and may have found it harder to remember, although they still discussed the role of their evidence in continuing the funding for the project (see Chapter 6 for findings from each case).

Verifying my reporting and analysis of the interviews during the latter stages of the research was also important to counteract any bias in the thesis, especially as this was triangulated by conducting this with most of the participants in the research. The initial reactions of positive and negative aspects of the research, rather than being analysed, were written up in an appendix so that the reader can also check whether participants' perspectives, most of which were verified, had been respected.

### **3.3.4 Stages in Case Study Analysis and the 'Two-Pronged' Approach**

In order to 'overcome traditional criticisms' Yin (1989, p. 13) suggests that great care should be taken in design of case studies. The approach taken in this thesis is 'two-pronged' and includes reflexivity and critical inquiry. Lofland and Lofland (1995, p. 11) discuss the importance of 'current biography', 'remote biography' and 'personal history' in determining what a researcher chooses to study and how a researcher must determine what it is that they care about enough or have an interest in to study. The first form of analysis, which I applied to the case studies, has the element of reflexivity (although an inductive process of review, reflection and analysis was continued throughout the research). The initial stage of reflection was based on my perspectives and observations, drawing on my previous involvement as a lead researcher and therefore my intimate knowledge of the evaluation case studies.

In order to broaden the analysis, the second component of the research takes the form of a critical inquiry carried out through detailed interviewing of the settings' participants, thus adding breadth, depth and a degree of objectivity to the analysis by scrutinising the case studies from a broader range of perspectives. Despite encouraging involvement and different participants offering their personal perspectives rather than

being more scientific and objective, the following tensions need to be considered for the researcher:

*.....involvement and enmeshment rather than objectivity and distance...the dual task of raising questions and answering questions does call for a certain internal tension between distance and closeness in the researcher.* (Lofland and Lofland 1995, p. 17)

Analysis involved detailed descriptions of the cases that are rich in the context of the case (Merriam 1998, in Creswell, p. 63) and analysis of emergent themes, as well as interpretation or development of assertions and generalisations (Stake 2003). The following are the approaches to analysis included in the different stages of this case study research (informed by Creswell 2007, Stake 2003, and Yin 2003):

- Detailed description of the case, (Chapter 4);
- Themed analysis or categorical aggregation to establish patterns in the data, (Chapter 5 and, as the themes develop and emerge, Chapter 6);
- Comparing across cases and perspectives for similarities and differences, (Chapter 7);
- Explanation building through developing assertions and generalisations, and inductive theorising or modelling, building on the previous analysis in an iterative way, (Chapter 7).

Stake (2003, p. 155) provides a helpful conceptualisation of the responsibilities of case study researchers, which I have directly applied with some modification in this research and incorporated in the development of stages of the planning and analysis set out in Table 3. These responsibilities are as follows:

1. Bounding the case, conceptualising the object of study;
2. Selecting phenomena, themes, or issues – that is the research questions – to emphasize;
3. Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues;
4. Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation;
5. Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue;
6. Developing assertions or generalisations about the case.

**Table 3: Stages of the Methodology in Case Study Research**

<i>Stages of the planning and analysis</i>	<i>Process for collection of evidence</i>	<b>Stake's researcher responsibility<sup>14</sup></b>
<p>1. Determining key phenomena or issues to be explored: the research questions (Chapter 2, Appendix 2 and Chapter 5)</p> <p>2. Developing an ethical framework (Appendix 1b)</p> <p>3. Selecting the case studies (Chapter 4)</p>	<p>Literature review (chapter 2), documents and the author's knowledge of, and reflexivity relating to evaluation cases that she has conducted</p> <p>Ethical consent forms and approval (Appendix 1b)</p>	<p>1, 2</p> <p>Bound case</p> <p>Select themes/ issues</p>
<p>4. Description - the context of the cases and the settings (see Chapter 4)</p>	<p>Documentation from evaluations and author's knowledge of cases</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Bound case</p>
<p>5. Reflexivity (see Chapter 5), including developing interview for critical inquiry with more detailed research questions</p>	<p>Reflection from direct involvement/ observation in evaluation case studies, documentation from evaluations and literature</p>	<p>2, 3</p> <p>Select themes/ issues</p> <p>Seek patterns</p>
<p>6. Critical inquiry interviews writing up key messages (see Chapter 6), comparing perspectives of different stakeholders and developing themes for further analysis (for Chapter 7)</p> <p>Verification with the participants in the case study research (as part of ethical framework)</p>	<p>Critical inquiry interviews, using participant priorities and summaries of issues raised by stakeholder groups to provide key messages</p> <p>Clustering responses to pull out themes for further analysis</p>	<p>3, 4, 5</p> <p>Seek patterns</p> <p>Triangulation</p> <p>Alternatives</p>
<p>7. Developing comparisons across cases</p> <p>8. Inductive theorising and modelling (see Chapter 7 and 8 for both points)</p> <p>9. Validation, including verification with the participants in the case study research (as part of ethical framework, section 3.4.2)</p> <p>10. Reflections on process of research and conclusions (see stage 10, section 3.4.10 in this chapter and Chapters 9 and 10)</p> <p>Feedback to participants (as part of stage 9, section 3.4.9 and ethical framework)</p>	<p>Using the primary and secondary analysis and then backing up generalisations and assertions, and modelling with evidence from two pronged approach with reference to the literature</p>	<p>4, 5, 6</p> <p>Triangulation</p> <p>Alternatives</p> <p>Develop assertions and generalisations</p>

<sup>14</sup> Relating to Stake's points as listed above.

The different stages of the methodology, as laid out in Table 3.1, are described in more detail in the following section.

### **3.4 Stages of the Planning and Analysis**

#### **3.4.1 Determining Key Phenomena, Themes or Issues: The Research Questions**

The key purpose of this research was to explore children's participation in evaluation, using three existing evaluation case studies that were previously carried out by myself in collaboration with colleagues (Johnson *et al.* (with colleagues in Development Focus and Nepal) 2001a and b; Johnson and Nurick 2001; Johnson with Nurick 2008, and Johnson *et al.* (with Development Focus staff) 2005). These were strongly influenced by a participatory and rights-based agenda and by the challenge of putting child rights into practice in the UK and internationally, as described both in the literature review and in the introduction to this chapter. A summary of the purpose of the research, how it was to be carried out and what it would be used for was included in an information sheet sent out to participants in the case study research (Appendix 1a).

Key research questions identified in the literature address the *why*, *how* and *who* questions that are thought to be important by case study researchers, such as:

- *How* to approach children's participation in evaluation?
- *Why* visual and qualitative methods of evaluation are or are not effective in influencing decisions that affect the quality of life for children?
- *How* different contexts – political, institutional and cultural - influence how children participate and whether their perspectives are taken seriously?
- *Who* participates and how? And *who* is listening? Do children's perspectives influence services and policies?

Yin (1989) suggests that it is not only questions, building on *how?* and *why?*, but also any propositions that need to be considered within the scope of the study. It was, however, decided not to have propositions when doing the research, but rather to have a more organic process whereby the analysis is inductive and the themes and

generalisations arise through the analytical process (Stake 2003). Hancock and Algozzine (2006, p. 56) describe the interpretation of information as

*....a recursive process in which the researcher interacts with the information throughout the investigative process.*

The development of assertions and generalisations (Stake 2003) is the approach followed in this thesis and is similar to an iterative approach of explanation building (Yin 2003), where analysis of case study data by building an explanation is similar to hypothesis generation in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). When looking at different issues and themes, Stake (2003) discusses the conceptual structure of case study research and how case studies can be organised around themes. He distinguishes between a *'topical'* concern that is more general in nature and *'foreshadowed'* problems that are posed by the researcher but, unlike a hypothesis, are approached with more of an open mind. He suggests that there is a sequence of inquiry that moves from a theme to an *'issue under development'* and finally, backed up by interpretation of data, an *'assertion'*. According to Stake (2003, p. 143) *'Issues are chosen partly in terms of what can be learned within the opportunities for study'*. The issues or themes identified in the literature thus become more focused in the initial reflexive stage (see Chapter 5) of the research and more detailed questions for the critical inquiry emerge from that stage. Perspectives are compared in the analysis from the critical inquiry (see Chapter 6) and themes for further analysis emerge (see process for analysis in stages 6 and 7) and are then discussed as assertions and generalisations (see Chapter 7), using the evidence from the two-pronged approach.

### **3.4.2 Developing an Ethical Framework and Ethics**

The evaluation cases being revisited for this thesis had already been completed. Case studies were selected where ethical frameworks and protocols for working with children and adults had been approved by the organisations that commissioned the research or that had been involved as partners<sup>15</sup>. The interviews and focus groups that

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<sup>15</sup> The organisations were as follows: The Croydon Children's Fund; Save the Children UK; in Nepal, The Himalayan Community Development Forum (HICODEF) and ActionAid Nepal; and in South Africa, iMEDIATE Development Communications, The Early Learning Resource Unit and Working for Water.

were conducted as part of the critical inquiry for the thesis were planned with adults and children (most of whom were now adults) who were previously involved or associated with the commissioned or funded evaluations. Key issues across the case studies were addressed by way of a semi-structured interview which explored different perspectives on the methodology used for children's participation in evaluating services, to gain a perspective on the relative value that may be placed on data collected using different approaches and methods and to assess how the evidence was accepted and used (see Stage 5 on the critical inquiry).

Informed consent was sought from these individuals, and their written permission gained for writing up and publishing findings from the research. For children and young people, written consent was sought from all the individuals and in addition, consent from parents/guardians, previously given to work with children, reaffirmed. The form was read out to participants so that they could then sign and tick the relevant boxes for use of photographs and to digitally record the interviews conducted (see Appendix 1b for consent forms for children and parents and service providers). All participants were provided with a short written information sheet in an accessible format about the research (see Appendix 1a), so they were fully informed about its purpose, how it would be used, and that they could opt out at any stage. Translation was used where English was not fluent, namely in the hill villages in Nepal. The translators were local development workers working with myself to revisit the evaluations that they had been involved with as researchers; one spoke Nepalese and the other in addition spoke the local language, Magar (discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.3 on bias).

Refreshments were provided to compensate for the participants' time and, if deemed appropriate by the partner organisations facilitating the research, money or vouchers were supplied for the small focus groups of children. This was negotiated with partners in different countries so that it was equitable for participants within each site. There would always be an additional adult in the interviews/ focus groups held with children, and the author was cleared through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Information from the interviews and focus groups was kept in a cabinet in a locked study at the researcher's home and computer files also held on a secure computer. The data will be stored for no more than five years after the research has been conducted (after which time it will be shredded or destroyed).

Prior to undertaking fieldwork for the critical inquiry, a risk assessment was completed for the overseas research trip to Nepal to assess the situation of conflict in the region over recent years. From the Foreign Office (2008) guidance, despite the ongoing political tensions and general threat of terrorism, Nepal was not classified with those countries or parts of countries where the advice was, ‘against all travel’ or ‘only essential travel’. This fitted in with the advice from Nepalese colleagues that the critical inquiry could be carried out in Kathmandu and Nawalparasi, and that it would not pose any additional risk to the participants involved.

### **3.4.3 Selection of the Case studies Participants**

Cases may be chosen for a variety of reasons. Creswell (1998, p. 62) advocates choosing cases that *‘show different perspectives on a problem, process, or event’*, also selecting what he refers to as *‘ordinary cases, accessible cases or unusual cases’*. Despite being able to compare across cases, while studying the individual case effort should be made to understand its complexity, so as to treat *‘each case study as a concentrated inquiry into a single case’*. This is pertinent to the selection of case studies, as not all cases need to be directly comparable if they give relevant lessons to be learned.

In case study research, it is appropriate to use data that have already been gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methods; thus written documents from the evaluations can be used to inform the description of the cases. For example, a ‘case study might be seen as a *‘holistic investigation of some space- and time-rooted phenomenon’* (Lofland and Lofland 1995, p. 21). This is discussed in the context of the detailed assessment of data sites and evaluating in terms of access, ethics, immediate risk, and personal consequences in order to gather the richest possible data.

The criteria set out by Lofland and Lofland (1985) in terms of guidance to researchers are as follows:

1. Collect the richest possible data;
2. Achieve intimate familiarity with the setting; and
3. Engage in face-to-face interaction so as to participate in the minds of the settings’ participants.

These criteria are used in the case selection that is further discussed in chapter 4 where the cases are also described.

#### **3.4.4 Description - The Context of the Case/ Setting**

The context of the case or the setting can be given using vignettes to give the overall cultural and socio-economic context, the physical environment or place, the overall timeframe and the overall purpose of study (Creswell 2007). This includes what Stake (2003) refers to as: *'bounding the case and conceptualising the object of study'*. It must also, however, define the case in terms of different aspects or units of analysis (Yin 1989). Thus in subsequent chapters the evaluation cases undertaken in the past are defined or described in terms of their different country, physical and policy settings, organisational context with details of the timeframe and scale of the evaluation, the numbers of projects, themes covered, length of project and ages of children and young people targeted, to provide a background to the analysis of how children's participation has been applied in the cases.

Context in case study research is critical and yet, as Yin (2003) suggests, this is not always clearly defined. The context (described in Chapter 4, and in more detail in Chapter 5) increased in importance throughout the research as participants in the critical inquiry stage also highlighted how changes in context and the conditions in which an evaluation was conducted were key to how children could participate and whether or not they were listened to (see Chapter 7). Appendix 4 provides a snap shot of the original evaluations that were conducted, their context and methodology, as well as tables in Chapter 4 and 5 that are discussed in the following chapter that describe the differences and similarities for each case.

#### **3.4.5 Reflection and reflexivity**

Although there is continuous reflexivity in case study research that allows a process of iterative analysis and inductive theorisation, building explanations and developing assertions and generalisations about cases, the 'personal archaeology' and specific stage of reflection adopted by this study facilitated an analysis of the evaluation cases and development of themes and questions for further research. The following two

responsibilities in case study research suggested by Stake (2003) were therefore built upon in this stage:

- Selecting phenomena, themes, or issues (that is, the research questions) to emphasise;
- Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues.

In the use of tables to compare and contrast the evaluations, more depth was added to the themes and questions to be explored with other participants in the critical inquiry. The patterns of data from the documentation and my reflections on the methodologies and how they were applied in different ‘real world’ contexts informed the next stages of research and analysis. Building on the importance of personal experience raised by Lofland and Lofland (1995) and the reflective nature of case study research (Stake 2003), this stage of description through direct observation relates to purpose and process, and how these have been affected by different conditions and contexts.

In order to set criteria for description, a ‘free thinking’ or ‘quick thinking’ exercise similar to those commonly conducted in participatory appraisal (PA) methodology (for example, see Johnson and Webster 2000, p. 46-61) was conducted. For each evaluation case I identified key factors that were considered to have hindered (acted as barriers to success, marked with a sad face) or to have helped (acted as facilitators to success, marked with a happy face) the evaluation process to lead to positive change/action for children. These were included in a table and the different factors were then taken in turn and each analysed for each case: for example, capacity of facilitators, institutional context, policies and whether they were applied during the evaluation (see Chapter 5).

These factors identified at an early stage were used as a basis to further develop themes and questions that would be explored with the participants in the critical inquiry. Chapter 5 explains how the questions for the interview guide for the critical inquiry were developed from the reflective stage of the methodology. These themes have in turn then been developed in an iterative way feeding into the further analysis in which propositions or assertions and generalisation are put forward, (see Chapter 7), and backed up with the evidence from this reflection and the different perspectives of participants in the critical inquiry.

Under each theme, a description was given for each case to provide a basis for analysis of comparison between the cases to see where there were similarities and differences,

and to discover what issues could be further developed and explored in the case study research and analysis in the following stages of the methodology.

### **3.4.6 Critical Inquiry and Comparing Perspectives**

#### ***Introduction***

The critical inquiry covers the following tasks of case study research suggested by Stake (2003):

- Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues;
- Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation;
- Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue.

The key themes were identified and developed throughout the semi-structured interviews. The first and last sections were left open-ended, in order to allow participants in the critical inquiry to explore positive and negative issues from the past evaluations. Interviews led to new issues being identified by respondents, with these perspectives then compared to my reflections and to each other, thus giving a richer analysis and triangulating the information that informs the generalisations.

#### ***Selection of key stakeholders to be interviewed in the critical inquiry***

The selection of key stakeholders or key informants to take part in the critical inquiry, was guided by the following perspective:

*...the researcher should identify key participants in the situation whose knowledge and opinions may provide important insights regarding the research questions.*

*(Hancock and Algozzine 2006, p. 39)*

Key informants were also selected from the different case studies to cover a range of roles from the evaluations as follows:

- Managers, funders and commissioners of services/ policy makers;
- Staff delivering services and researchers involved in facilitating evaluation with children;
- Children and young people (who now may be adults) involved in the evaluation.

The evaluations were all conducted across programmes that included a range of services or projects. A request was sent out to those managers and staff who had been involved in the evaluation and the cross-section of people responding was then examined and selection criteria established, to ensure that the sample was representative of people from the above roles, and from the range of projects or services involved; also trying to seek out participants who would provide both positive and negative feedback. For example, services were represented that had different levels of involvement in the evaluation and that had been reluctant to take part at various stages. It was expected that those responding to the request would be well informed and able to offer detailed knowledge and insights about the methodology applied in the evaluation, and selection criteria would relate to whether they might be likely to offer perspectives on barriers and negative aspects of the evaluation, the balance of participants from statutory and voluntary sectors, the different projects/ services and range of issues covered in the project or service, for example youth crime and working with children with disabilities, showing a range in conditions in which the evaluation methodology was applied. This was designed to help ensure the inquiry had a critical element and was not just selecting ‘success stories’. From the respondents in each case, the spread of projects was then analysed to see that there was a contrast in services within the scheme. On the whole the balance was found, however, with the initial respondents.<sup>16</sup> (See Chapter 4 for details of the participants.)

In terms of planning the logistics of the field research, it took around a month to gain permission from organisations for the work and around a month to arrange the interviews with participants, due to evaluations (in two of the cases) having been conducted many years ago and therefore some participants moving locations, and also due to the busy work schedules of many of the participants involved.

### ***Details of semi-structured interview format and process***

The key aim of the interviews, using a semi-structured schedule, was to gather the views of managers, staff, adults and young people, across the case studies about their experiences of the evaluations and about what had happened as a result of the children’s input. The issues that were explored included asking participants: how well

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<sup>16</sup> I tried to interview award holders from England as well as Wales, but the two young people who were still in touch with a mentor who had been based in London were not in the country or contactable during the period of the inquiry.

they felt that the evaluation worked, and what they would suggest changing in future evaluations; how they thought children and young people's views could best be heard and how well they considered that particular visual methods worked; and whether they felt that the process made an impact on the services provided or broader policies.

A semi-structured and qualitative form of interviewing was chosen rather than a structured survey. The interview was planned (see Appendix 2), where questions were predetermined, that is still put to the respondent in the same way each time the interview was conducted, through developing an interview guide or interview protocol (Hancock and Algozzine 2006). I mainly used verbal rather than visual methods in the interview, but had some visual scales to prompt discussion and to remind the respondent of what type of 'visual methods' were being referred to in the past evaluations. Follow-up questions were then used to probe for more information where the interviewee was interested. Questions were also open ended so that the respondents were not limited by closed, forced-choice questions or structured questionnaires (Hall and Hall 1996).

*....semi-structured interviews invite the interviewees to express something themselves openly and freely and to define the world from their own perspectives, not solely from the perspectives of the researcher.*  
(Hancock and Algozzine 2006, p. 40)

Past participatory visual exercises and photos from the evaluation processes were also shown at the beginning of the interview, for example drawings, ranking matrices and diagramming. This was in order to refresh the participant's memory about the process. Any outputs, including research reports, were also taken to the interview for this purpose.

The timing for the interviews was influenced by the time and schedules held by some of the decision-makers involved. The interview was planned for a period of one hour, although a slot of 1.5 hours was requested to leave time for initial introduction to the research with ethical procedures, 'remembering' the process and the use of visuals, and for elaboration and probing issues that emerged. Therefore the interview schedule aimed to cover a limited range of topics in depth and was conducted over around an hour. A longer time was planned to talk with children (now adults) in Nepal due to

issues of translation, especially as they were focus groups rather than individual interviews; these took just over two hours.

The interviews were voice recorded as well as field notes taken for cross-referencing and recall. Details about the setting were also noted. The advantages and disadvantages of recording versus note taking were analysed by myself as follows: note-taking rather than transcribing resulted in less information to sift through, although using a digital recorder meant that the interview could be more like a conversation and that there was a full record of what the respondent said. Different people could feel more or less anxious with either technique and some people do feel that a recording creates a more formal and permanent record of the interview, hence the need for ethical approval in order to use the voice recording (Hall and Hall 1996). The interview was therefore carried out in a relaxed way while I took notes to refer to for writing up and analysis, although the recording was used to ensure a full record of the interview and to check back to for quotes. I also limited my own input to the questions and probing in the interview, to allow the interviewee the time to put forward their own perspectives without bias.

*.....the researcher should remember that the time spent talking to the interviewee would be better spent listening to the interviewee. In other words, the researcher should limit her comments as much as possible to allow more time for the interviewee to offer his perspectives.*

*(Hancock and Allgozzine 2006, p. 41)*

Notes were also taken to assist analysis afterwards, with the taped interview being used to double check responses and extract quotes, whilst not necessarily having to transcribe all interviews given the relatively high number of respondents in the critical inquiry. The interviewee was given control of the recorder so that they could turn it off when they did not want sections to be recorded (Thomas and O’Kane 1998) and in the interviews a couple of people did this when they wanted to give information off the record. The researcher clearly introduced the purpose of the research and gained ethical consent for the research, including the use of the tape recorder. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were clarified, as permission was requested to quote participants in the research and in some cases; for example for policy-makers and service providers, they would be recognisable by stating their roles. It was also intended that the participants would get credit for their views so they are fully acknowledged as participants. A

system of verification and a timeframe for feedback was also agreed during the interviews (see Section 3.4.2 on Developing an ethical framework and ethics). Where interpreters were used in Nepal, it was important to go through the purpose of the research and to be clear about wanting to get positive as well as negative information (this is further discussed in 3.3.3 on bias).

### *Analysis of the interview data*

The key research questions should be kept in mind when analysing data, whilst not missing new perspectives and insights that arise from interviews (Hancock and Algozzine 2006). To analyse the data gathered in interviews, a system was employed of clustering information into themes, suggested by Hancock and Algozzine (2006, p. 59) who describe determining analytic categories that can then become grounded categories as the data is read through and written up. Data can be sorted into chunks or categories, although categories may be revised as the data is sorted. The later procedure they suggest of counting the number of entries for each category would not be relevant for the smaller sample size, but the extent to which different participants discussed issues is felt to be relevant and adds to determining the relative weight given to different issues arising; as Yin (2003) puts it: analytic, rather than statistical, generalisation.

Thematic analysis or categorical analysis should reflect the purpose of the research, but should stem from all of the data being analysed and themes emerging from a 'saturation' or 'exhaustion' of all the data: that is not leaving any of the data out, when themes are determined (Hancock and Algozzine 2006). The cases are therefore described in enough detail so that readers can appreciate the different experiences and draw their own conclusions, which may differ from those of the author (Stake 2003). Many messages and points are therefore illustrated with quotes to give a rich representation of the interviewees' accounts. The initial reactions of all of the interviewees is also written up and included in appendices, verified by the participants, so that the reader has the option of referring to these, and it is hoped that this, along with other steps to address bias (see Section 3.3.3), will show that there is inclusion of information that is critical of past processes.

In summary, the stages of analysis for the critical inquiry were as follows:

1. The interviews were written up for all the participants under the questions asked (see Appendix 6). This included all of the responses to the interviews and was done by using the full notes taken during the interviews with clarification and filling gaps in the notes with the taped interview. Transcripts of the tapes were not used as this was thought to be too lengthy to include and too time consuming considering the number of respondents in the critical inquiry.
2. For each case, the priorities of the participants, established in the open-ended section of the critical inquiry (see Appendix 2) were included under the groups of stakeholders interviewed as follows:
  - Children and young people (many now adults);
  - Staff and researchers;
  - Managers and decision-makers.
3. A clustering technique was used to identify the issues raised most often and in most detail by the different groups. Quotes were used to illustrate key points.
4. Themes or categories were then determined for further analysis to explore assertions and generalisations (in Chapter 7). This was done by clustering information and then analysing key messages under the following broad themes or categories:
  - Political and cultural context/ setting
  - Evidence of action/impact in response to children
  - Transformation change
  - Methodological issues relating to impact and visuals
  - Children's participation in the process
  - Logistics and power: timeframe, resources, capacity, roles and position.

The 'embedded' analysis was thus completed with reference to both my perspectives and those of stakeholder. The design of the critical inquiry to incorporate prioritisation by the participants was therefore crucial to ensuring that author bias was not leaning in favour of positive messages about past evaluation processes. The full analysis for each case study and across case studies was also verified with participants in the research once written up, also key in avoiding bias.

Hancock and Algozzine (2006, p. 57) suggest that, with the 'vast amount of information accumulated in case study research', computer software, such as NUDIST (now NVivo) and The Ethnograph can 'contribute to the case study researcher's ability

to categorise and process large amounts of information'. However, in this research Merriam's (1998, p. 155) point of view seemed particularly relevant: 'collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research'. Thus, data were analysed manually as interviews were carried out, key issues of comparison across cases and perspectives were highlighted in the field notes from the interviews and the modelling of findings developed and emerged as the fieldwork was carried out.

Under the categories of analysis defined by Merriam (1998, p. 159-160) for case study research, this research followed the 'content analysis and analytic induction', focusing on the frequency and variety of messages. The further analysis was inductive and, although there were themes identified that guide the analysis, themes emerged throughout the research.

*The process involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content.*  
*(Merriam 1998, p. 160)*

When the interviews were written up (the raw data), the document was highlighted using different colour codes for the different themes (or categories). The interviews were also typed up so that issues raised under different themes could be cut and pasted together. Some of these followed the themes covered by the questions, but some emergent themes were cross-cutting and covered by participants in different sections of the interview, especially in the open-ended sections at the beginning and end of the interview. The analytic induction referred to by Merriam is equivalent to 'explanation building' referred to by Yin (2003) and to the development of 'assertions and generalisations' suggested by Stake (2003).

### **3.4.7 Further Analysis: Developing Assertions and Generalisations**

This section covers the final responsibility of the case study researcher suggested by Stake (2003); that is, '*developing assertions and/or generalisations about the case*'.

There is a tension in case study research between generalisability and particularity. It should not be presumed that research must contribute to generalisability and this does not need to be emphasised in all case study research (Stake 2003). Although the cases were individually written up as intrinsic cases, thick in description and with their own

issues, contexts and interpretations, I hoped, in revisiting the cases, to learn lessons through comparison across the collective cases. I therefore also emphasised comparison across cases, for example, in terms of whether the visual and participatory evaluation methods used had worked, the conditions for success and the receptiveness of different stakeholders to children's perceptions and the relative value they place on the information gathered through visual participatory methods in evaluation.

There is a balance to be struck in the analysis between presenting the participants' priorities and their own words in quotes, and the analysis that I carried out in synthesising information across participants in the different cases and across the three cases to draw out more generalisable lessons learned. To address this concern expressed about how the case study approach relates to generalisation, it is useful to again refer to Yin (1989), who points out that case study research can employ analytic generalisation (where theories may be expanded and generalised from a case), rather than statistical generalisation (where it would be necessary to enumerate frequency and have statistical significance). Multiple case studies can thus be used to explore the same phenomenon in different contexts in order to generalise. It is important here to realise that 'generalisation' is a term used in case study research to mean cross-case analysis and learning rather than implying that conclusions are 'general', but not in-depth and detailed. As this seemed a point of confusion for readers not familiar with a case study approach I have chosen to adopt the term 'cross-case comparison and/or analysis'.

### **3.4.8 Inductive Theorising and Modelling**

Creswell (2007, p. 197) refers to considering '*structures for building ideas*' and building a theory that is composed of variables or themes that are inter-related. Merriam (1998) suggests that reflecting on the issues during the research and while in the setting can help to see how the data collected relates to the wider picture or to the '*larger theoretical, methodological and substantive issues*' (Bogdan and Biklen 1992, p. 159). The latter also suggest visualising learning about the phenomenon, which in this research was done by drawing out the model (see Chapter 7) as it arose from the interview data in the field, then cross-checking this using the detailed field notes and written up interviews. In the inductive analysis, I used a manual form of managing the data assisted with the computer, rather than a computer software programme (see 3.4.6).

The progression from assertions and generalisations to inductive theorising and modelling is one of moving from explanation to what Jon Elster (1989) refers to as explaining causal mechanisms (further discussed in chapter 8). This fits in with the way in which, in ‘critical realism’, Robson (2002) discusses mechanisms as effecting outcome through action.

### **3.4.9 Validation, Including Verification with The Participants**

Creswell (2007, p. 207-209) recommends incorporating at least two of the systems of validation and this has been done in the following ways:

- *Prolonged engagement and persistent observation building trust with participants*

Through prolonged engagement in the field (1-3 years in the evaluations, 2 weeks in each of the revisits), I could double-check the issues and points raised in the context of my observations about the culture and process of the evaluation. The trust built with participants over a long time-period also meant that I could ask for their negative as well as positive reflections in response to the research questions in the interest of learning.

- *Triangulation*

This was largely through gaining multiple perspectives on the issues being investigated in the critical inquiry, in order to be able to compare perspectives and see alternative interpretations of issues (Chapter 4).

- *Clarifying researcher bias*

The potential bias in revisiting evaluations that I had carried previously is explicitly addressed in the methodology as important to carrying out the case study research and the analysis (see Section 3.3.3).

- *Checking by participants*

Drafted analysis chapters relating to the findings of the critical inquiry were shared and verified with the interviewees, specifically checking that they were happy with the quotes used in the text, which were attributed by name. The results were also written up in different formats, such as in academic papers, and sent out to all the participants quoted to verify their input if different from how it had been expressed in the chapters of the thesis.

### **3.4.10 Reflections on the process of research**

#### ***Introduction***

Within an emerging participatory worldview, Reason and Bradbury (2006, p. 7) suggest that researchers be both ‘situated and reflexive’. Reflexivity was an important aspect in revisiting and scrutinising the processes of children’s participation in evaluations conducted in different contexts. There have been reflective inquiries that helped set the scene and validate this type of approach, for example to explore the application of participatory methods (Cornwall and Pratt 2003) and in the application of research with children and young people in the real world (Lewis *et al.* 2006). These present an analysis of what the researchers and facilitators of research felt about the processes in which they had been involved and identified learning that they could share with others.

Lewis and colleagues (2006) give a retrospective commentary to their collection on research with children and young people, as to the difficulties contributors faced in the application or process of their research. Researchers have revealed their feelings of frustration mixed with rewards, for example Punch (2006, p. 115) in ‘scrambling through the ethnographic forest’ in Bolivia. Some of the feelings that Punch experienced resonate with my own and have inspired me to continue to reflect on experiences in a personal as well as an outwardly professional way.

Cornwall and Pratt (2003) discuss how participatory rural appraisal (PRA) has taken on a multitude of meanings as it has been applied the world over. They raise concerns around the quality of practice, although they then embrace pluralism that allows varied contributions to the practice of PRA or PA and a broad description of participation. This is also put forward by Cornwall and Guijt (2004). In this thesis, the interpretation of different stakeholders, even of the same evaluation process, has been important to piece together to find a way of approaching the issue of children’s participation in evaluation. For example, Cornwall (2003) recounts how her own experiences of being involved in a PRA exercise in her ‘own back yard’ as a resident of an estate in the UK made her realise that change is brought about by creating a space to voice concerns and what mattered most was ‘who knows and how they come to know’. Talking about going beyond the mass of voices, she discusses the importance of finding new ways of ‘opening up deliberation and reflection in taken-for-granted assumptions’. She

embraces the idea of reflection and acknowledges the political nature of participation:

*Gone is the era of uncritical, defensive, promotion. What is needed now, is a greater clarity of politics and of purpose, and the reflexivity and honesty with which to reclaim participation's radical promise.*

*(Cornwall 2003, p. 50-51)*

### ***Reflections on planning***

This section covers some of the changes that came about during the process of the research and how I dealt with them. I had originally planned to carry out the research using case studies in both Nepal and South Africa as well as in the UK, although time and financial resources imposed limits, as well as the South African case not being so easily comparable with the other cases. It might therefore have been harder to make generalisations and assertions across cases. However, it would be worth revisiting the evaluation in South Africa at some stage in order to learn lessons from that context, and to see if the analysis and model from the cases in this thesis apply to the evaluation that had been carried out in South Africa.

In Wales I interviewed young people who had been involved in the Saying Power scheme and evaluation. There were also a couple of young people from London who were very willing to be interviewed, but were travelling at the time of the research. It would be interesting at some point to follow up with more of the young people who had been involved across the UK. Time and financial resources were the main limiting factor for this, although as also discussed below the different members of the scheme had no systematic way of tracing the young people, but rather relied on individuals' personal and professional contacts.

The Croydon case study was not planned to fully take the timing of the start of a new school year and the project were surprised by the lack of numbers for their first two sessions which I attended, one of which cancelled completely. In the second session only two boys attended the usual after school club held by the project, each of whom had been involved in a different stage of the planning. The numbers of children attended did increase after this period, although I had by that time relocated out of the country.

### ***Reflections on the logistics of carrying out the fieldwork***

In Nepal, many of the fieldworkers and managers were working for different organisations scattered across the country, so a venue and timeframe was agreed for the fieldwork, and travel and subsistence expenses provided. The children (now adults) in the villages of Nawalparasi were contacted and I went to their villages to interview them, travelling with some of the former researchers and interpreters. This experience raised issues of positionality for myself as a facilitator and researcher, as I do not speak Nepalese or the local Magar language (spoken by the Magar people in Nawalparasi), but had worked with bilingual researchers who had facilitated and translated. This was also an issue in the evaluation research in Nepal in 1999-2001. Long discussions took place in Magar and Nepalese, and only when asked for, was 'word for word' translation given, with the nuances and personal relationship with myself as a researcher lost in comparison with the cases conducted in English in the UK. This was the reason why I worked with bilingual Nepalese development workers and researchers many years ago, with training and joint planning of the evaluation leading to them conducting the evaluation methods in the field. In the critical inquiry, the issue of only one of the fieldworkers speaking Magar rather than Nepalese was raised, showing that this issue of positionality and language and ethnicity is not just an issue for non-Nepalese.

In the UK, the former mentors and managers for the Saying Power scheme felt that following up young people was important and could be done more extensively than within the confines of a PhD (as a more comprehensive evaluation of what the scheme had achieved across the UK). Several individuals mentioned that they regretted not keeping better contact with the young people and only certain individuals were still in touch with their mentors by chance. For the purposes of this research I was only looking for a couple of interviews with former award holders, so this was not an issue; to learn more from this case more award holders might need to be traced and more interviews conducted in the future.

In Croydon, the recent evaluation was fresh in the minds of the participants, since the evaluation reports were completed in 2008, and time to refresh memories was not needed as in the other cases. It was also possible to talk to children who were still children in this case! There was, however, less that could be learnt about long-term impacts and more that was discussed in the interviews around the methodology and the

extent to which particular types of evidence from children had influenced service provision and policy regarding funding.

The context of the changing political economy and cultural context in which the evaluations were carried out grew in importance during the research and was particularly stark in Nepal. More attention could have been paid to this facet of context in the UK cases, which were studied first: to the broader cultural context and the way in which attitudes of adults in the communities had or had not changed towards children. I have written about the changing political economy and conflict in Nepal and presented the findings at the Development Studies Association (DSA) Conference 2009 (Johnson 2010).

### **3.5 Summary**

My journey from practitioner research, largely participatory and rights-based, located within developing countries then transferred to a UK context, to an academic context has strongly influenced my ontology and epistemological perspective of critical realism taken in this thesis. From having an ideology that fitted with a growing body of academics and practitioners that are defining a ‘participatory worldview’, I have taken a critical and pragmatic view to how this can be applied in different ‘real world’ contexts and has come through a viewpoint of pragmatism, to taking a critical realist standpoint. I chose case study research as fitting well with this theoretical view. A naturalistic approach to the research was taken in that the context of the research was important to the research design and explanations emerging and an inductive approach to theorising. A qualitative form of inquiry was taken to gain in-depth understanding of cases, chosen to illustrate difference and particularity, but with the purpose of sharing lessons about children’s participation in evaluation. The three case studies involves three distinct processes, but can be described as collective and instrumental, as the research was undertaken in order to learn lessons that may be useful in carrying out future evaluation with a greater understanding of how children’s participation can work in practice in real world settings, and how children’s perspectives may be valued considering different physical, institutional and cultural contexts, changing political economies and power dynamics, that all in turn influence the capacity and the political will to respond to children.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE THREE CASE STUDIES, DESCRIPTION AND SELECTION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an introduction to the three case studies chosen to explore children's participation in evaluating services. The case studies were selected in order to provide richness of data, grounds for detailed reflections considering the student's intimate knowledge of the evaluations, and access to participants who had been involved at different levels and in different roles in the evaluations. In addition to this the cases were considered in terms of contrasting different contexts and timeframes (as discussed below in Section 4.4).

All the cases are evaluation processes that were carried out by myself, as lead researcher (jointly in one of the cases), and all use participatory methods within a rights-based approach. It was important to me that these cases were explored further in order to share lessons about how child rights and children's participation in evaluation can be translated from rhetoric to reality, especially as there tend to be diverse views about what participation means and what constitutes a 'rights-based approach' in practice (as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2 and the findings in Chapters 6). The cases demonstrate a range of institutional, cultural and policy settings so that there can be analysis of how context is linked to the way in which the evaluation methodology may be applied.

For the purposes of this thesis, the cases selected are referred to as 'Nepal', 'Saying Power' and 'Croydon' for ease of reference. It was clear to participants that the cases were not anonymised and the relevant organisations gave consent to the research, although individuals have not been specifically referred to in the text. The cases are therefore described in this Chapter and then referred to in the rest of the thesis as above.

## 4.2 Vignettes

Vignettes of the case studies follow:

- **‘Nepal’**: This detailed evaluation research used visual participatory approaches to explore the impact of community development programmes on children’s lives. It was carried out in Nawalparasi in Nepal with the Himalayan Community Development Forum (HICODEF) with support from ActionAid Nepal. This was part of a Department for International Development (DfID) Innovations fund research programme. It was carried out by Development Focus International, led by myself with local partners and was called ‘Rights Through Evaluation: Putting Child Rights into Practice in South Africa and Nepal’. The main programme of work was in the period 1998-2001, with the detailed research in Nepal being planned and executed in 1999-2000.
- **‘Saying Power’**: This was a three-year participatory monitoring and evaluation of a programme called Saying Power that supported young people to run their own projects with peers on issues of social exclusion. The evaluation included exploring impact, both for the young award holders who initiated and managed the projects and a group of their peers, and also included a capacity building element so that award holders could carry out their own evaluation using visual participatory methods. The programme was run by Save the Children UK and was funded by Comic Relief and the Millennium Commission. The external evaluators (myself and a colleague in Development Focus) were commissioned to conduct an evaluation process that would feed into the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and management of the scheme during 1998-2001. The scheme was run across the four nations of the UK although the revisit was agreed to cover Wales and England.
- **Croydon**: This comprised a five-year monitoring and evaluation programme of the Croydon Children’s Fund that supported 19 projects with children aged 5-13 years and their families. The evaluation involved the use of visual participatory methodology to report on outcomes and impact and also the development of a detailed quantitative monitoring system. The evaluation was led by myself and carried out with colleagues from Development Focus Trust during 2003-2008

and was commissioned by Croydon Voluntary Action, also reporting to a Partnership Board including statutory and voluntary sector representatives. The local evaluation to include service user views (that is perspectives of children and their families) was at first a requirement and then voluntary and left to the discretion of the Children's Funds, hence the year by year negotiation of the continuation of the evaluation with the Partnership Board over the five years.

(For further details on the methodology applied in each evaluation, see Appendix 4).

### **4.3 Further Details of the Case Studies**

This section shows how the cases have different characteristics and therefore different issues of context of the different settings can be explored. Here the settings will be described with further analysis of context and process being explored in the reflection in Chapter 5. The cases represent developed and developing country contexts in order that lessons can be shared and relevant to the global North and South. Thus the cases show very different cultural settings, from the rural hills of Nepal to some of the most deprived urban areas of Croydon in London. The mix of issues addressed by the evaluations, however, is not limited to poverty and deprivation, but also includes: issues of exclusion and children and young people's wellbeing, such as mental and physical health; exclusion because of difference, such as ethnicity, sexuality, language; advocacy in child rights in public policy. They also cover the area initiatives working with a cross-section of girls and boys, young men and women who may face discrimination because of where they live or a lack of local services.

'Nepal' and 'Saying Power', both carried out in the late 1990s, were firmly based in the non-governmental sector, although receiving mixed funding from voluntary and government sectors. 'Croydon', carried out later (2003-2008) was more heavily influenced by the statutory sector, as it had mixed statutory and voluntary sector board and services and also received government funding. The policy context was also very different, with 'Nepal' and 'Saying Power' being affected by the movement to rights-based programming in development, with child rights and children's participation at the forefront. In 'Croydon', the context was then less vocal about rights, but children's participation was a requirement established by government to show service user involvement in evaluation of preventative services that might decrease the numbers of

children seen as ‘at risk’, entering the criminal justice system and crossing social services thresholds of intervention.

In Nepal, the policy context was rights based, although children rights were seen as separate to broader development work. HICODEF were a local based organisation that had branched off from the international non-governmental organisation, ActionAid Nepal, after being one of its ‘Rural Development Areas’ for ten years. HICODEF ran integrated development programmes to provide support to communities for at least five years in order to address poverty in the rural locations including some specific Village Development Committees (VDCs)<sup>17</sup> of Nawalparasi. These programmes include: child clubs, water, community forestry, education, health, adult literacy, food security, income generation and micro-hydro projects.

‘Saying Power’ was implemented across the four UK nations and also had as its foundation rights-based approaches and programming. The management of the scheme lay in the non-governmental sector although some of the host agencies where young people were located to run their projects were in the statutory sector and the funding was from the Millenium Commission and Comic Relief. There were 54 young award holders supported over three years of the first phase: 21 in year 1, 20 in year 2 and 23 in year 3. The awards lasted for one year, although some of the projects were continued by award-holders in subsequent years. The projects covered issues of bullying, racism, self-harm, refugees, disability, drug abuse, LGBT, single parents, care leavers, youth forums to feed into decision-making forums.

In Croydon the Children’s Fund was limited to funding services for 5-13 years and was carried out over a five-year period from 2003-2008. The Partnership Board was headed by the statutory sector, but with voluntary sector representatives and the services had a mix of statutory and voluntary sectors. There was an emphasis on partnership working across agencies with Every Child Matters<sup>18</sup> policy framework for children’s services introduced mid way though evaluation. Funding cuts threatened the CCF throughout

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<sup>17</sup> Village Development Committee refers to ‘a committee of members elected to govern a village development area (as designated by the Village Development Committee Act of 1992) (ActionAid Nepal 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Every Child Matters was a national framework laying out specific objectives relating to children’s services.

evaluation although there was an extension of the Fund from 2003-2007 to 2008/2009 then merging into Local Area Agreement (LAA) in the Borough of Croydon. Initially local evaluation with service user involvement was compulsory, although half way through this condition of funding was dropped. National Government funding supported 19 projects and services over five years, with some services still funded from alternative sources. Services included youth crime prevention, working with children with disability, children who are asylum seekers or refugees, and from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. Some of the out of school provision and family support was focused in three areas of deprivation within the Borough.

The following table summarises the three case studies in terms of physical and policy setting, timeframes, institutional/organisational setting and ages of children worked with as discussed above.

**Table 4: The Case Study Settings for Schemes/ Programme Evaluated**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Saying Power</b>	<b>Croydon</b>
<b>Country setting</b>	Nepal	4 UK Nations	England
<b>Rural/Urban</b>	Rural remote hill area	Rural/ Urban	Urban
<b>Timeframe</b>	In Nepal 1999/2000 (Grant 1998-2001)	1998-2001	2003-2008
<b>Ages of children</b>	All ages	14-19	5-13
<b>Policy context</b>	UNCRC - Rights-based	Rights-based and UK devolution	Partnership working. Every Child Matters <sup>19</sup>
<b>Status since evaluation</b>	Ongoing rural social development	Phase 1 continued into Phase 2 and then ceased at the end of Phase 2	Extension of CCF from 2003-2007 to 2008/2009 then merged into LAA
<b>Organisational setting</b>	HICODEF - local community based organisation, supported by ActionAid - INGO	Managed by NGO Save the Children, some statutory host agencies for young people	Partnership Board and services mix of statutory and voluntary sectors

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<sup>19</sup> Every Child Matters was a national framework laying out specific objectives relating to children's services.

<b>Funding</b>	DFID – government donor	Comic Relief and Millennium Commission	National government funding
<b>Portfolio: services/ projects funded</b>	Integrated development programmes in hills of Nawalparasi	64 award holders over 3 years running peer projects in phase 1	19 projects and service funded over the five years
<b>Themes addressed by services/ projects</b>	Child clubs, water, forestry, education, health, literacy, food security, income generation, micro-hydro	Bullying, racism, self-harm, refugees, disability, drug abuse, single parents, care leavers, youth forums and policy influencing	Youth crime prevention, disability, asylum seeker/ refugee, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, family support, after school provision
<b>Length of projects</b>	Support to community continued over 5+ years	1 Year with some continuing after award	3-5+ Years

#### 4.4 Case Selection and Inviting Participants

The cases that are profiled in this chapter were assessed against criteria based on those put forward by Lofland and Lofland, (1985):

- They showed different perspectives on the research topic (that is the process of children’s participation in evaluation).
- The author/researcher had intimate familiarity with the settings. All of the evaluation cases chosen represented research over two and up to five years
- It was possible to arrange engagement and face-to-face interaction with the participants in different settings.
- They all represented a rich source of data about the process, and these data were on the whole accessible as I had previously led the research and therefore had familiarity with the detailed methodology, ethical procedures, analysis and presentation.

- The personal risk to the researcher of obtaining an initial data set for reflection was not high. The risks or personal consequences in revisiting the cases in order to gain a more critical range of views about the cases from a variety of perspectives was low as the intention of the research was to learn lessons from mistakes as well as building on what went well. A risk assessment was conducted to revisit the Rights through Evaluation research, due to the previous years of conflict in Nepal.

The first selection criteria were discussed in Section 4.3, which describes how the settings for the cases differed and how the processes of children's participation in the evaluations might be linked to context. I found that I had had to take a pragmatic approach to applying a rights-based methodology to children and young people's participation in the evaluations, and in all cases there had to be flexibility to fit around the requirements of the different programmes or schemes that were being evaluated (outlined in Table 4). Thus, despite the overarching participatory worldview with which I approached all the evaluations, other issues of context, power and position came into play, gaining in significance in the process to varying extents and in different ways. These questions are also discussed in the reflection in Chapter 5 and in the findings from the critical inquiry.

Each evaluation was also thought to offer a rich source of data in terms of showing: the application of participatory visual methodologies; measures of outcomes and impact; outputs produced for and with commissioners and/or partners; and potential access to different participants and stakeholders. The cases were therefore considered as interesting in terms of learning lessons to share more broadly on participatory evaluation with children and impact, and the links between context and process. In addition, although the evaluation cases were chosen for my intimate knowledge of each of them as lead manager and researcher (jointly for Saying Power), my own positionality changes for the different cases. This therefore means that the cases provide interesting contrasts in terms of my own reflection/reflexivity (see Chapter 5).

Each case offered a multi-layered opportunity to gain perspectives from the different stakeholders who have been involved in the cases: from children and young people who had participated in the evaluations through to managers and decision-makers from

the different cases making the critical inquiry viable. The cases were also all targeted at different age ranges of children and young people, to allow exploration of issues of age.

The cases were chosen to flow into one another as regards their timing. The Rights through Evaluation research that was carried out in South Africa and Nepal, especially the detailed study carried out with HICODEF in Nawalparasi in Nepal, built on previous research carried out by myself and colleagues at ActionAid that led to the report 'Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change' (Johnson *et al.* 1995). The use of visuals in developing country context had been widespread (see Chapter 2; also discussed in Chapter 5). Participatory appraisal (PA) visuals in development NGOs have been complementary to the use of visuals in ethnographic approaches with street and working children. Previous work with ActionAid had used anthropological and PA approaches to understand children's participation in development and social processes. At the time of the evaluation, however, this use of visuals with children was still thought of as innovative and in 2000, when the work in Nepal was carried out, many organisations did not have the capacity to carry out participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). There was also still resistance in development programmes forwards integrating children's participation into their broader development programming. Compounded by the following years of Maoist insurgency, political instability and conflict in Nepal, I identified with partners that it had been hard to fully take on board the learning from the participatory evaluation research at the time and that there were lessons to be learnt from the process.

During a similar timeframe (the Rights though Evaluation research being 1998-2001, with the research in Nepal being carried out in 1999-2000), Save the Children commissioned Development Focus to carry out a three year participatory monitoring and evaluation of the Saying Power scheme using visuals (1999-2001). This was a perfect opportunity for Development Focus to apply the learning and skills acquired in developing countries to a UK context, whilst also working with mentors, some of whom were starting to use visuals in the youth work in the UK. The Saying Power evaluation was therefore also selected to provide a comparison in the application of PA/PLA visuals in developed as well as developing country contexts, in evaluation with children and young people (CYP). 'Nepal' and 'Saying Power' were also interesting in terms of their similarities as they were both placed within the NGO sector and both had

elements of capacity building and collaboration in how the evaluation was planned and applied.

The third case of the Children's Fund in Croydon (2003-2008) was then chosen to show a contrast, first with 'Nepal', in that it was undertaken in a developed country context and also involved in a partnership between the statutory and voluntary sectors, but also with 'Saying Power' as it took place at a different point in terms of the political and cultural context in the UK. It was also felt to be useful in terms of the evaluation methodologies employed as the other two cases relied largely on PA/PLA visuals and qualitative analysis, whereas 'Croydon' had utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This was thought to be due to the pressures of the statutory sector influence, but also because of changing attitudes to evaluation. Some of the learning, for example on children and young people's roles in evaluation and capacity-building elements of the programmes, had been brought through from Nepal and Saying Power, but had met with different barriers and facilitators in the process, which now seem important to learn from. The annotated timeline (Figure 1) depicts the sequence of the cases.

**Figure 1: Annotated Timeline**

(see overleaf)

# TIMELINE

To show timing for different case studies of evaluation

Use of visual PRA/PLA approaches with children e.g. in Listening to Smaller Voices for ActionAid in Nepal, processes for Plan International and sharing learning in Stepping Forward (IT publications)

**Rights Through Evaluation Research**  
South Africa and Nepal 1999 - 2001

**Saying Power**  
Evaluation of scheme run for children and young people by Save the Children UK  
1998- 2001

Working in parallel on using visuals in participatory evaluation in UK and Nepal

**Nepal**  
Evaluation on impact of community development in Nawalparasi, Nepal 2000

Year 1: emphasis on process and scheme

Year 2: emphasis on capacity building for YP led evaluation

Year 3: emphasis on YP led evaluation and external evaluation of impact  
Showcase Event and Final Report

Development Focus Trust working on Community Assessment and Action processes with adults and young people in communities in the UK and Child Rights internationally 1998 - present

**Croydon**  
Croydon Children's Fund Evaluation 2003-08

Year 1: Service Providers evaluation

Year 2: Developing monitoring and service user evaluation with children and their families, local needs assessment, trained service providers

**Case Study Research for PhD at Uclan**  
2008-2010

Choice of case studies, Reflection and developing questions for critical inquiry, 2008

Year 3: Completing full service user participatory evaluation with children and their families, service providers and broader stakeholders

Critical Inquiry revisiting case studies, with Managers, service users, mentors, CYP (most now adults), 2008

Year 4 and 5: Sharing lessons, capacity building on issues arising from evaluation. Emphasis on obtaining quantitative monitoring data, Legacy report, dissemination

Key informants to be interviewed for the critical inquiry were selected following the methodology explained in Chapter 3. The participants from the different cases covered a range of roles:

- Policy makers and managers, including funders and commissioners of evaluation and services;
- Staff delivering services and researchers involved in facilitating the evaluation with children;
- Children and young people (some of whom were now adults) involved in the evaluation.

In ‘Nepal’, all the staff and researchers were interviewed as were managers and former members of child clubs who could be traced almost a decade following the research. In ‘Saying Power’, there were 64 Award Holders (young people) from across the UK in the scheme who received funding to run services. It was therefore decided in collaboration with Save the Children managers, that only England and Wales would be the most appropriate site for the research, as they could readily identify participants, both young people (now adults) and mentors, after almost a decade. There were 19 services evaluated in the more recent (2003-2008) ‘Croydon’ case, of which four projects had received minimal funding and less detailed evaluation, so the remaining 15 were sent requests for interviews. From the respondents in each case, the spread of projects was then analysed to ensure that there was a contrast between services within the scheme. (See Chapter 5 for more details on the participants for critical inquiry).

## **4.5 Summary**

The case studies have been selected for depth of data and breadth of context to provide a solid grounding for the case study research, so that lessons can be learned and shared more broadly. The reflection and critical inquiry that follow will build on each other, in turn giving the basis for analysis of findings and inductive theorising. Although the policy context and timeframe have been a basis on which to select cases, they are also relevant to the following chapter on reflection. Further details of the methodology used in each evaluation case are given in Appendix 4.

# CHAPTER 5: REFLECTION ON THE THREE EVALUATION CASES

## 5.1 Introduction

My initial reflections on the evaluations previously conducted are presented in this chapter. The process of reflection was informed by the literature, and tables are presented to allow comparison between the cases. Through an inductive process the questions for the critical inquiry arose during this reflection and analysis was further developed as issues emerged during the semi-structured style interviews. In order to further investigate factors to explore in the research, I considered the barriers and facilitators in implementing the three processes of children's participation in evaluation. These are summarised in Table 5 at the end of this introduction (also see Section 3.4.5). This helped me to clarify the factors influencing children's participation in evaluation and more specifically how evidence from children and young people was taken on board to influence service delivery and strategic policy and funding decisions. The following themes were identified from this initial analysis to further consider in the reflection and critical inquiry:

- Policy, political and cultural context, e.g. attitudes towards children, power dynamics, different spaces for participation and governance;
- Institutional/ organisational setting e.g. overarching worldview, motives, funding/ resource allocation, champions;
- Methodology and how children's participation was viewed by the different stakeholders in the process, and their view of the participatory visual methods that were used;
- Capacity and support for children and adults in the process of facilitating and participating in evaluation, and also for services and decision-makers who are receiving information from participatory processes;
- Positionality and power in areas such as considering internal or external evaluation, adult or child facilitators and who leads the process, issues of gender, ethnicity, language, and preconceptions, capacity and expectations of

- different stakeholders and how this can transform through the process;
- Power dynamics and who is making decisions e.g. funders/ recipients, decision-makers/ adults, adults/ children;
- Spaces for communication and deliberative democracy in society generally and that are created within the process;
- Logistics, timing and resources negotiated for the evaluation process.

I had already started to examine the context in the selection of the case studies, however, on further reflection I realised that this would need to include further investigation of how policies influence process and further considering how adult attitudes towards children in different cultures may also influence their participation (also raised in my previous thoughts about autonomous organisation of children; Johnson, 2009). There are a variety of different ways of interpreting both ‘participation’ and how a ‘rights-based approach’ should be implemented in development processes (as discussed in Chapter 2). In the different cases, the language of rights was used differently or not necessarily used at all, for example within the context of the more recent evaluation in Croydon where children were referred to as service users (relevant here are the categories that Alderson (2004) and Cornwall (2000) discuss relating the different perceptions of children’s roles – see Section 2.3.1).

The way in which participatory visual methods were applied also means understanding the different stakeholders’ perspectives and expectations relating to process, outcomes and impact. The further exploration of different spaces for communication and transformation were also considered important to include in further analysis. It therefore was crucial to understand the process in terms of power, capacity, position, timing and resources. These aspects of process grew in importance through the reflexivity of the case study research.

The rest of the analysis that informs the critical inquiry from this reflection across the cases lies under the following headings:<sup>20</sup>

- Context/ settings, including policy, political and cultural context as well as institutional setting;

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<sup>20</sup> Initial reflections on participatory approaches in international development were presented at: Children’s Rights and Participation: What pre-conditions? What Rights? What outcomes? What next? Centre for Human Rights, University of York.

- Issues of methodology and implementation of rights based evaluation;
- Issues of logistics, power, position, capacity and communication.

Transformational change also arose as a cross cutting issue to explore further in the critical inquiry and then subsequently grew in importance through the interviews and analysis.

**Table 5: Initial Reflections on Facilitating Factors and Barriers in Implementation**

	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Saying Power</b>	<b>Croydon</b>
<b>Key Facilitating Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration into ongoing programme of community development</li> <li>• Support from management and commitment of resources from senior management</li> <li>• High participatory capacity in facilitators</li> <li>• Development of approaches and tools with Nepalese facilitators (bilingual) and children</li> <li>• Support of flexible rights based research within the non-governmental sector</li> <li>• Flexibility of grant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional support with rights-based and young people’s participation in evaluation</li> <li>• Mentors champions of participatory approaches and visual methods with young people</li> <li>• Young people receiving support and capacity building</li> <li>• Scheme manager and coordinator working closely with evaluators</li> <li>• Residentials gave sufficient time to carry out cross programme work and capacity building</li> <li>• Support flexible and feeding evaluation evidence into rights-based and child focused framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from CCF Manager</li> <li>• Enthusiasm of some of services/ managers (champions)</li> <li>• Integration into Partnership Board as observers/ resource</li> <li>• Links between CCF and strategic partnerships in Croydon</li> <li>• ECM<sup>21</sup> framework to use across programmes</li> <li>• Visuals of interest to Board</li> <li>• Strength of having mixed qual/quant methods</li> <li>• Networking lunches set up for communication between services</li> <li>• Sufficient time and initial prioritisation by National CF</li> </ul>

<sup>21</sup> ECM – Every Child Matters framework introduced by Central Government in the UK

<p><b>Key Barriers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maoist insurgency</li> <li>• Remote hill area/ inaccessibility of field</li> <li>• Distance in terms of positionality of student due to language/ ethnicity</li> <li>• Initial set view of children’s rights as articles of the Convention</li> <li>• Varied interpretation of rights-based approaches in Nepal more generally</li> <li>• Lack of integration into DFID for results of evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distances to travel around the UK</li> <li>• Time to carry out detailed evaluation on impact in field</li> <li>• Each young person’s project was only for a year, unless they continued with other sources of funding</li> <li>• Impact assessment with other stakeholders, such as host agencies and local services only with a selection of projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rigidity of national requirement (statistical reporting)</li> <li>• Partnership Board controlling at times and some members not supportive of the evaluation</li> <li>• Constant threats to cut funding to CCF services and evaluation</li> <li>• Yearly bid for contract</li> <li>• Lack of capacity and interest for more child-led evaluation</li> <li>• Emphasis on statistics from statutory sector</li> <li>• Participatory work new to some of Board and funded services</li> </ul>
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### 5.3 The Contexts/ Settings

I consider the political and policy climate and cultural attitudes towards children in this section. The context and timing of evaluations have been presented in Chapter 4. In addition, consideration needs to be paid to: varying interpretations of rights-based approaches and how child rights are translated into Government and NGOs’ policies; and how the attitudes of funders or commissioners can influence the way in which evaluations are implemented and how evidence is accepted in decision-making processes. For example, in Nepal, HICODEF were newly formed partners of ActionAid (an offspring of ActionAid Development Area 2 in Nawalparasi) and therefore had a similar ethos and provided a supportive organisational environment in which to carry out participatory visual evaluation. Child rights were, however, still seen as being separate to the rest of the development process at the outset of the research. The Department for International Development (DfID) policy environment was at that time also conducive to following a right-based approach to evaluation and research in

international development (See Section 2.2 for a broader discussion of this phenomenon in international development).

In *Saying Power*, again the political setting was relevant and interesting to further explore: mentors with whom I had initial discussions about participation in the case study drew my attention to how influential they felt the scheme had been within Save the Children and more broadly. In gaining permission from Save the Children for the thesis research, managers who gave approval suggested taking England and Wales as examples, both due to the availability of people who had been involved in the evaluation, but also as they felt that the scheme may have had varying success in the different countries due to devolution in the UK. For example, the beginning of the Scheme coincided with the formation of the Welsh Assembly and the young people's process that fed into this. The acceptance of more participatory approaches to evaluation in *Saying Power* may also have been due to the links with Save the Children's overseas work in developing countries (the background to child rights and children's participation in international development and in the UK is included in Chapter 2).

For Croydon, the New Labour policies demanding more participatory processes with service users within the statutory sector as well as partnership working required further discussion, also the changes that may have resulted from the Every Child Matters framework being introduced by Government during the process. How the attitude to children's participation varied in different institutional settings could also be explored in this case as the services lay both in the statutory and voluntary sectors. (In Section 2.2 on child rights, this political and institutional analysis in the UK is also highlighted; Franklin 2002).

In a non-governmental or voluntary sector setting with the influence of the participatory appraisal trend that had taken development agencies by storm, the language of rights was very much evident in both 'Nepal' and 'Saying Power'. In Croydon, however, although issues of children's participation were highlighted in the procedures for local evaluation, the language of rights was almost non-existent during the five years, apart from discussion initiated by the evaluators with the voluntary sector manager, which resulted in basing the evaluation methodology on a rights-based approach to research (see Section 2.3.5). Both in the voluntary and statutory sector,

staff in Croydon mainly referred to children as recipients of services and therefore as service users in the evaluation. This is relevant to issues of categorising children into beneficiaries and passive recipients of services or active participants (as discussed in relation to the sociology of childhood and in international child-focused agencies in Section 2.2.1, and in relation to research with children in 2.3.5).

The following table gives details of my reflection on the attitudes towards children in the evaluation case studies: in the evaluation itself, in the services, programmes and schemes being evaluated, and in society more generally. The way of thinking about children as active participants through to beneficiaries, consumers or service users is discussed in the literature in Chapter 2, both in participation more generally (Cornwall 2000), and in terms of ideas from participation being applied to children's participation rights (Sinclair 2004, cited in and discussed by Thomas 2007).

The ages of the children were considered as important in terms of a child's development, but children's roles and the adult attitudes towards them are also influenced by their environment or context which varies over time (as analysed by Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner and built upon by Tudge 2008). The way in which children are regarded in processes and by services and other decision-makers is presented in Table 6 (over page).

**Table 6: Attitudes to/ roles of Children**

	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Saying Power</b>	<b>Croydon</b>
<b>Ages of children projects/ schemes</b>	All ages	14-19	5-13
<b>Roles of children and young people in evaluation</b>	Active participants and designers	Active participants and facilitators of peers	Active participants to evaluators/ service users by the Board and services
<b>Children's broad role in scheme/ programme</b>	Children as active participants in selected areas, such as the Child Clubs, but invisible in most of the programme outside education and specific health needs	Children as citizens/ key players, active participants in the context of child rights, addressed especially in NGOs	Children as service users/ consumers
<b>Role of children and young people in projects/ services</b>	Broader rights based development programming/ child rights seen as separate and dealt with in Child Clubs	Young people leading projects in rights-based framework	Service users/ informing – adhering to ECM framework
<b>Broader cultural attitudes to children</b>	Children work in household and community. Education is valued, but is often not achievable due to immediate needs of households. Preference towards boys in Nepalese society and strong caste/ ethnic system	Youth generally regarded as problems in society	Children as victims/ participating in 'invited spaces' e.g. school councils/ forums. Preventative programmes to avoid youth crime and children going into 'at risk' category

Although at first I put emphasis on describing the evaluations in terms of the ages of the children and their roles in the evaluation, as I continued to reflect on the processes I realised that the implementation of the evaluation processes was also dependent on how the children and young people were broadly viewed by the different stakeholders, including considering broader cultural attitudes toward children in society (also discussed by Hill and Tisdall 1997, Thomas 2000 and Hart 2008). Gaining a greater understanding of the cultural setting includes attitudes towards children and social capital. The way in which children interact with their context has been theorised (for example by Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2005 and Tudge 2008) and this ecological approach to child development has been applied in practice (for example, Jack 2000 and Boothby *et al.* 2006). These approaches may start to help in gaining an understanding of how rights-based methodologies can be implemented in real world research taking account of the links between process and context as advocated by Kirby and Bryson (2002). This would in turn then influence how the evidence of children is accepted or not in service and project design and delivery, and fed into action or change more broadly in the society (See Chapter 7).

Respect for children in society and research processes have at their core the power dynamics that exist within households between children and adults, within broader decision-making processes and in participatory processes (as discussed in gender dynamics by Kabeer 1994, Crewe and Harrison 1998, and Kesby 2005, in action research by Cornwall and Gaventa 2006, in participation by Chambers 2006, in the relationship between researchers and children by Mayall 2002 and Wyness 2006, and in children's participation by Mannion 2010). These power dimensions are introduced in Chapter 2, Section 2.3 and further analysed in relation to the findings in Chapter 7. Gender dynamics are particularly stark in Nepal, but 'issues of difference' (Welbourn 1991), such as gender and ethnicity need to be taken into consideration in all participatory processes in the different contexts. Taking children's perspectives more seriously by treating them as active participants in development processes is also advocated in international development (for example, by Ennew 1994, Boyden and Ennew 1997, Theis 1996, 2010).

I therefore decided to include questions in the critical inquiry about how different participants viewed children's participation in the evaluation case studies and would then ask them to consider whether they could imagine more child-led processes, and

whether times had changed with regard to children's participation. I also investigated their views on their own participation and that of other stakeholders, first giving them a set of levels of participation to consider using a spectrum of participation (IAP2 2006), but then asking them to explain what they meant by different levels of participation, seeing that participation is a variable construct in need of explanation (see Section 2.3 on children's participation, also relevant to discussion later in this chapter on logistics and power). Questions were also broadened out at the end of the critical inquiry to include more about whether policies and attitudes towards children were changing in the wider context and how this linked to process (as called for by Kirby and Bryson 2002).

The question that through reflexivity became increasingly important to me was whether people had taken children and young people's participation seriously and whether this had informed decisions and shaped services. I thought this might depend on methods, institutional settings, existing capacity and exposure to other participatory processes of managers and decision-makers. In turn this would be guided by policy, but also influenced by predominant cultural norms. Attitudes I observed had changed throughout processes due to strategies of capacity building and different forms of communication and collaboration. Therefore an emphasis was also placed on transformational change to individuals and organisations, asking participants to recount stories about personal and/or organisational changes as a result the process. In retrospect transformational change was also relevant at the broader cultural and societal level as this came out in the Nepal case, which was carried out last (see Section 3.4.10 and also discussed for Nepal in Chapter 7). In revisiting cases that were already completed some time ago, exploring this process of transformational changes grew in importance, as some of these changes were unintended outcomes of the evaluation processes, not expected or necessarily documented anywhere until the critical inquiry (also discussed in the generalisations or comparisons across the cases in Chapter 7).

## 5.4 Methodology: PM&E, outcomes/ impact, and visual participatory methodologies

Aspects of the methodology that I considered important included: reviewing the different methods used, particularly considering the use of visual participatory methods in measuring outcomes and impact; mechanisms for cross programme working; communication and dissemination (see Table 8 on p. 139). Initially, my focus of research was to explore whether the participatory visual methods used in the evaluations had been seen as effective in measuring process, outcomes and impact, and whether people had felt that they transferred from a developing country context to a developed country context, both within the non-governmental and statutory sectors. In reflecting on whether the participatory visuals had transferred from an international context, in order not to miss out issues relating to methodology and context, I first thought broadly about the similarities and differences in applying participatory appraisal visuals internationally and in the UK, before reflecting on the evaluation cases more specifically (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Similarities and Differences in Application of PA Visuals Internationally and in the UK**

Similarities in the application of PA visuals in the UK and International work:

- Going out to where people are
- Children and young people are experts in their own lives
- Power relations pronounced
- Need to involve a range of stakeholders
- Work throughout the process to get ownership with all stakeholders
- Visuals can be very effective for reaching the ‘hard to reach’
- Capacity building is needed for teams in facilitation and analysis
- Need to be flexible in the process
- Action orientated

Differences in the application of PA visuals in the UK and International work:

- Different tools may be needed, for example in wealth ranking (understanding poverty locally)
- More post-its tend to be used in the UK as they are, so called, local materials!

- High costs of childcare and travel in the UK
- Expectation of payment for involvement may be higher in the UK
- It is cold in UK for streetwork! Where to engage can be an issue
- Power dynamics of aid - young people more ready to walk away on streets in UK
- There is a high expectation of safety and ethical framework with child protection measures in the UK context
- Service providers in UK often expect statistics and are very concerned about national targets

Note: Some of these initial reflections on the transfer of participatory methods were presented in ‘Visual methods in Engaging Hard to Reach Young People’ at the International Childhood and Youth Research Network in Cyprus, 28-29/05/08 and in ‘Visual methods in engaging hard to reach children and young people’ at Re-presenting Childhood and Youth International Conference, University of Sheffield, 8-10/07/08.

These initial reflections reasserted the need to look beyond methods to explore power relations, capacity in facilitating participatory processes and the varying acceptance by decision-makers of the evidence that arises, and the logistics of the evaluation processes. Despite this, the methods themselves remain important as part of the picture. How methods had been applied in each of the cases is shown in Table 8. The extensive debates in the literature about the value of qualitative and quantitative data (touched on in the discussion of mixed methods research in Section 2.3.5) seemed relevant here and initiated my thoughts around why people in different institutional contexts will or will not make decisions based on different types of data. It also led to questions in the critical inquiry about whether, in different people’s perception, within the evaluation processes, outcome and/or impact had been shown and whether there was any evidence that this had led to change in the services or in the attitudes and policies towards children. This emphasis on considering the acceptance and ultimately the use of evaluation evidence by decision-makers is similar to the model of utilization-focused evaluation put forward by Patton (1997), (see Section 2.4 on monitoring and evaluation).

Qualitative PA visual methods were employed across the cases, although there were variations about how they were applied (see Table 8). In Nepal, the visuals were developed flexibly and organically with children and in Saying Power there was also space for the young people to develop visuals for evaluation for application with their peers. In the latter there was also a coding system so that quotes could be traced back to individuals to check and when indicators were scored, priorities were established

depending on the numbers of young people and adults that scored against them and scales were created on preference ranking tables and matrices. In Croydon, qualitative visual methods were used, but structured across programme with coding and star system to help in interpretation by policy makers and funders as this added a quantitative element. The children's evidence was also accompanied by quantitative monitoring of outputs and activities broken down by issues of difference, such as age, gender and ethnicity.

The means of cross-programme analysis and communication also varied. In Nepal, planning and analysis workshops were held with facilitators and researchers from Development Focus and HICODEF in the villages. Focus groups and interviews were also held with children in the field with informal meetings to verify with adults. In order to have greater dissemination and policy influence, presentations were made by researchers at the Village Development Committee (VDC) level, with a Reference Group of policy makers at national level and an international workshop held in London with donor staff. Planning meetings were held with the co-ordinator and mentors from Saying Power in order to plan residential meetings with young award holders. Focus groups for evaluation were also conducted with peer groups of young people and host agency representatives. In Saying Power, the 'big cheeses' as some of the young people called them, were asked to sessions at the end of the residential meetings so that there would be space for the young people to present evidence and interact in dialogue with decision makers. There was also a formal event with young people giving presentations at the end of Phase 1 of the scheme.

Whereas in Nepal and Saying Power there had been spaces for the children and young people to participate in dialogue with decision makers, in Croydon there was an opportunity for the service providers and evaluators to present on behalf of children with their evidence being considered in decisions instead of having children directly communicating with the Partnership Board. In order to ensure learning across programme and a capacity-building approach there were networking lunches with service providers run by evaluators, as well as training sessions in children's participation to ensure more meaningful input of children to shaping services. The Partnership Board also accepted the evaluators as observers participating in the regular decision-making meetings in order to feed in the evidence from the evaluation, including evidence from children. Indirectly the voices and perspectives of children

contributed to presentations by evaluators and services to the Board and in Legacy Presentation in Borough by way of the visual methods, video and rap songs.

**Table 8: Reflections on Methods and Communication the Evaluation Cases**

	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Saying Power</b>	<b>Croydon</b>
<b>Methods</b>	Qualitative visual PA methods, developed flexibly and organically with children	Qualitative visual PA methods with coding so information anonymous but able to check quotes. Developed indicators with young people to use across scheme	Qualitative visual PA, structured across programme with coding and star system to help policy makers and funders. Quantitative monitoring of outputs
<b>Means of cross programme work</b>	Planning and analysis workshops with researchers. Focus groups/ interviews with children. Verification with children and adults	Residential meetings with Award Holders planned with mentors. Focus groups/ interviews with peer groups of young people and host agencies	Networking lunches with service providers. Partnership Board meetings with evaluators as participants.
<b>Dissemination and policy influence</b>	Presentations to local government reps. Reference Group of policy makers at national level. International workshop in London	‘Big cheeses’ asked to sessions in residential. Formal event with presentations	Presentations by evaluators and services to the Board and in Presentation in Borough
<b>Stakeholders in evaluation</b>	Groups of children and individuals, adults in the community, area officials, national policy makers.	Young people and peer groups, Mentors, host agencies/ service-providers, Save the Children manager/ co-ordinator.	Groups of children, parents, service providers, Partnership Board, CCF management

## 5.5 Logistics and Power: Timeframe, Resources, Capacity, Roles and Position

The timeframe for the evaluations, security of funding and where the decision-makers lay set the scene for starting to reflect on power and logistics (see Table 9). The cases were thought to be comparable in terms of having enough time to implement a participatory evaluation, developing the process over periods of months and years, rather than weeks. They were therefore comparable in considering different factors that may influence implementation. On reflection, the awards for the young people in Saying Power were only given for a period of one year, in which they received training in the participatory monitoring and evaluation. This timeframe to explore impact for the young people, award holders and their peers, was rather limiting and an additional follow-up period with young people would have been preferable. The funding was insecure on a year-to-year basis for the Croydon evaluation and this was also, on reflection, thought to be limiting in terms of planning the evaluation in order to reflect the outcomes and impact of the programme on children. The full five years of the evaluation, however, could not have been planned, as after three years the funding to Croydon was extended.

**Table 9: Management and Funding for Evaluations of Schemes/ Programmes**

	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Saying Power</b>	<b>Croydon</b>
<b>Timeframe for evaluation</b>	18 months in Nepal, 3 years for full RER	3 years (Awards for one year projects)	Year by year for 5 years
<b>Funding</b>	DFID and support from ActionAid	NGO/ charity funding and grant	Central Government Children's Fund (UK)
<b>Security of funding for evaluation</b>	Secure – research grant	Secure – three year contract	Insecure – rolling contract agreed each year
<b>Decision-makers/ Managers</b>	DFID grant Development Focus and HICODEF/ ActionAid (NGOs)	Save the Children Manager, Co-ordinator of Saying Power with mentor input (NGO)	Partnership Board (Statutory and voluntary), CCF Manager (voluntary)

In Nepal and Saying Power, the decision-makers and managers of the programmes/ schemes being evaluated lay in the non-governmental sector (NGO), whereas the Partnership Board of the Croydon Children’s Fund (CCF) was made up of statutory and voluntary<sup>22</sup> sector organisations, and despite the manager being situated in the voluntary sector, there were very active statutory sector members of the Board, including the Chair of the Board coming from Social Services in the Borough Council.

The following two tables (10 and 11) are linked to each other in that the first gives an assessment of the capacity in terms of facilitating participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) processes and the second considers the power relationships within the process and the roles of different stakeholders in the evaluation process including my own positionality in the three cases. The existing capacity in participatory monitoring and evaluation (see Table 10) can make a difference to how an evaluation is both carried out and received, also raised in the assessment of social change (Guijt, 2007, see Section 2.4). Reflecting on how participatory approaches are applied and how they lead to transformational change, as discussed by Cornwall and Guijt (2004) may then also depend on the training, communication and collaboration in a process.

**Table 10: Capacity Building in Evaluations**

	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Saying Power</b>	<b>Croydon</b>
<b>Capacity PM&amp;E in Scheme/ Prog.</b>	High	High	Low
<b>Training in child sensitive PM&amp;E</b>	Workshop to agree an approach child rights and developing methods with children during project	Training for young award holders and mentors on participatory monitoring and evaluation	Training for adult facilitators/ staff in funded projects on participatory monitoring and evaluation
<b>Internal Support</b>	Other facilitators/ researchers in the evaluation	Mentors and Manager/ Co-ordinators	Self-motivated adults in projects/ supportive CCF Manager

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<sup>22</sup> A term commonly used in the UK for the NGO sector

**Table 11: Reflections on Roles in Evaluations**

	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Saying Power</b>	<b>Croydon</b>
<b>Development and agreement of research protocol and approach</b>	Development by evaluators plus researchers with input on the process from children	Development of overall approach by evaluators plus mentors and scheme manager/ co-ordinator. Young people led their own evaluations after training in addition to external evaluation	Development by evaluators, piloting with children, agreement of protocol with Partnership Board and Manager in first 3 years, then determined by Board for last 2 years
<b>Internal/ External</b>	Internal (researchers with staff and children)	External/ Internal (mentors and young people)	External/ Internal (adult staff)
<b>Reflection of roles that different stakeholders played in evaluation</b>	Unclear about leadership in research and relationship between partners. Innovations fund not that interested in results	Mentors key in sharing approaches with evaluators - both running residential meetings to make them successful	Pressure from Board for quantitative data restricted participatory approach in the latter stages
<b>Roles of Children/ Young People</b>	Active participants	Active participants	Active participants to evaluators, but generally regarded as service users
<b>Positionality (of myself)</b>	Translation meant missed some of the detailed discussion and inferences. Different body language and cultural references, but fresh and open to what children would say	Speaking same language Comfortable with body language and cultural references. Mentors supported process and were participatory approach	Speaking same language Comfortable with cultural references even with marginalised children. Staff from most services supported process. Children engaged, had fun and could opt out

The development of the research protocol (included in Table 11) gives an indication of collaboration in the evaluation process overall. Despite the evaluation methods being developed by the children and young people to varying extents in Nepal and Saying Power, the protocols for the evaluation research were not fully developed with children from the start. In Nepal, the protocol was developed by Development Focus and HICODEF with ActionAid, but then modified through the work with children in the field after initial planning. These evaluations were not initiated by children, and therefore in my view were not child-led. In Saying Power, although there was capacity-building so that young people could evaluate their own projects in the scheme, some did this reluctantly, whilst others took it on with enthusiasm and used it to their advantage. The young people did then develop and carry out their own evaluations with support. I felt it was therefore important to see what participants thought about their own participation in the evaluation (including children and young people) as well as specifically whether it was child-led.

In Croydon, despite the commissioners agreeing to child and young person-led evaluation, in the implementation young people from the Croydon Xpress project (working to gain the participation of younger children) had other priorities and decided not to be involved apart from being participants in their own evaluation. Therefore the evaluators developed the protocol in consultation with the Board and the services and piloted it with children, but in the latter years of funding the main decisions on research protocol and priority really moved to the Board. They felt that they needed quantitative evidence in order to continue to make funding decisions. This also fed into the key question on the use of children's evidence. It was also felt important to include in the critical inquiry how different stakeholders participated in the evaluation process and whether this led to changed communication and dynamics between parents and children, adults in the community and children, or decision-makers and children, especially considering the discussion of dialogue in children's participation (for example, Percy-Smith 2006, Mannion 2010).

In Nepal, a collaborative approach was taken to the research, but in trying to achieve a participatory process sometimes my own leadership in the research was uncertain and so swung from being too relaxed, and not being clear about the objectives and timeframes in order to satisfy funding requirements, to being too directive in order to get things done and the research completed. This also links to the positionality as I felt

that I didn't have direct contact with the children through spoken interaction as I always had to work with co-researchers translating. Therefore, I always felt a step removed from the process. The big advantage, however, was that I felt that I could bring a fresh perspective and didn't have the same kind of 'baggage' or preconceptions about what Nepalese children of particular caste and ethnicity might say. I felt completely open to their different perceptions of their world, and had to watch that I kept this same feeling in a UK context.

For *Saying Power*, again a collaborative approach was taken. Roles in the evaluation were much clearer as I, together with my colleague in Development Focus, were running the evaluation sessions with young people and in the projects, and the training for the young people to run their own evaluations. The mentors were running the logistics of the residential sessions and also parallel team building and sessions to cover other types of support needed for the young peoples' projects. In terms of my positionality, working in the UK, with the support of the mentors in running the residential meetings, I felt that I could directly speak to and relate to the young people with common points of reference.

In Croydon, the roles were clear, but bounded to a certain extent. The approach was, in the end, less collaborative: it was clear that I was leading on the planning and implementation of the evaluation, but that this was in response to the Partnership Board priorities. Again, in the UK context, I found that I had my own points of reference and communication with children, even though the children participating in the evaluation were younger (aged 5-11) than in *Saying Power*. Even where there were age, gender and ethnic differences, the communication was direct and I felt more directly engaged with the children and more able to provide decision-makers with evidence around pertinent issues that had arisen from the evaluation.

When reflecting on the roles of different stakeholders including children in the process, I placed importance on asking all the participants in the critical inquiry about not only their own roles and participation in the process, but also those of different stakeholders. I decided to use a spectrum of participation as a basis for discussion to expand upon: inform/ consult/ involve/ collaborate/ empower (similar concepts to Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation and Hart's ladder of children's participation, but taken from the International Association of Public Participation training (IAP2 2006, also see Section

2.3 on children's participation). The position of the cases on another spectrum that ranged from internal to external participation was also used to understand stakeholder perspectives about the attributes of the different elements of internal and external evaluation (see discussion on internal and external evaluation in Section 2.4).

I felt it was important in the critical inquiry to allow flexibility in reflecting on the evaluation processes, which had also been an important element in all of the cases. The beginning of the inquiry was therefore left open which allowed people to raise their own priorities in terms of what they felt worked well and what didn't. An 'evaluation H' was the starting point for this discussion; this is a visual that allows participants to discuss positive and negative aspects of a question with steps on how they would improve it (see Appendix 2). There was also a section in the middle of the interview, as has already been mentioned, to pick up transformational changes by asking interviewees in an open-ended way about any stories about the process that affected them or their organisations. The end of the interview was also left open to see if they had any advice to share on resource issues, how they would do things differently or if they had any shocks or surprises relating to the process that they wanted to share. The participants were also asked to expand on any issues relating to the political and cultural settings of the cases and how this had changed over time and why.

## **5.6 Summary**

This reflection has allowed me to consider the past evaluation processes and feed this through to the critical inquiry in order to explore issues further. I regarded this stage as central to the case study approach, in order to make more structured sense of the factors that affect the implementation of rights-based evaluations. It was hoped that this stage in the analysis could then be built upon through gaining the perspectives of the settings' participants, so that in future children's participation in evaluation may be addressed in a strategic way to inform the planning of approaches and anticipate how the evidence of children and young people can be most effectively included and valued in the process. The key themes that I have addressed in this reflection run through the analysis of the critical inquiry in Chapter 6: the context/ settings; the methods and linked methodological issues; the logistics and issues of power; and transformational change. Having reflected on these issues myself, the next stage was to gain the perspectives of others in order to learn from mistakes and build on strategies in the different cases of children's participation in evaluating services.

# CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS OF CRITICAL INQUIRY FOR THE THREE CASE STUDIES

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the findings from the critical inquiry into the three case studies. The accounts of participants are presented through an embedded analysis of each case in turn. The chapter focuses on further description of the cases from the perspective of participants in each setting, and each case has been structured to examine what the different stakeholders or participants in the evaluations have prioritised and emphasised in the critical inquiry. The discussion of findings is based on the perspectives of the following groups of participants:

- Children and young people (some now adults);
- Staff/ mentors, researchers and co-facilitators;<sup>23</sup>
- Managers and decision-makers.

For each of the case studies, the following are addressed:

- A comparison across perspectives showing different priorities within each case;<sup>24</sup>
- Key learnings that have arisen from the case, divided into the following sections: transformational change; context; institutional setting; methodology and building a participatory process;
- Summary of key messages from the case.

In order to address bias in analysing and writing up the findings, the initial responses of participants, along with the specific evidence they offered of action and outcome as a result of children's evidence in the three evaluations, are included in full in Appendix 6. The analysis has also been verified with the majority of participants to make sure key messages have not been misinterpreted.

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<sup>23</sup> The co-facilitators who worked with the author to implement the evaluations have been clustered with the staff/ mentors and other researchers as, especially in these participatory and collaborative approaches, these viewpoints overlap.

<sup>24</sup> Issues raised in the detailed interview by the different groups of participants are in Appendix 6b.

## **6.2 Findings for Nepal**

### **6.2.1 Introduction – Participants Interviewed**

In the critical inquiry in Nepal interviews were conducted in two villages, each with three young women and men who had taken part in the evaluation and were former members of the local child clubs. In one of the villages, the interview had been formally set up with the local schoolteacher (one of the participants) and this group was then joined by the current leader of the child club (aged 15 years). In the second village, the interviewees had been met on their way to a local festival and were keen to share their perspectives when asked if they could spare their time. At the time of the evaluation (2000), the participants interviewed were aged 13-16 years.

Four of the Nepalese researchers who had been key in implementing the ‘Rights Through Evaluation’ research in Nawalparasi were interviewed (one of whom had been the Director of HICODEF at the time and was therefore also interviewed as a manager). They travelled from different locations in Nepal to participate in the critical inquiry and share the lessons that they had learnt. Two of the researchers guided me back into the hills and offered to translate. Issues of their potential bias were discussed with the former members of the child clubs who agreed to share positive and negative memories in the interest of learning for the future (see Section 3.3.3 on bias). It was also carefully explained that this research was not intended to lead to further development in the villages; however, a small payment was made to each interviewee in return for their time, and refreshments were provided. (When the current leader of the child club joined the interview, it was agreed with him that, instead of any personal payment, a contribution would be made to the child club in the village, which could be used for training.) A co-facilitator for Development Focus was also interviewed; she had largely been involved in the ‘Rights through Evaluation’ research in South Africa, but had also worked with me on the national mapping in Nepal and shared her observations of the local process in the villages.

Managers were interviewed who had a range of perspectives relating to the evaluation. The current Director of ActionAid was involved with the initial support of children’s participation in ActionAid Nepal and is now interested in follow-up. Interviewees now working in the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Dalit

Empowerment and Inclusion Project were formerly in ActionAid and were involved in discussions when the evaluation was set up. The representative from the Safer Motherhood Programme had been involved in follow-up from the evaluation, as HICODEF conducted fieldwork to capture local people's perspectives as part of the programme. The Senior Impact Assessment Officer at ActionAid participated in a discussion about current evaluation practice in the organisation.

### **6.2.2 Comparing Perspectives in Nepal**

Although the former members of the child clubs had found it hard to remember the evaluation at first, their main emphasis in the interview was on whether anything had benefited children at the local level at which the research was carried out in the villages of Nawalparasi. One example was that steps had been built so that children could reach the taps that had been built too high for them to collect water for the household and another was that there was more awareness generally about children going to school (see Appendix 6). They remembered the process being fun, but in one of the villages how it had been difficult that only one of the fieldworkers had spoken their local language, 'Magar' rather than Nepalese. With further discussion, aspects of cultural change were discussed as the interaction between girls and boys and between adults and children had been raised as something that needed to be assessed if children's wellbeing was to be improved.

There was emphasis placed on the process of developing visual participatory tools for evaluation with children and how this had contributed to achieving transformational change at an individual and organisational level. In interviews, researchers recognised the importance of power dynamics within communities, especially between adults and children, but also the power that is wielded by donors and that, along with the policy and political context, determines the type of evidence that an evaluation provides and therefore the process that is developed. The crisis due to Maoist insurgency and the changing political situation in Nepal were identified as overtaking other considerations of process and change.

The managers highlighted the commitment to change as being central. They focused on why the evaluation had been carried out and how the invisibility of children previously led to negative unintended consequences for children, for example children being taken

out of school to look after goats in an income generation programme targeted for women. Again emphasising the political and cultural context of change, the managers recognised the power dynamics at play and the role of donor relationships in governing process, and of the resistance movement in raising awareness of rights. In order to have sufficient time and resources to carry out participatory evaluation leading to transformational change and benefits for children’s well-being, managers felt that frameworks for evaluation need to be developed and understood by different stakeholders. Table 12 provides a summary of key points raised in the critical inquiry.

**Table 12: Key points raised by different groups in the critical inquiry in Nepal**

	<b>Key points raised in interviews</b>
<b>Children and Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct benefits to children locally</li> <li>• Process fun using visuals</li> <li>• Positionality of fieldworkers – language</li> <li>• Cultural change including changed ways of thinking and interaction with adults</li> </ul>
<b>Staff, Researchers and Co-facilitators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual evaluation tools</li> <li>• Transformational change on organisational and individual levels</li> <li>• Power dynamics in communities and in development assistance, importance of including adults in process</li> <li>• Logistics of participatory evaluation, time and resources</li> <li>• Political and cultural context</li> <li>• Crisis overwhelming other processes of follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>Managers and Decision-makers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal and organisational commitment to change</li> <li>• Increased visibility of children in development process needed due to unintended impacts</li> <li>• Capacity building in process beneficial</li> <li>• Power dynamics in communities and with donors dictate processes and how child rights can be realised</li> <li>• Political and cultural context important including conflict</li> <li>• Frameworks of evaluation are needed that acknowledge time and resources</li> </ul>

### 6.2.3 Key Learning Arising from Nepal

Transformation change was shown to have occurred at a personal, institutional and broader level within the communities where the evaluation had taken place. The context was highlighted as important. Context is split into broader issues of the political economy, predominant culture and physical environment, and the institutional context in which the process of evaluation is taking place. This section reviews those approaches or processes put in place during the participatory evaluation successful in linking the evidence from children with decision-makers at different levels of governance.

#### *Transformational change*

When the initial evaluation was carried out in 2000/2001, the roles in households and the community had been analysed by girls and boys. Some interviewees discussed changing their behaviour at the time, such as one of the boys started washing the dishes and eating together with the girls in his household, but he had commented that these changes had not continued. Those involved in the research did, however, feel as adults they would now be willing to listen to those that are presently in child clubs.

The young men and women interviewed in one of the villages referred to sustained changes in attitudes towards children that they felt had been addressed through issues such as water accessibility, cleanliness and school attendance that they had raised during the evaluation and that they had continued to work on. They had learned from discussing issues amongst each other during the research and how they could have a role in raising awareness in the village amongst adults of what needed to be done in the village. One of the women discussed how her confidence had increased as a result of participation:

*I got confidence at that time and it made us more open to learning.*

*(Young woman)*

The relationship and communication between adults and children was discussed in both villages, highlighting the necessity to understand existing and changing power dynamics between different stakeholders, including between girls, boys, men and women in communities. In one of the villages the adults had not changed their perceptions and continued not to listen to children. In the other, as a result of child

journalism and working together with children in the evaluation, the adults had slowly started to take more notice of children's perspectives. All of the interviewees in this village who had been involved in the evaluation felt that current activities of the child club had built on the previous research and follow-up activities, particularly the child-led journalism project.

*The child club has remained important in our village and is still strong and feeds into decisions made in our village.*

*(Child leader of child club)*

On an individual level, the staff and researchers in Nepal gave examples of their increased sensitivity to children in broader development planning that has been valuable in addressing other issues of difference such as gender and working with marginalised groups, such as Dalits. Individual researchers had gained skills that helped them in their career development as well as improving their development practice:

*I feel that my work ... is now delivered in a much more child sensitive way. For example the drinking water programme in rural areas takes on board children's roles in collecting water and the construction element takes into account their perspectives. ... also the responsibility to enhance partner capacity in the use of participatory methodology with all groups including children. ... the collaboration in evaluation research has helped in my own career development giving the opportunity to explore further what 'rights-based approaches' actually mean in more practical terms.*

*(Manager)*

At an organisational level, the Director of HICODEF at the time of the evaluation research in Nepal felt that the participatory process and the profile gained nationally had meant that HICODEF, as a newly born partner of ActionAid, had exposure to a range of different policy decision-makers and international funding organisations. The research had helped them to then continue participatory evaluation work that is sensitive, not only to working with children, but also to issues facing people in different situations of poverty. HICODEF staff attributed their success in securing research with the DFID funded Safer Motherhood Programme to the interaction they had in the reference group formed at a National level as part of the evaluation.

### *Context – the political economy, conflict, culture and the physical environment*

Transformational change at any level, including at a personal and institutional level, and whether decision makers respond to children's perspectives in the evaluation, seems to be strongly dependent on issues of context in Nepal. The discussion of the changing political economy included the past ten years of conflict, the changing interpretation of rights-based approaches to development and the politics of inclusion across the country. The importance of taking into account the local culture(s) and changes over the years is also discussed, along with the reality of conducting research in the hills of rural Nepal.

### *Conflict*

The evaluation was conducted in the early days of the Maoist insurgency and it was not anticipated that the follow-up would become so fundamentally affected by the conflict situation. Riots were occasional at the time of the research, but the movement was growing in importance in the hill areas of Nepal. In Nawalparasi (during 2000/ 2001) local police officers were killed in the villages where the researchers were working and on a number of trips to the field researchers walked all day, often through the night, to reach villages, only to be advised by local people that they would be in danger (especially those who were not Nepalese<sup>25</sup>). This led to a growing sense of tension amongst local people, particularly with the added concern of having 'outsiders' visiting the area.

Having come towards some resolution of the conflict situation, bilateral donors and international NGOs are currently looking to the new Government in order to see how it will implement human rights and child rights and assess what type of support is needed. The Maoist insurgency has led to notable changes in the language of Rights, whereas at the time of the evaluation researchers felt uncomfortable to even talk about Rights in the villages: now the Hindi/ Nepalese word for 'rights', 'arhdika' has common usage in the villages of Nepal. There are also high expectations of the new Government throughout the rural villages:

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<sup>25</sup> This negativity towards foreigners shown by the Maoist in the early years of the conflict is not evident now (personal experience and refer to Donini and Sharma 2008).

*The Maoists fought for over 10 years for the rights of the poorer people in Nepal and this has had the effect that there is now language that has developed for rights ... the word 'adhikar' is now in common use and has meaning in Nepal. At the peak of the conflict there was a lot of suspicion, now there is a lot of expectation, but the time is now right to put into practice the rights-based approach in the field and more information on how to work in a participatory way with children could now be disseminated and used.*

*(Researcher)*

A key issue raised by interviewees was that, in such times of crisis, the capacity of small community based organisations, such as HICODEF, can be overwhelmed and therefore the process of participatory evaluation hard to follow up. It had therefore been hard to respond to the perspectives of children and other marginalised people in rural villages of Nepal:

*I felt frustrated as the conflict in the community and in the country as a whole meant that the implementation of more child sensitive work was limited. Despite their commitment and motivation at the time, everything became very difficult at the time of crisis with the Maoist insurgency. The fact that different people in the community had been involved in the 'Rights through Evaluation Research' meant that some initiatives were still able to go ahead, but on the whole, the implementation by HICODEF was limited. Children themselves were motivated and shared this enthusiasm with others, but those who had no ownership in the process and had not be involved from the beginning were not interested.*

*(Manager)*

In revisiting the evaluation research, the situation of conflict over the past years was highlighted by researchers and managers as overriding many of the other concerns regarding process. Conflict forces evaluation to be reframed within a new political, institutional and cultural context in Nepal:

*In the political context of Nepal over the past years, within such a time of extreme crisis, all notions of development work have to change ... The whole economic activities, religious activities and social activities were completely changed ... the whole society was running in a different way...*

*The research gave an interesting insight into the perspectives of children and HICODEF grasped children's ideas, but the issues of crisis and peace totally takes over these concerns ... even if now it can lead to changes in other areas. (Researcher)*

#### *Rights-based approaches and the politics of inclusion*

Other aspects of the political economy that were seen as influencing how the evaluation was both conducted and followed up were the changing interpretations of rights-based approaches and the politics of inclusion in such a diverse nation.

Despite the Nepalese Government having ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) more than a decade ago there was, and still is, uncertainty relating to implementation. Children's participation at the time of the evaluation research in 2000/ 2001 was marginalised in the broader processes of community development, and non-governmental organisations focused on high profile, albeit important, campaigns on child labour and child trafficking.

At the time of the evaluation, the 'rights-based approach' was relatively new and there was a lack of clarity in development agencies about what this meant in practice. Donors, such as DFID, attempted to differentiate between rights-based and needs-based approaches to social policy. The framework that they suggested put forward a context of state responsibility alongside the realisation of the rights of citizens, combining individual agency and broader participation of different stakeholders (Ferguson 1999).

Within evaluation, finding a balance between 'rights' and 'needs' can be a challenge:

*In the environment at the time of the movement in development to a 'rights-based approach', this research on child rights helped to find the balance between meeting needs (the approach that we had come from) and the advocacy work that was seen as fulfilling the 'rights approach'. In the research we could see how addressing child rights could help us to work with the community to deliver programmes that were sensitive to the needs of children and empowered them to be able to use evidence about their lives through the child clubs within their communities, also taking the messages to a national level. (Manager)*

Rather than a swing towards advocacy, which is what many of the NGOs did at the time of the evaluation, managers suggested that there has to be a way to address needs and rights together, alongside mobilisation:

*No one can be jeopardised for another if people are to enjoy their rights: you cannot give a speech and advocate for your rights if you are too sick to eat.*  
(Manager)

The lack of capacity to implement child rights at the state level was highlighted by one of the managers who also discussed the different roles that are required at different levels of governance:

*A rights-based approach should also be about the State's role to intervene in how individuals can exercise their freedom and enjoy their rights and that therefore services are still very much a part of this approach. Donors need to work with governments on constitution and legislation, also ensuring more accountability in government to respond to people and deliver services. On the other hand there will then be a role to work at the level of the people in demanding rights and helping them to build capacity to realise their entitlements and make their voices louder.*  
(Manager)

Recent developments in government policy show attempts to improve access to education at primary level and to take more seriously the voices of children in decision-making. The new Government has specified child club support at the Village Development Committees (VDCs)<sup>26</sup> level and education for all at primary level. Positive changes for children in the longer term therefore need to be analysed in terms of how they align with Government policies to support more inclusion in education and support of local child clubs or where the gaps in provision are.

According to managers and researchers interviewed in the critical inquiry, there still seems to be a gap in awareness that generation or age could be another aspect of the

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<sup>26</sup> Village Development Committees refers to 'a committee of members elected to govern a village development area, (as designated by the Village Development Committee Act of 1992). Candidates for election to a VDC represent the wards into which a village development area is divided. (from Glossary in ActionAid Nepal (2004), 'Reflections and Learning'.

broader inclusion policies and the politics of identity in Nepal, rather than children always being treated as a separate group, treated as targets in education and health projects or in children's clubs. Implementation of the UNCRC has been seen as separate and isolated from broader development work:

*Despite 'inclusion' being a buzz word all over Nepal over the last ten years, 'Inclusive Nepal' addresses caste/ethnicity and gender, but children seem to be separated out, rather than included. Issues of Child Rights should be cross-cutting like other issues of inclusion. Now even religion, the geopolitical location of people (for example, Madhesi – people from the Terai) and whether people are of different indigenous grouping (for example, Magar, Tamang, Gorkhas, Gurung, Rai, Limbu) or of different caste (for example, Dalit) are all aspects included in discussions of inclusion, but still not age, which should go alongside gender as cross-cutting.*

*(Manager)*

It is only when the decision-makers can see that children's participation is relevant to the implementation of national and local policy that children's evidence may be taken seriously. This context of change, and how the different stakeholders understand children's participation and their roles in processes more broadly, is therefore important if evidence from children is to lead to change in policy and practice.

#### *Context – Cultural and Physical Environment*

The researchers interviewed in Nepal drew attention to 'cultures'<sup>27</sup> in communities in the hill areas of Nawalparasi changing due to new developments, such as the road that has been constructed up to the area and hydroelectric projects, but also as people have been displaced during times of crisis and exposed to different places and cultural influences:

*Now the traditional culture is rapidly changing and therefore the 'thinking culture is changing'. In my view the culture is changing due to what was referred to in 'Listening to Smaller Voices' as 'exposure': that is exposure to an external environment of different places and people that*

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<sup>27</sup> Cultures is used here rather than culture, as during participatory work in Nepal it was recognised that many different cultural influences are important in communities recognised by different groups of interest.

*starts to make people change their views<sup>28</sup>. This environment of change affects the way that development-work in the villages is carried out: there therefore needs to be an appreciation of changing cultures for both adults and for children.*

*(Researcher)*

Cultural change for children was referred to by researchers as happening more gradually than the overall cultural change in the village, but that recent Government policy had also made a difference. An example given by the local schoolteacher, who was a child participant in the evaluation, was the education policy that requires children to attend primary school.<sup>29</sup> New Government policies were aligned with changes in awareness amongst children and adults of the value of children attending school. The government policy to provide support for child clubs in villages at the Village Development Committee (VDC) level was also raised as supporting a general movement to take children's perspectives more seriously.

Changes in attitudes of adults towards children was raised as being an important cultural change and as having been a result of the information from the evaluation then being used in the child-led journalism assisted by HICODEF in the child club in one of the villages re-visited. A child, who is now a journalist, encouraged other children in the club that their perspectives were valuable and that they could change attitudes in the village towards issues such as cleanliness and the importance of education.

The role of media more generally was also discussed in interviews and the way that the political movement has led to adults and children re-orientating their way of relating to each other in families and society. Despite significant progress in attempts in increasing access to formal education and children's perspectives starting to be taken more

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<sup>28</sup> In ActionAid research for 'Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change' (Johnson *et al.* 1995) in Sindhuli District, exposure was discussed in terms of children migrating to carpet factories or for other forms of work, people travelling to markets and even children going to school or moving around an area for work.

<sup>29</sup> One of the researchers, however, highlighted the importance of seeing how policy translates into practice,

seriously, there was, however, caution expressed about the capacity building that needs to take place, alongside continued advocacy for child rights:

*The culture in Nepal has changed hugely, partly due to the NGO movement, but also to the even bigger role of the media...it is like the bud of a flower and it is ready to flourish.... Children themselves have started to contribute stories to the 'Kantipur' paper. The discourse of rights and the political movement has increased awareness, although the most vulnerable children at risk are those that are less visible - the housemaids and working children who still do not even have a voice, and that is still where child rights is focused. (Manager)*

The geographic reality of the location in Nepal was also raised as critical in planning evaluation processes and children's participation, for example the amount of time that it takes to reach the villages by foot.<sup>30</sup> Frequent field visits are not always possible to remote areas and fieldworkers have to be prepared to stay in villages for some time to build up trust in the community and with children. The fact that HICODEF had a strong presence in these remote areas of Nepal also made a difference to their continued role in the DFID-funded participatory work for the Safer Motherhood Programme.

### ***Institutional Setting: structures, capacities, confidence and commitment***

The institutional structure was important in determining how the process of evaluation might be run and what kind of evidence may be accepted in decision-making processes with regard to development programmes and improving children's wellbeing.

Researchers and managers discussed how the methods employed in evaluation are often dictated by donors who do not always readily accept the type of evidence provided by the use of participatory evaluation. The donor climate has been changing, but despite some donors being more flexible, many donors demand evidence in a tradition logframe (logical framework) format and information that is quantitative. This is also the case when working with the Government in Nepal. ActionAid as a non-governmental organisation, however, advocates participatory approaches and both accepts and actively supports the collection of more qualitative information. As an

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<sup>30</sup> There is now a road that makes some of the Arkhala VDC more accessible cutting the journey from around a day and half walking to 4-5 hours by jeep.

offspring of ActionAid, HICODEF had the same organisational culture and was thus also able to act on qualitative evidence of impact gained from a more participatory evaluation.

In the critical inquiry, managers pointed out how evaluation frameworks and methodologies were often dictated by donors, and that evidence expected was thus predetermined. More progressive donors, such as DFID, support evidence that comes from participatory processes, but other donors such as UNICEF ‘just expect statistics’ (Manager). In the context of rights based approaches, the process of change is informed by institutions, their flexibility and capacity to understand and take on board qualitative evidence from participatory work with children and young people. One of the managers interviewed identified that in order to change services, and for people to claim services as a right, then work on the behaviour and attitudes of people in organisations needs to be addressed so that inequalities are not reproduced (see below on issues of process and methodology).

Some development agencies, it was suggested, carry out activities involving children for ‘decorative purposes’, but as awareness grows so does the importance of children’s participation:

*Gradually the awareness is growing in the global community about the valuable input that children can make and people can no longer deny the importance of their participation.* (Researcher)

It may take generations for members of a child club, people in the communities and local and national decision-makers to think differently, but in the critical inquiry participants felt that this was happening. Contributing to change, the ‘exposure’ that children get through working on different types of research and being able to participate in different projects was also discussed (see section below). Adults in communities and donors are recognising the value of children’s contributions albeit slowly, and with the Government support for child clubs at Village Development Committee (VDC) level, children’s participation is starting to be taken more seriously.

The current Director of ActionAid Nepal highlighted how personal experience can lead to commitment to processes of children’s participation in a context of politicisation and mobilisation. Inclusive processes of research and policy-decision making can then help

to share differing perspectives, capacity and experience in order to build confidence and a process for change together.

### ***Issues of Process and Methodology***

Issues of process and methodology include: children's participation; internal and external evaluation; qualitative and quantitative evidence; visual methodologies; and building trust, commitment, capacity and communication.

### ***Children's roles***

The former members of the child club in one of the villages suggested that they had carried out the evaluation as children, with the help of villagers, HICODEF and 'people from outside'. This needed to be done so that the gaps and inadequacies in the programme could be spotted and there was support to 'find the right witnesses', do something about what they found, and check that 'everything is in balance'. They felt that children had to be involved as the whole programme had a direct relationship to their lives: they were aware of their duties as children and understood the reality of what was happening in the village and what should or shouldn't happen to benefit children locally.

It was suggested that if this type of work was repeated then adults should be involved throughout the research, rather than only in verifying the results, in order to increase the likelihood of them listening to children's perspectives. With time, the researchers suggested that some of the children could have taken on more of the facilitation role by evaluating with their peers. In this situation, however, the power relationships between different groups of children in the community would also have to be considered carefully. Interviewees suggested that children had led the evaluation in some ways by helping to develop the visual tools as well as offering their opinions and perspectives:

*...the children led us and we respected their opinions.*

*(Researcher)*

A negative aspect of the process relating to language was raised by the women interviewed, who, especially as children, had very little experience of hearing or speaking any Nepalese and only spoke their local language, Magar. Although one fieldworker helped to bridge this language gap, the interviews raised concerns about how, in future processes, attempts should always be made to include the participation

of the most marginalised children. It is also tradition in Magar villages that male adults talk and female adults are more reserved, and although not so much the case for children, girls and boys needed to be encouraged to talk and express their views in different ways, especially as they grew older and were more influenced by gendered traditions.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding aspects of facilitation, researchers reflected on how an ethical framework needed to be followed so that other stakeholders did not influence what children said and that girls and boys were not put at risk by their participation in the process. The facilitators can help to hear the voices of a range of children and initiate and facilitate dialogue between adults and children and build on processes of change. Informal observation was also raised as a way of understanding the local situation and interactions. One of the researchers added that a sense of humour is needed when working with children and discussed how a relationship was built between researchers and children: many people in the local community still recognise and remember the researchers.

#### *Internal and external evaluation*

The value of internal evaluation was highlighted in Nepal. Especially in the context of ActionAid, value is given to the self-reflection that internal evaluation provides. External evaluation, it was suggested, can provide an examination of development work outside a set of values that is held within the organisation and can therefore provide different insights. Some of the managers and researchers felt that within donors there is often an emphasis on the objectivity of external evaluation and the feeling that internal evaluation can be biased and cover up what is not being done well:

*Both internal and external evaluation has its limitations, but both are crucial.*  
*(Researcher)*

One of the researchers suggested that in internal evaluation it is difficult to ‘lie to yourself’ and that external evaluation can also be biased as external consultants may say what the people commissioning them want them to. Sometimes evaluation with beneficiaries was also said to be biased, as they may say ‘what they think you want

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<sup>31</sup> These traditions are changing with ‘exposure’ to different external influences in the village, but, especially in more remote locations are still embedded and need to be taken into consideration.

them to'. The HICODEF staff felt that the children they worked with seemed less biased than adults in this respect.

In ActionAid, there has been an organisational decision that there should never be a lone evaluator, but that a team should consist of ActionAid staff, partner staff and external evaluators (personal communication Phnuyal and Pradhan from ActionAid, 2009). In this way, there are benefits of contextualisation, capacity sharing, flexibility and adaptability to take on board different designs for evaluation, thus enabling an empowering process whilst allowing objective assessment.

#### *Qualitative and quantitative evidence*

Participants in the critical inquiry suggested that there could be combinations of logframe (logical framework) and participatory approaches, with both statistics and training on how to include more qualitative measures of outcome, an approach that has been discussed between ActionAid and donors:

*There is a balance to strike between qualitative and quantitative information... the quantitative demonstrating the gravity of a situation and the qualitative explaining the situation. (Manager)*

Absolute numbers are not always even possible to obtain in Nepal, especially in rural areas: therefore quotes from before and after the intervention and specific case histories, it was suggested, can help people to understand the different perceptions of change in the community. In order to really understand impact for children, change would need to be recorded at a household level, whether it is qualitative or quantitative, in terms of allocation of resources, decision-making processes and gender relationships. Some managers felt that impact does not necessarily have to be measured over longer time periods, as long as it is possible to show the consequences for somebody's life from the start of or before a process, to when they feel that there has been a change that they link directly to the intervention being evaluated. Therefore impact can be shown using trends or perspectives before and after an event, that are attributable by the participant.

Another view put forward, however, was that in order to fully show impact, longitudinal information on individual children is necessary that can be compared to a baseline set out at the beginning of the evaluation process. This could be done using

any tools (including PA), as long as the full diversity of people in the community is reflected looking at gender, age, caste/ethnicity. Whilst many felt that qualitative research adds value to quantitative measures, many donors still require statistics.

### *Visual Methodologies*

The interviewees in the villages who had been children at the time of the evaluation had found the visual methods memorable, clear and easy to use. They were able to recognise visuals that they had done many years previously and discuss what the visuals represented. At the time of the evaluation the visuals had served as a useful way to communicate issues to adults:

*It was easier to tell adults and strangers about our views in pictures, rather than just trying to talk to adults. (Young woman)*

Managers discussed how visual methods could create an environment that helps to develop honesty amongst the participants. The current Director of ActionAid specified that the way visuals had been used with children in evaluation fitted into his concept of keeping methods contextualised and keeping them innovative. There was, however, concern expressed that visuals are time-consuming and require a high level of skill to facilitate and interpret them effectively. All too often PA exercises are carried out and ‘the information ends up in the bin’. Despite this concern, researchers discussed how, like any tool, they are ‘as useful as the people using them’ and that they need experienced facilitation (see section 6.2.3 on building capacity below). On the other hand, the tools were thought to be helpful especially to understand community dynamics in areas where there are few existing data and low levels of literacy.

*The tools are helpful in understanding what makes a community tick and to explain the stories and differences in situations for particular sections of the community. I have used visuals, such as mobility maps, in a rural area where there is little data to draw on. (Researcher)*

Researchers had found visual methods very effective with children, for example asking them to draw their actual ideal situations and then identifying steps of how they would like to achieve this, also adding ‘why?’, ‘who is involved?’, ‘who would be responsible?’, and ‘when?’. One example given of a tool was carrying out SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses of children’s dreams and aspirations for the future. The visual methods were described as powerful when

analysis was carried out by children and young people, especially with the discussion of those images:

*They use the participants' imaginations and then enable you to obtain good information, by continuing through dialogue with the detail in the visual.*  
(Researcher)

In terms of addressing the inequalities, power dynamics and working on action research relating to social justice and improving the well-being of children, researchers referred to visuals as a good way to create an environment where people can contribute more equally, although it was also acknowledged that the way in which this is facilitated will influence what different stakeholders may say and that this needs to be considered:

*In facilitation, you have to recognise the influences at work and the power dynamics between different people. So when you are doing visuals with children, many people may gather round, but this will influence what the children say.*  
(Researcher)

#### *Building Trust, Commitment, Capacity and Communication*

It takes time to build rapport within the community and with children. Children may not think it is relevant to them to evaluate and may want to spend their limited time doing other things. The relevance of the research and the potential follow-up from evaluation needs to be considered at the outset and re-visited throughout the process:

*We have to check that we are not doing it to follow a fashion ... revisiting and monitoring what has happened after the evaluation is essential.*  
(Researcher)

In Nepal, the link was shown clearly between logistical issues and change. Technical and financial support is needed for more inclusive approaches, often time and resource intensive, that build on local strengths and evolving capacities. Transformational change is part of making development processes more sensitive to children, and placing generation firmly into the politics of inclusion:

*In order to carry out this type of sensitive participatory work and build on positive attitudes within communities and have a process of transformational change, adequate time and resources are needed as well as local skills in facilitation, monitoring and documentation.*  
(Manager)

Putting adequate time and resources into an evaluation can be more efficient than having to make corrective measures due to unintended consequences. Researchers and managers suggested that additional time should always be built into proposals for adequate capacity building, communication between partners, monitoring of what has happened after an evaluation and fuller dissemination of learning.

*Evaluation is worthless unless the quality of life for children and adults  
in the villages actually improves. (Manager)*

The Nepalese research manager suggested that working with children and following through on what they have said is an ethical issue; however, there was no way to compel donors to listen to what has come from research and evaluation. He suggested that the level that you are working at has implications for responsibility, relationships and accountability. Acquiring an understanding both for the roles and power dynamics at different levels of decision-making, and for how different stakeholders in the process communicate and collaborate, is essential.

Involving different people in the community in the evaluation meant that, even when the capacity and implementation was limited in HICODEF due to the conflict situation, initiatives were still able to go ahead with other stakeholders in the process. Children themselves were motivated and shared this enthusiasm with others; however, those who had no ownership in the process and had not been involved from the beginning were not interested. The involvement of adults in the community as well as children in the process was identified as key. Researchers felt that it is often at a household level that views on children's roles and their participation need to change, and that power dynamics, including gender relations and relations between children and parents, also need to be further explored.

Nepalese researchers gave examples and referred to some of the transformational changes in one of the villages as having been a result of children and adults working together. For example, a widespread change in cleanliness in the village was attributed, not only to the water taps being more accessible to children, but also to children raising awareness about cleanliness in the village through a child journalism project in the child club. It was reported that women supported the issues raised by girls and boys, and that their attitudes to cleanliness had been influenced.

*... after we have started to do things in the village like clean and make resting places then the adults also have started to agree that the children are doing something... but it was very difficult to get them to hear us..*

*(Young man)*

Having a collaborative approach and agreeing on different roles in the evaluation research meant that there had been more of a link from the children and community level through to the local programme and to local and national decision-makers. The roles and the capacity building process were planned as part of the evaluation:

*Holding a workshop before the research in the field helped to map out the capacity on the UNCRC and in the implementation of child rights in HICODEF and amongst the fieldworkers: it was therefore an opportunity to identify capacity needs and to re-orientate ourselves and plan together.*

*(Researcher)*

Sharing details of process, for example how to obtain informed consent from children, and having space for self-reflection and consideration of positionality can also be an important part of working with teams of researchers in partner organisations:

*... one has to shed your own ego and reflect on your own role in the process.*

*(Researcher)*

Children's perspectives had been particularly influential through the evaluation, feeding into a child journalism project in one of the villages that included a magazine. Improvements in the community were partly also attributed to one of the boys being a 'champion for children' in the community. This led to children becoming confident and empowered as they realised they had a role in changing their situation and, according to the current leader of the child club, has eventually resulted in the continued strength of the club in the village and to adults respecting what they say:

*I feel that this boy... developed 'a habit of asking questions' when he was involved in the research and took a lead in the evaluation, empowering other children to ask questions of adults and local politicians and in a sense he has continued to do this.*

#### **6.2.4 Summary of Issues Arising from Nepal**

The context in which evaluation is taking place was shown to be crucial to how evaluation can be implemented and whether different types of evidence may be accepted. Changing cultural practices and the political economy seemed an important part of understanding the way that evaluation can affect children's wellbeing, and it should be noted that the process of evaluation can in itself effect change in this context. Issues of crisis can also change the context and overwhelm the capacity of people in communities and organisations involved in evaluation.

This case demonstrates the necessity to understand intra-household and gender dynamics in communities in order to encourage intergenerational dialogue and change that is beneficial to children rather than having unintended negative consequences. Central to children's participation in evaluation is the goal of reaching the most marginalised children, which demands consideration of the methods which will engage them most effectively and the positionality of facilitators, also finding a balance between external and internal evaluation.

Visual methods in this evaluation helped children to present and establish dialogue with adults, and issues raised in the evaluation were then built on through child-led journalism in the community. The visuals seemed to help researchers and managers to understand children's perspectives and how local development programming needed to be changed to take account of these perspectives, and to avoid the consequences of ignoring children in planning. These qualitative methods were not, however, adequate to convince all decision-makers, some of whom also required quantitative statistics in their decision-making processes, especially those who did not have prior knowledge of participatory processes or of working closely with children in decision-making.

The existing capacity, confidence and commitment to change within institutions might be considered before embarking on evaluation. Effective processes of capacity-building and collaboration seemed to assist in building confidence throughout the process amongst children, adults in the community, researchers and decision-makers. Relationships of power between donors, partner organisations, statutory sector decision-makers, children and adults in communities therefore need to be understood in building a collaborative approach. Communication and ongoing dialogue between

stakeholders was the key to building lasting solutions to improve children's wellbeing in the villages in Nawalparasi.

## **6.3 Findings for Saying Power**

### **6.3.1 Introduction – Participants Interviewed**

An email requesting an interview was sent to every ex-award holder in Wales and England with whom mentors or managers had contact. The scheme had been UK-wide, but in discussions amongst management, the review of evaluation in two countries was thought to be a good starting point for contrast. The ex-award holders interviewed were both from the Welsh programme as they still maintained regular contact with the mentors and managers who had worked for Saying Power. A few of the ex-award holders from London were also still in touch with their mentor and had been willing to be interviewed, but the timing of the research had not coincided with their availability. The award holders from Wales had different perspectives from each other and were able to reflect positive and negative experiences of the evaluation. A perspective that was shared by many of the participants was that it might have been productive to keep more systematic contact with all ex-award holders in order to explore longer-term impact of the scheme.

Mentors were interviewed from England and Wales, as had been agreed by the management of Save the Children when permission for the research was sought. One of the mentors in Wales had been involved during the evaluation and the other had come into the scheme after the phase 1 evaluation. Similarly three coordinators of the scheme were interviewed from different time periods, which was intended to show whether systems put in place were sustainable and how the timeframe in which evaluation takes place, and changing institutional perspectives, may be important.

Managers and decision-makers interviewed thus included the three coordinators<sup>32</sup> from subsequent periods in the lifetime of the Saying Power scheme, the overall manager

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<sup>32</sup> One coordinator had also been a mentor in England.

who had been in place at the beginning of the scheme and the evaluation, and one of the host agency representatives that had joined after some of the mentor interviews and shared his reflections.

### **6.3.2 Comparing Perspectives in Saying Power**

The award holders interviewed about the Saying Power evaluation emphasised the political environment or context in which they were working; to a certain extent this showed that they had been involved at a high level of decision-making in terms of running their own projects for young people, and had influenced policy and practice relating to how young people were treated in Save the Children and by broader stakeholders. They raised the counter point of evaluation being seen as another bureaucratic burden for young people, and indeed for any practitioners running their own projects. They had ‘grown with the process’ and then seen how evaluation could work for them, raising ongoing funding and feeding back into practice.

The young interviewees expressed a preference for a collaborative approach over child-led or service user-led evaluation, and suggested that, for a more participatory approach to be successful, power dynamics between different stakeholders need to be addressed. Children and young people need support to build their capacity, whilst still using external evaluation to take the pressure off them to allow them to deliver services. Participants felt that a mixed methods approach was desirable to give them the different types of information that different stakeholders require.

The mentors stressed the effectiveness of the visual participatory tools in working with young people and how they contributed to transformational change of award holders themselves, and to the work of Save the Children. They stressed the importance of having a conducive and supportive institutional environment and appreciated the varying capacity of young people and thus the different levels of support needed to facilitate them in participatory processes. The importance of communication and documentation was also recognised at this level.

The independent and collaborative evaluation was valued by the range of participants as different stakeholders, including young people, had been involved in determining criteria and indicators against which to measure success, engendering a greater sense of

ownership. The managers interviewed discussed the innovative approach at the time in the use of participatory visuals that they acknowledged as fitting with the ethos of the Scheme and of Save the Children at the time. They also analysed the change in policy environment and the growing requirement for more quantitative evidence to show impact. They suggested that more of a mixed-methods approach with statistics to back up more qualitative information would be needed to justify funding and demonstrate impact. They all felt that this had been the case in the statutory sector for many years and that with a move towards rights-based programming there was previously support for more participatory methods, for example, in Save the Children. More recently, the voluntary sector has also begun to require what the managers referred to as ‘harder’ evidence. In order to effectively utilise evaluation evidence so that it influences policy and leads to positive change, they also emphasised the importance of communication and collaboration between stakeholders. Table 13 below provides a summary of key points raised in the critical inquiry.

**Table 13: Key points raised in the critical inquiry in Saying Power**

	<b>Key points raised</b>
<b>Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political context</li> <li>• Power dynamics understood so mentors can support young people</li> <li>• Collaborative approach preferred to totally young person led/ user led and external evaluation appreciated</li> <li>• The growing realisation of evaluation as a useful tool for gaining ongoing funding and for influencing rather than being seen as a bureaucratic burden</li> <li>• Importance of mixed methods including participatory visuals</li> </ul>
<b>Mentors/ Co-facilitator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative participatory processes and the use of visuals</li> <li>• Capacity building approach for young people carrying out evaluations</li> <li>• Transformational change for young people, mentors and the work of Save the Children</li> <li>• Innovation of scheme and evaluation in terms of participation</li> <li>• Crisis in young people’s lives as a barrier to their participation</li> <li>• The varying capacity of, and support required for, young people’s participation</li> <li>• Documentation, communication and ongoing follow-up is key</li> </ul>

<b>Managers and Decision-makers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory ethos needed in institutional setting</li> <li>• The innovative use of visuals was appreciated at the time</li> <li>• Changing policy environment makes a difference to level of participation</li> <li>• Increased pressure in voluntary sector for quantitative data to demonstrate impact taken over from the use of participatory visuals for assessment</li> <li>• Communication and relationships between different stakeholders – the scheme and evaluation showed collaborative approach with young people</li> </ul>
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### 6.3.3 Key Learning Arising from Saying Power

Transformational change was personal and after a time institutional. The institutional context in which young people are expected to participate was raised in the critical inquiry, as it had been in the evaluation of the Saying Power scheme. The broader context of rights-based approaches being acceptable at the time was discussed, for example an increasing willingness to listen to young people. In the context of the non-governmental sector, participatory evaluations were also seen as acceptable and in keeping with a rights-based approach. With more attention now to evidencing funding with statistics, there seems much to be learned about participatory processes from this case. When it was conducted almost a decade ago there was an environment conducive to exploring new ways of working with young people and this has resulted in significant personal and organisational transformation.

#### *Transformational change*

Transformational change at both individual and institutional level was emphasised by many of the participants in the critical inquiry for Saying Power. Mentors talked about how personal changes as a result of the scheme needed to be monitored as young people had different ways of coping with running their own projects. These personal changes were often positive and could be viewed as personal development, but in some cases they had felt under stress from all their new responsibilities and young people needed support identified early. It is in any case important to evaluate at this level to show what a huge difference this kind of participatory work with children and young

people can make to their lives and to ensure that they are receiving the kind of support that they need to overcome the barriers or difficulties they are facing.

One example was given of an award holder who was on the young offenders list when he came onto the scheme, but went on to make a huge difference to his local community in a project which is still receiving independent funding and running successfully today. The young person, having contributed an enormous amount to the scheme has gone on to use his skills with another voluntary sector organisation.

*Where would he be now if he had not been involved? We need to keep evaluating to show the true impact of the scheme for many of the young people who were involved.* (Mentor)

In other situations, mentors gave examples of where a young person had to deal with personal issues and crises outside the project and could not continue in their role as an award holder, or where the stress of running their own projects had felt overwhelming, again emphasising the need to monitor effects of the process at a personal level.

One of the mentors felt that her learning had helped her work and life, as well as supporting young people in their project work. She felt that it was not only the work of award holders that was influenced, but also organisations; for example, Save the Children had so many networks of young people on the ground as a result of Saying Power. In her view, the evaluation had helped to show the benefits of this more participatory style of working:

*I was struck with how clear it was through evaluation that young people would really make a difference to both policy and practice and that Saying Power had proved that.* (Mentor)

The mentors and co-facilitator emphasised the role of participatory visuals in these transformational processes. Those mentors who already had working knowledge of participatory visuals had not felt this individual change themselves, but had rather been able to co-facilitate from the beginning:

*It was important to use methods that can work with young people so that they can follow, adapt and go on to engage with other young people, whilst educating those that are receiving the information.* (Mentor)

Personal transformation through the process of participatory evaluation in working with young people was also attributed to the experience of evaluating such innovative projects that young people had been given the space and opportunity in the scheme to manage. The co-facilitator gave examples: in Northern Ireland, gaining a sense of reality from the young people who were on both sides of the fence in a conflict zone; visiting physically disabled award holders running projects with their peers to raise awareness; and working with young people on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) projects.

*The young people and their work were inspiring in the face of the many barriers that they met in their local communities and with local and national organisations.* (Researcher)

In Saying Power, the profile and recognition of young people's roles within Save the Children went up as the scheme became more established. The evaluation contributed to this according to managers interviewed, as it provided evidence that innovative work was being carried out and details of the more participatory approach that was taken in the Saying Power scheme:

*The participatory principles and ethos of the scheme and the evaluation were set up from the beginning. Young people grew in confidence... Their stories were recognised and valued and this tied in with feedback to the organisation... The profile and recognition of young people went up and this strengthened how young people were treated as a resource in the agency, although it was a long time until it fed into Save the Children governance structures.* (Manager)

### ***Context – Rights-based approaches, Four Nations and Welsh Assembly***

Those mentors and managers who were based in Wales felt that Wales was leading the way in having a more conducive political environment with a greater acceptance of participatory approaches during the time of the evaluation, especially with the establishment of the Welsh Assembly (April 1999) and the positive attitude amongst policy decision-makers to processes that 'listen to the people'. This had led to a broader general acceptance of evidence from qualitative and visual methods of evaluation. This view was reflected in the very positive attitude of the young people interviewed who had been based in Wales as award holders, in that they highlighted the positive policy context in which they were working.

The mentors from England, however, also felt that there was a receptive policy environment at the time, especially within the voluntary sector in that many of the young people running their own projects as award holders were having an impact on policy and practice. This, however, seemed to be linked more closely to the particular institutional context in which the young people were working: in particular, the capacity and level of support they offered and whether there were champions for children's participation in positions of power (see section below).

***Context – Institutional structures, capacities and commitment***

Despite the favourable political will at the time, it still requires supportive organisational environments to recognise the value of more participatory processes and both time and resource input. Many of the mentors described Save the Children as being a 'thinking' and 'learning' organisation at the time, willing to try innovative ways of working with young people. The organisational culture was discussed in terms of working with young people and how this changed as a result of building trust and relationships between different stakeholders, including young people.

At the time of Phase 1 of the scheme and the evaluation, the language of rights in the UK was relatively new, even in the voluntary sector:

*The scheme acted like a catalyst for host agencies, especially in the statutory sector, to engage in other opportunities to work with young people in a more trusted way. ... Any work that they then continued with young people had the ethos of support and evaluation built into it. There were also individuals in different host agencies, as well as in Save the Children, that helped to provide a supportive environment for young people.*

*(Manager)*

Many of the host agencies were also supportive of taking a participatory approach with young people and of a more participatory style of evaluation: many were therefore willing to accept the more qualitative outcomes. It was later on, in the attempts to gain ongoing funding, that the requirement for quantitative measures of outcomes by funders was highlighted.

The methodology was referred to as good for showing what were referred to as ‘soft’ outcomes’, for example changes in self-confidence and self-esteem. Outcome or impact was shown for the award holders themselves and, in some cases, for their peer groups over the year or 18 months that they were involved in Saying Power. Beyond that the longer-term impacts on policy and on the community that were explored by the external evaluators in Phase 1 were not followed up, and the value for money could not really be justified in enough detail for funders. The Saying Power scheme would also have had to set more formal objectives, and be less flexible in responding to the young people directly, in order to evaluate more formally against those objectives. In the evaluation of the Active8 scheme that came after the first phase of Saying Power, they had tried to use some longitudinal case studies as their qualitative evidence. It was suggested that it would be interesting to now follow up with more award holders in a longitudinal study.

After the evaluation of the first phase of Saying Power, where the external evaluators had reviewed the impact in local communities and broader stakeholders, there was more concentration on the impact for the young people in the projects and using the capacity building approach with the award holders. Although some of the mentors and managers suggested that it was possible to show impact in qualitative terms for a young person or their group of peers with whom they were working, some felt that it was only an indication of the direction of change and lacked what was referred to as ‘harder evidence’ on outcomes and impact, and cost/benefit information.

Even at the time, there was a debate about whether more quantitative data should be produced. The manager of the scheme suggested that impact of the scheme had been shown on three levels: individual (for award holders), community (their peer groups and people in the community with whom award holders were working), and organisationally (for host agencies and some of the broader stakeholders), and that this had been achieved through the use of qualitative data.

This stronger partnership between different agencies was advocated: if more Local Authorities or statutory partners had been involved in the scheme, they might have demanded the quantitative data that, in the end, Save the Children and partners required in order to provide continue funding. They might not have had the vision at that time to work in such a participatory way with young people, although now the policy

environment has completely changed and there are more requirements to work in partnerships, and in more participatory ways, involving service-user views.

### ***Issues of Process and Methodology***

Issues of process and methodology include: children's participation; internal and external evaluation; qualitative and quantitative evidence; visual methodologies; and building trust, commitment, capacity and communication.

### ***Children's roles***

Young people's participation, both in the scheme and in the evaluation, was seen by managers interviewed as innovative, piloting new ways of collaborating between different stakeholders. There was general agreement on the positive experiences of young people in evaluating their own projects, but concern was expressed about going much further in terms of child or young person-led evaluation. As one manager said:

*The evaluation can be itself then become the objective of the project.*

*(Manager)*

Mentors and managers were generally cautious about overwhelming the young people in an already innovative and intense scheme. Positive aspects of young people carrying out their own evaluation were discussed as reflecting the reality of what was happening in the projects as well as being useful to feed back into practice:

*Their evaluation gives a truer picture of the innovative nature of projects, whilst also feeding back into project/ service planning by defining more child-sensitive indicators and making service providers take the young people's perspectives more seriously.*

*(Mentor)*

The young people's capacity varied; one of the mentors gave an example of two award holders, one of whom was able to take on board the training while the other felt quite overwhelmed:

*This raises the question of whether we all expected too much from the young people.*

*(Mentor)*

The award holders interviewed said that they preferred a supported and collaborative approach to evaluation and didn't want to be further burdened, as they had needed time to deliver their projects. They saw the approach to evaluation as being collaborative in

that the scheme and the mentors had decided that they should carry out their own evaluations and participate in the external evaluation. If they had been given the choice at the time, they might have decided not to evaluate at all. Both, however, said that that they benefited in the end, and that they appreciated the evaluation training that had allowed them to gather evidence for further funding and to feed into their ongoing projects.

The ex-award holders suggested that either young people or adults could effectively carry out evaluation, and that a peer group of young people could have been external evaluators, working across the scheme and with broader stakeholders. The Millennium Commission and Comic Relief funded the scheme and Saying Power managers commissioned the evaluation. The young award holders were trained up as part of the evaluation and were then able to lead the evaluation of their own projects with their peers. The conditions and institutional context needed to be set up to enable them to do this, and led to young people effectively influencing different stakeholders locally. The evaluation had also been flexible to the needs of the scheme and fitted in with the participatory brief given by the managers.

One of the mentors suggested that some of the young people would not have liked to be as *'hard nosed'* as externals need to be, and some young people might not have wanted other young people evaluating them. Although there are benefits to young people-led evaluation, for example that they may ask questions that adults may not think of, one of the mentors also raised the concern that there is sometimes an artificial legitimacy put on young people: they have to be interested and there needs to be some justification of why those young people are chosen. The process of how young evaluators are recruited and what gave them the legitimacy to be the evaluators of the scheme, needs to be addressed, in much the same way as getting the right people as adult external evaluators.

A range of different spaces for communication and evaluation were also created as part of the process. Examples given of where the evaluation and training had worked well were in residential sessions, which enabled the evaluators to pull issues together and set indicators with award holders against which to measure their personal development.

*It was fun to see everyone together and to find out the kind of barriers others had been facing in their projects.* (Young woman)

An OCN course<sup>33</sup> was created in community activism and young people, which included the participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) training originally developed and piloted in the evaluation of the first phase of the scheme. This was created as a response to young people wanting recognition for their work, although in some ways it made it more academic, which did not necessarily fit in with the scheme being targeted at marginalised young people. Some of the young people had literacy issues and this course therefore had to be facilitated carefully. Within the evaluation, this was helped by the facilitation of evaluators and mentors, but the running of the rest of the scheme relied on strong mentor support to help the young people to address their responsibilities.

Where the award holders had the capacity to take the evaluation training on board with the support that they needed, mentors and managers commented on how they could use their experience of evaluation with their peers.

*Skilling-up the young people added value to the programme of work ...  
In the context, it added credibility to pilot new and innovative ways of  
working with young people... but there always needs to be a 'reality  
check' as everyone seems to want everything and we always try to  
deliver.* (Manager)

Where it was more difficult was generally when award holders were facing serious problems in their own lives, and thus needed a confidence boost in order to feel that they could cope with all that was expected of them. To inform practice and policy, however, the broader power dynamics had to be considered, including the role of host agencies and broader stakeholders, for the scheme in facilitating young people to fulfil their potential.

#### *Internal and external evaluation*

The independent external evaluation was valued as included both independent evaluation of impact with peers, host agencies and local decision-makers, but also training that encouraged internal evaluation and engendered ownership. It was seen as a collaborative approach: different stakeholders, including young people, had been

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<sup>33</sup> The OCN course has 10 modules to be done over 3 years

involved in determining criteria and indicators against which to measure success. A selection of projects was visited to assess impact with a range of stakeholders and a training element of the evaluation was carried out from the second year so that the young people could build capacity to evaluate their own projects with their peers, as well as continuing the ongoing external evaluation.

The award holders felt it was important to have fresh, impartial perspectives from external evaluators and a mentor joining the scheme later suggested that having an external report can add legitimacy and independence. Managers agreed that there had to be a system of checking internal processes and perceptions. The internal element, however, was seen as legitimate and as giving ownership of the process and resulting in change at an operational level, while also maintaining the involvement of the young people. The desirable balance between the two was thought to depend on the circumstances and the value base of the external evaluator fitting in with the internal processes.

*The evaluation was both internal and external. The evaluation was built into the planning of the scheme and then the external evaluators jointly planned the evaluation, with mentors and the scheme co-ordinator, so that it could feed directly into the ongoing running of the scheme ... Young people were then trained up so that they could plan their own evaluations with their peers.* (Mentor)

Each evaluation process works under different constraints and needs to be planned realistically in terms of time and resources. Time constraints were linked to what could have been achieved in the Saying Power scheme:

*The appropriate time and resources have to be put into evaluation in any new project and people also need to be realistic in recognising the constraints of working in different ways in different processes.* (Mentor)

### *Visual Methodologies*

Visual participatory methods in the evaluation, had been enjoyed by the young people interviewed. They had utilised them in their ongoing work at Funky Dragon and the young person's cyber café and drop-in in Fernhill. Examples were given of evaluation

matrices with smiley/sad faces that are easy and now widely used, however, at the time it had been unusual to see anything like that:

*When you use visuals, you can really **see it**. (Young woman)*

*You are also left with a visual that you can use and present, and thus young people can also directly see what they have achieved.*

*(Young man)*

Mentors commented on how visuals were a good way to work with young people: they were not as daunting, but more engaging than other methods. As many of the young people had no formal education visuals provided a fun, accessible and easy way to work on evaluation with their peers. The funders also seemed to appreciate the visuals at the time, as they provided them with different charts that really showed the young people's involvement.

*They help to allow everyone to have their say whilst also helping to illustrate what was happening in the projects, although the policy makers often need translation of what they are seeing. (Mentor)*

Communication of the discussions around the visuals is key to enabling different perspectives to be viewed by decision-makers whilst promoting a sense of ownership:

*The positive aspects of using visuals are that they can cater to the different ways in which people see the world and enable people to express themselves in a different way. They can also be useful to explore aspects of rights and responsibilities and give young people ownership of the exercise. (Mentor)*

There was general consensus amongst the managers interviewed that the visual methods had worked well with the young people, especially with verbal descriptions that went alongside to help other stakeholders to understand. Visual methods were described as 'memorable, accessible and fun'. The managers involved in the evaluation recounted particular visuals, such as traffic lighting systems, the evaluation H, developing indicators and scoring them on matrices, and confidence lines.

The facilitation of visual methods was seen as important, especially to get over young people's barriers in feeling self-conscious about writing and spelling, especially in some of the peer groups of young people. A mix of visual methods alongside verbal

and written description was employed, with facilitators willing to write for participants when required. Award holders had active learning styles and had generally really enjoyed using the visual methods.

### *Building Trust, Capacity and Communication*

Whether policy makers and service providers are receptive to young people's participation can depend on their exposure to the use of different qualitative participatory methods and to working with young people. Often professional training is biased towards the use of quantitative methods and the use of questionnaires and statistics, but those people who have experience of working with young people can see the value of also using alternative, complementary ways of engaging, communicating and collaborating.

It was therefore important that the evaluators worked with broader stakeholders on evaluating their projects and that the system of support within the scheme involved young people, mentors and host agencies working together. A representative from the host agency in Fernhill in Wales discussed how perceptions about the value of young people's input into the delivery of services and decision-making processes had changed. These tripartite power dynamics did not, however, always work out for the young people: some of the award holders felt somewhat disconnected from Save the Children, except those who were actually situated with Save the Children as their Host Agency or for those with particularly supportive mentors. As a result, in the second phase of the scheme, salaried positions in SC offices were created<sup>34</sup>, which young people felt would help them feel valued and more integrated. This created a young-people-friendly space and involved adapting policies and procedures, which in turn influenced the whole way in which Save the Children worked *with* young people instead of just *for* them.

*The whole approach in Saying Power meant that young people from different backgrounds were able to take responsibility and there was plenty of evidence to show this. It helped Save the Children to have the conviction and commitment to have young people integrated into their*

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<sup>34</sup> In order to do this the scheme had to spend a fair bit of time setting up a new 'training position' that would be suitable for young people in that age range who had varying amounts of experience.

*teams, although a lot of work still needed to be done on how to work with young people with such varying experience as colleagues. (Manager)*

Training in evaluation was identified as important by interviewees to give young people the skills both to collect and analyse information, and this takes time. In the first year of the evaluation, where the emphasis was on the working of the scheme including the support for the young people and the power dynamics, young people were seen as being 'informed and involved'. In the later years, as the training was developed and impact was further explored with the young people and the different stakeholders, the young people became more 'empowered' in the process.

*Learning by doing can be a good way to work with young people who have been rejected in these more formal systems and, considering we are all expecting a lot from these young people, we need to provide the right kind of support and to continually evaluate their achievements.*

*(Manager)*

Participants emphasised the vital role of the mentors in enabling the young people to get the most out of the participatory approach in the scheme and in the evaluation. Where support was weak from the mentor and/or host agency, then the young people often met with difficulties and stress. In situations where young people had mentors close at hand, the resource-intensive support paid dividends and the projects could often really fulfil their potential. This mentoring role is now more broadly recognised, for example, in mentoring services supported by the Youth Opportunities Fund and the Children's Fund. Some mentors said their capacity had been raised through the participatory evaluation training throughout the three years of the first phase of the scheme, putting them in a better position to provide the support the young people needed. Once the systems were fine-tuned for more effective support, in response to the evaluation in year 1, there was a more supportive environment for the mentors and young people to work within.

Mentors interviewed suggested that there could be more training for broader stakeholders so that they also had more capacity to support and work with young people and to understand the information they received from more participatory processes. Training in participatory monitoring and evaluation should always be initiated from the start for any substantial evaluations of this nature.

*Decision-makers have to be trained or educated if they are to accept and understand the results that they may be waiting for. There are different ways of 'knowing', or understanding issues and these were important to accommodate in order to see how acceptable different methods and data will be to different participants in the process.*

*(Mentor)*

The young people had also highlighted the residential sessions run three times a year in the scheme as important spaces for evaluation: they could have fun together, whilst sharing their problems and learning about new solutions. Having a balance of going out to the projects to support young people and provide external evaluation, whilst also having separate spaces away from the projects where young people could evaluate away from their projects was suggested. The importance of documentation throughout a process was highlighted. Documentation might include guidance on participatory monitoring and evaluation, as had been given in the training manual, and more information about the different types of support that were found to be successful in the scheme, such as the mentor support role.

In reflections on the UK policy context and evaluation, it was suggested by mentors and the co-facilitator that it takes enlightened individuals, young people and adults, to follow through on processes that address power and engage with children and marginalised adults in a way that is meaningful – champions for children, in other words:

*There are individuals within organisations who take up the New Labour, EU and UN agenda on Child and Human Rights and the policies and directives on participation with regard to young people as active participants in their own lives and in society, and they make all the difference in a process.*

*(Researcher)*

#### **6.3.4 Summary of Issues Arising from Saying Power**

Transformational change was strongly linked to having an organisational culture of innovation and learning, and to the use of innovative visual participatory methods of evaluation that had enabled young people to express their perspectives to a wider audience of peers and decision-makers. Transformation was experienced at an individual level, and also in terms of the Saying Power scheme and the evaluation influencing the commitment within the organisation and the way in which Save the Children worked with young people. The political conditions, especially with the establishment of the Welsh Assembly, meant that Saying Power and the evaluation were being received in a climate where young people were starting to be treated as citizens and their perspectives valued. This must surely raise the question of what progress has been made in children and young people's participation over the subsequent decade.

Award holders, mentors and managers advocated a collaborative approach to evaluation, so that there was adequate support for young people whilst also allowing the flexibility needed for the innovative peer-led projects and evaluation. Participatory training in evaluation was considered to have empowered young people to use evidence to inform ongoing delivery of projects, in fundraising and to influence local policy makers. It also enabled some of the mentors and managers to deliver their work with young people in a more informed way. It was suggested that in a political climate where there was openness to young people's views, service providers would have benefited from training to ease the 'journey' in learning to accept a different way of working with young people.

Cautionary issues noted were that young people have varying capacity and interest in participating in evaluation and that crisis in a young person's life can put a stop to well-laid plans of support and child and young person-led initiatives. Marginalised young people appreciated the mentoring role in which they could seek support when needed, and also valued the opportunities or spaces created in evaluation to reflect on and share their experiences.

More partnerships with statutory sector agencies might have encouraged more quantitative data to be collected alongside the qualitative evaluation. Despite the innovative and exciting visual methods being appreciated at the time within Save the Children as effective to evaluate with marginalised young people and to show outcome and impact to a certain level with peers and in local services, the evaluation was lacking the statistics on impact that were later required by funders as credible evidence to justify continuing the scheme.

## **6.4 Findings for Croydon**

### **6.4.1 Introduction – Participants Interviewed**

In Croydon, one of the children interviewed (aged 13 years) had been involved in the full evaluation of the project using visual methods alongside quantitative monitoring. The other child (aged 11 years) had been involved in drawing to the attention of the Partnership Board and other decision-makers issues that he and other children in the Junior Youth Inclusion Programme had thought important to share with them. On both occasions when I had visited the project there were logistical problems relating to the beginning of the term for the children: no children came to the first session and only two turned up at the project on the second session. After having a discussion with each, it was decided that the two would join to have more fun in the interview and to help each other to remember. The children, especially the older interviewee, suggested that they would like to interview the other children in the JYIP project with the help of the project worker who joined the interview at the end. Other priorities took over for the JYIP and the two children's information stands and gives a good insight into a child's perspective on the evaluation process.

The services funded by the Croydon Children's Fund fell into three funding categories, and the projects that were in the top two brackets were emailed with requests for interviews. This was decided with the CCF Manager as those services had received a full evaluation, as opposed to more minimal monitoring and evaluation for those in the lowest funding bracket. The services that replied may therefore have been those that were most involved in the evaluation, but they gave a spread of services and showed how the services changed perspectives through the process. For example, the Youth Inclusion Support Programme (YISP) had been very sceptical about qualitative

participatory evaluation at the outset of the process. The Reaching Out Project had been reluctant to be involved, but had wanted to show some of the problems that they had experienced as a small service working within a school setting.

An email was also sent out to the Partnership Board members; again, those who got in touch were willing, but again discussed the positive and negative aspects of the evaluation in the interests of learning, and to represent some of the highly negative views about evaluation and particularly participatory evaluation expressed in some of the Board meetings. I had known about this scepticism in the Board, alongside the positive support for the mixed methods approach taken, as the evaluators had attended Board meetings as observers and advisors.

#### **6.4.2 Comparing Perspectives in Croydon**

The children interviewed came straight to the point and said that if evaluation can support a project that can improve your life, through providing better understanding and thus better information for funding, then it is worth doing. The purpose of evaluation for the children was largely to gain further funding for the project fitting in with the perspectives of staff, although they also said that they would want to work together with adults on evaluation. The reason they gave for this was so that the adults gained a better understanding of their lives and how the project helps them.

The staff in services funded by the Croydon Children's Fund (CCF) focused on visual participatory methods, but also emphasised how the work on the quantitative monitoring system had given them evidence to feed to funders and decision-makers in order to gain the funds they needed to sustain their ongoing services. Having been quite sceptical about children's participation and the use of visual methods at the outset, many had identified the capacity building as valuable to feed into ongoing service delivery and, some said, into shaping and transforming services to be much more responsive to the children and families with whom they worked. Many had only felt a sense of value in children's participation as the evaluation process had progressed. Once trust had been built and communication between stakeholders maintained, participants said they could grow with the process and use evidence to its full potential. The time and resources that are needed for this type of approach were also discussed.

The managers highlighted the independence of external evaluation, whilst also recognising that the more participatory approach, and the capacity that led to ongoing self-evaluation, had also seemed to work for some of the funded services. They agreed that there are different requirements for different stakeholders, especially for quantitative data, which they referred to as ‘hard’ evidence to show ‘hard’ outcomes, and which they felt were needed to justify funding and strategic decision-making processes and to demonstrate impact for children. Most of the managers, however, felt that qualitative data, so called ‘soft’, were necessary to explain the figures and, alongside the statistics, could provide evidence for preventative services that could otherwise be at risk of being under-funded. Some agreed that tokenism in children’s participation may be a problem unless adequate time and resources are devoted to evaluation, and that government requirements for service-user views may have been the main reason for participation for some of the members of the Board.

Generally the voluntary sector was seen as being more accepting of qualitative methods than the statutory sector, although there is increasing pressure all around to justify funding. On the one hand, the participation of children in the evaluation was seen to have met with the requirements of central government to have service user involvement, although some managers also saw how their participation could transform the delivery of services. On the other hand, evaluation was said by interviewees to have been seen as dispensable and unnecessary by some members of the Partnership Board. The policy environment including ‘Every Child Matters’, which was introduced half way through the evaluation, was seen as being important in developing frameworks for evaluation that are appropriate to the different stakeholders involved. Table 14 provides a summary of key points raised in the critical inquiry.

**Table 14: Key points raised by different groups in the critical inquiry in Croydon**

	<b>Key points</b>
<b>Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A project is worth it if it changes your life for the better</li> <li>• External people need a better understanding of children’s lives so that projects are funded</li> <li>• Children want to work together with adults to get things done</li> <li>• The way the research is carried out needs to be fun and engaging using a mix of different methods including audio visual and visual</li> </ul>

<p><b>Staff and co-facilitator</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformational change on individual and service level due to participatory processes</li> <li>• The use of participatory visual methods grew in importance for some of the services through the process</li> <li>• With increased knowledge and capacity in children’s participation, different stakeholders may have a growing trust in children participating in evaluation</li> <li>• Roles in children’s participation depend on their age</li> <li>• There is a requirement from funders for quantitative data</li> <li>• Quantitative data collection can be as empowering as qualitative as it can be used to relate to funders and decision-makers</li> <li>• Communication between stakeholders can lead to a better understanding of the process and evidence produced</li> <li>• Participatory processes can be time and resource intensive</li> </ul>
<p><b>Managers and Decision-makers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement for different types of evidence by different stakeholders</li> <li>• Changing policy environment including ‘Every Child Matters’ gives a framework that can also be useful for evaluation purposes</li> <li>• Balance of statutory and voluntary sector makes a difference to process, especially in locally determined evaluation</li> <li>• Evaluation can provide the evidence needed for funding and for maintaining jobs in periods of funding uncertainty and cuts</li> <li>• Evaluation can be seen as unnecessary by some stakeholders Independence of external evaluation required</li> <li>• Sufficient time and resources needed for participation to avoid tokenism</li> </ul>

### 6.4.3 Key Learning Arising from Croydon

#### *Transformational change*

Individual transformation was highlighted mainly in interviews with staff of services in Croydon. This was expressed in terms of new ways of listening to children and their families, and the way in which different methods could inform service delivery and ongoing bids for funding, thus contributing to transformation of their services. One of the staff from the JYIP also felt that having more ownership of the project and the

evaluation process made the children seem more responsible and responsive to the project:

*Young people can identify their own faults if they are given more ownership... they then know why JYIP is there rather than just another provision and they get more responsible and have more respect which is very valuable for the young people's outlook. (Service staff)*

Transformational change within a service or institution is possible when individuals within that space, managers and staff, are open to changing the power dynamics and ways of communicating with service users. One example of transformational change, given by a participant from the statutory sector, was that the practice of YISP had become more inclusive and responsive to children at risk and their families. They had found different ways in which staff listened to children and had a growing sense of value in how their perspectives could inform the way in which they worked with excluded children and young people. Together with the voluntary sector Junior Youth Inclusion Project (JYIP), they now also incorporate more participatory approaches in their evaluation and in their everyday work. In what they call the Junior Impact Factor (JIF), they go into secondary schools and talk to young people about issues that affect them, such as staying safe and peer pressure.

The transformational change attributed to children's participation in evaluation that has been suggested in Croydon may be less at the broader contextual level, perhaps as children and young people were not as involved in these levels. For example, although some members of the Partnership Board informed their decisions using evidence from children, most had little or no interaction with any of the children or families from the funded services. There had been suggestions of members of the Board visiting the services to meet some of the staff and the service users, although few had the time to accept. Presentations to the Board by staff, however, had been regarded as helpful to them in their decision-making processes.

### ***Context – Policy Climate***

In Croydon, the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) national policy framework, was viewed by the managers as generally helpful in Croydon:

*It is understandable, straightforward and helps to address children's lives from a holistic point of view. (Manager)*

The ECM framework was also seen as useful in selling children's issues and services to people who have not previously been involved in the children's agenda. Policies such as the 'Healthy Schools Programme' are also seen by managers, for example from the Education Department of the Council, as being helpful in making more qualitative information on children's perceptions of services more acceptable, alongside the statistics that they still also require. The policy environment is important in terms of how children's and young people's views are accepted:

*In the midst of all these different evaluative processes, the views of children and young people, especially those that are most marginalised ... and go against the 'social norms', rather than just those on the youth forums, need to come through in a way that is taken seriously so they are not just lost in tokenism. You just can't do this in isolation and to highlight the importance of children's views, you think of the chaos theory approach where all these little issues add up to make a big difference.*

*(Manager)*

In Croydon, there was some concern expressed by Partnership Board members that funding for preventative services for 5-13 year olds may be hard to justify, as this will no longer be ring-fenced under the new commissioning structure that integrates the Children's Fund into Croydon's Children's Services under the Local Area Agreement (LAA) with Croydon Council. Members from the Partnership Board interviewed felt that there would be added value in using information from the evaluation to highlight the evidence of success for preventative services and services that are targeted to the 5-13 year age group. This example thus shows how the political and policy context needs to be understood to help to determine process and how change may occur in response to evidence from children.

### ***Context – Institutional structures, capacities and commitment***

The expectations within different institutional contexts came out quite clearly in this case. For example, the more qualitative evidence produced from the participatory visual evaluation methods were said to be more acceptable in the evaluation due to the management of the Croydon Children's Fund being situated in the voluntary sector. The requirement by National Government to have a more participatory process that

incorporated the views of children in local evaluation has also meant that statutory sector players are more receptive than they would be otherwise.

Some of the service providers saw the statutory sector as having a growing interest in the perceptions of service users, for example in the National Health Service (NHS) and the Department of Health, and that there was therefore more receptiveness within, for example, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to the views of the children and families with whom services work. There is now an expectation that services will provide qualitative indicators as well as quantitative information. Patient satisfaction surveys (which included adult questionnaires) are now applied across the health service: an example was given where the staff of the Willow service, having been involved in the style of the more participatory evaluation of the Croydon case, adapted these surveys to carry out with children and that this was welcomed in the PCT. When a bid was written to the National Lottery they also incorporated extra funding in the bid for evaluation so that service-user views could feed back into palliative care services and therefore be more effective in meeting their needs.

The voluntary agencies took on board the qualitative style of evaluation more readily, although there were also examples from the statutory sector where acceptance of a participatory style of evaluation grew throughout the process. Therefore an analysis of the institutional context is important, alongside an awareness of how this can be influenced and changed as a result of the process (see Section 6.4.3).

It was suggested by some of the managers that the evaluation of the CCF carried out had not been able to go beyond these 'softer' outcomes to show 'real' or 'hard' outcomes or the longer-term impact for children. There was also discussion of how this would not have been appropriate for the CCF as it is such a small subset of children, but to demonstrate effective children's services, there needs to be quantitative evidence that offers proof of 'harder' outcomes.

*In order to build up a picture of what happens to children over the next, say, 18-20 years, a quantitative data base would need to be developed ... for example, to show whether there are less children excluded from school, or whether children have a higher reading age, or whether less children entering the criminal justice system. An evaluation would need to be set up differently in the first place as a longitudinal study, with a*

*baseline and ongoing quantitative evaluation of different individual children over the years.*  
(Manager)

Some managers, however, did not agree that all evidence on impact needed to be in the form of statistics gathered in a longitudinal way and felt it important to find acceptable ways to evidence so called ‘softer’ outcomes. With partnership working it was also acknowledged that attribution is difficult. One of the managers from education took bullying as an example: the same service may go into two different schools with a completely different ethos to bullying and the responses may be different from the stakeholders in the different contexts. The situation and political climate therefore also has to be taken into account when interpreting statistics, perceptions and attribution. To use the same example, bullying may be reported in one school more than another, just as crime is reported more in one community compared to another, and parents may be engaged in different ways in the different schools. Thus, analysis of different stakeholder perceptions will need to take into account the awareness of issues and who may contribute to the success of a service, and this may in turn determine methodology.

### ***Issues of Process and Methodology***

Issues of process and methodology include: children’s participation; internal and external evaluation; qualitative and quantitative evidence; visual methodologies; and building trust, commitment, capacity and communication.

### ***Children’s roles***

Both of the children interviewed said that they would want to carry out evaluation, not by themselves, but together with help from adults. In that way, the adults would get more of an understanding of their lives: they saw this collaborative approach as ‘working together’ with an emphasis on the education for the adults involved about their lives. The staff from JYIP reflected on how the children and young people who came to the project had been helped to identify their own issues and face them, but in doing this, they also now know *why* the service is being run, rather than JYIP just being another provision. One of the project workers noticed that the children then seemed to become more responsible.

Children’s participation was seen differently for children of different ages in the Together in Waddon project, and this differentiated participation for different aged

children was also highlighted by the Reaching Out project, both based in or attached to schools. In Reaching Out, based in a Primary School, it was suggested that children aged 4-7 years needed help with methods, especially as they were nervous of the process, as they didn't speak much English:

*The refugee and asylum seeker children were sometimes frightened to be interviewed and didn't understand all the questions in the evaluation and at first needed someone to explain how the visual methods worked.*

*(Service staff)*

In Together in Waddon, for the primary aged children (5-11 years), their participation varied depending on activities. Staff suggested that with this age group (5-11) they do work 'with us' and are totally involved in decisions, but not to the extent of the older children. For the older age group of children, 11-15 years<sup>35</sup>, they could really get involved and take more control:

*...the evaluation process could really be seen as empowering the children as their perspectives fed directly into the ongoing work of the projects.*

*(Service staff)*

The project leader discussed how they had started to collaborate with parents in an ongoing process of building trust. Competence in the use of more participatory evaluation has grown in the project and, whereas at the beginning of the evaluation he would not have imagined children leading the process, he grew to see how this could work. He could imagine this older age group of children taking over some of the evaluation.

In considering participation with children with disability, although during the evaluation the manager of the Willow service did not feel able to have direct evaluation with the children with life-threatening illnesses<sup>36</sup>, the process of capacity building on children's participation has made them think differently. The drama therapists work with children in a way that helps the children drive the process and determine the issues that the service addresses. They also specifically gather the views of children and young people (including siblings) on the service and the use of drama: these are now

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<sup>35</sup> Including children of older than the 13 year age limit of the CCF in their groups.

<sup>36</sup> Due to timing as service was so new and staff were changing.

collected in questionnaires using visuals (drawing) and their opinions written into a book. Two children helped to make the DVD that they used to explain the service to decision-makers and funders. The children helped to make up the questions, did the interviewing, and also designed the logo and thought up the name for the service.

The view from within the statutory sector Youth Inclusion Programme (YISP) based within the Youth Offending Team (YOT) was that child-led participation could not have worked at the beginning of the evaluation. The manager suggested the process would have been more patronising than empowering at the time, and even felt uncomfortable with discussions of more children's participation on the Panel of the YISP. She suggested that children's participation needed to be built over time, also considering the risks involved, and that is now there is a greater acceptability of children's participation in broader policy. The Youth Opportunity Fund, for example, can provide funding to initiatives that can be owned and run by children and young people.

*Children's participation can grow, but in their territory and on their terms... there are risks involved to the children facilitating if decisions are taken based on their information that puts other children into a higher risk situation.*

*(Manager)*

The original tender by the evaluators had included more of a child and young person-led element that included training up the Croydon Xpress<sup>37</sup> team of young people to be evaluators. The CCF manager discussed how the Xpress project determined their programme of activity, and at first they wanted to work on establishing their own project rather than being involved in evaluation. Their management also changed early on in the project, and their capacity to do more participatory work has been built by working with individual projects over the five-year programme. She suggested that the Partnership Board may not have been ready for child led evaluation and/or more internal evaluation at the beginning of the programme, although now the political climate is in alignment with a more participatory approach.

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<sup>37</sup> A project on children's participation that was originally intended to have a team of young people to work with and service other funded services in the Croydon Children's Fund.

### *Internal and external evaluation*

Managers in Croydon valued the independence of external evaluation and felt that this made the evaluation more objective and therefore more credible, many not at first seeing why there was a capacity-building aspect of the process in order to support internal evaluation. According to some members of the Board, the fact that the evaluation was only funded and commissioned on a year-by-year basis meant that there was more chance for the evaluation to be shaped by the Board making it more 'internal', whilst still keeping an external element by employing independent external evaluators. It was acknowledged that this did restrict some of the possibilities for setting in place processes or methods that took more than a year, such as longitudinal case studies. Some of the Board members, especially by the end of the evaluation process, also recognised that the staff from the services had been 'empowered' by the capacity-building element of the evaluation that had allowed them to continue to carry out ongoing evaluation.

Some of the staff in one of the non-governmental preventative youth crime projects at first felt threatened by external evaluators; however, as the process progressed, the time and effort spent helped to identify weak points in the services before they escalated, and to identify problems that children felt were not being addressed. Evaluation was also recognised as helping services/projects to show what they are doing to change children's lives in order to obtain more sustained funding. The children also seemed to like professionals coming in to evaluate their (the children's) services and said that this made them feel as if they were being listened to.

If the process of evaluation is ongoing, then there is potential for the services to feed the evidence back into their practice by 'learning from the lessons'. External evaluation was identified as valuable by some of the service staff, so that someone who was not attached or involved with the project could objectively observe. A suggestion from one of the staff in the funded services was that external evaluators could help to both keep the evaluation on track and identify how to move forward in the services. They could also match trends to targets and question why services are conducting the work that they are doing with service users. This requires a working relationship with services and the evaluation is therefore best carried out as an internal /external collaboration. Someone needs to come into the services to ask the right questions and a fresh perspective can often be valuable:

*Without an external, nobody is asking the questions. (Service staff)*

### *Visual Methodologies*

Visuals were discussed in terms of how they showed exactly what the children wanted to say, and one of the children in the critical inquiry suggested that he would have liked a bit more time<sup>38</sup>

*For more people to say what they think, so that more people from outside can understand us. (Boy, aged 13)*

In the one of the services, the project leader commented that the use of visuals had ‘grown on him’ and had raised literacy issues for young people and in the community. Visuals used children’s own language:

*I find them far preferable to ‘dry paper’ ... there are real literacy issues in the local community and that you can never presume that anyone can read. The sheets are colourful and easy and quick to use once they are prepared. There were a few problems with post-its blowing off in the wind, but generally the visuals could be used out and about and at events to attract people to join in. Children can use their own language and the visuals can be used with a whole range of different ages, still being able to trace back what different children of different ages said because of the coding system developed by Development Focus. (Service staff)*

The coding system that was developed in the evaluation was discussed as useful to identify children’s perspectives by age, gender and ethnicity, whilst maintaining anonymity and having fun in creating the visual. Coding the ethnicity of the children was, however, thought to be invasive, although recognised as information required by funders: as long as the children also understood that, they didn’t seem to mind.

The co-ordinator for the Reaching Out project based in an infant school again emphasised how children aged 4-7 needed support from adults in using visual methods. As they come into the last two years at infant school then, according to the facilitator in the project, the use of visuals becomes more rewarding. The example was given of

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<sup>38</sup> This boy said that he would interview other children and with help send the results to the author, but in the end understandably the JYIP project had other priorities.

happy and sad faces working well with this age group to talk about the pros and cons of the project, especially for the children that have English as their second language.

The Willow service used drama techniques, both for working directly with children with life threatening disabilities, and with their families and friends at school to cope with bereavement. They explored how different people cope with bereavement using the techniques and also use drama to address strategies for coping. The manager suggested that now they had the capacity, built up through the evaluation, to use more different visual methods, some of these drama techniques could be utilised in the service for evaluation.

In Croydon, the acceptance of visuals depended on perceptions of their value. One of the managers suggested that it didn't really matter how the evidence from children or other stakeholders was collected, as long as decision-makers have some figures and some qualitative evidence to back these up and explain them. She recognised that some of the services had their views about how evidence was collected and that, although some of them had got a lot out of the visual methods, others had been sceptical, especially in the early days. Another manager summed it up:

*The visuals in the evaluation seemed to work well with the staff involved, but whether they are accepted depends on individual's perspectives. As long as the information presented is rigorous then the mechanism by which it is collected shouldn't make a difference.*

*(Manager)*

Managers from Croydon recognised the value of using qualitative research methods and how this could really make a difference to children and young people's lives by making the linkages between the issues in the real world that affect them:

*The value of the qualitative information is also in finding the linkages between issues. When a child is excluded from school this may link up with more than just the immediate problems in the school environment ('corridor kids'). The trouble comes where these links are not acknowledged and the real issues that face the CYP not found: then they may find another value system that they can relate to, for example in local gangs or in extended groups or families.*

*(Manager)*

Apart from being enjoyable, some managers, for example from the PCT and education, felt that visual techniques enabled people who don't speak up to get involved and were particularly useful for less literate children and young people, and their families; they also provided variety for staff in methods for their own evaluation. Although some decision-makers want to see a particular format, people do have different learning styles and the evaluation was required for a wide audience. This acceptance, or lack of acceptance, of visual and other qualitative methods is linked to capacity-building and communication at different levels with stakeholders in the process (see below).

### *Building Trust, Capacity and Communication*

Services in Croydon often received funding from different sources and therefore some of their work was carried out with different ages of children. Fitting together different systems of reporting for different funders, especially developing databases for quantitative monitoring information to feed into Partnership Board decisions, was raised by managers as one of the onerous aspects of external evaluation discussed in Croydon. For service providers, already producing detailed quantitative records, for example in the PCT, there was little time to do more; systems therefore needed to be tailored together. In smaller organisations, especially those in the voluntary sector, that did not already have rigorous monitoring, developing systems was time consuming. In the end, however, this was thought by interviewees from services to have been highly beneficial to their prospects of more sustainable funding, although the qualitative methods were still needed to feed into their service delivery:

*Working with young people, when we have the stats then we can feedback on their behalf and get the funding. Helping them to express themselves with other methods like role play and art work can get their true opinions and thought what they get out of it ... identify the weak links so that it doesn't get to be a bigger problem ... We can also understand what they mean by prejudice and racism and they can understand whether they meant to offend each other.*

*(Service staff)*

Although limits of time and capacity of evaluators were acknowledged, the Together in Waddon Project would have liked more qualitative evaluation visits, especially when new staff members came in. Although they found the quantitative evaluation daunting

at first, they valued this type of monitoring with support on how to structure data. Longer timeframes for evaluation from the outset would have been beneficial so that case studies of individual children could have been planned and followed through. The manager of Willow felt it had helped in the Children's Fund evaluation process to have a flexible approach so that services could influence how the evaluation was carried out; for example, in the Willow service in extremely sensitive times when children are coping with bereavement of siblings and friends. The capacity-building element of the evaluation had also led to more different participatory approaches within the service, but this had grown with the process.

It was time consuming to develop participatory evaluative capacity in services as well as setting up external evaluation sessions with the right people at the right time, especially as many of the workers, particularly in the voluntary services, were part-time or sessional:

*The more participatory process of developing the methodology is time consuming and therefore often pushes the work over time and therefore over budget.*  
*(Service Staff)*

The interaction between services in the 'networking lunches' was highly valued by many of the service staff in the critical inquiry. These were monthly lunches set up for structured discussion, sharing and learning, in which some of the cross-programme evaluation and capacity building for the evaluation was conducted. This space for communication and learning between projects during 'networking lunches', including discussions facilitated by the evaluators on topics such as working with children with disabilities or with behavioural issues, and was highlighted as important by service staff. Those smaller projects, such as Reaching Out, where staff could not spare the time to attend the lunches did have communication problems as a result.

Capacity building as an element of the evaluation was voluntary, but was identified by the services in the critical inquiry as useful for their ongoing evaluation processes. It should be noted that those that did not participate in the training were also the services that did not participate in the critical inquiry. One of the service staff who manages youth prevention projects could see how the participatory work had 'grown over the years'. Despite the task of evidencing their work in a qualitative way being time consuming and (at first she felt) 'annoying', she had in the end found it not only

worthwhile, but enjoyable and fun. She feels it is still, in her words, ‘pink and fluffy’, but now she sees it as important as it gives another necessary dimension to evaluation and reporting.

Service staff interviewed regarded the training on monitoring systems also as empowering in the evaluation process: ‘Together in Waddon’, for example, have been able to use the information to further fund the project and to feed into local policy debates. This aspect of evaluation enabled them to get involved with local decision-makers in a different way, and they felt that through this interaction their work seemed to be understood and valued more. Members of the Partnership Board had noticed a change in capacity in terms of the providers of the services and the commissioners being able to use evidence in their strategic decision-making. One manager gave an example of how she now saw evaluation as a tool, used in budgetary decision-making as well as in cascading to other levels, for example the way in which managers can engage with service users.

The direct forms of communication between services and the Partnership Board were also valued, but limited. Services were invited to present to the Board and, for example, staff from YISP said that showcasing the evidence from the projects had made them reflect on past and current practice. One of the managers stressed how important this was for Board members to get an idea of how the services were working with marginalised children in the Borough, but she wished that more invitations had been accepted by the Board to visit the service users in the programme and to attend the ‘networking lunches’ with the service staff.

Managers in Croydon discussed how children’s views might be taken more seriously if there were ‘champions’ who would support the use of the more qualitative perceptive evidence from children. In the context of justifying ongoing funding of services for the 5-13 year old age group there needs to be ‘champions for children’, and one of the managers used the example of the recently appointed Chief Executive to the Council, who could continue to advocate for this age group and for preventative services. Analysing results and continually verifying with service users and services means that communication and a type of capacity building develops through the process. The importance of having information from the evaluation in an accessible form for policy-

makers was also highlighted; for example, the Legacy reports that were produced in the last two years of the evaluation.

#### **6.4.4 Summary of Issues Arising from Croydon**

The Croydon case demonstrates the importance of institutional context and how the capacity and confidence of organisations in participatory methodology can help to change the way in which qualitative visual methods are utilised by service providers and received by local decision-makers. These methods were appreciated by some of the managers in statutory settings as important in working productively with marginalised young people, particularly with those who do not usually have a say, to understand the reality of their situation and find linkages to determine what leads to negative situations in children's lives. They were also seen as beneficial to service providers in shaping preventative services. The broader acceptance of these participatory visuals was thought to be due to the government's position on service user involvement, specified as compulsory in the first few years of the evaluation of any Children's Fund programme, and to individuals acting as champions for children. However rigorously the visuals were applied, using coding systems to follow children's perspectives by age, gender and ethnicity, some managers did not feel that they provided 'hard' enough evidence for many decision-makers, especially in the statutory sector.

Quantitative monitoring aspects of the evaluation were highlighted by managers and service providers as crucial to have alongside the qualitative work, which had not been carried out in the other two cases. The mix of methods including the quantitative had enabled them to better engage with local decision-makers and to meet the requirements of funders. Capacity building in this aspect of evaluation was thought to be particularly important by the smaller voluntary sector organisations. This aspect of evaluation was also recognised as daunting, however, as many services had to meet the requirements of different funding bodies with different monitoring systems, often with little guidance about how to balance these different demands with ongoing delivery of services to children.

The capacity-building side of evaluation contributes mainly to the internal aspect of evaluation and, although this was thought to be time consuming, it was also seen as

necessary in order to continually review and improve services. The capacity to demonstrate outcomes in quantitative and qualitative terms was also thought to be particularly important in preventative services where outcomes are often hard to quantify.

Transformational change was evidenced at a service level, but less so at broader cultural and political levels or at the level of the children themselves. Children in this evaluation had less participation in the methodology than was originally planned or that might be conducive to a greater connection between children's perspectives and changing society in a more fundamental way. Communication was identified as crucial – between service providers and between service providers and decision-makers – but the link between children and decision-makers was largely through presentations and their visual representations, rather than by direct contact and involvement – a lesson that could be taken forward from Nepal and Saying Power. The commitment to children's participation, however, was shown to grow through a process of capacity building, collaboration and communication. This demonstrated the importance of taking people's starting point, initial capacity and working relationships into account, and building a process, and establishing trust, from there.

# CHAPTER 7: COMPARISON ACROSS CASES AND THE EMERGING ‘CHANGE-SCAPE’

## 7.1 Introduction

It is evident that, despite revisiting all of the evaluations with a similar mindset in terms of rights-based research, there were factors or conditions in each case that influenced how the evaluations were implemented. There were varying extents to which different stakeholders felt that the process had been participatory and the extent to which children and young people’s evidence was taken on board in order to shape services, inform policy and change the context or setting in which the evaluation was taking place. Gaining greater understanding of those conditions and the mechanisms which resulted in positive outcomes for children, was seen to be valuable in understanding how the process of children’s participation linked to significant features of the context. This chapter presents a structure or model that can help to explain how evidence from children and their participation in evaluation processes in different contexts can lead to transformational change and encourage decision-makers taking their perspectives seriously to translate rhetoric into positive outcomes.

The following were the key findings that arose from analysing across the cases. Firstly, qualitative participatory processes of evaluation *can* lead to transformational change on an individual, institutional and/or broader societal and policy level (see Section 7.2 on transformational change which also introduces a model to structure the rest of the messages). It was not the case that any rights-based evaluation using visual participatory methods would lead to change, but that transformation was dependent on the conditions for change being conducive to more meaningful processes of children’s participation, where decision-makers valued and acted on the perspectives of children. These conditions included both broader cultural, political and policy contexts as well as a thorough understanding of institutional settings and the capacity, commitment and experience or confidence in participatory processes within them. In order to structure the links between conditions for change or the context in which the evaluations take

place, in relation to the process of children's participation in evaluation, a framework or model is suggested that is built on socio-ecological and cultural-ecological theories of child psychology and on critical realism (see Section 7.3.2).

Secondly, children and young people who are part of an evaluation have to be considered as central to constructing a process; this would take into account their interest, availability, identity and agency. Children and young people may change their interest during the process, and indeed their identity and agency may develop throughout the period of the evaluation, both independently and as a result of the process itself. The starting point therefore needs to be established as well as the ways in which the process could develop and be continually reviewed in different contexts (see Sections in 7.3.3 on children at the centre and on time).

Thirdly, understanding political/policy, cultural and physical aspects of context was necessary in order to find mechanisms to encourage a more collaborative and participatory approach with children and young people in evaluation. Conditions for change had acted in the cases revisited as barriers and facilitators to participation. This led to the conclusion that if these external drivers could be better understood at the outset of an evaluation process, alongside getting to know the children who are involved, then more relational approaches to children's participation might be built where power dynamics and politics within households, communities and institutions, could be taken into account and longer-term impact on children's wellbeing would become more likely. Examples of the kinds of barriers and facilitators in context, such as relevant policy frameworks, predominant cultural attitudes and varying perspectives on rights-based approaches, experienced in the evaluations are discussed in sub-section in 7.3.3 below.

Fourthly, analysis of the existing capacity and spaces for communication and participation could lead to more guidance in processes of children's participation and more specifically what type of evidence and forms of communication and capacity building may lead to meaningful change to improve the wellbeing of children (see sub-sections in 7.3.3 on internal process and context). The institutional context in which the evaluation is taking place, whether this lies in the voluntary and/or statutory sectors, affects the expectations of different stakeholders including funders, and thus how evaluative evidence will be utilised effectively in decision-making. For example,

evidence and outcomes that are qualitative may be regarded as ‘soft’ as opposed to the ‘hard’ quantitative statistics that are often expected by funders and managers, especially within the statutory sector or government, or in the case of international aid, the international bilateral and multilateral donors.

Fifthly, building trust, capacity and communication in an evaluation was put forward as even more important than the methods, as this is what helped to break down existing barriers to change and power dynamics in evaluation processes and within the different levels of context in which the services being evaluated were operating. In order to achieve effective evaluation that informs positive outcomes for children and transformational change on an individual and institutional level, consideration of spaces for participation, and adequate time and resources, can be included in planning alongside an appreciation of the roles of different stakeholders and the associated support, collaboration and capacity building required in order to change power dynamics (see sub-section in 7.3.3 on mechanisms for change).

A mixed-method approach seemed to help in responding to the different demands of decision-makers, whilst also allowing space to achieve transformational change. Flexibility and capacity to respond to children’s perspectives seem to be a pre-requisite for meaningful participation, while the continual review of how the process is implemented and how the context changes can guide ongoing evaluation. Visual participatory methods can, however, be effective in working with marginalised children and young people in a participatory way and have been connected by interviewees in the critical inquiry to transformational change (see sub-section within 7.3.3 on children’s evidence as a mechanism for change).

In this chapter, I seek to explain how the findings from the revisits could contribute to our understanding of how processes of children’s participation in evaluation are linked to significant features of context. In order to do this I have structured the discussion in an emerging called a ‘Change-scape’. This framework has helped me to understand how to start to define meaningful participation in evaluation in varying contexts through a range of mechanisms. It is hoped that this may also be useful theoretically and practically in informing discourses on children’s participation.

## **7.2 Considering Transformational Change and Introducing the Change-scape**

In undertaking analysis of the revisits to evaluations previously conducted, I kept coming back to the same questions: why evaluate with children? And why bother with participation if most of the decision-makers expecting evaluation want quantitative data, collected in an objective way to produce hard evidence? I could see that following a right-based approach led to including stakeholders at all stages of the process, and addressing participation as a right expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and more explicitly emphasising children's voice and their right to be heard. There was, however, an underlying message across all of the interviews: although outcomes had been achieved in terms of some changed services and funding decisions, participants in the research had highlighted the importance of changing the attitudes of adults and confronting power dynamics in the process in order to achieve positive forms of transformational change. Individuals had experienced and described such changes with excitement. Examples given of organisational and broader societal transformation had not been expected in the evaluation and were regarded as spin-offs to the process. Indeed, I had at first only added the question in the critical inquiry on transformation as an afterthought as, in reflection, it kept coming up as a cross-cutting issue and was an important term arising in the participation literature as an objective of more meaningful processes (for example Hickey and Mohan 2004). More seemed to be required to understand how context linked to process to achieve positive outcomes for children from their participation in evaluation.

Considering my research question of how processes of children's participation are linked to significant features of context, I realised that in all three cases, in very different contexts, employing participatory visual approaches with children in evaluation, according to interviewees, led to some form of transformational change (although I also freely admit that this finding is not limited to the qualitative element of evaluation processes). The transformation that took place for different stakeholders participating in the evaluation not only affected the ongoing implementation of services, but also through changing attitudes affected the extent to which evidence from children was valued by decision-makers at different levels of governance.

The transformational changes identified in the critical inquiry fall into five categories:

- Changed attitudes of different stakeholders towards children and increased capacity to understand and value children's perspectives and evidence, for example mentors, managers and host agencies in Saying Power and managers and service providers in Croydon;
- Children and young people increasing their capacity and interest in participating in evaluation and decision-making processes and encouraging each other to continue innovating and learning, for example children from the child club contributing to the evaluation process and follow-up in one of the villages in Nepal and the award holders coming together to evaluate and share barriers in Saying Power;
- Changed boundaries and shifting power dynamics within households, communities and institutions through supporting more spaces for communication and dialogue with children. For example, through child-led journalism in one of the child clubs in Nepal and creating new ways of working with young people including eventually in governance structures in Save the Children in the Saying Power case;
- New structures, ways of working or spaces created in organisations for the greater participation of children and young people, for example, changing HICODEF's development work in Nepal, and gaining children's perspectives in youth crime prevention projects and projects working with children with disabilities in Croydon; and
- Changed policies that affect more than the immediate projects and services that are being evaluated, for example, the evaluation evidence being used by award holders to influence policy in Saying Power and children's perspectives being fed into borough-wide policies in Croydon.

Although these transformational changes are often seen as 'spin-offs' to evaluation, it was suggested that they could be planned for in a more strategic way by having strategies or mechanisms that could support and encourage this type of change, and to monitor transformation as part of the process. This fits in with recent debates around participation being transformative in processes of participatory governance and citizenship through both creating space for more expression and transformation of marginalised people as well as addressing the broader issues of power and politics (see Section 2.3 in Chapter 2). The issues of flexibility and capacity were also raised so that

unintended impacts can be responded to, but when transformations occur, they could be recorded and recognised, and qualitative participatory processes acknowledged as contributing to change. The type of transformational change found in each of the cases depended both on the starting point or the initial capacity of the stakeholders at different levels of decision-making, their involvement at these levels, and communication with each other.

At an organisational level, HICODEF rethought their development programme in the villages where the evaluation had been carried out in Nepal. This included taking account of children's perspectives in their water projects by changing the height of, or putting steps up to, taps and toilets. Children in one of the villages in Nepal had started to think in a different way, and were interested in learning new things and were more confident about their perspectives being important in the village. The child journalism that utilised children's evidence arising from evaluation built on this, with the help of a young boy who was very motivated and who encouraged other children in the village to communicate around issues of water supply, cleanliness and school attendance. The adults in the community gradually started to listen to the input from children, and the child club is still strong and feeds into decision-making in one of the villages. There was therefore change at an individual level that also fed into a broader societal change in the way in which adults regarded the perspectives of children in decision-making.

In *Saying Power*, the young people and some of the mentors felt that as a result of the capacity building in participatory approaches and evaluation they had become more reflective practitioners and could use evidence to change policy and ways of working with young people. The innovative participatory ways in which the scheme worked, demonstrated by the evidence from the evaluation, influenced Save the Children's other work in the UK, for example young people being based in Save the Children Offices. At a broader level, there were projects that influenced the broader policy arena. For example, one of the award holders interviewed was able to provide evidence on how Funky Dragon was involving young people and therefore gained continued funding which has led to young people's voices being heard in the Welsh Assembly.

Most of the examples of transformational change given relating to Croydon remained at the individual and organisational level for services. One example is how the YISP manager and staff found new ways of listening to and responding to children and

parents they work with, which they realised that they needed to do in order to survive as a service. The practice of YISP staff is now, according to their manager, more inclusive and responsive. There are also examples of where services have received mainstream funding supported by evidence from the evaluation. For example, the Willow service received ongoing funding from the PCT and the case was made stronger by children identifying ‘bereavement’ as a major concern in the needs assessment conducted as part of the evaluation process. Some of the evidence also fed into the development of the plan for the following two years for the Croydon Children’s Fund programme, and children’s perspectives in evaluation started to be valued by at least some of the Partnership Board members. Children in Croydon were interested in how their evidence could change the ways in which adults understood their lives and thus how they could influence funding decisions, although they had not had the same kind of contact and direct communication as children and young people in the other two cases, which was perhaps the reason for less change being identified by interviewees at a broader level.

Many of the researchers and staff in Nepal, the mentors and managers in Saying Power and staff from services in Croydon highlighted issues of individual transformational change, with their own capacity and understanding of children’s participation growing with the participatory process. In many cases this translated in their capacity to work with marginalised young people improving and examples were given of how this had led to better services. Examples in Nepal included: increased water availability and cleanliness, and more education about the value of school attendance in villages. Examples from the UK evaluations included: views of peers feeding directly into projects for excluded young people in Saying Power; the continuation of funding for award-holder projects in Saying Power in Wales; and the incorporation of views of children with life-threatening illnesses and their peers and families, and of children at risk of offending in services in Croydon.

In Nepal, child journalism resulted in children starting to think differently about their abilities to participate in decision-making processes. This kind of transformational change or evolving capacity occurring to children and young people who are involved in participatory processes is also referred to by Lansdown (2005), who suggests that exercising participatory rights can increase capacity to participate, rather than only following fixed stages of childhood growth. In Saying Power, according to

interviewees, young people's perspectives had started to be taken more seriously by different decision-makers. The focus relevant to transformation for them was the way in which adults relate to young people and how decision-making can be informed by the perspectives of children and young people.

In both Nepal and *Saying Power*, broader transformational change required the appropriate space and support for a different kind of power dynamics to be developed: the active children's club in Nepal; and in *Saying Power* award holders being supported by mentors within Save the Children and host agencies in running their own peer projects on issues that were relevant to them. Recognising and creating appropriate spaces for participation, which potentially leads to this type of transformational change, is an issue also discussed by Cornwall (2004), White and Choudhury (2007), Shier (2010) and Mannion (2010). The focus of the rest of this chapter is on how to create the conditions and space to have evaluation with meaningful participation that can lead to transformational change.

Where children had not been involved directly in decision-making, but had participated in providing evidence to decision-makers, such as in Croydon, comments on transformation were more limited to how they had changed the way in which they thought of themselves or how they felt that this had influenced adults' understanding of their lives. Having children's perspectives included in evaluation, however, had in this case informed funding decisions being made using qualitative data from the visuals they had created, alongside quantitative monitoring statistics. Transformation at different levels of decision-making did occur as, at an individual level, service providers and decision-makers who had more direct contact with children and the services provided grew to value qualitative evidence from children and their families through the process. Having a complementary agenda to work with decision-makers and people in positions of power who are receiving the information from participatory processes, is also suggested by Chambers (2006). The roles of different donors, intermediaries and facilitators are important to recognise in terms of their influence on assessment and learning, especially if social change is to be strengthened. Guijt (2007 and 2008) qualifies social change as transformational processes related to distribution of power and discusses the change in accountability moving from being purely upwards, to accountabilities that are 'more interactive' and 'downwards accountability'. Having more accountability downwards to children in a process of

social mobilisation could be considered as meaningful participation; how this can happen involves considering conditions for change and how context is linked to process. In order to do this, the ‘Change-scape’ model is presented so that the structure can be used to depict the findings and offer some suggestions on the interactions between children and how they participate in different contexts.

## **7.3 The ‘Change-scape’**

### **7.3.1 Introduction**

The model or framework that I have developed, referred to as the ‘Change-scape’, is put forward to help to analyse and structure the different contexts/settings in which evaluation with children takes place, and potential mechanisms to increase the space for participation in evaluation, and to help determine how decision-makers may value children’s perspectives. The structure of the ‘Change-scape’ links the children involved in evaluation to their context through a series of mechanisms. This model is in effect a ‘utilisation-focused’ model (Patton 1997, 2002), as it explores how the evidence from children may be used and accepted by decision-makers, but it seeks to ensure that conditions can be understood to achieve more illuminative approaches to evaluation and change (for example, Richards 1985, Patton 2002). The ‘Change-scape’ therefore explores the environment of change or context, and how evidence may be received and conditions for children’s meaningful participation maximised. Taking into account power dynamics and the roles and capacities of different stakeholders in processes, it is suggested from the case study research that different mechanisms employed in the evaluation process may help to turn action identified through participatory evaluation more effectively into positive outcomes for children and transformational change on a personal, institutional and broader societal level.

In what follows, the ‘Change-scape’ is presented as it has been developed from the analysis of the case study research, and its structure informed by theoretical perspectives (ecological models of child development, and critical realism). The structure and the different components or conditions for change of the ‘Change-scape’ are presented in detail referring to comparisons across cases to show how the model is grounded in the evidence from the revisits. The ‘Change-scape’ is then discussed in relation to theories of dimensions of power and how these relate to the implementation

of children's participation in evaluation. The 'Change-scape' put forward not as a theoretical predictive model but is intended to help structure analysis around the links between context, children and participatory process.

To assess whether policy makers and service providers may be receptive to children's and young people's participation and to the evidence that comes from more participatory methodologies, such as using participatory visual methods in evaluation, the mechanisms to achieve positive outcomes from action need to be optimised. This may involve the creativity and flexibility, information needs and methodological options that Patton (2002) refers to. Thus, the model is intended to help determine approaches and methodologies for evaluation of services and programmes that can lead to improved wellbeing for children, through changing the context and the attitudes and capacities of the individuals involved in different aspects of the evaluation. It is only in this way that existing power dynamics and structural issues that prevent children's perspectives being valued will be changed.

### **7.3.2 Theories Informing the Structure of the Change-scape**

In structuring the 'Change-scape', the following theories have been useful and are discussed in more detail in the following sections:

- Ecological theories of child development (referred to in Chapter 2)
- Critical realism and realist 'revisits' (referred to in Chapter 3)

#### ***Ecological theories in Child Development Informing the 'Change-scape'***

Understanding Piaget's theoretical perspectives can inform methodology in evaluation, despite some of the problems raised with this approach around understanding the life-course changes for children in different settings and cultural contexts (as discussed in Chapter 2). It is, however, the more contextualised theories in child psychology of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner which have fed into 'ecological approaches' to childhood development, that have informed the model by placing children at the centre of the model with the layers of their interactions with different stakeholders and their contexts around them. The importance of context is relevant to the 'Change-scape' model as it takes into account not only aspects of process and the institutional environment surrounding children and young people, but also the macro level cultural and political/ policy conditions. These contextual conditions in which evaluation takes

place influence the ways in which children are regarded in society and in development programmes or service provision, thus making a difference to how evidence from children may be taken on board by those people in positions of power.

Ecological theories of child development placing children at the centre interacting with different levels of context were put forward by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) (see Section 2.5 in Chapter 2). Highlighting the centrality of children fits in with understanding how different children are participating in evaluation in different contexts and also how their identification processes and identity (Mannion 2010), their development of identity (Hart 1997), and feelings of belonging and interest in evaluation are also important to consider in their participation. Later theories of Bronfenbrenner (2005) and Tudge (2008) are relevant to this thesis as they engage in an understanding of children as agents and recognise the importance of broader sociological and cultural context and change.

In his later theoretical writing, Bronfenbrenner (2005) highlights the importance of ‘process, the person, context and time’, all of which are important aspects of the ‘Change-scape’ model. Tudge (2008) also adds more detailed understanding of how culture can be understood in relationship to individuals and their interactions in his cultural-ecological theory, taking account of cultural practices both at a societal level and within different groups in the same society. This resonates very strongly with the critical inquiry findings in Nepal, showing how individuals affect their context and visa versa. In the contextualist paradigm that Tudge (2008) promotes, he suggests that this fits with the approaches taken by cultural psychologists.

In the relationships that a child has with their immediate surroundings, bi-directional influences mean that a child may be influenced by context and in turn the context may be changed through children’s participation, as in Nepal regarding the changes in children’s relationships with adults. This then also radiated out to affect broader cultural attitudes and practices through the child journalism initiative, suggesting that the model should not be constrained to children interacting and being influenced by their immediate systems and surroundings. In Nepal, children working with peers in child clubs extended their influence on decision-making and through dialogue with adults also influenced broader cultural practices in the village. In *Saying Power*, young people led projects with their peers to influence broader policy environments.

Influencing their own social world is what Corsaro (1992) describes as ‘interpretive reproduction’ which:

*Enables children to become part of adult culture – that is to contribute to its reproduction and extension – through their negotiations with adults and creative production of a series of peer cultures with other children.*

*(Corsaro 1992, p1)*

The interactions between structures and settings of context that Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, 2005) identifies are particularly relevant as they can reveal an optimal position or space for participation that could be created in a participatory process of evaluation in terms of interaction, interconnections or dialogues in each setting. This is demonstrated where different stakeholders in the evaluation process are linked together (for example through reference groups in Nepal, show cases and residentials in Saying Power or networking lunches in Croydon), or where there are barriers to their communication and participation (for example, when the host agency and mentor relationship was not working for the young people in Saying Power). More ‘participatory space’ may thus be created for participation by employing mechanisms of interaction, such as communication and collaboration throughout the evaluation process, and these have been shown to make outcomes more beneficial to the children involved (see subsection in 7.3.3 on mechanisms for building trust, confidence, communication and collaboration).

Ecological theories also include consideration of external environments that indirectly influence the children, for example the predominant cultures in communities and the varying interpretation of the rights-based approaches in Nepal, the mentoring system or requirements of young people by Saying Power, and the Children’s Fund management system and insecurity in funding during the times of funding cuts. This broader context includes the changing political economy, the cultural setting of the evaluations, the situation of conflict in Nepal, the devolution in the UK and the requirement of service user perspectives in evaluation of Children’s Fund projects and the application of the Every Child Matters Framework in Croydon.

The ‘Change-scape’, developed from the findings of the critical inquiry in this thesis, shows that different dimensions of context, including culture, need to be considered to help determine processes that can encourage meaningful children’s participation and to

understand the results of the evaluation. It is suggested that in this contextual approach, utilising participatory visuals to understand context and children's changing roles and lives can contribute to an 'ecological' approach to working with children. Context is thus linked to the individual, to the process and to how change happens over time in response to the perspectives and evidence of children. The element of change over time in Bronfenbrenner's model (2005) has been important to consider in children's participation in evaluation and indicates that the model emerging needs to be revisited at different times throughout the evaluation process. Those who have utilised Bronfenbrenner's ecological theories, for example Boothby *et al.* (2006) working in war zones (see Chapter 2), have recognised the importance of children as part of the affected community who have resilience and can transform in the face of conflict. They also consider what the humanitarian community, considering their human capacity, social ecology and culture and values, bring to a situation, and the broader context of economic, environmental and physical resources.

'Ecological' approaches and theories are utilised to inform the 'Change-scape' model in the following ways:

- Children are placed at the centre of the model to counteract the invisibility of children's evidence in decision-making. Here the identification of the different children is important and also their own sense of identity and belonging.
- The interaction between different stakeholders in the settings is important for optimal outcomes in the wellbeing of the children that are involved, including their optimal development.
- Whilst recognising the importance of age and competency in children's development, ecological theories of child development highlight how context, individuals and the interaction between them can help to understand children's everyday lives, extended to their participation in activities and processes to evaluate services and programmes/ projects that are delivered to improve children's wellbeing.
- The human capacity, social ecology, culture and values can help or hinder transformation. Economic, environmental and physical resources set the broader context in which to consider how a child responds to change.
- The dimension of time and ecological transition is also relevant to the changing contexts, in that flexibility is needed to allow for the transformational processes of some of the children who are participating.

- Flexibility also needs to be considered in situations of crisis, both in the broader context and in the lives of children.

The ‘Change-scape’ model thus places children in the centre, as the evaluation process depends not only on which children and young people are involved, but also on how they see their identity and what interest they have in the evaluation. Their confidence and feelings of belonging to the process can also change with the capacity of facilitators who work with them, and the capacity of service providers and policy makers who interact within the process and take on board different forms of evidence (see sub-section in 7.3.3 on children at the centre of the Change-scape). Attention must also be paid to the context, including the social relations and systems within which a child and others gain meaning in their experiences, and the resources that form the boundaries of change affecting children’s lives. (This is further built upon in the next section on internal processes and external drivers in realism and is discussed in sub-section 7.3.3.)

### ***Realism and Revisits Informing the ‘Change-scape’***

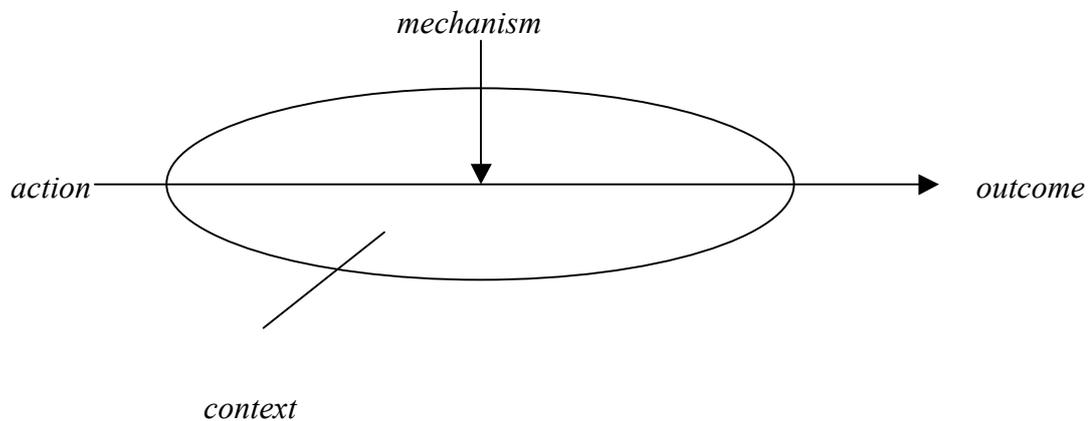
Critical realism, as the epistemological position taken in revisiting case studies of children’s participation in evaluation, has also served to offer some insights into the analysis of the more open systems within real world contexts that have formed the basis of the ‘Change-scape’ model.

The context in which mechanisms work to turn actions into outcomes, which derives from Robson’s (2002) interpretation of Bhaskar’s work as discussed in Chapter 3, can form the basis of the way in which children and young people’s participation in evaluation can be theorised. This would include gaining an understanding of their interaction with other stakeholders, and how ultimately children’s evidence may be taken seriously by decision-makers and service providers in order to both shape services and result in transformational change on a personal or organisational level. The conceptual model discussed above, derived from Roy Bhaskar’s realist theories, has also been developed for use in ‘realistic evaluation’ by Pawson and Tilley (1997). They put forward a simple formula (1997, p. vx):

$$\textit{Mechanism} + \textit{context} = \textit{outcome}$$

Figure 2, from Robson (2002, p 31), also helps to explain the importance of understanding both context and mechanisms in achieving outcomes from action.

**Figure 2: Representation of Realist Explanation**



Generative causation and the base on which all realist explanation building is explained by Pawson and Tilley (1997, p. 58) in the proposition: ‘causal outcomes follow from mechanisms acting in contexts.’ This has been useful in developing the ‘Change-scape’ model as the context has been identified as important to understanding how mechanisms of communication, collaboration and capacity building for example, will help to translate actions into outcomes for children.

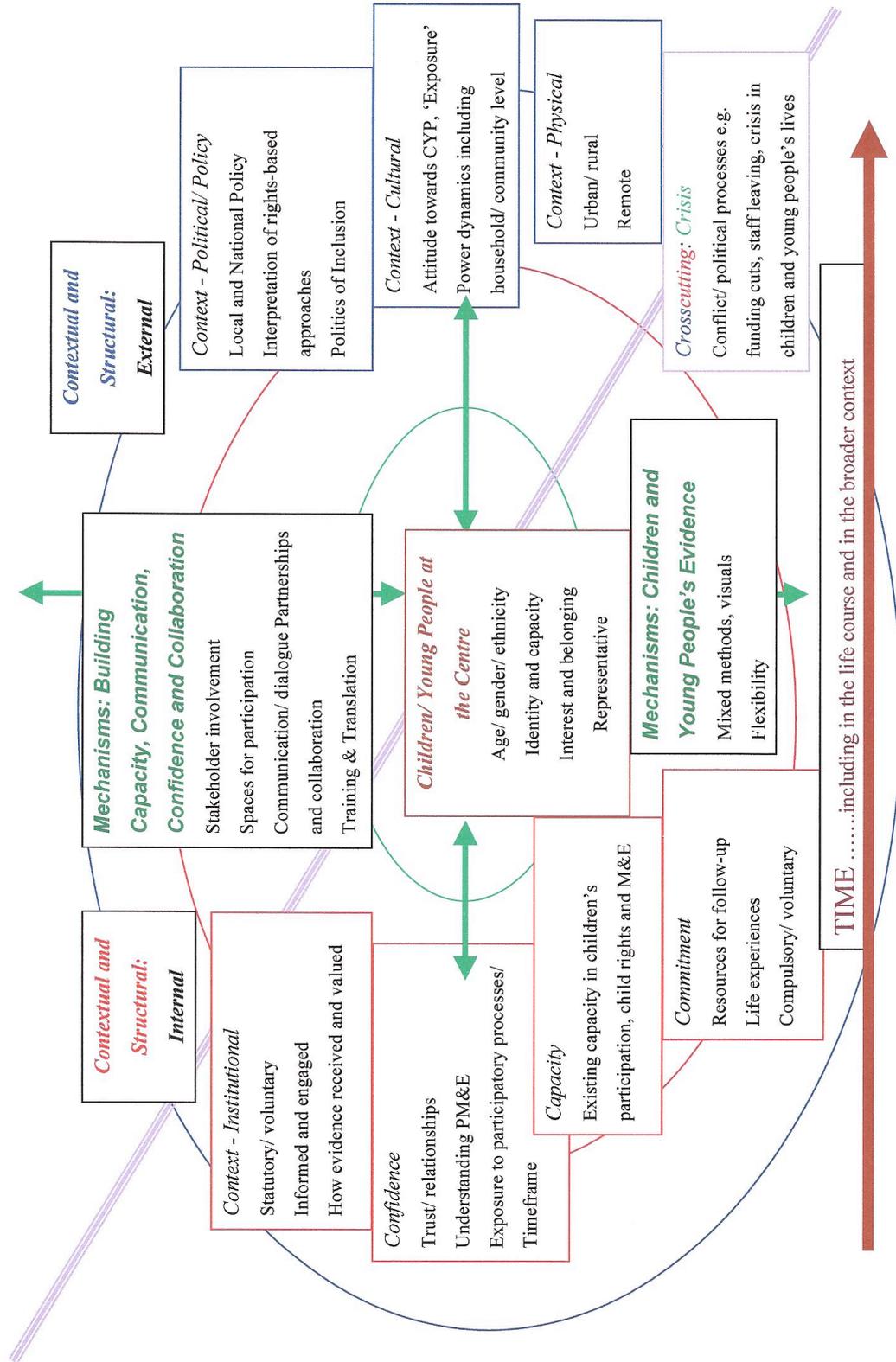
Thus, the model is informed both by these concepts and by the contextualised ecological theories. Realism addresses structural and contextual influences combined with mechanisms to turn actions into outcomes. Children and young people are at the centre of the ‘Change-scape’ model in Figure 3 on p. 215, with the different stakeholders with whom they interact and different types of institutions, structures and spaces in which they interact at different levels of decision-making being linked together in the evaluation process through these mechanisms. Children are then linked or connected in their context by encouragement in the process for different stakeholders in the evaluation to collaborate and communicate. This will include the process by which their evidence in evaluation is collected using different methods, such as participatory visuals and a range of qualitative and quantitative methods. The mix of methods may depend on the changing capacity and confidence of those involved in the process and whether there are strong advocates or champions for children.

The building of trust, capacity, collaboration and communication are therefore referred to as the mechanisms by which action, in terms of evaluation processes, can lead to outcomes for children in different contexts. These mechanisms for linking children to the structural and contextual issues also need to take into account that children and other stakeholders can change the context in which they are living and working in a two-way process. The outcomes from using participatory visual methods with children, adults and service providers/decision-makers, can be seen both in terms of changes to services and funding decisions and transformational change, although the latter is not always planned for or immediately recognised. Transformational change, could, however, be better planned for due to its importance in changing the behaviour, attitudes and even lives of different stakeholders in the process, including children, and in addressing power dynamics between adults and children and within groups of children. The conditions for change are therefore referred to as the contextual and structural issues.

Burawoy's (2003) theory of 'reflexive ethnography' suggests that 'realist revisits' emphasise attempts to explain change through understanding internal processes of change and/or the dynamics of external forces. This includes reassessing the relationships, dynamics and theory and explaining change, through both examining internal processes and acknowledging and gaining a greater understanding of external forces. This is also relevant to the way in which children are affected by different layers of context around them (Bronfenbrenner describes it 'like nested Russian dolls'). It also ties in with examples of the application of social ecological approaches to working with children (as described in 7.3.2 above). Instead of using all of the layers or systems of the social ecological models, however, I wanted to reflect the phenomena of children's roles in a participatory process, where children may be able to interact and influence at different levels of context and decision-making, despite perhaps having most influence at the more local level (as suggested by Williams 2004). Within the 'Change-scape' model shown in Figure 3, the conditions or factors of change are split into 'Internal Processes' and 'External Forces': thus how the contextual and structural issues are placed in the 'Change-scape' is guided by Burawoy's analysis and, to a certain extent, also by social ecological models.

**Figure 3: Change-scape (C-Scape)**

**Conditions for Transformational Change and Change in Services to Improve Children's Lives**



### 7.3.3 The Structure of the ‘Change-scape’

Based in cross case analysis and the theories discussed above, the conditions of the ‘Change-scape’ were formulated into components which have been used to then structure the discussions of findings as follows:

#### Children at the Centre

- Children and young people: their identity, agency and interest

#### Context and structure: External Drivers

- Context: Political/Policy, Cultural and Physical

#### Context and structure: Internal Processes

- Institutional setting: Commitment, Capacity, Confidence and Champions

#### Connecting children to stakeholders and context: Mechanisms

- Children’s evidence – participation, mixed methods, visuals and flexibility
- Communication, capacity building and collaboration between stakeholders

#### Crisis - Crosscutting

- Conflict and Children in Crisis

#### Change over Time

- Change over the life course and change over historical time

#### ***Children and Young People at the Centre: their identity, agency and interest***

In all the cases, the situation, identity and capacity of children and young people in the evaluation processes was seen as key, guiding the way in which evaluation was planned, applied and received. Thus, the way in which children were treated by services or projects determined how they were allowed to participate or not in the process or how their evidence and perspectives were taken seriously in decision-making processes. For children facing different issues of dis/ability, for example, or who speak another language or who were seen as being ‘at risk’ (for example in some of the youth crime programmes in Croydon), there was concern expressed about the appropriateness of different people interacting with children at different times or in varying states of distress or vulnerability, and therefore the background of the evaluators was identified as important, together with the trust that builds up between evaluators and services. Some of the children were already seen as entering the ‘at risk’ category, and even in preventative work, children’s lives can be in crisis. One of the

managers in Croydon raised the issue of the children's own sense of belonging to a 'group' of children and whether this necessarily exists in the more preventative services outside finding themes for funding streams, such as working with children in 'black and minority ethnic' groups (BME) or working in a particular location such as on deprived estates in the Borough.

In building a participatory evaluation process, comparison across cases relating to children's roles showed that issues of children's identity, capacity and interest were all important to consider. It was clear from the case study research that children and young people can facilitate evaluation processes, but that young people in all the cases supported a collaborative approach, both to have the support they felt they needed, but also to influence the way in which adults and broader stakeholders value their perspectives and understand their lives. This very much fits in with more recent relational theoretical perspectives on children's participation (discussed in Section 2.3, Chapter 2). Whilst recognising the need for intergenerational dialogue and more spaces for participation through addressing power dynamics (Mannion 2010), children's perspectives are regarded as central in informing change in the 'Change-scape' model to counteract the past invisibility of children's views in evaluation processes (see Section 7.3.4 for further discussion of power with regard to the 'Change-scape').

An ethical framework for evaluation, including obtaining informed consent that is revisited during the process may therefore need to consider how children's perspectives are responded to and address the accountability to children in the process (as discussed by Guijt 2007). Issues would include children's age, gender and ethnicity, but also their own perceptions of their developing identities, their sense of belonging to externally identified groups and their interest in the process. Understanding how children's roles are regarded by different stakeholders, and in differing cultural contexts, is also a starting point in developing a participatory process. Children were seen as active citizens, as in *Saying Power*, or as service users and/or victims of their circumstances, including their parenting, ethnicity, dis/ability, education and the location of their home in a marginalised area, as for example was the case for some of the stakeholders in Croydon. Nepal highlighted the gendered roles of girls and boys, the differences imposed by cultural attitudes structured by ethnicity and caste, and how children, even in the community development programme, were seen initially as supplying labour to build taps in projects, until this changed in the course of the evaluation process so that

they were recognised as having valuable information for planning. This changing view of children's roles was also relevant in Croydon as some of the services placed increasing value on children's participation in shaping their services.

In terms of learning from the process of children's participation in evaluation, some of the key points that managers from Nepal wanted to share regarding children's roles in evaluation processes were as follows:

- Children could be more involved in the evaluation of processes and not just in the hard labour/ work in implementing projects;<sup>39</sup>
- Children could conduct evaluation and start to gain control, and through this process both children and those working with them became more empowered;
- The involvement of other stakeholders, such as parents, adults, and local decision-makers and service providers, in the participatory process was of key importance so that evaluation can lead to more sustainable change;
- The learning relating to children's participation and involvement, including the tools developed, could be used in other participatory evaluation sensitive to other issues of difference, for example in evaluation with people of different gender, ethnicity/ caste and situations of poverty and exclusion.

In order to have a more child-led evaluation, interviewees across cases suggested that adequate time and resources had to be planned, including processes for support and capacity building, as demonstrated in particularly Nepal and Saying Power, but also to a certain extent in Croydon. In all of the cases, it was clear that power dynamics could only be addressed through encouraging intergenerational dialogue, and dialogue between service providers, decision-makers and service users. Creating and encouraging spaces for communication and capacity building for different stakeholders were seen as helping children's participation in evaluation. The importance of the mentoring role was highlighted in Saying Power, showing how young people with the right kind of support both from mentors and host agencies could fulfil their potential. Across the cases, 'champions for children' were also identified as helping to both create the space for children's perspectives to be heard, for example within decision-

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<sup>39</sup> Children had shown in the first evaluation how they had been involved in the labour in the construction of taps, for example, rather than in the planning. Mahendra and other researchers said that this often happened, as adults would send children to fulfil the household contribution of labour for different development interventions.

making processes, and to help children to believe in themselves and see the value in their own voices. This may be within the community, such as the boy who has now become a journalist in the child-led journalism in Nepal, or amongst service providers and decision-makers, such as the mentors and managers of *Saying Power*, or the Children's Fund Manager and some of the members of the Board in Croydon.

In all of the cases, a collaborative approach rather than a child-led approach was advocated by the children and young people interviewed, not only so that all the potential burden of evaluation did not fall on them so they would have more time for carrying out their programme of activities, but also in order to influence the perspectives of adults involved in the research, whether in the community or with the decision-makers in funding bodies. This very much fits with Mannion's (2010) conception of children's participation that encourages spaces for intergenerational dialogue and recent relational framing in the new sociology of childhood (see Section 2.3 in Chapter 2). Young people's interest in evaluation processes and the legitimacy of the young people chosen to evaluate others' projects were also discussed in *Saying Power*; that is, young evaluators need to be chosen carefully, just as adults, rather than simply because they are 'young'.

There are ethical issues associated with children and young people's participation that were discussed in the critical inquiry, such as putting children at risk through their participation. In Nepal, careful facilitation was needed in order to build trust and intergenerational dialogue, while also ensuring that children's perspectives were not influenced by other stakeholders, or children put at risk by challenging adult authority without support. Also highlighted was the need to ensure proper inclusion in the process for participants who are marginalised, for example by language and understanding of power structures relating to ethnicity and caste in Nepal, or by the range of capacities (and vulnerability to crisis in their own lives) of young people in *Saying Power* and Croydon.

Children cannot be seen as a homogeneous mass; differences between children and power relations between groups of children and with adults were discussed in interviews. Such differences not only affected the choices that they made about their own participation, but also influenced the way in which their evidence was received. As the different stakeholders from *Saying Power* verified, marginalised young people

had innovative and effective ways of working with their peers; the challenge was whether policy makers and service providers valued what they were doing, listened to their evidence and were able to work with them as colleagues. In considering who the children and young people were, findings from *Saying Power* also show that children cannot be identified only in terms of gender and age, but also by their level of interest in the evaluation, how politically aware they are and how engaged they want to be at different levels of decision-making. This interest and capacity of children and young people was also shown to change throughout the process and this might be referred to as cultivating agency and developing identity, as was the case for the award holders in *Saying Power*, or in child journalism in Nepal. Other 'issues of difference' (Welbourn 1991), such as ethnicity, caste and race, have varying importance in different contexts and therefore need to be considered, as well as understanding their 'intersectionality' (Banda and Chinkin 2004) or crossover of these different forms of inequality and discrimination.

More traditionally accepted issues, such as the age of children, make a difference to the processes of participation and cannot be disregarded due to the criticism of the more universal stages of child development imposed by some development psychologists (see Section 2.5). There should, however, be recognition that in contrasting cultural contexts there may be very different competencies and expectations of children and young at different ages, and that local attitudes and influences regarding girls and boys, young men and women at different ages need to be taken into account. Taking age-appropriateness of methods into consideration in evaluation processes was raised as an issue by service providers and managers in Croydon; for example, service providers and managers perceived collaboration with, or involvement of, children of primary or secondary age differently, especially amongst those involved with the formal education system. This to a certain extent was linked by services working in schools to the children's competence at different tasks which may vary in different contexts within and across cultures and settings. A consideration was therefore how perceptions about age varied between and within cultures, for example in attitudes to children's roles in the household and society with regard to work and school in Nepal as opposed to in the UK. This is taken into account in more recent cultural-ecological models of child development (Tudge 2008). Attitudes towards children and their capabilities can also change considerably during a participatory process. This type of transformational change and evolving capacity is referred to by Lansdown, (2005): exercising

participatory rights can increase capacity to participate, rather than only following fixed stages of childhood growth. This may also be applicable for changing attitudes towards people experiencing other issues of difference, such as gender or ethnicity.

Children's sense of identity and belonging in different preventative services was raised in Croydon, showing the importance of how issues of age, gender and ethnicity are seen by children themselves and how they may influence their participation, rather than only being added as monitoring statistics for funding requirements. The 'development of identity' has been raised in literature by Hart, (1997), drawing on the work of Daiute. Having highlighted the importance of environmental and social context, Hart suggests that issues of 'personal identity and self-concept' (p. 28) may be western concepts and therefore thinking of developing identities as a social process allows us to think across cultures:

*An understanding of the social world and understanding of oneself are constructed in a reciprocal manner, influencing and constraining each other.*  
*(Hart 1997, p. 28)*

Hart goes on to discuss the identity development in the two different periods of middle childhood and adolescence which are particularly relevant to community development. He indicates that children around 8-11 years need to participate in different ways to adolescents; this was confirmed in Croydon where service providers described how they needed to involve primary and secondary school aged children differently in terms of their participation.

In the view of one of the managers in Croydon, children who are involved in preventative services (as opposed to children already identified as 'at risk') do not necessarily see themselves as 'belonging' to a particular group, and this can affect the process of working with them. In some cases it was felt that children were allocated to such groups in order to fit with the demands of funding streams that distributed money, for example, projects and services for children from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups or children with disability. This seemed acceptable to some services specifically targeting children with disabilities, but not for others; for example, in a local area-based out of school service they had debated how identification of children by ethnicity could be divisive, as children do not necessarily see each other in those terms. Differentiating children in this way was referred to by staff as being more about satisfying funding

requirements than actually catering for different children's needs. Through further discussion in the process of the evaluation, it was evident that the debate needs to be part of a planning process in how to work with different children and how they and others in different cultural settings see their own identity and differences to others.

In Nepal, researchers suggested that the gender and caste/ethnicity of children made a difference to how they become involved in decision-making and what was expected of them in terms of their roles in the household. This also had a bearing on whether they were listened to in the evaluation process and whether their evidence would be taken seriously. Gaining an understanding of these issues could help to understand the kinds of barriers to children's participation that existed in different contexts. In Nepal, the 'Magar' girls (now women) in one of the villages commented on how the researchers had mainly used Nepalese, which had been difficult for them to understand and that only one researcher had been fluent in 'Magar'. This may also be linked to the structural issues relating to ethnicity and caste in the Nepalese context.

This consideration of difference amongst children and developing identity raises issues in the process about the positionality of the researchers. Being English rather than Nepalese was my main concern, but the inquiry also highlighted differences in castes/ethnicity, settings (urban/rural), gender and the practical issue of language. Life experience, commitment and capacity or previous experience in facilitating participatory processes were also issues raised by interviewees that contribute to the ways in which researchers can relate to the participants in the different settings.

There were different suggestions about how to balance the internal and external elements of evaluation; one of which was that an external evaluator can be seen as having a fresh perspective and being objective and therefore their positionality, whilst being acknowledged and discussed, is not necessarily limiting in the process. Ensuring that children feel comfortable to express themselves and have the right to opt out within the ethical framework of the evaluation was, however, raised as important across all cases.

### ***Contextual and Structural Issues: External Driving Forces***

External driving forces and how they facilitate or block children and young people's participation were further understood and analysed in the research. Mapping the political and policy context with regard to child rights and children's participation

nationally was one aspect, including how national policy translates to local policy and how this is understood and applied by different stakeholders.<sup>40</sup> In the cases revisited there were frameworks and policies that have helped to encourage children and young people's participation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is universally seen as a framework for child rights, but has varying degrees of recognition as a serious basis for policy. There are variations in how it is interpreted and applied in real world situations, depending on national and local political and policy settings as well as the institutional context in which the evaluation is funded, commissioned and carried out. In Nepal, the changing political economy included: the Maoist insurgency; the varying and changing perceptions of 'child rights' and 'rights-based approaches' to development; and generation and age as part of the politics of inclusion in Nepal. The political/policy context was also highlighted in *Saying Power*, in that the UK political climate at the time of the evaluation was identified as being a key to how participatory processes with young people were supported and how young people's changing roles and their evidence were accepted by different stakeholders. In Croydon, the UK Government Policy that emerged during the evaluation, *Every Child Matters (ECM)*, was thought to be useful in decision-making processes, alongside the local policy framework used to promote preventative services.

The cultural context was specially highlighted by the case in Nepal, although there are many more subtle elements of contextual and structural issues that are less stark than the contrast between a Nepalese village and the urban streets of Croydon: how girls and boys of different age and ethnicity are treated within the community and whether there are spaces in the broader context of society for their perspectives to be heard. Dominant cultural practices can often tend to de-prioritise children's roles in decision-making in households and in society more broadly, even where the policy context is advocating more formal spaces for children's participation. This issue therefore had to be explored with sensitivity and acknowledgement that children participating in processes of service delivery, advocacy strategies and indeed evaluation can lead to changed attitudes and changed cultural practices. There were occasions where conflicts of interest and entrenched perceptions about children and young people prevailed, for example in one of the villages in Nepal where there seemed to no change from the

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<sup>40</sup> For this analysis of institutional settings and processes see later in this section in *Internal Processes*

evaluation as a result of children's perspectives (see analysis of different dimensions of power in Section 7.3.4).

The physical setting also influenced how the process of evaluation is planned and implemented, although it was not explored in great depth in this thesis apart from where the issue was raised in Nepal, suggesting that time and resources for accessing more remote locations need to be taken into account.<sup>41</sup>

The structural and contextual setting of the evaluation was also shown to change, which implies that the 'Change-scape' may need to be revisited at stages in the course of the evaluation process. Examples from the critical inquiry include the policy framework of 'Every Child Matters', introduced by the UK Government in England during the evaluation, and the escalation of violence in the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Transformational change may also be a result of the evaluation process and the changing power dynamics, such as the attitudes of adults towards children which changed through child journalism in one of the villages in Nepal; this type of change might also need to be monitored and taken into account as an outcome.

In all the case studies, the context and setting made a significant difference to how the rights-based evaluations were carried out, how children's participation in evaluation was valued, and how children and young people's evidence had influenced different stakeholders and strategic decision-making processes. An overarching message that came from all the three cases is summed up by one of the managers from Croydon:

*Process is defined by circumstance. (Manager, Croydon)*

### ***Political and Policy Climate***

The political/ policy context was recognised as important by participants in all three of the case studies as both guiding process and being a key condition for how evidence from different stakeholders was viewed.

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<sup>41</sup> The cultural and physical context, however, were more specifically discussed by participants in Nepal in the critical inquiry.

In Nepal, the key issues arising from discussions about context were related to the changing political economy heavily influenced by the Maoist insurgency over the past decade. Crisis in the form of war can be overwhelming compared to other conditions of change and, although the participatory processes can continue and may still be effective, the (changed) context has to be recognised and the capacity of the organisations involved taken into account. In the face of armed conflict, organisations, especially those that are small and community based, may be overwhelmed and unable to respond to evidence arising from evaluation, or have limited capacity to facilitate such a process.

In addition to revisiting Nepal to understand how the evaluation was viewed and responded to, more continuous and sustained research and development work was needed to understand more fully how situations of conflict affect different children and the contexts in which they are living. How conflict has affected different people in communities may in turn depend on their vulnerability and resilience. The ‘exposure’ that different individuals have to conflict directly and indirectly, for example to other places and people through migration and relocation due to the troubles, was also raised by one of the researchers who had been working with displaced peoples throughout the conflict in Nepal.

Aspects of the changing political economy in Nepal raised by staff, researchers and managers included: the situation of conflict (discussed above); the varying and changing perceptions of ‘child rights’ and ‘rights-based approaches’ to development and the implications on the ground; and whether generation and age have been part of the politics of inclusion in Nepal.

Rights-based approaches to development were interpreted in a range of ways a decade ago, and in some organisations this meant a complete swing from service delivery to advocacy-based strategies. More recently, however, there are within the same organisations, debates about more rights-based delivery of services alongside social mobilisation and addressing the capacity of governments to deliver. This type of discussion has only been possible within the context of the newly constituted Government in Nepal. Previously it was difficult for the researchers to even talk about ‘rights’ in the remote rural areas of Nepal; now the language of rights has developed,

and the word ‘adhikar’ that has been used for many years in India is now commonly used throughout Nepal.

It still seems to be the case, however, that child rights are seen as separate from broader development programmes and that issues of age and gender are not seen as integral to the politics of identity in Nepal, or to the policies of inclusion of donors and aid organisations more generally (see below and as discussed in Section 2.2 in Chapter 2). One of the managers interviewed (Paudyal) identified three elements necessary to include in a rights-based approach:

- Delivery of services;
- Mobilisation of people; and
- Changing the rules of the game.

The ‘rules of the game’ here are taken to mean the power differentials in international development that need to be addressed. Lukes’ (2005, p. 21) discussion of a two dimensional view of power leads to a ‘radical three dimensional view’ (see Section 7.4). In this two dimensional view he describes the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1974, p. 43) where they refer to a ‘set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures (‘rules of the game’) that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others.’ The ‘rules of the game’ and organisational culture of development agencies are also referred to by White and Choudhury (2010), and by Cornwall (2004) in discussing an example (Jones and SPEECH 2001) where using PRA helped to change the ‘rules of the game’, meaning the way in which women had been able to assert themselves in various spaces for participation in South India (see Section below on Internal Processes including institutional settings).

In order to turn the rhetoric of rights into practice, it has been suggested by Williams (2004) that those with decision-making power will need to see children’s participation as integral to the mainstream development agenda. Children’s participation in addressing wellbeing has, however, often been seen as an ‘add-on’ with low status in broader poverty reduction strategies (Marcus *et al.* 2002), and Bartlett (2001, 2005) has referred to children’s needs often being ignored or sidelined as if they were a ‘special interest group’ in broader programmes of development assistance; a point also discussed by researchers and managers in Nepal.

In *Saying Power*, award holders interviewed who were based in Wales discussed how positive and receptive the policy environment was to their views, especially with the formation of the Welsh Assembly encouraging participation that included listening to the input of children and young people. In a UK context, conditions across the four nations may vary: for example, many of the participants in the critical inquiry felt that earlier progress in terms of children and young people's participation had been made in Wales than in England.<sup>42</sup> It can be difficult to make generalisations about how policies are implemented, and this needs to be considered in different settings, depending on the scope of the evaluation. The policy environment would then in turn affect the perceptions and practice of those stakeholders involved in different institutions that were involved in the scheme (see sub-section 7.3.3 below).

In the English context more recently, New Labour policies have given more credence to participation of service users, including children. The Children's Fund nationally advocated local evaluation with service-user participation from the outset, although these stipulations changed during the course of the 5-year evaluation. In Croydon, the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework was instituted as part of the partnership working in Children's Services during the period of the evaluation, and was thought to provide a framework for children's services and their evaluation in Croydon.

### ***Cultural and Physical Context***

The 'cultural' context of change was discussed more by participants in the critical inquiry in Nepal than in the other cases. Discussion about cultural change was sparked off by my observation that the women interviewed as former members of the child club in one of the villages seemed to be participating less than they had when they were younger. Also in discussing the political crisis and development initiatives, such as building roads and how these had led to huge changes for people in the hill areas of Nepal, cultural change was identified as key including the 'exposure' that different people, including children, had to a range of places and people. Cultural change was thus raised in Nepal by the participants in the critical inquiry, as there have been many local and national changes that have influenced the way in which people in villages live their lives, including how children interact with adults and are regarded in society. The

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<sup>42</sup> Managers in Save the Children suggested that this case study research would be carried out for England and Wales, not Scotland and Northern Ireland due to capacity and key players who were available for interview.

case in Nepal was conducted last, and I had not discussed cultural change in detail in the other two cases. It is therefore not clear whether this is generalisable across cases, although a couple of points discussed below from the two UK case studies suggest that it may be, and I have also written about the links between participation and autonomous organisation with changing attitudes towards children in broader society in a UK context (Johnson 2009).

In Nepal, the culture in communities was described as rapidly changing due to the influence of the new Government; in addition to this, when there are innovations in rural areas, such as roads and electricity, the pace of change increases. The issue of ‘exposure’ was deemed important to the researchers in Nawalparasi, as children and adults in communities come into contact with different people from different places and are therefore exposed to different ideas and attitudes. This was also discussed by researchers as increasing for some people, including children, in times of crisis due to migration. Attitudes towards children, especially in some of the more remote villages, were thought by the researchers to be changing more slowly due to embedded cultural practices at a household level (cultural influence and how it interacts with individuals and process are discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5 and in section 7.3.2 on cultural-ecological theory, Tudge 2008). Despite this, the child clubs, initially supported by international and local NGOs and now supported by the new Government, have sometimes created a space for change and in some communities adults have listened to children’s suggestions for change and have continued to involve children in some areas of decision-making in the village. The example of the child-led journalism project in one of the villages was given by former members of the child club and researchers as having led to changes in cleanliness in the village, so that in addition to HICODEF making the taps in the villages more accessible to children in response to the evaluation, the attitudes of adults in the village were thought to be slowly changing. This reflects the social-ecological perspective (discussed in Section 2.5) where individuals and context are intertwined and can influence each other.

In Croydon, children were generally regarded as service users, although their participation was regarded as important as such.<sup>43</sup> Rather than being embedded in a

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<sup>43</sup> This seems to fit with the growing culture within England where children and young people are often seen as being part of the problem, as opposed to being part of the solution (Johnson, 2009).

rights-based approach to development, this mindset may be one of seeing children more as victims and passive recipients in development, rather than as active participants (as discussed by Ennew 1994, Boyden and Ennew 1997). This is indeed still the mindset of many donors, organisations and individuals in international development as well as in the UK. Despite there being strong advocates for child rights, and projects and campaigns being targeted at children in special circumstances or who are 'at risk' (for example, Ennew 1994, Theis 1996, Nieuwenhuys 1997, Hinton and Baker 1998, Thomas and O'Kane 1999), it is still the case that age and generation are not often incorporated in the broader politics of inclusion. It is often already more vocal children who are brought into positions of influence in more formal settings and allowed to influence decisions, as opposed to children's perspectives more broadly being respected in decision-making and development (see also White and Choudhury 2007).

The relationship and communication between adults and children was also identified as important in all the cases and this supports Mannion's (2010) analysis of children's participation (see Section 7.2.4 and 7.3.4). Whether children's participation in processes can contribute to transformational change, for example in the cultural context, seems to vary depending on a range of other factors only understood through an analysis of the changing power dynamics between stakeholders, including between adults and children. This was highlighted in both Nepal and *Saying Power*, especially the latter, where young people were involved in every level of decision-making in running their own projects and evaluations. In Croydon, the children felt that it was important for external people to come and evaluate their projects so that they could understand how they live and think and how the project affected their lives.

The physical context, which was considered briefly in terms of whether the cases were rural or urban, was not specifically asked about in questions in the critical inquiry and was only raised in Nepal when discussing the methodology. Due to the time taken to walk into remote villages, it took time to build up trust and for the fieldworkers to commit enough time to being in the remote villages for the impact assessment. The physical context in which the evaluation and the revisits take place is also considered important in terms of going out to where people are rather than expecting them to come to meetings. This confirms White and Choudhury's (2007 and 2010) view that development workers should get out of their offices and understand children's lives in

the contexts in which they are living. Creating physical spaces in which to evaluate is also relevant, such as having residential evaluation and training sessions in Saying Power.

This issue of context has also been raised within debates in childhood studies, for example by Qvortrup (1998) and Alanen (1995), (both cited in Thomas 2000), who suggest that the paradigm shift in reconstructing childhood that emphasised children's agency (James and Prout 1997) be placed in the context of an analysis of macro research and theory. Hart (2008) has also suggested that in the proliferation of micro-studies examining children's 'lifeworlds' there is a lack of consideration of the conditions that structure children's experiences and the dynamics of international development. The past emphasis on the 'voices of children', as opposed to addressing the underlying structural and contextual issues of change, is also discussed with reference to the politics of decision-making in development and 'the resources that children have to draw on in expressing their agency' (White and Choudhury 2010, p. 44), as well as the space for participation within a given context (Mannion 2010, also see Section 7.4 on power). A contextualist paradigm is also discussed in child development (Section 2.5 in Chapter 2) and can be related to how children as individuals, interact with their context and has been applied to children's everyday participation in activities (Tudge 2008).

### ***Contextual and Structural Issues: Internal Processes***

In the institutional setting, the commitment to change, existing capacity and spaces for the participation of children and young people were all considered as a starting point for the processes to build commitment, capacity, communication and collaboration within and between different stakeholders. The expectations of stakeholders from different institutional settings seemed to influence their views on how so called 'soft' and 'hard' evidence in evaluations is to be taken into account in planning evaluation strategies and methods. The non-governmental or voluntary sector seemed more immediately open and supportive of qualitative processes that may lead to transformational change. For example, in Nepal, HICODEF and ActionAid were well versed in participatory methodology with support given to this from some donors, such as DFID. At the time of the evaluation in Saying Power, Save the Children was also thought of as very innovative and open to such participatory processes, although even at the time, the requirement from funders for more traditional quantitative evaluation

was growing in the UK. In Croydon, services that worked directly with children varied in their response to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the evaluation depending on their capacity, although the fact that the evaluation was commissioned from within the voluntary sector was suggested as the reason why such a qualitative approach was supported alongside the central government requirement for service-user involvement. Some of the services from the statutory sector, however, also grew to value the qualitative visual and participatory approach taken in the evaluation for its ability to directly feed back into service delivery, with the quantitative data giving them ‘something to report to funders’.

Evidence of outcomes for children delivered by projects and services was sometimes required by decision-makers and donors in order to justify further funding, and this was seen by some as dictating evaluation methodology. The capacity at different levels of governance for facilitating and interpreting participatory processes, and understanding how projects and services impact on the wellbeing of children and their families, were also suggested as limiting factors. Whilst evidence from participatory processes was not also regarded as important to managers and decision-makers in comparison to more formal statistics collected by external evaluators, staff working directly with children in services quickly recognised the transformational changes that can result from children and young people’s participation, using their perspectives in ongoing evaluation to shape and redirect their services. This initial capacity could then change through processes of evaluation by planning a capacity building programme (see sub section in 7.3.3 on change mechanisms).

An important aspect of the ‘Change-scape’, and a key factor in determining what role different stakeholders may play in the evaluation as collaborators, is the commitment in organisations to change. This was sometimes informed by a better understanding of the time and resources available for the participation of different potential collaborators both during the evaluation and in follow-up, and the willingness of different stakeholders, including children, to participate in different aspects of the evaluation. Building or ‘growing’ commitment in processes linked to the mechanisms of the ‘Change-scape’ from having champions for children and young people’s participation, to creating more spaces for participation in the process (discussed in section below). There were also examples of experiences in previous participatory processes or in people’s lives that shaped individuals’ attitudes towards children’s participation,

influencing the ways that decision-makers and service providers expected to communicate and how they understood knowledge. This was also the case for some of the young people, for example, in *Saying Power* as their interest in the evaluation grew over the course of the process.

The institutional context was identified in the reflective stage of the research as being potentially important, with the case in Nepal and *Saying Power* being situated in the voluntary sector and the case in Croydon having both voluntary and statutory sector influences in terms of the Partnership Board and the different funded services. At the time of the evaluation in Nepal and for *Saying Power*, there was an atmosphere of innovation and acceptance of evidence generated through participatory visual methods. International non-governmental organisations were especially open to the visual participatory appraisal (PA) visual methods that had largely been developed overseas (as discussed in Chapter 2).

With regard to the institutional setting, addressing rights-based approaches in the NGO sector meant that Nepal and *Saying Power* were comparable: they both had organisational settings familiar with more participatory work and allowed the evaluators to treat children as active participants in process. The Croydon evaluation, however, was conducted in a setting in which children's participation was politically prioritised, but children were regarded as service users or beneficiaries, able to shape the immediate service (in which they were largely treated as recipients of services). This fits with Shier's (2010, p. 26-27) analysis of tensions in children's participation. He found that in Nicaragua leading practitioners referred to children as activists, whereas children tended to be seen as service users in the UK, although with some intention to move towards 'children's autonomous and pro-active engagement'. More recently NGOs (drawing on interviews in Nepal and *Saying Power*) have indicated that this space for participatory processes in the non-governmental sector is reducing, so that implementing meaningful participatory processes with children has to be balanced with some of the rigid demands of donors/ funders that often dictate the parameters of the process.

Cornwall (2000) raises the importance of institutional change, including attitudes and behaviour in development agencies to make possible transformative participatory processes; this was advocated as part of a rights-based approach by one of the

managers in Nepal. The necessity of changing organisational culture is also raised by White and Choudhury (2010) who suggest that the existing power relations need to be challenged and, in order to support change in response to children's perspectives, there would need to be corresponding political commitment and resource reallocation. This also relates to power and Lukes' (1974) discussions of systems of values, beliefs and procedures that remain in place through vested interests and those in elite positions, part of which may be seen as the dominance of donors' perspectives in development assistance.

### ***Expectations around Evidence***

The critical inquiry found a requirement from funders for quantitative evidence, especially from within Government or statutory sectors. It only seemed to be with more experience through the process that the value of evidence from more participatory processes, producing mainly qualitative data, grew. Evidence of transformational change in such processes could be presented alongside other outcomes to donors/funders: many of those managers interviewed from voluntary and statutory sectors did highlight the value of qualitative visual and 'experiential' evidence, alongside the quantitative data that they felt they needed for decision-making. The expectations of different stakeholders in terms of the kind of evidence required needs to be made clear alongside discussions on the time and resource implications of running more participatory processes and the support requirements for children's participation. Involvement and collaboration in processes can also help key payers in organisations to become more aware of what can be gained by engaging with marginalised children and young people alongside other stakeholders: for example to achieve a fuller picture of outcomes and impact and therefore more meaningful and sustainable change. This is transformation in itself, where capacity building can lead to changed institutional and political environments.

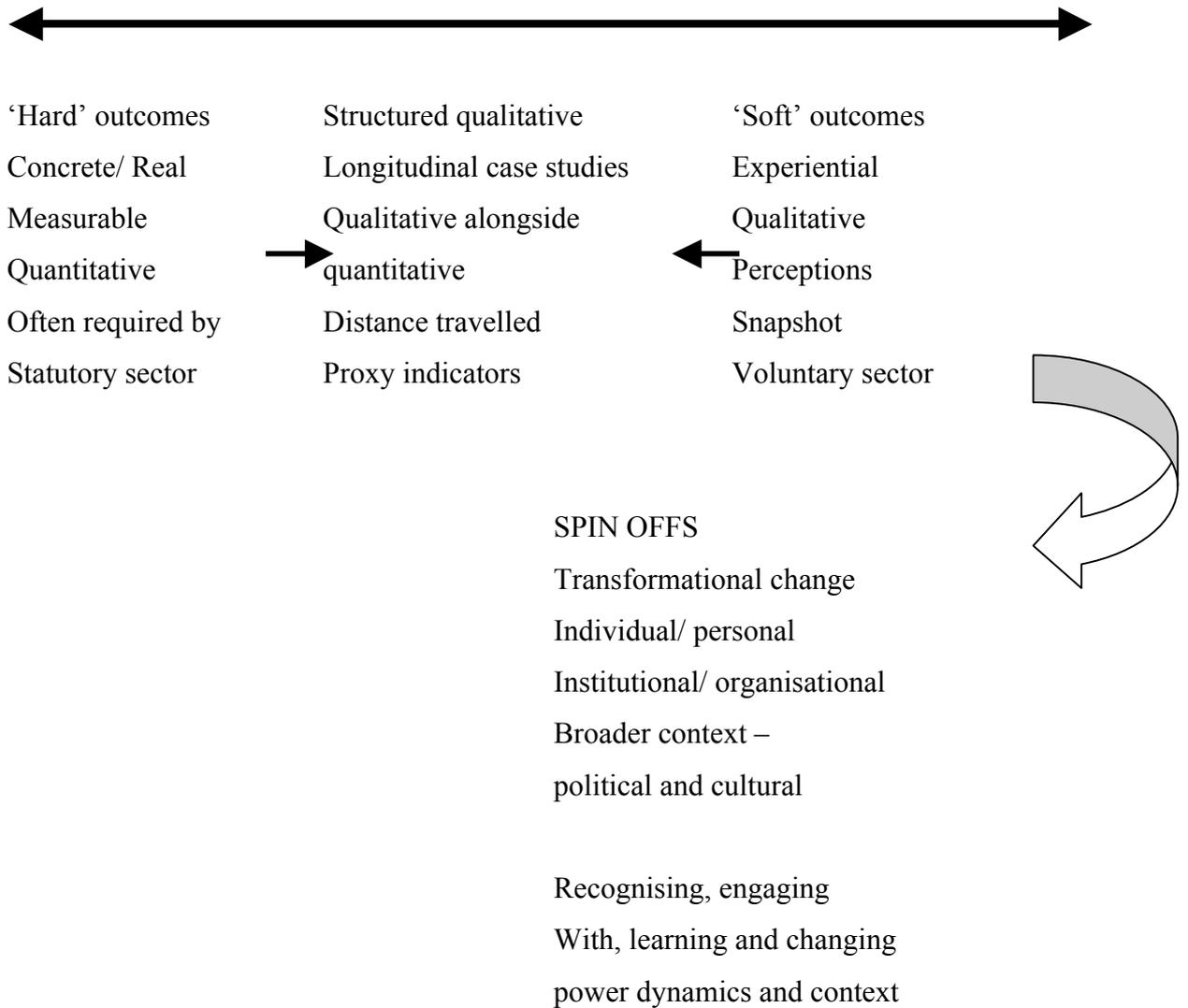
In the critical inquiry participants across the cases discussed whether impact had been shown in the evaluation and this brought out their views on the different types of evidence on outcomes and impact. There were a range of different views expressed across the cases about the type of evidence that is acceptable from evaluation, and a range of terminology associated with qualitative and quantitative approaches. These have been used to construct a spectrum (Figure 4 on p. 239) that helps to illustrate the nature of the debate about evidence.

The figure shows the different terms used to express (often strong) perceptions about different ways of measuring outcomes for children and young people in evaluation. These vary depending on whether the institutional setting is voluntary/ NGO or statutory, although even in the voluntary/ NGO sector there are increasing pressures to respond to donor or funder demands in terms of what type of data or evidence is acceptable in order to report on effectiveness of services or projects and to receive further funding.

On one side of the spectrum are the so called 'soft' outcomes that tend to be referred to in the context of using PA visuals in evaluation, and on the other side are the so called 'hard' outcomes that refer to showing how outcomes have been achieved in a more measurable and quantitative way. In fact, the outcomes for children's lives may be the same, but the terms refer to way in which these are measured in evaluations, and this seemed to transfer to how far the managers and decision-makers feel that they can rely on the type of evidence produced using the different methods. This perception of the way in which outcomes are measured was reconfirmed across all the cases.

The middle of the spectrum signifies how some of the 'softer' outcomes could be taken more seriously (that is, regarded as 'harder') as suggested by participants in the critical inquiry in the different case studies. Suggestions include using longitudinal case studies, employing quantitative measures alongside qualitative, for example utilising quantitative measures of output to accompany qualitative measures of outcome/impact (as was carried out in the Croydon). Other suggestions were the use of more structured ways to show the qualitative and 'distance travelled', for example, by including quantitative measures, such as scoring, coding and star systems within qualitative visual methods (used in the evaluations in Saying Power and Croydon), and the use of proxy indicators (although this was only mentioned once and was not extensively explored). In Saying Power, there was discussion about how there could also have been more follow-up with the award holders to further establish impact in order to justify this resource-intensive way of working with young people.

**Figure 4: A Spectrum of outcome measures identified by case study participants**



The transformational changes that are often seen as unintended outcomes/impacts of evaluation or wider participatory processes are not always recognised and are therefore often regarded as ‘spin-offs’ to a participatory processes. Transformational change was specifically linked to the visual participatory methods in *Saying Power*, and to a certain extent in the other two cases. In Croydon, smaller voluntary agencies attributed transformational change also to learning how to monitor rigorously and use the statistics to have more dialogue with local decision-makers and funders. Individual/personal and organisational changes can have a significant and lasting impact, and the process can also change the very context or setting in which the evaluation is taking place. These transformations could therefore be evidenced more

consistently, also recognising the context and the changing power dynamics in which the evaluation is being conducted and the mechanisms by which the transformations occur.

There has been a growing demand for new approaches, but amongst social change groups working on rights-based initiatives there is a move to look at experiences of social change over time, and to recognise that approaches have to be flexible to the context and that there should be transparency in the process of assessment:

*In practice, creating an appropriate assessment and learning process requires mixing and matching and adapting from a combination of frameworks, concepts and methods – to ensure that they address information and reflection needs, and match existing capacities.*

*(Guijt 2007, p. 5)*

In Nepal and Saying Power, whilst the value of using participatory qualitative methods in the evaluation was thought to be innovative and appropriate at the time, especially in a non-governmental context, many of the participants interviewed would in retrospect have preferred to have also had quantitative data to satisfy fundraisers. This resonates with recent debates about the value of mixed methods generally (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007), in action research (Reason and Bradbury 2006), in participatory approaches generally and in participatory monitoring and evaluation (Chambers 2007), in understanding childhood wellbeing (Jones and Sumner 2009), and in evaluation for social change (Guijt, 2007). In Croydon, where qualitative visuals were used alongside a quantitative monitoring system, decision-makers felt that the balance had been needed in the funding decisions made within the Croydon Children's Fund. In both Saying Power and Croydon a coding system was used with the visual methods in order to trace perspectives by age, gender and ethnicity; this was also helpful in giving decision-makers the depth and breadth of information that they needed when the data was analysed (Johnson and Nurick 2003).

If development programmes and services are to incorporate children's views into decision-making processes, rather than target children without considering their perspectives, there needs to be careful consideration of the different aspects of participatory process from the beginning, such as the impact of the process on children and young people. According to managers in Nepal, this would lead to more

accountability downwards (as discussed by Guijt 2007 and 2008), that is accountability to the children that one is trying to help, and that can lead to social mobilisation and action.

In his analysis of the ‘quiet revolution of participation and numbers’ Chambers (2007) discusses how, in a process where local people identify and monitor their own indicators in participatory monitoring and evaluation, rarely do they use numbers to monitor over time, but he argues that use of such statistics can actually lead to empowerment and policy influence. This was discussed by service providers in Croydon who talked about their improved communication with decision-makers using monitoring statistics and their shaping of services using the more qualitative evidence. Although Chambers identifies the ‘increasingly widespread use of numbers’ in participatory monitoring and evaluation in areas such as community-led sanitation, he also highlights the ‘three way tensions that can arise between the desire of agencies for numbers, the objectives of empowerment and the time of facilitating staff’ (Chambers 2007, p. 24). He also raises the balance that needs to be struck between ‘people gaining confidence and learning on one hand, and standardisation and making a difference with higher level decision-makers in the other’.

Flexibility thus needs to be given to staff to alleviate these tensions considering their other duties in programming, in order that they also have the time and resources to respond to the views of the children. There were suggestions across the case studies that evaluation processes have to be continually reviewed and the benefits (and any risks) of carrying out the evaluation shown to participants. In *Saying Power*, one of the award holders said that evaluation should be action-orientated so that participants can gain confidence when they see what has happened as a result of their work; otherwise *‘it all seems like a waste of time’*. Hart and colleagues (2003) discuss allowing the flexibility to generate local indicators, whilst acknowledging the pressure to find indicators that can be applied systematically and consistently across programmes and countries, and they question whether equal weight is given to these different forms of evidence.

There were many situations in all three cases where the programmes were dealing with marginalised or excluded children and young people and the participatory process was used to better understand their lives. This means that flexibility should be allowed for

in a process to deal with the different forms of crisis that occur (personal, institutional and political). If aspects of the process are monitored then individuals can be offered support or be referred to another service or project that may be able to assist them, or changes needed in institutional dynamics can be highlighted, as was the case in reviewing the dynamics between award holders, mentors and host agencies in *Saying Power*.

In considering methodology and how people perceive and accept different measures of outcome and impact, including evidence from children and young people it is, however, also vital to consider the different conditions and the linkages between them. These conditions might be thought of as the barriers and facilitators to change that vary from case to case. The capacity building and the different degrees of communication and collaboration, for example, that take place in the process make a difference to whether stakeholders are able to take on board and respond to children's evidence on impact and outcomes.

*You can't get 'hard' outcomes immediately and what the methods were able to capture showed how important the context and communication was to the successful implementation of the process.*

*(Mentor, Saying Power)*

It therefore seems that the use of visuals in the evaluations needs to be considered in the context of understanding power dynamics and linkages between issues affecting children's wellbeing, as well as acknowledging that a mixed methods approach may need to be taken to provide evidence in evaluation that satisfies a range of stakeholders (this is discussed further in the change mechanisms below).

### ***Change Mechanisms: Connecting Children with Stakeholders and Context***

How evaluation methodology is planned, it is suggested, should take into account of the initial mapping of context and an understanding of the children that are to be involved in the evaluation. This could assist in achieving more meaningful participation with children and influencing the conditions for change so that evaluation lead to positive outcomes for children through their perspectives being valued. Children and young people's evidence acted as one form of change mechanism that connected children and young people to other stakeholders and their context. Making this

evidence more valued in decision-making processes than depended on change mechanisms of building capacity, confidence, communication and collaboration.

*Change Mechanisms: Children and Young People's Evidence*

Children and young people's evidence was one way of connecting different stakeholders with the reality of the lives of children: thus gaining more of an understanding of their situations and settings and how different services and projects and programmes can affect children and young people's lives. Different types of evidence in the cases revisited had been both required and appreciated in different ways by different stakeholders, depending on the context and institutional setting in which the evaluation was taking place. This in turn informed the evaluation methodology and change mechanisms employed to improve the process of achieving positive outcomes for children and transformational change at different levels.

This change mechanism builds on the learning from the critical inquiry and comparisons across the cases on the flexibility, review and use of mixed methods and the use of visual participatory methods with children explored for each case. Finding a balance of internal and external evaluation and understanding the mix of methods that may satisfy the requirements of different stakeholders in the process led to the following key points discussed in the interviews. Adequate space, time and resources were raised as necessary considerations in planning in order to allow for the flexibility needed to respond to children's agendas. Changes in context and for stakeholders had often been positive and reinforced commitment of stakeholders and transformational change (see sub section on transformational change above). Where processes were monitored, negative outcomes could be rectified, for example, when mentors were able to respond to young people feeling the strain of running their own peer projects and evaluations.

The type of evidence, qualitative and/or quantitative, was received with varying enthusiasm by stakeholders. The involvement of different stakeholders with children in the evaluation was found to be key to building trust and respect for their perspectives, thus enabling decision-makers at different levels (from adults in households and communities to service providers and funders) to learn to understand and accept different types of information from children. This resonates with Percy-Smith (2006) which addresses creating opportunities for dialogue between children and adults in

processes, and moving towards social learning as a means of promoting in the participation of children and young people in community processes. Mannion (2010) refers to encouraging intergenerational performance. It was suggested by service providers and managers across the cases that the acceptability of so called experiential or 'softer' outcomes using qualitative data could be raised in the following ways: if qualitative data is more structured (e.g. applied across the programme and with different stakeholders); or given a quantitative element, for example through scoring or star systems (as in *Saying Power* and *Croydon*); accompanied by quantitative monitoring data (as in *Croydon*); or structured over time into longitudinal case studies.

There was evidence offered in the critical inquiry on transformational change, attributed by some interviewees to the use of visual participatory evaluation. Visual methods were widely accepted as being effective in working with marginalised young people across case evaluations as they not only allowed analysis of complex issues and linkages, but also broke through more traditional boundaries in communication, thus allowing young people to say what they wanted and to present their views to adult and decision-makers.

Visual methods were appreciated across the cases, by children and young people, and by those service providers and decision-makers who had more direct contact with children. Among service delivery staff, researchers and mentors, and some of the managers who were more involved on the ground and so had more direct contact with children and young people, visuals were highlighted as important to the process and effective in finding a more equitable way of interacting, especially with some of the children and young people who were not as familiar or comfortable with traditional and formal styles of learning and communicating. They also suggested that visuals could help to understand issues of complexity and linkages in the different dimensions of children's lives. This can be extended to considering visuals as being useful in explaining some of the relational and subjective domains that are included in the concept of wellbeing (White and Pettit 2004).

Children and young people interviewed found the visuals fun, and I noticed how much easier it had been for the children in Nepal to interact using the visuals in the previous evaluation research, than it was in interviews employed for the critical inquiry with the

young women and men. The children in Croydon liked the visuals because they showed exactly what they had drawn or written:

*I think they are good to use 'cause people can pick them up and we can show them what we wanna say. (Boy, aged 11, Croydon)*

At the level of services and those who interact with children and young people directly, many participants in the critical inquiry felt that visualisation helps them to understand complex issues and develop their thinking on issues carrying out analysis with the different stakeholders, including with children and young people.

*Seeing is believing ... visuals help to show what the real thinking is ... it is a reflection of thought in maps and pictures. (Researcher, Nepal)*

In Saying Power, visuals used in the evaluation allowed everyone to have their say, which fitted the inclusive style and approach of the whole scheme. Participants could still make their contributions and the evaluators could make information given by individuals anonymous.

*.....there is immediate analysis built into many of the visuals.....they can be simple to use, with complexity built into the discussion. (Mentor, Saying Power)*

Again at the service level in Croydon, staff had found visuals effective for understanding the connections between issues and also for team building. Having not been convinced of the value of using qualitative visual methods at the outset of the evaluation, the YISP manager gradually realised that the visuals could be useful in identifying trends and understanding the reasons why children and young people may offend in the first place. She suggested that they provided a way of working with children and their families that was not only informative but also fun. She now describes visuals as 'different, dynamic and interactive'. One of her lasting memories was of seeing the children at an evaluative session doing a 'body map' and really enjoying it. The facilitation and discussion then provide the crucial translation that adds detail to what they are representing in the visual.

Among managers, there were mixed views about visuals, especially in a UK context where the use of PA visual methods is not as prevalent as in developing country contexts. In the UK, it seemed to make a difference whether managers had previous

knowledge of the use of participatory visuals and/or direct contact with the children and young people who were working on the evaluation. A key drawback of the use of visuals identified by young people and staff/ researchers/ mentors in both the UK and in Nepal was that some decision-makers tend not to take the evidence provided by visuals seriously, especially if there are contradictions in what different data are telling them. In Nepal researchers also recalled how, when the visuals were presented at District level, they were received with varying enthusiasm: some found it hard to accept their reliability because of their qualitative nature, but also because they were created by children. Young people in Wales questioned whether the visuals produced by young people may be seen as ticking ‘the participation boxes’ whilst the decision-makers really needed quantitative data to inform them on their strategic decisions on funding and management.

Managers, especially in Croydon, and particularly those managers who may not have had close contact at the field level, were indifferent to the method of collection of qualitative data as long as it gave them the information they needed alongside quantitative data. Some did seem aware of the visuals having been effective with some of the services working with children and young people and had recognised their use in providing interesting pictures and graphics in reports and presentations.

#### *Change Mechanisms: Building Capacity, Confidence, Communication and Collaboration*

Appreciating roles and existing capacities of stakeholders in different institutional settings and contexts could be thought of as a starting point for planning strategies for support, communication, and collaboration. Capacity building across cases was found to transcend the more traditional boundaries and roles in decision-making and evaluation, and helped address existing power dynamics that acted as a barrier to children’s perceptions being valued. The extent to which decision-makers interacted with children and young people in the evaluation process, and their opportunities for dialogue and verification with children, influenced the way in which adults in the process took children’s perspectives more seriously to inform their decision-making and how they experienced their participation. The identity and interest of children and the background and positionality of the evaluators were also highlighted as important to consider.

Communication channels set up in the evaluation were identified in the case study research as vital to how children's participation could be implemented effectively: bringing along the different stakeholders or leaving them behind. Spaces for participation or channels for communication and collaboration valued in the revisits included: networking lunches, workshops or trainings to build capacity and establish mutual areas of agreement and difference in approach and values; residential meetings with young people; focus groups and child clubs out in the communities and areas where services were being delivered; and reference groups, events and showcases with managers and service providers. These might be thought of as 'invited spaces' (after Shier 2010 and Cornwall 2004); and they were highlighted as having encouraged dialogue between stakeholders. This can be complementary to going out to where children and young people are in order to further understand their lives.

Invited spaces can accentuate already marked power relations so it may be necessary to encourage participants to create their own space giving different opportunities for adults and children to participate and discuss (Shier 2010). Shier suggests that popular spaces can be linked to adult invited spaces in order to prepare, empower and support, or even to confront authority and to also convince adults of the validity of different ways of working with children. The opportunity for dialogue and learning in the cases led to evidence from children being more easily understood and thus acted on, for example in the case of child-led journalism in the child club in Nepal. Some spaces in the evaluations revisited seemed to have helped establish more understanding between stakeholders (amongst adults, amongst children and between adults and children) in interpreting the evidence from children on change.

In the cases in Nepal and the UK, capacity of policy makers and service providers was built so that they could understand the participatory evidence produced, thus confronting more traditional ways of learning and thinking. Reference groups in Nepal had been given by managers and researchers as an example of one way to involve people with more decision-making power and less time. In terms of dissemination, showcase events that had involved children and young people were effective, for example, in *Saying Power* they were used to help explain evidence and provide a forum for discussion and dialogue. Accessible reports, for example in *Saying Power* and *Croydon*, were also helpful in sharing lessons from evaluation processes and describing outcomes and impact.

How collaborative an approach ultimately depended on funders, commissioners, evaluators, service staff, guardians of children and the children and young people themselves: their capacity and flexibility to get involved. A period of negotiation around the methodology, considering the contextual and structural issues, was suggested as helpful as part of the evaluation process. Communication between external evaluators and programme/ scheme managers included setting up reporting in different formats with outputs made accessible to different audiences and dissemination strategies as part of the methodology. This helped decision-makers to gain better understanding of children and young people's participation, leading to growing respect for their views as different stakeholders gradually saw the added value of their participation. Planning the logistics of the evaluations was part of addressing power dynamics: the time and resources allocated to children's participation in evaluation often reveals the political nature of evaluation and determines the way in which the process may be conducted and how the evidence may be received and utilised.

Confidence seemed to work on many levels, from the trust and confidence that was built between evaluators and service users or service providers, be they children or adults, to confidence that was built in valuing children and young people's evidence through the collaboration and involvement of different stakeholders throughout the process. In the case studies revisited, a confidence boost was identified when participation of children and young people in evaluation was supported by a 'champion for children'. Champions were sometimes children who give other children confidence to participate and express their views for example, the child who later became a journalist in Nepal. They could also be adults in key decision-making roles who provide the political will and support in terms of time, space and resources for more participatory processes and capacity building, for example, the managers of the Saying Power scheme and the mentors in Saying Power, and the manager and some of the service providers in Croydon.

Issues of space and time were addressed and introduced in a meaningful way by one of the managers interviewed in the critical inquiry:

*In evaluation methodology, we have to appreciate having the space to evaluate and be aware that the power to evaluate often lies with external 'experts', hence children's roles in evaluation have to be seen in this*

*context. Therefore in designing programmes one has to design the space and time to evaluate from the beginning so that it can inform practice throughout.*

*(Manager, Nepal)*

There was general agreement throughout the cases on allowing adequate time and resources for more participatory evaluation across cases, especially in Nepal and Saying Power where the participatory approach to evaluation was so highly prioritised from the outset. At the same time there was recognition that this needs to be balanced with expectations and what can be delivered realistically when working with different partners and stakeholders with often varying requirements for different types of evidence:

*"There could have been different ways to look at impact, but there does need to be a reality check. There is only a certain amount of time and resources and there are such broad expectations from stakeholders. The challenge is managing these expectations whilst trying to deliver and get some sense of whether the programme is making some impact".*

*(Manager, Saying Power)*

### ***Changing Power Dynamics***

It is useful to consider some of the more specific examples of how mechanisms for communicating and collaboration vary depending on the contextual and structural issues; adults in the community in Nepal provide an example. In order to encourage people to take children's views more seriously, researchers talked about having to change power dynamics and the attitudes towards children that were rooted in traditional culture. In this context, child groups were discussed as creating new spaces for discussion and interaction, although they were not suggested as the sole solution to children's participation in community development. Despite the rhetoric of children's participation in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the reality points to political decisions made by people in positions of power in communities and institutions who can influence how children are listened to and their views valued. The household level was recognised as important in understanding the dynamics of power and, if evidence from the children and young people was going to lead to change, then the roles of both children and adults in participating in a relational process where dialogue is encouraged needed to be recognised. The researchers in Nepal wished that they had involved adults to a greater extent throughout the research, so that there would be more

likelihood of lasting change. The subsequent work with the child club in one of the villages, however, communicated the issues arising from children's participation in the evaluation to adult members of the community and they gradually changed the way that they listened to and interacted with children in the village. This had also led to the child club being taken more seriously on an ongoing basis in the decisions made in the village.<sup>44</sup> In the other village revisited there was little change in adult attitudes towards children. (See Johnson forthcoming for further details of this aspect of the Nepal case.)

In Nepal, a workshop was held to establish understanding and ownership between researchers who were external to the area and the HICODEF and ActionAid staff. Confidence grew and a protocol for the research was established before visual methods for impact evaluation were developed in the field with children from child clubs, also working with other children and adults in the village.

*There is a big difference between theoretically accepting a 'rights-based approach' and what this means in reality. When the research started we all did not know where it was going to take us and as it was implemented everyone grew in confidence. ... if this more sensitive type of participatory evaluation could be applied with different stakeholders as well as with children, then it would empower more people, including the adults in the village.*

*(Manager, Nepal)*

In Saying Power, the award holders were project leaders, with support from the mentors and the host agencies. The young people and mentors interviewed identified residential sessions as being important spaces in which evaluation was carried out across the programme. Included in these were: reviewing issues of personal development and support; finding ways to overcome barriers that young people were facing in implementing their projects; and determining how impact analysis would be carried out with a range of stakeholders in the project locations. Key decision-makers were invited to interactive presentations and discussions at the end of these sessions which had been planned by the young people with the external evaluators.

In Croydon, 'children and their families' were referred to as target groups for services, in recognition of the power relationships within households and families. There was an

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<sup>44</sup> Child Clubs were also supported by the coalition Government (2009).

understanding throughout the Children's Fund that improved wellbeing for boys and girls depended on changing adult attitudes and their relationships with children, as well as delivering effective services that are more responsive to children. Networking lunches were held in Croydon as capacity-building sessions on children's participation and monitoring and evaluation for service providers and were also utilised to carry out evaluation across the programme. Board members, however, influenced the direction of the evaluation, prioritising the quantitative information from the third year onwards. In this way at least, the information fed directly into their decision-making processes, despite the perspective of some of the Board members that qualitative evaluation was a lower priority. Transformational changes beyond the services that were interacting directly with the children were not evident in Croydon; this may have been due to the lack of direct interaction of the decision-makers with children. Although the change mechanism of children's evidence was therefore employed, the approach in Croydon could not be described as collaborative with children, although it was effective in collaboration and partnership working at all other levels. Mechanisms for children's participation beyond collecting their evidence as service users would have to be planned throughout the evaluation, although at the level of services the staff did build into their ongoing service delivery a different way of interacting with children. Across the Fund there was a 'Children's Xpress' project planned where young people interacted with children across the Borough and fed their evidence into policy meetings and documents, so this was an attempt at a mechanism that linked children to policy through their evidence.

The balance between internal and external evaluation was discussed in the critical inquiry and is relevant to issues of power and control over processes. Across the cases, there was a general acceptance that there are benefits from both internal and external elements, although there was more emphasis on the need for objectivity in the statutory sector in Croydon and a growing requirement in more recent years for the voluntary sector in all the cases including in Nepal to have more external evaluation with an emphasis on providing 'hard' evidence for funders. The balance, however, was perfectly summed up by one of the managers interviewed:

*....internal evaluation provides the value of self reflection and how this sensitisation to what is happening as a result of your own action can lead to an understanding of how to do things better. The external is like the third eye and sees what you cannot see: it can provide an examination*

*outside your own set of values, although it can't be continuous.*

*(Manager, Nepal)*

Evidence and therefore methods in evaluation were said to be: dictated by donors in Nepal; in retrospect not meeting the requirements of decision-makers and funders in Saying Power; and influenced by funding requirements in Croydon. This chimes with perspectives of Estrella and colleagues (2000) when discussing participatory monitoring and evaluation they related to the development of indicators being determined by funders and external evaluators. An interesting element of discussions in the critical inquiry around internal and external evaluation was how much the children and young people interviewed across the cases valued external evaluation. In Nepal and Croydon, external evaluation was mainly appreciated because the children saw the evaluation as being strongly linked to providing evidence that was needed for continued funding for projects and services that were directly having an impact on their lives. Children in Croydon suggested that adults coming in from outside the project needed a better understanding of their lives in order to see why projects like the Junior Youth Inclusion Project (JYIP) should be supported.

The importance of evaluation in continued funding was also recognised as a consideration that had grown in the minds of young people in Saying Power through the process of evaluation, although at first evaluation had seemed like 'an additional burden'. The young people in Saying Power had also seen external evaluators as taking the pressure off the award holders in terms of their time that could then be freed up to deliver the service that they were managing. As they became more familiar with the evaluation techniques, however, they saw how evaluation could be used to feed directly back into their practice making them more reflective practitioners.

Internal evaluation was thus thought to be time-consuming and at first a waste of time by the young people acting as service providers in Saying Power and by the range of services funded by the Children's Fund in Croydon. However, once participants had seen the value of providing evidence on what they were doing to improve programmes, influence policy and gain further funding, they felt empowered by the process.

The behaviour and attitudes of officials and professionals within organisations were discussed by managers as needing to be addressed so that inequalities were not

reproduced: it is only in this way that interviewees felt that children would be taken seriously to inform the delivery of services and decision-making processes. The importance of changing attitudes and behaviour is raised by many writers including Cornwall (2000) and White and Choudhury (2010), and is seen within ActionAid as being a key pillar of participatory rural appraisal (Kumar, 1996). In order to achieve social mobilisation, managers suggested that research and evaluation processes needed to link with service providers in order to influence policy and address inequitable access to resources. This better communication and collaboration between stakeholders was partly carried out in the research in Nepal by forming a national ‘reference group’<sup>45</sup> for the process which was a space intended, not only to inform decision-makers of results, but also to involve them in the process from the outset. In Croydon the evaluators were allowed to attend the Partnership Board meetings in order to present evidence to feed directly into decision-making processes.

Addressing power raises issues around the political nature of decision-making and how children’s participation in evaluation can or cannot change the power dynamics. Managers from services in Croydon, and mentors in Saying Power, referred to how decisions are often made in an emotive way, and how therefore dismissing children’s evidence in the form of qualitative rather than quantitative evidence may be an excuse to justify decisions already made for political reasons; although they did also say that it seemed harder for decision-makers to ignore rigorous results that were produced through participatory processes with the ownership of different stakeholders.

A manager in the Primary Care Trust identified the following positive attributes for external evaluators: skill in evaluation including communication with practitioners, managers and wider stakeholders, children, teachers and parents; the use of many different processes of evaluation and ways of engaging with stakeholders (this was referred to as a 3D survey); the use of qualitative information that is valued by practitioners, and qualitative information that is valued by decision-makers concerned with value for money; enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism throughout the

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<sup>45</sup> A reference group was formed locally and nationally that consisted of members from donor, government and non-governmental organisations: all meeting together to gain a better understanding of the process of the research and to discuss follow-up action.

process; and production of useable end products including reports and executive summaries.

### ***Crisis as Cross Cutting: Conflict/War and Crisis in Young Peoples' Lives***

Crisis is identified in the 'Change-scape' as cross-cutting, as different types of crisis can affect children's individual lives or there can be situations of political crisis, and war can completely override many planned processes in participatory evaluation. This is not to say that participatory work cannot be carried out in conflict situations (for example, Coomaraswamy 1998 in Sri Lanka, Dejanovovic 1998 in the former Yugoslavia, Feinstein *et al.* 2010 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatamala, Nepal and Uganda, Pells 2010 in Rwanda), but that this has to be taken into account in planning and methodology: there also needs to be flexibility in order to respond to changing contexts. In Nepal, for example, the Maoist insurgency has escalated over the past decade and therefore in the first instance, when the evaluation was planned, there was not much international awareness of the troubles starting in rural areas of Nepal. A situation of crisis arising during the process also highlighted the importance of having a collaborative approach where many stakeholders are involved, increasing ownership and sustainability due to different players taking on responsibility for responding to children and young people's evidence. Children could therefore come to be seen as resourceful, as shown, for example, by the resilience of the child club in one of the villages in Nawalparasi and the role that child-led journalism played in the positive changes in the local community.

One element of 'crisis' that arose from the cases, especially in *Saying Power*, was the way in which crises within the lives of individual children and young people needed to be monitored and taken into account in implementing evaluation. This affects what role a child or young person might play or ultimately feel capable of playing in the process, and will also determine the changing levels of support that may be needed. There had to be flexibility to respond to rapid change during the process, so that roles of those children and young people could change, either as participants or as facilitators.

Crisis in individual children's lives can put a halt to an otherwise participatory process unless adequate support can be given to help the child or young person to overcome this situation. Change monitored at a personal level captured these issues early, where there was celebration of positive personal development that young people experienced

in taking part in participatory processes. Problems arose in *Saying Power* due to inadequate support and communication between the young person, the mentor and the host agency. The right kind of support, however, helped young people overcome problems and achieve their goals and what they feel was expected of them. Monitoring the process as part of an ethical framework can be set up as an integral part of children's participation in evaluation.

### ***Change over the Life-course and Historical Time***

Ecological theories of child development (see Section 2.5) recognise the importance of time through the development of Bronfenbrenner's theories (1986, 2005) where he incorporated the linkages between process, the person, context and time and took into account changes in the broader historical context (Tudge 2008). Thus, the changing context of the physical environment, culture, social policy and the political economy is seen to affect how children can participate in the process, and indeed this context also needs to be reviewed as children through their agency may change their contexts (although this also depends on how different stakeholders engage in the process and respond to children's standpoints). Children's perspectives may be valued and their evidence taken into account and acted upon depending on the mechanisms that change actions into outcomes. This may include creating spaces for participation and dialogue through capacity building, employing innovative communication channels and tools, and collaboration within the process. However, these will also have to be reviewed taking into account not only initial contexts, but how these contexts change through the course of the process due to external factors or due to the process itself.

Over time participatory evaluation can help to shift power dynamics and lead to changed attitudes and behaviour, and sometimes to changes on a broader societal level. In Nepal, children worked together on a child journalism project in order to promote better cleanliness in the village, made easier by steps being built up to the taps so that they could collect water more easily. One of the boys acted as a champion amongst the children and led them in a campaign in the village that resulted in the adults listening to their perspectives and acting on them. The child club in this village is still regarded as important in decision-making, also gaining the support, including some financial support at VDC level through the policies of the new coalition government's policies.

In Croydon, there was recognition of people, including children, developing their capacity and identity through the life course, by services working with different aged children in the Croydon Children's Fund, where they used different styles of engagement and support, different methods and varying degrees of participation in leading aspects of the programme and evaluation. For example, in one of the area-based initiatives in a deprived estate, the project leader of the after school project, Together in Waddon, regarded the participation as working *for* children in junior school and working *with* children in secondary school. In many of the services, the children and staff were seen to develop their capacity and subsequently their interest in taking a more active role and their ownership of the evaluation, thus increasingly demonstrating their agency as the process developed.

#### **7.3.4 Dimensions of Power Applied to the 'Change-scape'**

The previous sections have emphasised that building a participatory process is multidimensional and requires explanation of how process can take into account the different contexts in which services that impact on children's lives are delivered, which can then enable the planning of more meaningful processes of children's participation in evaluation. In comparisons across the evaluation cases, there was acknowledgement that power dynamics have to be addressed in order to achieve positive outcomes for children. The original aim of these three examples of children's participation in evaluation that were revisited in this research was to improve children's wellbeing through understanding the impact on different aspects of their lives and on the broader context, and to inform the improvement of the services and projects being evaluated. Children's lives were appreciated as complex, and issues of power were at the time recognised and partially addressed in the different evaluations to try to include an understanding of relationships and entrenched inequalities alongside issues of agency and ownership (White 2009).

Crewe and Harrison (1998) describe how in the previously popular 'Women in Development (WID) movement, power and empowerment was often discussed in terms of 'Power to' (see Section 2.3.4 in Chapter 2). I suggest that a lot of the work carried out with 'children in development' has been within this context, that is seeing the 'empowerment' of children as being individual change and that they are beneficiaries of services provided, or they are treated as individual participants in advocacy. It is by

taking on the other dimensions of power that we see that child rights and age have to be integrated into development programmes and that, in a UK context, addressing children's issues should be seen as tackling child-adult power dynamics, cultural and institutional context, and seeing children as active participants rather than passive recipients of projects and services.

'Power over' may be considered as including those institutional and cultural factors that may not have been on the agenda when analysing the power of individuals in terms of their inclusion in decision-making and action ('power to'). This is relevant and has been highlighted in the discussions of the findings above in terms of understanding, not only the policy and institutional context and how receptive organisations are to the evidence of children, but also the changing context of cultural attitudes towards children; which in turn is undeniably tied up with adult/child power relationships in the households/ families and also within broader society. There are roles expected of children in different contexts and their capacity to change these roles, procedures and the lives of children will depend on their power to do so.

The concept of 'power within' can be identified in the issues that arise through participatory processes with children and other stakeholders in evaluation. There is growing recognition that awareness of conflicts of interest may grow within participatory processes. Children in the critical inquiry became aware through the evaluation process of how issues that affected their lives were related to their relationships of power with other children and with adults: conflicts of interest could arise with different perspectives being brought out in evaluation. Ways in which to resolve these conflicts would need to be taken into account in the process.

Ethical frameworks developed to work in a more participatory way with children therefore need to incorporate the growing awareness of conflicts of interest through shifting power dynamics between different stakeholders. Emotional responses needed to be monitored and children offered support or even protected from risk when their perspectives differed to those of more powerful stakeholders and thus challenge the status quo. Responsible researchers evaluating and working through related action plans may benefit from incorporating these dimensions of 'power over' and 'power within', as they assist in recognising what children may or may not be able to change and where there may be barriers to their perspectives, and to changing power

relationships with adults or other children. This may be the case when considering their relationships with adults in families, or when referring to the adult structures and staff in the services or programmes of development work that are being implemented and evaluated, supposedly for their benefit.

Allen (2003, p. 2) describes power being ‘exercised’ rather than ‘held’, as ‘a relational effect of social interaction’ and discusses how people ‘experience power in particular places’; which supports the idea embedded in the ‘Change-scape’ model of understanding context and structural issues, both external drivers and internal processes, in planning evaluation processes. Allen also suggests that relationships of power exercised may arise from ideas and events in different places. This is relevant to the notion of ‘exposure’ expressed in Nepal, where the exposure that people have to different ideas and places influences attitudes and power dynamics within communities over time. Also relevant in Allen’s analysis is the prospect that understanding spatial notions of power can ‘hold out the prospect of alternative, more collaborative paths to action and social change’ (p. 52).

In the ‘Change-scape’ model, I acknowledge that the use of participatory methodologies with children to give them a voice is insufficient and that power relationships between different stakeholders in the process have to be understood, alongside gauging how positions and relationships of power are influenced and contexts changed. The way in which participatory processes lead to transformational change is thus informed by this set of theoretical perspectives on power which underlie the model or framework.

Table 15 on p. 262 is intended to use these dimensions of power to assist in understanding the children’s and young people’s participation in evaluation. As different mechanisms can be employed in order to translate evidence gained in evaluation processes into the improved wellbeing of the different children involved, this table is built upon in Table 16 on p. 263, in order to consider how these dimensions of power relate to the different components of the ‘Change-scape’.

In the dimension of ‘power to’, dominant roles, procedures and structures that affect the way in which children are regarded within the different contexts that need to be understood, alongside the different existing relationships of control or entrenched

attitudes and behaviours that are acting as barriers to valuing children's input into evaluation processes or into decision-making more generally. Within this dimension, 'issues of difference' and how these may affect children's experiences of wellbeing and identity need to be understood, including when different issues that may result in inequity, such as, for example, gender and ethnicity, work together to compound disadvantage (Moncrieffe 2009).

The dimensions of the 'Change-scape' that are relevant here are the contextual and structural external driving forces in terms of culture, policy, institutional and physical environment, but also the centre of the model: who are the children and young people involved as beneficiaries of the services and projects, or rather who should be involved? Are more marginal children going to be involved, and who are the other stakeholders that need to be included at different levels of decision-making and governance, from household to local and beyond? It may be worth taking into account Williams' (2004) analysis of different case studies in South Asia showing that children have proved most successful at influencing decision making at the local level, although they are less likely to challenge power relations in society or to make significant changes in 'policy'. This also resonates with the tension discussed by Shier (1998 and 2010) around children's participation being often less tokenistic in settings closer to the children's everyday lives, although there are examples of where children's voices are heard at regional and national levels, especially in a developing country context. Processes may therefore do better to start influencing and working with children at local levels of decision-making, however, that this should not be restricted to that level.

In initial assessment or mapping of who the children are, and the context or external drivers and institutional settings, it will be the case that some aspects of the context are enablers in children's participation and have contributed positively to children's experiences of wellbeing. Thus, in this initial assessment of structural and contextual issues, it is important to establish what elements are constraining and what elements are enabling children to participate and their perspectives to be valued. This is addressing the dimension of 'power over'. Whilst 'external drivers' may facilitate children to have more space in which to participate, existing capacities and capabilities can be mapped out to plan processes of capacity building, confidence building and identifying champions for children, all of which have been shown by the case study research to build on positive contextual and structural factors and create new opportunities. It has

mainly been at that more individual level of giving children voice and seeking to empower individuals and small groups in policy processes that this aspect of participation has been addressed. This has taken into account agency and how individual agency develops throughout a process, and also acknowledging differences between children in their participation.

In order to address ‘power with’ in evaluation, and as Mannion (2010) suggests, intergenerational dialogue and understanding would need to be built through transformative processes so that, provided adequate time and resources are allowed and spaces created, more sustained change may result at individual, institutional and broader societal and policy levels. In considering the concept of ‘power with’, Kesby (2007, p2819) discusses working *with* others by way of the modalities of ‘associational power’, such as ‘negotiation’ and ‘persuasion’, thus coinciding with mechanisms of collaboration and communication that are discussed in the model. Kesby applies to the role of participatory facilitators and organisations working for social change the idea that initial inequities and ‘authority over’ in ‘power over’ moving to ‘authority amongst’ in the dimension of ‘power with’. He also puts forward the notion that participatory processes themselves can create opportunities for empowerment, challenging social relations, thus bringing in the aspect of transformational change through participation with children. Power dynamics need to be understood and challenged and the agency of children needs to be cultivated and supported through the mechanisms in the ‘Change-scape’ of building confidence and capacity, communication and collaboration. Different ways of working through partnerships and inclusive processes with adults and children in communities, and with managers and decision-makers, have been discussed in the account of the ‘Change-scape’ model and these can also build on positive contextual and structural contexts, both in external drivers and internal processes.

‘Power within’ comes back to the centre of the model – children – and radiates out through the ‘Change-scape’. In cultivating agency and running more inclusive processes of evaluation, conflicts of opinion may occur and individuals who are vulnerable in the process, particularly children, may need support in dealing with change. Part of the flexibility built into the process will need to incorporate monitoring such conflict, and responding to changes at an individual level for all stakeholders, as discussed above, for the children and young people involved.

A common understanding of the goals and objectives of conducting evaluation needs to be reached between stakeholders at the beginning of a process if there is going to be acceptance of the evidence. The framework of wellbeing may be useful here in discussing common goals; that is, if the overall aim is to improve the wellbeing of children and their communities, then it may be agreed, for example, that mixed methods are needed to show material, subjective and relational aspects (as discussed by Jones and Sumner 2009). Common understanding may then be reached on what this means in practice in terms of the stages of the process and the review of the evaluation research and the action and outcomes resulting. If there is an inclusive process from the start, it is thus more likely that those involved in the evaluation, adults and children, local people, service providers and decision-makers, may use their agency in a way that coincides to achieve the common goal of improving wellbeing for children and young people.

If not all the dimensions of power are considered from the start of the process, then children and young people's participation is likely to be tokenistic and undervalued. If, however, all of the dimensions of power are considered and planned for at the beginning and throughout the process then there may be more meaningful children and young people's participation in evaluation that may then lead to transformative processes of change. The 'Change-scape', as a model developed from the experiences of children and young people, staff and mentors from services and projects, managers and decision-makers, who had first hand experience of evaluations in Nepal and the UK, may be helpful in planning for this process of change. (See Table 15 and Table 16 on the following pages, refer to Table 15 for references).

**Table 15: Dimensions of power and children’s participation or non-participation in evaluation**

Dimensions of Power	Processes of children’s participation or non-participation in evaluation
Power over	<p>Understanding:</p> <p>Institutional roles and procedures affected by attitudes and behaviour towards children in society (cultural norms) and in processes of intervention (related to policy and institutional context);</p> <p>Child-adult and child-child relationships/ control, access to decision-making and to resources, and entrenched attitudes and perceptions;</p> <p>‘Issues of difference’ and ‘intersectionalities’ and how these affect children’s wellbeing.</p>
Power to	<p>Increasing the space and capacity of individual children to be involved in decision-making and to act.</p> <p>Their agency and how their agency develops.</p> <p>Taking ‘issues of difference’ and ‘intersectionalities’ into account.</p>
Power with	<p>Building intergenerational dialogue and understanding: working together to ‘organise’ and build collaboration and communication.</p> <p>Challenging attitudes, behaviour and expectations of different stakeholders to promote transformational change at an individual, institutional and broader societal level.</p> <p>Cultivating agency.</p>
Power within	<p>Through participation in a process where conflicts of interest are raised, and dialogue between stakeholders deepened, self-awareness may be raised and self-confidence developed. The agency of different stakeholders may thus be developed and this will hopefully be used to promote positive changes in wellbeing for children.</p>

Drawing on dimensions of power described by Lukes (1974, 2005), built upon, explained, modified and interpreted by Kabeer (1994), Crewe and Harrison (1998), VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), Chambers (2006), Kesby (2005 and 2007) and Mannion (2010). Also informed by Sumner *et al.* (2009).

**Table 16: How the dimensions of power relate to children’s participation in evaluation and the ‘Change-scape’ (third column added to Table 15).**

<b>Dimensions of Power</b>	<b>Processes of children’s participation in evaluation</b>	<b>How this relates to the ‘Change-Scape’</b>
<b>Power over</b>	<p>Understanding institutional roles and procedures affected by attitudes and behaviour towards children in society (cultural norms) and in processes of intervention (policy and institutional context).</p> <p>Child-adult and child-child relationships/ control and entrenched attitudes and perceptions.</p> <p>‘Issues of difference’ and ‘intersectionalities’ that affect children’s wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>Often initial starting point - the landscape or context for change. Gaining an understanding of the constraining and enabling aspects of the context, reviewing <i>external driving forces and existing space and capacity</i> for children to be involved in decision-making and to act.</b></p>
<b>Power to</b>	<p>Increasing the space and capacity of individual children to be involved in decision-making and to act.</p> <p>Their agency and how their agency develops.</p> <p>Taking ‘issues of difference’ and ‘intersectionalities’ into account.</p>	<p><b>Building on enabling aspects of <i>external drivers and on internal processes addressing power</i>, such as reviewing capacity to plan capacity building with different stakeholders in the evaluation process.</b></p>
<b>Power with</b>	<p>Building intergenerational dialogue and understanding: working together to ‘organise’ and build collaboration and communication.</p> <p>Changing attitudes and behaviour and expectations of different stakeholders to promote transformational change at an individual, institutional and broader societal level.</p> <p>Cultivating agency.</p>	<p><b>Creating the <i>mechanisms for change</i> and cultivating agency through collaboration and communication: thus taking into account material, relational and subjective domains of wellbeing.</b></p>
<b>Power within</b>	<p>Through participation in a process where conflicts of interest are raised and dialogue between stakeholders deepened, self-awareness may be raised and self-confidence developed. The agency of different stakeholders may be developed and this will hopefully be used to promote positive changes in wellbeing for children.</p>	<p><b><i>Identity and agency</i> and how this changes/ develops and interacts with context in the process – Who sets the agenda? Are there common goals and interest to change? – using the framework of improving children’s wellbeing could help to use this ‘power within’ positively.</b></p>

## **7.4 Summary**

In this chapter, key learning was presented relating to whether children's participation in evaluation can lead to transformational change whilst also responding to the agendas of people in positions of power, to ultimately lead to improving the lives of children. This involved understanding the conditions under which, in three case studies conducted in Nepal and the UK, more meaningful children's participation in evaluation was achieved. An in-depth analysis of these case studies led to the development of a model called a 'Change-scape', which helped me to structure my thoughts around linking process to context through critical realism and ecological approaches to child psychology. Theories of power have further helped to relate the components of the model to different dimensions of power.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

### 8.1 Introduction

Translating the rhetoric of rights into reality required understanding how context in three case studies affected the application of evaluation processes and whether children's participation was valued by the different stakeholders involved. In these 'real world' evaluations revisited, there were varying interpretations of rights and participation. With increasing academic contributions on how children's participation fits into addressing child rights, improving children's wellbeing and addressing intergenerational transmissions of poverty, challenges have been raised around how to achieve meaningful, as opposed to more tokenistic, and invited participation with children (for example, White and Choudhury 2007).

The starting point for this research was whether a rights-based framework (for example as specified by Beazley and Ennew 2006), where children are treated as active participants in the process, was adequate as a theoretical framework to guide children's meaningful participation in evaluation in varying contexts. Evaluations previously carried out by myself with colleagues were revisited in this research in order to explore whether and how processes of participation were linked to context, and what mechanisms might influence whether children and young people's evidence was taken seriously in decisions that affect their lives. In revisiting evaluations that I previously carried out in Nepal and the UK, the initial emphasis of the research was modified; from a focus on the visual participatory methodologies and how they had been applied in varying contexts, the key research question shifted to how significant features of context were linked to process, incorporating an analysis of power dynamics.

The cases were chosen to explore differences in timeframes, policy, cultural, institutional and physical settings in the UK and Nepal. The critical inquiry addressed issues of methodology and how the different stakeholders involved were disposed to act on the evidence produced by children and young people in the evaluations. Underlying issues of power dynamics, position and context were also explored in further depth in the course of the semi-structured interviews. The research therefore

incorporated an analysis of how conditions for change influenced stakeholders in different positions of power to act in response to children. The stages of the research included: description, themed analysis, developing assertions and generalisations and modelling (Stake, 2003). A model was developed through inductive theorising, arising from different levels of analysis from the two-pronged approach of reflexivity and critical inquiry in case study research.

There may be ideological or instrumental underlying reasons for children's participation and motivation may vary between stakeholders. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that inclusive evaluation processes can lead to improved outcomes for children. It is only, however, if context and existing power dynamics are taken into account, that more meaningful processes of children's participation may be developed leading more consistently to positive transformation at an individual, organisational and broader societal level. This conclusion offers a reflection on the answers to the research questions that informed the revisits to the rights-based evaluations in Nepal and the UK. (The fuller analysis of findings is in Chapter 7.) The following section poses the detailed questions one by one before the final reflections that addresses the main research question relating to the links between the process of children's participation and context and how this might contribute to both theory and practice.

## **8.2 Research Questions and Answers**

*1. In the revisited evaluation cases has evidence from children and young people informed and shaped services and projects/ programmes and fed into policy?*

The evaluation that had previously been conducted in Nepal first stemmed from concern about the invisibility of children in the broader context of international development assistance a decade ago. I would reconfirm through this research that it is rare that children are seen as integral to decision-making and that their participation often remains at a level of seeking to give voice to individual or groups of children and young people. The extent to which children and young people's perspectives were taken seriously and acted upon, however, varied in the different evaluations depending on a range of factors including the context in which the evaluation was taking place, the expectations and initial starting points of different stakeholders involved, and how these changed through the process. The analysis of these conditions and the significant features of context follow in the other questions addressed in this section.

In Nepal, the outcomes varied in the two villages revisited. In one, the local community based organisation, HICODEF, had responded to children's perspectives by building steps to water taps when children had not been involved in planning and the water taps had been too high for girls and boys to reach. As the concrete for the steps had covered the water pipe, it was also cooler and toilet construction had also taken account of the height of the children. Initially, girls in particular felt excluded from the evaluation process due to researchers speaking Nepalese and not the 'Magar' language. They responded well to a new facilitator joining the process who spoke the local language and building trust as the other evaluators learned to communicate with the villagers. The children had felt increasingly confident that their voices were being listened to both by HICODEF staff and within the broader community; the child club is still strong and feeds into decision-making in the village (discussed further in question 2). In both villages, children had identified that, in order to fulfil their dreams, they would need to go to school: gradually, with the support of new government policies, this seemed to be more of a reality with parents' attitudes changing, particularly towards girls going to school.<sup>46</sup> Few other changes were recalled in the second village as a result of the evaluation, although the young interviewees had remembered that they enjoyed the process including the use of visual methods as children. Memories were sparked when pictures of them as children evaluating using visuals ten years ago were used to recall the original process. HICODEF's expertise in using participatory methodologies was recognised in a national reference group of policy makers for the evaluation and they found their niche; securing work that included gaining the views of marginalised women and girls in different communities around issues of sexual and reproductive health.

In Saying Power, evidence from the evaluation had fed directly through the peer-led processes to inform the young people's projects, and through the external evaluation into the ongoing systems of support and management process in the Saying Power scheme. The evaluation had originally been planned as an integral part of the rights-based scheme. Examples were provided in the evaluation carried out ten years ago of how young people had built their confidence through the participatory process and used their evidence to influence policies in different spheres: influencing approaches in

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<sup>46</sup> Previously there was parental preference to send boys to school.

mental health services, policies towards young refugees and asylum seekers, and getting young people's voices heard in decision-making forums including the Welsh Assembly (Johnson and Nurick 2001). Interviewees also recalled some of these changes that had resulted from the innovative peer projects and evaluative evidence produced by young people. Ongoing funding had been secured using young people's evidence, for example for Funky Dragon, the cyber café and drop-in at Fernhill in Wales, the Young Refugee Rights Project and the Pro Touch Academy for young Asian football payers. Specific changes given as examples by mentors and managers about the nature of the scheme included: improved relationships between mentors, award holders and host agencies; mentors recognising the additional support that some of the young people needed due to the stress of running their own projects with peers. Salaried positions were created within Save the Children offices for young people, and supportive structures were set up in an attempt to make them feel more valued and integrated. The interviewees recognised the positive context in which they had been working, but also reflected on more negative aspects of process. The mentors and managers recognised that they had not kept in touch with the award holders in a systematic way to find out what the longer-term impact of the scheme had been across the range of projects. In addition, the quantitative evidence from the participatory evaluation on impact had not been enough to convince funders to continue the resource intensive scheme beyond the second phase. On reflection, managers and mentors interviewed reflected on how the individual and organisational transformational changes (discussed below in question 2) had not been fully recognised at the time.

Children in Croydon gave examples of particular activities that had happened in the after-school project they attended as a result of their participation in evaluation: camps, swimming lessons and sessions on controlling temper were given as examples. They felt it had been particularly important that outsiders had come to understand their lives better in order to get more funding for their project. In Croydon at the level of services, those working directly with children and their families, had experienced significant improvements through using more participatory approaches to communication and evaluation with children. Services included those working with children that were identified as being at risk of entering the criminal justice system and children with disabilities. In one example, evidence from parents of children that were receiving palliative care services had directly resulted in specific actions within their services, for example, setting up a father's support group. In some of the services

where children and their families participated on a voluntary basis, staff recognised that unless they had more participatory communication that attracted their clients, their services would cease to be effective or to exist at all. Services that already took a participatory approach with children highlighted how training in quantitative monitoring had empowered them to communicate with service providers in a productive way and they had as a result successfully secured funding. Some of the members of the partnership board involved in funding decisions said that they had genuinely taken children's evidence into account while others regarded this evidence as providing useful anecdotes and pictures, but superfluous to more quantitative information on service delivery and the proper use of finances. Some services provided examples of continued funding after the Children's Fund, partly on the basis of children's evidence, such as the Willow service working on childhood bereavement with peers and siblings in schools and the Youth Inclusion Support Panel.

## *2. Has children's evidence led to improved outcomes for children and transformational change?*

Transformational change was not pre-defined, but left open for the interviewees in the cases to describe significant changes at any level. In Nepal, different levels of transformational change were described including at an individual, organisational and broader societal level. Starting with the latter, as it was only in this case where this emerged, broader societal change also very much depended on the context of change and the way in which the process of children's participation was supported and developed. In one of the villages revisited, evidence from children's participation in evaluation had fed directly into a child-led journalism project that included setting up a community magazine, supported by the local community based organisation, HICODEF. Children had chosen to work on issues of cleanliness and going to school and this gradually led to adult attitudes changing towards children in the village. Child-led journalism was energised by a boy who motivated his peers and was described as 'champion for children' by members of staff interviewed in the critical inquiry. The child club is still strong in this remote and poor village and adults have continued to consult with children on local decisions. This initiative has also been complemented by Nepal's coalition government's policies to support child clubs at a village level and to send primary aged children to school. In this village, HICODEF had also responded to children's views by building steps to the taps so that they could more easily collect the

water to fulfil their household's tasks so adults had been able to see the positive results that children's participation could bring (as discussed in question 1).

In the other village, many other significant changes had taken place including electricity supplied through hydropower and a road built to the village, saving hours walking to markets and bringing supplies. The evaluation seemed insignificant in comparison as the young men and woman interviewed struggled to remember any changes and said that adults still had the same attitudes towards children: that they would not really listen to their views in decision-making. Some changes were, however, recognised by individual young people as they recognised that the participatory process had built confidence and encouraged them to learn about new things: they had 'exposure' to different people and ideas through the research process. HICODEF staff also recognised that the process of working *with* children had made them rethink their poverty programme, despite feeling overwhelmed in the period of conflict (see question 3). From their perspectives 'rights' and 'needs' went hand in hand and children will only be taken seriously in household and community decision-making if existing power dynamics are understood and political and structural issues taken into account in the process of children's participation (Johnson, forthcoming).

In *Saying Power*, young people's participation, together with a growing belief amongst Save the Children staff that young peoples' capacity to understand and work with their peers was invaluable has led to significant and pioneering institutional transformation. Examples included young people working in Save the Children offices accompanied by the development of an accredited course. In the longer term, young people have also been included in the broader governance structures of the organisation. These outcomes were largely due to innovative approach of the scheme itself, although those mentors and managers interviewed felt that the evaluation had provided important evidence of the outcomes for young people and had inform the development of the scheme. Young people conceded that in the participatory evaluation, where they had received training from the evaluators to run their own processes with their peers, they initially had little interest in carrying out evaluation themselves and valued an external approach. The award holders said that they gradually realised that providing their own evidence could give them more power to influence change. Managers and mentors recognised how processes using qualitative visual approaches had helped to build young people's confidence, and young people themselves gained interest in order to work with peers to

achieve their goals. There was, however, a broad recognition in the interviews that funders required more quantitative evidence of impact, and that this was an ever-increasing requirement.

In Croydon, transformational change remained mainly at an individual level and, to a certain extent, at an organisational level amongst some of the services working directly with children. Individual experiences were shared by service staff and managers who suggested that their communication with children and their families had been transformed through the application of visual and participatory approaches, in turn leading to changes in the way that services were delivered. Some partnership board members said that both qualitative visual evidence and information that had been generated by children had gained credibility through the rigorous process of evaluation with service users, and that as long as the results were clearly explained, from a rigorous research process shown to inform decision-making, then it did not matter what methods were used. For others the process of children's participation had been a requirement from central government that was unnecessary. Broader policy change was influenced largely through 'champions for children' amongst senior managers on the board that transmitted children's evidence into broader policy processes. Services had also received mainstream funding through providing evidence that included children's perspectives. Children were not involved, however, in policy processes beyond the direct delivery of services in which they were involved, and were not more widely accepted as advocates or rights holders, as opposed to as service users. The evidence produced by young people working with children in a participatory programme funded as part of the Croydon Children's Fund was generally presented by adults in decision-making forums.

The transformational changes experienced across the cases were often not expected as a result of the evaluation process and were therefore regarded as spin-offs. The greater recognition of transformation at different levels – individual, organisational and broader social change – could be part of a justification for time consuming and often costly processes of participation with children and young people.

### *3. How was this affected by the political, policy, cultural and institutional context?*

Significant features of the context were split into the external drivers and internal processes and these were shown to vary between the different and changing contexts

and influenced what mechanisms may be planned for to maximize more meaningful participation and positive transformational change (see question 4 below). External drivers that affected the way in which a rights-based evaluation could be implemented in Nepal included: the conflict situation due to Maoist insurgency overwhelming the capacity of community-based organisations to respond to children; varying interpretations of what rights-based approaches mean to operations on the ground; and the lack of issues of generation or age in the politics of inclusion of Nepal.

Cultural context was also shown to be important in both influencing the process and visa versa (in a similar way to Corsaro's (1992) interpretative reproduction in children's peer cultures as discussed in Chapter 7). An example provided from the villages revisited in the mountainous regions showed how adult attitudes towards children could only change in a positive and productive way where children's initiatives in peer groups were supported over time. This was achieved in a child-led journalism project and space was created where they could gradually convince local decision-makers in households and communities of the value of the perspectives of girls and boys in local level village development. Combined with this were complementary policies of Nepal's coalition government (as discussed in question 2 above). In the UK cases examples, participants reflected on situations where children and young people's participation was assisted, and young people's evidence accepted, because of supportive political environments. One example was the establishment of the Welsh Assembly at the time of the Saying Power scheme that facilitated the involvement of young people feeding into public decision-making. Another was the introduction of useful policy initiatives, such as the Every Child Matters Framework in the case of the Croydon Children's Fund.

Internal processes relating to the institutional context and the different stakeholders involved in the evaluation also emerged from the interviews as significant features of context or the starting point for children and young people's participation from which to build inclusive evaluation processes. In different institutional settings there were expectations regarding evidence. In the case of the evaluations carried out in the non-governmental sector a decade ago, there was great excitement about the potential of qualitative visual participatory methods, recognised at the time as contributing to both understanding impact and empowering those people who were often excluded from decision-making processes, including children. Interviewees, however, revealed that

this perspective has changed over time with an increasing requirement from funders for organisations based in the non-governmental organizations to monitor and demonstrate their impact more quantitatively. In the case of the evaluation carried out more recently in Croydon, mixed methods were employed and participants in the critical inquiry for this research emphasized the value of having qualitative and quantitative evaluation alongside each other. Issues of capacity, confidence and commitment were identified as areas that could be built on to gradually change attitudes to children's participation and their evidence. Having an idea of the kind of collaboration that is possible at the beginning of the process between children and the different stakeholders involved, can help to generate the most appropriate mechanisms to develop more meaningful and relational participation in different contexts (discussed below in question 4).

*4. How did aspects of process relating to children's roles in evaluation, capacities and commitment in organisations, and power dynamics in evaluation, influence the way in which children's participation and their evidence was regarded by different stakeholders?*

Building capacity and encouraging greater communication and collaboration, were mechanisms to assist in translating children's participation in evaluation into improved outcomes for children. Where flexibility and innovative mechanisms had been employed in the different cases, implementation of evaluation processes could respond to the perspectives of children and young people with more joint ownership in the process of participation. Examples of successful mechanisms that had been put forward by interviewees in this research included: reference groups and working with child clubs to develop methods and carry out evaluation with villages in Nepal; residential training and evaluation sessions with young people in Saying Power and support for them to carry out their own evaluations with peers with support from mentors; networking lunches and training sessions with service providers in Croydon as well as support in carrying out participatory evaluation with children and their families. These mechanisms could be thought of as providing different spaces for participation and creating different opportunities for dialogue between different stakeholders. This fits with more recent theories on participation more generally and children's participation more specifically where a more relational form of dialogue encouraging dialogue between different stakeholders can help confront existing power dynamics (see Chapter 2). Where mechanisms were not so successful, for example in suggesting ways to create dialogue between, for example, managers and decision-makers, and children in

Croydon then the transformational change seemed more limited. In all of the cases, the use of visual participatory appraisal methods could also be seen as a mechanism for communicating children and young people's evidence directly themselves or through other stakeholders in the process (discussed in question 5 below). Champions for children in different settings, whether individuals are adults or children, can help to facilitate and excite or lend political will to the process, also encouraging moving from tokenism to more meaningful participation.

When evaluation was applied in a more collaborative way and power dynamics addressed through these mechanisms, transformational changes resulted and, although these were often regarded as spin-offs from the process (as discussed above in question 2), they could also be recognised as important outcomes. Dimensions of power identified by Lukes (1974) and further developed and modified by Kabeer (1994), VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), Chambers (2006), Kesby (2005) and Mannion (2010) were related to children's participation in evaluation in the analysis and are further discussed in the final reflections. It seemed that the different dimensions of power ('power to', 'power over', 'power with' and 'power within') would need to be considered if children's perspectives are to be taken seriously in their more meaningful participation in evaluation. This could also be relevant in working with different disadvantaged or marginalised people; for example, as the gender and development debates (for example Kabeer, 1994, Crewe and Harrison, 1998 and Alanan, 1995) have informed this model. Learning from power dimensions in children's participation may also therefore be relevant to debates around gender and generation.

*5. What was the value of visual 'participatory appraisal' (PA) approaches and visual methods, developed in the 'South', in helping to understand the impact of projects and services on children's lives?*

Employing participatory visual methodologies had helped in the evaluations revisited to contribute to: constructing childhoods in varying contexts; demonstrating the impact on children of development programmes and services; and amplifying the voices of children and young people. These visual methodologies were more commonly applied in developing countries over the past twenty years, but have also been transferred to the UK both to respond to a call for the participation of children and young people as a right as expressed in the UNCRC, and to satisfy requirements for evidence from service

users, especially by central government.<sup>47</sup> Their application in working with marginalised children and young people has also been recognised: in the Saying Power evaluation, the methods were seen as an important mechanism in building confidence in new collaborative styles of working with marginalised young people. The evaluations could all be described as giving children and young people a ‘voice’ and having provided rigorous processes of collecting children’s evidence alongside the perspectives of other stakeholders.

From the case study research conducted for the thesis, visual participatory methods in evaluation were suggested as having contributed to transformation in varying contexts, the ways in which different stakeholders experienced the process and having influenced attitudes, policies and procedures in institutions. In the cases revisited, the application of participatory methods, including visuals, that may be included in qualitative or mixed-methods evaluation, contributed to understanding the impact of services on the lives of children and young people, but only led to positive change for children under the right conditions. Despite their potential for transformative change, qualitative visual evidence collected with children was not always valued by decision-makers. Employing mixed-method approaches was therefore suggested as useful in evaluating children’s lives and their wellbeing (as also advocated by Jones and Sumner, 2009) as this also met the expectations of different stakeholders in the process.

*6. How could a more theoretical understanding be applied to the implementation of action-orientated and rights-based evaluation with children and young people?*

It was demonstrated through comparisons and learning across cases how contextual and structural issues, including both external driving forces of context and internal processes in different institutional settings, were important to consider in planning evaluation processes and selecting methodologies. If conditions for change are taken into account then information from children may be received and translated into improved wellbeing for children. Where conditions for change are such that children and young people’s participation may not initially be embraced, processes may be quite different to that of a situation where the context is facilitating a more political involvement of children. Different levels and styles of participation may then be

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<sup>47</sup> For example, in England the requirement of local evaluation that involves the participation of service users in the Children’s Fund.

appropriate to different contexts. This should not constrain innovation, but rather recognising varying levels of progress in terms of changes to services and more wide-reaching transformational change. Understanding how children and young people participating in processes are regarded by other stakeholders, as well as their own interest in the evaluation, was also critical as this influenced both the way in which children and young people wanted to participate and how their evidence was collected and received. More discussion of the theoretical influences and contributions in the research is included in the final reflection below.

### **8.3 Considering the Key Research Question**

*How can linking processes of children's participation in evaluation to significant features of the context contribute to our understanding of children's participation?*

Inclusive participatory processes in evaluation, with adequate time and resources, have been shown through the case study research to lead to transformational change at individual, organisational and broader societal levels. Achieving positive outcomes for children and young people, however, means not only working to empower children and young people to participate, embodied as a right in Article 12 under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Meaningful participation also requires attention to significant features of context that affect the application of rights-based evaluation through emphasising a more relational approach to participation that takes account of power dynamics. These significant features of context or conditions for change emerged in the research as being: external drivers regarding the political, policy, cultural and institutional contexts; internal processes that need to be taken into account when planning evaluation processes and children and young people's participation, such as the levels of commitment, capacity and collaboration that exist amongst children, young people and decision-makers.

Given an understanding of the landscape of change, children and young people's differences in identity and interest in the evaluation process, and how these develop over time (also influenced by the process itself) also provide a central consideration in evaluation. Part of the problem may be that children and young people who are not usually centre stage are pushed into arenas of invited participation in evaluations requiring service-user evaluation without considering the existing power dynamics and their interest in the process. Moving from this starting point, in order to develop more

meaningful processes of participation, various mechanisms to build capacity, communication and collaboration were demonstrated as having helped to overcome barriers to taking children and young people seriously in decision-making processes. Using mixed methods that included participatory visual methods was thought to have facilitated this process in the cases revisited. For some stakeholders interviewed, children and young people's participation remained at the level of tokenism and was regarded as a policy-led requirement or to provide interesting anecdotes and pictures to liven up reports. Recognition that evaluations are political processes that require understanding of context and adult-child and broader structural power dynamics was regarded in this thesis as necessary in order to move from tokenism to changes that will lead to improved outcomes for children and young people in the longer term. The findings from this research resonate with Mannion's (2010) challenge to move beyond 'voice' to encouraging increased space for participation which may be seen as intergenerational performance requiring analysis of different dimensions of power.

The theoretical perspectives from ecological theories of child development and critical realism have helped organise the 'Change-scape'. The emerging model explains *how* to link context with process and how to achieve transformational change in evaluation, whilst maximising the potential of children's participation. It is suggested that this better understanding of contextual and structural issues could improve intervention and influence policy and attitudes towards children and young people in organisations and in broader society. Through understanding children's perspectives alongside issues of power, position and context, positive change in wellbeing can be achieved. An in-depth understanding of contextual and structural issues, including external driving forces and internal processes (Burawoy 2003), examined in the research were linked to mechanisms to help translate actions in evaluation into positive outcomes for children. Planning methodology for participatory evaluation with children might therefore be informed by first understanding and then maximising positive conditions for change by working through the components of the 'Change-scape'. Central to the model is the developing identity and interest of the children and young people who may be involved.

Underlying power dynamics were discussed for the different components presented in the 'Change-scape'. More specifically, different dimensions can be related to the components in this analysis: the identity and agency of children; contextual and

structural issues including external drivers; internal processes; and the mechanisms that link context to process (see Chapter 7). The different aspects of the emerging ‘Change-scape’ model can help to understand and structure the starting point or conditions for change in varying contexts in order to build more participatory and illuminating mechanisms that are responsive to decision-makers’ expectations, addressing these different dimensions of power. Addressing all of the dimensions of power was identified in the thesis as critical: addressing only one or even two dimensions of power may amount to non-participation of children in evaluation or at least tokenistic participation.

The ‘Change-scape’ that emerged from this analysis thus includes issues that may otherwise be passed over in participatory evaluations. These include: local and national politics and varying interpretations of rights; changing policy frameworks and how these may be applied; existing structures or spaces for public and invited participation and how these influence attitudes and communication; developing capacities amongst different stakeholders; expectations and interest regarding evaluation; and entrenched perceptions that exist within communities and organisations. All of these factors may serve to either facilitate or block change in response to children. It is also hoped that the analysis in this thesis may contribute to the academic and practitioner debates on children’s participation through linking processes to significant factors of context. This is an area identified as insufficiently covered in theoretical discourses in childhood studies (Thomas 2000, Hart 2008) and in evaluation and research with children and young people (Kirby and Bryson 2002).

Dissemination of different approaches to working with children and young people in evaluation needs to be further encouraged, demonstrating how mechanisms can be planned to encourage more spaces for participation and develop dialogue between stakeholders. Thus, a growing bank of mechanisms could be developed and shared that might help to translate the rhetoric of children’s participation into practice. In terms of theory, this approach to creating spaces for intergenerational dialogue fits into broader discourses on children’s participation and broader participation, but the way in which context is linked to process is new. Explaining the link between processes of children and young people’s participation to their context through the realist explanation of mechanisms that helped to translate action into outcomes has been useful in developing the analysis.

Socio- and cultural-ecological approaches to child development have also grown in importance in this research and will hopefully help to move beyond the controversies in childhood studies fuelled initially by positivist universal theories from child psychology about stages of development conflicting with the construction of childhood in the new sociological approach. Recent theories of Bronfenbrenner (2005) and Tudge (2008) are put forward in this thesis as relevant to understanding the way in which children and young people have bi-directional relationships with their context, appreciating children's agency whilst recognising and linking to power relationships and context.

Creating new spaces and mechanisms for capacity building, communication and collaboration with different stakeholders throughout the process is key to building adult-child or intergenerational dialogue, and to addressing institutional power relations and power dynamics that affect children and young people's lives. Learning across cases in this research has helped in better understanding links between significant factors in context and process. In this way, it was also shown that processes of children's participation in evaluation could contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people's wellbeing and transformational change. Although there is now broad acceptance that children and young people can participate and also facilitate evaluation processes, issues of capacity, support and their own developing identity and interest in carrying out the evaluation needs to be considered and brought centre stage. Linked to this are tensions between subjective and objective, hard and soft data, internal and external evaluation, that arise due to the very different expectations and capacities of different stakeholders that need to be considered in varying and continually changing contexts in order to obtain a balance between illuminative and utilisation approaches to evaluation. To conclude: improved outcomes for different children will only be achieved through understanding the contextual and structural issues: the conditions for change in which evaluation is taking place.

## **8.4 Final Reflections**

Much of the research and work carried out in the area of participation has focused on the right for any child to have a say in decisions affecting his/her life, embodied in Article 12 of the UNCRC. Child participation rights as such are universal and are by

their nature generally seen out of context, resulting broadly in strategies that have concentrated on ensuring the empowerment of individuals, rather than necessarily considering the complexities of social change in different contexts. In reality, however, practitioners and researchers have usually endeavoured to take into account local cultural and policy context and power dynamics. This is a dichotomy in approaches to youth participation that is also highlighted by Cooper, (2010) in his reflections on responses to unhappy childhoods in the UK. On one hand he presents those approaches to the 'youth problem' in the UK that change individuals' behaviours, through for example building self-esteem of individual young people who are put forward as bearing responsibility for action. On the other, he puts forward attention to context where institutional processes are 'challenged and adapted', and mutual respect is built within communities providing more opportunities for marginalised young people.

Past models that have been useful in understanding participation, such as the 'Hart's ladder' (1992) and Shier's 'pathways to participation' (2001) have not been context specific and, although rights-based research has incorporated the importance of involving different stakeholders, much participation work with children and young people has championed raising and often amplifying their voices. This has, however, sometimes fallen on deaf ears, even when children are participating in invited spaces. This is not to say that much participatory work has not been both innovative and effective in achieving certain objectives, but that there has not necessarily been systematic analysis of the context in which processes take place, or of the mechanisms that may work in different contexts in order to improve children's lives and result in transformational change on an institutional and broader societal level. In this thesis, it is linking the context to processes of children and young people's participation that is put forward as essential to trying to achieve more meaningful participation. In addition to this, it is important to see how children and young people's wellbeing is linked to context and in turn how different mechanisms in participatory processes can promote wellbeing.

Children in the 'Change-scape' are placed at its centre and the central objective of processes is suggested as being to achieve children and young people's wellbeing while taking into account the significant features of context. It is arguable that if the focus in the past has been the rights of individual children and one of the problems has been that they are not at centre stage in either their everyday lives or in international

development programmes, then why are they are the centre of the ‘Change-scape’? Why would it not be intergenerational dialogue and interaction that is advocated in the mechanisms to change power dynamics at the centre? I argue that if children and young people are not central, then they are invisible, ‘add- ons’, sidelined or forgotten as has been the case in broader international development for many years (for example, Bartlett 2001, 2005) or see as *the* problem (Cooper 2010). Alanen (2005) has argued with regard to the movement of ‘children in development’ to ‘children’s standpoint’. This repositioning of children and young people as being at the centre of the research process is further supported through processes of participatory action research that have been conducted with children, as advocated by Nieuwenhuys (2004) and Cooper (2010). I would suggest that in order to achieve better intergenerational analysis, children and young people need to remain central and should not be lost as stakeholders in the process.

The issues of children’s dependency on adults and the duty of care of adults towards children put children’s participation into a moral domain, where power dynamics need to be taken into account and make children different from other marginal groups. Dependency and authority are discussed with reference to child abuse and need also to be considered with reference to their participation in everyday activities. Because of their age and immaturity, children can be even more excluded than others that are marginalised from decision-making, and they have long been treated as vulnerable victims in the development process. Intersectionality in relation to children and young people (for example Moncrieff 2009), is important to take into account and the process of developing identity and interest for different stakeholders is key to achieving more meaningful participatory processes and evaluation that may lead to transformation. Children may well in their different situations in varying contexts have growing power in terms of social linkages, especially with the event of new technologies and they are important actors in political and social change. All too often they are, however, seen as being part of the problem in society, rather than part of the solution.

In terms of relational objectives for participatory processes, then trying to achieve improved wellbeing for children and young people, as opposed to only referring to child rights, can help to ensure that power dynamics are addressed. As the material, subjective and relational are all components of wellbeing, placing children’s wellbeing as a prime objective, includes both intergenerational dialogue and improved

relationships between stakeholders as central. The ‘Change-scape’ arising from a socio- and cultural-ecological perspectives also helps to link children and young people to their context, including to the different stakeholders with different levels of authority and vulnerability, including both other children and adults.

Attention to context is vital if more meaningful children and young people’s participation is to be achieved in order to improve their wellbeing. Context, however, is complex and therefore needs to be stratified, with analysis taking into account different aspects of the political economy, cultural practices and beliefs and institutional environment, commitment and capacity to change. In this thesis, the ‘Change-scape’ constructed for participatory evaluation has employed Burrawoy’s stratification as specified for realism revisits and modified through this research, depending on the different aspects of external drivers and internal processes. For future processes, however, it may be interesting to see different stratifications that may be tested for other processes, for example for other types of participatory research or planning. Different aspects of context may be identified as important through further research, or it may be the aspects of context constructed during this research are also relevant to other participatory processes with different marginalised groups. Mechanisms, such as intergenerational dialogue and communication, were demonstrated in this thesis as contributing to improved wellbeing and transformational change under certain conditions in different contexts. Further investigation may also therefore be productive in the area of exploring the different mechanisms in varying contexts, although also maintaining flexibility and innovation that that is so important in responsive and exciting participatory processes with children and young people.

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