

PARTICIPATION ECOSYSTEM

“An ecosystem involves the interactions between a community of living organisms in a particular area and its non-living environment”
- Collins dictionary

The term ecosystem is used entirely deliberately in this context to describe the organic characteristics of the Participatory Ecosystem.

Conceptually the Participatory Ecosystem is a living, breathing ecology, in which project ideas and activities are continuously being designed, tested, grown, paused, discarded or replicated.

Similar to ecosystems in the natural world, the Participatory System develops organically, is unpredictable in form, and is rooted in the shifting interrelationships of many diverse and distinct parts (multiple residents joining and leaving, and projects emerging, thriving, replicating and stopping on a constant basis).

The Participatory Ecosystem shares the following characteristics with other organic models:

- Interdependence and diversity of parts.
- The ability to adapt, learn and evolve.
- Emergent behaviours or properties.
- Organic or natural growth and renewal patterns.

“Every One Every Day is helping and changing local people’s lives and making a difference to a broad amount of people. On a day-to-day basis in the shop I’m seeing old people, disabled people, children, different cultures and backgrounds. People coming and being all together, and getting along, and happy to have this place.

These days will probably be some of the best summer days ever – when all of us are together like this, we need this place to stay.”

- Participant

This is one of the key differences between the Participatory City Foundation approach to participation and other approaches in which the key structural relationship is between funder and individual projects.

The function of the relationship between the Participatory Ecosystem and the Support Platform is to build and maintain stable systems that co-produce predictable and high levels of positive outcomes with and for residents and neighbourhoods long term.

The organic structure of this Participatory Ecosystem allows for the development of small, hyperlocal or temporary ideas to succeed within a whole system of activity, where they might not be possible or successful on their own. The more prevalent organising model is for projects to become mini-organisations in order to attract or hold funding. This more traditional model relies on scale, and can result in networks of mini-organisations becoming ossified and unsustainable long term without direct individual funding.

RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

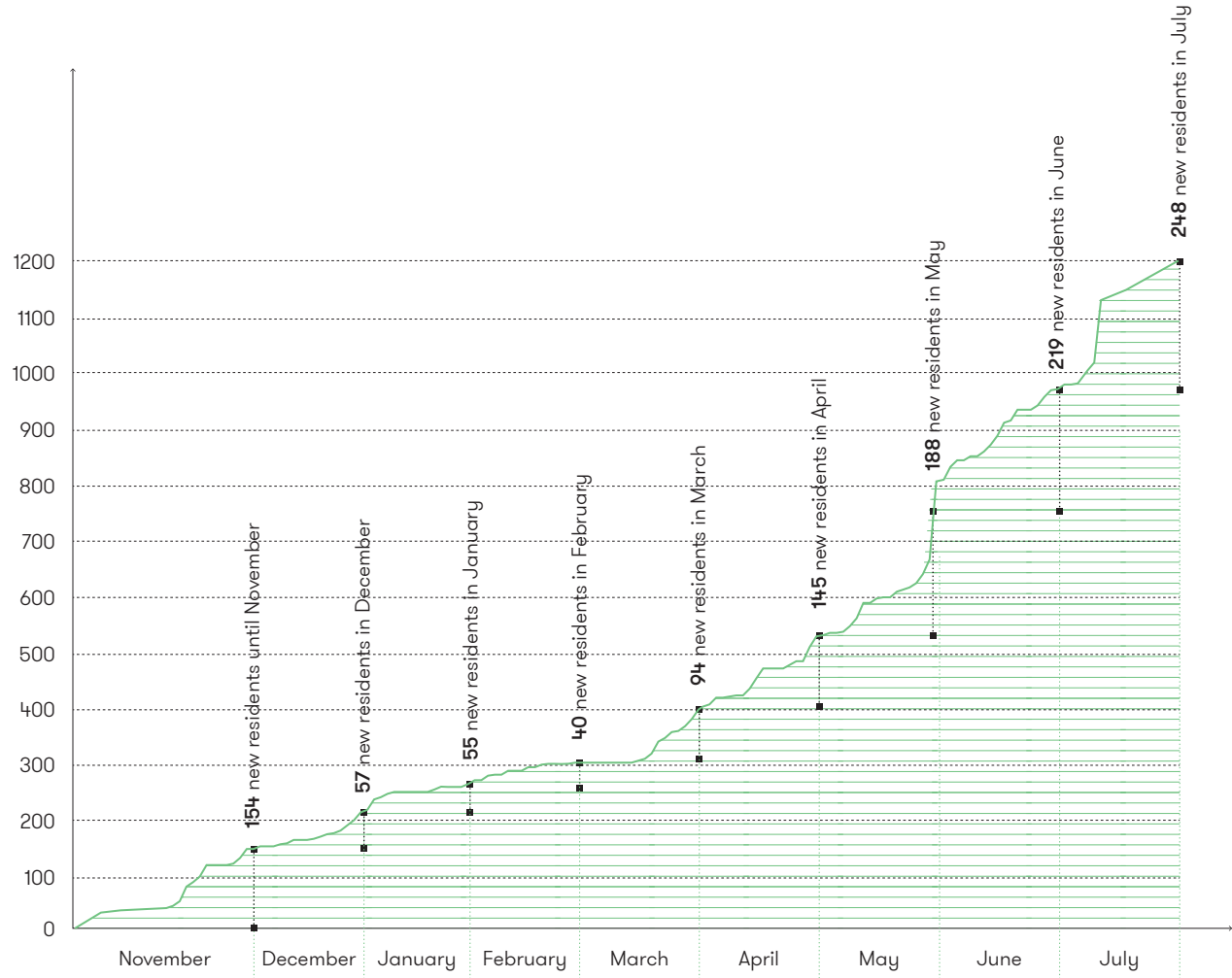
The graph shows how many residents have signed up in the Every One Every Day project within the first eight months of operation (end of November ‘17 - end of July ‘18), along with the gender split.

These numbers do not include children involved in the project, nor all the people who participated without signing up.

1,200
residents have signed up
to be part of Every One Every Day
within the first year



Overall growth of residents involved with Every One Every Day by participating and signing up
(this figure doesn't include: children or participants who chose not to sign up)



PERSON-CENTRED ECOSYSTEM

The Participatory Ecosystem from the resident perspective.

The design of the Every One Every Day Participatory Ecosystem puts residents at the epicentre of the system. The system is thus organised around residents, rather than asking residents to organise themselves around top-down systems. Organising in this way allows residents to participate and interact on their own terms - and to meet their own needs. It allows them to make choices about what activity they or their family or the neighbourhood might benefit from.

As described in the Executive Summary this model creates participation on an equal footing in a way which is mutually beneficial to all participants. This means that the Support Platform is strategically working to encourage frequent participation for as many people as possible in order to achieve long term outcomes.

Self-directed involvement

A diverse range of project ideas and participation opportunities allows residents to decide which activities suit them at any one time:

- Activities that fit within the demands of their lives e.g. around jobs, child raising, caring for elderly relatives.
- Activities that match their levels of confidence.
- Activities they are most attracted to.
- Activities with the most potential benefits e.g. learning, health, friendship etc.
- Activities where their abilities or talents are best activated to support each other and neighbourhoods.

It also allows for people to self-direct their interactions based on their situation, their feelings and their available time, which are always changing, often more so for people living in deprived circumstances.

With a flexible, person-centred Participation Ecosystem of this kind on their doorstep, residents are more likely to get involved in projects and activities than if only high threshold opportunities were available, thus enabling people to benefit more by participating more frequently at a less committed level.

The Participation Ecosystem grows and sustains by inviting and involving a constantly changing and renewing network of people to be part of the ecology - with new people regularly joining the network, while others might withdraw for periods due to ill health, work or family demands, or even a natural need for periods of solitude.

People are also constantly moving in and out of the borough - with the coming years likely to bring with them significant growth and population churn, the network will be welcoming many new people on an ongoing basis, as well as wishing people well as they move out to other places.

This describes how well matched this model of a Participation Ecosystem is to the realities of people's lives and the changing context. It provides a welcoming, flexible, attractive means to spend time with neighbours, getting to know and understand them, learning with them and co-creating places that are good to live in.

This is very different from participation models which rely on high levels of dedication from a fewer number of people, a static population or high levels of social confidence straight away.



Ecosystem of people, projects and participation opportunities designed to fit around the daily life of residents.

Network constantly being renewed, with new people joining, and others leaving the network continuously. This works in synch with the rhythms and flows through the borough.

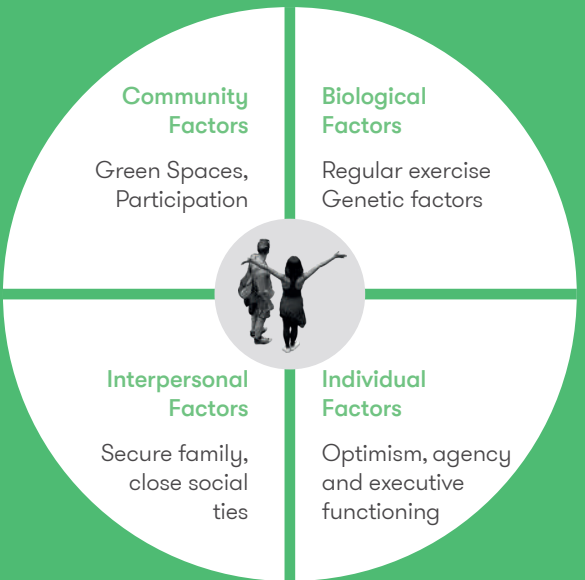
Outcomes are co-produced through peer-to-peer interactions with neighbours working together.

Protective factors

People and families need to find ways to manage the ongoing ups and downs of life, and this is done through a combination of resources which are collectively referred to as 'protective factors'.

The Participation Ecosystem creates a network of opportunities that help people experience and build more 'protective factors', including:

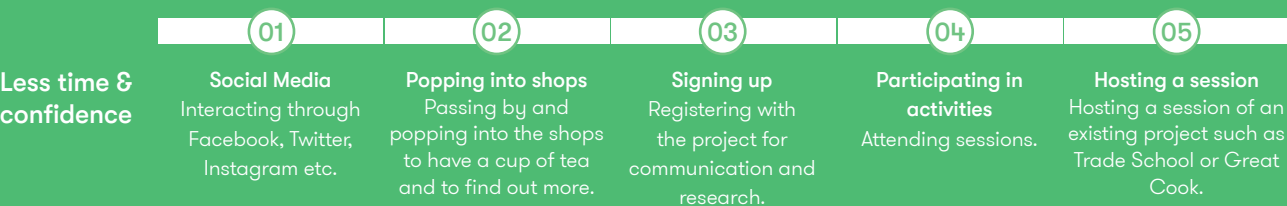
- Building friendships and support.
- Accessing networks and resources.
- Developing a sense of purpose and future.
- Practical opportunities to act e.g. environment or cohesion.
- Experiencing new safe and inclusive environments.



Stepping stones of participation opportunities

The network of projects and opportunities are designed to create opportunities across the whole continuum of types of participation. These opportunities start at the smallest entry point and grow from there. This small simple entry point is how the Participation Ecosystem ensures that everyone can join in

and has access to the benefits of participation. People can self-navigate, participating where they want to, often across multiple projects, in multiple roles, but always guided by their own judgement of their readiness to develop further.



ECOSYSTEM OF PROJECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Where ideas come from

Ideas can come from anywhere. From the people who live locally, from other neighbourhoods across the world, from the many partners and collaborators.

Some existing open source projects are particularly good at surfacing people and ideas, and these have been used in the Every One Every Day project to kickstart activity and are referred to as stimulation projects.

As a general rule only ideas that local people love and want to develop themselves get designed and tested in the neighbourhood.

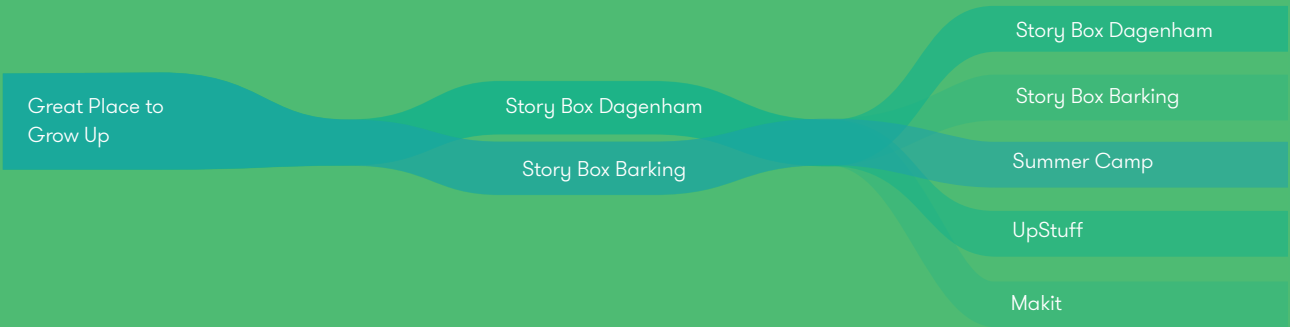
These projects get co-designed through putting together combinations of several open source ideas, utilising local resources and people’s creativity and energy from the neighbourhoods. This always makes every project, regardless of the idea’s origins, different and unique because it can only be made in that particular way by the people that live there.

Ideas are plentiful and their success and survival should depend principally on people’s participation in a particular location - this only happens if residents continue to experience the benefits directly and see it benefiting others.

Project family trees

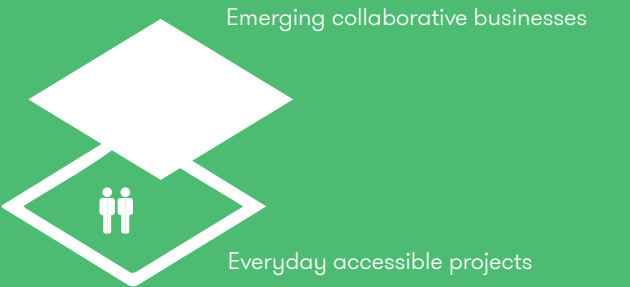
Many of the project ideas in this open source environment tend to combine and change over time. Ideas spark other ideas. Creating frameworks for hosting and collaborating are designed to make it easy to create new individual projects under an overall concept, .e.g. Open Corners. Family trees also recognise the origins of ideas, giving recognition to projects

that have been openly shared for the benefit of the community. This recognition is a very important aspect of open source culture, where intellectual property is not commercialised but openly shared. It’s a vital part of co-creating an open source network of ideas in Barking and Dagenham and one that needs time and care to foster.



Layers

Community businesses will emerge from the large system of neighbourhood projects as a second, additional layer of activity, rather than see projects converted into businesses. This protects the network of activity which is highly accessible and built into the fabric of everyday life. It is the everyday layer of activity where the majority of outcomes such as cohesion, health and learning will be co-produced between residents.



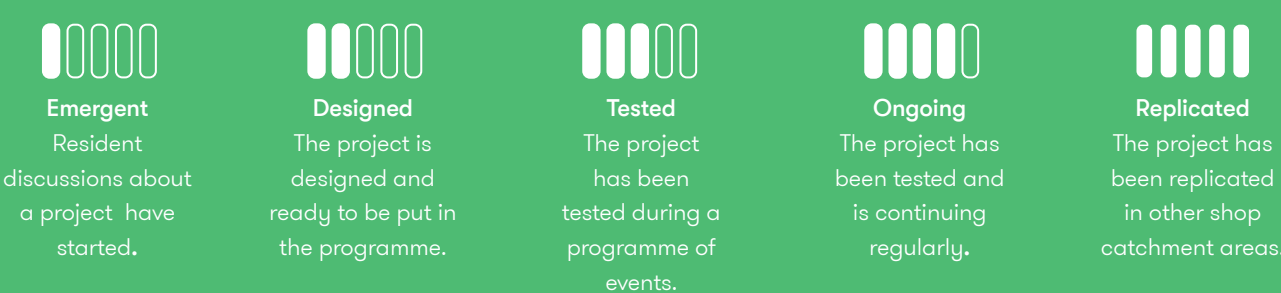
Types of project

Projects differ based on how they invite people and the types of opportunities they offer to residents.



Development phases of projects

Projects are co-designed and developed with residents, from the initial idea to actually testing the idea with other residents to replicating in different catchment areas or from another group of residents.



Development status of projects

In this ecosystem model projects are not expected to be continuously offering participation opportunities. Collaborators may decide to take a break for a variety of reasons, including health, family or work pressures and holidays. Some project ideas won’t be successful in a catchment area and may become dormant.

