



Increasing participation and influence in local decision-making: a systematic review of evidence

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The context

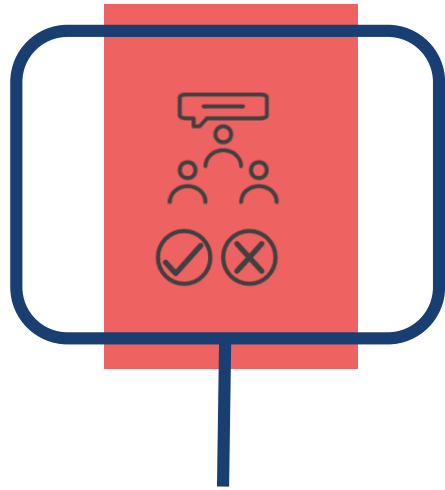
Having opportunities to influence decisions where we live is an important social determinant of health

But these opportunities are often not equally available to people

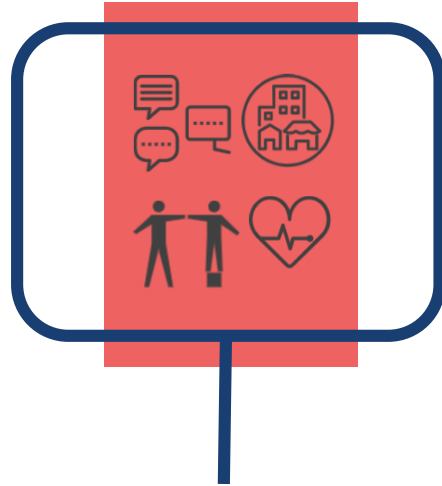
Creating conditions for people to influence decision-making can be an important aim of strategies to address health inequity

In Europe, local governments, non-government organisations and communities have experimented with participatory initiatives – often in challenging economic circumstances

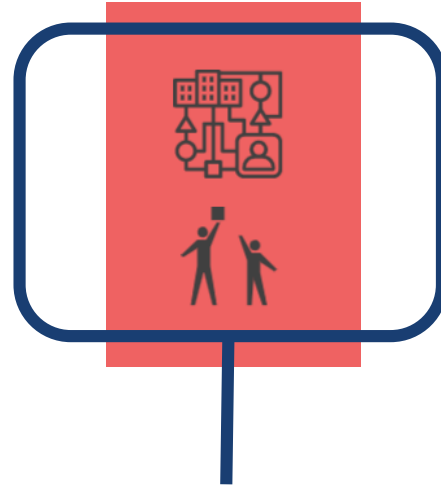
What we explored



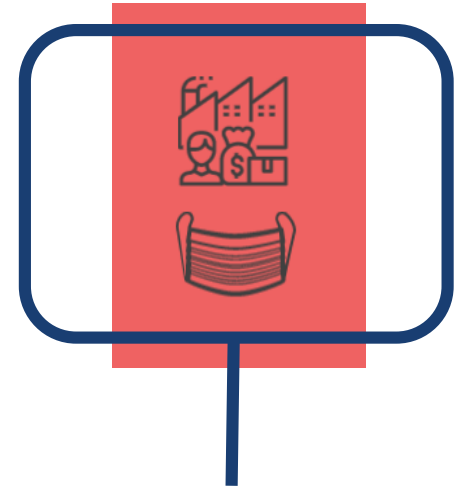
Examples of
participatory
initiatives in Europe



Effects of
initiatives



Factors that affect
what happens



Role of economic
context

What we found

42 relevant documents, most UK, qualitative, case studies

Initiatives focused on different topics (e.g. planning, built environment, capability-building)

Initiatives were 'labelled' differently (e.g. area-based initiatives, engagement activities, participatory assessment/budgeting, community organizing)

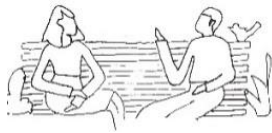
Little about what activities were part of each initiative or how these worked in theory or practice

More effective initiatives involved a mix of elements that focused on:

Developing spaces for participation



Formal spaces

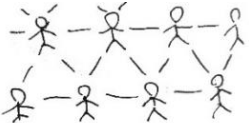


Informal spaces



Collective learning, knowledge sharing

Strengthening relationships



Professionals-public
Public-public

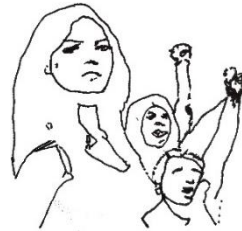


Bricoleurs



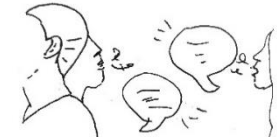
Trust

Strengthening collective capacities for influencing



Confidence, identity, cohesion, knowledge, belonging

Changing culture and practice to legitimise public knowledge



Invite, listen, respond



Challenge views of participation as a 'cost'

Long-term commitments to public influence



Investment in community infrastructure



Public influence as a norm (not a 'project')

What we found

Many factors affect initiatives - often reflecting deep-seated political issues within local governance

Few clear effects on local decision-making – but initiatives can change how problems are understood and choices about community infrastructure, built environment

There can be positive and adverse outcomes for communities, individuals, wider determinants and inequities

Economic context can impact initiatives in significant ways

Implications

We need to be clearer about *how* participatory initiatives work - recognise they are about relationships, politics, power

Key elements to prioritise: developing spaces for participation, strengthening collective capacities, developing relationships, changing institutional practices

There is potential to harness the learning and confidence gained by those involved in collective efforts locally

And to build on the momentum of civic participation and relationships emerging from emergency responses to COVID-19



Thank you

I'd like to know what you think...?

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