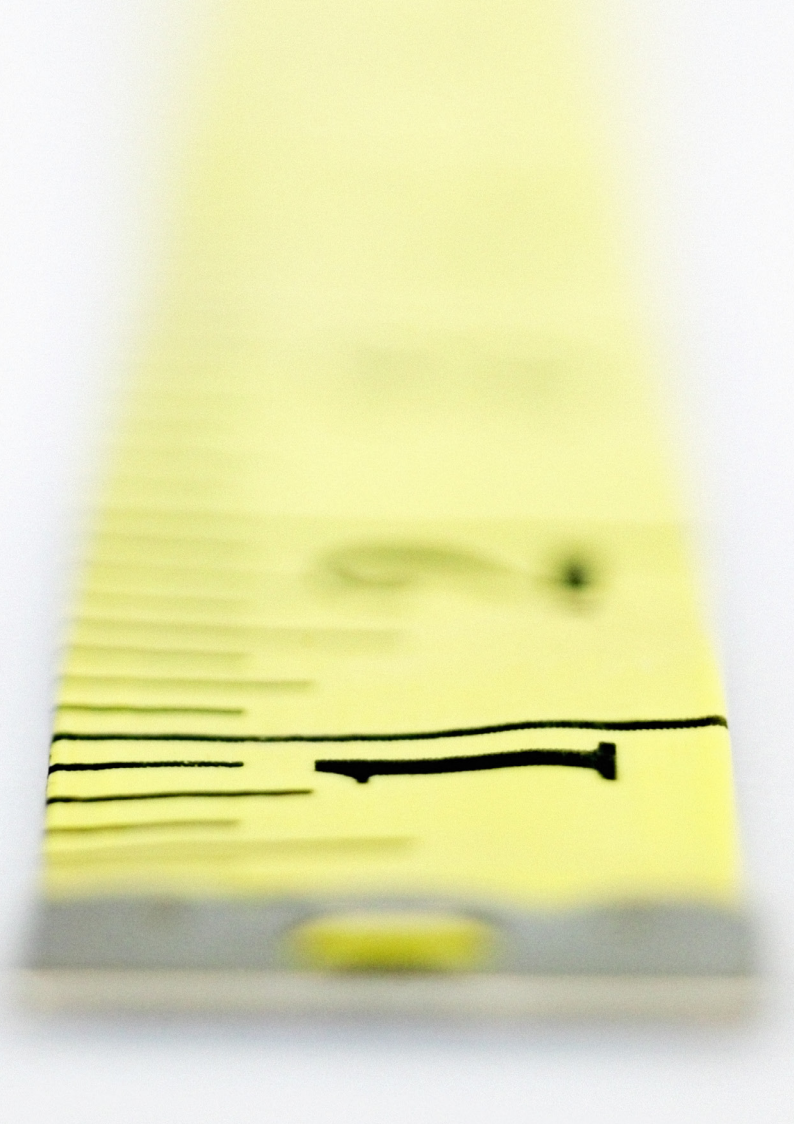# THE CIVIC PULSE
MEASURING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN A COLD CLIMATE

Sam McLean and Benedict Dellot
July 2011

RSA
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ABOUT THE RSA

The RSA has been a source of ideas, innovation and civic enterprise for over 250 years. In the light of new challenges and opportunities for the human race our purpose is to encourage the development of a principled, prosperous society by identifying and releasing human potential. This is reflected in the organisation's recent commitment to the pursuit of what it calls 21st century enlightenment.

Through lectures, events, pamphlets and commissions, the RSA provides a flow of rich ideas and inspiration for what might be realised in a more enlightened world; essential to progress but insufficient without action. RSA Projects aim to bridge this gap between thinking and action. We put our ideas to work for the common good. By researching, designing and testing new ways of living, we hope to foster a more inventive, resourceful and fulfilled society. Through our Fellowship of 27,000 people and through the partnerships we forge, the RSA aims to be a source of capacity, commitment and innovation in communities from the global to the local. Fellows are actively encouraged to engage and to develop local and issue-based initiatives.

ABOUT CITIZEN POWER AND THE CIVIC PULSE

In 2009 Peterborough City Council and the Arts Council approached the RSA to develop a programme of interventions to strengthen civic pride in Peterborough by looking at how participation, attachment and innovation in the city's public services and among its citizens might be enhanced. The Civic Pulse – one of the Citizen Power projects – is helping to deliver those outcomes by developing a new survey tool which can help local authorities to measure and better understand the capacity of local residents to be active in their communities. This paper sets out the foundations for a new tool which will be developed and piloted during the summer of 2011.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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THE CIVIC PULSE MODEL
A SUMMARY

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER?

This paper is the first statement on the thinking behind the Civic Pulse Model being developed by the Citizen Power team at the RSA. In this pamphlet we explain why it is important for policymakers to have a better understanding of the capacity for active citizenship in their local areas. We also set out a preliminary method for measuring the presence or absence of key mechanisms and social assets driving participation.
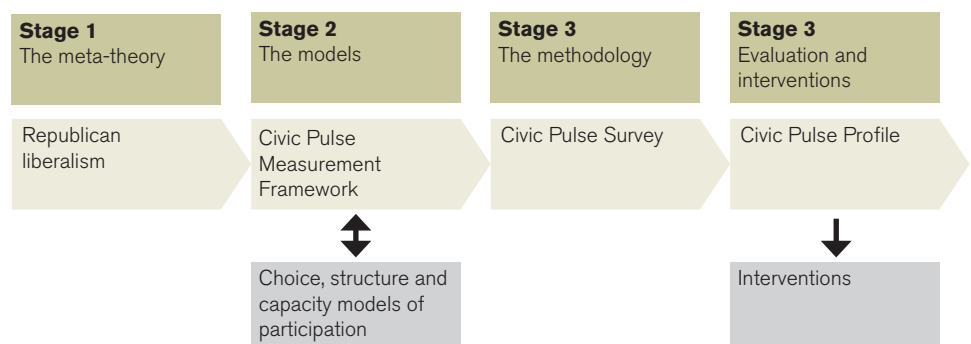
The RSA is continually exploring innovative methods for collecting valuable data on communities, and this paper marks the beginning, rather than the end, of a much needed conversation on the future of measurement tools for local areas. In this section, we summarise the foundations of our emerging Civic Pulse Model.
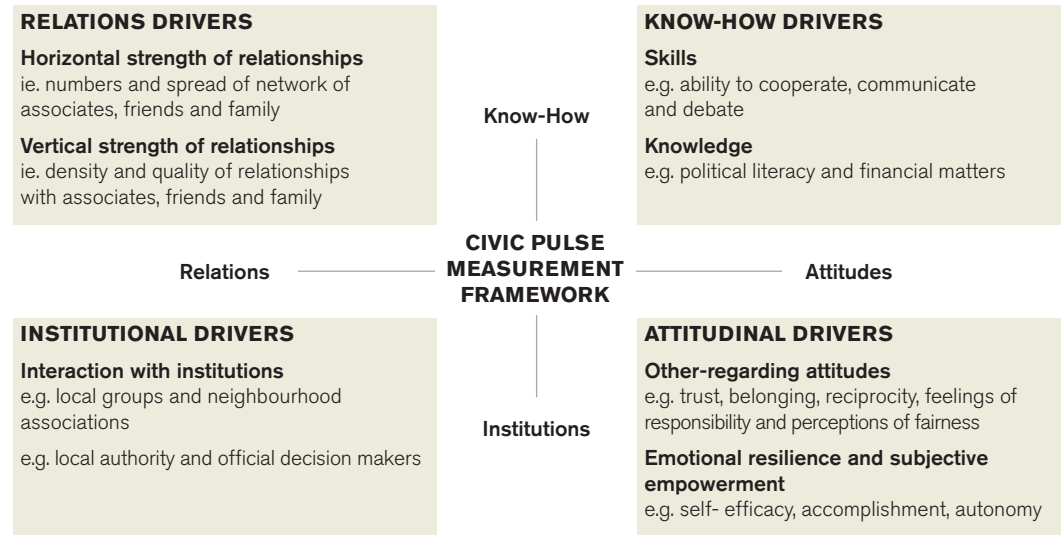
WHAT IS THE CIVIC PULSE MODEL?

The Civic Pulse Model is a new approach to understanding, identifying, and measuring the underlying drivers of active citizenship within communities. It is comprised of four parts:

1   The Theory. Republican liberal citizenship defines 'active citizenship' as participation in collective activity that furthers the 'common good', and considers active citizenship to be a social right and moral obligation.

2   The Framework. The Civic Pulse Measurement Framework brings together key drivers of active citizenship identified by choice, structure and capacity models of citizenship. Drivers of active citizenship are made up of the core mechanisms that enable people to participate effectively in civic life (e.g. trust and emotional resilience). Drivers also take the form of social assets which can be marshalled and shared with others to facilitate participation (e.g. skills and know-how).

3   The Survey. The Civic Pulse Survey measures and identifies the drivers outlined in the Civic Pulse Measurement Framework. The information collected will enable local policymakers (i.e. local authorities and public services) to generate 'Civic Pulse Profiles' which summarise the actual and potential levels of active citizenship in their communities.

4   The Intervention. Local policymakers can use Civic Pulse Profiles to identify areas or groups of people that lack particular drivers. They can then redesign services and develop new initiatives that improve active citizenship by addressing this need.

CIVIC PULSE MODEL

Stage 1 The meta-theory	Stage 2 The models	Stage 3 The methodology	Stage 3 Evaluation and interventions
Republican liberalism	Civic Pulse Measurement Framework	Civic Pulse Survey	Civic Pulse Profile
	Choice, structure and capacity models of participation		Interventions

1 E. Norris and S. Mclean, *The Civic Commons Model: a new approach to social action* (London: RSA, 2011).

WHAT WILL THE CIVIC PULSE MODEL MEASURE?

RELATIONS DRIVERS

Horizontal strength of relationships
ie. numbers and spread of network of associates, friends and family

Vertical strength of relationships
ie. density and quality of relationships with associates, friends and family

KNOW-HOW DRIVERS

Skills
e.g. ability to cooperate, communicate and debate

Knowledge
e.g. political literacy and financial matters

Know-How

CIVIC PULSE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Relations — Attitudes

INSTITUTIONAL DRIVERS

Interaction with institutions
e.g. local groups and neighbourhood associations

e.g. local authority and official decision makers

Institutions

ATTITUDINAL DRIVERS

Other-regarding attitudes
e.g. trust, belonging, reciprocity, feelings of responsibility and perceptions of fairness

Emotional resilience and subjective empowerment
e.g. self- efficacy, accomplishment, autonomy

The Civic Pulse Measurement Framework brings together the drivers of active citizenship into four key domains: know-how; attitudes; relations; and institutions. This framework can be translated into the Civic Pulse Survey which will measure the presence or absence of these drivers. The Survey will also collect data on actual rates of participation, particularly the rates of social participation, which include tacit acts of neighbourliness and volunteering, as well as more demanding examples of active citizenship, like co-producing or running local services.

WHAT WILL CIVIC PULSE DELIVER?

The Civic Pulse Model will attempt to provide local policymakers with something they do not currently have – the ability to measure existing and potential levels of active citizenship, in particular the underlying drivers associated with participation. This gap needs to be closed. If the coalition government is committed to the 'Big Society' and expects citizens to participate in solving social problems, local policymakers need to know if their communities have the capacity to take on a new level of responsibility. They also need to be aware of how they can tap into existing reserves of civic potential – the people and groups who have the skills and talent needed to galvanise others in a community, but whose potential may not yet be fully realised.

The data collected by the Civic Pulse Survey can be used to generate place-based profiles of active citizenship – Civic Pulse Profiles – which provide a snapshot of the health of active citizenship in any particular area.

The Civic Pulse Profile would deliver specific benefits to local policymakers in the UK, empowering them to:

- Identify and direct scarce funding towards those in vulnerable communities who are the least engaged.
- Reengineer existing services and develop new initiatives (e.g. the RSA Civic Commons intervention) which seek to promote participation by plugging those gaps and building upon available assets.[1]
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing services and initiatives that are intended to nurture active citizenship and develop people's capacity to participate.
- Highlight the strengths and weaknesses of their own activity and facilitate public scrutiny of these efforts.

WHAT NEXT?

The RSA's work on the Civic Pulse Model is just the beginning, and the ideas we present in this paper will evolve based on our fieldwork in Peterborough and the contributions of the citizens and stakeholders we are collaborating with. Although this paper outlines a preliminary method for collecting and making use of community data, with the current context in mind we are exploring how the Civic Pulse Survey could be made more cost-effective, robust and accessible by employing new and innovative methods. We will share our findings as we engage with this issue in the months ahead.

2   M. Taylor, *Pro-Social Behaviour: the Future – it's up to us* (London: RSA, 2007).

3   C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The making of modern identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

4   See D. Miller, *The principles of social justice* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2001); and R. Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, citizenship and republican liberalism* (New York: OUP Press, 1997).

5   M. Sandel, *Public Philosophy: Essays on politics and morality in politics* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2005); and A. Ryan, *John Dewey and the high tide of American liberalism* (W. W. Norton & Co, 1995).

6   See J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1971) and *Justice as Fairness: A restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); and M. Walzer, *Politics and Passion: Towards a More Egalitarian Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

7   See J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998).

THE FOUNDATIONS

THE RSA TRADITION

The Civic Pulse Model builds on the longstanding traditions of the RSA. The vision of people working together to develop new solutions to shared problems has been at the heart of the RSA since its formation in 1754. Today, we argue that in order to close the 'social aspiration gap' – the gap separating the society we say we want and need, from the one we have based on our current behaviour – citizens will need to be more engaged, more resourceful and more pro-social.[2]

A NEW CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP: REPUBLICAN LIBERALISM

The vision of active citizenship at the heart of the Civic Pulse Model and the wider Citizen Power programme is at odds with the 'liberal' conceptions of citizenship that have been dominant in Western Europe for decades, perhaps centuries. Most liberal conceptions of citizenship – from libertarianism to egalitarianism – consider civic participation to be a matter of personal freedom rather than a moral obligation.[3]

The RSA takes an alternative and more demanding viewpoint. The concept of active citizenship underpinning the Civic Pulse Model is republican liberalism, which has three key principles.[4]

CIVIC VIRTUE

The first is the republican concept of civic virtue. Participation in public life is good for citizens and society and should be a condition of citizenship, at least in part because it enables people to realise their human potential and develop the personal character required for the 'good society' to grow.[5]

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

The second is an egalitarian liberal conception of distributive justice applied to active citizenship. Everyone should have the capacity to be an active citizen, partake in community self-governance and influence political, social and civic decision-making. No moral obligation to participate in public life should exist unless this condition is met. Government and public services have an important role to play in building that capacity, providing particular support to people lacking the capability or opportunity to participate.[6]

PUBLIC REASON

The third is the deliberative democratic principle of 'public reason'. All public policy decision-making (e.g. the fair distribution of resources and support) should be driven by citizens, fundamentally concerned with the public good, and transparent and open, so that public institutions and citizens can be held to account.[7]

8 H. Dean (ed.), *The Ethics of Welfare: Human rights, dependency and responsibility* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2004).

9 P.F. Whitelely, *Citizen Audit of Great Britain 2000-2001* (University of Essex, 2002).

10 Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, *Power to the People* (London: JRF, 2006).

11 Carnegie Trust, *Making good society* (London: Carnegie Trust, 2010).

12 S. Mclean and E. Andersson, *Activating Empowerment* (London: Ipsos MORI, 2009).

13 See H. Clark, H. Gough, and A. Macfarlane, *It pays dividends: Direct payments and older people* (JRF, 2004); C. Dawson, *Independent successes: implementing Direct Payments* (York: JRF, 2000); Department for Communities and Local Government, *Empowering communities to influence local decision making: a systematic review of the evidence* (London: DCLG, 2009); D. Boyle et al. *Right Here, Right Now: Taking co-production into the mainstream* (London: NEF, 2010); and C. Pattie, P. Seyd, and P. Whiteley, *Citizenship in Britain: Values, Participation and Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

14 R. Putnam. *Bowling Alone* (Simon and Schuster, 2001).

15 S. Parker, 'Participation: a new operating system for public services?' in S. Creasy, *Participation Nation: Reconnecting Citizens to the Public Realm* (London: Involve, 2007) cited in E. Brodie et al. *Understanding Participation: A Literature Review* (London: NCVO, Involve and IVR, 2009).

16 A. Bandura, 'Self-efficacy: The exercise of control' (New York: Freeman, 1997) cited in E. Brodie et al. *Understanding Participation: A literature review* (London: NCVO, Involve and IVR, 2009).

17 NCVO, Involve and IVR, *Briefing paper no.1 – What is participation? Towards a round-earth view of participation.* (London: NCVO, Involve and IVR, 2009).

These three principles form a republican liberal conception of citizenship, which considers active citizenship to be a social right and civic obligation. It places particular emphasis on developing the ability of people to shape their own lives and the life of their communities and public institutions.[8] This conception of citizenship is concerned with more than helping people to help themselves; it's also about helping people to fulfil a moral obligation to help others and contribute to the common good, which demands a high level of participation and commitment.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP WORKS

This commitment to republican liberalism reflects a growing consensus over the last decade that involving more people in social and political decision-making is desirable and practically beneficial. This has been the conclusion of every major review of democratic and social renewal, including the Citizen Audit of Great Britain,[9] the Power Inquiry[10] and the Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland.[11]

There is strong evidence to show that involving people in decision-making and co-production can help to deliver improved public services.[12] Having people meaningfully involved in decision-making helps to foster services that are better tailored to the needs of individuals and communities, while also providing a powerful, empowering incentive for those who become involved to participate in other areas of public life.[13]

Active citizenship also delivers benefits to society that go beyond the potential for improved public services. While the relationship between cause and effect is difficult to determine, higher levels of social participation have been associated with stronger levels of social capital[14] and greater happiness.[15] What is more, active citizenship can improve participants' confidence, and enable people to develop skills and attributes which they can use in other areas of their lives.[16]

DEFINING PARTICIPATION

A key term in this paper is 'participation'. But what do we mean by it? The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) distinguishes three types of participation: public participation – engaging with the state; social participation – engaging with other people; and individual participation – personal acts aiming to achieve social change, such as donating to a good cause.[17]

Republican liberalism presupposes a society in which people work together to overcome the collective challenges they face. For this reason, the Civic Pulse Model is predominantly concerned with, although not limited to, social participation.

18 D. Cameron, *Have no doubt, the big society is on its way* (Observer, Sunday 13 February 2011.)

19 See N. Boles, *Which way's up? The future for coalition Britain and how to get there* (London: Biteback, 2010); and P. Blond, *Red Tory: How the left and right broke Britain and how we can fix it* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

20 Institute for Fiscal Studies. *The IFS Green Budget: February 2011* (London: IFS, 2011).

21 2020 Public Services Trust. *2020 Welfare: Life, Work, Locality*. (London: 2020PST 2010).

22 Cabinet Office Strategy Unit and HM Treasury, *Power in People's Hands: Learning from the World's Best Public Services* (London: Cabinet Office/COI, 2009). See also C. Hatton. *A Report on in Control's Second Phase* (London: In Control, 2008).

23 See P. Diamond, 'Public services: A radical settlement for the next decade', in P. Diamond (ed.) *Public Matters: The renewal of the public realm* (London: Politico's, 2007).

24 M. Glasman, *Labour as a radical tradition* (Soundings, December 2011).

25 See B. Page, *Building the Big Society*, presentation to the Cabinet Office, November 2011.

26 See NCVO, *Participation: trends, facts and figures. An NCVO Almanac 2011*. Retrieved from http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

27 B. Barber, *A place for us: How to make society civil and democracy strong* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

28 D. Miller, *Principles of Social Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

29 HM Government, *State of the Nation Report: Poverty, worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK* (London: Cabinet Office, 2009); and Office for National Statistics, *The effect of taxes and benefits on household income* (ONS, 2009).

30 See NCVO, 2010. Op cit.

CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

CITIZENSHIP AND THE BIG SOCIETY

Republican liberalism is more than a philosophical ideal – it is a vision of citizenship well-suited to the current challenges of austerity, and closely aligned with the nascent demands of localism and the 'Big Society'.

Most political slogans have a lifecycle of days or hours – not so the Big Society. Having survived the general election campaign and the early stages of the coalition government, its relaunch suggests that the Big Society is likely to stay for some time yet. But what is it? David Cameron tells us that it combines three distinct dimensions, each firmly couched in a sense of personal and collective responsibility:

"The Big Society comprises three clear methods to bring people together to improve their lives and the lives of others: devolving power to the lowest level so neighbourhoods take control of their destiny; opening up our public services, putting trust in professionals and power in the hands of the people they serve; and encouraging volunteering and social action so people contribute more to their community." [18]

Some new Conservatives consider this renewed emphasis on responsibility to be the appropriate medicine needed to cure 'broken Britain'.[19] While these views on the state of British society can seem overstated, they prompt us to ask what value a resurgent active citizenry might bring to society more generally.

Part of the answer is practical. Out of the 29 leading industrial countries, only Ireland and Iceland will experience sharper funding cuts than Britain.[20] Our austere fiscal climate will require a transformation in the role that citizens play in shaping public services and the places in which they live. We will need to become what the 2020 Public Services Hub at the RSA has termed a 'socially productive' society, with more people coming together to identify, understand and solve public problems using all appropriate means.[21] The best public services, from prisoner rehabilitation services in Denmark, to social care in Finland, to the co-production of adult social care services in the UK, have long recognised this.[22]

The Big Society focus on active participation and social responsibility also holds a normative appeal. It speaks to people from across the ideological spectrum who believe that British politics and public policy has for too long lacked an animating vision of the 'good society' based on shared obligations of citizenship and self-government.[23] As Maurice Glassman argues, participation in community life is not only of instrumental value, it is a good and desirable end in itself.[24]

RECOGNISING THE CHALLENGES

But policymakers need to be realistic. Despite consistent efforts by the last government to get more people involved in public participation and volunteering, only 4 per cent of people are involved in their local services[25] and the number of people volunteering has remained stagnant for the past ten years.[26]

Neither social nor public participation are even playing fields. Not everyone has or will have the motivation or personal capabilities they need to be civically active,[27] and some places lack the collective drive or capacity to be the self-governing communities the coalition government wants to see. Many are excluded from participating in society due to resource constraints.[28] Indeed, rates of social and political participation and state dependency vary greatly across the country and within different demographic groups.[29] The Third Sector Research Centre has identified a 'civic core' made up of 8 per cent of the adult population who are providing nearly half the total voluntary hours within the UK and who are drawn from a very narrow social demography. [30]

31 J. Rowson, S. Broome and A. Jones, *Connected Communities: How social networks power and sustain the Big Society* (London: RSA, 2010).

32 A. Coote, Ten Big Questions about the Big Society' (London: NEF, 2010).

33 A. Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

34 M. Nussbaum, The Discernment of Perception: An Aristotelian Conception of Private and Public Rationality in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* (1986), 2:151-201.

35 Department for Communities and Local Government. *Decentralisation and Localism Bill: An Essential Guide* (London: CLG, 2010).

36 See J. Wolff and A. de-Shalit' , *Disadvantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

With this in mind, forward-thinking local authorities like Peterborough City Council are beginning to ask themselves three questions. What capacity do we have within our citizenry to meet the challenges we face? How can we cultivate it where it is absent? And, perhaps most importantly, how do we activate and tap into it where it is latent? As the RSA's recent Connected Communities report argues, the future success of policy initiatives and the state of public services rest on whether or not they are able to galvanise an area's existing assets, be that their networks of people and organisations, or their physical infrastructure.[31]

The work of RSA Projects is continually focused on finding the best means by which we can unlock such 'hidden wealth'. One approach, advocated in this paper, asks local policymakers to start measuring the mechanisms and social assets which drive and sustain active citizenship in their communities. In particular, we propose that they pay attention to identifying and nurturing the underlying capabilities that citizens need in order to participate effectively.[32] As Amartya Sen[33] and Martha Nussbaum[34] argue, participation in civic life is a capability in itself and we should aim to develop it wherever possible.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

This presents a practical challenge to local policymakers who lack the research tools to understand where these drivers exist. The Localism Bill has introduced new measures to further decentralise power to local communities, yet they have no way of assessing levels of active citizenship or of evaluating the performance of neighbouring institutions against locally agreed priorities.[35] The local government performance management framework (including the Citizenship and Place Surveys, which once gave local authorities a snapshot of active citizenship in their communities) has now been abandoned.

Yet the progressive credentials of the government rest on their ability to reduce deprivation and empower the most disadvantaged in society to take control of their lives and help shape society for the better.[36] To equip them in this effort, local policymakers need a new way of measuring active citizenship which can identify both 'civic assets' as well as areas of 'civic need' within communities, and which can be used to fashion appropriate interventions to stimulate levels of participation. Given the current financial climate, this will need to be done in ways which save the taxpayer money in the long run. The Civic Pulse Model aims to be part of this solution.

In the next section, we look at new measurement approaches in the UK which have influenced the development of the Civic Pulse Model.

37 N. Wei. *Navigating the Big Society.* (Blog posted 10 September 2010), retrieved at http://natwei.wordpress.com/2010/11/24/unlocking-hidden-wealth-part-1-finding-time/.

38 IPPR and PwC. *Capable Communities: Towards Citizen-Powered Public Services.* (London: IPPR and PwC, 2010).

39 V. Lowndes, 'Institutionalism in citizenship: How to better target resources based on knowledge of what people can do' in *Journal of Political Studies*, September 2007.

TOWARDS A NEW MODEL OF MEASUREMENT

AFTER THE CITIZENSHIP AND PLACE SURVEYS

The Citizenship Survey and Place Survey provided government and local policymakers with important data on citizenship. They measured volunteering rates, feelings of influence and levels of social cohesion at the community level. They also provided policymakers working in the area of civic health with longitudinal data to compare different localities and assess changes to aspects of citizenship, including participation in consultation processes, over time.

The focus of the Place Survey on perception and satisfaction with local services was well-aligned with an approach to public service reform driven by the state, when national targets and indicators were the norm in the public sector, and when local government budgets were on average 30 per cent higher than they are now. But this feels less relevant in 2011 and out of step with the coalition government's talk of the 'Big Society' and its emphasis on localism, resistance to top-down target setting, and the reality of significantly reduced budgets.

The Citizenship and Place Surveys were limited in three major ways. First, they paid little attention to more nuanced aspects of 'everyday citizenship', including reciprocal behaviour and acts of kindness. Second, they did not tend to gauge emotional resilience, social networks and other key mechanisms and assets of active citizenship. And third, they did not take into account some important contemporary indicators of participation, such as hyperlocal blogging and time banking.[37] As a recent report from ippr and PwC shows, we run the risk of overlooking a number of pro-social activities that people are willing to take part in.[38] For instance, of the people they interviewed, as many as 46 per cent said they were willing to keep an eye on an elderly neighbour. The conclusion to draw is that we require updated measurements that can pick up on these subtle activities.

Policymakers now have the opportunity to develop new measurements of citizenship more appropriate to the changing role of state and citizen. These should consider a wider range of activities, as well as the diverse array of mechanisms and assets that actually drive and enable people to be the active citizens the Big Society requires. Such information would enable policymakers at the local level to develop improved strategies for cultivating participation and active citizenship.[39]

LEARNING FROM NEW MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORKS IN THE UK

The past five years have seen the emergence of new measurement frameworks in the UK which can be used to better understand active citizenship and the civic vibrancy of local areas. Four case studies have influenced the development of the Civic Pulse Model. These are outlined below:

Case study 1 WARM – WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE MEASURE

The Wellbeing and Resilience Measure was developed by the Young Foundation in 2010 to measure levels of wellbeing and resilience at a local level. It aims to provide a better understanding of how people feel about the quality of their lives in a way that is cost-effective and instructive.

WARM measures the assets and vulnerabilities of three domains within a community: Systems and structures (economy and public services); Supports (social capital and networks); and Self (income, wellbeing, autonomy and self-efficacy). Rather than using a new survey to collect this information, the framework draws upon existing data from past surveys (e.g. Place Survey and British Household Panel Survey) to create a useful picture of the shape of local neighbourhoods.

WARM can be used by local authorities to identify which groups and areas are most vulnerable. With this information to hand, the local authority and public sector organisations can make more informed decisions about where to direct their resources.

South Tyneside Council established the Vitality Index in 2006 to set the benchmark for measuring future deprivation. The Vitality Index provides a holistic assessment of changes in deprivation in 71 self-defined neighbourhoods in South Tyneside.

The Vitality Index takes into account many aspects of 'inequality of capability'. It includes 38 'indicators' of deprivation statistically combined into 8 domains: **1)** working age benefit dependency, **2)** income dependency, **3)** health dependency, **4)** education dependency, **5)** housing dependency, **6)** crime dependency, **7)** local services dependency and **8)** access to key services dependencies. These are combined into overall deprivation and neighbourhoods ranked from best to worst.

The Vitality Index is used by local public services and third sector organisations to: **a)** develop area and neighbourhood plans, **b)** prepare neighbourhood profiles, **c)** help evaluate the impact of policy interventions, **d)** direct neighbourhood action planning and **e)** prepare funding bids.

The CLEAR model has been designed by three of the foremost academics in the field of local government participation: Professors Gerry Stoker, Vivien Lowndes and Lawrence Pratchett.

CLEAR is a diagnostic tool – the CLEAR model – that anticipates obstacles to involvement in local decision-making and links these to policy responses. It identifies five key factors: *Can do*—have the resources and knowledge to participate; *Like to*—have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation; *Enabled to*—are provided with the opportunity for decision-making; *Asked to*—are mobilised through public agencies and civic channels; and *Responded to*—can see evidence that their views have been considered.

The CLEAR model enables policymakers to look at citizens and ask questions about their capacities, sense of community and civic organisations. It also asks them to examine their own organisational and decision-making structures and assess whether they have the qualities that allow them to listen to, and take account of, messages from citizen participation in decision-making.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Citizen Audit was designed by Professors Charles Pattie, Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley in 2001 to study the state of citizenship in the UK.

The Audit provided a holistic evaluation of the rights and obligations of citizenship. It measured people's civic attitudes, civic behaviours, structural incentives, barriers to participation, civic efficacy and political knowledge.

The methodology was comprised of three parts: a representative face-to-face survey, a panel survey and follow-up interviews. The rationale for the framework was to study changes in the levels of citizenship over time.

WHAT'S MISSING?

What benefit would a new Civic Pulse Model bring when there are already examples of new measurement approaches like these? While these models offer a useful starting point for taking the pulse of active citizenship in a place, they fail to provide us with a sufficient understanding of the actual and potential levels of the form of active citizenship outlined earlier.

The WARM framework is useful in demonstrating how nuanced drivers of participation such as resilience and wellbeing can be measured, but it is still insufficient for measuring active citizenship for two reasons. First, it is geared towards measuring wellbeing and quality of life, rather than citizenship or participation. Second, it is based on secondary analysis of data sets (not primary data), some of which are derived from surveys which are no longer undertaken in local areas.

The Vitality Index provides insight into one dimension of active citizenship (resources), and uses a website to make the data open-source and therefore available to local people. But the Vitality Index is hindered by a narrow emphasis on material resources at the expense of all other indicators. And it concentrates heavily on what communities do not have, rather than on their 'social assets' (e.g. skills and social networks).

Both the CLEAR model and the Citizen Audit seek to measure the drivers behind citizenship. But like the Place and Citizenship Surveys, they are limited in specific ways: they do not measure a wide range of important subjective drivers of participation (e.g. resilience and confidence), and their large expense means local policymakers are very unlikely to use them. The Citizen Audit does not measure everyday types of civic activity like providing informal care and support for neighbours, while the CLEAR model focuses on participation in official decision-making processes, as opposed to social action, such as community organising, which germinates from the bottom-up.

40 D. Halpern, *The Hidden Wealth of Nations* (Bristol: Polity Press, 2009).

41 Ipsos MORI, *Do people want to join the government of Britain?* (London: Ipsos MORI, 2010).

42 See for instance S. Abdallah et al. *National Accounts of Well-being* (London: NEF, 2009).

43 See RSA, *Civic Health Seminar Summary* (London: RSA, 2010).

PRINCIPLES OF A NEW MODEL

These limitations suggest the need for a new means of measuring active citizenship in the form of the Civic Pulse Model. When combined together, WARM, the Vitality Index, CLEAR, and the Civic Audit all contribute a number of learning principles which the Civic Pulse Model draws upon.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Get beyond satisfaction and opinions
Measuring public satisfaction with services is important. Knowing what people want and think drives up standards of public service delivery.[40] The problem is the gap between what people say and what people do. 75 per cent of people say that active participation in their communities is important. The reality is that only five per cent of people actively participate on a regular basis.[41] Civic Pulse needs to measure more than just perception.

Principle 2: Measure subjective drivers of active citizenship behaviour
It is important for any measurement of citizenship to tap into the subjective factors (e.g. levels of confidence) influencing the likelihood of someone wanting and being able to participate. Supplementing objective indicators with subjective ones will provide a richer account of what drives participation and what prevents it.

Principle 3: Measure more nuanced drivers of active citizenship behaviour
Once seen as being beyond the capacity of surveys to measure, with the help of a wealth of emerging research, aspects such as emotional resilience and wellbeing are now considered quantifiable.[42] Civic Pulse needs to capitalise on these new indicators and capture much 'softer', but no less important, drivers of participation.

Principle 4: Look at social assets, not just deficits
Measuring where there are gaps in the drivers of participation is useful for local policymakers. It provides a means of locating areas of highest need and helps them to design responses to address those deficiencies. But in a cold economic climate the Civic Pulse Model should also be measuring and identifying community assets (e.g. people with high skill levels and dense social networks) so that policymakers can design interventions that go with the grain of a community's strengths.[43]

44 C. Patti, P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, 2004. Op cit.

45 See NCVO, *Participation: trends, facts and figures. An NCVO Almanac 2011*. Retrieved from http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk.

46 P. Vizard, *Equality, Cohesion and Public Services* (London: 2020 PST, 2010).

47 B. Duffy and D. Lee Chan, *People, Perceptions and Place* (London: Ipsos MORI, 2009).

48 J. Rowson, S. Broome and A. Jones, 2010. Op cit.

49 For an excellent introduction to the theory and methods of political science see D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

50 For an excellent analysis of the drivers and barriers to participation see E. Brodie et al. *Understanding Participation: A Literature Review* (London: NCVO, Involve and IVR, 2009).

51 See S. Verba and N. Nie, *Participation in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974).

52 R. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic traditions in modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

THE CIVIC PULSE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK: WHAT DO WE WANT TO MEASURE?

Based on these principles, what would the Civic Pulse approach to measuring active citizenship look like? In this section we outline the foundations of The Civic Pulse Measurement Framework and the underlying drivers of active citizenship (mechanisms and social assets) which the Civic Pulse Model will measure.

THE NEED FOR A HOLISTIC MODEL

Any measurement of the drivers underlying active citizenship must include a consideration of socio-economic factors. The Citizen Audit, for instance, found a strong correlation between citizenship and income: people on higher incomes were found to participate in civic life, on average, far more than those on lower incomes.[44] Likewise, educational background is also a strong predictor of participation. Twice as many people with a degree or equivalent volunteer formally at least once a year compared to those with no qualifications.[45]

But what drives or prevents people from being active citizens cannot be reduced to an IFS income distribution graph or an educational league table.[46] Places with high levels of multiple deprivation often have high levels of civic participation. This is driven by other factors, including dissatisfaction with local services[47] and high levels of interpersonal trust, which are not specific to high income social groups.[48]

Alongside socio-economic factors is usually a discussion of willingness; some people, it is often said, simply don't want to participate. But evidence suggests that willingness is not an isolated variable set in stone. While wanting to get involved is paramount to people participating in their community, this form of motivation is subject to other factors, both conscious and unconscious, which cannot always be determined by a simple calculation of costs and benefits. These might include whether or not there is a strong social norm of participation where citizens live, or whether or not they feel they have the skills to participate, which in turn gives them more confidence to engage with others.

The complexity and diversity of the mechanisms and assets which drive and sustain levels of active citizenship is reflected in the different models used in political science to explain the prevalence of participation and citizenship.[49] That is, why some people participate and others do not. The dominant models remain choice models, which consider civic participation in terms of the informed choices people make; and structural models, which focus on the social norms and resources people have. A third type has emerged in recent years: capacity models, which explain participation in terms of the personal skills, knowledge and attitudes people possess.[50]

In the table below we summarise each model and the drivers of participation they emphasise.

STRUCTURAL MODELS OF PARTICIPATION
Civic voluntarism model[51]
This model emphasises the importance of **resources** (time and money), **psychological engagement** (individual sense of efficacy) and **social networks** (affiliation to groups and organisations).
Social capital model[52]
This model shows us the importance of **social trust** (relations between people) **and institutional trust** (relationships with institutions). Interactions between individuals in voluntary associations generate interpersonal relationships (i.e. social capital). Social outcomes improve when people trust each other and work together to solve collective problems.

53 See H. Clark, D. Sanders, M. Stewart and P. Whiteley, *Political Choice in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

54 See P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, *New Labour's Grassroots* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

55 See the CRELL Research Network on Active Citizenship for Democracy project, accessible at http://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/

CHOICE MODELS OF PARTICIPATION

Cognitive engagement model[53]

This model is based on a vision of 'homo economicus', which suggests that people participate when they **1)** have **access to information and knowledge**, and **2)** use that information to make **informed choices**. The core concepts of this model are education, media consumption, interest in and knowledge of politics, and **levels of satisfaction** with public policy.

General incentives model[54]

This model shows us that people need incentives to participate. People participate when they feel they can make a difference to decision-making **(collective incentives)**; when it enables them to fulfil other objectives like meeting new people **(specific incentives)**; when they think it'll improve conditions for the majority of people **(group incentives)**; if other people around them are already doing so **(social norms)**; or if they have an attachment to other people or a place **(emotional incentives)**.

CAPACITY MODELS OF PARTICIPATION

Civic Competencies model[55]

This model emphasises the importance of a set of personal attributes, assets and abilities which support people to participate effectively. Equipped with the right skills (e.g. active listening), knowledge (e.g. political literacy), attitudes (e.g. trust and respect), values (e.g. equality and fairness), and identity (e.g. sense of community), people are more likely to feel an obligation to be an active citizen and be better placed to add value to their community.

Each of these models provides a valuable perspective as to why people participate and how participation can be encouraged and sustained. But focusing on one particular model would be to ignore the insights provided by the others. The Civic Pulse Model draws together factors from each of these approaches into a single measurement framework, and in doing so provides a more rounded, evidence-based measure of the drivers of active citizenship.

THE CIVIC PULSE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

The Civic Pulse Measurement Framework outlines what the Civic Pulse Model intends to measure. The framework is comprised of four dimensions of drivers impacting on active citizenship. These have been derived using the structural, choice and capacity models and include know-how, attitudes, relations and institutions, alongside socio-economic factors, including income, education and wealth.

The Framework is in the process of being developed, and these drivers are not comprehensive. They are, however, indicative of the kinds of mechanisms and assets associated with participation that the Civic Pulse Model will attempt to measure.

56 This dimension, particularly in relation to the mental demands of participation, is being explored and developed in greater detail in a forthcoming RSA Projects Social Brain publication.

57 See http://civicsurvey.org and J. Kahne and S. Sporte, 'Developing Citizens: The impacts of civic learning opportunities on students' commitment to civic participation' in *American Educational Research Journal*, 45:3 738-766.

58 See www.in-control.org.uk for more information.

59 Department for Communities and Local Government, *The Community Right to Build*. (London: CLG, 2010).

60 A. Ellis, *Barriers to participation for under-represented groups in school governance* (London: Institute for Volunteering Research, 2003) cited in E. Brodie et al. 2009 Op cit.

61 B. Hoskins and R. Crick, 'Competencies for Learning to Learn and Active Citizenship: different currencies or two sides of the same coin?' in *European Journal of Education* 45:1 2010.

62 E. Andersson, S. Burall and E. Fennell. *Talking for a change: a distributed dialogue approach to complex issues*. (London: Involve, 2010).

63 N. Low et al. *Helping Out: A national study of volunteering and charitable giving*. London: Cabinet Office 2007 cited in E. Brodie et al., 2009. Op cit.

The dimensions of the Civic Pulse Measurement Framework are summarised in the table below.

CIVIC PULSE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK		
Dimension	**Necessary underlying drivers (mechanisms and assets)**	**Existing behaviours**
Know-How	■ Skills (e.g. ability to cooperate, organise, communicate and debate) ■ Knowledge (e.g. political and financial literacy)	■ Interacting with neighbours (e.g. greeting one another in the street) ■ Informal and formal volunteering ■ Being part of a community group or housing association ■ Campaigning, internet blogging and community organising ■ Helping to shape, control, or set-up local services ■ Political participation (e.g. influencing council decisions affecting community)
Attitudes	■ Other-regarding attitudes (e.g. trust, belonging, reciprocity, feelings of responsibility and perceptions of fairness) ■ Emotional resilience and subjective empowerment (e.g. self-efficacy, accomplishment, vitality and autonomy)	
Relations	■ Horizontal strength of relationships (i.e. numbers and spread of network of associates, friends and family) ■ Vertical strength of relationships (i.e. density and quality of relationships with associates, friends and family)	
Institutions	■ Relationship with local groups and neighbourhood associations ■ Relationships with public services ■ Relationships with the local authority and official decision-makers	
Resources		
Socio-economic drivers	■ Levels of income ■ Levels of wealth ■ Levels of education	
Source: RSA (2011)		

Know-How[56]

The **know-how** dimension relates to the 'personal capital' – knowledge and skills – that an individual can draw upon to participate in their community.

Knowledge covers political literacy and know-how about how to influence public policy.[57] This is essential for people who wish to manage their own health treatment using personal budgeting or to decide which social care support to choose.[58] On a complex level, greater familiarity with organisational and bureaucratic procedures is linked to deeper types of civic action, from setting up a voluntary group, to influencing decisions on new housing developments.[59] A lack of understanding about how to get involved in civic activity is also a key barrier to less demanding forms of participation, such as attending a neighbourhood association meeting.[60]

Skills refer to specific abilities such as those required to cooperate, communicate, work autonomously and cope with ambiguity. These allow people to engage with others and work together in solving problems affecting the local and wider community.[61] The capacity for deliberation, for instance, is regularly cited as an important capability, especially in terms of engaging in collaborative conversation and managing difficult compromises in communities.[62] There are also more generic skills to consider, such as media literacy and an acquaintance with IT. These can help with activities spanning from writing letters to the local council to setting up a hyperlocal blog. In general, a lack of skills and confidence is a key impediment to all kinds of participation. Two-thirds of respondents to the Helping Out Survey did not feel they had the adequate skills or experience to volunteer.[63]

Attitudes

The **attitudes** dimension encompasses personal characteristics, feelings, questions of identity and general values that are important drivers of participation. Particularly important are other-regarding attitudes, such as feelings of social trust, agreeableness, belonging, fairness and emotional resilience.

64 C. Elshaug and J. Metzer, 'Personality attributes of Volunteers and Paid Workers Engaged in Similar Occupational Tasks' in *The Journal of Social Psychology* 141:6 2001; and A. B. Bakker et al., 'The Relationship Between the Big Five Personality Factors and Burnout: A Study Among Volunteer Counselors' in *The Journal of Social Psychology* 135:5 2002.

65 D. Perkins, B. Brown and R. B. Taylor, 'The ecology of empowerment: Predicting participation in community organizations' in *Journal of Social Issues* 1996 cited in A. McBride Op cit.

66 P. John, *Rediscovering the civic and achieving better outcomes in public policy. Policy briefing: Why do some people become good citizens? (Manchester: IPEG, 2010)* retrieved at http://www.civicbehaviour.org.uk.

67 M. Corcoran, 'Place attachment and Community Sentiment in Marginalised Neighbourhoods: A European Case Study' in *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 11:1 2002.

68 D. Couto, 'How Resilience Works' in *Harvard Business Review*, Havard Business Publishing May 2002.

69 P. Thoits and L. Hewitt, 'Volunteer Work and Well-being' in *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 42:115-131 2001.

70 M. Taylor, *Signposts to community development* (London: Community Development Foundation, 1992) cited in E. Brodie et al. Op cit.

71 M. A. Musick and J. Wilson, *Volunteers: A social profile*. Indian University Press 2008 cited in E. Brodie et al. Op cit

72 See NCVO. *Participation: trends, facts and figures. An NCVO Almanac 2011.* Retrieved from http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

73 J. Rowson, S. Broome and A. Jones, 2010. Op cit.

74 D. Francis and P. Henderson, *Working with Rural Communities*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992) cited in E. Brodie et al. 2009 Op cit.

75 E. Brodie et al. 2009 Op cit.

76 N. Low, S. Butt, A. Ellis Paine and J. David Smith, *Helping Out: A national study of volunteering and charitable giving* (London: Cabinet Office, 2007) cited in E Brodie et al. 2009 Op cit.

77 V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker. 'Diagnosing and Remedying the Failings of Official Participation Schemes: the CLEAR Framework' in *Social Policy and Society* 5:2:281-291 2006.

78 J. Pearce and E-J. Milne, *Participation and community on Bradford's traditionally white estates* (London: JRF, 2010).

Having strong 'pro-social' feelings such as empathy increases the likelihood that citizens will be engaged.[64] There is also very strong empirical evidence that feelings of neighbourliness can help to cultivate civic participation.[65] Although the link between trust and participation is now being brought into question, feelings of belonging and attachment are still widely considered to have a positive effect on participation rates.[66] Mary Corcoran's work in European cities shows how residents drew strength from attachment to their local area in order to come together and tackle drug dealers outside of their homes.[67]

The attitudinal dimension also includes emotional resilience, which refers to the capacity to bounce back from everyday setbacks.[68] This is comprised of a number of facets including feelings of self-efficacy, confidence, and autonomy. People who help others and participate in their communities benefit from higher levels of emotional resilience and wellbeing, but this also works the other way round. People with strong levels of emotional resilience and wellbeing are more likely to seek community service and voluntary work, as well as be asked to participate in them.[69]

Relations

The **relations** dimension refers to the social networks and personal associations which people can access for support and which shape social norms. Social networks act as an important motivator for engaging in civic action. As Marilyn Taylor has pointed out, interest in participation flows from social bonds embedded in extensive social networks.[70] Evidence shows that people with deep and wide-ranging connections, from family, to friends, to colleagues, are more likely to hear about opportunities for participation, as well as to be asked to get involved.[71] Nearly one in five people are prevented from volunteering because they haven't heard of any opportunities to help.[72]

Social networks are also vectors for transmitting civic knowledge and skills, as well as for gaining an influence over people in positions of power.[73] There will always be gatekeepers and lynchpins that control access to the most important contacts and who can facilitate participation (e.g. time bank moderators). The relationships people have with these gatekeepers can determine whether they gain access to a group or not, and their open or closed style can mean the difference between transformative and negligible participation in an area.[74] In general, social networks are a key force for sustaining participation as they help to associate community engagement with a sense of loyalty and obligation.[75]

Institutions

The **institutions** dimension refers to the practices and availability of local institutions – from the local authority to voluntary groups – which impact upon levels of active citizenship. Participation is a two-way process and institutions can be an impediment or an enabler of active citizenship depending on the opportunities they create for people to participate, and the techniques they use to do this. Too much bureaucratic 'red-tape' (e.g. dealing with insurance and liability) is one of the major barriers preventing people from participating in or understanding more structured forms of civic participation (see skills dimension).[76]

The CLEAR framework identifies three particular areas where institutions and organisations can play a part in cultivating active citizenship and facilitating participation:[77]

- 'Enabling' means providing people with actual opportunities to participate and influence decision-making (e.g. by providing spaces and funding);
- 'Asking' is based on strong evidence that people are more likely to participate if invited by institutions; and
- 'Responding' refers to the feedback that people receive having participated in a decision-making process. People will only continue to participate if they are able to see that they are influencing community outcomes and decision-making.

Experience of 'talking shop' engagement angers and demoralises people, and inhibits future participation.[78] What is more, as with any action, people want their involvement to be recognised and appreciated. Finally, whether or not people have 'democratic trust' in their local institutions is a key motivator of participation.

In the final section, we outline how the drivers and assets included in the Civic Pulse Measurement Framework will be translated into a survey which local areas can use to measure, and subsequently foster, existing and potential levels of active citizenship.

THE CIVIC PULSE SURVEY:
HOW MIGHT IT BE USED?

The Civic Pulse Measurement Framework, which outlines the core mechanisms and assets driving participation, will be used to develop the Civic Pulse Survey. This will collect information that will equip local policymakers with the knowledge and insights they need to promote participation and galvanise residents in their communities. The Civic Pulse Survey is one tool among many which the RSA is currently developing as part of its efforts to help identify, develop and tap into community assets. In this section we outline the basic methodological framework of the Civic Pulse Survey, which is in the early stages of development. We are currently exploring ways to improve this through new and innovative methods, including social network analysis.

THE STAGES OF THE CIVIC PULSE SURVEY
Implementation of the Civic Pulse Survey will consist of five key stages, illustrated in the chart below:
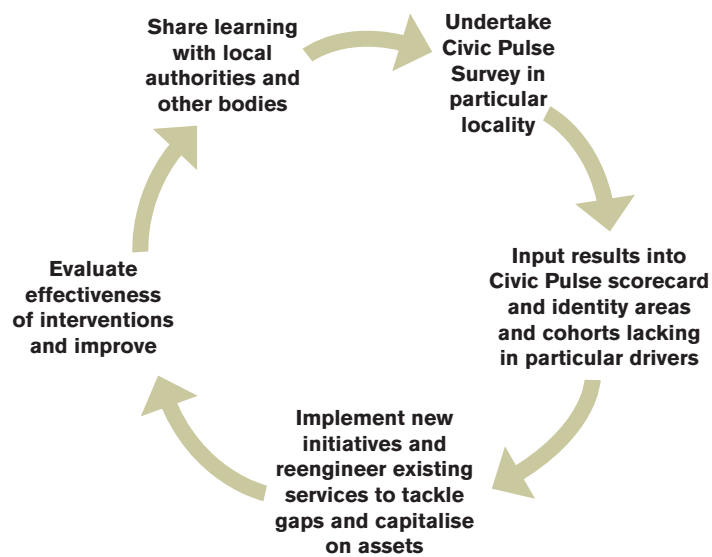
Stage 1: Undertake the Civic Pulse Survey
The first stage is to deploy the Civic Pulse Survey in a local area. The Survey will contain questions designed to measure the area's existing levels of participation as well as the presence or absence of drivers identified in the Civic Pulse Measurement Framework. It is envisaged that the local authority would be the primary body undertaking the Survey, although the Local Strategic Partnership may also wish to deploy the tool. In order to ensure cost-effectiveness, the Civic Pulse Survey would be completed by participants online.

Stage 2: Construct the Civic Pulse Profile
The second stage is to use the Survey data to create a Civic Pulse Profile, a template of which is shown below. The Profile would be based on the dimensions outlined in the Civic Pulse Measurement Framework and, once the data has been input into the template, would provide an overall snapshot of the existing and potential levels of active citizenship in the local area.

As part of the Profile, there would also be a section containing the results of a complementary area (the 'benchmark community'). A similar approach used by the Florida Civic Index suggests that benchmarking against other local areas with similar population sizes and demographics provides a more insightful analysis.[78] This is based on the premise that it is both fairer and more appropriate to compare one area's results against another which is facing similar challenges than it is to compare them against a generic national average. Any major differences between the two areas would be highlighted and a 'traffic light' system used to identify areas and groups with 'civic need', as well as those with 'civic assets'.

80 See M. Grist, *Steer: Mastering our behaviour through instinct, environment and reason* (London: RSA, 2010).

81 See RSA, *Area Based Curriculum: Engaging the local* (London: RSA, 2010).

82 M. Wind-Cowie, *Civic Streets: the Big Society in action* (London: Demos, 2010).

83 See Ipsos MORI and Camden Council, *Understanding Social Capital in Camden: Findings from the 2008 Social Capital Survey* (London: Camden Council, 2008).

84 For more information see http://citizensuniversity.org.uk/.

85 Among third sector organisations there is a clear need to establish a better evidence base for their work. A recent report by New Philanthropy Capital showed that of the charities they assessed, although almost 90 per cent were able to explain their outputs, only 40 per cent could articulate what impact they were having on people's lives. New Philanthropy Capital, *Talking about results.* (NPC: London, 2010).

CIVIC PULSE PROFILE

Dimension		Benchmark Area Results	Cohort / Locality Results				Subsequent Interventions
			A	B	C	D	
Know-How	Skills						Conduct Citizens University workshops
	Knowledge						Hold Civic Commons events
							Provide leadership training
Attitudes	Other-regarding						Offer resilience training
	Resilience and wellbeing						Teach Steer principles [80]
							Use Area Based Curriculum [81]
Relations	Horizontal						Set up Social Cohesion Forums
	Vertical						Develop 'hubs' for networking
Institutions	Local groups						Reassess funding and regulatory procedures
	Local services						Establish Time Banking scheme
	Local authority						Conduct empowerment initiatives
Resources	Income, wealth, education						Reassess education priorities
							Tailor employment initiatives to those areas/groups identified as vulnerable
Existing behaviours and activities							
Neighbourliness							
Volunteering							
Creating and shaping services							
Political participation							

Stage 3: Disseminate results locally, implement new initiatives and reengineer existing services

The third stage is to share the Civic Pulse Profile with citizens and local policymakers. Using the Profile, residents would be able to reflect on the needs and assets within their communities, leading to the cultivation of grassroots efforts designed to foster active citizenship.[82]

Local policymakers – from those in the local authority to those in relevant public services – would be able to take a more strategic approach to the allocation of resources and policy development, using the results to reassess strategic objectives, implement new initiatives, and adapt existing services so that they are more attuned to local needs. For instance, if a particular neighbourhood is found to have weak social networks, the local authority could redirect the efforts of its social cohesion team to that area or inform the neighbourhood association about what it might do to build bridges between different groups of residents.[83]

Depending on the resources available, the local authority and other local policymakers could then develop bespoke interventions. If there was found to be a lack of basic skills and know-how about how to get involved in local community activity, the council could set up a drop-in training session. This might be similar to the Citizens University scheme which provides temporary citizen training workshops in high streets across the country.[84] The Civic Pulse Profile above notes a list of potential interventions appropriate for different needs.

Stage 4: Evaluate the impact of interventions and services

The fourth stage is to evaluate the impact of any interventions or changes to services. This could be done by undertaking further iterations of the Civic Pulse Survey to assess changing participation rates and drivers of active citizenship over time. These changes would then lead to a new Civic Pulse Profile for the area to reflect any improvement or emerging problems.

The Civic Pulse Survey could also be used to assess the impact of particular interventions by surveying changes amongst service users. For example, if a local arts project was intended to increase participation or, more specifically, key drivers such as wellbeing and resilience, the Civic Pulse Survey could be undertaken both before and after the work to evaluate its effectiveness and value for money.[85]

86 RSA. *Civic Health Seminar Summary* (London: RSA, 2010).

Stage 5: Share learning with local authorities and other relevant bodies across the UK

The final stage would be to share learning with other organisations and institutions across the country. This would require the development of mechanisms to collect and disseminate best practice case studies of how other organisations are building the key drivers of active citizenship. One possibility is the formation of a national research consortium made up of public, private and community organisations that are working towards increasing participation across the UK. [86]

Organisations including the new Local Government Improvement and Development agency would be well placed to disseminate this learning. Learning partnerships could also be formed between local areas who have benchmarked one another and who share a similar demographic makeup and size.

THE VIRTUES OF THE CIVIC PULSE SURVEY

Improved service delivery

By identifying the 'conditions of possibility' for active citizenship, the Civic Pulse Survey would help local policymakers (i.e. local authorities and public services) to:

- *Identify* and direct efforts to demographic groups and geographical areas of highest need where current levels of active citizenship are lowest and where drivers are most lacking.
- *Re-engineer* existing services and develop new initiatives which seek to promote participation by plugging any gaps in underlying drivers and making use of existing social assets.
- *Evaluate* the impact and cost-effectiveness of existing services which are intended to nurture active citizenship.
- *Highlight* the strengths and weaknesses of their own activity and facilitate public scrutiny of these efforts.

Cost-benefit

It is important to recognise that deploying the Civic Pulse Survey is an investment in itself. Local policymakers are increasingly looking to cut back on costly services and will expect a more robust civil society to fill the gaps left behind by a retrenched state. The Civic Pulse Survey is designed to facilitate this transition, collecting information which can be used to nurture participation and community self-reliance, which in turn creates more breathing space for a steady and reasonable reduction of statutory services.

Despite these long-term benefits, it is still important to make the Civic Pulse Survey as cost-effective as possible, and ensure that it is attuned to the specific needs of different areas. How could this be achieved?

- By *rationalising* the number of questions and indicators. The Civic Pulse Survey will be comprised of a wide range of indicators. To make it practical, a subset of these indicators could be chosen based on local need by local people and key stakeholders.

- By *making the most of new software*. The Civic Pulse Survey would be deployed online and the results drawn down and promptly analysed using new software. This would enable cost savings to be made over the conventional labour-intensive process of inputting data by hand.

DEVELOPING THE SURVEY AND METHOD

We are continually looking for more innovative, robust and economical ways of gathering informative data on the social assets and civic capacity of communities. We will therefore amend our approach as and when we find new and more innovative methods for measuring active citizenship. With the support and input of academics, local authority practitioners and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, we will be developing a finalised survey and method over the coming months.

The final survey will be piloted in Peterborough during the summer of 2011 as part of the RSA's Citizen Power programme of work in the city. Peterborough City Council is keen to pioneer new ways of building active citizenship, and our hope is that the Civic Pulse Survey will provide local policymakers with invaluable information which they can use to increase participation rates in the city.

CONCLUSION

This pamphlet is the founding statement on the Civic Pulse Model, in which we put forward an argument for a new approach to understanding and measuring active citizenship. This is being designed with the political and policy context in mind, which is likely to see greater responsibility being redirected from the state to local citizens and institutions. With indicators of active citizenship, such as volunteering and involvement in local decision-making, having plateaued at mediocre levels for the past decade, it is clear that we need to find more effective ways of encouraging and enabling a greater number of people to become involved where they live.

If local authorities and public services are to galvanize citizens, they need to have a firmer grasp of the topography of active citizenship in their areas, and a clearer picture of the presence or absence of the drivers that empower people to be active citizens. The Civic Pulse Model is designed to fulfil this need. Once fully developed, it will provide policymakers with the necessary information to nurture participation and navigate the rocky transition to a period where citizens play a much bigger role in shaping the direction and outcomes of their communities.