

Democratic participation and agonism: citizen perspectives of participatory spaces created under the Localism Act (2011)

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the nature of participatory democracy offered by the UK's Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government between 2010 and 2015. Primary and secondary data are employed to consider citizen participation in Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs), a community-led planning initiative introduced under the Localism Act (2011). This explores the nature of participation on offer, and how citizens are simultaneously encountering and creating new democratic spaces, navigating legislative frameworks, managing relationships with governance partners, and seeking to secure their own interests. An interpretive policy analysis methodology is employed, highlighting how the interpretations of core participants play a central role in determining the content and direction of NDPs and the dynamics of local participation. The findings highlight the instrumental approach adopted by many participants in light of their previous experiences with local government, the expectations and norms of the planning system, and on-going uncertainty concerning 'light touch' regulation. Participants report rudimentary processes of co-production, however the crucial supporting role of Local Authorities remains uneven and largely unaccountable. The findings pay particular attention to the ways in which the participatory space is structured both implicitly and explicitly by the discursive framing of participation, the regulations, and national policy makers, local government officers and private consultants. Overall a picture of bounded participation is presented - with contestation largely bracketed out, ignored or otherwise managed within participatory spaces. As a result, the post-2010 localist agenda can be seen to be a form of centralism wielded at the local level. Despite this, positive changes are identified at the citizen/state nexus, with some communities seeking to co-opt the process and achieve a vision for their neighbourhood beyond the scope of land use policies, whilst evidence of increased community resilience, nascent collective identities, and enthusiasm concerning local democracy are also identified. The thesis contributes to on-going debates concerning democratic innovations by building on Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism and exploring the extent to which present forms of participatory democracy display signs of agonistic practice. A model of agonistic participation is set out, reorienting the macro level insights of agonistic pluralism, with the empirical data concerning citizen participation at the micro and meso levels. This incorporates practical lessons from deliberative democracy, and seeks to move beyond increasingly well rehearsed debates between the two traditions to promote a positive sum approach that allows citizens to secure their interests and combat hegemonic practices by determining the nature of their own participation.

Contents

List of Figures	i
List of Abbreviations	iii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2 Democratic Participation	13
Chapter 3 Theories of Power	39
Chapter 4 Doing Democracy	63
Chapter 5 Agonistic Participation	105
Chapter 6 Methods and Methodology.....	125
Chapter 7 Participation in an Urban Neighbourhood Development Plan	153
Chapter 8 Participation in Neighbourhood Development Plans in England	197
Chapter 9 Agonistic Participation Revisited	245
Chapter 10 Conclusion	285
Bibliography	295

List of Figures

Figure 1: Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation	15
Figure 2: Pretty's (1995) Typology of Participation	19
Figure 3: Thomas' (1990) Approaches to Decision Making	23
Figure 4: Cohen and Uphoff's (1980) Dimensions of Participation	24
Figure 5: Bishop and Davis' (2002) Map of Participation Types	26
Figure 6: White's (1996) Table of Participation	28
Figure 7: Macmillan's (2011) Forms of Participation Failure	32
Figure 8: Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube.....	47
Figure 9: DCLG's Neighbourhood Planning Policy Model	168
Figure 10: Neighbourhood Planning Communities by Deprivation	211
Figure 11: Adopted Neighbourhood Development Plans by Deprivation	212
Figure 12: Adapted Table of Participation for Neighbourhood Planning	248

List of Abbreviations

ABI	Area-Based Initiative
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CRtB	Community Right to Build
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DH	Department of Health
EPG	Empowered Participatory Governance
HAZ	Health Action Zones
HMOs	Houses of Multiple Occupation
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
IPA	Interpretive Policy Analysis
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreements
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NDO	Neighbourhood Development Orders
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NHS	National Health Service
NMP	Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder
NPM	New Public Management
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
NSNR	National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
PAS	Planning Advisory Service
RBM	Resident Board Member
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessments
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
WNF	Working Neighbourhoods Fund

Chapter 1 Introduction

Recent research indicates that in Great Britain those who believe that it is essential to live in a democracy has fallen from approximately 70% among those born in the 1930s, to around 30% among those born in the 1980s (Foa and Mounk, 2017). This trend is replicated across most if not all mature Western democracies, leading to a large body of scholarship analysing the dysfunctions of democracy (Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Norris, 2011; Geisel and Newton, 2012). In the UK, accounts of popular disenchantment and an anti-political - or at least anti-establishment - culture abound (Stoker, 2006; Hay, 2007; Pattie and Johnston, 2011; Flinders, 2013). It is contended that representative democracy is in long term, terminal decline (Wilks-Heeg et al., 2012), with an increasing distance perceived between the experiences of 'ordinary' citizens and the financial and political 'realities' of the cities of London and Westminster (Blond, 2010; Glasman, 2010).

There are as many reasons proffered for this disaffection as commentators willing to discuss it. Arguments commonly take one of three forms: a political argument that sees citizens being crowded out of policy making agendas and thereby consigned to passive observers (Ostrom, 2000); a social argument that claims citizens' wider indisposition to participate in social life has resulted from economic, social and technological changes that have undermined social capital (Putnam, 2000); and an economic argument that criticises the neo-liberal fetishisation of markets tempering the actions of civil society and producing a population of consumers (Monbiot, 2000). Most likely, a confluence of these and other factors has resulted in the inability of contemporary liberal democracies to engage productively with citizens and mollify their concerns. As a result, a significant body of longitudinal research has established the public's lack of faith in 'institutions, processes and actors associated with conventional representative democracy' (Flinders and Dommatt, 2013: 490). This has led to questions concerning the end of politics (Boggs, 2000), the death of democracy (Keane, 2009) - and the emergence of counter-democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008) or even post-democracy (Crouch, 2004).

This crisis of legitimacy has resulted in increased democratic participation becoming an official priority of many states globally (Smith, 2009). This thesis investigates attempts to increase democratic participation in the UK under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (hereafter 'the Coalition') between 2010 and 2015. Employing empirical evidence of citizen

perspectives of a community-led planning initiative created under the Localism Act (2011), the nature and implications of contemporary participation is explored. Despite various efforts at embedding participatory democracy within the UK's representative system over the past 50 years, it is now well established that members of the public rarely take action except when their lifestyle or livelihood are adversely affected (Martin, 2012; Crompton, 2015). When citizens are driven to participate, voluntary action is commonly seen as both more effective and more attractive than engaging in politics (Kane et al., 2009), whilst the periodic engagement of citizens is often perceived to be indicative of a lifestyle statement rather than more serious political engagement (Jong et al., 2005). For many individuals, political action continues to be an unappealing and unedifying experience, meaning that many attempts to engage citizens are ad hoc and sporadic (Stoker, 2015). Since the 1960s, the idea of greater citizen participation has transitioned from a counter-hegemonic approach to radical social transformation to a legitimate state-led activity and even a policy buzzword (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Leal, 2007). As a result, before the parameters of this thesis are set out, it is necessary to ask what we mean by participation and why it is an increasing priority for many Western governments.

What is meant by participation and why is it important?

Participation refers to any action taken by individuals or groups in social or civic arenas, and as such can signify almost any initiative that involves people (Cornwall, 2008). Participation has been the preoccupation of prominent intellectuals in the West dating back to Aristotle, however contemporary claims of participation are so frequent that the term has become 'mired in a morass of competing referents' (Cornwall 2008: 269) and for this reason there is an on-going call for 'clarity through specificity' (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980: 213). Due to the surfeit of definitions pertaining to participation it is frequently qualified with the prefixes such as social, democratic, political, cultural or public, and as with any contested concept there is no 'true' definition, instead competing definitions are mobilised and tailored to meet the needs of the research context (Verba et al., 1978).

In a comprehensive review of participation literature, Brodie et al. (2009) sought to subdivide participation into three distinct arenas: individual, social and public. Individual refers to 'everyday politics' such as the choice to buy fair trade goods or donating money to charity - actions that signify the kind of society in which an individual wishes to live (Brodie et al., 2009: 5). Such 'everyday' participation is notoriously difficult to monitor since such actions are often informal and sporadic.

Social participation refers to collective activities such as being a member of a faith or community group, a mutual, trust or trade union. This is also often referred to as associational, horizontal or cultural participation and situated in the broad traditions of self-help, solidarity, mutual aid, philanthropy and voluntary work (Brodie et al., 2009). The necessity of such participation was summed up by de Tocqueville (2000: 107) who argued that civilisation itself would be at stake if individuals 'never acquired the habit of forming associations in ordinary life'. Finally, public participation refers to the engagement of individuals with democratic institutions, and is set apart by participants' inclusion in decision making processes themselves. This is also referred to as public, political, citizen or democratic participation - examples include taking part in government consultations, contacting a local Member of Parliament (MP) or voting in elections. These delineations are not definitive and the categories are not mutually exclusive - for example, Brodie et al. (2009) class being a member of trade union as social participation - however unions are often involved in democratic decision making in pluralistic societies, thus making it also a form of public (or democratic) participation.

Further distinctions are often made between horizontal and vertical forms of participation, with the former relating to communal interaction between individuals predominantly, and the latter referring to the contact between citizens and state apparatus. Such definitions mirror the idea of top down and bottom up participation: the former refers to authority-led initiatives such as participatory budgeting. In contrast, bottom up or grassroots participation is broadly exclusive of state involvement and are often initiated as form of protest or social movement. Again, such categories are broad and by no means absolute, with many actions bridging different forms (Ginsborg, 2005). Nonetheless, rudimentary classifications such as this provide a foundation from which to consider participation. This thesis is concerned with democratic participation and the ways through which citizens interact with structures of democracy, and by implication the nature of governance that is established between them.

Participatory initiatives appear to be a logical antidote to the anti-political culture outlined above, and the literature is commonly underpinned by the assumption that democratic participation is an inherently 'good thing' (Field, 2003). By involving citizens more directly in governing processes, it is hoped that a more informed and invigorated civil society can be fostered. Proponents of participation often implicitly evoke de Tocqueville's (2000) contention that a vigorous, independent and heterogeneous civil society is necessary to counter-balance the influence of the state and the

market. Citizens therefore have a key role to play in creating sustainable policies through considered decisions. Moreover the public is free from the myopia created by electoral competition (that is, the fear being voted out of office) and therefore is able to consider the best course(s) of action across short, medium and long terms (Stoker, 2015).

Advocates suggest that the concept has grasped the imagination of policy makers for five central reasons: first, involving citizens in governing purportedly adds legitimacy through greater transparency and strengthened communal belief in decision making processes (Mansbridge 1999a; Beetham et al., 2008), making participation central to producing rules that are acceptable to all (Rousseau, 1998). Second, participation is often posited as a means of achieving better outcomes or increased efficacy (Duffy, 2007) - especially where deployed in collaboration with service users or local citizens with the aim of providing public goods and services better suited to local needs. This builds on the general premise of localism that decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level, thereby increasing the likelihood to efficacy and responsiveness (Pieterse, 2001). Third, greater social cohesion is achieved where participation inculcates a sense of being a public citizen with a greater responsibility for decisions (Foot, 2009). The creation of more cohesive communities (often discussed in terms of solidarity or social capital) can be traced back to the work of Guitierrez (2001) and Freire (1996) who stressed the importance of mobilising the critical abilities of socially excluded groups to make decisions about their own inclusion. Fourth, participation allows citizens to develop democratic knowledge and skills, whilst increasing the self-confidence required to operate in civic spaces (Schugurensky, 2010). This educative function is particularly important to theorists who seek to socialise citizens into a democratic system that places participation at its heart (Pateman, 1970). Fifth, participation is often thought to lead to empowerment: it is argued that participants can gain self-esteem, learn new skills and heighten personal efficacy (Barnes and Shardlow, 1997). Although similar to the educative function, principles of empowerment go beyond participatory spaces. Despite empowerment forming an increasingly important part of the discourse (or rhetoric) of government, as a concept it remains 'flexible, ambiguous, and ill-defined' (Bailey and Pill, 2015: 300). Some theorists have suggested 32 separate definitions for empowerment (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007) and proving causality between participation and empowerment remains problematic. The two concepts are often intertwined and there is therefore a tendency within the literature to conflate the two, more specifically, there is an assumption that participation automatically leads to empowerment. This obfuscates important questions, such as who is being empowered and how.

Reductionist accounts that use inclusion as an indicator of empowerment significantly narrow the parameters by which empowerment is measured, and cannot possibly reflect the complexity of power relations which underpin the process(es) of empowerment (Hermann, 2005).

It can be hard to distinguish between the five benefits of participation, however understanding them is central to analysing and advocating greater citizen involvement. Citizen participation is also important on a symbolic level: how decisions are made can be considered the defining question of any democratic project, and the emblematic nature of decision making (encapsulating concepts of power, social justice, inclusion, equality and solidarity) makes democratic participation the ultimate problem of political sociology. This importance has been marked by a surfeit of 'new forms' of democracy that share the common characteristic of prioritising greater citizen involvement. Often representing a significant break from liberal, representative democratic models, examples of these progressive forms include direct, social, associational, substantive, deliberative, reflexive, empowering, radical, deep and cosmopolitan democratic models (Pieterse, 2001). Of these, deliberative democracy is commonly regarded as the predominant model (Saward, 2001), encapsulating a vast and growing branch of democratic theory (Ercan and Hendriks, 2013) - although 'a sustained attack' on this dominance is increasingly applied from the perspective of agonism (Knops, 2007: 115).

The Big Society and the Localism Act (2011)

In the UK, democratic participation came to the fore during the 1960s with the inception of a number of government programmes combatting poverty and social mobility with particular emphasis on the relationship between individuals and communities (Taylor, 1995). Community development and participation took a backseat during the subsequent Conservative administrations (1979-1997) as the state withdrew from providing many public services, with voluntary groups encouraged to fill the resulting void (Taylor, 1995). Interest in participation was renewed under the New Labour administrations (1997-2010) who sought to increase links between the state, communities and individuals by means of voluntary and community groups - in what became known as the Third Sector (Brodie et al., 2009). The emphasis on partnership arrangements in public sector provision alongside an increase in government consultations at all levels represented a reinvigoration of participation throughout the early 2000s, however concerns were raised over continuing central

control of local decisions, alongside co-option and over-reliance on the Third Sector during this period (Taylor, 2007).

It is against this backdrop that the Localism Act (2011) emerged. The origins of the act originated in the now apparently moribund Big Society project as a form of government through community (Miller and Rose, 2008). Despite building on an unusually considered debate over the future of political terrain encapsulated by the Blue Labour, Red Tory dialogue (Blond, 2010; Glasman, 2010; Glasman and Norman, 2011), the Big Society was beset with problems from its inception. Shortly after the 2010 election, then Prime Minister Cameron (2010: no page) claimed that the Big Society represented ‘the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street’. However despite several efforts to clarify the meaning of the project, it was poorly received and poorly understood (Lindsey and Bullock, 2013; Defty 2014). A lack of a clear definition created a vacuum that sucked in speculation and in many respects the Big Society was a blank canvas onto which commentators projected their own doubts and fears about Conservative policy. Further problems occurred at a conceptual level, with the project appearing to be predicated on an eclectic and confusing mix of One Nation Conservatism, free market ideology and libertarian paternalism (Corbett and Walker, 2013), as well as New Labour’s legacy of civil society and community wellbeing, and to some extent the Liberal Democrat tradition of ‘liberalism-cum-community’ (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012: 33). Initial confusion was compounded by the Big Society not being a single, coherent programme or set of self-contained projects but rather a broad array of (occasionally contradictory) principles (Macmillan, 2013; Ishkanian, 2014). The situation was further undermined by fundamental misconceptions about the nature of society displayed in early policy rhetoric, in particular a failure to recognise that the state/society relationship is not a zero-sum game where less state activity necessarily equates to more civic activity, or vice versa (Sullivan, 2012; Corbett and Walker, 2013).

Nonetheless the Big Society sought to continue positive connotations in recent political thought concerning empowerment and underscoring notions of autonomy and self-determination that are found in many strands of liberalism, whilst maintaining the participatory foundations of democracy (Dean, 2010). Early analyses noted that the underlying concept of the Big Society was ‘old as democracy itself’, with the image of citizens playing an active part in their own governance being evoked from Athenian democracy onwards (Pattie and Johnston, 2011: 406). Some aspects of the Big Society were praised for contributing to the long standing theme in critical social policy of

criticising social policy's subordination to economic policy (Walker, 1984; Corbett and Walker, 2013), not least Norman's (2010) denunciation of the model of rationality that underpins the current dominant mode of capitalism. However the wider motivations of the Coalition - prioritising a smaller state and increased marketisation and personal responsibility (Sage, 2012) - were not commensurate with the rhetoric of the Big Society, and many concluded that it was simply shorthand for a continuation of the neo-liberal policy agenda pursued by New Labour (Bone, 2011). Lei and Walker (2013: 26) connect the ambiguity surrounding the Big Society to deeper issues, highlighting:

... the obvious danger of constructing a major policy initiative based on a vague rhetorical notion that appears to lack any empirical connection to real social and civic life and any understanding of how civil society operates, such as the factors which determine sustainable civic and social institutions, and how community solidarity is created.

On paper the Big Society consisted of three central tenets: increased social action, opening up public services and decentralisation (Office for Civil Society, 2010). Plans to increase social action were immediately questioned on the basis that volunteering often declines when government interventions decrease (Bartels et al., 2013). Far more troublesome was the desire to open up public services, with early analysis suggesting that this was at best an encouragement for citizens to do 'good deeds' and at worst a dangerous belief that charities and volunteers could provide core public services (Kisby, 2010). A consensus emerged that the project was an ideological smokescreen used to rhetorically justify the dismantling of social welfare (Corbett and Walker, 2012, 2013; Evans et al., 2013; Levitas, 2012; Lister, 2015; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011; Taylor-Gooby, 2012; Teasdale et al., 2012). Of the original triumvirate that made up the Big Society therefore, decentralisation alone withstood the unpopularity of the wider concept. Indeed, the Big Society has now been dropped from the political lexicon, with localism taking up the mantle of the Coalition's stated desire to give communities more power (Cabinet Office, 2010, Stanton, 2014). Despite justified fears that the process equates to a form of 'austerity localism' (Featherstone et al., 2012), decentralisation has retained the confidence of a succession of Ministers at the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the government department responsible for enacting the Localism Act (2011).

Prior to 2010 successive governments proclaimed their aspiration to devolve power and foster greater citizen participation (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). The persistence of this discourse likely stems from the fact that most social and political institutions were traditionally local, making decentralisation a broad school of thought. Evans et al. (2013: 405) define localism as:

An umbrella term which refers to the devolution of power and/or functions and/or resources away from central control and towards front-line managers, local democratic structures, local institutions and local communities, within an agreed framework of minimum standards

The argument put forward is that centralism, with its associated processes of hierarchy and bureaucracy, creates deficits of efficiency, fairness and democracy - whilst localism is the natural solution (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). The Act therefore seeks to devolve decision making powers from central government into the hands of communities and to a lesser extent local government through the introduction of elected mayors, opportunities for community participation, and a general power of competence for Local Authorities (LAs). A key question has therefore arisen: how will localist initiatives be translated into practice in a neo-liberal era during a time of austerity (Parker et al., 2015)?

It has been noted that the rhetoric surrounding post-2010 localism has been couched in a market-based liberalism that draws heavily on the ideas of individual choice, freedom, and the benefits of economic growth (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2013). It is now well established that contrary to localist rhetoric, greater participation does not necessarily equate to greater democratisation (Pieterse, 2001). Indeed theorists have begun to warn against the unjust and illegitimate exercise of power through the 'tyranny of participation' (Cooke and Kothari, 2001) and technologies of citizenship (Cruikshank, 1999). It is therefore necessary to interrogate contemporary governmental claims made under the guise of localism and participation - the next section sets out the research questions that seek to do so.

Research Questions

This thesis explores democratic participation in the UK through an analysis of the Coalition's localism agenda. This examines the shifting roles, expectations and relationships between individuals, communities and the state - and ultimately the potential for democratic renewal through democratic innovation (Geisel and Newton, 2012; Buser, 2013). The empirical core of this research concerns citizen participation in neighbourhood planning - specifically Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) - a local level initiative that allows communities to make decisions about the future of their neighbourhood through land use planning policies. Successful NDPs become statutory documents and must be considered during any future planning decision made by the relevant Local Planning Authority (LPA). Neighbourhood planning represents the apogee of the Localism Act

(2011) and as discussed above, the vestiges of the Big Society. The following research questions are explored in this thesis:

1. What is the nature of the participation being offered by UK Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015) and how is this demonstrated by policy and practice?
2. How are citizens participating within the new democratic spaces opened up by the Localism Act (2011) and what informs this practice?
3. To what extent do contemporary forms of participation allow for agonistic forms of democratic practice?

To answer these questions the citizens' perspective of participation is prioritised. The findings seek to explain the nature of the new participatory spaces, but crucially also how citizens are participating. The first two questions are answered primarily by an in depth case study (Chapter 7) and nationwide interviews (Chapter 8). The third research question is primarily addressed in Chapter 9 informed by the findings of the previous chapters. In answering these questions the potential for new forms of participation is also explored.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research offers two contributions to knowledge: first, primary and secondary data are employed to empirically consider democratic participation under the Coalition government (2010-2015) via neighbourhood planning, concentrating on how participants interpret and navigate local democratic spaces and manage their relationship with governance partners. The empirical component concentrates on the micro and meso levels, explaining both the nature of the new participatory spaces and the terms on which they are offered, and how citizens are navigating the legislative framework, simultaneously encountering and creating new forms of democratic practice. These questions do not concern the efficacy of participation (from a governmental perspective), but rather explore the relationship between how participation is offered and how it is being undertaken. The 'participant eye view' exposes the contrast between policy rhetoric and frontline reality, in particular the bounded form of participation on offer and the ways in which conflict and contestation are first bracketed out through regulation and then managed within participatory spaces through the discursive framing of participation in NDPs and the political opportunity structure, the expectation and norms of planning system (including local officials and private planning consultants), and finally the local policy interpretations by citizens themselves.

The second contribution is theoretical, building on Mouffe's (1993, 2000, 2005, 2013) agonistic pluralism - an intellectual project that emphasises the productive role of conflict in social relations. Unlike more established projects such as deliberative democracy, agonism has been limited to symbolic resistance to established forms of democracy, and has failed to proffer concrete 'ways of doing' democracy in its own image (Wingenbach, 2011). By utilising the practical principles of empowered participatory governance (EPG) (Fung and Wright, 2003; Wright, 2010) alongside empirical data, a model of agonistic participation is tentatively set out. This seeks to move past purely critical accounts of liberal democracy, and productively contribute to debates around alternative forms of democratic practice. Building from existing theory, this marries the macro level insights of agonistic pluralism with empirical data concerning citizen participation at the micro and meso levels. A careful consideration of EPG's use of deliberative democracy is used to add to an underdeveloped portion of the literature that considers a more nuanced relationship between deliberative and agonistic forms of democracy (Markell, 1997; Brady, 2004; Martin, 2005; Knops, 2007; Gürsözlü, 2009; Bond, 2011). The framework embraces both traditions in a positive sum relationship by establishing how both forms of democratic practice can be deployed - particularly at and between different spatial levels (Gaventa, 2006; 2007a) - within Mouffe's (2005) radical conception of 'the political'. As such, the theoretical contribution of this research spans different levels of analysis, by investigating how Mouffe's (2005) macro level theory of agonism is applicable at the micro and meso levels. This seeks to advance the increasingly well rehearsed debates between deliberative and agonistic theorists (Inch, 2015), and contribute to contemporary debates concerning democratic innovations (Smith, 2009; Geisel and Newton, 2012) through a model of agonistic participation.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 begins with a critical review of the democratic participation literature, providing a working definition of the concept spanning the analysis of early practitioners to contemporary arguments. The central typologies of participation are set out, from Arnstein's (1969) seminal ladder to more nuanced interpretations that seek to emphasise contrasting perspectives and motivations. Contemporary forms of democratic participation are then problematised by contrasting bottom up forms with invited and state-led initiatives. Chapter 3 critically reviews how power operates within society: following Clegg (1989), the competing traditions of Hobbes and Machiavelli are used to

navigate the wealth of literature pertaining to power. Through an account of the community power debate, the highly complex and contested nature of power is established before communicative and post-structuralist accounts are used to question claims of a single, comprehensive concept of power (Göhler, 2009). The chapter concludes with an exploration of the important role of hegemony in the play of power, and following Gaventa (2006; 2007a), the importance of spatial considerations when analysing power. Chapter 4 then charts the development of representative democracy, before the dominant incarnations of participatory democracy are introduced. Attention is paid to the New Left's vision for a participatory society and the increasingly prominent strand of deliberative democracy. The chapter concludes with a critical account of participation in various area-based initiatives (ABIs) in the run up to 2010. This stresses the context, aspirations and outcomes of locality based participation and illustrates the impact of a shifting political opportunity structure - outlining the move from targeted interventions focused on deprived communities to a 'first come, first served' approach.

Chapter 5 details Mouffe's (200; 2005) theory of agonistic pluralism. This is contrasted with the 'liberal illusion of a pluralism without antagonism' (Mouffe, 2000: 20) and the post-political turn that seeks to achieve consensus through the advancement of individualism and rationality (Mouffe, 2005: 6). The theoretical insights - particularly the central role of passions in political life and the need to allow collective identities to form - are then integrated with the practice-based model of empowered participatory governance (Fung and Wright, 2003; Wright, 2010) to provide a normative framework of agonistic participation. Chapter 6 then sets out the ontological and epistemological foundations of the interpretive policy analysis (IPA) methodology adopted, addressing methodological suitability in light of the research questions and forgoing theoretical frame. This is followed by an account of the fieldwork including a discussion of ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter 7 explores citizen participation through an in depth case study of an urban community participating in an NDP in a Northern English city. The chapter begins by contextualising neighbourhood planning within recent policy trajectories - establishing the relevant dominant political discourses that have shaped the policy and participants' understandings of participation. The case discloses the central role played by early interpretations of core participations, and a coincident sense of uncertainty on behalf of both residents and local government officials getting to grips with the new legislation. Despite this, the community displays a significant degree of resilience, alongside

a wealth of skills and considerable capacity as they navigate the legislation's framework. It is demonstrated how the collaborative enterprise of coming together as a community resulted in a tentative collective identity through associations to place, which lead to experiences of episodic empowerment for selected residents. It is argued that in some respects the community's choice of policies represents a 'co-option' the participatory space. Chapter 8 introduces data that interrogates citizen participation in neighbourhood planning across England. Drawing on a secondary dataset of 120 structured interviews and nine follow up semi-structured interviews, participant experiences are relayed across three key themes. First, the instrumental manner in which citizens are participating, driven by a desire for community control, the burdensome nature of the process, and the regulatory structure of NDPs. Second, the limited and uneven processes of co-production occurring nationwide. Third, the causes and consequences of the uncertainty that imbued participants' experiences. Central to the findings of this chapter is the bracketing out of conflict in participatory spaces, preventing radical alternatives to 'business as usual' planning policy and established 'ways of doing' democracy. Chapter 9 brings together the empirical findings, the forgoing literature and the theoretical frame to suggest a tentative model of agonistic participation for future citizen involvement. The thesis concludes with Chapter 10 which recounts how the research questions have been answered and recapitulates the contribution to knowledge. There follows an exploration of the implications for policy and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 Democratic Participation

Introduction

This chapter explores the central themes and tensions of democratic participation through a critical review of the academic literature. In so doing, it seeks to scrutinise the shifting roles and responsibilities of citizens and their wider relationship with the institutions of democracy. At its broadest point, democratic participation can be defined as ‘the processes by which citizens influence or control those who make major decisions affecting them’ (Verba, 1967: 54). Bishop and Davis (2002: 27) contend that all definitions of democratic participation include first, a measure of citizen involvement in decisions that might otherwise be the sole prerogative of executive government; second, a commitment to seeking the views of those affected by a decision; third, some transfer of authority from government to citizens; and fourth, a transparent process which ensures citizens are informed about policy processes. As this thesis concerns participation within invited spaces set out in legislation, it is not necessary to rehash the arguments of what should or should not constitute democratic participation - this has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere (Verba, 1967; Conge, 1988; Parry et al., 1992; Pattie et al., 2004; Whiteley, 2012). There is no doubt that forms of democratic participation are changing, with individuals moving away from membership of political parties, whilst involvement in single issue politics is rising significantly - reflecting an ‘evolution, transformation and reinvention of civic engagement’ (Norris, 2002: 4). Participation therefore remains an essentially contested concept that can ‘serve many masters’ (Bishop and Davis, 2002: 26).

As we have seen participation literature is underpinned by the assumption that citizen involvement in democracy is an inherently good thing (Chapter 1). Proponents often cite the positive externalities associated with participation, sometimes despite a lack of clear evidence. It is important to reiterate participation’s benefits since they are often implicit in the literature that follows. Michels and de Graaf (2010: 480) outline three core benefits: first, the educative function whereby citizens are able to increase their civic skills and become more adept at their involvement in decision making. Second, the integrative function inculcates a sense of being a ‘public citizen’ thus creating more cohesive communities (often discussed in terms of solidarity or social capital). Third, the legitimising function, where participation contributes to a greater communal belief in decisions made and decision makers. Two other commonly attributed benefits should be included here. Although

often considered implicit, public involvement should bring about better outcomes - this is often hard to evidence as new forms of participation come with an unknown opportunity cost (i.e. the outcome that would have resulted if no participation had occurred). Nevertheless, analysis should consider whether public involvement has brought about better outcomes (whether this be regarding inclusivity, efficiency, social justice, cost effectiveness etc.) with the caveat that 'better' is largely dependent on the perspective adopted. In addition, participation can bring about empowerment - an increased feeling of personal efficacy that goes beyond the specific space where participation is undertaken. These arguments are dispersed throughout the largely normative literature that follows.

In the next section, typologies of participation are considered, charting the move away from normative models of participation to more sympathetic typologies that stress dynamism and messiness. These typologies provide useful, if ultimately limited, heuristics for considering the character of specific forms of democratic participation, and will be utilised in answering the first research question concerning the nature of the participation offered by the Coalition. The discussion then turns to the participants themselves, asking who is participating and what impact their motivations might have on outcomes. Finally, the present vogue of 'bringing citizens back in' (Fuchs, 2007: 35) is explored through the contrasts of invited and uninvited spaces of participation.

Typologies of Participation

Studies of participation became a mainstream academic pursuit in the 1960s and since that time there have been innumerable attempts at providing a holistic model or typology of democratic participation. Commonly typologies endeavour to provide heuristic devices for thinking about participation and a yardstick against which activities can be measured. This section explores three common classifications of typologies: continuums, tailored participation, and participation by interest.

Participation as a continuum

The most commonly employed model is the continuum typology, where the characteristics of participation are normatively set out from 'lesser' to 'better' forms. The most enduring example is Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation which continues to figure prominently in the literature

(Tritter and McCallum, 2006), it sets out the different ways in which the public can be involved in decision making (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation

8	Citizen control	Degrees of citizen power
7	Delegated power	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Degrees of tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Nonparticipation
1	Manipulation	

Source: Arnstein (1969: 217)

Arnstein (1969: 216) is at pains to stress that the eight-rungs are a simplification - however the ladder succinctly illustrates the gradations of citizen participation. The first two rungs constitute 'non-participation': at the first level, manipulation (1), citizens are advised to sign-off on decisions that have been already made, after being 'educated' such that they believe the decisions to be in their interest. Therapy (2) is a process of power holders 'curing' citizens by having them engage in activities whereby their opinions may be altered.

The second category Arnstein refers to as 'tokenism' or the 'thin veneer of participation' (Cornwall, 2008: 270); here citizens become involved in decision making solely in a symbolic manner with no power devolved. Tokenism comprises of three rungs the first of which is informing (3) whereby citizens are informed of what is being discussed at decision making level. This is one-way process whereby information is broadcast by power-holders to the powerless, but no system of feedback is established. The next rung, consultation (4) is the first instance where citizens may theoretically affect the outcome, albeit in a limited and often circuitous manner. Here citizen voices are heard, but in Arnstein's terminology has no 'muscle' and so there is no system to guarantee that this voice will be heeded, thus making the maintenance of the status quo the most likely outcome. The final tokenistic section is termed placation (5) - this is where citizens are 'hand-picked' to be

representatives on decision making boards although ultimately no decision making power is devolved.

The final category 'citizen power', starts with partnership (6) whereby 'have-nots' are able to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power-holders. Subsequently in delegated power (7) the situation is reversed, the majority of members on a board would be citizens and the traditional power-holders are the ones who have to start negotiating with citizens. Finally, citizen control (8) occurs when citizens hold the ultimate decision making capability - this may be achieved through mechanisms such as referendums. Arnstein (1969: 216) argues that 'citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power' and therefore any participatory initiative that does not transfer decision making capabilities is by definition tokenistic: a manipulation of the citizens that are purportedly being involved. It follows from this that until some form of direct democracy has been achieved, no meaningful participation is taken place. Writing as a citizen activist, Arnstein is highly sceptical of participatory initiatives that are created within or in addition to existing decision making structures - in particular participation predicated on consultancy - and this is reflected in her approach.

A similar approach was developed by Pateman (1970) and taken together these two texts share a common argument that citizen participation can be understood as taking place along a continuum. Pateman (1970: 1) provides a more nuanced idea of participation by devoting more attention to the relationship between representative and participatory democracy, noting that the latter is given 'only the most minimal' role in a system where the electorate decide between contending power elites. Pateman (1970: 111) seeks to rework the central characteristics of democracy, and looks to place 'the notion of participation at its heart'. Such a reformulation would be self-sustaining since participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for engagement (Pateman, 1970: 42-43). Socialisation into such a society would provide citizens with the means to interact with the system and also therefore not pose a threat to future stability.

In distinguished between pseudo, partial and full participation, Pateman's (1970: 68) typology echoes that of Arnstein. At one end of this continuum citizens are offered a voice but without any substantial sway and the other processes where each individual may alter the outcome. Participation only becomes meaningful when there is a transfer of power from the elites to 'ordinary' citizens. Pateman argues that socialisation into a society with participation at its core is central to her project,

however she dismisses pseudo participation as not meaningful thus preventing the opportunity for information sharing between authorities and citizens. This appears to contradict participatory ideals such as Freire's (1996) conscientisation, where an increase in political consciousness leads to a better associational life with active citizens better informed and better equipped to self-govern and self-mobilise. Whether regarded as an emancipatory or not, Pateman's dismissal of pseudo participation may close off fruitful channels of communication between authorities and citizens whilst preventing citizens from learning useful skills.

A further example of the continuum approach, Pretty's (1995) typology speaks to the user herself. Pretty's functional participation is the category that equates to the efficiency argument, often mobilised to legitimate the use of participation. Here, participation is a means to achieving goals for the external agency - most often as means of reducing costs. This category houses participatory initiatives that external agencies see as a vehicle to achieve their aims: groups meet to resolve given issues - sometimes to the extent of actual decision making - however Pretty contends that ordinarily decisions have already been pre-determined by the parent agency. The use of 'structured learning processes' within interactive participation is significant: Pretty contends that it is through this process that participants gain a stake in maintaining structures and practices. This suggests that learning the process from within the system cannot be an emancipatory one, in line with Freire's (1996) argument that freedom is achieved by conquest and not by gift. Instead changing systems or altering the 'rules of the game' (Barnes et al., 2007: 201) is reserved for the final type of participation, self-mobilisation. This is where groups take the initiative independent of authority, through developing contacts with the institutions for resources and advice, but crucially retain control over local decisions. As such, Pretty's typology (Figure 2) is as equally normative as Arnstein's, progressing as it does from 'bad' to 'good' forms of participation. In these examples, participation only becomes a positive experience for the user in the final two categories. When participation is an interactive process, participants are able to learn about the decision making process and ultimately take control of decisions, whilst developing a vested interest in the process and potentially a stake in the resources. For Pretty this is only surpassed by self-mobilisation, where a group can achieve the same goals but without the need of external organisations.

Akin to Arnstein's typology, Pretty's continuum approach is characterised by a shift from placatory initiatives with the authorities retaining control to a situation where citizens have control. However there is a contrast between Arnstein's citizen control and Pretty's self-mobilisation, as the former

goes much further, perhaps reflecting the more ambitious and radical political landscape within which Arnstein was writing in the late 1960s. Pretty by contrast was writing at time when neo-liberalism was well established in the mid-1990s. Pretty (1995: 1252) argues that 'self-initiated mobilisation may or may not challenge the existing distributions of wealth and power', although Cornwall (2008) argues that self-mobilisation may be entirely consistent with the neo-liberal approach, where self-mobilisation is actively promoted by the state (Corbett and Walker, 2013).

Figure 2: Pretty's (1995) Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics of each type
1. Manipulative participation	Participation is simply a pretence, with 'people's' representatives on official boards but who are unelected and have no power.
2. Passive participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
3. Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
4. Participation for material incentives	People participate by contributing resources, for example, labor, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Farmers may provide the fields and labor, but are involved in neither experimentation nor the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
5. Functional participation	Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision making, tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents. At worst, local people may still only be co-opted to serve external goals.
6. Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used. Self-mobilization can spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilization may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.

Source: Pretty (1995: 1252)

Pretty's approach is compatible with Arnstein's however it is notable that in the 26 years that passed between the two publications, the emancipatory overtones have been diluted to the extent that

Pretty's zenith of participation is entirely compatible with current systems of governance. Cornwall (2008: 271) notes that Arnstein's (1969) citizen control was the nirvana of participation in the 1980s before the influx of 'participatory governance' initiatives where the role of the state was significantly reframed thereby changing the landscape of participation studies. Whilst Arnstein's (1969) typology reminds us that political participation is ultimately a question of power and control, Pretty's (1995) reminds us that the motivations of those who adopt participatory practices should be factored into any analysis (Cornwall, 2008: 270).

Due to this focus on motivation, arguably Pretty's work signals a shift in the participation literature away from the continuum to a more interest-centric approach to participation in the 1990s. Arnstein, Pateman and Pretty all develop the concept of an implicit continuum which sees participation as occurring along a plane from tokenistic to transformative citizen control - with initiatives ranging from perfunctory to meaningful. This conceptualisation recognises the ambiguity of the different characteristics of participation, seeing it not as a 'single act, but a scale of possibilities' (Bishop and Davis, 2002: 18). However the highly normative approach leaves little room for meaningful analysis of initiatives fall short of citizen control with direct democracy considered *sine qua non*. Bishop and Davis (2002: 18) note that the continuum does avoid the difficulties of precision within a contested concept, however this could easily be reframed as a criticism implying lack of specificity. Moreover in instances where there is no support from the authority concerned, it is possible for citizens to achieve self-management on their own, since there is no alternative - Choguill (1996) therefore argues that this form of self-mobilisation is only the bottom rung of the ladder. The approaches put forward by Pateman and Arnstein therefore derive their validity from some form of governmental involvement and do not account for instances where bottom up participation forges its own space of decision making. This significantly weakens the continuum typology since it can only account for contexts where the authority in question is devolving some information or power.

The benefit of the continuum lies in being a heuristic tool for thinking about what policies may be 'offering' to the public - in particular the critical distinction between tokenistic and more progressive forms of participation. Despite its enduring appeal, Cornwall (2008) notes that Arnstein's ladder leads to many more questions such as: who are the citizens being empowered? What are citizens actually in control of? What are the benefits for the state in ceding this power to citizens? Arnstein (1969: 224) herself briefly outlines some issues with full citizen control, discussing neighbourhood self-governance in cities with a predominantly black population:

Among the arguments against community control are: it supports separatism; it creates balkanization of public services; it is more costly and less efficient; it enables minority group “hustlers” to be just as opportunistic and disdainful of the have-nots as their white predecessors it is incompatible with merit systems and professionalism; and ironically enough, it can turn out to be a new Mickey Mouse game for the have-nots by allowing them to gain control but not allowing them sufficient dollar resources needed.

However given Arnstein’s overall position, it can be presumed that even a corruptible system is preferable to tokenistic participation, or no participation at all. The reference to funding is also significant: even when genuine powers are devolved to citizens, this can be undermined where funding is withheld. If the implication is that those who hold the money hold the power, then citizen control is largely redundant. It is also significant that Arnstein’s hierarchical approach says nothing of the participants’ motivations. Ultimately by Arnstein’s definition the majority of initiatives are destined to fall below the ultimate standard of citizen control, thus losing their legitimacy, even though this may be contrary to the feelings of the participants themselves.

This is an inherent failing within the continuum approach, and moreover theorising a linear relationship between non-participation and citizen control is too simplistic (Bishop and Davis, 2002) and cannot account for the specificity of policy problems. The approach neglects the fact that different types of participation that may be required in different contexts. Fung (2006: 66) notes that whilst there maybe contexts whereby empowerment through citizen control is desirable, in other scenarios a consultative role for the public may more appropriate. Furthermore the ladder approach fails to accommodate the large field of work has now been established that distinguishes between different methods of decision making. This criticism can be extended to argue that it is in the process of participation, the characteristics of the policy issue being considered are refined, therefore shaping the nature of the participation itself. As Tritter and McCallum (2006: 158) note, the linear conception of participation does not sufficiently emphasise this reciprocal process or ‘feedback systems’. Tritter and McCallum (2006) go on to make clear that in concentrating solely on power, Arnstein’s conception of the participants, failing to realise that for some, participation is a worthy goal in itself. Cornwall (2008: 273) to notes that even the most nominal forms of participation can give citizens a foot in the door where before there was no constructive engagement, and conversely fully-delegated power counts for little when it only involves choosing the colour of paint for the waiting room.

Consultation is important to consider here. Under the continuum typology it is merely tokenistic, placatory or at its worst manipulative. However for some consultation is the ‘foot in the door’ and

actually a significant improvement on exclusion. It should be considered too that rather than simply being a 'lesser' form of participation, keeping a flow of information is important in of itself (Cornwall, 2008: 272): consultation can result in greater transparency and can be an important reflexive process for the authority concerned. Criticising consultation to the point where it is no longer used could be a Pyrrhic victory, since the process has a number of benefits that can be seen to outweigh the singular criticism that it is not complete citizen power. Furthermore, consultation is a key means of educating citizens in the nature of governance: where a population is uninformed it is unlikely to desire let alone utilise participatory opportunities.

The continuum approach assumes a 'continuous space - an incremental change to the same phenomenon' (Bishop and Davies, 2002: 18) where participation moves smoothly from tokenistic to 'real'. This simplifies the intricacies of real world participation and ultimately does not account for surrounding context whilst assuming that policy problems remain constant - choosing instead to concentrate on the intentions of the authority involved. Axiomatically, the applicability of participation to policy problems varies hugely, whereas Arnstein's writing in particular suggests that any policy might be open to greater participation. Examples can be made to illustrate the point: first, a participatory budgeting scheme where decisions are made about a council's transport budget, and second, a public consultation over the nature of palliative care in hospices. The first scenario requires feedback from the community and potentially a consensus is reached over the destination of funds. In the second scenario the public is consulted, however being a highly ethical and sensitive issue that requires the views of experts, it follows that the public may not be awarded the final decision. The continuum approach would label the first scenario as meaningful and the second as tokenistic or pseudo-participation and therefore meaningless or manipulative. It is doubtful whether judging all such mechanism from a single perspective is advantageous and such labels say nothing of the appropriateness of participation. Instead, as Bishop and Davis (2002: 18) contend, form should follow function and the nature of the policy problem should dictate what instrument of participation is applicable.

Tailored participation

The continuum approach acknowledges the ambiguities in defining participation and avoids some of the difficulties of precision, but in so doing it downplays the reasons why participation is introduced in the first place (Bishop and Davies, 2002). An antidote to this approach comes from the work of

Thomas (1990, 1993) who argues that authorities should properly identify and classify policy problems so that appropriate participatory initiatives can be employed. Thomas' argument is that each policy problem contains some central characteristics that mean it is suited to certain types of participatory initiatives (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Thomas' (1990) Approaches to Decision Making

Autonomous managerial decision	The manager solves the problem or makes the decision alone without public involvement
Modified autonomous managerial decision	The manager seeks information from segments of the public, but decides alone in a manner which may or may not reflect group influence;
Segmented public consultation	The manager shares the problem separately with segments of the public, getting ideas and suggestions, then makes a decision which reflects group influence;
Unitary public consultation	The manager shares the problem with the public as a single assembled group, getting ideas and suggestions, then makes a decision which reflects group influence; or
Public decision	The manager shares the problem with the assembled public, and together the manager and the public attempt to reach agreement on a solution.

Source: Thomas (1990: 437)

The rationale for this approach is simple: policy problems are different, so participation should be tailored to those differences. As a result any typology should be discontinuous. As Bishop and Davies (2002: 18) contend it should not be the willingness of an official that dictates the probability of widening participation, rather it should be the nature and merit of the issue under discussion:

It is easy to consult over a new road proposal, but more difficult to open general discussion on complex medical procedures. Participation may serve different ends in each case: in one seeking community feedback, in the other testing contentious expert evidence. To portray either or both as not 'meaningful' participation is irrelevant; here form follows function so that the character of a policy problem decides whether, and through what instrument, participation is possible.

With form following function, Thomas is able to move past the meaningful/non-meaningful divide present in Arnstein's work. However there is a danger present in the above example, namely underestimating the abilities of citizens. It is an easy assumption to say that matters of expertise are beyond a lay public's understanding, however elected members often make judgements on the

advice of expertise and have to interpret expertise themselves as lay people. There is little reason to say that such expertise could not be made available to public groups to form the basis of a more participatory decision making process. Nonetheless, what Thomas (1993: 461) does illustrate is the need for initiatives to be tailored to the policy problem and context, with the desirability of any given approach dependent ‘on the particulars of the issue at hand’.

Cohen and Uphoff (1980) provide a comprehensive typology emphasises the who and how of participation. This is achieved by addressing the phases of participation (though they need not be sequential). This approach is successful in focusing on the suitability of one dimension of participation to another and thereby sidesteps the criticism of the continuum normative approach by approaching participation in a systematic but not hierarchical manner. It could be argued that this approach is merely a checklist, however it does serve as a useful heuristic device for thinking about participation.

Figure 4: Cohen and Uphoff’s (1980) Dimensions of Participation

Kinds of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in decision making Participation in implementation Participation in benefits Participation in evaluation
Who participates?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local residents Local leaders Government personnel Foreign personnel
How is participation occurring?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basis of participation Form of participation Extent of participation Effect of participation

Source: adapted from Cohen and Uphoff (1980: 219)

Cohen and Uphoff’s detailed typology is set out in order to secure ‘clarity through specificity’, a call recently restated by Cornwall (2008: 281) who suggests that the ‘cloud of cosmetic rhetoric’ (Cernea, 1991: 25) that gathered around participation literature in the 1980s has yet to be dispelled. Indeed Cernea’s (1991: 25) claim that the ‘rhetoric of intent is still far ahead of the design for action to promote participation’ could apply to the current UK context (Corbett and Walker,

2013: 13). Nonetheless Cohen and Uphoff's dimensions of participation is able to unpick participation through an applied focus, with less adherence to theoretical divisions, allowing the typology to be taken up by researchers in the field, as exemplified by Michener (1998).

Bishop and Davis (2002: 26) have argued that despite social science's desire for synthesis, the continuum typology is not compatible with Thomas' (1990) approach. This is because the former approaches participation from the position of citizen activists and therefore necessarily wish to sideline or even undermine representative government. By contrast Thomas' approach is considered from the perspective of the policy maker and thus has entirely different concerns regarding the forms of participation being offered. Since these 'dimensions are incommensurate' (Bishop and Davis, 2002: 26) there is no utility in trying to combine them. Instead Bishop and Davis (2002) have sought to provide a 'map of participation' (Figure 5) without recourse to a normative position.

Figure 5: Bishop and Davis' (2002) Map of Participation Types

Participation Type	Objective	Key Instruments	Limitations
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to gauge community reaction to a proposal and invite feedback • consultation is only participation when information gathered can influence subsequent policy choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key contacts • surveys • interest groups meetings • public meetings • discussion papers • public hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delay between consultation and any outcomes • communities feel betrayed if they do not like the decision • expensive and time consuming for complex decisions
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving citizens and interest groups in aspects of government decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advisory boards • citizens advisory committees • policy community forum • public inquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue of who can seek for a community • bias toward established interest groups • legitimacy issues with those excluded from the process
Standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing third parties to become involved in the review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review courts and tribunals • open and third party standing • statutory processes for social and environmental impact assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only relevant for those issues which come to court • expensive and time consuming • bias toward well funded interests • legal approach may be inappropriate for some issues
Consumer Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing customer preferences to shape a service through choices of products and providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • surveys, focus groups • purchaser/provider splits • competition between suppliers • vouchers • case management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant only for service delivery issues
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to hand control of an issue to the electorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • referendum • 'community parliaments' • electronic voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • costly, time consuming and often divisive • are issue votes the best way to encourage deliberation?

Source: Bishop and Davis (2002: 27).

This provides a map of participation 'without seeking to impose hierarchy or direction' signalling a move away from normative typologies towards a more rounded account of participation, better suited to explaining forms of participation preferred under neo-liberal agendas. The tailored participation typologies continued Pretty's (1995) move towards understanding participation in ways

that aligned with existing democratic systems and thereby opened the debate up to the competing interests involved in participation.

Interest-centric participation

The interest-centric approach places emphasis on the motivations of the parties involved and recognises the competing agendas that make up the tensional field of participation. Michener's (1998) approach divides participation into either planner-centred or people-centred: the former promotes participation on the assumption that this is the best way to secure the authority's desired outcomes, usually maximising instrumentality or efficiency. In contrast, people-centred approaches concentrate on the potential for participation to build capacity and empower citizens so that they might meet their own needs. As such the planner-centred approach is outcome based, whereas the people-centred approach is more process orientated, with the experience and welfare of the participants as its focus.

This approach seeks to bring motivations to the fore, however the motivations of the planners and people need not be mutually exclusive. The planner-centred approach focuses on administrative and financial efficiency, whilst facilitating 'local people's acceptance of new policies and technologies promoted by outsiders' (Michener, 1998: 2106). Michener suggests that the planner centred approach is a cynical attempt to 'exploit' local knowledge and labour, however the planner-centred perspective could be reframed as mutually beneficial where local citizens gain knowledge the topic and the process whilst contributing to overall efficiency. Michener (1998: 2106) argues that situated between the transition point between planner- and people-centred approaches in the belief that participation can prevent top down, paternalistic attitudes and thus reduce dependency. Whilst this is a valid observation it somewhat undermines the point regarding the planner-centred approach: a people-centred approach may be preferable, given that it priorities the needs of local citizens and aids capacity building, yet a planner-centred approach may fulfil many of these criteria just as well.

Michener (1998: 2106) goes on to argue that the people-centred approach represents both a means and end in itself. Participation meets local needs in redistributing scarce resources but also contains inherent value as a process which empowers the powerless. Empowerment is achieved through enhancing the local management capacity, increasing confidence and raising collective consciousness. However, again Michener's (1998: 2106) description of the planner-centred approach

could potentially achieve these benefits - it is where the goals of the planner-centred approach negate the benefits of the participants that this analysis gains relevance. If as a cost-saving measure, consultation is used instead of more meaningful forms of participation, where the latter would be appropriate, then the initiative may be seen as too planner-centric. Michener's framework serves to emphasise that there are contrasting and sometimes competing motivations and objectives in any given participatory exercise. The contention is that participation should be people- and not planner-orientated (that is, bottom up not top down), thereby simply echoing the calls of the 1960s literature. Akin to Michener, White (1996) emphasises competing interests but also incorporates the normative continuum approach (Figure 6), with the forms of participation moving towards more nominal to transformative forms.

Figure 6: White's (1996) Table of Participation

Form	Top-down	Bottom-up	Function
<i>Nominal</i>	Legitimation	Inclusion	Display
<i>Instrumental</i>	Efficiency	Cost	Means
<i>Representative</i>	Sustainability	Leverage	Voice
<i>Transformative</i>	Empowerment	Empowerment	Means/Ends

Source: White (1996: 144)

This demonstrates the divergent expectations of participation from the different stakeholders. During nominal, instrumental and representative stages the views of the planners and the people are conflicting, it is only at the final stage that expectations are shared. At this stage 'being involved in considering options, making decisions, and taking collective action to fight injustice is itself transformative' (White, 1996: 216). However White recognises in contrast to Arnstein, that nominal forms of participation *can* serve a purpose and should not be dismissed simply because they are not an ideal form of participation. White (1996: 149) attests that participation is a dynamic process that changes over time, but that typologies necessarily present a static picture that cannot account for changing motivations, interests, or power dynamics. Different power relations require different forms of engagement by different kinds of participants, and as such it is not an appropriate goal for citizens to simply become 'more engaged' in participation, rather it is a question of expanding, refining and optimising the nature of participation on offer (Cornwall, 2008). The typologies

discussed in this chapter offer different ways of thinking about participation, however what is clear from the literature as whole is that context is key when it comes to analysing participation.

Motivations for Participation

White (1996: 146) argues that it is rarely the disadvantaged who identify participation as a critical means of bettering their situation. More often, individuals have more immediate and tangible interests and it is the concern of institutions to generate interest in the positive externalities of participation. Commonly it is only after individuals have witnessed the potentially empowering effects of participation that they become engaged. This raises questions about the motivations of the parties involved.

It is considered axiomatic that political elites are rarely keen to voluntarily cede power (Lijphart, 2008), however the reality is more complex and top down participatory initiatives are increasing globally (Gaventa, 2006). The perception remains however that top down initiatives are not attempts to devolve power but rather are an attempt to placate the public or legitimise decisions made by political elites. The placation argument assumes that participatory initiatives are a response to pressure from groups within society, and so citizens are provided with information or a modest amount of power to curtail their opposition, thus producing a more widely recognised outcome. Analysing participation as a form of legitimation has several effects on the power relationship between the 'rulers' and the 'ruled': not only does legitimation-via-participation cement the power of the rulers, it also enables the exclusion of non-participants, regardless of the reasons for not being involved. Exclusion can take a number of forms: deliberate, discursive or structural (Agger and Larsen, 2009), but as White (1996: 142) argues, those who choose not to participate, perhaps due to lack of awareness, scepticism or participation fatigue - are often seen to have forfeited the right to an opinion. Non-participants pay a heavy price for being 'outsiders', since they are often dismissed as a homogeneous group 'uninterested' in the issue. A rudimentary distinction between involved and not involved cannot account for multiple and often complex reasons for non-participation. Even those who are pre-disposed towards participation and have the skills, time and resources to participate may choose not to: one can grow tired of being an 'active citizen' (White, 1996: 149). That people do not express their interest does not mean that they do not have views, rather it is more likely that have no confidence in their interests being acted upon (White, 1996: 153). The internal dynamics of participatory initiatives can also play a part in the levels of inclusivity and sustained attendance. In

some instances the best option for participants is to register their dissatisfaction by exiting the process and resorting to what Scott (1985) termed the 'weapons of the weak' such as manipulations, resistance and non-participation.

However, as White (1996: 143) argues, sharing 'through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power' and therefore in some instances the act of non-participation can be as instrumental as involvement. Since non-participation can be a deeply political act, there is a danger in limiting analysis to those present during participation. Equally, those structurally excluded (for example through a lack of resources or requisite skills) or deliberately excluded should be factored into any analysis. In the case of state-led participation, involvement may require the acceptance of explicit and implicit conditions that some citizens cannot hold to in good conscience. At the other end of the scale, social and political movements 'from below' can be co-opted by authorities, often translating social issues into technical problems and thus shifting their original purpose. White (1996: 143) uses the example of gender and green movements that have begun as protests against the orthodoxy but have been transformed into participatory schemes in a form of technical adaptation. This co-option goes further than placation because it removes moral elements from protest movements and subsumes them, creating a problem to be circumvented or 'solved'. In such cases, it is important to remain cautious of the 'warm glow' of participation and its promise of inclusion and transparency which may mask participation's service of many interests.

Who is participating?

The question of who is participating is frequently neglected in favour of calls for 'full participation' (Cornwall, 2008: 275-276), however the composition of participants is the principle way through which initiatives can vary (Fung, 2006: 66). Unlike being member of a political party or voting in an election, participants in deeper forms of democratic participation are harder to quantify and analyse. Farrington et al. (1993) advocate simple axes of depth and breadth to test this phenomenon. Breadth refers to the range of people involved, where a narrow participatory process involves few people or displays bias towards certain interest groups or demographics, and a wide process draws on a greater and perhaps more representative sample of the population. The depth of an initiative refers to the level of involvement of participants throughout the process, ranging from identification of an issue to making the final decision. Cornwall (2008: 276) claims that this can be a useful instrument by which to assess the claims made about participation, with a focus on the

‘intersections between inclusion and exclusion’ as well as ‘degrees of involvement’. Cornwall (2008) goes on to make the point that whilst full participation is often extolled in policy statements, in reality such claims are both unlikely and impractical. Instead there should be a concentration on optimum participation, or getting the balance between depth and inclusion right for the policy issue under consideration. This is reminiscent of Bishop and Davis’ (2002) contention that form should follow function so that the question of breadth and depth of participation should be tailored to the issue. For instance, it would make little sense to consult a whole local community over residential planning for one dwelling, in the same way that involving too few people in region-wide decisions might be described as perfunctory.

The relevance of who participates is not considered by the continuum typologies above which assess an initiative's worth only by the nature and extent of participation. Therefore whilst Farrington et al.’s (1992) axes are a simple tool, they are effective for assessing the claims of those offering participation. All participatory spaces must justify the make-up of participants: the danger being that participatory processes have the potential to deepen exclusion of certain groups unless explicit attempts are made to embrace them. If steps are not taken to ensure a broad spectrum of participation, then initiatives can be appropriated by local elites and not be representative of wider interests. Farrington et al.’s (1993) axes highlight the importance of ensuring that the width and depth of the mechanism is suited to the policy problem, but also the importance of ensuring that regressive forms of exclusion are ruled out.

We have seen that non-participation is rarely clear cut. Macmillan (2011) has proposed ‘participation failure’ as a concept that should be introduced alongside the familiar ideas of state, market and government failures (Jessop, 2000). If a participatory initiative displays forms of participation failure (Figure 7), then it is unlikely that a positive, legitimate or progressive outcome will result. For example, participatory spaces should be appropriate to the spatial boundaries of the decisions being made to avoid failures in the ‘geography of participation’. Initiatives should therefore be designed in the knowledge that those living in less populous communities are more likely to participate than those in densely populated areas (Oliver, 2000) and participation can be significantly affected by the size of population (Batty et al., 2010b).

Figure 7: Macmillan's (2011) Forms of Participation Failure

Form of participation failure	Example
Insufficient participation	'due to time pressure, labour market participation, family life and private consumption and leisure pursuits'
Social gradient of participation	'where some groups such as the better resourced are more likely to participate than others'
Geography of participation	'here it appears to be stronger in some places than others, such as the idea that voluntary and community action struggles in more deprived areas'
Temporality of participation	'where provision, and thus participation, comes and goes according to changing funding regimes and trends in charitable giving'
Interest-centric participation	'where participation may concentrate on particular interests and enthusiasms, rather than on meeting essential welfare requirements for sustainable livelihoods'

Source: Adapted from Macmillan (2011: 112)

Avoiding participation failure should be a priority, not least because it is never just the present participatory initiative that is at stake. Successful participation increases the likelihood of future initiatives and public involvement in participatory spaces is often viewed as a route to more 'professional' political involvement (Barnes et al., 2007: 203). Inadequate participation also jeopardises the various benefits of participation as well as wider processes such as Freire's (1996) conscientisation, where an increase in political consciousness leads to a better associational life, with active citizens better informed and better equipped to self-govern and self-mobilise.

Whilst Macmillan (2011) provides a useful heuristic for considering the pitfalls of participation, it is important to recognise who decides the parameters for failure. State-led participatory spaces for example may be tailored to a specific outcome, which if not achieved marks the participation as a failure, but this may ignore increases in citizen knowledge, expertise and resilience. With regards to who is participating, an initiative might be considered a success if a certain quota of participants is achieved, or certain groups are represented, however this may bear no relation to the success of the process for the participants.

The literature persistently refers to the ‘usual suspects’ (often versus the ‘hard to reach’) (Barnes, Newman et al., 2004; Millward, 2005; Pratchett et al., 2009; Agger, 2012; Bradley, 2015) referring to the small percentage of a given community that traditionally provides a large proportion of the voluntary or participatory activities undertaken. This phrasing is needlessly pejorative and is better conceived of as active citizens, or a civic core (Reed and Selbee, 2001) - nonetheless it is demonstrably true. In the UK, an analysis of 27,000 responses to the Citizenship Survey between 2007-2010, found that just 10% of the population contributed between 24% and 51% of charitable giving, volunteering and civic participation (Mohan and Bulloch, 2012). Participatory democracy is traditionally a self-selecting exercise, although as this section has shown, care should be taken regarding exclusionary practices. The ownership of participatory spaces is a further variable that dictates who participates, and this is explored below.

Top Down versus Bottom Up

Non-established channels of participation are increasingly relevant to the overall nature of participation (Cornwall, 2008: 282), not least by demonstrating new ways of ‘doing democracy’. The delineation between top down and bottom up participation is largely synonymous with state-led and social movement participation respectively, and is also referred to as invited and uninvited participation. This section reviews how the nature of participatory spaces can be structured differently depending on who creates and therefore ‘owns’ the participatory space.

Invited spaces

Instances of formal or invited participation, where opportunities to participate are made available to particular individuals or groups, are increasingly common (Cornwall, 2008). Despite the rhetoric of many state-led initiatives and no matter how participatory such initiatives seek to be, they are necessarily ‘owned’ by those that provide them (Cornwall, 2008: 275). It is rare that ownership is transferred entirely to participants, which can prove problematic for producing transformative participatory spaces given Freire’s (1996) contention that the oppressed cannot be liberated through any action of the oppressors. This can be compounded if participants see their involvement merely ‘as a means to gain access to benefits or to improve their own access to services’ (Cornwall, 2008: 275). This argument is predicated on the understanding that the predominance of participants in such schemes are lacking voice or resources, and are therefore required to participate in order to secure

service provision, where the middle-classes can afford to opt out. Conversely it might be argued that where decision making abilities are devolved, it is the middle-class that is in the best position to 'capture' such opportunities (Matthews and Hastings, 2013). Invited spaces are of particular interest to researchers as they represent the explicit interface between citizens and the local or national state, and the structure of such spaces can reveal the government's implicit understanding of the citizen/state nexus. Furthermore at the micro level, public officials are brought into contact with private citizens in a way that alters the roles and perceived identities of both. This calls into question issues of expertise, identity and accountability - however there remains a paucity of research that explores how public officials negotiate their roles and identities within participatory spaces where there is considerable fluidity in concepts such as 'official' and 'citizen' (Barnes, 2009: 24).

The increasing prominence of invited spaces can have the effect of framing uninvited forms of participation as illegitimate. The expansion of the participatory sphere (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007) has produced a proliferation of institutionalised mechanisms, which has meant that the 'more traditional forms of exercising voice such as demonstrations, strikes and petitions has become less acceptable than seeking a seat at the consultation table' (Cornwall, 2008: 282). Such 'illegitimate participation' can be dismissed as inferior to invited initiatives, and participants labelled as unresponsive to more 'formal forms'. Yet as White (1996: 153) claims, those who do not express their interest, often fail to do so because they have no reason to expect their views will be acted upon - similarly those that opt for uninvited participation may do so because invited participatory spaces are neither sufficient nor suited to their needs. Cornwall (2008) has sought to achieve parity between top down and bottom up forms of participation by arguing that both need to be considered as part of what participation means in practice. The 'delegitimation' of uninvited participation is worrisome given the traditional connection with crucial struggles for equality and justice (Cornwall, 2008: 282). Uninvited participation is therefore crucial to achieving social justice and ensuring wider democratic vitality and should not be undermined for the sake of creating 'many more seats at many more tables' (Cornwall, 2008: 282). In response to this Young (2000) argues that ultimately participation should encourage 'speaking truth to power', rather than being top down and prescriptive. Advocates of participation therefore should also provide 'material, moral and political' support for popular mobilisation that 'seeks to influence policy through advocacy rather than negotiation' (Cornwall, 2008: 282).

Uninvited spaces

Uninvited spaces can range from small, local networks to complex social movements spanning the globe. Their nature is often entirely different from invited spaces, especially through the absence of unequal power relations within the participatory space. Such groups are often formed through a common interest in contrast to invited spaces where different stakeholders are usually called to represent differing points of view. Cornwall (2008: 275) is at pains to point out that such uninvited spaces can be crucial to civil society as they often foster spaces where individuals can gain confidence and skills, and groups can develop agendas to be pursued elsewhere, all the while creating solidarity within the group. Such movements often precipitate the emergence of collective identities and the development of ‘oppositional consciousness’ where, as Mansbridge (2001: 1) explains, a group claims:

... their previously subordinate identity as a positive identification, identify injustices done to their group, demand changes in the polity, economy or society to rectify those injustices, and see other members of their group as sharing an interest in rectifying those injustices

That is to say that groups derive their identity through a shared experience, often in negative relief from an established authority. The crucial benefit of such groups is the ability to set the agenda with rules ‘constructed jointly, rather than imposed by officials’ (Barnes et al., 2007: 50). As such, non-established channels of participation are central to shifting the boundaries that construct participation - they ‘push participation beyond the limits laid down by the political system, and they force it to change’ (Melucci, 1996: 214). For Barnes et al. (2007) the importance of social movements in this sense is their potential to establish new methods of action and challenge established rules, especially in relation to the least powerful in society whose communication styles do not necessarily cohere with the orthodox norms. This importance is reflected in Pretty’s (1995: 1252) zenith of self-mobilisation where individuals ‘participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems’. The question for those wishing to engage with democracy therefore is whether their aims can be fulfilled within invited spaces or whether uninvited participation is required as entering ‘spaces for participation means making strategic choices about whether and how to engage’ (Cornwall, 2008: 280).

A significant proportion of the literature demonstrates a preference for uninvited participation, associating it with ‘greater social justice, more effective public services and a society of self-

confident citizens' (Beetham et al., 2008: 11). But as Eversole (2010: 30) contends that all forms of participation have a close relationship with social change:

Participation is ultimately a discourse: a way of speaking, signalling (in an implicit binary) that we-as-professionals believe that they-as-communities have something important to contribute to the process of social change. The idea of participation is native terrain for community development practitioners who typically seek to enable 'change from below'

This recognition is central to the post-2010 'rediscovery of the social' (Corbett and Walker, 2013) and goes some way to explaining the turn to localism and participation in contemporary state policy. It is the emphasis on the change from below that ultimately drives much of the participation literature, whether the change comes from top down initiatives or from self-mobilised participation or a mixture of the two, participation is about change.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the broad literature pertaining to participation and defined its central concepts. The literature demonstrates three core characteristics regarding participation: first, participation is a catch all term that may mask many agendas, motivations and interests (Eversole, 2010). Second, in both academic and policy literatures participation is regarded as highly normative (Field, 2003), although there are notable exceptions in the shape of the post-structuralist perspective (Rose, 1999; Cruikshank, 1999). Third, despite continuing calls for clarity and specificity (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980; Cornwall, 2008), these qualities remain rare. No one typology, theory or account of participation can interpret the whole process in practice, therefore whilst calls for specificity and clarity are germane, it is also important to bear in mind the complexity that defines participation. In this vein, Flinders and Dommett (2013) contrast the expectations of the public against the reality of democratic involvement, with the conclusion that politics has a tendency to promise too much and deliver too little. They argue that participatory initiatives, far from being an emancipatory tool are inescapably rooted in the realpolitik of the policy landscape. Consequently the turn to state-led participation has allowed greater opportunities for citizen involvement, but this retains associated costs for democratic vitality in both material and abstract terms. Whilst the government's role in including marginalised groups in recent processes has been recognised (Young, 2000; Cornwall, 2008), the government's involvement is treated with scepticism in much of the literature - in particular the technical (rather than political) orientation of participatory initiatives and subsequent

‘tutoring’ of the population to speak to power in ‘acceptable’ ways (Barnes, 2006). Moreover, Fung and Wright (2003: 259) warn that the unifying problem of those supporting participatory governance is remaining inattentive to the problems of powerlessness. It is also important to remember that finding the ‘right institutional design’ will not necessarily redress the established imbalances of power that exist between certain citizens and groups, and between groups and institutions. Therefore radical methods of democratic practice may be required to break established power relations.

Addressing imbalances of power is traditionally the central purpose of democratic participation. As a result, attempts by government to redefine systems of governance through incorporating greater citizen involvement should be analysed against the normative typologies addressed above to assess claims to citizen control, empowerment, or transformative participation. The next chapter critically discusses the major theories of power that are both explicitly and implicitly present within participatory spaces. In so doing, it is possible to better understand how plenipotentiary powers might be devolved, and reveal how contemporary initiatives confront or avoid issues of power.

Chapter 3 Theories of Power

Introduction

Political sociology revolves around the question of power. Many theories have been put forward seeking to represent the nature of power and its effects in society; this chapter critically assesses the major theoretical traditions regarding power following Clegg's (1989) dichotomy of Hobbesian and Machiavellian schools of thought, paying close attention to how these theories seek to explain how power operates between the state and citizens. Localist principles dictate that power or decision making capabilities should be devolved to the lowest appropriate level. Any such process contains various assumptions about what power is and how it operates, as well as who may be permitted to wield it within a democratic arena - as such it is important to establish a working definition of power to be used in the subsequent analysis.

Power determines both where political spaces are located and which actors and relations are being examined (Berenskoetter, 2007: 1), therefore it is critical to recognise the role of power in shaping the substance and subject of social research. Citizen participation can bring latent issues of power to the fore, however the assumptions made about the nature of power are often implicit so any analysis of democratic participation must remain sensitive to questions of inequality and exclusion, in particular how citizens' 'non-participation, or participation on other people's terms, can ultimately reproduce their subordination' (White, 1996: 154). The discussion that follows will be particularly pertinent to the second research question: in asking how citizens are participating within the new participatory spaces opened up by the Localism Act (2011), it will be necessary to address the play of power, in particular between the state and citizen, in shaping how participants navigate the participatory process.

Clegg (1989) convincingly argues that theories of power within the modern Western social science tradition can be divided into two schools, derived from the political philosophy of Hobbes (1588-1679) and from Machiavelli (1469-1527). The former views power and action as synonymous with cause and effect such that power is an observable cause of movement towards an end result. In contrast Machiavelli studied strategies of power that emphasised individual actions in specific contexts. This chapter addresses these two schools, first the Hobbesian tradition where explanations of power developed significantly during the community power debates in North America throughout

the late 20th Century, and subsequently the Machiavellian school where theorists emphasised the strategic and often amoral study of power - notably in the work of Foucault (1990; 1991). Although Foucault rejected the label, his work heavily influenced the post-structuralist movement which included the influential works of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Clegg, (1989) and Rose (1999); and those writing specifically on the subjects of empowerment (Cruikshank, 1999) and participation (Barnes et al., 2007; Newman et al., 2004). Finally this chapter addresses communicative theories of power which have influenced participatory democracy and in particular deliberative theory. Focusing on the work of Arendt (1958, 1986), Habermas (1977), the communicative approach stresses communitarianism and deliberation in a decisive move away from the 'power over' tradition that has dominated much of the power debates in recent Western social science. The chapter concludes with a working definition of power that stresses the often neglected spatial elements and underscores the central role of hegemony in the analysis of power.

The Hobbesian Tradition

Hobbes' political philosophy continues to underpin much contemporary societal and political analysis (Hindess, 1996). Hobbes' work was heavily influenced by the Enlightenment, in particular the scientific revolution of the 17th Century typified by Newtonian physics that advocated a mechanistic view of the world grounded in empiricism. This ethos is evident throughout in Hobbes' (1962: 45) work:

Science is the knowledge of consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another: by which, one of that we can presently do, we know how to do something else when we will, or the like another time; because when we see how anything comes about, upon what causes, and by what manner; when the like causes come into our power, we see how to make it produce the like effects

Hobbes attempted to extend the methods and metaphors of this new science into the study of human relations such that power could be portrayed as a modern and mechanical concept (Ball, 1975).

However 'Hobbes was not a legislator for state power per se but for a science in which power was a key concept' (Clegg, 1989: 31), or in other words, a legislator on the very role of legislator (Bauman, 1987). Hobbes (1962) conceived of power as a causal, mechanistic and observable phenomena (McKee, 2009), an accumulative property (Hindess, 1996) that manifests itself in a political community granted by a beneficent sovereign (Clegg, 1989). Hobbesian power contained a moral component centred around the individual's means to secure a future good. This moral stance

stemmed from Hobbes' (1962: 143) belief that without the continued order of the civilised world, humans would exist only in a state of nature, where individuals would - in the famous phrase - live in 'continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. It is in reference to this belief that Hobbes' developed a theory of power underpinned by the desire for a civilised political community.

The Hobbesian conception of power can be reduced to the ability of A to make B act against the B's will. In this way power and action are synonymous with cause and effect such that power can be viewed as the cause of movement towards an end where power is an observable phenomena - the push and shove of human agency (Ball, 1975). This may be summarised as 'no change without push' (Watkins, 1965: 43), where individual social actors move around social space 'pushing' and 'being pushed' by other bodies. In attesting that power is an empirically verifiable phenomenon, it follows that any analysis of social life should be predicated on cause and effect, or the push and shove of the individual's agency. The Hobbesian political model creates a community in which the sovereign is composed of the individual powers of citizens - that is, the political community was achieved in direct relation to a sovereign power, although this should be understood as much for social order as for the unwavering preference for an autocracy rather than a democracy (Clegg, 1989). This idea is depicted on the cover of Hobbes' *Leviathan* published in 1651, which shows the large figure of the sovereign's body comprised of all the citizens in the community - emphasising that the sovereign only exists through them (Wolin, 1960). As Wolin (1960: 66) illustrates, of equal importance is the fact that each subject retains his autonomy by being depicted whole rather than being 'swallowed up in an anonymous mass'. Hobbes' (1962) instrumental account of an individual's power as their means to obtain some future good is open to interpretation. Ball (1988) notes for example that where resources are scarce, this merely corresponds to the satisfaction of individual needs and wants. In sum, Hobbes' political community constitutes the push and pull of atomistic social actors roaming across a social void, and this mechanical and atomistic conception of power is still often evoked today particularly in the field of political science.

The community power debate

Power returned to prominence in the form of the community power debate in North America during the late 1950s. The debate centred around who held power in a given community and was instigated by Mills' (1956) influential hypothesis that it was small power elites that held power in American

communities through influence in the fields of business, politics and public institutions. The debate progressed with a series of methodological and substantive revisions, first by pluralists, notably Dahl (1957, 1958, 1961) and Polsby (1960, 1963) who argued that power operated by means of competing interest; then Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1970) who incorporated both decision making and non-decision making, and finally Lukes (1974, 2005) who introduced the hegemonic processes of preference shaping. The community power debates dominated academic theories of power throughout the second half of the 20th Century, solidifying the agent centred approach defined by 'power over' or the ability of one person to realise their will over another. Despite the concept of 'power over' coming under criticism (Göhler, 2000), it remains an influential idea today, not least in discourses surrounding localism that seek to 'free' citizens from the yoke of central state institutions.

From elite power to pluralism

Elite theory emphasises the unequal role of elite groups within societal power structures. Michels (1949), a student of Weber, developed the iron law of oligarchy to demonstrate how rule by an elite class or oligarchy was inevitable within any democratic system. By contrast Pareto (1935) believed it was the superiority of elites, as the foremost figures in their field that secured their primacy. The European elite theorists then saw elite power as either normatively desirable or at the very least an inevitability. By contrast, their American counterparts, such as Mills (1956) and Hunter (1953) took the view that power elites posed a threat to democracy, in particular Mills (1956: 274) was critical of the danger that ruling elites posed to the functions of a healthy democracy, such as the vigour of public debates:

In so far as the structural clue to the power elite today lies in the political order, that clue is the decline of politics as genuine and public debate of alternative decisions - with nationally responsible and policy-coherent parties and with autonomous organizations connecting the lower and middle levels of power with the top levels of decision. America is now in considerable part more a formal political democracy than a democratic social structure, and even the formal political mechanics are weak.

A similar argument was espoused by Hunter (1953) who noted the questionable links between governors and governed. Both Mills and Hunter recognised that it was the institutional forces within the political structure that wielded power over society, rather than influential individuals within the ruling elite. Mills' (1956) argument underscored the role of social structure, emphasising the military-industrial-political complex where small group of 'loose cliques' governed key institutions

dispelling any lingering myth of 'romantic pluralism' (Mills, 1956: 271). This focus on social structure was predicated Weber's (1968) bureaucratic rationality by seeking to emphasize the institutional source of power for elite groups, rather than individual agency.

By the 1960s the idea of a stratified system of power where one group dominated another had been superseded by a pluralist account emphasising the interplay of competing groups within society. The behaviouralist perspective of Dahl (1957, 1958, 1961) and Polsby (1960, 1963) confronted elite theory with claims of methodological and analytical failings: in particular how elite theory concentrates on the institutional source of power, as opposed to the how power itself is wielded (Polsby, 1960). In place of this, pluralist theories contended that power was diffused among groups of largely independent individuals and this could be empirically verified in decisions made by individuals. Dahl (1957: 202) defined the power as where 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'. The most powerful actor in this scenario is where A has the greatest possibility of drawing a response from B. Evidently this is a simplified construction since A can represent anything from individuals to groups, singular offices to governments or nation states (Dahl, 1957). Unlike the Hobbesian view of the elite power theorists where one group possesses power, the pluralist perspective is relational, arguing that A's power is not possessed but employed in relation to B. Moreover, power is observable in this instance, we know that A has wielded power by observing the response of B since action cannot occur at a distance (Dahl, 1957). Whilst the nature of the connection may be queried, this view strengthens the methodological challenge of the power elite model that refers only to the power bases (Polsby, 1960) and not the exercise of power itself.

Like the theories that preceded it, pluralism continued to present the negative rather than positive aspects of power (Hardy and Clegg, 1999: 393). However the pluralist attack on the methodological weaknesses of elite power theory meant that important recognition of the role of social structure in power relations was downplayed. Clegg (1989: 64) argues that the view of pluralists of the political community as an 'ordered totality' is mistaken, instead the political community should be viewed as a product of power relations. The epistemological assumptions of behaviouralism mean that only empirically verifiable theories can be considered - in attacking the likes of Mills and Hunter so forcefully, the original insights of the elite power model were lost, thus making the first face of power something of a Pyrrhic victory. A further criticism aimed at pluralist accounts of power was made by Clegg (1989) who demonstrated that pluralism is only concerned with actors involved in a

pre-defined political community. The behaviourist methodology is inattentive to actors considered external to the political community because it considers them to be outside of power relations; this demonstrates a wilful ignorance of structural social inequalities of opportunity and unequal access to resources that prevent many from participating. Polsby (1963: 131) argued that participation equates to competence and a willingness to work, however this is a partial picture of the requirements of participation.

Decision making and non-decision making

The criticisms of the elite power model and the subsequent pluralist account were taken further by Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1970) who suggested that power was not exercised simply through decision making but also through non-decision making. Bachrach and Baratz (1962: 947) subscribed to the pluralist criticism of elite power theory's assumption of stable power structures:

One has to do with its [the elitist approach's] basic premise that in every human institution there is an ordered system of power, a "power structure" which is an integral part and the mirror image of the organization's stratification. This postulate the pluralists emphatically - and, to our mind, correctly reject, on the ground that nothing categorical can be assumed about power in any community

An additional criticism developed by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) was that the sociological analyses of political elites equated reputed power with actual power. In contrast, for the pluralists power meant participation in decision making that can only be analysed after 'careful examination of a series of concrete decisions' (Dahl, 1958: 466). Bachrach and Baratz (1962: 948) established that this perspective overlooks how power can be exercised by restricting decision making to 'safe issues'. The agenda of powerful groups is only ever a partial picture - issues being deliberately excluded are also evidence of the exercise of power. This oversight is as a result of the methodological tendency of pluralists to forgo unmeasurable elements from analysis of power - consequently Bachrach and Baratz (1962: 948) asked 'how can one be certain in any given situation that the "unmeasurable elements" are inconsequential, are not of decisive importance?'. Consequently the pluralists fall into the same trap as the elitists before them, as their assumptions about power predetermine their findings (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962).

This second face of power, or the hidden face of power, is where certain topics are kept away from public consumption in the form of non-decisions. As Bachrach and Baratz (1962: 950) attest, it is vital that we are aware of the 'dominant values and the political myths, rituals and institutions which

tend to favour the vested interests of one or more groups relative to others'. Again akin to pluralists, Bachrach and Baratz's view of power is a relational one, where one actor has power over another. However this does not just occur where a decision is made, it also occurs where a non-decision situation exists, or where dominant power relations stop particular concerns developing into issues which require a decision. Therefore 'the extent that a person or group - consciously or unconsciously - creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 8). The recognition of non-decision making as the second face of power is conjoined with the methodological assumption that latent issues can be observed in light of non-action by powerful groups within the political community. In other words by bringing such grievances to light, non-decisions are made a fitting subject for analysis (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963).

The three dimensional view of power

Lukes (1974) incorporated the Marxist work of Gramsci into the on-going debates around power. Gramsci's (1971) influential theory of hegemony introduced the idea that one group may dominate another by means of direct domination via the state and by cultural domination, where civil society's values and mores are ideologically shaped to suit the ruling group. Lukes (1974) argued that previous one and two dimensional accounts of power were not inaccurate but incomplete; nonetheless the three dimensional view developed from criticisms of the prior incarnations. Lukes (2005) claimed that both pluralist and Bachrach and Baratz's conceptions of power concentrate solely on observable conflict, or where we can observe A exercising power over B. However where Bachrach and Baratz criticised pluralists for only accounting for overt forms of power, Lukes continued the criticism by noting that previous theorists only accounted for overt and observable latent forms of power. Bachrach and Baratz proposed that non-decision making was also an exercise of power but only where issues are raised but not addressed in public fora. Lukes' concern lay with grievances that do not come light because of the Gramscian notion of preference shaping. This is the third face of power that incorporates the ways in which 'the relatively powerless come to internalise and accept their own condition, and thus might not be aware of nor act upon their interests in any observable way' (Gaventa, 2007a: 204-205). This concept is important in participatory studies as hegemonic processes will manipulate public attitudes before citizens enter a participatory space, hence certain issues can be excluded from public participation whilst participants themselves may be

drawn to participate in particular issues through the shaping of public opinion. This is reminiscent of the post-structuralist view that argues that publics do not pre-exist but are rather drawn up or created for particular purposes (Cruikshank, 1999; Newman, 2011; Inch, 2015).

Hay (2002: 183) has criticised Lukes' work on power arguing 'serves only to confuse things further'. Hay (1997: 49) claims that Lukes' work comes close to conflating analysis and critique, and that the appeal of Lukes' work lies in the presentation of power as a 'neutral analytical category', when in fact he is proffering a 'value-laden critical conception of power'. Lukes (1974; 2005) sees power as A exercising power over B such that B's (real) interests are being denied, and crucially finding A accountable. This is problematic as Hay (1997: 48-49) explains:

To identify A as exercising power over B is to identify a situation in which B's (real) interests are being subverted, and to identify A as not only responsible but culpable. It is, in short, to engage in a critique of A. Within such a schema power is not so much an analytical category as a critical category. At times Lukes is clearly aware of this, as for instance when he refers to power as an essentially-contested concept ... Yet, at other times, as for instance when he refers to the need to establish an empirical basis for identifying real interests, he seems to be referring to power as an analytical concept

That A is culpable in this instance is unquestionably a critique, and so as Hay points out, in such a schema power is not so much an analytical as critical category. Lukes' claim to be a critical theorist of power is undermined since his work fails to differentiate between the analytical account that recognises how power operates within a social setting, and the normative accounts that assess the arrangement and use of power against a particular understanding (Hay, 1997). Hay (1997: 49) goes on to claim that Lukes' account imagines a world free from power relations where power ultimately cannot be exercised responsibly or (more importantly) legitimately. Finally, Lukes (2005: 30) states that power is an 'essentially contested concept' - articulating that there are on-going debates about its nature and use, but problematically then claims to have produced a 'more satisfactory analysis of power relations' (Lukes, 2005:16), appearing to contradict the fundamentally contested nature of power.

The three faces of power therefore can be summarised as: one: 'the ability to get one's way despite opposition or resistance', two: 'the ability to keep issues off the political agenda in the first place' and three: 'the shaping of the public domain through the beliefs, values and wants that are considered normal or acceptable' (Beetham et al., 2008: 15). Whilst the three faces of power remain influential, more recently theorists have sought to add further depth to the analysis due to the

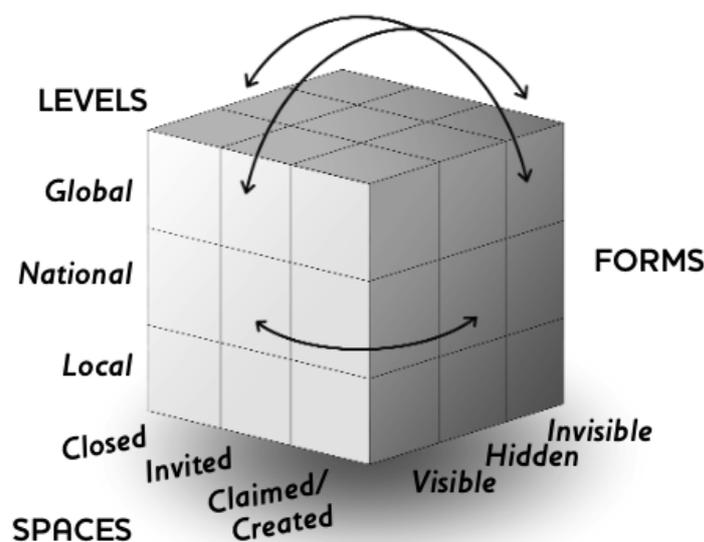
influences of globalisation (Held and McGrew, 2002, 2003; Gaventa, 2007a), in particular noting that the community power debate concentrated exclusively on a given community and therefore fails to incorporate spatial levels into the analysis of power.

Spatial relations of power

A former student of Lukes', Gaventa (2006; 2007a) built on the three dimensional approach to better represent the changing patterns of globalisation that have altered the spatial relations of power.

Whilst earlier debates focussed on power at the community level, Gaventa recognises that power must be understood at not only the local, but national and global levels, as well as the ways in which they interrelate. Gaventa (2007a: 205) argues that a 'focus on decision-making arenas in locality alone ... will rarely help us understand who really governs, though nor, of course, will only a focus on the national or supra-national'. Gaventa (2006; 2007a) incorporates spatial levels (supra-national, national, sub-national) and spaces for participation (invited, closed, claimed or created) to the original three dimensional concept of power, to form the power cube (Figure 8). Akin to a Rubik's cube, the blocks can be rotated and any specific blocks or side may be the first point of departure in any given analysis of power. Gaventa (2007a) argues that by visualising the spaces, levels and forms of power in this way - as separate but interrelated - it is possible to assess the possibilities of transformative participatory action in various political spaces.

Figure 8: Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube



Source: Gaventa (2006: 25).

Gaventa is not alone in prioritising the role of place in studies of power. Held and McGrew (2003: 11) state that the study of power can no longer be focused solely on a particular place, as the 'exclusive link between territory and political power has been broken ... [with] layers of governance spreading within and across political boundaries'. As a result, the central questions for analyses of power have become 'who rules, in whose interests, by what mechanisms and for what purposes?' (Held and McGrew, 2002: 8). However such questions throw up methodological challenges: if a holistic understanding of power cannot be achieved at the research site alone, then how do you go about researching the full effects or strategies of power? Gaventa (2007a: 209-210) suggest two arenas where analysis may take place:

... it is in the arenas of everyday life in which people are able to resist power and to construct their own voice. Others argue for the importance of the nation-state and how it mediates power, suggesting that the possibilities of local spaces often depend on the extent to which power is legitimated nationally but shared with the locality.

Gaventa draws on Beck (2005: 81) to suggest that global strategies of power impact local and national levels experiences:

... there is a new dialectic of global and local issues that do not fit into the scheme of national politics. As these kinds of global problems increasingly impact on people's everyday lives and yet are dealt with either inadequately or not at all at the national level, the crisis of legitimation in nation-state politics deepens.

Beck's analysis illustrates that accounts of power cannot be complete when they rely on data collected from one decision making level. Analyses need to recognise the interaction of different levels and question how power - or the lack of it - at one level shapes actions in another. As Gaventa (2007a: 211) explains using the language of the community power debate that: 'A may exercise power over B, B may in fact respond by influencing actors C, D or E, who in turn challenge A's dominance'. As a result, analyses of power must pay heed to the vertical interrelationships of power, from the subnational, to the national, to the supranational.

The rise of participatory initiatives and forms of governance has opened up new (institutional) spaces for democratic participation which in turn challenge traditional assumptions of state/civil society relations (Gaventa, 2007a: 213). This rise can be seen in the emergence of theoretical frameworks such as 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung and Wright, 2003) within the 'new participatory sphere' (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007). For Gaventa, it is important to recognise that new spaces do not automatically change the nature of power, nor the relationships between individuals, as Lefebvre (1991: 24) notes:

Space is a social product ... it is not simply “there,” a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control, and hence of domination, of power

It is the definition of power that determines where political spaces are located, and which actors and relationships are being examined (Berenskoetter, 2007: 1). Thus in terms of examining the spaces for participation, we must ask: ‘how they were created, with whose interests and what terms of engagement?’ (Gaventa, 2007a: 214). The spatial relations aspect of power opens up a more complicated and nuanced understanding of the movements of power in modern society that will be returned to at the conclusion of this chapter. Despite the dominance of Hobbes’ work, many contemporary accounts of power differ from the mechanistic, agent centred approach he adopted, and many of these accounts can be traced back to an Italian diplomat who died some 61 years before Hobbes was born.

The Machiavellian Tradition

In contrast to Hobbes’ conception of an ordered political community, Machiavelli (2011; 2012) conceived of a social setting where order might be secured by a strategically mindful ruler. Originally published in 1532, *The Prince* was written for the then-governor of Florence, Lorenzo de’ Medici, for whom Machiavelli (2011) focused on ‘strategies, deals, negotiation, fraud and conflict’ such that political ‘myths ... become gameplayers’ resources rather than a topic which frames what the game might be’ (Clegg, 1989: 30). Whereas Hobbes can be seen as a ‘legislator’ on what power is, followers of Machiavelli stress the interpretation of the strategic effects of power. The Machiavellian tradition can be seen in the work of Foucault (1991), Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Rose (1999) and Clegg (1989) who sought to utilise Machiavelli’s ‘cynical, rationalist and realist perception’ (Clegg, 1989: 30).

Machiavelli never explicitly set out a definition for power, and unlike Hobbes he did not attribute moral values to his notion of power. Machiavellian power is simply ‘the effectiveness of strategies for achieving for oneself a greater scope for action than for others implicated by one’s strategies’ (Clegg, 1989: 32). Machiavelli (2011) passes no judgement on the manipulations of power, only their efficacy is questioned. The ability to eschew generalities and focus on the context of power is a critical strength of the Machiavellian tradition, a characteristic that is highly useful for studying the inherently complex nature of power relations (Fleming and Spicer, 2005: 103). Indeed

one of Machiavelli's foremost analytical qualities was the emphasis on studying strategies of power in whatever form they might take, rather than being tied to any a priori, mechanical or causal conception of power (Clegg, 1989: 32). The strategic approach demonstrates that power does not reside in an individual but rather is the effect of individual manoeuvrings (Fleming and Spicer, 2005: 100); subsequently power must be considered in contextual and non-generalisable framework which stresses that power does not revolve around 'any single originative and decisive centre' (Clegg, 1989: 6-7). That is not to say that Machiavelli (2012: 32) did not condone or deny individual authority:

... the wise founder of a commonwealth who seeks to benefit not himself only, or the line of his descendants, but his state and country, must endeavour to acquire an absolute and undivided authority. And none who is wise will ever blame any action, however extraordinary and irregular, which serves to lay the foundation of a kingdom or to establish a republic.

Machiavelli thus advocates those acting in the public good to use extraordinary means to achieve their ends. Organisation cannot be achieved by the many since the divergence of their opinions prevents adequate agreement - yet once an agreement is achieved it is not readily abandoned (Machiavelli, 2012). In other words, organisation is best left to the individual, but administrations can only be sustained by the many. The recognition of the abilities of the individual and group within social relation demonstrates the pragmatic nature of Machiavelli's understanding. However, crucially Machiavelli's understanding required the powerful will of one individual to sustain the kingdom or community against its enemies; the need for a singularity to unite a community is the antithesis of the later work on communicative understandings of power dependent on formation of a collective will (Arendt, 1958).

Despite the stark differences in understanding, Machiavelli's (2012) approach to power is not inattentive to the chances of the individual, arguing that individuals cannot be made to bear privations without the inducement of a reward. The ability of the individual to rise in society suggests an equality of opportunity within this concept of power - where any citizens' manoeuvres may bring about their desired ends. Clegg (1994: 157), himself a proponent of the Machiavellian tradition, understands power as a set of techniques that shift over time in order to secure the interests of the dominant:

Power becomes conceived as a set of techniques disciplining practices, as well as the more or less stable or shifting networks of alliances that such disciplinary practices make possible through their elective affinities between wholly contingent forms of identity, extended over a shifting terrain of practice and discursively constituted interests.

Fleming and Spicer (2005: 103) suggest that Clegg's calls for the analysis of 'concrete, contextually specific mobilization of power' and 'the ethnographic and empirical context of power' do not materialise in his own work, instead Clegg's circuits of power is a highly abstract, even baroque model. This criticism is recurrent in the Machiavellian tradition, however advocates would argue that a productive understanding of power has to reflect its relational and ultimately contingent nature. Although divisive, the theorist par excellence within this tradition is undoubtedly Foucault (1984a: 384) who advocated a problematisation of the concept of power, a development of 'acts, practices, and thoughts' that establish problems for the realm of politics.

Foucault and post-structuralism

Foucault's (1975, 1980, 1984a, 1984b, 1990, 1991) problematisations of power built on the Nietzschean (1986) contention that the world is the will to power and nothing besides. Foucault conceived an all pervasive web of power that pervades society and engages a 'will to conform' within social actors (Barth, 1998) by permeating social relations, or the 'multiplicity of specific, localized relationships that constitute the social body' (Callinicos, 1999: 278). For Foucault (1990: 93), power was not produced by conscious agency but rather it 'is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'. Foucault's understanding of power (and the many readings of his work by his audience) changed over time, primarily due to the belief that there can be no ahistorical answer to the epistemological question of power, rather theorists should strive for specificity in providing heuristic devices or pragmatic constructions from which to analyse the concept (Hoy, 1981: 129). Foucault (1991) first addressed power directly in *Discipline and Punish* where power is shown to be a technology of governance that achieves its designs by means of its disciplinary character. Famously, the text begins with a detailed account of the torture and execution of Robert-François Damiens, an attempted regicide of Louis XV, before recounting the mundane penal practices of an early 19th Century prison. Foucault noted that this transition was commonly attributed to the Enlightenment ideals of progress, morality and civility, but in place of this argued that the shift was part of an on-going trajectory of subjection tied to the discursive expertise of particular epochs. Extending the argument, Foucault sought to demonstrate how the

disciplinary practices of the prison were also evident in everyday institutions such as schools and hospitals, where the surveillance and evaluation (and latterly also quantification) of individuals became a necessary prerequisite for the manipulation of whole populations.

Central to this argument was the belief that many academic theories of power had been mistaken in placing sovereignty at their centre (Clegg, 1989); consequently Foucauldian disciplinary power does not derive from a central, intentional will such as a sovereign or even the traditional condensation of power centred around the state. In place of such a Hobbesian model, Foucault set out a synaptic model of power that operates through and between social actors and their relations - in so doing Foucault (1975: 39 - emphasis in original) rejected a top down form of power in favour of a:

... capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives ... a synaptic regime of power, a regime of its exercise *within* the social body rather than *from above* it.

Power then operates at the level of everyday practices, with (unequal and dominating) power relations replicated and reinforced via society's institutions (schools, marriage, the police and so on) saturating the whole social order. As noted by Fischer (2003), central to this process was the emergence of professional disciplines post 18th Century (sociology included), particularly through practices such as defining individuals as social objects to be observed and ultimately regulated - revealing the ultimate goal of modernity as the rational control of populations through normalising behaviour (Foucault, 1975). Foucault (1991) further developed his problematisation of power in *The History of Sexuality*, establishing the move from the 'anatomy-politics' of disciplinary power (Smart, 1985) to biopower, or 'the way our current practices work so as to bring about an order in which Western men will be healthy, secure and productive' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986: 116). Biopower therefore is the means of controlling and normalising populations through expert discourses, emanating from influential institutions and sustained through the range of human relationships that are marked by power relations between individuals, 'within families, in pedagogical relationships, political life, and so on' (Foucault, 1984b: 283)

Power relations are extremely widespread in human relationships. Now, this means not that political power is everywhere, but that there is in human relationships a whole range of power relations that may come into play among individuals,

The role of expertise is central to the biopower, as power constitutes all claims to knowledge within society (Foucault, 1977: 104) demarcating both what was permissible and 'logical', creating an

interwoven network of discourse that is both enabling and constraining. Existing institutions have an interest in (re)producing such knowledge claims as they act to maintain their authority whilst reinforcing the discursive structures that support them. Such expert discourses are then internalised by individuals, who may then police themselves and delegitimise alternative forms of action: ‘our own reflexive gaze takes over the disciplining role as we take on the accounts and vocabularies of meaning and motive ... while certain other forms of account are marginalised or simply eased out of currency’ (Clegg, 1998: 32).

In the spirit of the Machiavellian tradition, Foucault refrained from advocating judgements about ‘good’ or ‘bad’ government, arguing that such proclamations add little to the debate (Gordon, 1991). The perceived absence of a critical standpoint combined with the pervasive model of power that he espoused, laid Foucault open to accusations of advocating an inescapable and totalising system of power that precluded meaningful freedom (Gordon, 1991). This stemmed in part from the rejection of the emancipatory project of Marxism, however Foucauldian power does not preclude resistance - hence the famous statement that ‘[w]here there is power, there is resistance’ (Foucault, 1990: 95). Rather Foucault believed that the overthrow of any given hegemonic project would simply result in another manifestation of ruling power, and far from viewing individuals as passive, ideological dupes saw social actors as imbued with agency (Mills, 2003) albeit within a wider web of social relations playing out within a contingent field of power. Within this complex field of power relations, practices of liberty should be encouraged, allowing subjects to resist domination where possible.

Despite contrasting readings of Foucault’s work, the paradigmatic break created by his understanding of power retains influence in contemporary political sociology. Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 153) took up a Foucauldian position and defined resistance as a ‘type of action whose objective is the transformation of a social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination’. Such a contention brings into question what underpins social practices and allows subjects to be constructed. Akin to Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) decentred class as the focal point of achieving such political consciousness, arguing that society cannot be so neatly or statically explained (Mohan and Stokke, 2010), thus moving away from the classical Marxist concentration on the common relationship to the means of production. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) sought to further their discussion of power further by engaging with concepts of false consciousness and hegemony; central to their analysis was the diversity of fluid (collective) identities within society, with the

existence of new social movements supporting their argument of culturally constructed identities which are constructed through collective action.

A further strand of post-structuralism followed Foucault's (1991) later work on governmentality (Gordon, 1991; Dean, 2010). Stressing the itinerant and insidious nature of power, this described the 'conduct of conduct' (Gordon, 1991: 2) and the ways in which organisations, groups and individuals have become implicated, or even instrumental in methods of governing. From this perspective, citizen involvement is (potentially at least) a technique of government designed to envelop individuals into new fields of governmental power (Barnes et al., 2007: 65). For this reason, evaluation of participation should remain conscious of the possibility that participation could be a means to (re-)produce unequal power relations and subordination. In line with the Machiavellian tradition, post-structuralist analyses do not consider participation as an intrinsically good or bad mechanism of governance, rather they contain the 'twin possibilities of domination and freedom' (Cruikshank, 1999: 2). These processes occur through 'technologies of power' which are tied to institutions that disseminate knowledge claims (Foucault, 1991), hence the development of power/knowledge denoting that there can be no power relationship without a corresponding field of knowledge. With regard to participation, Barnes et al. (2007: 65) note:

These encompass the expertise of the state professional (defining the problem on which an agency wishes to consult its public), the expertise of the state official (designing a consultation strategy or setting out the seating plan for a public meeting) and the expertise of an 'expert citizen' (voicing the claims of a particular group in a way that can be heard by the relevant officials).

This perspective inverts normative writings about participation by suggesting that participation may be far from emancipatory but rather a reconfiguration existing forms of governance. Rose (1996a, 1996b, 1999) has been instrumental in highlighting how 'free' actors are subject to new discursive practices that seek to constitute the governable subject through what Cruikshank (1999) terms 'technologies of citizenship'. This process is concisely summarised by Fisher (2003: 18), noting it 'is not that institutions cause political action; rather, it is their discursive practices that shape the behaviours of actors who do'. Thus citizens are discursively produced and regulated as a fully political being, to the point at which the subject 'is claimed to be prior to politics itself' (Butler, 1992: 13). Citizens therefore are not seen as pre-determined legal, social or political subjects (Dean, 2010) rather they are constantly (re-)constituted and (re-)defined (Cruikshank, 1999) dependent on the political rationalities of the moment. Such rationalities are 'the formulation and justification of

idealized schemata for representing reality, analysing and rectifying it' (Miller and Rose, 2008: 58). Examples of this can be seen where citizens are defined by what they lack, such as employment, housing, citizenship and so on - and so when we claim that a subject is dependent or apathetic we are measuring that individual against a normative ideal of citizenship (Cruikshank, 1999: 24). In these terms, democratic participation may be seen as a response to 'a lack of power, of self-esteem, of coherent self-interest, or of political consciousness' (Cruikshank, 1999: 3). In this way, policy problems become a way of representing reality and thus frame the nature of the interventions designed to correct them, and based on this understanding citizens are 'called up' to participate in democracy.

Foucault's opus and the work of post-structuralists led to the recognition of different, subtle and itinerant forms of power and thus halted the 'endless search for a sovereign power that is not there' (Cruikshank, 1999: 17). Despite this, the 'technologies of citizenship' that seek to constitute the governable subject are too often regarded in functionalist terms, as solely indicative of attempts to cut back on public expenditure (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000). This is problematic since the ways through which citizens are discursively rendered as subjects of democracy has critical implications for democratic politics, with power rendered as 'invisible or unaccountable' (Cruikshank, 1999: 13). This invisible form of power - sometimes termed the fourth face of power (Digeser, 1992) - remains a central problem for researchers investigating power relations, however this too has come under criticism for an undue emphasis on power as system of social boundaries that delimit possible action (Hayward, 1998). In place of this overly negative and repressive understanding of power, communicative theorists have sought to accentuate the concept of 'power to' as a foundation from which to model a positive form of power created through communication between social actors resulting in collective action.

Communicative Power

Communicative theories represent a clear break in ways of thinking power. Solidified in the work of Weber (1968), the dominant view in the social sciences sees power as the strategic assertion of an individual's interest over another, a zero-sum game where power is wielded at the expense of others. In contrast, communicative theories of power emphasis the positive effect of collective action. This is evident in Freire's (1996) assertion that humanity can only flourish where both the oppressed and oppressors recognise social injustice and act collectively to address it, and is at the heart of the move

from 'power over' to 'power to'. Where Machiavelli previously advocated a single will at the heart of a political community, communicative theorists - notably Arendt (1958, 1986) and Habermas (1977; 1984; 1990; 1996) - argue for a collective will, a form of power derived from collective engagement with a foundation of achieved consent.

Arendt

Arendt (1958, 1970, 1986) saw power as the potential for free and self-determined action by means of the communicative abilities of individuals within a wider collective. Crucially, Arendt marked the distinction between power and its associated concepts: authority, strength, violence and force. For Arendt (1986: 64-65) authority refers to a property possessed by individuals and revealed by the unquestioning acceptance of others without recourse to coercion; strength is an inherent property of an individual or object which may 'prove itself' in relation to others but is ultimately independent of them; violence meanwhile is an instrument used to increase strength (Arendt, 1986: 65); and force refers to the 'energy released by physical or social movements' (Arendt, 1986: 65). It is these four concepts that Arendt believed were being considered in the faces of power debate, not power itself - therefore Arendt's unpacking of power sought to demonstrate that the traditional conceptions of power are misrepresented as simply forms of rule and domination. In place of this, Arendt's power originates from the collective will, not violence - in fact violence and coercive acts of strength are antithetical to power.

For Arendt, power was not wielded over a subject but rather exercised through others by means of a common will formed in non-coercive communication (Flynn, 2004). Power should be viewed as 'power to' (Arendt, 1958: 200), emphasising the ability of groups of individuals to act collectively. In order for this to occur, individuals need to be free to the extent that they can engage in concert, and equal to the extent that each individual has the same right to join with others. In turn, individuals must have the capacity to express their views and others must be in a position to understand them. Political power in this way is a shared power where the powerful group in a community understands the distinction of power as co-operation and not coercion, since 'power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse' (Arendt, 1958: 200). Such a view clearly subverts the Hobbesian idea of a beneficent sovereign and instead sees power as, not the property of an individual, but a human creation and the outcome of collective engagement. So long as actors continue to act in concert, a group may harness power predicated on persuasive techniques

and achieved consent: consequently when an individual as 'in power', the underlying meaning is that they are empowered by a number of other individuals and allowed to act on their behalf (Arendt, 1986). This is true at the level of the individual, but also in institutions, since the latter are only manifestations of power that rely on the consent of their members, as Arendt (1970: 41) explains:

It is the people's support that lends power to the institutions of a country, and this support is but the continuation of the consent that brought the laws into existence to begin with ... All political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them.

As such, Arendt's power is *sui generis* - a product of action (the activities of a plurality of individuals) and is founded upon persuasion, achieving consent of others through unconstrained debate. Under this understanding the role of words is not to 'veil intentions but to disclose realities', whilst 'deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to create new realities' (Arendt, 1958: 200); this reveals the productive force of power, but also its reliance on discursive rationality. Central to communicative power is the impartial reasoning achieved between individuals so consensus can be achieved. Such reasoning, for Arendt (1977: 220-221), is a social exercise even if the 'other' is only anticipated:

The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others, and the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement ... it needs the presence of others 'in whose place' it must think, whose perspective it must take into consideration and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all

The communicative anticipation of the other in relation to one's own judgement was taken up by Habermas (1996: 147) who contrasted this to the Weberian model that 'sees the fundamental phenomenon of power as the probability that in a social relationship one can assert one's own will against opposition'. Habermas (1977: 17-18) embraced the Arentian view of power as the potential of a common will formed in non-coercive communication, against the notion that violence or force alone can bestow an individual with power.

Habermas

Habermas (1996: 136) therefore argued against the Hobbesian conception of 'power over', maintaining that 'all political power derives from the communicative power of citizens', specifically

how political and administrative power is legitimated by means of public discourse. Popular sovereignty can only be sustained by means of the public's right and capacity to engage in rational discourse. The legitimacy of political-administrative power therefore can be traced back to its foundation in public will formation achieved through public discourse (O'Mahony, 2010).

Consequently, communicative power is the expression of the citizenry's political autonomy.

Underpinning this free public discourse, Habermas (1987) conceived of a communicative rationality which establishes a unifying force aimed at achieving consensus, where citizens overcome their own subjectivities in favour of rationally motivated agreement. Habermas' (1977; 1984; 1990; 1996) extensive work on communicative power prioritises the intersubjective structures of communication, rather than individual reasoning. Central to these structures of communication is the individual's ability to either corroborate or criticise claims to knowledge whose validity is contested through free and open debate. In so doing citizens learn from one another and reflexively examine their own arguments and assumptions in order to reach a position of mutual understanding. To achieve this consensus Habermas argues that a mutual understanding 'entails a commitment to certain presuppositions rooted in the idea of unconstrained argumentation or discourse' (Flynn, 2004: 436).

The unconstrained discourse in Habermas' account occurs within the public sphere, a self-constituted space distinct from the economy and the state in which citizens act in networks through dialogue. In reality, there are many overlapping public spheres but Habermas conceived of the public sphere as an ideal type, where certain normative values have to be met. First, participants must ensure that the ideas they hold are comprehensible to themselves and others. Second, participants' ideas must cohere with what has already been established and thus be 'true'. Third, participants must be authentic in the sense that they sincerely hold the views they espouse. Fourth, participants are expected to be morally appropriate given the situation. Overall, citizens are expected to participate in rational debate where all participants are free to put forward questions, ideas and claims, promote their own arguments, whilst no individual's right to deliberate in the public sphere should be impinged upon. The implication therefore is that where consensus is reached in such a deliberative forum, it will be founded on shared, rational understandings of what constitutes both validity and legitimacy. As such, consensus should be set apart from mere agreement.

Habermas' account of communicative power has been criticised for its lack of specificity but also contrasting accounts of its nature. Specifically, for some it remains unclear whether communicative

power amounts to discursive power produced through arguments within informal public spheres, or is primarily associated with the institutional power to make binding decisions (Flynn, 2004). Nonetheless, theories of communicative power continue to be influential in theoretical circles as well as heuristically useful for advocates of participatory democracy. Aspects of Habermas' theory of communicative power in particular has been transmuted into the theoretical foundation of the deliberative model of democracy which is considered in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the highly complex and contested nature of power. Following Clegg (1989), the work of Machiavelli and Hobbes has been used as a framework for analysing the contemporary debates around power. This review has intentionally refrained from advocating a particular reading of power as since the three faces of power debate it has become increasingly difficult to disentangle the differing accounts of power into a single, comprehensive concept (Göhler, 2009). In part due 'the fragmentation of power' in a 'global postmodern world' (Innes, 2004: 16), we may state along with Haugaard (2006: 9) that:

There is no single essence that defines the concept [of power] but there are a number of overlapping characteristics, as in a large family, which define membership. Each theory has local usage which makes sense for that theory but is not entirely applicable in a different context.

Context is therefore crucial to understand the operation of power. As Foucault (1990) contended there can be no ahistorical answer to the epistemological question of power - but more than this, there can be no comprehensive or definitive theory of power as portrayed by the theorists and traditions above. This thesis therefore adopts a pragmatic working definition of power from which to base the analysis that follows; this definition pivots around spatial considerations in the analysis of power and the central roles of hegemony and contingency¹. The first element embraces Gaventa's (2006) spatial analysis and crucially contends that different forms of power may operate within different spaces and across different levels. This is intentionally open-ended, recognising both the applicability of 'power over' (whilst noting its limitations - particularly the agent-centred approach)

¹ The account that comes closest to the definition of power offered here is the contingent 'web of power' put forward by Foucault (1990; 1991) that stresses specific articulations of power in different epochs. As discussed above, the difficulty with advancing this understanding exclusively, is that it may be criticised for amounting to a totalising system that precludes meaningful freedom (Gordon, 1991) - despite the fact that Foucault (2009) himself in later lectures stressed that power is a predominantly productive and positive force.

and ‘power to’ (in particular the positive relational aspect concerning collective action). The pertinent question for a political sociology analysis therefore should be *how* power is realised in a given context, with attention paid to the form(s) of power in operation, in which space(s), and across the relevant level(s) (Gaventa, 2006; 2007a).

The second element concerns the importance of hegemony in understanding how power is realised. This follows Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) understanding of hegemony that is predicated on the play of difference and contingency, seeking to move away from what they considered to be an essentialist conception of society where ideology dominates through the propagation of both state and civil society (Levitas, 1986). Society must be understood as constituted by the play of difference through discursive formations, by which is meant an ‘ensemble of phenomena in and through which social production of meaning takes place’ (Laclau, 1980: 87). These discursive formations, whilst essentially transitory, are subject to hegemonic processes and thus meaning can become ‘fixed’ and appear ‘natural’ at any given time. At this point a Marxist reading would introduce the concept of ideology as false consciousness (Clegg, 1989), but this could only be so if actors had a fixed and essentially ‘true’ identity. In place of this Laclau (1983: 22) argues that social actors are ‘decentred’ and identity is merely an ‘unstable articulation of constantly changing personalities’. This contingent understanding of identity (and social relations more widely) removes the possibility of false consciousness and this has a profound consequence for the meaning of ideology: instead of being a misrecognition of some fixed social reality, ideology becomes the ‘refusal to recognize the always unstable, articulated character of the social form’ (Clegg, 1989: 179). For Laclau and Mouffe (1985) therefore, the nature of identity is dependent on discursive practices and crucially stresses the contingent nature of social relations. This understanding of hegemony moves beyond Gramsci’s (1971) concept, to describe the processes by which discursive formations permeate social relations and therefore our understanding of reality. In other words, meanings become temporarily fixed (albeit in unstable and transitory ways) via hegemonic practices and normalised to the extent that they appear beyond question. Such practices operate discursively, expanding into ‘a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces’ (Torfing, 1999: 101). This reflects Laclau’s (1996: 90) two central features of hegemony as contingent and constitutive since hegemonic articulations ‘institute social relations in a primary sense, not depending on some a priori social rationality’. Society therefore is the product of a series of on-going hegemonic practices that aim ‘to

establish order in a context of contingency' (Mouffe, 2009: 549) - but that same contingency means that all social structures may be 'redefined through hegemonic struggle' (Mouffe, 2005: 32-33).

With this in two elements mind, we can form a working definition of power. Wright (2010: 111 - emphasis in original) defines power simply as 'the *capacity* of actors to accomplish things in the world'. This has both instrumental and structural dimensions: the capacity of actors to accomplish their desires, and how effective such capacities are, given structural constraints. This definition encapsulates the effects of collective action in the exercising of power, whilst allowing for structural constraints that may stem from hegemonic articulations. Importantly this is not a zero-sum conception - the ability of one actor or group of actors to accomplish their desire, does not *necessarily* impinge on the abilities of another group to accomplish theirs. As such, power permeates all social relations and crucially, is not a finite resource: it may operate positively by means of collective action, but also repressively through hegemonic structures that continually seek to subordinate social actors and exclude the articulation of possible alternative. Hence we can say that power operates (in both positive and repressive ways) within a social field in constantly flux between hegemonic order and contingency. Returning to the first element of this working definition, we may begin to understand particular articulations of power by deconstructing the specific context, that is the form(s), level(s) and space(s) theorised by Gaventa (2006).

Under this understanding it is important to note that we cannot 'free' ourselves from power (in a Leninist/revolutionary sense), but rather attempt to bring about 'a profound transformation of the existing power relations and the establishment of a new hegemony' (Mouffe, 2005: 52). Whilst hegemonic power seeks to repress potential alternatives, such alternatives can crucially always be reactivated - and this introduces the possibility that every social order can be challenged by radical practices that demand new articulations of power (Gürsözlü, 2009). It follows therefore that radical democratic projects may provide new ways of doing democracy and destabilise existing articulations of power. The central purpose of democracy may simply be to arrive at collective decisions from amongst competing interests (Stoker, 2006), but as illustrated by the preceding discussion, hegemonic systems of power mean that equal access to influence amongst those competing interests is rarely more than a theoretical position. As noted by Barnes (2009: 35-36) citing the example of deliberative fora, in practice democratic spaces are often 'where citizen aspirations confront institutional rules and norms, and power remains unequally exercised'. The above literature struggles to demonstrate concrete examples of radical displays of power within invited participatory spaces,

which are too often dominated by powerful voices and established interests. The play of power within a society is intimately tied up with the system of governance, therefore the following chapter explores the predominant models of democracy before concentrating on recent incarnations of participatory democracy that have sought to confront established articulations of power through alternative forms of decision making.

Chapter 4 Doing Democracy

Introduction

The meaning of democracy remains contested and yet it is often perceived as a simple and commonly understood idea (Somerville, 2011). Whilst not reducible to a single definition, democracy is usually viewed as a normative system of rule involving some form of input by the people (the ‘demos’), and is generally held to be conducive to society’s welfare. Democracy is often understood through associated principles: for instance, popular equality dictates that all members of a society have a equal rights of participation and equal responsibilities to adhere to democratically arrived-at decisions (Beetham, 1999). Democracy can also be understood as a project (Sartori, 1987), a process of becoming democratic (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) or a horizon point towards which a society may travel but never meet (Lefebvre, 2003). This acknowledges that democracy must inevitably fall short of its normative conceptions: some individuals are more powerful than others, some are able to participate more effectively, and others do not adhere to the collective will (Somerville, 2011). This process of ‘becoming democratic’ explains the deeply contested nature of democracy, as societies seek to dispute, achieve or refine their own visions of a democratic model.

Democracy can be traced back to at least 460 BC and whilst popular struggles for democracy surfaced in 15th Century Britain and again during the French and American Revolutions of the 18th Century, it was not until the 20th Century that recognisable models of representative democracy crystallised in the West. This chapter critically reviews the pre-eminent models of democracy broadly categorised as either representational and participatory, before turning to a critical review of empirical research into deliberative democracy as the most dominant strand of contemporary participatory democracy. This concentrates on the UK’s recent policy context and the nature of the political opportunity structure through a review of research into New Labour’s area-based initiatives (ABIs), before considering the dominant political discourses that surrounded the inception of post-2010 localism.

Representative Democracy

This section briefly evaluates the three predominant manifestations of representative democracy, namely elite, pluralist and neo-pluralist forms. These models are highly dependent on conceptions of

power as well as societal and institutional arrangements, although emphasis here is placed on the role of citizen participation.

Competitive elitism

Competitive elitism is most closely associated with the works of Schumpeter (1976: 629) who defined democracy as a mechanism for producing political decisions in which ‘individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote’. Schumpeter was building on Weber’s belief in competition: democracy for Weber (2008) was an institutional mechanism, a struggle to establish the most competent in positions of power - he viewed parliamentary governance and a competitive party system within capitalistic economies as both inevitable and valuable. Weber foresaw political life becoming ever more rationalised by the iron cage of bureaucracy and thus championed the ‘countervailing power of private capital, the competitive party system and strong party leadership’ (Held, 2006: 138). This stemmed from the view that the power of the central state increases as it penetrates its territory with an increasingly dense institutional infrastructure that makes it possible to implement decisions in remote territories (Uitermark, 2005). Schumpeterian democracy however was not a vehicle through which normative values of common good could be achieved, nor was it an end in itself (Schumpeter, 1976: 242), it was simply a mechanism for selecting leaders.

Schumpeter saw no greater role for citizens than voting at elections due to their perceived inability to look beyond their own personal milieu. This was predicated on the belief that mass society had caused conservative morality to be overrun by base instincts and criminal tendencies (Schumpeter, 1976: 257). Weber (2008) considered the ‘emotionality’ of the electorate as a poor foundation for understanding public affairs, preferring instead a form of elected dictatorship. Thus, in competitive elitism citizen participation is conceived simply as a choice between political parties through voting; the normative value of equality only extended as far as one individual, one vote. With the citizenry too capricious to trust with greater involvement, their role is restricted to passively receiving party political agendas. Competitive elitism therefore promotes a massive concentration of power within elite political circles and denies opportunities for subordinate groups to obtain control over society. More damaging for competitive elitism is the fact that the underestimation of the potential of citizens to engage in political matters precludes the model’s own foundations: if the electorate is sufficiently inadequate to be involved in a larger participatory sense, why should they be trusted to choose

between political parties? The model also assumes the passive acceptance of society's structure and governance by the citizenry. Even where power is held within a political elite, should the citizenry begin to counter apathetic sentiments and become politically active they have the means at their disposal to resist the competitive elitism model. Giddens (1979: 147-148) for instance notes that this could be achieved through the prevention of data collection necessary for such centralised decision making.

Schumpeter (1976) endeavoured to build an empirically based, realistic model of democracy and move away from what was perceived to be arbitrarily normative preferences of the dominant discourses of democracy. Schumpeter's work should also be read in light of his fears regarding the awakening of the demos through increased participation, notably seen in the work of Rousseau and Marx. Schumpeter was also concerned that society was incapable of living up the ideals of political equality and equal participation that he perceived to be at the heart of a classical theory of democracy. Whilst there are recognisable elements of modern Western liberal democracies in the competitive elitism model of democracy (Held, 2006), Schumpeter's theory has come under significant criticism. Not only does Schumpeter fail to recognise that there is no classical model of democracy (Pateman, 1970), he also overlooks the value of normative ideals as providing criticism of existing structures and processes. Macpherson (1977) points out that competitive elitism is actually a misnomer: the model could more accurately be described as - borrowing market terminology - an oligopoly, since there are so few political options from which voters may choose. Here, political parties 'do not respond to the buyers' demands as they must do in a fully competitive system' (Macpherson, 1977: 89). Thus Schumpeter's theory of democracy could at best be described as protection from tyranny, but little more.

Pluralism

The competitive elitist model draws a sharp contrast between the 'emotional' citizen and the small number of competitive bureaucrats who vie for power. However, the model paid no attention to the intermediary institutions between state and civil society. Pluralism sought to remedy this by incorporating groups such as trade unions, religious groups and businesses into a more holistic account of democracy. Pluralistic theory is predicated on normative freedoms of expression and organisation through free association - the role of government therefore is to protect the freedom of these factions to further their own interests and ensure this does not infringe upon the freedom of

others. This shares with competitive elitism the contention that what distinguishes democracies from non-democracies is the process of selecting leaders, also holds that the electorate is less well informed than is generally admitted, with the individual having little if any true influence on the political process (Held, 2006).

Pluralism grew concurrently with Dahl's (1956, 1961) conception of power (Chapter 3), which at its most simple may be represented as A's capacity for acting in a such a way as to control B's responses (Dahl, 1956: 13). In contrast to the strong centre of the competitive elitist model, here power is spread competitively throughout society via an endless process of bartering (Dahl, 1961). Whilst pluralism sees elected representatives as opinion makers, it does not view the concentration of power within political elites as inevitable. Instead pluralist democracy is made up of multiple power centres and emphasises processes of collective action in exercising that power. In a complex society social interests are self-evidently fragmented, but such differing interests are seen as a structural source of stability (Held and Krieger, 1984). Therefore Dahl's theory of democracy is anchored to a value consensus (Held, 2006), and whilst the majority may not rule society, they govern it through determining the framework within which powerful groups operate.

Elster (1976) criticises pluralism for presupposing a utilitarian idea of humanity whereby individuals always act in ways that further their own interests, thereby ignoring the misinformed and often paradoxical behaviour of social actors. Held (2006: 165) also questions whether pluralism really accounts for the frequently disjointed and incremental process of policy creation that occurs as a result of rivalries between different factions. More fundamental than this, pluralism erroneously considers people free to participate in democracy by ignoring the structural imbalances in the distribution of power, resources and influence. Furthermore Dahl (1956: 81) argued that maximum participation from people was futile, since only a small proportion will ever utilise decision making opportunities., and this was considered desirable since political apathy was a stabilising factor for democracy. This is reminiscent of de Tocqueville's (2000) concerns (borrowing from John Adams) about 'tyranny of the majority' however, Dahl appears closer to Almond and Verba's (1963) contention that a lack of popular political interest may be seen as an implicit vote of confidence in the system. This is problematic since such acceptance can only every be assumed and moreover, given that the aforementioned structural inequalities are largely overlooked, it implicitly suggests that those not participating are doing so through choice. Nonetheless Dahl (1956: 133) contended

that a tyrannical rule by the majority was unlikely where open contests for electoral support would produce a polyarchy - with power invested throughout society thereby ensuring a healthy democracy.

The most significant flaw of the pluralist theory concerns the actions of government whose role it is to mediate between power centres - given that there is no guarantee that it will do so. Pluralists argue that elections mean that representatives who fail in this role will be ousted - however long periods between elections leaves significant scope for governments to abuse this power. This opens up a series of ancillary questions: what happens when a government chooses to prioritise one group over another? What happens when a government engages with multiple power centres but then pursues its own agenda? How can any group combat unequal power relations if they are not consulted? Early pluralism therefore suffers from issues of accountability as well as fundamental questions about the distribution of power (Held, 2006) as the high degree of popular control that Dahl (1956: 3) suggests, is only applicable during period elections.

Neo-pluralism

Neo-pluralism sought to reflect the inequalities of most political systems, removing the assumption of equality of access and rejecting the premise 'that decision making reflects the potentially equal balance of political forces' (John and Cole, 1995: 308). These changes were largely brought about due to Neo-Marxist criticisms (Miliband, 1969; Poulantzas, 1972) that focused on pluralism's inability to account for the role of the state, particularly in its propagation of unequal power relations. Neo-pluralism built on the earlier model by recognising that corporate capitalism tends to produce 'inequalities in social and economic resources so great as to bring about severe violations of political equity and hence of the democratic process' (Dahl, 1985: 60). In the West, governments are restricted by the capitalist system which is predicated on private accumulation, investment and ownership, the needs of which can only be met through prioritising business interests that protect economic growth. Neo-pluralists argued that business therefore enjoyed a privileged position by virtue of its economic power despite not being explicitly involved in the policy process (Lindblom, 1977). As such, governments are 'captured' by the development of private enterprise and corporate power - and therefore competing interest groups cannot be seen as equal and nor can the government be conceived as a neutral authority managing them (Lindblom, 1977, 1982; Dahl, 1985).

Dahl (1989: 326) therefore asked how citizens can become political equals in a system where income, wealth and economic positions are unequally distributed? Whilst business interests are prioritised, they remain integral to market societies as they perform functions that government officials regard as indispensable, as Lindblom (1977: 122-3) observed:

Because public functions in the market system rest in the hands of businessmen it follows that jobs, prices, production, growth, the standard of living, and the economic security of everyone all rest in their hands. Consequently government officials cannot be indifferent to how well business performs its functions. Depression, inflation, or other economic disasters can bring down a government. A major function of government, therefore, is to see that businessmen perform their tasks.

Lindblom (1982: 332-333) went on to argue that no fully developed system can operate where business 'imprisons the policy-making process' and that society had neglected citizens' needs in favour of the 'fixed element' of the market system. This led neo-pluralism to become tied to a critique of the rational actor model of neoclassical economics which conceives of individuals operating within a market as free and rational beings. In reality, economic relationships as with all human action, are typified by unequal power relations, imperfect information and paradoxical beliefs. Neo-pluralists therefore advocated democratic ownership of economic institutions through a widespread cooperative movement through the extension of democratic principles into the workplace (Dahl, 1989). This was also seen as solution to another of pluralism's deficiencies, that pre-existing groups have a significant advantage over sections of the population considered unorganised (Lindblom, 1977). Thus neo-pluralism retained the concept of polyarchy but recognised the dangers of established political and private business interests being harboured by the state. However both Dahl and Lindblom remained cynical about participatory alternatives and therefore neo-pluralism continued to downplay more participatory forms of democracy. However by the time of neo-pluralism's emergence, radical alternatives to representative democracies already had a significant history.

Participatory Democracy

There is a long tradition within democratic theory that is critical of the limited nature of representational democracy, with 'true democracy' seen as a situation where individuals have greater direct participation in decisions that affect their lives (Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009). The recent turn towards participation has been driven by popular disillusionment with traditional representative

models (Yetano et al., 2010), yet contemporary participatory democracy has roots in Enlightenment thinking, notably in the work of Rousseau (1998). Akin to the pluralist debates two centuries later, Rousseau (1998: 96) illustrated that outside of elections, the citizenry has little control over the decisions that affect them, encapsulated in the famous statement of 1762:

The English nation thinks itself free, but it greatly mistaken; for it is so only during the election of members of parliament; as soon as they are elected, it is enslaved and counts for nothing. The use which it makes of the brief moments of freedom renders the loss of liberty well deserved.

For Newman et al. (2004: 204) the present interest in participatory democracy can be attributed to representative democracy being ‘too hierarchical, bureaucratic and party bound to be able to deal effectively with questions of identity in a multi-cultural and global/local world’, leading to a persistent decline in trust in public institutions (Nye et al., 1997). There is a kaleidoscope of theories that promote the role of participation in democracy, embracing a wide range of positions from classical Athenian democracy through Marxist models and more radical enterprises (Pieterse, 2001; Held, 2006). This section concentrates on two of the most influential forms: the New Left model which came about in response to dissatisfaction with both liberal and Marxist political theory (Pateman, 1970, 1985, 2012; Macpherson, 1977); and deliberative democracy, which despite recent criticism from agonistic theorists (Connolly, 1991; Mouffe, 2005, 2013), is commonly considered the most influential contemporary strand of participatory democracy (Saward, 2001).

Pateman (1970: 42) argues that the writings of seminal participatory theorists such as Rousseau (1998), Mill (1991) and Cole (1920, 1944) make it difficult to understand why the ‘classical’ theory of representative democracy is so vigorously defended. In its place, Pateman (1970: 70-71) argues for the normative ideal of a fully participative society defined simply as a situation where each individual has equal power to influence the decisions made. This presumes that participation does not just make room for citizen involvement in decisions but concurrently ensures the each individual’s social and political capacities are continually developed (Pateman, 1970: 43). This is an example of the ‘educative function’ of participation (Michels and de Graaf, 2010) and is derived from the New Left’s questioning of the free and equal citizen normatively assumed by liberal democratic theory. Pateman (1985: 171) argues that such a citizen is rarely found in reality and large sections of the population are systematically excluded from both civic and political expression due to structural inequalities (for example along the lines of gender, race and class) - and often as a consequence, inclination.

Held (2006: 216) contends that the New Left relies too heavily on an innate democratic will - the belief that people have both the propensity and desire to act in a 'democratic' manner. However Held's criticism reckons without the emphasis placed on the educative function of participation: Pateman argues that were a sea change brought about through democratisation of industry and the workplace, then democratic reason would be more prevalent. Pateman (1970: 85-102) uses the worker self-management in the former Yugoslavia as an example of this in practice, however after the country disintegrated in ethnic warfare in the 1990s few examples can be found. Nonetheless, Pateman (1970: 42) argues that democracy cannot thrive by means of representative institutions alone, instead participation should be fostered in other spheres as a form of training that develops the necessary attitudes and qualities needed for participation, therefore making the participatory process self-sustaining.

A sense of political efficacy is an important component in successful democratic participation (Flinders and Dommett, 2013), and Pateman (1970: 46) contends that empirical evidence into political behaviour demonstrates that those who believe their actions will have some effect on the political process are more likely to participate. Self-confidence in one's dealings with the world can be a predictor of attitudes to participation, as recognised by Almond and Verba's (1963). This is the starting point of what the New Left sees as a virtuous circle of participation: citizens are educated in democracy (for example in the workplace), feel publicly orientated and see results stemming from their actions, individual and collective confidence grows and the population becomes predisposed to further participation. All the while the efficacy and appropriateness of decisions should improve. The logical conclusion of such a model is a fully participatory society. The liberal critique of this states that such a situation would effectively coerce citizens into participating since there would be little option but to participate, thus ironically infringing upon freedom in a manner close to totalitarianism (Berlin, 2002). The obvious rejoinder is that participants must necessarily engineer a system that they do wish to participate in - in other words, the antithesis of totalitarianism. Pateman (1970) argues that even in the smallest possible doses, the feeling that participation is possible produces the positive externalities of raised confidence, personal satisfaction, social skills, and so on. Moreover, in the ideal state, participation expands citizens' rights alongside processes of self-transformation that may counteract the exclusive pursuit of private interests by engendering collective identities and responsibility (Zittel, 2007). Taken together these points stress that the transformatory nature of the New Left's model - educating citizens in democratic processes whilst producing more effective,

informed decisions and cohesive collectives - resulting in a civil society with the motivation and skills to engage in an increasingly participatory society.

This is a radical model advocating wholesale societal change. However, as witnessed by the lack of such societies at present - participatory initiatives that are grafted on to representative structures are more common in Western democracies today. Whilst such initiatives have the benefit of a less ambitious scale, they often suffer from a lack of continuity, resources and exposure which severely negates educative and integrative functions. It could be argued that participatory initiatives are often used solely to serve the legitimising function by adding validity to representative democracy and rarely alter the underlying fabric society (Beetham et al., 2008), and these criticisms demonstrate how such isolated forms of participation have both practical and theoretical limits within a large and diverse public (Judge, 1999). Nonetheless in many respects the New Left's cause has been taken up by deliberative democracy, a variant commonly predicated on debate, rationality and consensus. Deliberative democracy can now arguably be seen as the most active area of not just democratic theory, but political theory as a whole (Dryzek, 2007; Pateman, 2012).

Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy encapsulates 'a family of views according to which the public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision making' (Bohman, 1998: 401). In the ideal state, deliberation is a process of mutual justification that consists of reasoned, open debate, between equal participants who explore and express their preferences, and reflect on their own and others' reasonings such that new perspectives might emerge (Ercan and Hendriks, 2013). Importantly, citizens should be free to participate in public reasoning both in terms of ability and opportunity, as well as in power and resources (Cohen, 1989). Through extensive moral argument, deliberation aims to reach provisional agreement on the merits of public policies whilst maintaining mutual respect among citizens (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996). Within such a system, institutions are only regarded as legitimate in so far as they establish the framework for free public deliberations (Cohen, 1989), and therefore the source of legitimacy in deliberation 'is not the pre-determined wills of individuals, but rather the process of its formation, that is, deliberation itself' (Manin, 1987: 351). This 'process legitimacy' denotes deliberation's potential to overcome public disaffection with representative democracy, as the method itself can result in 'rhetorical and ideational' implications for public understanding of governance (Flinders and Dommett, 2013: 491; Young, 1996).

Proponents advocate deliberation over the simple aggregation of preferences, due to the process' potential for transforming private preferences (Dryzek, 2000; Barnes, 2008b). Deliberation's focus on consensus-building and inclusion is also often lauded: in the ideal situation, deliberation improves social cohesion as participants are encouraged to understand the views of others whose positions and circumstances may be different from their own. Furthermore the process makes it more likely that actors move away from positions of self-interest to those that are more likely to deliver social justice (Young, 2000). Where appropriately empathetic, egalitarian and reason-centered therefore deliberation is expected to deliver a variety of positive democratic outcomes (Cohen 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Benhabib, 1996), and as such the process has been encouraged by governments seeking to foster dialogue in civil society as means of improving policy outcomes, promoting sustainable communities and overcoming democratic deficits (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004; Stoker, 2004b).

A normative ideal

Deliberative democracy draws heavily upon Habermas' (1977; 1984; 1990; 1996) theory of communicative action. This argues that what prevails in the deliberative ideal is the 'unforced force of the better action' since power is derived from (democratic) legitimacy which in turn can only be accomplished through communication (Habermas, 1996: 305). In other words, only those who can construct a common conviction in an unconstrained field of communication can be said to be powerful. For Habermas (1996: 298) deliberative democracy depends on the 'institutionalisation' of procedures that facilitate communication and rationalisation - and in this way oppressive societal relations can be resisted through unrestricted communication among free actors. This position is adapted by theorists who argue that it is not necessary that all components in a democracy be deliberative, so long as the system as a whole is (Stephenson and Dryzek, 2014). The deliberative approach seeks to decentre fixed positions in favour of a learning process where citizens react to and interpret multiple positions in order to arrive at their own reasoned political judgement. As a result, no political perspective or set of values can claim to be individually valid, rather each position must be justified: the process therefore replaces the 'language of interest' with the 'language of reason' (Elster, 1998: 111). In theory therefore effective deliberation should create the 'best' decisions, or the at least the ones with the greatest legitimacy, as any argument should be rigorously examined and widely accepted.

Like the New Left model, deliberative democracy is a normative theory that establishes an 'ideal type' of democratic practice. Habermas (1990: 89) outlines a series of conditions required for an ideal form of deliberation, designed to promote the use of reason in argument - adapted below:

1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in the deliberation.
2. (a) Everyone is allowed to question any assertion;
(b) everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse;
(c) everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs.
3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (1) and (2).

Habermas (1989) explores this ideal type in his concept of the public sphere: a space situated between individual citizens and the government where the former can gather and debate topical issues without the interference of the latter. This ideal has been heavily critiqued, in particular critics have questioned the notion of a public realm in which power relations are suspended, and where rational communication is premised above all else (Edwards, 2008). However deliberative theorists have increasingly recognised that bracketing out power relations is not possible (Young 1990, 1996; Fraser, 1997; Barnes, 2002; Mansbridge et al., 2010). Any democratic space must necessarily be shaped by existing, unequal structural relations which impacts both who is listened to (that is, whose voice has 'authority') and who actually reaches the deliberations in the first place (Young, 1990). Furthermore, as Fraser (1997: 78-9) acknowledges, seeking to bracket out inequalities can actually exacerbate them:

Insofar as the bracketing of social inequalities in deliberation means proceeding as if they don't exist when they do, this does not foster participatory parity. On the contrary, such bracketing usually works to the advantage of dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of sub-ordinates. In most cases, it would be more appropriate to unbracket inequalities in the sense of explicitly thematizing them.

Seeking to banish power in such a situation would therefore bestow privilege on certain actors by means of existing status (Swyngedouw, 2005) - moreover it is important to remember that not all participants necessarily meet 'the standards of cognitive and lingual competence set within forums dominated by professional/bureaucratic norms of debate' (Barnes, 2002: 324). Since language is an 'an instrument of action and power' not an object of contemplation, and participants are likely to possess unequal levels of social and cultural capital, the possibility of any such 'linguistic communism' is foreclosed (Bourdieu, 1991: 37). Without preventative mechanisms therefore deliberation would bestow disproportionate power on those who are rhetorically gifted. Furthermore,

reason is an acquired capacity and so those most likely to possess cultural and social capital through experience of operating in public fora (e.g parish councils, trusts, boards, community groups and so on), are those likely to dominate deliberative arenas. Decisions arrived in such circumstances are unlikely to neutralise power relations and may serve to merely redistribute new forms of power (Cohen and Rogers, 2003).

For some the inability of deliberative democracy to account adequately for power significantly impacts its legitimacy. Cornwall (2004: 2) argues that in some cases invited spaces 'have been transplanted onto institutional landscapes in which entrenched relations of dependency, fear and disprivilege undermine the possibility of the kind of deliberative decision-making they are to foster'. Addressing unequal power relations is therefore perhaps the central dilemma for deliberative theorists who acknowledge that people do not have equal opportunity to access and participate in such forums (Barnes, 2002). The effectiveness of deliberation is directly tied to the question of who participates: if those affected by a decision are excluded then the resulting decision's legitimacy is compromised. Those who by virtue of deprivation, frailty, or other form of social exclusion do not see the value in deliberative fora (compounded by the fact they have likely been excluded from previous activities) are unlikely to be motivated to participate, thereby violating equity of access (Cohen, 1989). This is of particular importance since deliberative fora are increasingly used to transfer executive plenipotentiary powers to new democratic arenas (Flinders and Dommett, 2013) and the boundary between uninvited and invited spaces has become increasingly fluid as empowerment and participation become government priorities (Barnes, 2008b). This shift highlights the need for deliberative fora to be inclusive and representative of wider society, and also able to accommodate diversity, difference and contestation. Yet the extent to which deliberative democracy is able to fulfil this role continues to be questioned (Young, 1996; Phillips, 1993; Fraser, 1997; Edwards, 2008). For example, Habermas' (1984) central claim that communicative action is by its nature oriented toward consensus has led critics to ask if deliberation actually serves to deny the legitimacy of conflict in social relations. Many theorists have looked to the contemporary public sphere for ways in which difference is excluded by certain definitions of rationality or various deployments of authority (Young, 2001; Sanders, 1997; Mansbridge, 1999b; Mouffe, 1999, 2005), with critics fearing the marginalisation of plurality and difference that comes with the norms of rational deliberation (Martin, 2005). The extent to which deliberation can assimilate contestation is central to its capacity to create transformative change that challenges the status quo. The assumption

that unequal power relations can be surpassed by rational speech continues to be queried given the exclusive nature of reason and its inadequacy regarding the marginalisation of groups of whose styles of speech are deemed inappropriate. This has led some theorists to argue against the ‘bracketing’ out of power and attempting to find a role for emotion in deliberation.

Rationality and emotion in deliberation

The normative ideal of deliberative democracy set out above sees actors communicate in an ideal speech situation: a free, rational space undistorted by power relations, that privileges arguments predicated on neutral and dispassionate reason (Habermas, 1984). However critics argue that rational behaviour is conceptually impossible, since there is no ultimate, rational ground that social actors can appeal to (Mouffe, 2000; Bond, 2011) and moreover, humans are fallible, emotional actors who operate by means of feelings, instincts, passions and any manner of ‘irrational’ phenomena. Empirical research also demonstrates that the ‘deliberative ideal’ is often unachievable in practice (Church, 1996; Barnes et al., 1999; Barnes et al., 2007; Davies et al., 2006; Martin, 2012). This so-called ‘challenge of affectivity’ (Thompson and Hoggett, 2001) has resulted in some theorists calling for the ‘ideal of impartiality’ to be exposed for the myth it is (Young, 1990; Barnes, 2002; 2008b). Noting the crossover between social movements and invited participatory spaces, where emotionality ‘both motivates and is generated by action’, Barnes (2008b: 468) argues we ‘should not then be surprised if social movement activists bring emotionally charged perspectives into deliberative arenas when they move into those spaces.’ Indeed empirical research has shown a variety of styles of communication in participatory spaces, highlighting the importance of emotional engagement to the vitality and validity of deliberation (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004; Barnes et al., 2007). Some therefore argue that emotion represents a legitimate contribution to deliberation, and that forums should be judged on their capacity to encompass such expressions of feeling (Dryzek, 2005; Thompson and Hoggett, 2001; Barnes, 2002, 2008b; van Stokkom, 2005; Martin, 2012; Komporozos-Athanasiou and Thompson, 2015).

Embracing alternative forms of communication within deliberative spaces - such as rhetoric, testimony, emotion, storytelling, gossip, or humour (Dryzek, 2000, 2005) - helps prevent the exclusion of those unable to modify their styles of speech to meet others’ expectations (Young, 2000). Barnes’ (2004) exploration of the participation of older people and mental health service users shows how storytelling can be delegitimised and therefore dismissed as a means by which to

reach conclusions about policy issues. This is understandably important in terms of social inclusion as such performative speech acts and styles of speech are often integral to social identities (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004). In addition to embracing different rhetorical techniques through effective and sympathetic moderation, Thompson and Hoggett (2001) suggest a number of other approaches that might incorporate emotion into deliberative spaces. Through an analysis of literature on citizens' juries, they suggest that deliberation should have a clear sense of purpose and be based on very small rotating groups in order to reduce the danger of intimidation and factionalism. They also highlight the role of moderators in facilitating different forms of expression. The authors argue that where deliberative gatherings acquire rudimentary knowledge of group dynamics, all members' contributions to the debate may be better valued, leading to reflexive choices and realistic expectations of leaders. Underpinning this argument is the belief that where groups become aware of their emotions, they stand a better chance of minimising their 'harmful' effects and maximising their beneficial potential. The use of formal, moderated spaces alongside unmoderated 'break-out' spaces where less confident participants might contribute is also put forward (Thompson and Hoggett, 2001). This, alongside similar ideas such as parallel discursive arenas (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004), is analogous to Fraser's (1997) concept of 'counterpublics' or multiple public spheres that attempt to combat the challenge of affectivity through the development of 'counterdiscourses' that may serve to challenge dominant lines of argument. Diverse public arenas (or break-out groups on a smaller scale) have the potential to allow different forms of communication and can create alternative discourses which may be introduced to the wider discussion providing 'a basis from which to challenge official definitions of needs, interests and identities' (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004: 95). A plurality of participative sites is a progressive notion although in practical terms it raises further questions. On the macro scale, it is questionable how far such counterpublics are recognised by state officials or what their relationship is to participative fora driven by policy goals (Edwards, 2008). At the local level, even the use of multiple breakout spaces cannot guarantee 'safe spaces' for marginalised voices, nor can it ensure that parallel groups are heard when the whole fora reconvenes. As with all similar mechanisms designed to encourage alternative modes of engagement - for example using cartoonists and drawings, scenarios, field trips and listening sessions (Hendriks, 2009) - the core issue remains the legitimacy of alternative means of communication.

Barnes (2008b) employs the moral principles of care in order to see what a deliberative space that embraces emotion might look like. One such principle, attentiveness, can be induced in deliberative

spaces by encouraging dialogue based on experiences of marginalisation as a result of, for example, disability, old age or mental distress (see Barnes, 2004). Such emotional expressions can emphasise the significance of issues and the particularity of the situations that demand a response (Barnes, 2008b). Where such expression is encouraged, it is necessary that ‘public officials are prepared to listen and to hear things that are said in ways that make sense to the speaker - which may well be very different from ways of speaking familiar to public officials’ (Barnes, 2008b: 475). This approach is again progressive, the axiomatic problem is guaranteeing that such pronouncements are heard - especially given the pragmatic focus of many state-led fora. Nonetheless the principles of care - also including responsibility, competence, responsiveness and trust - offer a way of conceptualising the emotional deliberation that Barnes argues is necessary to deliberation in the context of public policy making. Central to this approach (and participation more generally) is the role of reciprocal trust, which Barnes (2008b: 477) rightly points out is undermined by disregarding ‘contributions to debate on the basis that they are not expressed in the right way’ (see also Barnes and Prior, 1998). As Martin (2012: 167) acknowledges there is often a ‘dissonance between the norms of conduct embraced by public participants and those expected by the actors ‘in charge’ of deliberative processes’. The difficulty lies in fostering and maintaining trust across institutional boundaries, citizen and official identities, and lay and expert knowledges.

Alongside practical attempts to embrace non-rational communication, some deliberative theorists have questioned the utility of a rationality/emotion duality. In their study of patient involvement within a large partnership including the Third Sector and government departments coordinating cancer research, Komporozos-Athanasίου and Thompson (2015: 1141) consider the ‘semi-conscious, viscerally experienced sense of self, developed and sustained over historical time, [that] enables (and motivates) a person to position herself relationally against unfolding social reality’. In concentrating on the personal biographical construct that actors bring to deliberations, the authors seek to demonstrate how our understanding of unfolding reality is emotionally mediated. Komporozos-Athanasίου and Thompson (2015: 1148) describe how their study suggests that:

... in particular, that questions of how actors reason (in an emotionally charged manner) and what they reason about (such as more attentive cancer care or more patient voice) are mutually constitutive and should thus be considered together. Acknowledgement of the ‘what’ as a political aim points to the inseparability of affect and reason even in less conscious (reactive) forms of affective structuring

This challenges the view that social actors act exclusively from reason or emotion, logic or experience. The authors acknowledge along with Dryzek (2000), that emotion can be coercive and therefore suggest guarding against the ways in which emotion may be anticipated, deflected, harnessed or otherwise manipulated to support particular political rationalities. However behind apparently rational dialogue we can actually detect an interplay of power and emotion. This is not a critical judgement on the merits of reason over affect (or vice versa) but an acknowledgement of their indivisibility in practical terms. Komporozos-Athanasiou and Thompson (2015) are careful not to imply that reason itself is imbued with emotion (as this would suggest that there is no ultimate rationality), but rather it is *how* reason is deployed that is tied up with our 'biographical affect'. In a similar vein, Gottweis (2012) proposes a reinterpretation of emotions as 'pragmatic acts' and 'communicative performances' that constitute legitimate modes of argumentation. The empirical recognition that emotion and reason are constitutively deployed during deliberation breaks down the exclusivity of the concepts found elsewhere. Certainly there is little value in upholding the prevailing dualism of emotion versus reason that pervades much of the policy deliberation debate. A more progressive view may be to conceptualise emotional agency and rationalist, institutional structures in a reciprocal relationship in which each modifies, and is modified by, the other (Komporozos-Athanasiou and Thompson, 2015).

The role of emotion is highly dependent on many contingent variables such as the cultural background and past experiences of participants (both citizens and officials), the topic of participation, and even the physical setting. Promoting emotion needs to be undertaken with care, bearing in mind that a lack of emotion can be used to question the authenticity of participants' interest, as Barnes (1999b) found in a study of a citizens' jury in Belfast. Furthermore Barnes et al. (2007) note that some can feel marginalised by emotional disclosures, just as others are excluded by rationalistic norms. Researching emotion is also a difficult undertaking: even when employing in depth qualitative techniques in partnership with participants it is difficult to attribute causality in any definitive sense when it comes to the role of emotion. Nonetheless the above examples demonstrate how some theorists have sought to encourage and integrate emotional expression in deliberative settings. However the literature also discloses that emotional expression remains a secondary concern. Whilst leading theorists continue to argue that rational argument should not be the sole form of 'authentic deliberation', there is no doubt as to which approach is ultimately paramount, since 'emotion can be coercive; which is why in the end it must answer to reason' (Dryzek, 2000: 3).

This can be contrasted with approaches such as agonism (Chapter 5) which start from the premise that humans are not ultimately rational and that politics is in fact the play of emotion, and it is political passions that needs to be expressed. Proponents often position agonism in negative relief to deliberation due to their contrasting views of rationality, but also divergences in the role of conflict, which is considered below.

Consensus, conflict and power relations

Agonists argue that genuine consensus is an impossibility since antagonism and conflict constitute ‘an ever-present possibility in politics’, any claims to consensus must necessarily be predicated on acts of exclusion (Mouffe, 2000: 13). However as will be considered later, even agonists accept the need for temporary and contingent consensus. The possibility of consensus is well analysed by Knops (2007: 124) who argues for recognition of the ‘fallibilistic nature of consensus in deliberative theory, which allows for any consensus that is reached rationally to remain open to question’. This definition seeks to guard against the inevitability of hegemonic reproduction that Mouffe claims must necessarily result from deliberation, and allows for the possibility of both temporary consensus and respectful conflict in democratic settings. As we have seen it is important that emotion be given a place in deliberative settings as it is a key means by which alternative - and often neglected - viewpoints can be given a voice. The exploration of alternatives is central to democratic practice, and how such differences are resolved (or not) lies at the heart of debates over the role of democracy. Deliberation and contestation are not obviously complementary processes, given the former’s emphasis on collaborative consensus-building that seeks to identify new shared ideas between otherwise competing agents (Fischer, 2003), yet advocates increasingly recognise that moral disagreement and contention are an unavoidable reality of deliberation (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996).

Dryzek (2000; 2005: 223-234) argues that contestation within a deliberative system takes place at the level of competing discourses², or the ‘shared way[s] of making sense of the world embedded in language’. Discourses enable participants to subscribe to (or be enveloped by) coherent accounts of the social world and share their experiences in an ‘intersubjectively meaningful fashion’. Therefore

² Dryzek (2005: 224) acknowledges that the possibility of such contestation requires discourses to be treated as less totalising and constraining than some theorists allow, particularly in the Foucauldian tradition.

collective decisions arrived at through deliberation depend strongly (but not exclusively) on the 'relative weight' of discourses. Discourses therefore have 'real consequences' and must be amendable - 'if only at the margins' - and this is the site of contestation. For Dryzek (2005: 224), the 'requisite communication is deliberation not agonism because it is oriented to persuasion rather than conversion, and it retains some connection (however loose) to collective decision'. As Dryzek (2005: 225) goes on to explain the engagement of competing discourses is less likely to be conflictual where there is focus on specific needs (such as security or education) rather than general values, and gives the following example from Turkey where headscarves worn by young Islamic women were a symbolic marker that excluded them from secular universities :

Beginning in 2002, a reframing of the issue in terms of the education needs of young women and the character of education as a basic human right gained ground, and the issue looked less intractable. Avoidance of head-on confrontation means the other side is less easily accused of a hidden agenda to capture the state, and one's own side cannot so easily claim alone to represent "the people" or safeguard the polity.

This play of contestation at a discursive level may explain how actors draw on different meanings established on competing discourses, but remains silent about the resolution of fundamental, perhaps ideological, clashes within deliberative settings. Nor seemingly can contestation at this level account for dominance of elites in the public sphere and much rests on the 'reframing of the issue' in Dryzek's example. Moreover, changes at the margins of discursive formations may partially account for shifts in understanding that may support new positions, but does not account for what happens when conflictual positions are not redressed by the 'avoidance of head-on confrontation'.

Fung (2003b) demonstrates that in 'cold' deliberative settings where participants are not partisans, the changing of minds is common, especially if the forum is either unofficial or advisory. It is during 'hot' deliberation - often tied to a collective decision - where participants may have more strongly formed views that are less easily changed. In these 'hot' situations not only is contestation more likely but the depth of political passions may outstrip the marginal changes in discourses that Dryzek describes, forcing conflict into the open. However, not all deliberative arenas require consensus: Barnes (1999a: 70) argues that 'obtaining a consensus is not the only desirable outcome of deliberative processes which are not established to act as decision arbiters'. Citing the case of a citizens' jury, Barnes (1999b) notes that participants did not see reaching an agreement as a necessity - rather the way in which difference and dissent were 'handled' was felt to be a better indicator of success. It is fair to say that deliberation may have many purposes, configurations and outcomes, and

some initiatives may be inherently open-ended nature, producing either conflict or common ground (van Stokkom, 2005: 389), however as we have seen, deliberation is increasingly adopted in state sponsored arenas where collective decision making is the aim. This requires a closed system with a decision - that is, some form of (temporary) consensus - as the outcome.

Some theorists have sought to employ insights from social movement theory to further deliberative democracy's credentials in this regard. Social movements are natural sites for contestation, as they are commonly predicated on collective identities that recognise a 'we', and the difference between that 'we' and the rest of society (Barnes et al., 2006) - reminiscent of Mouffe's (1999) us/them distinction. Whilst social movements have traditionally been understood to operate outside the state, social movement and deliberative traditions share common principles such as encouraging participants to reflect on their beliefs with a view to transforming others' preferences, and often a desire to move past the aggregative approach of representational democracy. This cross-fertilisation is also relevant given studies that suggest that deepening democracy is best served by action in both civil society and state sponsored initiatives (Gaventa, 2004b; see also Barnes et al., 2007). Social movement scholars have shown for example how particular movements construct meanings for action through the generation of 'collective action frames', often drawing on the symbols and narratives of previous struggles (Tarrow, 1994; Barnes and Prior, 2009). Collective action frames are an 'action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization' (Benford and Snow, 2000: 614), and the role of such organisations is to generate, negotiate, and maintain these interpretive frames. The question of who has the authority to define terms of reference, meanings and the nature of a problem is understandably a significant site of contestation (Crossley, 2002). Questions of authority are intimately tied up with theories of knowledge, and in the context of invited participation there is often a juxtaposition between lay and expert knowledges, a tension that Fischer (2002) refers to as the key political issue of our times.

Barnes et al. (2008) view local knowledge as experiential, detailed and specific. It is focused on how things work in a particular setting and how this meets specific needs. This can be contrasted with professional knowledge that is often more concerned with generalised ideas of how things should be done. Local knowledge is also distinguished from local representation, which as the name suggests concerns how given participants stand up for the views of particular local constituencies within the decision making process, such as through formal mechanisms like partnership boards. Barnes et al.

(2008) argue that sympathetic participatory initiatives should be designed to confer legitimacy on participants based on the knowledge they bring to the table, rather than the accountability they may have to would-be constituents. Legitimacy therefore relates to the authenticity and value of participants' understandings predicated on experience rather than election or nomination (Barnes et al., 2008: 73). Deliberative arrangements between citizens and professionals, managers and politicians therefore should create shared understandings and allow for 'different perspectives to be surfaced [through] identifying the different individuals and groups likely to have a perspective on the policy issue and ensuring that they can participate' (Barnes et al., 2008: 18). The privileging of local knowledge in this way is a means by which those who are least powerful may legitimately contribute - however there are particular challenges to instituting such arrangements.

The first challenge is to access local knowledge - as Barnes et al. (2008: 74) note, formal meetings held by public organisations are seldom adequate in this regard. In place of more formal engagement opportunities, they call for the use of community conferences, arts events, participatory action research and other methods 'that start from where people are and engage them in a productive and enjoyable experience'. A further challenge relates to the willingness of participants, particularly public officials, to change their minds on the basis of discussion underpinned by local knowledge. The authors argue that this should be combatted by means of sympathetic design, although it is questionable whether this can adequately address ingrained (and potentially wilful) inertia on behalf of public institutions. The concept of local knowledge can be seen as example of what Seidman (1998) calls 'contested knowledges' that question normative assumptions about traditional legitimacy through acknowledging personal experience and knowledge derived from social interests and advocacy (Renn et al., 1993). Contested knowledges therefore imply a different source of authority from which to claim a right to take part in debate - in contrast to professional, bureaucratic or 'formal' political claims (Barnes, 2002). Prominent examples of new social knowledges include feminism, Afrocentrism, queer theory and the social model of disability (Barnes, 2002; Seidman, 1998) all of which have been central to identity-based movements - expressing an alternative reality from that offered by liberal or enlightenment thought. Citing evidence from an area committee designed to involve citizens more directly in the workings of a city council, Barnes, Knops et al. (2004: 105) relay how different forms of knowledge lead to contestation:

While lay knowledge based in personal experience was valued for providing different insights and a source of challenge, there was evidence of councillors using their power and positions to limit debate. When councillors felt challenged by members of the public they took this out on officers; when members of the public complained about lack of resources going into their wards councillors backed this up. Officers made frequent reference to procedures and to government policy to define the limits of what was possible.

Examples such as this reveal that dialogue between ‘the public’ and ‘officials’ does not automatically mean that deliberation will ensue, and Barnes, Knops et al. (2004) acknowledge that frustration about such limited forms of dialogue can lead to open conflict. Successful deliberation has to be nurtured by an awareness of the conditions necessary to enable argumentation and challenge, as Barnes, Knops et al. (2004: 106) go on to argue:

Such conditions relate not only to the recognition and legitimation of different types and sources of knowledge, to different discourses through which the meanings of events and circumstances are constructed, but also to different modes of expression, and to the significance of respect and recognition of the person as well as the substance of exchange.

The concept of contested knowledges demonstrates how participants can contest meanings and legitimacy in deliberative spaces where conditions allow. In a similar vein, developing collective action frames may help alter the political opportunity structure - that is, the ‘dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure’ (Tarrow, 1994: 85). However in both instances where concepts from social movements have been transposed into deliberative spaces, the creation and development of new meanings is problematic given the dominance of state actors in dictating the scope and nature of participation. This situation is summed up by Dryzek (2005: 223) who states that deliberative democracy ‘can process contentious issues in a politics of engagement in the public sphere, even if it has problems doing so when it comes to deliberation within the institutions of the state.’

Barnes et al. (2007) convincingly argue that the existence of groups outside invited spaces increases the potential that the rules of deliberation will be constructed jointly, rather than imposed by officials. Social movements they argue, play a crucial role in shifting the boundaries of acceptable participation by pushing it ‘beyond the limits laid down by the political system’ (Melucci, 1996: 214). Barnes et al. (2007: 50) contend therefore that the role of social movements in a complex system of multi-layered and increasingly open governance arrangements is to:

... constantly question the ways in which the rules of the game are being determined and defined, in particular in relation to the rules governing the way in which those who are least powerful, or whose communication styles do not match official norms, are represented within such systems.

In addition, Barnes et al. (2007) argue that deliberation can be the site of contestation between established means of interaction and new ways of participating created through the participation itself. New institutional theory posits that the interactions of social actors produce rules (that regulate activity) and norms (that set out expectations of appropriate behaviour) (Barnes et al., 2007: 58; see also Scott, 2001). Participatory spaces are subject to the pervading rules and norms of a political and social culture and these shape actors' thoughts, actions and interactions. However Barnes et al. (2007: 61) argue that such institutions 'are not determining in their effects', and that 'constitutive' rules (or 'rules that are deliberately established to facilitate new dialogic activities') actually set the parameters of possibility within a given forum. As these rules and norms do not derive directly from the policy context but are constructed between policy actors, the parameters of participatory settings may be influenced by the degree of public involvement in this rule making. Barnes, Newman et al., (2004: 271; see also Sullivan et al., 2003) identify three points at which these constitutive rules and norms can affect public participation:

- *Access rules*: regulative and normative institutions that delimit participation in forums by describing whom the forum is intended to engage.
- *Agenda setting*: normative institutions defining the way in which items are identified for debate and who is able to take part in this process.
- *Rules and norms in deliberation*: normative and cultural-cognitive institutions that guide the conduct of both citizens and officials in the deliberative process itself

The contention here is that institutional rules and norms are actively (re-)made by actors as they interact; it is important therefore to see the citizen/state nexus as a dynamic interface, rather than seeing institutions as separate from the public sphere (Barnes, Newman et al., 2004). This understanding gives rise to a potential contestation between the 'new' rules and norms and those already established. The process of resolving these contests throws up the possibility of reformulating old rules and norms, embracing new ones, or even exploring the co-existence of old and new rules - each governing different elements or levels of the wider system (Lowndes, 1999). This state of flux between different systems induces instability that opens up the possibility of agency, and the potential for bottom up challenges to the status quo. It is this fundamental question

of the exercise of power through control of the rules of the game that defines the transformational abilities of deliberation (Barnes, 2002: 329).

The insight of new institutional theory affords some legitimacy to the argument that deliberative fora can provide grounds for contestation. However the limitation of this argument, particularly in the confines of invited spaces, is that at best the ‘new’, constitutive rules are fighting against the dominance of status quo and the hegemonic power of the state. Bearing in mind Cornwall’s (2008) contention about the ownership of participatory spaces, it is hard to see how new understandings can compete with ingrained forms of regulation and control at a time when ‘across whole areas of state action, there is an increased concern with defining and shaping ‘appropriate’ individual and community conduct, regulation and control’ (Raco, 2003b: 78). Indeed the application of new institutional theory may be hard to square with the broadly post-structuralist approach adopted by Barnes et al. (2007), given the operation of various ‘technologies of power’ (Foucault, 1991) that invoke a ‘will to conform’ (Barth, 1998). Problematically, the rules of the game continue to be established ‘from above’ by government actors (see for example, Taylor, 2003; Jones, 2003), with regulatory techniques defined by ingrained cultures of decision making, strong central guidance and auditing requirements (Taylor, 2007).

Such arguments also have to contend with issues of scale. It is questionable that even where new ways of participating emerge within localised sites of deliberation, this can be instituted across a polity without greater political leverage. To take an example at the micro level, Dryzek (2005: 228) proposes the indirect communication between opponents as a means to circumvent conflict (such as small talk on issues other than the topic of deliberation) - however he goes on to make the point that such mechanisms are insufficient to produce the requisite engagement across whole discourses:

At one level they [deliberative theorists] could pin their hopes on the civilizing force of deliberation to defuse conflict ... But now the familiar scale problem arises: deliberation, at least of the face-to-face variety connected tightly to state authority, can only ever be for the few

Transforming the rules of the game on a wider scale remains a problem for all participatory theorists who must adequately account for the local, national and international spaces where power operates. Whilst some theorists have sought to address the imbalance of power through various mechanisms, there is a more fundamental point to be made about how power operates. If we assume that participation is ‘a constitutive process in which particular concepts of the public are mobilised,

negotiated and enacted' (Barnes, Newman et al., 2004: 274, see also Cruikshank, 1999), it follows that power is not taking place between two pre-conceived identities, but rather that power constitutes the identities themselves. The idea of 'constituting the public' - that is, a citizen or community being socially constructed from a range of discourses mobilised within specific historical and political contexts - is problematic if the aim of deliberation is to transform power relations. We may ask how a public that is enacted or 'discursively summoned up' (Newman, 2011: 316) in this way (and therefore constitutive of power relations) can combat those same power relations that are the means of their creation? The idea that actors might act in a purely deliberative manner in such a way as to emancipate themselves from a particular articulation of power relations is an impossibility since their identity is constructed by the very power relations they are trying to suppress.

Hendriks (2009) argues for an alternative approach: to recognise that within a deliberative system, different kinds of arenas will attend to different kinds of power. Following Mansbridge (1996: 56) who argues that 'different arenas facilitate critiques of power from different directions', Hendriks claims that from this perspective, power may not be so 'problematic' for public deliberation. Claiming that deliberation should embrace power, rather than merely 'bracket it out' - Hendriks (2009: 181) outlines how power enables actors to organise and participate in moments of deliberation, and 'confront or constrain it when they experience injustice'. Hendriks (2009: 181 - emphasis in original) goes on to argue that the:

... challenge for deliberative practitioners therefore is to expand their efforts beyond designing out 'power-over' from micro deliberative forums, towards encouraging more generative forms of 'power-with' within the *entire* deliberative system.

The recognition that deliberative fora might be used within a wider system that critiques power from different directions is persuasive, and opens up the possibility of deliberation working in concert with alternative, potentially coercive, forms of power. By testing the boundaries of deliberative theory in this way, previously marginalised groups may be able to 'push their issue[s] onto the agenda' (Hendriks, 2009: 173) - with pockets of deliberation employed within a wider democratic system that has further means to recognise and accommodate contestation.

The foregoing discussion has outlined the normative ideal of deliberation democracy and attempts to translate it into practice. It has acknowledged the impossibility of bracketing out power, conflict and emotion in deliberative settings, and how theorists have sought to address these issues. Questions remain over whether the techniques, mechanisms and reconceptualisations seen above allow

deliberation to genuinely facilitate transformational change on a wider scale, yet empirical studies have shown that deliberation can take place in adversarial settings (Hendriks, 2006; McLaverty and Halpin, 2008), across significant cultural divides (O’Flynn, 2006), and concerning sensitive issues (Wagenaar, 2006). This suggests that the conceptually difficult issues of emotion and contestation may be pragmatically dealt with in some capacity in practice. However the empirical question of affectivity will always cause issues for ‘a deliberative process whose structure grounds an expectation of rationally acceptable results’ (Habermas, 2001: 110). In a similar fashion, the immutability of conflict in social life will always cause tension for an approach ultimately based on consensus. These on-going questions have led to a focus on alternatives such as agonism as a means to accommodate conflict in social policy fields such as planning (Hillier, 2002; Pløger, 2004; Purcell, 2009; Bäcklund and Mäntysalo, 2010; Bond, 2011; McClymont, 2011; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012; Bradley, 2015 - see also Metzger et al., 2015 and Gualini, 2015). The following section considers how recent UK policy has mobilised the idea of localities - often including the use of deliberative fora - to involve citizens, service users, stakeholders and communities in decision making.

Localism and Participation

Localism in various guises has been a staple of the British political landscape dating back to Burke (1790), who extolled ‘small platoons as the pillars of the state’ (Crick, 2002: 497). The Coalition has placed significant political capital in decentralisation (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015), and the current agenda can to some extent be seen as a continuance of ‘the new localist’ agenda pursued under New Labour (Stoker, 2004a). This sought to free local decision making from the constraints of central government, whilst promoting partnership working between local people, businesses and voluntary organisations (Labour Party, 1997). Communities were seen as central to ‘turning around deprived neighbourhoods’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998), ensuring that public policy better reflected the needs of local people (Gustafsson and Driver, 2005).

The early New Labour administrations sought to ‘modernise’ local government (Newman, 2001), tackle social exclusion and foster democratic renewal through widespread experimentation in new forms of governance embracing service user participation, partnership working, community engagement and double devolution (Taylor, 2007). These democratic innovations emphasised neighbourhoods in an emerging ‘multi-level governance system’, introducing new management

structures at the local level and foregrounding participatory democracy, including deliberative forums (Newman et al., 2004; Sullivan et al., 2004). The raft of centrally funded, area-based initiatives (ABIs) instigated during this period displayed a diverse array of origins and objectives, but generally shared three core characteristics: first, the participation of citizens and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in new forms of decision making, often in partnership with the public and private sectors (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). Second, specified localities were targeted which purportedly offered spatially 'fixed' communities as a source of participatory citizens (Raco, 2003a). Third, initiatives were designed to combat issues in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Taylor, 2007). Through a review of the major ABIs initiated between the late 1990s and 2010, this section reviews the context, aspirations and outcomes of locality based participatory initiatives, and in so doing illustrates the impact of the shifting political opportunity structure for participation. Significantly, this marks the reformulation of central government's modes of operating from targeting deprived communities to the Coalition's 'first come, first served' approach to participation. This review therefore outlines the policy context in the run up to the Localism Act (2011) and contextualises the policy of neighbourhood planning analysed below.

Area-based initiatives, partnerships and participation

Early neighbourhood renewal initiatives in the 1960s, such as Education Priority Areas, the Community Development Projects, and the Urban Programme, involved allocating additional resources to Local Authorities (LAs) in deprived areas. However by the time the Single Regeneration Budget was established in 1994, partnerships of public, private, and voluntary sector organisations were funded directly by central government. This shift was precipitated by an increased understanding of how economic, physical and social issues facing deprived areas came together in a way that tended to compound the intensity of local problems over time (Rhodes et al., 2003). The plethora of ABIs concentrating on urban regeneration in the 1980s was labelled a 'patchwork quilt of complexity and idiosyncrasy' (Audit Commission, 1989: 9), resulting in calls for strategically co-ordinated interventions (Barnes et al., 2005), leading to the establishment of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) as a comprehensive source of funding for area-based regeneration in England.

The SRB was designed to bring together local partnerships to address a diverse range of social issues including housing, infrastructure, employment, and social exclusion. The programme marked a

dramatic change from past initiatives through the adoption of a competitive bid-based approach to delivery that was responsible for expenditure of approximately £26bn between 1995 and 2001 (Rhodes et al., 2003; 2005). This was an attempt to simplify the funding process for regeneration initiatives and was marked by its flexibility in inviting local stakeholders to derive a strategy that directly reflected local problems (Rhodes, et al., 2005). The SRB marked a notable shift towards partnership-based approaches which concentrated on the ‘the revival of citizenship and the activation of communities to spearhead urban change’ (Imrie and Raco, 2003: 4), with many schemes prioritising community development as a means of capacity building, which was seen as integral to the sustainable development of regeneration activities (Rhodes et al., 2005).

Public participation in SRB projects was not unproblematic however, particularly where ‘constructed constituencies’ met the messiness and the complexity of local interest groups (Edwards, 2008: 1672). Within the context of the SRB, local decisions concerning the nature of participation were framed by a central policy guide which, it was argued, was underpinned by a conception of the public sphere as ‘a series of spatially or temporally fixed arenas of rational debate punctuated by decision-making’ (Newman, 2005: 127). Such an assumption belies the reality of participation, as Edwards (2008: 1673) discusses in relation to the constitution and representation of disabled people in one SRB partnership:

... what added to the complexity of the participative picture were the different layers of fora, different types of engagement (some people engaged as one-off consultees, others as members of project groups), as well as the perceived timing at which it was deemed relevant to include people. Indeed, the participatory sphere of the SRB is not a singular site, nor is participation a zero-sum game.

Edwards (2008) found that some partnerships were not necessarily creating new participatory spaces but instead utilising already established fora further adding to local, frontline complexity.

Furthermore, participants’ doubts concerning representation revealed how the contested notion of representativeness has certain limitations, with some noting that some forms of representation were more ‘authentic’ or ‘real’ than others. For instance, a fundamental distinction was drawn between people speaking for their own interests and those speaking on behalf of others, suggesting that there are ‘degrees of representativeness’ and that ‘in the end ... each of the claims will be partial and contestable’ (Edwards, 2008: 1674). This problem was mirrored by the issue of legitimacy where tensions arose ‘between officially espoused adherence to recognizing issues of difference and the deeply embedded assumptions about what constitutes a legitimate community’ (Barnes, Newman et

al., 2003: 387-388). Issues of representation and legitimacy in participatory initiatives were to some extent precipitated by the imperative to fix communities in a spatial locality which was undergirded by assumptions concerning actors' connections both to and within particular neighbourhoods (Newman, 2005). Edwards (2008) argued in the case of many SRB programmes, the focus on localities had a homogenising effect by subsuming diverse interests (falling into the trap of past regeneration initiatives in being ill-equipped to deal with the issue of difference) with universal targets subsuming specific interests or rendering them invisible (Brownill and Darke, 1998). The SRB was folded into the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in 2001, which in turn was abolished in 2012 to be replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

As the SRB was being phased out, a new raft of ABIs emerged under the banner of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR) with the aim of tackling 'the unacceptably bad conditions in this country's poor neighbourhoods' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001: 12). The strategy built on the work of the government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)³ which highlighted how social exclusion rendered the most deprived communities continually vulnerable, 'not least because it was at this level that the interplay between social exclusion and political participation was most intimately experienced' (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008: 60). The strategy was developed in response to the perceived inadequacy of shorter-life programmes - such as the five year City Challenge or the maximum of seven year SRB programmes - in combating the scale of problems faced (Fordham, 2010). The NSNR was supported by dedicated finance, principally the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) - later reformed as the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) and the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF). It was led by the cross-departmental Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) which monitored local programmes and supported neighbourhood capacity building via the provision of key resources such as neighbourhood renewal advisors, neighbourhood statistics and web-based learning resources (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008). The NSNR was to be achieved through investment in 39 New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas over a 10 year period, 35 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders (NMPs) established to develop a more holistic approach to mainstream service delivery in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and 88 cross-cutting Local Strategic Partnerships

³ The SEU was launched in 1997. In 2006, it merged with the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, which included the Social Exclusion Task Force. This in turn was abolished in November 2010, its functions absorbed into the Office for Civil Society.

(LSPs)⁴ set up in priority areas to draw down the new forms of funding. Local communities were expected to play a central role in these initiatives via partnership boards and in the delivery of local projects, however communities were not always central in determining even the most basic dimensions of participation, such as the boundaries of their locality. The boundaries of many ABIs were largely left for LAs to determine, and this process was constrained by programme requirements and a heavy reliance on central government's regularly updated Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to identify the most deprived localities. Consequently target areas were quantitatively defined by their relative deprivation to adjoining areas rather than in terms of social criteria such as residents' perceptions of place (Bailey and Pill, 2011).

This was the case for the New Deal for Communities (NDC), an intensive policy programme launched in 1998 designed to help turn around the poorest neighbourhoods (DETR, 1998). Continuing New Labour's focus on 'cross-cutting' initiatives, 39 partnerships were established across England, each receiving approximately £50m to assist in achieving positive change across three broad, place-based outcomes: crime, the local community, and housing and the physical environment - and three people-based outcomes: health, education and worklessness (Lawless, 2011). Each area was directed by a partnership board charged with the strategic transformation of the neighbourhood over a 10 year period. Between 2002 and 2008 NDC evaluations reported improvements across a range of core indicators spanning crime, education, health, worklessness, community and housing and the physical environment (Batty et al., 2010b). However the biggest improvement was for indicators of people's feelings about their neighbourhoods, as residents recognised change brought about by the programme (Batty et al., 2010b: 6). The NDC placed unprecedented emphasis on the community dimension (Batty et al., 2010a), with partnerships developing various community based strategies including, inter alia: community audits, resident preference surveys, local and sector fora, community based media and community workers (Lawless, 2011: 58).

Despite the fact that residents felt more positively about their communities, analysis of NDCs has suggested that the programme suffered a lack of clarity over the meaning and objectives of community involvement, leading to conflicting interpretations the concept (Robinson et al., 2005; Lawless, 2011). Whilst all NDCs shared the commitment to engage the wider community, challenges

⁴ In 2004 Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were established between central government and areas undertaking LSPs 'which will tie public bodies into agreed targets at local level' (Taylor, 2007: 299) - LAAs were subsequently abolished in 2010 but LSPs are now established in almost all LAs in England.

were found in involving residents in formal structures - one participant relayed the challenges of engaging significant numbers of residents in decision making to Batty et al. (2010a: 34):

... it would be very easy to gloss over that and pretend there have been very very high levels of participation in decision making. It's not quite like that, it has been quite a challenge. It's been relatively easy to engage large numbers of residents at a variety of levels in terms of informing, participating, contributing to decisions and so on and we've always been reasonably successful in populating our board, but the actual mechanics of decision making thematically has been a big challenge.

Neighbourhood boundaries could extend to a centrally-defined maximum of 4,000 households per area and feedback consistently reported that the population of NDC areas - averaging 9,900 people (Batty et al., 2010b) - was simply too big to make sense to residents. Not having to correspond with existing political and administrative boundaries also caused difficulties in gathering reliable and specific data (Fordham et al., 2010). At the root of these issues was a discrepancy between expectation and reality, as some residents assumed an unexpected windfall of £50m would lead to immediate changes, with subsequent analysis suggesting that it was unrealistic that communities could possibly be aware of the nature and depth of local problems (Lawless, 2011: 61).

The early stages of NDCs were characterised by disagreements between agency representatives and the citizens who participated most directly through resident board members (RBMs). In 2008, the average size of such partnership boards was 21, with residents at that time holding a majority in 26 out of 39 NDCs (DCLG, 2009b). A survey of RBMs found them generally positive about their experiences and the effect participation had on their lives (DCLG, 2010a). However research also suggested RBMs tended to overplay problems associated with crime at the expense of issues such as educational attainment and health standards, and often relied on commentary in the popular press rather than evidence (Lawless, 2011). The Chief Executive of one NDC suggested that 'it might have been good if the partners had been more willing to challenge residents when they are wrong-headed' (DCLG, 2010b: 40). Competition between local and expert knowledge was again compounded by issues of representation, with RBMs often failing to reflect the wider populations: older, white, employed, middle-class, and better qualified sections of the community were over-represented, whilst perennial problems were discovered when trying to engage 'hard to reach' groups. The NDCs programme was therefore judged by some to have failed in its objective of instilling a stronger sense of collective purpose, with the narrative in some areas being dominated by conflict and tensions, often driven by race (Lawless, 2011). One Community Regeneration Manager relayed that 'there was a quite overt view amongst the community that it was a competition to grab

resources for one ethnic community or another' (DCLG, 2010b: 38), and in at least one other NDC the partnership had to be dissolved and reformed as a result of institutional paralysis that stemmed from voting patterns that appeared to be largely driven by the ethnicity of board members.

Ultimately critics of NDC argued that the policy objectives and performance management system imposed by central government were a distraction for the local teams charged with delivering the programme (Bailey and Pill, 2011), and as such NDCs proved far from 'a radical departure in relation to implementation and governance' (Beatty et al., 2010: 247).

Similar criticisms were levelled at Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), a multi-agency programme aimed at the 88 of the most deprived LAs. The LSPs were designed to funnel funding into interventions designed to reduce relative deprivation in areas such as health inequalities, educational underachievement and high crime rates. However the partnerships were seen to be dominated by managers and persistently failed to deliver accountability through community engagement (Munro et al., 2008; Matthews, 2014). The lack of accountability was a result of partnership working that contributed to confusion and tension in many LSPs regarding the respective roles of community representatives, elected councillors and local officials, with each was claiming to represent the community (Gaventa, 2004a). Councillors were able to call upon their electoral mandate to legitimise their role whilst community organisations were questioned about their representativeness and accountability. Tensions were compounded by the fact that often 'the big players write the rules' during partnership working, with pressure exerted upon citizen representatives to 'get up to speed' (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). Furthermore, 'fewer democratic governance obligations tend to be imposed on partnerships than apply to the organisations of representative government' (Munro et al., 2008: 63). Local Strategic Partnerships were further criticised for instituting processes of monitoring, auditing, budgetary management, and above all setting targets. These processes, central to the New Public Management (NPM), focus on efficiency, competition and the citizen-customer, and are seen as central to the neoliberal state's capacity to manage the local apparatus (Fuller and Geddes, 2008) but have had the effect of closing down local innovation and pre-empting local control over priority areas.

A further ABI that would later contribute to the development of LSPs and Primary Care Trusts was the Health Action Zones (HAZs). Initiated in 1998, HAZs were designed to modernise health services and tackle the social determinants of health inequalities. As such, they had three strategic objectives: to identify and address the public health needs of the locality; to increase effectiveness,

efficiency and responsiveness of services; and develop partnerships for improving peoples' health and relevant services, adding value through operating across institutional and organisational boundaries (Bauld et al., 2005). Early Department of Health (DH) guidance made it clear that successful HAZs would harness the dynamism of local people and organisations by achieving better collaboration across the National Health Service (NHS), the VCS and local government - as well as engaging with communities, service users and citizens in developing and delivering the programmes' goals (Sullivan et al., 2006). Partnership working was again central to the delivery of HAZs; the complex and dynamic nature of activity in the zones was achieved by means of partnership boards, joint programmes of work, and various collaborative relationships across local networks (Barnes et al., 2001).

The experiential knowledge of community members was regarded as an important contribution to designing projects and developing strategies in many HAZs (Bauld et al., 2005). However perhaps as a result of being offered relatively little freedom to develop new governance arrangements, there was little evidence that HAZs contributed to solving the challenges of partnership governance at a strategic level, particularly relating to accountability (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Barnes, Sullivan et al., 2003). Overviews suggested that HAZs were better suited to embracing new governance mechanisms below the strategic level, where cross-sectoral partnerships could be established within localities rather than across broader geographical areas (Bauld et al., 2005). Early research also indicated that participants struggled to come to terms with the different meanings attributed to terms such as 'community involvement' and 'partnership' (Judge et al., 1999), whilst consensus was not always reached on the nature or purpose of collaboration (Barnes, Matka et al., 2003). Bauld et al. (2005) argue that HAZs were the victim of the very complexities they set out to address, a point reinforced by Barnes, Matka et al. (2003: 271) who when researching the initiative noted that 'many points during our interviews with HAZ participants neither they nor we were entirely clear what constituted HAZ'.

External factors resulted in HAZs resembling more of a top down initiative than might have been anticipated. Ministerial changes resulted in significant health policy reforms such as tackling heart disease and cancer, combatting waiting times and compensating for winter pressures, with the result that HAZs had to modify their programmes to address these issues. These shifts signalled that the 'original remit of developing local solutions to address local health problems had been broadened to embrace a wider NHS agenda' (Bauld et al., 2005: 434). The result of top down pressure was for

boards to spend time and effort in negotiating the place of the HAZs in the wider context of the statutory system rather than establishing community objectives, with the result that the programme could not be strongly characterised as a community-led initiative (Barnes, Sullivan et al., 2003). The imbalance between board members may have been attributable to the tendency to establish large and unwieldy forums designed to incorporate all relevant partners (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004), and as a result were found to be complex, fluid and dynamic - making it difficult to define precisely the nature of the initiative, as 'what it is' changed over time (Barnes, Matka et al., 2003). Furthermore as with NDCs, many HAZs covered large areas in terms of both population and geography making it hard for participants to identify with wider goals. Consequently HAZs were subject to multiple interpretations that changed over time, partly due to changes in government's 'intentions and aspirations' as seen above. Barnes and Prior (2009: 11-12 - emphasis in original) argued:

The programme was initially viewed as a radical departure from Tory preoccupations with health service organisation and management through its focus on health inequalities and the root causes of poor health, but, as government priorities changed, became a vehicle for the delivery of targets ... HAZs could not be understood as *a* programme, but that their achievements and limitations needed to be related to the different narratives constructed by practitioners to make sense of a constantly changing configuration of projects and governance arrangements

This point emphasises the importance of actors' interpretations of priorities, motivations and rationalities that are built into the narrative of a programme. Such narratives - constructed iteratively between individual, groups, institutions and wider discourses - are central to how participation unfolds: they offer a 'way of understanding' that shapes what is permissible and desirable within a given space. A central difficulty for HAZs and other ABIs is the wider public understanding of community governance. This point is explicated by Stoker (2011: 28), evoking his own work on networked governance:

One key issue with community governance as a societal role for local government is that it has far less support from citizens or organized interests within society. It is one of those ideas appealing to academics discovering a new paradigm ... but it is very difficult to embed in popular culture understandings of how societies are governed.

Arguably the fact that HAZs could 'not be understood as *a* programme', combined with a lack of wider understanding about the role of community governance led to the ambiguities with the initiative's narrative relayed above. The consequence of this was reflected in the following downbeat assessment made by the Health Committee (2009: para 117): HAZs 'were conceived and implemented too hastily, were too poorly resourced and were provided with insufficient support and

clear direction to make a significant contribution to reducing health inequalities in the time that they were given’.

Around the same time as HAZs, the Sure Start initiative was established with the promise of 10 years funding. An early intervention programme, Sure Start sought to tackle child poverty and social exclusion by means of a more integrated approach and multi-agency working (Glass, 1999).

Partnerships brought together a range of local services in the most deprived communities to extend and improve service provision for young children and their families. Central to the programme was parental participation, initially as part of partnership governance structures (principally management boards and parent forums) but also by means of public consultations and evaluations designed to determine local needs and priorities (Gustafsson and Driver, 2005). Early research found that parental inclusion helped to maintain the focus on local needs, ensuring that individual Sure Start programmes interpreted the government directives according to perceived community needs (Myers et al., 2004). Community development and empowerment were explicit aims for the programme, however Sure Start was never a ‘bottom up’ process: not only was it state-led, but parents were a minority voice on the partnership boards responsible for the initiatives’ governance (Williams and Churchill, 2006). Nonetheless parents were seen to be positive towards the benefits obtained - particularly overcoming isolation, gaining new skills and improving job prospects. However a multitude of practical issues were identified with participation, including participants needing to overcome financial and transportation difficulties, not helped by awkward programme locations and timings. Problems of perception were also apparent, such as the belief that partnerships were ‘cliquey’ and relied on expert terminology, but also suffered from a lack of visibility and required significant social confidence on behalf of parents who had concerns about being criticised for their child’s behaviour or their abilities as a parent (Avis et al., 2007). Perhaps the most damaging issue however was an awareness of the targeted nature of the programme on deprived communities, which some participants felt was stigmatising (Avis et al., 2007).

By 2003, Sure Start’s ethos had become out of step with central government policy regarding childcare, and the implementation of a universal network of integrated children’s services at the local level meant the end of Sure Start as an area-based programme (Lewis, 2011). The fate of Sure Start was emblematic of the inherent tension in New Labour’s ABIs between local autonomy on the one hand, and shifts in central targets, policy trajectories and political discourse on the other. The breadth of Sure Start activity makes it difficult to derive generalised lessons concerning participation:

MacNeill (2009: 665) found that some parents were passive recipients of the service ‘whereas other parents were active participants within a democratic framework’. The same research concluded that partnership working can stagnate in areas without a tradition of community involvement, and a lack of consensus about the meaning of participation and how it can be operationalised can prove fatal to participation (MacNeill. 2009). The business of triangulating perspectives on partnership boards can also affect the nature of participation, as Lowndes and Sullivan (2004: 65) explain:

It can be particularly hard for citizens to identify where power lies within a partnership (leadership is often unclear), or to know how to hold the different partners to account. Processes of decision-making are complicated by the competing mandates of different partners – how can the legitimacy of election be weighed against the legitimacy of expertise, or the legitimacy of common experience? Issues of power overlay issues of difference: councillors often feel they can play the ‘trump card’ of their electoral mandate, while community organisations are constantly questioned about their ‘representativeness’ and ‘accountability’.

These issues can create tensions between citizens, experts and elected members, but also raise wider questions about the ‘fit’ between new forms of participatory democracy and the existing system of representative democracy (Pierre, 2009). Partnerships are not immune from local political agendas, and often sit alongside, overlap, and conflict with existing representative institutions (Newman, 2001). The following sub-section draws together the links from ABIs instituted under New Labour.

Lessons for post-2010 and the political opportunity structure

A number of unifying themes can be drawn from the evaluation of ABIs introduced in the New Labour period. Foremost among them is that community participation was given greater prominence and increased influence over programme development and delivery, predominately through inclusion in new forms of governance such as partnership arrangements. However participation during this period was not without problems, with multiple programmes unsurprisingly finding that meaningful community engagement becomes more difficult across larger populations (Bailey and Pill, 2011) and a lack of clarity concerning what was meant by participation (encapsulating issues of representation, accountability and legitimacy) hampered the efforts of many participants. Initiatives were increasingly funded for longer time periods, notably the NDC’s ten year programme, as previous initiatives were deemed to be too short to adequately combat social issues. Despite the emergence of ‘multi-level governance’ hinting at a new formulation of centre-local relations, the central state continued to retain considerable influence over the key agents of local governance (Sullivan et al.,

2004), and ultimately tensions between the desire for central direction and commitments to local empowerment (at least rhetorically) led to many ABIs fading from the policy picture.

The formation of the Coalition in May 2010 signalled a sea change in neighbourhood policy. The core funding schemes that marked the New Labour project were discontinued (notably NDC, NRF, NSNR, NRU, LAAs, Housing Market Renewal, Area-Based Grant) and replaced by a focus on stimulating economic growth through the Regional Growth Fund, City Deals and reforms to the planning system (Lupton, 2013). At the smaller than local level, the government moved towards promoting action within communities themselves by means of the localism agenda (HM Government, 2010b). As outlined in Chapter 1, the Coalition government's take on participatory democracy is parcelled up in the amorphous Big Society project and in particular, the decentralisation agenda. Participation and localism share similar values and political histories, as both are often seen as solutions to dealing with wicked problems (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012). This is particularly true in periods of austerity where local participation is thought to build communities' adaptive capacity and resilience. Despite the similar geographical scale of New Labour's ABIs and Coalition's localism initiatives such as Our Place (formerly Neighbourhood Community Budgets), Community Rights and Neighbourhood Planning, the respective agendas call upon different governmental rationalities. New Labour's localism was marked by the pursuit of evidence-based policy making, focusing on deprived localities, and a form of top down managerialism that ultimately caused the localist agenda to stagnate (Stoker, 2011; Evans et al. 2013). By contrast, the Coalition's localism is framed by the failures of 'big', interventionist government (Conservative Party, 2010a) and has shifted focus away from deprived communities.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008: 57-59) identify four rationalities for neighbourhood governance: first, neighbourhood empowerment (civic rationale), encapsulating forms of direct citizen participation; second, neighbourhood partnership (social rationale), where partnership arrangements take a holistic approach by 'joining-up' local action; third, neighbourhood government (political rationale) or government through new forms of representation and participation; and fourth, neighbourhood management (economic) where local service delivery is managed locally to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. As the authors indicate, such rationalities are distinct, but also interlocking, and governments selectively draw on different rationalities to justify their policy overall programmes. New Labour's neighbourhood renewal approach was primarily concerned with spatial inequalities to be combatted by 'joined-up', holistic approaches targeting social and economic outcomes for

individuals, although it was not overall an economic programme and was seen as ‘conceptually distinct from, although often in practice linked to, local economic development’ (Lupton and Fitzgerald, 2015: 5). Lowndes and Sullivan (2008: 53) argue that New Labour’s approach came ‘near to developing a comprehensive case for neighbourhood governance, drawing upon all four rationales’, although the above research suggests that the social rationale (in the form of partnership arrangements and ‘stakeholder democracy’) and the economic rationale (focusing on more efficient and effective local service delivery, albeit centrally defined) were the core rationalities of New Labour’s tenure.

By contrast, post-2010 policy draws heavily on the civic and economic rationales - promoting a market democracy with opportunities for community participation. The juncture was marked in the trajectory of neighbourhood policy by a government paper entitled *Regeneration to enable growth* (DCLG, 2011a) that set out a ‘menu’ of activities that local areas could draw upon - focusing on decentralised public services and incentives for local growth, and to a lesser extent removing barriers to local action and targeted investment in infrastructure and public services (Lupton and Fitzgerald, 2015). The shift from targeting disadvantage to a ‘first come first served’ approach was reflected in the rejection of performance monitoring (seen in the abolishing of the Audit Commission and national indicators), as Lowndes and Pratchett (2012: 36) identified:

... the removal of the comprehensive audit regime for localities can be seen as being another politically expedient manoeuvre, making it difficult, if not impossible for localities to be benchmarked or compared. Consequently, there will be no high profile failures being published by government but only quietly deteriorating localities in the more socially and economically disadvantaged parts of the country.

The voluntaristic approach has had predictable effects on the type of localities involved and the nature of participation within them. This in large part is due to the political opportunity structure that denotes the context within which individuals and collectives mobilise (or are ‘called up’ in a post-structuralist reading) and construct strategies for participation. The opening up of political power in new governance spaces creates opportunities in the form of new external resources, prospective alliances (perhaps ones previously considered unlikely) and political realignments that potentially shift power relations (Taylor, 2007).

The concept of an opportunity structure was developed within social movement theory, denoting how ‘open’ and accessible a given political system is (Tarrow, 1994), with the argument following that closed institutions are associated with higher levels of participation outside the system.

McAdam (1996: 27) summarises the four central, dynamic components of the political opportunity structure as conceived by its leading proponents:

1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system;
2. The stability or instability of the broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity;
3. The presence or absence of elite allies;
4. The state's capacity and propensity for repression

This concept is particularly useful given the emergence of a differentiated polity where the lines between state agencies and communities at the point of local governance and public service delivery are increasingly blurred (Newman, 2005; Edwards, 2008). This has come about in part, due to social movements which, even when unsuccessful, 'leave behind them incremental expansions in participation, changes in popular culture and residual movement networks' (Tarrow, 1994: 190). The same can be said of invited participatory spaces that may bring about greater or lesser participation dependent on the perceived success of past initiatives. These often subtle changes to governance structures and prevailing attitudes are what gives the opportunity structure its explanatory power. Advocates of the concept have been criticised for adopting too broad a conceptualisation of the relevant aspects, which has the effect of 'soaking up' all the relevant contextual features of a given political environment making it impossible to discern what is most relevant (Gamson and Meyer, 1996: 275). Nonetheless the components set out above do provide a useful framework from which to consider the actions of citizens and contextualise participation within a fluid political structure. Reflecting on the opportunity structure under New Labour, Newman et al. (2004: 210) argue that the effect of focusing on locality as a site for new forms of partnership between the state (predominantly public sector agencies) and citizens (as consumers, users and communities) was to inspire a wider ethos of participation:

... central government policies on participation, while not necessarily bringing citizen and user voices closer to the centres of decision-making power, were producing a culture change as some strategic actors seized policy opportunities in order to introduce new ways of working and used the enhanced legitimacy afforded to the participation agenda to bring about change

The tenor of national policy was deemed to have introduced a new culture that could both stimulate and legitimise new forms of participation. This illustrates the importance of the meanings attributed to political spaces by the actors involved. Opportunities for participation created in legislation are unlikely to have meaningful effects unless the social construction of that reality attributes positive

meaning to participation - that is, that new opportunities are perceived as important by the actors concerned (Della Porta and Diani, 1999; Newman et al., 2004). This raises questions regarding the political opportunity structure post-2010, not least early warning signs of participation failure (Macmillan, 2011; Figure 7) in the Coalition's first come, first served approach. The twin concepts of the 'social gradient of participation' (where established, networked and better resourced communities are more likely to participate than others) and the 'geography of participation' (where community action tends to struggle in more deprived areas) are already in evidence (Parker and Salter, 2016). That the voluntaristic nature of post-2010 localism is inattentive to structural barriers is not only problematic in terms of social inclusion in the immediate term, but also in symbolic terms about who should participate and under what terms. This is underscored by a lack of understanding about the localities as a site of political action, as Madanipour and Davoudi (2015: 277) summarise:

... the capacity for local autonomy is asymmetric. A peaceful, prosperous, confident and well-connected locality is well-placed to benefit from a process that favours the local. Localism in this context may lead to the reconfirmation of the status quo and furthering of existing privileges. In such circumstances, active networks and civic enterprises are more likely to be able to fill the gaps left by the withdrawal of the state institutions and support. However, if a locality is riddled with conflict, unable to mobilise resources, exposed to the dominance of larger players and located unfavourably in the broader political and economic processes, localism is likely to find a different meaning.

There are two points to be made here: first, the removal of the focus on deprived communities ensures that the asymmetry of local autonomy, capacity and resource is reinforced. Second, the reference to 'exposure to larger players' alludes to the fact that a disparity of resources and the potential for conflict curtails the ability of communities to exercise power outside of their locality or to combat local elites, corporate interests, 'big' government and so on. This oversimplified conception of localism, coupled with the presence of pervasive market-based discourses (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2013) that appear to subordinate locality based participation to established state and market forces, suggest a far more 'closed' political opportunity structure, than government rhetoric would attest (Cameron, 2010; Conservative Party, 2009; 2010b; 2010c).

Between 1997 and 2010, public participation was regarded as a means of building accountability and legitimacy through sustainable, resilient and empowered communities (DCLG, 2006; 2008). These rhetorical aspirations have not fundamentally changed post-2010, but the means of delivery have. Given that the global economic crisis of 2007-2008 has accelerated the neo-liberal project of transferring traditional state roles to the market and civil society (with coincident processes of

deregulation and marketisation) (Corbett and Walker, 2013), it is important that the residual power *may* be devolved to communities level is reinforced by the ability to challenge the status quo rather than reinforce it. The New Labour turn to participation appears to have been defined by a lack of clarity over the meaning and objectives of community involvement, whilst managers and the ‘big players’ have continued to dominate participatory spaces, often culminating in local partnerships being browbeaten by shifting central government priorities. The post-2010 localism agenda displays continuity in encouraging communities to become more closely involved in both decision making and undertaking public services - however the framing of participation appears to suggest a markedly different political opportunity structure than one described by Newman et al. (2004) under New Labour (see also subsection ‘Participatory planning in context: discourses of participation’ in Chapter 7). The New Labour preference for performance management and setting national goals does appear to have been echoed by the Localism Act (2011), which itself contains a raft of centralising measures (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013; Stanton, 2014). Crucially, despite radical rhetoric claims concerning decentralisation, Coalition policy also appears to have replicated New Labour in largely devolved managerial power (i.e. *how* to meet targets), rather than political power (i.e. *what* targets should be met).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the major concepts and models of democracy, culminating in the turn to participation and in particular deliberative democracy. The different models reviewed here each have implications for ‘doing democracy’, but as Held (2006: 259) attests:

... there are good grounds for not simply accepting any one model, whether classic or contemporary, as it stands. There is something to be learnt from a variety of traditions of political thought, and a propensity simply to juxtapose one position with another, or to play off one against another, is not fruitful

Modern societies require advanced and nuanced ways to make democracy work, beyond that of representative democracy (Bevir, 2006; Dryzek, 2010; Ercan and Hendriks, 2013), although all political projects are complex and every model of democracy is subject to inherent weaknesses and open to criticism. Increasingly forms of participatory democracy are being integrated within larger systems of representative democracy for ‘mutual benefit’, seeking to inculcate a ‘sense or culture of everyday politics... mechanisms by which ordinary lives are connected to extraordinary problems’ (Ginsborg, 2005: 171-172). The aim for advocates of participation therefore is to harness

the present political interest in localism and participation, and to suggest how state-led initiatives can maximise the likelihood of social just outcomes.

This chapter has also explored research into deliberative democracy and state-led participation in the form of New Labour's ABIs. In so doing, this chapter has critically reviewed the policy context in the immediate run up to the Localism Act (2011), reviewing the democratic innovations made during this period. The following chapter introduces agonistic pluralism, a strand of political thought that has to date been critical of deliberation and its underlying pursuit of consensus. This chapter seeks to assimilate the explanatory power of pluralistic systems of democracy with the present interest in participatory mechanisms, and in so doing considers a model of democracy compatible with agonism. The theoretical framework that is set out recognises the plurality of values in modern societies and seeks to accommodate them, not just through deliberatively achieved consensus (although this has its place) but through the mobilisation of political passions and collective identities that challenge existing hegemonic structures and seek to promote an equality of opportunity. Whilst different forms of democracy are often presented as an inevitable outcome of socio-political histories, it should be remembered, given the preceding discussion of power (Chapter 3), that each way of doing democracy is historically contingent and far from being immutable is actually the product of hegemonic practices that could always be otherwise.

Chapter 5 Agonistic Participation

Introduction

This chapter begins by setting out the normative theoretical framework of the thesis. Building on the discussions of democratic participation, power and democracy (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), Mouffe's (1999, 2005, 2007) model of agonistic pluralism is critically discussed and extended through an exploration of principles of participatory democratic theory and arguments for 'deepening democracy'. Employing the practical orientation of Fung and Wright's (2003) empowered participatory governance (EPG), a new framework of agonistic participation is established. The discussion that follows is pertinent to the third research question of this thesis concerning the extent to which contemporary forms of participation under the Localism Act (2011) allow for agonistic forms of democratic practice.

This thesis operates within an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that draws on social policy and sociology, as well as political and democratic theory to analyse democratic participation from a political sociology perspective. Political sociology is principally concerned with two closely related phenomena: the relationship between citizens and the state, and power relations within society. In the 1950s, the discipline developed a renewed concern with issues of power, whilst the field's theories have oscillated between core assumptions based on consensus and conflict (Udehn, 1996) - these fundamental principles are analysed below and directed towards the new participatory sphere, which has opened up new (institutional) spaces for democratic participation, challenging traditional assumptions of the state/civil society relationship (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007; Gaventa, 2007b).

Agonistic Pluralism

As explored in Chapter 4, pluralists hold that democracy is constitutive of multiple centres of power, arranged both competitively and non-hierarchically (Held, 2006). The 'classic' conception of pluralism focuses on the processes of collective action by different social groups in exercising that power. The classical pluralism model broadly considered people free to participate in democratic processes and downplayed the structural deficits of inequality that dictate access to participation. In addition, as we have seen, critical (or neo-) pluralism reached an impasse due to its inability to accommodate greater participation by citizens. These drawbacks however do not undercut the

fundamental explanatory power of pluralism to demonstrate how multiple groups compete for a say in democratic decision making processes. The task befalling pluralists is to move past this stalemate - in particular, failing to engage with modern understandings of social organisation, this means envisioning a pluralistic democracy where citizen involvement is extended beyond limited and occasional participation through elections or a unique event such as a referendum.

Early versions of pluralism (Dahl 1957, 1958, 1961) envisioned the role of the state as mediating between power centres. However, as was recognised by the neo-pluralism model (Lindblom, 1982; Dahl, 1989) there is no guarantee that the state will act in an impartial manner; particularly in light of the ‘capture’ of states by the power of corporations and the global flow of capital which has reconfigured the central aims of government to achieving economic growth. In response to these criticisms, Dahl (1989) advocated a widespread cooperative movement through the extension of democratic principles into the workplace, akin to those advocated by Pateman (1970). Nonetheless, advocates of neo-pluralism were reticent about the ability of participatory democracy to alleviate imbalances of power and corresponding states of inequality. Agonistic pluralism can be seen to fit into this history, sharing many of the central contentions of earlier approaches. The agonistic approach furthers the debate by advocating a model of society with multiple power centres, but also one that allows counter hegemonic voices to be heard, thus providing the opportunity to alter unequal social relations. It shares with Dahl’s conception the idea that pluralism is a source of structural stability and that any such system is predicated on value consensus - that is, a consensus on the rules of engagement (Held, 2006), what Mouffe (2005: 32) calls the ‘ethico-political’ principles of democracy, principally: liberty and equality for all.

This section sets out a normative framework for a pluralistic and participatory democratic system based on Mouffe’s (1999, 2000, 2005, 2013) theory of agonism. Crucially, this model stresses the need for political passion, collective identities and (legitimate) conflict within democratic settings, as Mouffe (1999: 755-756) argues:

... the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions nor to relegate them to the private sphere in order to render rational consensus possible, but to mobilise those passions towards the promotion of democratic designs

Central to this promotion of passions is the role of conflict which is generally considered a danger to stable, liberal societies as Hirschman (1994: 206) explain in relation to Habermasian theory:

Generally, conflicts have been viewed as dangerous, corrosive and potentially destructive of social order and therefore in need of being contained and resolved. This view seems to cover Habermas's outlook on conflict, which is understandable given Germany's, and Habermas's, experience with Nazism, World War II and their after-effects. There is mounting evidence, however, that social conflicts produce themselves the valuable ties that hold modern democratic societies together and provide them with the strength and cohesion they need; that social conflicts are the true pillars of democratic society

Agonistic pluralism recognises the 'valuable ties' created by social conflict and goes further in attesting the immutability of conflict within social relations, rejecting the current liberal democratic model based on rational consensus (see discussion of deliberative democracy above). Such a model based on consensual practices is described by Rancière (1991: 102) as a post-democracy, or:

... a democracy that has eliminated the appearance, miscount, and dispute of the people and is thereby reducible to the sole interplay of state mechanisms and combinations of social energies and interests

Such a model presupposes the negation of conflict, however for Mouffe (2005: 8-9) conflict is a central concept of 'the political': a space of power and antagonism that concern the way in which society is instituted. Controversially echoing Schmitt, Mouffe (2005: 11) argues that predicating a political community on a mutually beneficial consensus is unjustifiable since consensus is necessarily predicated on acts of exclusion. Consensus can never be wholly inclusive since antagonism and conflict constitute 'an ever-present possibility in politics' (Mouffe, 2000: 13) and cannot be eradicated from political life; therefore in the liberal/rationalist understanding of democratic consensus, some interested party must *necessarily* have been excluded. As Mouffe (2000: 49) describes:

Consensus in a liberal-democratic society is - and will always be - the expression of a hegemony and the crystallization of power relations. The frontier that it establishes between what is and what is not legitimate is a political one, and for that reason it should remain contestable. To deny the existence of such a moment of closure, or to present the frontier as dictated by rationality or morality, is to naturalise what should be perceived as a contingent and temporary hegemonic articulation of 'the people' through a particular regime of inclusion-exclusion.

This has profound implications for the nature of contemporary democratic participation. If democratic practice is driven towards consensus then it necessarily forecloses the expression of anti-hegemonic voices and thus negates the possibility of transformative participation. In contrast, agonism refers to a political tradition that recognises conflict as a central part of democratic life. It envisages a social order that 'produces and reproduces itself precisely from the interconnection of

the antagonistic interests of its members' (Adorno, 2005: 17) but in such a way that such that hostility is reformulated into positive and respectful means of interaction.

Mouffe (2000) has sought to transcend the dominant liberal democratic perspective that conceptualises democracy as a vehicle to achieve the aggregation of preferences - with citizen participation reducible to one person, one vote. This advances the prior conceptions of pluralism which views democratic participation narrowly as periodic voting at elections. The liberal model prioritises the protection of the individual's (human) rights whilst establishing a stable government orientated towards societal consensus. By denying asymmetrical power relations and prioritising consensus, we are left the 'typical liberal illusion of a pluralism without antagonism' (Mouffe, 2000: 20). Consensus in the centre ground of politics leads to an uncontested hegemony of liberal thought, in such circumstances, the antagonistic set pieces of dissent and criticism are either subsumed, relegated to the private sphere, or else the dissenters are conceived as enemies to be destroyed. As such liberal theorists 'are unable to acknowledge not only the primary reality of strife in social life' and are blind to the 'integrative role that conflict plays in modern democracy' (Mouffe, 2005: 30-31). As a consequence, Mouffe (2005: 52) argues:

... the fundamental question for democratic theory is to envisage how the antagonistic dimension ... can be given a form of expression that will not destroy the political association. I suggested that it required distinguishing between the categories of 'antagonism' (relations between enemies) and 'agonism' (relations between adversaries) and envisaging a sort of 'conflictual consensus' providing a common symbolic space among opponents who are considered as 'legitimate enemies'.

The irony of pursuing a consensus in the centre ground of politics is that the outcome may well be an impasse created by essentialised and immutable polar opposites. Such consensus in the centre ground (echoing Thatcher's edict that 'there is no alternative') has caused political disaffection since many citizens require the possibility of choosing real alternatives in order to remain interested in politics (Mouffe, 2005: 29). Liberal democratic theorists who call for consensus-driven politics subscribe to the 'ethico-political' principles of liberty and equality for all' but it is not these proclaimed ideals that are the issue but rather the fact that they are not put into practice (Mouffe, 2005: 32). As indicated above, in acknowledging antagonism it is possible to accommodate it within a pluralist democracy by reconfiguring it into a form of agonism. This involves the reformulation of enemies (to be defeated) into adversaries (to be respected as legitimate).

Where an antagonistic relationship is maintained, enemies are irredeemable collectives that must be dismissed or destroyed since both parties' wills are immovable. However, when reformulated as adversaries, conflictual parties can share a symbolic space where each others' position is respected as legitimate. For Mouffe (2013: 138-139) adversaries accept that there is no rational solution to their conflict, however they nevertheless accept 'a set of rules according to which their conflict is going to be regulated' thus creating a 'conflictual consensus' whereby they agree about ethico-political principles by which to organise political association, but crucially they 'disagree about the interpretation of these principles'. This can be overlaid to participatory spaces where conflicting communities pluralistically and legitimately come to decisions regarding local level policy. Crucially, participants in state-led initiatives must be treated as legitimate (even if in an adversarial form) - that is, they must be afforded the opportunity to make decisions that affect their lives. Using the language of Arnstein (1969) we may say that therapeutic or manipulative forms of participation do not treat citizens as legitimate actors in an agonistic field - therefore the participatory agonism framework laid out here is a normative one against which contemporary initiatives may be assessed against. It is important to note that agonistic pluralism does not deny the possibility of consensus - indeed it is necessary in certain contingent and temporary forms - but such consensus must be accompanied by dissent (Mouffe, 2005: 31). Pluralism is in this sense a 'mixed game' (Mouffe, 1999: 756), that is, partially collaborative and dependent on consensus, and in part conflictual - crucially it is predicated on the formulation of collective identities and a recognition of the role of passions in democratic processes.

Passions and collective identities

Central to an agonistic understanding of pluralism is the understanding of passions - 'the various affective forces which are the origins of collective forms of identifications' (Mouffe, 2005: 24). The task of agonistic pluralism therefore is not to eliminate passions nor to relegate them to the private sphere, but to allow passions to be mobilised in sympathetic democratic designs (Mouffe, 1999: 755-756). Liberal rationalism views passions, or the affective dimension, as an archaic and primitive response that will dissipate with the advance of individualism and rationality (Mouffe, 2005: 6). It is for this reason that many participatory fora in liberal democratic contexts are better understood as 'contested spaces' where the contentious and passionate politics of social movements and aspirations of community organisation meet the rational ambitions of participatory governance (Barnes, 2008a;

2009). Consequently the rational calculation of interests and the moral deliberation of equal parties that liberal democratic theory requires, cannot accommodate the play of passions (Mouffe, 2005: 24-25). For agonists, it is not sufficient to recognise a plurality of values and extol tolerance, democratic practice must have a partisan nature so that passions may play a full role in political life. This understanding of human behaviour is crucial in its social dimension since the mobilisation of passions is intertwined with the ability of individuals to act in concert and identify with a collective group. By realising the central role of passions, citizens can build collective identities around partisan positions - this is the foundation of agonistic political practice; it was the dissolution of collective identities, through processes of 'individuation' (Giddens, 1991), that enabled the post-political hegemony of liberal individualism.

Mouffe (2005: 25) argues that in order for people to act politically, they must identify with a collective identity 'which provides an idea of themselves they can valorize', hence the need for 'clearly differentiated' political identities and a creation of a us/them divide. As discussed above, 'taking collective action to fight injustice is itself transformative' (White, 1996: 216). Agonists ultimately see identities and interests as ephemeral (Wingenbach, 2011: 110) crystallising at any given point when coming into contact with others and institutions. Mouffe (2013: 137) uses nationalism as an example to demonstrate how collective identities are created through the mobilisation of affects and desires. We may just as easily look in the opposite direction, to ideas of neighbourhood or community to see how collective identities manifest themselves at the local level - therefore demonstrating how passions relate to the democratic participation at the centre of this thesis.

We know that neighbourhoods are sites of conflict since academics remain sceptical over the extent to which current interpretations of 'community' and 'neighbourhood' in policy strategies are helping to revitalise local democracy (Parker and Street, 2015). This is because such concepts commonly remain poorly defined (Minery et al., 2009; Natarajan, 2012), despite calls for 'a more nuanced analysis of the neighbourhood as an unstable field of social exchange that problematizes attempts at 'empowerment' and neighbourhood management' (Wallace, 2010: 805). Given Mouffe's (2005: 30) assertion that confrontation is the very condition of democracy's existence, we should not assume communities to be uncontested sites of consensus but rather unstable fields that contain the possibility for productive conflict where relations are agonistic (dynamic and productive) and not antagonistic (static and unproductive):

... confrontation should provide collective forms of identification strong enough to mobilize political passions. If this adversarial configuration is missing, passions cannot be given a democratic outlet and the agonistic dynamics of pluralism are hindered. The danger arises that the democratic confrontation will therefore be replaced by a confrontation between essentialist forms of identification or non-negotiable moral values ... Antagonisms can take many forms and it is illusory to believe that they could ever be eradicated. This is why it is important to allow them an agonistic form of expression through the pluralist democratic system.

In contrast, liberal theorists (Giddens, 1991, 1994, 1998; Beck, 1997) conceive of the democratic process as a dialogue between individuals - albeit one that is designed to create new solidarities and trust. Public spheres are created or opened up, where individuals with differing interests will make decisions about their lives through dialogical exchange whilst developing mutual tolerance. This evidently chimes in with the core tenets of deliberative democracy and whilst disagreements may exist in this model, they do not take an adversarial shape - but nor do they engender group identities, from which individuals can secure validity and solidarity. Drawing on the Social Quality framework, Beck et al. (2012: 46) describe how individual identity is enabled (valorised in Mouffe terminology) through interaction with a collective:

... people as social beings (first assumption) interact with each other, and these interactions constitute a diversity of collective identities which provide the contexts for their self-realisation and which lead to manifestations of the social ... a person's self-realisation is enabled through interaction with various collective identities

The prioritisation of conditions that allow for collective identities to form them, do not deny the role or rights of the individual but actually validate a person's self-realisation as a social being. This enabling factor is crucial if anti-hegemonic or radical politics is to be facilitated by an agonistic framework.

The fundamental difference between the dialogical approach and an agonistic one in Mouffe's (2005: 52) view is that 'the aim of the latter is a profound transformation of the existing power relations and the establishment of a new hegemony'. It is entirely possible that agonistic pluralism is compatible with hegemonic interests and may uphold them, since, as we have seen with Lukes' (1974, 2005) recognition of the third face of power, hegemony operates in a way in which 'the relatively powerless come to internalise and accept their own condition, and thus might not be aware of nor act upon their interests in any observable way' (Gaventa, 2007a: 204-205), and therefore even where the possibility of anti-hegemonic actions exists, they are not recognised or acted upon. In this situation new social relations may facilitate agonistic debate but no structural changes would occur (for instance in dominant discourses of the nature of capitalism). However, unlike the dialogical

approach, by recognising and facilitating difference, and encouraging the formation of new collective identities, agonistic conceptions of democracy allow for a greater chance of anti-hegemonic voices to be heard. The dialogical approach by contrast is far from radical since it cannot challenge existing power relations since a legitimate adversary is required (to present and advocate an ulterior point of view or ideology) ‘which is precisely what such a perspective forecloses’ (Mouffe, 2005: 51). The drive towards consensus is always likely to converge on an established, centre-ground perspective since necessarily this will be the most familiar ground to the largest number of individuals. In contrast, radical or anti-hegemonic perspectives are intrinsically unfamiliar to the majority (whatever the utility of the view may be) and therefore are unlikely to form the kernel of a consensus in a setting that prioritises the amelioration of difference and the transformation of ulterior views. The liberal politics of competing interests on a ‘neutral terrain’ or a ‘discursive formation of a democratic consensus’ (Mouffe, 2005: 52) cannot allow for radical practice in a way that agonistic interaction can in establishing ‘a new hegemony’. The shift from one hegemonic order to another is reminiscent of Foucault’s (1991) recognition that there cannot be an emancipation from power relations, just a shift in one *épistème* to another. Mouffe’s work argues for a radical and plural democracy but rejects the Leninist revolutionary model and envisages change more as an unending process (Mouffe, 2013: 132-133). This echoes Deleuze and Guattari’s (1994) recognition of ‘becoming democratic’⁵ and Lefebvre’s (2003) conception of democracy as a horizon that should be aimed for but never met.

Power, hegemony, boundaries, inequality

Pluralist accounts of democracy have traditionally been bound up with theories of power, particularly the behaviouralist accounts of Dahl (1957, 1958, 1961) and Polsby (1960). Mouffe’s (1999: 752-3) agonistic pluralism too, seeks to ‘acknowledge the dimension of power and antagonism and their ineradicable character’ in arguing that ‘if any power has been able to impose itself, it is because it has been recognized as legitimate in some quarters’. For Mouffe the ultimate expression of power in contemporary society is hegemony and the acknowledgement that ‘every social order is a contingent articulation of power relations that lacks an ultimate rational ground’ (Mouffe, 2013: 131). From such a position, the adoption of a rationalist approach can only

⁵ Although Deleuze and Guattari were likely advocating liberal democracy, rather than a more radical model.

ever reproduce inequalities of power. Agonistic pluralism falls back on Mouffe's post-Marxist development of hegemony (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) that argues that that social objectivity is constituted through power, that is, power is constitutive of social relations such that power does not 'take place' between two pre-constituted identities but constitutes the identities themselves (Mouffe, 1999: 753). As such, the idea that social actors might act in a deliberative manner in such a way as to facilitate truly emancipatory action is impossible since their identity is constructed by the very power relations they are trying to suppress. This echoes Bourdieu's (1991) dismissal of deliberative democracy and 'linguistic communism' as sites where hierarchies are reproduced, in particular the existence of experts and non-experts. This is due to language (as with identities) being a medium of power, not merely an instrument of it - and as such dialogue between speakers are expressions of the relations of power between them (Baiocchi, 2003). The dialogical model therefore (and democratic designs based on deliberation) is a consequence of an inability to acknowledge the hegemonic constitution of reality (Mouffe, 2005: 54). In contrast, agonistic pluralism subscribes to Laclau's (1996: 90) two central features of hegemony as:

... the "contingent" character of hegemonic articulations and their "constitutive" character, in the sense that they institute social relations in a primary sense, not depending on some a priori social rationality

Where power relations are constitutive of the social, the aim of the democratic process must be not to eliminate or suppress power relations, but to reformulate them so that they are compatible with democratic values (Mouffe, 1999). In Mouffe's (1999: 753) view, to acknowledge (uneven) power relations and undertake to change them whilst 'renouncing the illusion that we could free ourselves completely from power' is central to the radical and plural democratic project she is advocating. Any radical democratic project has to compete with institutional inertia, built up over time, and often cited as a source of stability, whilst in the UK this is compounded by an implicit conservatism that permeates political life. Increasingly these obstacles to radical thought are bound up with the success of neo-liberalism, and so it follows that an agonistic approach must be equipped with the ability to unseat 'the unchallenged hegemony of neoliberalism' (Mouffe, 2005: 31).

Mouffe (2005: 11) argues that the solution to the present impasse lies in part in the idea of collective identities, inherent in which is the concept of boundaries: both between us and them, but and also delineating a given participatory space. These boundaries may be constituted by structural effects (inequalities) of power, both unseen and enforced - as Cornwall (2002) has contended: spaces for

participation are not neutral but are themselves shaped by power relations which shape, surround and infiltrate them. Relations of power construct the boundaries of participatory spaces, as well as who is admissible and what is possible within them in terms of identities, interests and outcomes. Using the idea of boundary, Hayward (1998: 9) suggests that we might understand power 'as the network of social boundaries that delimit fields of possible action'; on the other hand, freedom constitutes the 'capacity to participate effectively in shaping the social limits that define what is possible'. This demonstrates the nature of power as constituting social reality but also names the powerful as those able to shape social limits. This understanding of power can be integrated with a pluralistic understanding of democracy; multiple parties are not competing over a finite amount of power, but competing to shape social relations in such a way that benefits them most. This has significant implications for an understanding of pluralism, since if multiple parties are not competing over a finite amount of power, that is, if power is not zero sum, then the question of how power relations play out within a pluralist system is crucial to uncovering perhaps the critical question of political sociology: who benefits from any given process? In relation to policy formulation, the question of boundaries is a political one - not only because it commonly requires political approval, but because it defines the spatial limits of 'people's felt sense of identity' (Stoker, 2004a: 125). This then feeds back into the idea of passions and collective identity: it is the political question of boundaries that either facilitates or forecloses the possibility for communities to establish a collective identity.

The agonistic model is sensitive to 'the multiplicity of voices that a pluralist society encompasses, and to the complexity of the power structure that this network of differences implies' (Mouffe, 1999: 757); thus what is at stake in an agonistic struggle is the very configuration of power relations around which society is structured (Mouffe, 2005: 21). This is crucial given that inequality of power is the 'mother of all inequality' (Bauman, 2011: 42). Social justice in a democracy requires an 'equalisation of life chances': this is not implying perfect equality, but 'a clear distinction between individual or personal differences between people in terms, for example, of intelligence and identity, and social differences derived from the structure and organisation of society' (Walker and Walker, 2011: 276). This distinction between the core diversity of society, and divisions based around social, economic or political inequality is a vital recognition in light of many forms of pluralism such as trade unions, guild socialism, the cooperative movement and workers' control which are all a staple of the Left's democratic heritage (Barker, 2011). In order to be described as pluralist an arrangement must possess diversity, but to be described as progressive a pluralist system must promote equality in

some feature of its life - no-one should be lulled into thinking that all 'pluralisms are progressive or benign' (Barker, 2011: 50). As such it is imperative to ask what sort of pluralism is being proposed: who is in control, who is being controlled and, ultimately, who is benefiting? Any given instance of pluralism should 'be judged on the extent to which it promotes greater equalities of status, power and human flourishing' (Barker, 2011: 54) - that is, relishing the richness of 'personal differences' whilst attempting to combat social differences derived from the society's structure and organisation.

Agonism and Participation

This section seeks to refocus the principles and aims of agonistic pluralism toward democratic participation at the micro and meso levels. Mouffe's (2005: 115) writings are orientated toward national and then international levels, that is, a macro level analysis -demonstrated by the discussion of a 'multipolar world'. In this section, the central principles of agonism (the need for collective identities, legitimate and adversarial conflict, and so on) are applied to the local level to produce a normative theoretical framework of agonistic participation. In line with localist principles, these pluralistic values are applied not only to nation states and intra-national institutions but extended to a polity made up of local government and public institutions, corporate interests, neighbourhood and community groups, and individual citizens. In order to develop this framework using Mouffe's theoretical insights, the concrete principles of participation proffered by Fung and Wright (2003) and later (Wright, 2010) under the title of empowered participatory governance (EPG) will be critically reviewed.

Through a discussion of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Fung and Wright (2003) have sought to extend lessons of democratic participation beyond the particular political and cultural situation of Southern Brazil. Using this and other case studies, the concept of EPG is developed outlining six principles concerning the institutional internal design of participatory initiatives: deliberation; bottom up participation; pragmatic orientation; (recombinant) decentralisation; state centred institutionalisation; and instrumental change. Fung and Wright (2003: 15) argue that in conventional governance situations public justifications are too often conducted ex post facto and behind locked doors. In place of this they propose a continual struggle (echoing Mouffe's emphasis on contingency) for visible democracy. Empowered participatory governance is not adopted wholesale here but instead used as a skeleton around which to build an agonistic form of participation. These six principles of EPG provide practical characteristics of participation that can

be adopted and reconfigured to add specificity and practicality to an agonistic form of participation, each will now be taken in turn and discussed in relation to agonistic pluralism.

Deliberation

The first of these core principles - deliberation - is the most controversial in light of Mouffe's overarching thesis. Building on the work of Habermas (1977; 1984; 1990; 1996), EPG places deliberation at the centre of its design - where a process of 'rational', open debate between reflective participants willing to adjust their opinions reach a consensus based on the 'better argument'. In the ideal deliberative situation new perspectives and understandings emerge. However through the development of agonistic pluralism Mouffe (1999: 745) has been a leading critic of Habermas' conception of rational, consensus-orientated approach, which she describes as 'most recent paradigm of liberal democratic theory'. Mouffe herself persistently underscores the incommensurability of the two approaches (Karppinen et al., 2008).

This mirrors a schism in the field of political sociology which divides itself between theories favouring either conflict or consensus. The deliberative/agonistic and consensus/conflict dualities are often seen as the starting point of two separate lines of argument with irreducible final positions. Some theorists maintain that the tensions between Habermas and Mouffe are irresolvable, but that such differences remain fruitful and educative (Kapoor, 2002; Karppinen et al., 2008; Gürsözlü, 2009). Others however have made attempts to question the immutable differences between the two (Markell, 1997; Brady, 2004; Martin, 2005; Knops, 2007; Bond, 2011). This framework takes the position that whilst the theoretical differences between deliberative and agonistic approaches are ultimately irresolvable, a practical marriage of both traditions is feasible and even desirable, in line with Barnes et al.'s (2007: 183) contention that productive engagement comes about between and across different theoretical traditions.

Deliberation has a place *within* a given collective identity at the micro and meso levels (say a neighbourhood or local community). However nation states or large geographic regions can never achieve the levels of familiarity and homogeneity that a deliberative system of governance requires (Chappell, 2012). Furthermore, as we have seen power does not operate between pre-existing or fixed identities but rather constitutes the identities themselves (Mouffe, 1999: 753) - therefore deliberation cannot be a means of radical political change on its own. Agonistic pluralism in

contrast, can be maintained between identities at the macro level, for example when dealing with traditional power holders such as the various arms of the state or corporate interests. The central drawback to the deliberative approach, as typified in EPG, is the reliance on ‘roughly balanced power’ (Fung and Wright, 2003: 23) - that is, people are much more likely to engage in deliberation if individuals cannot dominate others in order to secure their best preference. As seen in the discussion of Habermas’ ideal type, deliberative settings cannot sufficiently accommodate differing power relations and for that reason, deliberation between the powerful and the powerless is highly unlikely due to vastly unequal backgrounds and access to resources. The ability of citizens to participate are curtailed by many forms of pre-existing inequality predicated on class, social capital, prior experiences, socio-economic status, educational level and so on. That these are not adequately addressed by deliberative mechanisms hollows out the argument that consensus based deliberation can adequately address asymmetrical power relations.

Whilst acknowledging deliberative theorists’ desire to bring morality and justice into the political field (both agonistic and deliberative traditions share the same ethico-political principles), the present emphasis on consensus in the national polity, which deliberation requires, turns people away from politics and the democratic process. This is because people require a collective identity formed by a conflictual representation of the social world with which to identify. As contended by Hay (2007: 65-66), the attempt to draw public attention to ‘issues of contention relies on the capacity for things to be different’, thus underscoring the ‘importance of (political) choice’. Therefore it is appropriate to seek to replace ‘genuine’ consensus as an end goal, with a conflictual and temporary consensus. If we regard participatory initiatives as complex systems that function in between order and chaos, hierarchy and anarchy (Wagenaar, 2007) then such a conclusion is both more likely and more sustainable. This approach reflects Gaventa’s (2006; 2007a) recognition of the specific interplay of power within a given configuration of forms (visible, hidden, invisible), spaces (closed, invited, claimed), and levels (local, national and global). Deliberation, drawing on a form of largely visible communicative power, is feasible within a given space at the local level - however such an approach is impractical (probably impossible) even at the national level. In contrast, an agonistic participation potentially challenges all three forms of power, operating in any given space and at any level. Only a form of participation that recognises the immutability of passions at the ontological level of ‘the political’ can create radical and progressive politics. In short, an agonistic framework is necessary overall but this does not preclude deliberation at the local level - crucially, an agonistic

democratic system does not debar deliberative practices, but the system as a whole must be agonistic. This more nuanced understanding of how deliberative and agonistic approaches operate at different levels of society allows the framework to draw strength from both traditions.

Bottom up participation

The next principle of EPG is that citizens should have control over the decisions that effect their lives. This replicates the basic principle of localism that power over decisions should be devolved to the lowest appropriate level. As Wright (2010: 161 - emphasis in original) acknowledges, public participation in government is not a new principle, what EPG calls for is that participation is *empowered*; that is that participation is not merely 'expressive or symbolic'. Put another way, Wright (2010) is calling for participation on the upper rungs of Arnstein's (1969) ladder, rather than manipulative or therapeutic public involvement. Empowered participatory governance proposes significant changes to the structure of social institutions, suggesting a move to participatory systems of governance and away from the liberal democratic model and its 'capitalistic' composition (Fung and Wright, 2003; Wright, 2010). This position mirrors the *raison d'être* of the agonistic tradition by challenging the hegemonic articulations of the given social order (and alongside social democracy more widely) confronting the systemic problems of inequality and instability generated by capitalism (Mouffe, 2006: 60). Given Mouffe's (1999) contention that power does not occur between pre-constituted identities but instead constitutes the identities themselves, it is important for participatory spaces to acknowledge uneven power relations and seek to change them. Whilst citizens cannot free themselves completely from power relations (none of us can), legitimate participation in agonistic spaces can only be brought about through valorised collective identities - which in turn, is best achieved through 'bottom up' participation rather than proscribed from above.

This brings into view arguments about a transformation of citizenship, again moving from the neo-liberal conception of the citizen as consumer, to a civil society that is steeped in the principles and practices of participatory democracy (Pateman, 1970, 1985, 2012). This is also central to Mouffe's project - through establishing a contrast between the manufacture of consensus around the status quo, and the adversarial and conflictual struggles that are characteristic of 'the political', agonism is able to facilitate the generation of genuine political alternatives. In this way, fundamental changes to the structure of social institutions is desired by both EPG (through bottom up participation) and agonism (through the recognition of conflict).

Pragmatic orientation

Imperative to EPG is a practical orientation to participatory initiatives; that is, where citizens are called upon to make decisions about their locality, it should have an agreed output or goal, rather than purely abstract outcomes. Dealing with specific or identifiable issues ensures a focus to participation, and will encourage participants to sustain their efforts over time (in order to fulfil the stated goal) whilst individuals gain the skills required to operate within a democratic setting. The idea here is to allow parties to come to the political table with a common desire to achieve certain concrete and practical aims ‘even if they also have significant conflicts of interest’ (Wright, 2010: 161). This is commensurate with agonistic pluralism’s recognition of conflict in social relations, with the need to recognise the immutable nature of dissension whilst still pragmatically engaging with conflicting parties. As with bottom up participation, the pragmatic orientation of a concrete goal allows collective identities to develop over time. Indeed a focus to participatory spaces is more likely to attract communities of interest than more abstract decision making arenas, thus making collective identities both more likely and more resilient.

The practical orientation is a necessary focal point for participants: concrete goals provide a shared point of reference for participants and form the foundation for wider discussion of broader societal aims and the political identities these may represent. Both a practical orientation (often a technical problem to be resolved) and the wider discussion are necessary to develop an agonistic form of participation, otherwise a technocratic attitude could develop thus preventing challenges to the status quo (or hegemonic) interests. Wright (2010: 162) acknowledges that whilst a pragmatic orientation ‘may not result in a broad, general consensus, it can reduce the sharpness of antagonistic interests in ways that facilitate collaboration’. Wright’s reading of collaboration can be seen as analogous to Mouffe’s adversarial exchange - what an agonistic reading would add is the development of collective identities during this process of collaboration that would facilitate genuine pluralistic exchange. Wright (2010) contends that pragmatic solutions to real problems are possible despite conflict and inequalities, and this process of empowerment can, in the long run, set the stage for profound reconfigurations of power. The recognition within EPG as a process through which power can be reconfigured draws a parallel with agonism, since the aim of the later is the transformation of existing power relations to establish a new hegemony (Mouffe, 2005).

(Recombinant) decentralisation

Empowered participatory governance requires that participation by local units (neighbourhood forums or workplace councils for example) are imbued with real power such that they are charged with devising and implementing solutions to local problems and are held accountable for the performance of such solutions (Fung and Wright, 2003; Wright, 2010). Whilst this is a familiar if little seen idea, the concept of recombinant decentralisation is less well known. This refers to a specific understanding of the relationship between the central state and local units of decentralised power: basic decisions about means and ends are made at the local level (and it is here that accountability lies), the central authority has important roles to play in terms of linkages of accountability and communication, as well as co-ordinating and distributing resources. Clearly the latter is essential for combatting inequality, whilst it is important that local units do not participate in totally autonomous, isolated or atomised ways (Wright, 2010). Instead the central authority must support the problem-solving capacity of local units as well as holding them accountable for their actions.

One concrete example of how citizens aid this process through participation is the shortening of the feedback loop: here the distance between decisions, actions, effect, observation and reconfigurations is significantly reduced thus allowing for flexibility and responsiveness in decision making and service provision. Such methods can form ‘numerous component groups, each operating with substantial autonomy but not in isolation’ (Fung and Wright, 2003: 25). Thus EPG calls for ‘centrally coordinated’ participation that rejects both the extremes of democratic centralism and strict decentralisation as ‘unreasonable’ (Wright, 2010: 165). In a similar vein, designing and managing spaces for agonistic pluralism requires time, understanding, learning and resources - as well as continuities in all of the above. EPG’s principle of decentralisation to locally empowered, non-atomised units dovetails with the management of participatory spaces through which agonism can flourish. Critically, such institutional designs need to invest adequately in the above resources in order to allow time for collective identities to form and benefit from the linkages of accountability and communication provided by a strong central state.

State centred institutionalisation

Empowered participatory governance calls for the transformation of established institutions through the participation of the public. Unlike social movements and spontaneous activist efforts which seek

to influence state outcomes from the outside or work in parallel to state activities, EPG attempts to reform governance structures from the inside and thus seek to institutionalise the on-going participation of 'ordinary' citizens (Wright, 2010: 165). This aligns with agonistic pluralism's desire for pluralistic exchange between adversarial identities in such a way that the institutions themselves may be transformed and freed to combat inequality. Whiteley (2012: 3) has argued that British democracy is traditionally a top down affair with the emphasis being placed upon leadership rather than mass participation. This has led to a particularly staid political system that in many ways tied to the national identity. In such circumstances, change is difficult to evoke since institutions such as parliament and monarchy are often seen as 'off limits', whilst their permanence is commonly regarded as a source of strength. This, coupled with the widespread disillusionment with politics in Britain, is what makes progressive or radical democratic change such a daunting feat. The internal design of EPG initiatives as described above hopes to achieve incremental change to democratic structures from within - drawing on the legitimacy of the state and avoiding being dismissed as a protest movement.

An agonistic participation must adopt a similar approach if it is to gain traction as a vehicle for institutional change. Uninvited democratic spaces are often too easily dismissed as uncoordinated, radicalised or illegal - and this perceived lack of legitimacy may also undermine an agonistic form of participation. Without the endorsement of incumbent state institutions, a fully inclusive and legitimate space is unlikely to be achieved. Whilst any invited participatory space is inevitably structured by the authority in question, the agonistic recognition of passions in legitimate adversarial interchange inherently combats such structures and their implicit hegemonic articulations. Without such state sponsorship, attempts to engender agonism are likely to be dismissed as Punch and Judy politics, or the arbitrary promotion of conflict. Therefore if agonistic participation is to institute consequential change in democratic structures, it should be rooted in those same structures, drawing on the legitimacy and resources of the state in order to place citizens closer to decision making processes.

Instrumental change

In modern, pluralist societies, 'deep democratic advances could be carried out through immanent critique of existing institutions' (Mouffe, 2013: 133) - for this reason agonism can be seen as a 'radical' political theory. Fung and Wright (2003) suggest three reasons why their vision for

democracy is also radical and can be instrumental in bringing about change. First is EPG's ability to create effective problem solving: democratic experiments must achieve public ends (effective schools, safe neighbourhoods, sensible urban budget allocations) and if this occurs then they contain the potential to gain widespread public and possible elite support. Such experiments must convene and empower individuals 'close to points of action, who possess intimate knowledge about relevant situations' (Fung and Wright, 2003: 25). The argument being that that local citizens know how best to improve situations given their proximity to them.

The second instrumental benefit of EPG is equity. Experiments in EPG may contain an innate solution to forms of social justice since many of them are concentrated on the problems concerning poor and disadvantaged groups, any remedy necessarily involves some form of social justice. Fung and Wright (2003) also stress that EPG is to include the participation of such groups not just addressing their needs. The inclusion of marginalised groups is distinctly Freireian although the state-centric underpinnings are less so. The third benefit of EPG is its ability to foster broad and deep participation. As we have seen from Farrington et al.'s (1993) axes, the appropriateness of a given initiative's breadth and depth is of paramount importance. Fung and Wright (2003: 27) suggest that EPG is reliant on popular engagement as a central productive force, allowing 'channels of voice' to become established so that the issues of importance participants care deeply about are addressed. Implicitly this would suggest a breadth of opportunity to participate such that relevant social issues are addressed. The argument follows that these channels can also be a gateway into other forms of participation either formal or informal, but also that participation in this form offers a distinct inducement to participate in the form of the real prospect of exercising 'state' power.

Accepting the basic premises of agonistic pluralism, we must recalibrate and restructure participatory spaces to allow citizens to challenge how participation is structured. Since conflict cannot be ultimately rationally resolved, bounded or restrictive forms of participation prevent anti-hegemonic arguments from being heard. This aligns with the contention that adversaries in the we/they game are treated as legitimate - if participatory initiatives do not allow participants to challenge the means and spaces of that participation, then they are not being treated as legitimate since they are being excluded from the set of social design (Beck, 1994, 1997).

Conclusion

The chapter began by establishing the thesis' position in the field of political sociology, before creating a normative theoretical framework of agonistic participation at the micro and meso levels, building on Mouffe's (1999, 2005, 2007) model of agonistic pluralism and the Real Utopias project's empowered participatory governance (EPG) (Fung and Wright, 2003; Wright, 2010). The resultant framework of agonistic participation seeks to accommodate the play of passions, the creation of collective identities, and respectful conflict in a concrete model of public participation. This framework will inform the findings chapters below and act as a normative yardstick against which to assess contemporary state-led democratic spaces.

Despite beginning from different approaches to the role of deliberative methods, both agonism and EPG seek to reconfigure contemporary power relations in such a way as to challenge the hegemony of neo-liberal projects. The ability of agonism to reconfigure conflict into a legitimate and productive force furthers the EPG model which relies solely on deliberative methods. Concurrently the empirically grounded principles of EPG provide a concrete structure of 'doing participation' which in turn furthers agonism's theoretical insight. This pragmatic model seeks to achieve instrumental change without curtailing the ability of citizens to participate in ways that they see fit, achieving the 'mixed game' (Mouffe, 1999: 756) of consensus and conflict required by progressive models of pluralism. As such a theoretical framework of agonistic participation is presented, acting as a bridge between the traditions of conflict and consensus that has traditionally split the field political sociology. This framework will be used to examine current localist initiatives, where increased public participation is challenging the established state/civil society relationship. In line with the agonistic project, this framework positions itself in wider debates concerning radical democratic innovations and as such is an important prism through which to analyse contemporary policy and practice. This remainder of this thesis therefore will explore the nature of contemporary democratic participation and consider the potential for agonistic participation. The next chapter sets out how the research questions will be answered, through an account of the methods and methodology adopted by this research.

Chapter 6 Methods and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter sets out the methods and methodology employed in this research. This thesis adopts an interpretive policy analysis (IPA) methodology and uses qualitative methods to empirically investigate participation in Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). Interpretivism stems from the belief that to understand actions, practices and institutions it is first necessary to grasp ‘the relevant meanings, belief systems and preferences’ of social actors, and how they reach their understanding of the social world (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 1). Interpretive approaches remain relatively new in UK policy analysis (Sullivan, 2007), however the methodology is well suited to studies of localism as it emphasises the role of individual experiences in how we understand and interpret particular contexts, shedding light on why initiatives play out differently in different areas, as Yanow (2000: 4-5) explains:

To understand the consequences of a policy for the broad range of people it will affect requires “local knowledge” - the very mundane, expert understanding of and practical reasoning about local conditions derived from lived experience

Here, local knowledge is defined as a ‘kind of non-verbal knowing that evolves from seeing, interacting with someone (or some place or something) over time’ (Yanow, 2004: 12). The IPA methodology allows space for local knowledge in its explanations by remaining situation specific rather than adopting universal principles (Yanow, 2007). The use of case studies is therefore a particularly valuable method as they are grounded in lived experience and remain sensitive to the inherent variation and specificity of local settings - allowing participants to reconstruct their actions in relation to local context. This study is concerned with participants’ own subjective readings of participation since complexity and ambiguity about the meaning and impact of reform is felt keenly at the front line (Durose, 2009).

Primary data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with case study participants (Chapter 7) and nationwide participants (Chapter 8). In addition, direct observation during the in depth case study (Chapter 7) revealed the working culture of the community, how policy information was disseminated and understood, and how the practicalities of participation were framed by the local milieu. The primary purpose of the observation was to stimulate lines of inquiry for the subsequent interviews, ensuring that they were not ‘starting from scratch’. Researcher knowledge of

the NDP process was also employed to add breadth to the interview guide. The semi-structured interviews proved a productive tool in reconstructing participant experiences and exploring known issues as well as those which arose during the course of the interview. The chapter provides an account of the IPA approach, alongside an exploration of the philosophical foundations of interpretivism and agonism. This followed by a description of the fieldwork, data collection and analysis, and a justification of the methods employed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations of this research.

Interpretive Policy Analysis

Since the turn of the century, attempts to understand public policy have witnessed an ‘interpretivist turn’, with researchers seeking to understand how meaning is created and used by individuals to navigate the social world. This research adopts an interpretive policy analysis (IPA) methodology (Yanow 1996, 2000, 2004, 2007), which like all interpretivist positions indicates strategies which emphasise the ‘meanings and actions of actors according to their own subjective frame of reference’ (Williams, 2000: 210). Analysis therefore focuses on iterative meaning-making processes through emphasis on individual actors’ attitudes, values and interpretations (Yanow, 2007). In so doing, IPA seeks to move past the ‘contrasting rhetoric and reality’ approach that is commonly seen in social policy research, as Yanow (2000: 5-6) explains:

When policy language is examined, for example, a comparison is often made between the words of legislation and the projected or implemented actions in the field, under the assumption that policy words can and should have univocal, unambiguous meanings that can and should be channeled to and directly apperceived by implementors and policy-relevant publics

In place of this, IPA recognises that all social actors interpret the social world from their own subject-position, attempting to make sense of the policies on their own terms. Researchers should therefore view contrasts ‘as different ways of seeing, understanding, and doing, based on different prior experiences’ (Yanow, 2000: 8) rather than simply a failure in policy implementation. The philosophical presuppositions of IPA put human meaning and social realities at the centre of analysis (Yanow, 2007), often concentrating on tensions such as the researcher’s expectations (derived from prior experience, education and training) versus their actual experience (Yanow, 2000). These tensions often explain why a policy is unfolding differently in one area compared to another - an important consideration in localist initiatives where policies can be taken up by communities with

fundamentally different characteristics, motivations and resources. Internally consistent analytical traditions build from a set of ontological positions that inform epistemological possibilities, and in turn these lead to set of methodological commitments (Hay, 2002) - the philosophical assumptions of interpretivism are established below, incorporating the insights of Mouffe's (2005) agonistic pluralism.

Ontological and epistemological assumptions

Interpretivism's ontological position is predicated on an understanding of the inter-subjective character of meaning, and therefore the social origins of the beliefs that inform our actions (Hay, 2011). This is an ontology of shared meaning, collectively arrived at but individually mediated (Wingenbach, 2011: 7). This is to say, that for the individual, meaning is made in a dialectical process between themselves and their environment (Yanow, 2000): social realities are encountered via our interpretation, whilst our beliefs and meanings inform our actions within these realities. Interpretivists emphasize the 'embeddedness' of political subjects in 'traditions', understood as webs of meanings (Hay, 2011) - therefore as actors, we are immersed in inter-subjective traditions which act as a guide for the interpretation of the realities in which we find ourselves. These inter-subjective traditions provide us with meaning and ways of looking at the world (beliefs), they are open-ended (i.e. contingent) and evolve through the discovery and resolution of 'dilemmas' (Hay, 2011: 169). Beliefs are a central component of interpretivist analysis, but they should not be considered 'entities of which people have direct observations but rather entities people postulate to explain actions' (Bevir and Rhodes, 2012: 201) - as such beliefs and practices are indissolubly linked to one another. The individual therefore is in a constant dialogue with their environment as beliefs are discovered within inter-subjective traditions by actors who develop locally-contextualised knowledge through 'readings' of given situations (Durose, 2009).

Interpretivism largely draws on the philosophical traditions of hermeneutics and post-structuralism. The former contends that actors imbue the artefacts they create with meaning as they engage them (Yanow, 1996). During this engagement the underlying meaning of artefacts are 're-instantiated and maintained - or changed' (Yanow, 2007: 114) and their meanings are re-interpreted. Similarly, interpretivism emphasises questions of meaning, however it seeks to go beyond the textual realm and consider social and political realities more widely (Bevir, 1999; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003); it does so by re-casting and re-reading (literally) social and political practice as text (Hay, 2011). For

some, this leads to a focus on discursive formations, following Foucault (1980: 73-74) arguing that over-arching webs of belief (or discourses) shape identity and create forms of domination since the individual 'is not a pre-given entity' but rather 'the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces'. For interpretivists such as Bevir and Rhodes (2003), the term tradition is employed in place of discourse to denote the webs of belief that may influence individual belief (McAnulla, 2006).

The methodology adopted here uses discourse as an ontological category that enunciates the complex and contingent nature of social relations, but also explicates how subjects both identify with, and are captured by meaningful practices. This follows both Foucault (1991) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) in recognising that knowledge and power are fundamentally interconnected at the level of discourse(s) -a term deployed here in a manner analogous to Wittgenstein's (2001: 4) 'language game': a relational configuration of social actors, words, actions and objects, which are only intelligible within a particular context. Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 96) use discourses to denote articulatory practices that constitute and organise social relations, and this feeds into the desire to move past essentialism and the belief that the human subject or a society 'have fixed essences that exhaust *what* these entities are' (Howarth, 2010: 311 - emphasis in original).

There is a second dimension to the ontological position adopted in this methodology, that follows the work of Mouffe (1993, 2005). This advocates a radical and pluralist democracy that seeks to extend the values and ideals of equality, freedom and solidarity to 'ever-widening sites and sets of social relations' through the linking together of 'various demands, claims, identities, and interest' (Howarth, 2015: 130). Central to this is the 'undecidability' of the social world: any given social formation is an historical regime comprising social, cultural, economic and political elements whose shape is dependent on inclusion or exclusion of particular ways of thinking about the world. Mouffe (1993, 2005) developed an ontological dimension she refers to as 'the political', or the dimension of power, conflict and antagonism which is constitutive of human societies. A fundamental lack of understanding of the political is the 'origin of our current incapacity to think in a political way' (Mouffe, 2005: 9) where political questions always involve making a choice between conflicting alternatives (Mouffe, 2013). Order is constructed within the political through hegemonic practices, hence hegemony's central position within political analysis (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Hegemonic practices are predicated on the division of social space through the delineation of political boundaries which presuppose the construction of antagonistic relations between differently

positioned social actors made possible through the 'logics of equivalence and difference' (Howarth, 2010: 313). Antagonisms are constructed where the presence of an 'other' blocks the identity of a subject, and this necessitates the creation of political frontiers which act as boundaries in the creation of regimes (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 122-127). Crucially antagonisms also expose alternative ways of thinking and acting, thus exposing the ultimate undecidability, or 'lack of a final ground' of any given structure (Mouffe, 2009: 549; Laclau, 1990). The methodology adopted here therefore prioritises the role of discourse in the socially constructed nature of reality, but also the immanent contingency of this ontology.

Theorists that adopt a Foucauldian understanding of discourse have been criticised for appearing to grant no meaningful role for individuals to alter their webs of belief through creative reasoning (McAnulla, 2006). However despite the emphasis placed on hegemonic practices the understanding presented here sees agency as viable and even necessary, in particular where the undecidability which underpins the social order is made visible by events. This occurs where the subject's identity becomes vulnerable to the threat of its dissolution or negation, which occurs where discursive structures are disrupted (Laclau, 1996). When an actor takes up a subject-position within a discourse (i.e. through speaking or acting) they are reliant on the stable foundations of that discourse to provide a coherent narrative. However where the discursive structures fail to provide stable points from which to speak or act they open up the space for a more radical form of subjectivity in which social actors are free to identify with new possibilities (Howarth, 2010). These new possibilities are possible because discourses are constructions surrounded by a 'surplus of meaning' that escapes any given social order (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111-113) and as such are constantly being altered by social circumstances (Howarth, 2015). In the form of other (often competing) discourses, this surplus constantly subverts the existing order and plays the role of a 'constitutive outside' (Laclau, 1990: 16-18). Unlike the Marxist tradition, there are no social totalities which express an underlying essence - social formations are therefore 'open-textured' structures that are not reducible to any privileged point (such as the relations of production) (Howarth, 2015). This allows for a precarious unity between the various elements of a given discursive structure - organised by means of hegemonic practices - and bringing 'interpellated' subjects into being.

The surplus of meaning can provide instability in the open-textured structure of discourse, and this in turn opens up the possibility of actors identifying with new ways of understanding. In so doing, actors are able to construct new identities, and from collectives - both of which can be considered

acts of power. This explanation provides a different perspective on the structure/agency debate by problematising accounts that prioritise one or the other, but also contesting dualistic conceptions which are predicated on an external relationship between structures and agents. Howarth (2010: 314) argues that the dialectical interplay between identity and identification is important because it opens the prospect of freedom:

... it begins with a 'thrown' subject - a subject that is nothing but the practices and identities conferred by its culture or 'world' - where the split between subject and structure is covered over. However, if both the structure and subject are marked by a fundamental foreclosure - an impossibility which becomes evident in moments of disruption - then in certain conditions the subject is able to act in a strong sense: to identify with new objects and ideologies. This moment of identification is the moment of the radical subject, which discloses the subject as an agent in its world.

Social actors do not simply 'subscribe' to shared ways of understanding the world, they both identify with and are captured by meaningful practices, and as such discursive structures can be seen as a richer ontological category which captures the complex character of all social relations (Howarth, 2010). The identities of social actors within this understanding are not reducible to transcendental positions such as real interests (Lukes, 2005), but are unstable constructions that are constituted by political practices of inclusion and exclusion. As a consequence of this anti-essentialist conception of identity, we should see social and political identities as unfinished and therefore susceptible to change.

Actors 'socially construct their world, and it is through this construction - always precarious and incomplete - that they give to a thing *its being*' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987: 89 - emphasis in original). This is to say that claims to knowledge are socially constructed and therefore (inter-)subjective. In this way, methodological approaches employing discourse as an ontological category challenge positivist theories that assume a straightforward and unencumbered relationship between knowledge and reality (Hastings, 1998). Through the unmasking of inherent privileges in particular discourses and accounts of the social world, it is possible to reveal how actors are both constrained and enabled, and how things are can always be other. The precondition of contingency, alongside how those imbued with power can construct dominant narratives, means that this approach to analysis can be considered critical, despite its constructivist underpinnings. The goal of critical policy studies is to explain both why and how a given 'problem' has been understood, and why resultant policy positions have been adopted rather than others. This is significant given the theoretical concern of this thesis encapsulated in the third research question - only through a critical analysis of

contemporary forms of participation is it possible to see how agonistic forms of democratic practice might be brought about.

This ontological understanding informs epistemological assumptions. As Hay (2011: 169) explains, first amongst these is that the social world can be viewed differently dependent on the subject's vantage point (subject-position) and thus knowledge is both provisional and perspective-dependent. The importance of subject-position in interpretivism has significant ramifications, in particular it dictates that unmediated knowledge of social and political realities is impossible. Claims to knowledge are therefore social constructed *and* (inter-)subjective (Yanow, 1996) - with the qualification that whilst truth is a social construct, this does not preclude truths being 'accurate' representations. Actors' understandings (i.e. establishing beliefs and meanings which inform actions/practices) may explain all social and political phenomena, and interpretivist analysis therefore should seek to understand these beliefs and meanings, but also consider how they frame the actions, practices and institutions within which they appear (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 17). Such epistemological convictions suggest that the IPA approach seeks only to interpret actions, practices and beliefs - but as the following section explains the approach also seeks to explain them.

Explanations and normative theory

The explanatory power of interpretivism is understood by Bevir and Rhodes (2006: 20) as follows: 'to locate beliefs in webs of beliefs and to locate webs of beliefs against the background of traditions and dilemmas is to explain those beliefs and the actions and practices they inspire'. As Hay (2011) contends, this is close to the lay understanding of explanation: to provide a description of a given outcome through an understanding of how things came to be a certain way (rather than another). Hay (2011: 172) states that for interpretivists:

... the key to explanation is in fact understanding. To traditionally trained social scientists, brought up on the (Weberian) distinction (indeed, dichotomy) between causal explanation (*Erklären*) and interpretive understanding (*Verstehen*), this is likely to sound decidedly disconcerting. But the point is that if we disavow or reject the applicability of a covering law conception of (causal) explanation, then we are in a position to recast understanding as explanation

Interpretivist explanations are case specific, however whilst these explanations are not to be abstracted to a series of general properties that might form a law (as they might in the natural sciences), a circumspect form of generalisation is both possible and desirable (Williams, 2000).

Whilst appearing counter-intuitive, this is tenable due to discrepancies in what is meant by generalisations. Guba and Lincoln (1982: 238) claim that generalisations are ‘not possible since phenomena are neither time- nor context-free’ - but this understanding would rule out generalisations even in naturalistic enquiries. In place of this Williams (2000: 215) suggests ‘moderatum generalisations’, or the generalisations of everyday life, that is, not governed by the axiomatic laws of the ‘hard’ sciences. The basis for these generalisations is the ‘cultural consistency in the social world that makes social life possible’. Social orders are held together by a ‘communicative cement’ made up of ‘stocks of phrases, expression or languages themselves’ that allow the interpretivists to be able to understand participant beliefs and be able to ‘say something’ about them (Williams, 2000: 220). Whilst not axiomatic or statistical generalisations, moderatum generalisations are self-evidently moderate and allow the researcher to overcome the tyranny of absolutes in either nomothetic or ideographic approaches.

As we have seen, IPA seeks to reveal the constructed and contingent nature of policy decisions, and demonstrate how things could always be other. One way in which this is achieved is through the use of normative theory - the application of an ideal or prospective model against which ‘reality’ can be assessed. Whilst this is an important tool in critical policy analysis’ arsenal: due to the primacy afforded to radical contingency in our social ontology, it is necessary ‘concede a lexical priority to the ethical vis-à-vis the normative’ (Howarth, 2010: 328). Since any normative statement is ultimately contingent, the ideals we employ to assess objects of research are themselves intrinsically contestable and mutable. That is, the fundamental undecidability of the social world also extends to realm of normativity. For Howarth (2010) this means we must develop a suitable ethos for conducting research, for which he turns to Connolly’s (1995) ‘ontopolitical interpretation’. The task of ontopolitical interpretation is to reactivate the policy options that were foreclosed during the nascent stages of policy development, revealing the clashes that were either defeated or dismissed in order to demonstrate how social practices rely on the exclusion of competing explanations and thus ultimately exposing the contingent or ‘non-necessary’ character of a given social order. Such explanations may then be evaluated by researchers who test available explanations. This may involve a back and forth between hypotheses and empirical data until an explanation is produced that is accepted as explaining the given phenomena. Such ‘acceptance’ of an explanation does not guarantee its validity - however such dialogical practices are crucial in determining what counts a ‘candidate for truth’ (Howarth, 2010). When such a critical community is combined with

practitioners and policy makers, who may choose to act and reflect on the insights and explanations offered by research, then a form of critical policy studies is made possible - one that is both interpretative, explanatory and capable of normativity: constituting 'a specific genre of critique or critical attitude toward ways of being governed in the present - an attitude of testing and possible transformation' (Tully, 2002: 534).

The philosophical foundations of interpretivism leads to a methodology that seeks to capture the meaning actors attribute to their actions and practices. This concentration on beliefs and meanings generally imparts a preference for qualitative methods, as have been adopted in this study. The researcher is not exempt from the social reality he or she is analysing, and they are not outside the (inter-)subjective tradition that provides meaning to both themselves and the participants. Thus the 'positionality' of the researcher relative to social situations and other actors must remain 'a matter of analytic concern with respect to the possible way(s) the researcher-analyst is herself shaping and being shaped by the people, settings, and/or events that she encounters' (Yanow, 2007: 111). As a result, data collection has been regarded as data generation rather than excavation, working with participants to explore how they understand and articulate their roles.

Fieldwork and Methods

The fieldwork lasted 16 months, beginning in December 2013 and concluding in March 2015. An in depth case study was undertaken to observe and reconstruct participant experiences of participation in a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), using direct observation to construct the case and semi-structured interviews as a data collection method (Chapter 7). A secondary dataset and follow up interviews with nationwide participants from the same study were also analysed (Chapter 8). The empirical data therefore comprises three parts:

1. An in depth case study of a neighbourhood planning forum with data drawn from nine semi-structured interviews ('the Fairholme case study');
2. Selected qualitative data from a secondary dataset of 120 structured interviews with NDP participants ('the Locality dataset');
3. Follow up semi-structured interviews conducted with nine participants nationwide ('the follow up interviews').

This section recounts the conditions of the fieldwork including the choice of research sites, the data analysed in the course of the research and the data collection methods. The fieldwork was preceded

by an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) internship undertaken by the researcher at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) between June and September 2013. I applied for a position in the Decentralisation and Big Society Analysis⁶ team due to the proximity of the localism agenda to my initial research proposal. My principal roles centred on researching Community Rights (Community Rights to Bid, Build and Challenge, Community Asset Transfer) and neighbourhood planning (Neighbourhood Development Orders and Neighbourhood Development Plans). During this time I was involved in researching eight Frontrunner communities⁷ undertaking NDPs, involving over 40 participants across eight case studies. The time spent at DCLG provided a useful insight into how the localism agenda was progressing, and how it was both viewed and managed from inside central government. During this time it became apparent that NDPs would provide an appropriate, timely (similar participatory initiatives such as Our Place were yet to be fully implemented) and revealing case study of state-led participatory spaces. Neighbourhood planning constitutes the best example of decentralisation - one of the original Big Society triumvirate, completed by increased social action and opening up public services (Cabinet Office, 2010). Given that the social action strand (in the form of volunteerism and philanthropy) is at best limited (Daly, 2011), and the opening up of public services has been widely perceived as strengthening the market over society, leading to a retrenchment of the welfare state (Corbett and Walker, 2012; 2013) - it may be contended that the localism agenda contains the last vestiges of the Big Society project.

Immediately following this internship, I was part of a team of three academics commissioned by Locality⁸ to research neighbourhood planning as part of a DCLG policy review. At this time DCLG wanted to review the policy in order to ascertain what stakeholders and government might do to improve and potentially streamline the process. The project was directed by a steering group (including selected academics and civil servants), however the research team were responsible for developing the structured interview guide, conducting the structured-interviews and focus groups, analysing the data and writing the report. Undertaken in mid-2014, the resultant project involved six

⁶ DABS has since been renamed Integration and Community Rights Analysis.

⁷ A group of (originally) 17 communities selected to trial run NDPs and NDOs in advance of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (this included a £20,000 budget to managed by the corresponding LA to facilitate the process).

⁸ A nationwide network of development trusts, community enterprises, settlements and social action centres. Locality won the initial contract from DCLG to deliver the neighbourhood planning policy.

thematic focus groups with participants, and 120 structured interviews⁹ with key community figures in NDP groups nationwide. These data were used to construct a comprehensive policy report (Parker et al., 2014). The raw qualitative data from this report has been analysed in this thesis (referred to as the Locality dataset).

Secondary data: Locality dataset

The interviews conducted for the Locality policy report were administered as part of the discreet research project relayed above. Whilst I was involved in the project from research design to data collection and analysis, this data is treated as secondary as the original research was not designed to answer the research questions of this study. The nationwide analysis chapter that follows (Chapter 8) draws on the raw data of 120 structured interviews (each lasting approximately 1 hour) conducted with neighbourhood planning participants, but excludes the focus groups data as this was not available in its raw form.

In the original study, a sampling strategy was devised to maximise the quality and representativeness of participants, although the sample should not be considered wholly representative. An appropriate split between Neighbourhood Forums (n=50) and Parish Councils (n=70) was achieved as well as between urban areas (n=70) and rural areas (n=50). A geographic spread was also achieved across the nine regions of England, with weighting towards regions with higher uptake¹⁰. The average population of neighbourhoods varied widely across the sample and a good spread was achieved: the majority of all areas surveyed had populations below 10,000 (68%) and only eight had a population of over 20,000. The sample contained communities from all stages of the neighbourhood planning process beyond the initial application process. Of the sample, 60% per cent had reached pre-submission consultation stage (stage 3 of 7 in the NDP process, see Chapter 7 below for a full explanation) and beyond. This gave a slight weighting to communities that could be categorised as advanced, a choice that was made to ensure that participants had sufficient experience of the process to contribute to the study. The overall population of ‘designated’ neighbourhood planning groups at the time of the research was 737, meaning the sample represented 16.3% of the total population.

⁹ These were conducted by telephone - I conducted 60 of these, with the remaining 60 conducted by the other research assistant.

¹⁰ The interviewees were drawn from: North East (4), North West (12), Yorkshire and Humberside (4), West Midlands (10), East Midlands (10), East (5), London (21), South East (34), South West (20).

Graphical representations of the sample and the full methodology of the Locality project can be found in Parker et al. (2014: 10-16).

A significant number of the questions contained in the interview guide had pragmatic policy-orientated aims, since the policy review sought to improve and streamline the policy in the short term. For this reason the quantitative responses are not reanalysed below - only data collected from 43 qualitative, 'open' questions are incorporated. This allowed the richer and more in depth responses to be drawn upon. Significantly, the majority of pertinent data came from the broadest questions such as: 'What additional comments, if any, do you have you about engaging in neighbourhood planning?'. A full copy of the structured interview is available in the report (Parker et al., 2014: 109-116). The Locality report was a significant undertaking and provided access to a large range of participants and likely represented a better response rate than could have been achieved by an individual researcher¹¹. As the research was commissioned by the sponsoring government department, participants were keen to express their views with the hope that it would influence future policy. A common drawback of secondary data is the lack of control over data quality, however due to being involved throughout the project and undertaking quality control on the dataset, the data can be employed with a high degree of confidence. Where participant responses from this secondary dataset are quoted below they are denoted by the letter 'L' followed by a participant number, e.g. (L.45).

Primary data: An in depth case study of participation in a neighbourhood development plan

Initially two case studies were chosen to provide the empirical core of this thesis. The ambiguity of experiences on the frontline mean that both participant and researcher understanding can only meaningfully crystallise over the medium to long term. For this reason, the case studies were planned to be undertaken over the course of a year. Case studies are an appropriate method for researching localist initiatives due to their depth and relevance to lived experiences - and 'can "close in" on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice' (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 235). Buser (2013: 16) has noted that case studies are 'particularly valuable in order to consider specific local government responses to localism and engagement within prevailing concepts of democratic renewal', not least due to the inherent specificities of local history

¹¹ In total, 174 communities were approached to take part in the Locality study over a two week period, resulting in a 69% response rate.

and context in policy implementation. It is hoped that lessons from these case studies can ‘inform subsequent guidance, contribute to discussions regarding resource and capacity and provide new insights regarding the quality of engagement and political processes put forward’ (Buser, 2013: 16).

Two communities were purposively chosen based on practical issues such as access and availability, but also on the basis of information-oriented selection (Flyvbjerg, 2006) in order to maximise the utility of the data (see below). In December 2013, the average plan was taking two years from designation (official recognition by the LA) to passing community referendum. I anticipated being in the field for approximately a year, since I felt that this was a sufficient period of time to allow for adequate grounding in the process. The choice of communities was therefore narrowed by concentrating on groups in the relatively early stages of the process, whose understanding of the policy would develop and deepen over the course of the fieldwork.

Drawing on Quinn-Patton’s (2002) purposeful sampling technique the intention was to select two cases offering different forms of anticipated information: the first was to be a ‘typical case’ (Quinn-Patton, 2002: 236) where a qualitative profile of an ‘average-like’ community might be presented. A rural, affluent Parish was therefore sought, as these were the typical characteristics of early adopters of neighbourhood planning (DEFRA, 2013). The second community was to be an ‘extreme or deviant case’ (Quinn-Patton, 2002: 230-234) which would hopefully illustrate how participants were interpreting the neighbourhood planning regulations in a way that was significantly differentiated from those of DCLG. Due to the time I wanted to spend within the communities the case studies were required to be within commutable distance. At that time, four such communities had submitted an NDP applications; I approached three communities by telephoning the lead contact and I was able to attend a public meeting for a fourth community where I made myself known to the group’s chair. In the event this led to knowledge of a fifth community looking to submit an application in the coming months. Three of these initial five potential case studies were subsequently ruled out: one community had withdrawn from the process; another halted progress on the plan due to complications dealing with their LA; and in the third community, the two individuals leading the process could not commit to a suitable timeframe that aligned with the fieldwork. Consequently the two remaining case studies were chosen. The two communities also appeared to complement each other well - one a rural, parished community under pressure to secure housing development, and the other an urban neighbourhood with no proposed development.

During the fieldwork it became apparent that rural case study would not provide data that would allow a full exploration of the research questions. This was due to the NDP being developed by an external planning consultant, meaning that engaging with the community (e.g. organising consultations events, consolidating and translating community views, developing and writing planning policies and producing a planning document) was being undertaken by professionals, essentially behind closed doors. In this instance the Parish Council was acting in an advisory capacity with relatively little detailed knowledge of, or input into, the policy process; as such participation in the NDP was limited and heavily depoliticised (an interesting finding in of itself). Whilst this is not unusual - many communities have adopted a similar approach for reasons such as lack of expertise or capacity, or wanting to 'detoxify' the process by bringing in outside professional services - it meant that the community members I was in contact with were not fully cognisant of the intricacies of the policy, nor involved in deliberations with the community or other parties. In addition, it became apparent that amount of time and utility I could provide the community appeared limited since they did not require extra expertise or capacity (in the form of advice, contacts, evidence collection, administration and so on) due to the arrangement with the external consultants. I offered to produce a plain English report for the Parish Council about my research findings - a form of constructive criticism or advice from a 'critical friend' that might be used to facilitate positive changes (Clark, 2011: 493), however this was not deemed necessary by the participants. When it became apparent that the research would be ostensibly a one way activity (the researcher collecting data from and about the community, but providing nothing in return), the case study failed to meet a reasonable expectation that participants too might benefit from the research process (Clark, 2011). In contrast, the steering group of the urban case study found multiple uses for my time, including general advice, designing and conducting questionnaires, aiding with digital content, collecting evidence, attendance at local consultation events, writing policy reports, collating, analysing and presenting demographic data, and attending meetings and workshops with the LA and DCLG. This was seen as a *quid pro quo* for my continued research in the community. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was set up between the researcher and the group's Chair (acting as gatekeeper) to manage this relationship.

As only one case study was conducted, I was able to spend a greater amount of time in the community and this undoubtedly led to a greater depth of understanding during the data collection that followed. The case study is based on 16 months working alongside the community, amounting

to approximately 60 hours of contact time beginning at the group's first AGM in December 2013. When attending events in the community, I almost always assumed the role of student, taking on the mantle 'acceptable incompetent' (as opposed to expert, sociologist, researcher or academic) to ensure that participants were not deterred by my presence (Lofland et al., 2006: 4), or indeed, suspicious of my motives. The fieldwork included the roles explained above as well as attendance at AGMs, steering group meetings, and one-on-one meetings with the core members of the steering group. Due to the high level of my involvement, the role was closer to participant than observer on the majority of occasions.

Towards the end of the fieldwork period, nine interviews were conducted with community members, including the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, a representative of a pre-existing community group, a local Ward Councillor and the Students' Union representative. Whilst membership of the co-ordinating group shifted over the course of the fieldwork, the predominance of core members were interviewed. Two members were approached but not interviewed: one member who left the group during the course of the fieldwork was willing to speak informally about the process but declined to be formally interviewed. A further member of the co-ordinating group agreed to be interviewed in person on multiple occasions but ceased contact when a date was being set for interview.

The research questions call for participants' views of the NDP process and so only private citizens were interviewed (although one participant was acting in a professional capacity for another community's NDP). During the fieldwork I approached two individuals acting in a professional capacity for interviews to help provide context to the case study, one from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and one from the local University's Estates team. In the event, neither was interviewed. A planning officer from the LPA to whom I had spoken informally was approached twice to be interviewed but declined, stating: 'we have had several approaches from students researching [neighbourhood planning] so it would seem unfair [to be interviewed] when we have turned others away' (Personal Correspondence, 17/3/14). A second inquiry one year later elicited the following response: 'Very sorry but we are all very busy with Local Plan work at present' (Personal Correspondence, 11/3/15). The representative from the University did not reply to an email invitation to interview.

In sum, nine interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide informed directly by the emergent themes discovered during time in the field. Interviews were conducted face-to-face (with two exceptions where circumstances made telephone interviews necessary) and lasted between 49 to 80 minutes, averaging 56 minutes. This provided a rich dataset articulating both participants' experiences and a wealth of information about the community including declining church attendance, the history of local activism, loss of local shops, increases in traffic and the colour of local buses, saving the local library, changes in the student experience, and which pubs to avoid. As all core members of the group were interviewed, an holistic account of the NDP process was garnered with both tensions and points of particular agreement drawn out. Both the neighbourhood and participants of this case study have been anonymised in order not to jeopardise the democratic process of producing the NDP (such as publishing information that might be used when campaigning at the community referendum).

In mid-2014, when it became clear that the rural case study would not help answer the research questions, the decision was taken to supplement the remaining case study with follow up interviews with participants from the Locality policy review. Fortuitously, it became apparent during the course of the subsequent data analysis, that the specificity of case studies meant that the two original cases would most likely not have been able to properly account for the rich variation in communities producing NDPs. The follow up interviews provided an opportunity to remain attentive to specificity of local communities and their experiences.

Primary data: follow up interviews

The Locality project provided a pool of 120 potential interviewees. As I personally interviewed 60 participants it seemed reasonable to narrow the selection to those with whom I had established relationships. The prior knowledge I had of the communities in question was supplemented with a period of desktop research of twenty cases selected from the Locality dataset, split evenly between Parished and non-Parished areas. As before, the participants were selected using information-oriented selection, seeking to maximise useful data. Bearing in mind Ragin's (1992) contention that the 'generalisability' can be increased by the strategic selection of cases, 'outliers' were omitted - that is, cases that demonstrated extraordinary characteristics¹². One exception was made in this

¹² For example, one community was awarded over £150,000 by their LA, as this was clearly beyond an ordinary or expected level of funding, the case was not considered.

regard where an NDP had broken down in some acrimony; such cases are underrepresented in emerging research and it was felt that the experiences of this community would reveal some of the tensions central to NDPs, as Flyvbjerg (2006: 229) describes:

Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied. In addition, from both an understanding-oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur.

Several other communities were not considered for selection as they had already been the subject of multiple academic studies. A further semi-structured interview guide was developed for the nationwide interviews. Individual adjustments were made to the guide dependent on previous information regarding the circumstances and progression of the participant's NDP. In the event nine follow up interviews were undertaken (four Parished and five non-Parished communities), one prospective participant was unable to commit to an interview due to illness. An initial consideration of data in February 2015 revealed an 'emergence of regularities' during an early coding process, at which point I resolved that 'data saturation' had been achieved (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Seven of nationwide interviews were conducted over the telephone and two face-to-face, each lasting between 39 and 70 minutes, averaging 57 minutes. As before, interviews were seen as meaning-making occasions and a site of data generation not excavation (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Roulston et al., 2003). This approach also recognises the need to encourage and develop ways of working with rather than on participants (Sinha and Back, 2013). The foremost concern throughout the data collection was to increase the chances of credible findings. To help achieve this, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) proposed techniques of prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation have been employed. The significant length of time spent engaged in the field has allowed initial assumptions and expectations (of the researcher, participants and other interested actors) to be tested against the emerging data. During this time, observation has ensured the relevance and granularity of the data collected by focusing in detail on the most pertinent recurring issues. The three forms of data collected (the case study, the secondary dataset and the nationwide interviews) provide both depth and breadth to the findings and allow for a form of triangulation - understood here as providing credibility to conclusions drawn from multiple sources of data (Tracy, 2010). The concept of triangulation is employed cautiously given the realist foundations of the term that assume a single, knowable reality - rather than the contested and ultimately constructed social

reality assumed by interpretive approaches. Nonetheless findings may be judged ‘more valid’ when different and contrasting methods of data collection yield identical findings: ‘a case of replication within the same setting’ (Bloor, 2001: 384). Furthermore, drawing on multiple sources of data encourages a reflexive approach during data collection and analysis, highlighting disparities between datasets and foregrounding commonalities.

A note on interviews

As the primary source of data in this thesis, it is necessary to briefly reflect on the nature of interviews and the data they produce. Hammersley (2003: 120) identifies four ways in which interview data is used by researchers. First, as a source of witness account of the social world, supplying information about interviewees' biographies, events they have observed and so on. Second, as a source of self-analysis where interviewees are asked to reflect on their behaviour and attitudes, with their interpretations used as components of explanations for their actions. Third, as an indirect source of evidence about informants' attitudes or perspectives, with the analyst using what they say as evidence for drawing inferences about their intentions. Fourth, as a source of evidence about the constructional work done by the interviewee and interviewer by which data are produced - with the interview viewed as an ‘interactional site for various sorts of discursive practice, which may or may not be assumed to operate elsewhere’ (Hammersley, 2003: 120). In the first two approaches interviews are a source of information, ‘in the sense that the informant operates as surrogate researcher’, whereas in the third and fourth approaches ‘interviews are as a source of observational data for interpretation by the researcher’ (Hammersley, 2003: 121).

In practice, elements of all approaches are usually employed by social researchers. For example, interviewees will most likely need to supply information about events and their biographies as well as more abstracted analyses of events. The ‘meaning-making’ approach adopted here accepts that interpretation occurs by the interviewee before the interview, by both interviewee and interviewer during the exchange and by the interviewer afterwards during data analysis. Most importantly, this approach is a pragmatic one, emphasising the fourth option but recognising elements of all four. Interviews have therefore been identified as ‘a collaborative enterprise ... an exchange between two parties’ (Pezalla et al., 2012: 166); this sees interviews as ‘reality-constructing’ and ‘meaning-making’ occasions (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 4) and therefore a site of data generation not excavation (Roulston et al., 2003). This is a pragmatic position that recognises that interviews are a

firsthand witness account of the social world, a form of interviewee self-analysis, and a stand alone discursive practice to be analysed. This allows for events to be (re)constructed during the interview for the purposes of a case study for example, but also combats the criticism of interviews as an inevitably artificial setting, emphasising actors' interpretation of events, stressing the meanings and actions of participants according to their own frame of reference (Williams, 2000). This is vital since participants' understanding of social reality is ultimately the foundation that shapes how they will react and interact with the social world outside of the interview setting.

This approach seeks to combat 'the radical critique of interviews' (see Murphy et al., 1998: 120-123) that criticises the use of interview data as a window on the world of participants. This identifies the 'romantic impulse' to treat the method as capturing the 'genuine voices' of interviewees, rather than 'a methodically constructed social product that emerges from its reflexive communicative practices' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 11). A conscious attempt was made throughout this study to go further than a genuflection towards 'postmodernist constructionism', and avoid an approach that employs data in 'a manner that suggests direct realism' (Hammersley, 2003: 124). This is central to the interpretivist approach, and a recognition that the 'realist paradigm cannot sufficiently embrace the significance of contested meanings amongst multiple actors within such complex initiatives' (Barnes, Matka et al., 2003: 274). However there are limitations to the application of this approach as set out below. Interview data is naturally highly specific to local context (see the discussion of generalisation above) and particular care was taken during the interviews to explore issues that were of interest to the participant, rather than solely following the researcher's line of interest. Furthermore, in order to discover how individuals have arrived at certain attitudes and adopted certain values (Yanow, 2007), it is necessary to recount their experiences of events and provide an account of those events. Consequently, in Chapter 7 participant experiences and accounts or 'real life' events have been woven into a narrative that is constitutive of the case study. As we have seen case studies benefit from being able to 'close in' on real-life situations (Flyvbjerg, 2006), yet this focus does not undermine an interpretivist approach but rather is central to operation, as it is the relationship between the perceived social reality and participants' interpretations that are in question. For the analysis to remain firmly situated in 'the social realities - the lived experiences - of policy-relevant publics' (Yanow, 2007: 118) the case study must address both the specific/concrete and general/abstract dualities - as per Flyvbjerg's (2006: 237) account of another planning initiative:

I wanted the Aalborg case study to be particularly dense because I wished to test the thesis that the most interesting phenomena in politics and planning, and those of most general import, would be found in the most minute and most concrete of details. Or to put the matter differently, I wanted to see whether the dualisms general-specific and abstract-concrete would metamorphose and vanish if I went into sufficiently deep detail.

Therefore despite its focus on participants' perspectives, the IPA approach still provides an account of the policy including at times the 'most concrete of details'. This should not be construed as ethnographic realism but an attempt to set the scene, establish the participants' perspective and to consider the relationship between events and interpretations. This is consistent with the ontological position predicated on an understanding of the subjective character of meaning - that is, shared meaning, collectively arrived at but individually mediated (Wingenbach, 2011). This does not deny the existence of objects external to thought, but does deny that objects 'could constitute themselves ... outside any discursive conditions of emergence' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 70). This leads to a discussion of direct observations and their use: observations were used primarily to inform the interview guides and to ensure the researcher's first-hand knowledge of the policy - rather than to provide primary data. Therefore descriptions of participation rely principally on 'the accounts or texts of participants' (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 63) rather than direct observation. In the event, the technical nature of participation in the case study precluded extended periods of overtly political behaviour (such as micro-process of deliberation) where direct observation would have been particularly useful. The decision to use interview data was taken in part due to the limited in depth or reflexive discussion of participation noted during the fieldwork. Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter 7 (see subsection 'Participatory planning in context: discourses of participation'), the rhetoric surrounding post-2010 localism has been saturated by a market-based liberalism (with associated concepts of individual choice, freedom from state control, and the primacy of economic growth) in ways that have precluded developed discourses of participation that participants may otherwise have drawn upon and been shaped by - with the consequence that participant interviews were heavily event focused.

Overall therefore, whilst the methodological approach has been interpretive - seeking to understanding how local interpretations and contexts, as well as personal experiences have shaped participation - there has also been a need to present the findings as reported by participants. This has been a conscious balance between analysis of the local context and imparting wider messages about the policy that might increase the utility of the data for policy audiences. The data in this project

therefore have both strengths and limitations. One limitation is recounted above concerning the nature of the interview data, a second is that only one in depth case study was undertaken (for reasons stated in the previous section). Without falling for the misconception that one cannot generalise from a single case (Flyvbjerg, 2006), the findings of this case were extended and strengthened through an analysis of both secondary data and national follow up interviews. This ensured that undue weight is not afforded to a single case study, and that theoretical contribution (Chapter 9) is predicated on a range of data: the case study provides insight into the intricacies and nuance of participation in one community; the secondary dataset provides breadth and generalisability (the Locality data drew on 10% of participating communities at the time of the research); and the follow up interviews provide a temporality to the data, revisiting the experiences of participants from the secondary data set, and providing reassurance over the emerging concepts and processes. This embraces Flyvbjerg's (2006: 241) deceptively simple declaration that the 'advantage of large samples is breadth, whereas their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse. Both approaches are necessary for a sound development of social science'. The following section recounts how data were analysed and employed in this study.

Data analysis

In sum, 120 interviews from the secondary dataset were analysed, alongside 18 semi-structured interviews. Fieldnotes were taken throughout the fieldwork, resulting in a compendium of observation referring to community meetings and events, one-on-one meetings with participants, correspondence with other researchers and practitioners, and meetings with civil servants. The fieldnotes were used in the production of the interview guides by reviewing the notes prior to the interview stage, paying particular attention to topics likely to arise in each interview. This involved grouping key issues thematically with a series of sub-categories within each theme: this produced a large range of topics - too many to be explored fully. Understandably, a large number of issues arose pertaining to the wider planning system and whilst these provided useful context, I was conscious that the thematic topics should concentrate on democratic participation wherever possible. At the beginning of each interview it was reiterated to the interviewee that participation was the core topic of the research.

Data analysis ultimately comes down to the process of making sense of the data (Merriam, 1988). This process began through transcription, a time consuming task but one that creates a familiarity

with the data and allows for an initial process of coding and note making to be undertaken. The notes created were brief explanatory paragraphs relating to participant quotations, in line with Wolcott's (1990: 21 - emphasis in original) contention that 'writing *is* thinking', with many of these notes being refashioned and incorporated into the final analysis. In line with the IPA approach, the coding process paid particular attention to both participants' understanding of meaning and how they interpreted actions (both their own and those of other key actors) in accordance with their own subjective frame of reference. When the transcription and initial coding phase was completed, a more focused coding process was adopted: moving from more open ended interpretations of the data resulting in emerging themes, to more definitive thematic categories (Lofland et al., 2006). This was performed manually through electronic copying and pasting of quotations and notes into a spreadsheet where they could be more easily manipulated¹³. The manual approach allowed greater flexibility in reviewing the data, enabling themes and categories to be linked by configuring the data in different ways and allowing for quotations and notes to be easily moved between categories, and categories between themes.

Codes were broadly separated into two categories: topics and processes. The former referred to the actors involved (e.g. LA, consultant, excluded group, existing community group, students) or key concepts (e.g. local knowledge, democratic education, time); and the latter to the processes taking place (e.g. confrontation, motivation, instrumentality, modulation). The iterative process of arranging quotations and notes, consulting fieldwork notes and mapping themes allowed for an analytical process that linked everyday observations and interpretations to a wider and more abstract understanding of the data. The thematic groupings were not mutually exclusive, with each quotation able to have multiple codes. The data could then be organised by a particular code or cross-tabulated to see if there was a connection between any given topic or process. Each overarching theme was then written up in draft form, eventually forming the structure of the findings chapters. Issues were therefore dealt with thematically during the analysis phase, rather than chronologically in the case study, or by community characteristic in the nationwide data. Questions do remain regarding how different types of communities undertake participatory initiatives (including variations in levels of deprivation, population size and density, physical geography, development pressure to name a few), however the focus on participation meant that a thematic approach was best suited to analyse shared

¹³ More sophisticated coding software was not used due to a personal preference for formatting data in spreadsheet form and to prevent 'over-coding' (previous experience of qualitative software programmes had resulted in quotations and notes being labelled with so many codes that they lost relevance).

phenomena across participant experiences. Nonetheless care was taken throughout to ensure that both context and the unique characteristics of participants' experiences were not dismissed in an attempt to establish patterns in the data. This is important given that social actors 'read' particular situations based on the surrounding context, and to excoriate this would fundamentally undermine the explanatory power of interpretive research.

Ethical Considerations

This project has adhered to a carefully considered set of ethical principles during both the design and conduct of this research. Ethical guidelines provided by the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) and The University of Sheffield (2002) were used as central reference points. Every effort was made to ensure no harm came to any participant and all participants had the right to withdraw at any time. In order to ensure that all participants were fully aware of the potential impacts of their involvement, participation operated on the principle of informed consent which was achieved prior to conducting each interview. Participants received an information sheet setting out the details of the research and what participation would entail. This explained: the rationale for the research; research aims and outputs; the voluntary nature of participation (including the rights to refuse to answer any given question, terminate the interview, or withdraw totally from participation without reason); how anonymity would be secured; how data would be kept and (confidentially) employed; and finally that the interviewee could review a copy of the interview transcript and final output if desired (two participants took up this opportunity to review the interview transcript, neither instance resulted in alterations). The information sheet was sent to every participant in advance of the interview and in the case of face-to-face interviews, a physical copy of the information sheet was available. For interviews conducted over the telephone, the researcher confirmed that the participant had received and understood the information sheet. In all cases participants were encouraged to ask questions and to query any aspect of the research which caused concern. Whilst this process was necessary to ensure that no harm came to the research participants, some commentators have problematised the notion of informed consent (Plankey-Videla, 2012). This is based on the reasonable contention that no-one can truly know the future implications of the research or any harm it may cause, even in seemingly innocuous cases. This prescient discussion was considered and the view was taken that the best solution lay in being as open and responsible a researcher as possible in every instance.

Interviews were therefore only conducted when both the interviewee and researcher were comfortable with the intended uses and outcomes for the research.

No incentive was offered to the participants, financial or otherwise (with one exception¹⁴). This was to minimise the potential methodological and ethical ramifications of offering incentives: as no recompense was offered for participating there was no connection between information offered and payment received that may have resulted in feelings of obligation on behalf of the participants. In addition, financial incentives were avoided due to the potential for such a transaction to devalue participants' involvement (Clark, 2008: 410). Anonymity was given to all participants since naming individuals could potentially have repercussions should their views prove contentious in light of the public initiative with which they were involved. A number of participants expressed a desire to waive anonymity, but since this would jeopardise the identity of others, it was considered both simpler and safer to maintain anonymity across the whole dataset. Participants are identified by interview number in the chapters that follow, with all identifiable data such as names or descriptions of other people, groups, institutions or places have been altered where necessary to prevent potential repercussions for any party. Only the hard copies of the participants' consent forms noted the link between participants' identities and their interview number and these were securely stored in a locked cabinet on University of Sheffield property. All electronic documents, including raw data such as interview transcripts, were stored in an encrypted folder throughout the research. Every care has been taken such that this thesis does not contain any information that could damage the progress of any NDP either in progress or completed.

Researcher's role

Throughout the course of this research I have operated primarily as an ESRC funded doctoral candidate conducting independent research, however at times I have also operated as a DCLG researcher conducting internal government research, and as a research assistant conducting government commissioned research (see Parker et al., 2014; 2015; 2017). There was overlap between participants in all three of these roles, and so care was taken throughout the research to

¹⁴ A one off gift of a £35 gift card was given to one participant who was interviewed twice during the course of the research. The participant explicitly asked for the community to be recompensed before involvement in the Locality research project; when I approached the individual to be interviewed as part of this research, we agreed that this small sum was a recognition of community's involvement. The sum was claimed from the researcher's ESRC research training support grant - the gift went towards a community event.

stipulate clearly what my role and institutional affiliation was at any given time. Whilst these roles were a source of strength in writing this thesis, it was important that my role was clear in the participants' minds since my perceived institutional status (or lack of it) may have altered their responses. This was particularly important in light of the recognition of interviews as meaning-making occasions, but also so that participants were clear about their own role in participating. For instance, I was conscious that participants I had spoken to as (temporary) representative of DCLG did not feel obligated to participate in my doctoral research, or indeed misinterpret their participation as part of the same overarching project¹⁵. Before conducting each interview the above issues were discussed with the interviewee, emphasising the opportunity to ask questions about any issue that may have caused concern. This was an important step in achieving trust between the researcher and participant, a process arguably more important than securing informed consent.

When I was present at public meetings during the case study, the decision to announce my presence was taken on an ad hoc basis between myself and the gatekeeper, usually this involved a brief introduction stating my institutional affiliation and that I was undertaking research into neighbourhood planning. Due to the nature of my participation in the communities themselves this was often unnecessary and in the vast majority of cases I was known to all attendees. In some cases however some individuals may not have been fully cognisant of my reasons for being present and the notion of informed consent in these cases was clearly ambiguous (Bulmer, 2001). However since the purpose of the case study was to provide context to the interview data and not to provide thick description (Geertz, 1993) or other detailed accounts associated with participant observation - no personal or identifying data was collected at these events and it is reasonable to assume that attendees were not harmed by my presence.

The responsibility for producing trustworthy and accountable research principally lies with the researcher, so in order to ensure these standards I reflexively considered my own position as researcher where possible throughout the research process. Jenkins (2011: 32) has concisely summed up the role of the reflexive researcher by stating the need to 'perpetually reflect on what I was doing and seeing, in a continuous conversation with myself, looking all the time over my own shoulder'. This form of desired self-awareness acts as a safeguard against unjustified assertions or significant leaps of faith within the findings, whilst also ensuring that the researcher remains sensitive to the

¹⁵ I made clear to several participants that I was actively pursuing areas of research interest that were not adequately addressed by DCLG's research efforts.

direction and purpose of their research. Whilst arguing that researchers should be rigorously self-aware, Pillow (2003: 188) notes that such reflexivity should not be considered a panacea for ethical considerations in social research, and as researchers we should be acutely aware that ‘comfortable’ reflexivity can paralyse a project or worse, fool the researcher into the assumption that reflection automatically equates to good quality research. One way this threat was mitigated was the keeping of fieldnotes which functioned as a repository for personal reflections and helped document changes in understanding (Gerstl-Pepin and Patrizio, 2009: 300). The process of committing thoughts to paper and rereading past entries situates the researcher within a line of thought, demonstrating the processual nature of knowledge production and illuminating on-going themes. Whilst these reflections are primarily for the researcher’s personal use, their utility extends to keeping track of the research process more widely, aiding in relaying the chronology of the fieldwork and providing context during the analysis stage.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the methods and methodology employed in this research. The interpretive policy analysis (IPA) methodology has been explained, emphasising the need to understand the beliefs, meanings and interpretation of social actors, and how they reach their own understanding of the social world. This stresses the contingent and constitutive ontology of the social world, where actors are embedded in wider discursive structures that both enable and restrain them. The discussion has shown how the constructivist epistemology of interpretivism is particularly suited to studies of localism, given how policies are interpreted differently in localities thereby altering the nature of citizen participation.

A chronology of the fieldwork has been set out, explaining the central decisions taken as well as the qualitative data collection methods adopted and the precautions taken to ensure the research was ethically sound. The resulting data will be used across the following three chapters to answer the central research questions of this thesis. These were collected over a significant period of time, and despite changes to data collection methods during the fieldwork (particularly the decision to abandon one case study due to lack of relevance), they are characterised by both richness, depth and temporality. Similarly, the length of time spent by the researcher engaging with the policy and working alongside communities and policy makers has provided a wealth of accumulated knowledge

that has aided the analysis that follows. The chapters that follow therefore analyse these data in order to construct a detailed picture of citizen participation under the Localism Act (2011).

Chapter 7 Participation in an Urban Neighbourhood Development Plan

Introduction

This chapter sets out a case study of a community in a northern English city undertaking the early processes of producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) between December 2013 and March 2015. Adopting an interpretive policy analysis approach, the chapter focuses on the participants' interpretation of the policy itself, key events and the nature of the invited space within which they were acting. Approximately 60 hours of direct observation were undertaken during the fieldwork, and the analysis that follows draws on nine semi-structured interviews with key participants from the community's Planning Forum (here after 'the Forum'). It explores the core facets of NDP production, including community motivation and engagement, support arrangements, co-option and episodic empowerment.

The dynamics of participation are shown to be framed by the early interpretations of core community members who viewed neighbourhood planning as a means of local control, particularly concerning issues of wellbeing such as green spaces, better travel arrangements and sustainable communities. Whilst these issues contrast with the intended policy aims of DCLG policy makers, local understandings of the policy and preferences for local issues meant that the participatory space was largely co-opted to suit (some) local needs. These early interpretations largely dictated the nature and scope of participation. Further key findings disclose a sense of uncertainty on behalf of residents and City Council officials in coming to terms with the new legislation. This exacerbated issues of trust between participants and the Council, which affected the support arrangements known to be crucial to effective neighbourhood planning (Parker et al., 2014). Despite these issues, the Forum displayed a considerable degree of resilience, along with a wealth of civic skills and capacity as they sought to navigate the process. The collaborative enterprise of coming together as a community, including members existing groups but also new networks, resulted in a tentative form of place-based collective identity within the community, leading some participants to report instances of episodic empowerment. The enthusiasm displayed in embracing the new plenipotentiary powers and the early policy direction of the NDP also reflect the specific histories and understandings of key community members. Despite disagreements between some participants on the nature and direction of the NDP, and a marked schism in the community between 'permanent

residents' and students of a local University, community participation was notable for a lack of open conflict or contestation over key issues. The avoidance of such axes of contention and the apparent consensus over the type of participation undertaken are explored. The chapter begins by establishing the context for citizen participation in planning and exploring the various political discourses that have framed neighbourhood planning.

Participatory planning in context: discourses of participation

The English planning system is plan-led meaning that each Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required to assemble a Local Plan setting out how planning will be organised within their jurisdiction over a set period. This must conform with the recently introduced National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out central government's planning policies and how these should be applied. Since the creation of LPAs in 1948, the power to decide what plans should consist of has been held by Local Authority (LA) councillors, although over time a significant amount of this work has been delegated to planning officers (Farnsworth, 2013). Citizen involvement in this process has a significant history in the form of written submissions, attendance at public meetings and engaging in civil disobedience.

The Skeffington Report (1969) marked a significant turn towards greater public involvement in planning, and throughout the 1970s participation and planning were viewed as complementary concepts in both local and national policy debates (Hampton, 1990). Since then however there has been a slow move towards interest representation as a way to overcome widespread technocratic inertia and a perceived reluctance on behalf of LAs to listen to the public interest. Meanwhile attempts to integrate public participation into the planning system have commonly been criticised for trying to prevent objections that might slow development and for trying to 'educate' citizens into accepting a particular 'professional planning' ideology or prevailing political views (Farnsworth, 2013). In the 1980s, the New Public Management (NPM) approach instilled neo-liberal principles that sought to reduce the size and power of local government through a reduction in public expenditure (and coincident expansion of the private sector) and the introduction of competitive tendering processes for many public services (Gallent and Robinson, 2013). The NPM often resulted in central government bypassing local government structures with the effect of 'hollowing out' the state (Rhodes, 1997) and placing emphasis on agencies and private actors rather than local government or communities. As discussed in Chapter 4, the New Labour administrations of the

1990s saw 'local democracy as the normative *raison d'être* for local government' (Lowndes, 2001: 1966), and with the institution of the 'new localism' (Corry, and Stoker, 2002) the Blair administrations claimed to provide a response to the complexity of modern governance, seeking to build social capital and foster civic renewal through engaging forms of democracy (Stoker, 2002; Newman and Clarke, 2009). Despite a raft of ABIs (Chapter 4) involving local residents in decision making to an unprecedented extent (Lupton and Fitzgerald, 2015), the new localism came in for widespread criticism for failing to live up to early rhetoric promising local communities more power in neighbourhood renewal (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Fuller and Geddes 2008).

Superficially at least, the Coalition formed in 2010 drew on many of the same discourses that underpinned the new localism when promoting the Big Society (Sage, 2012). Shortly after becoming Prime Minister, Cameron (2010: no page) explained that the Big Society was 'about liberation - the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street'. This was met with a mixture of scepticism and apathy: whilst the Big Society appeared to promote a role for civil society in delivering community wellbeing - à la New Labour (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012) - it was also seen as a vehicle to continue a wider neo-liberal policy direction (Bone, 2011; Corbett and Walker, 2013). The project was tied up with a sustained period of financial austerity and research revealed that the project was not well understood by the public or civil servants, and so the slogan was gradually replaced by an emphasis on localism (Bailey and Pill, 2015). Then Minister of State for Decentralisation, Greg Clark, claimed that 'localism is the ethos; decentralisation is the process, and the outcome is the Big Society', and in 2013, the then Planning Minister Nick Boles argued that the whole concept of the Big Society was encapsulated by neighbourhood planning. Despite this shift to localism, the opportunities for participation extended to communities remained tied up with the original Big Society aims of improving economic growth and exercising personal responsibility, as well as devolving control 'hoarded' in central government by previous administrations (Conservative Party, 2010c). The centrality of the planning system to future prosperity was explicitly linked to participatory democracy by the Conservative Party (2010b: 1) just a few months before the Localism Bill was introduced, describing the planning system as 'vital for a strong economy, for an attractive and sustainable environment, and for a successful democracy'. Crucially therefore, early discussions of localism were framed by established discourses surrounding One Nation Conservatism, libertarian paternalism, but also free market ideology (Corbett and Walker, 2013). It is important to interrogate such political discourses as they are central

to locally constructed meanings and they place importance on particular forms of understanding and knowledge in local settings (Barnes, Newman et al., 2003; also see Yanow, 2007). Despite superficial similarities between ‘new’ and post-2010 localism, the language of the latter has been an important way through which the Coalition has sought to differentiate itself from New Labour (Tait and Inch, 2016). The New Labour administrations have been discursively portrayed as ‘committed centralizers’ with a coincident ‘high-spending ‘big government’ approach’ (Tait and Inch, 2016: 175), and so the first come, first served approach of neighbourhood planning (Chapter 4) therefore not only marks a significant departure from targeting deprived communities, but is also a rejoinder to the prescriptions of the so-called ‘nanny state’. This was evident in the Conservative Party’s (2009; 2010b) message in the lead up to the Localism Act (2011) which centred around communities taking control of their neighbourhoods - leading to an emphasis on autonomy and self-determination that was seen to preclude targeted state intervention.

The discourses mobilised in support of community participation as self-determination sought to draw a connecting line between ‘the local’, more responsive forms of governance, and also crucially with greater economic efficiency (Painter et al., 2011). The influence of the growth imperative led to the application of more ‘responsible’ forms of localism as a means of orchestrating ‘local autonomy without disturbing underlying political antagonisms’ (Tait and Inch, 2016: 188; Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). These changes have drawn the discussion regarding participation away from (centrally directed) socially just outcomes, interest representation and social identity, towards local (instrumental) control and economic growth. The shift has had predictable effects on the type of localities involved, with successful neighbourhood plans coming predominantly from more affluent, rural areas (Parker and Salter, 2016; Colomb, 2017). This particular form of liberal participation (i.e. rejection of big government, achieving self-determination and promoting growth) has been founded on persistent assumptions about the nature of local neighbourhoods as cohesive, clearly defined and spatially ‘fixed’. Tait and Inch (2016: 190) label such attempts to mobilise ambiguous political constructions of ‘the local’, place and community as ‘affective imaginaries’; this builds on New Labour’s understanding of spatially ‘fixed’ communities (Raco, 2003a), by overlaying a particular Conservative ideology that harks back to Burke’s little platoons and similar themes in de Tocqueville, Chesterton, and Belloc (Barker, 2011). Central to such imaginaries is the assumption of ‘autonomous and internally homogeneous localities’ where neighbourhoods represent a source of stable, pre-formed local identities: such a view denies the complex institutional geographies and

spatial levels that local actors move within and across, 'embedded as they are in partnerships, associations, groups, and contracts stretching down into neighbourhoods and out into other localities, regions, and countries' (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013: 16). The supposed stability of such localities has been central to the rationalities that underpin recent changes to planning practices, acting as a natural site for a planning system 'rooted in civic engagement and collaborative democracy' (Conservative Party, 2010: 1). The promotion of participatory democracy is therefore an explicit attempt to shift the 'almost wholly negative and adversarial' planning system towards a more 'collaborative' approach (Conservative Party, 2010: 1). In line with the liberal participation model, the rejection or subsuming of contestation has been reconstructed as a response to the manner of decision making rather than as a reaction to development in of itself (Gallent et al., 2013: 564). This has sought to reframe conflict as avoidable if only decisions are made in ways closer to local residents, rather than an inevitable outcome of competing interests (see Stanier, 2014).

The policy discourse surrounding neighbourhood planning has therefore been couched in neo-liberal ideology, framing a form of collaborative democracy (*contra* 'negative and adversarial' approaches), promoting instrumental community control (*contra* 'big government') amongst spatially fixed and stable communities that, it is hoped, can align their aspirations to the pro-growth imperative (*contra* targeting disadvantage). The ascendancy of such discourses has precluded the concerns over social inclusion, local and social identities, local knowledge, interest representation and so on (Barnes et al., 2006; Barnes et al., 2008) - that were central to ABIs under New Labour. The absence of such developed discourses of participation has been reflected in local understandings of community and participation that are addressed below - with such concepts remaining largely unproblematised by local residents. In this sense, the primacy of the growth agenda in particular has textured the political opportunity structure, by rendering various goals of community development usually associated with participation (such as capacity building and increasing social capital, but also achieving equality and social justice) as either extraneous to the process of neighbourhood planning or at least not central to it. This has rendered participatory spaces as competitive and instrumentalist, ignoring the fact that social change often involves social conflict, with the effect of limiting the 'thinkable' possibilities of participation (and more concretely the policies communities might enact). This undoubtedly has influence over how participants construct strategies for participation, but also how local government officials and private planning consultants view their own facilitatory roles.

Commentaries have questioned the limited conception of the Coalition's politics of place, assumptions about the purpose of state intervention, the role of civil society more generally, and the imaginaries invoked as being highly selective and potentially exclusionary (Barker, 2011; Clarke and Cochrane, 2013; Gallent et al., 2013; Davoudi and Madanipour, 2013; Valler et al., 2012; Lynn and Parker, 2012) - whilst the eclectic and at times contradictory political traditions drawn upon in the framing of post-2010 localism have created both tensions and opportunities within new participatory spaces (Corbett and Walker, 2013; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012). It is important to consider therefore the variety of localisms that are 'still emerging as different localities prove more or less able to engage with the contradictory dynamics of change that have been introduced' (Tait and Inch, 2016: 189), and these effects are explored in the case below.

The neighbourhood planning process

Introduced under the Localism Act (2011), neighbourhood planning is a suite of rights overseen by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that allow communities to formulate planning policies for the development and use of land in their neighbourhood. This constitutes 'a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work' (DCLG, 2012b: 3), as early DCLG (2011b: 12) literature explained:

Neighbourhood planning will allow communities, both residents, employees and business, to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go - and what they should look like. These plans can be very simple and concise, or go into considerable detail where people want.

The most popular and most comprehensive of these rights is the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Knowledge of other initiatives such as Community Right to Build (CRtB) and Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) remain little known (Parker et al., 2014). Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) are statutory documents which have parity alongside the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This means that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must take into account an NDP in any planning decision affecting the relevant neighbourhood. The production of an NDP requires a seven step process, set out in the primary legislation and in the neighbourhood planning regulations:

1. Application to Local Planning Authority
2. Area Designation (non-parished areas also require Forum Designation)
3. Pre-submission Consultation
4. Draft Plan Submission
5. Independent Examination
6. Referendum
7. 'Made' Neighbourhood Plan (i.e. adopted by the LPA)

In parished areas, the Parish or Town Council applies for designation from the LPA using the established boundaries (or an amalgamation of multiple parish boundaries). Non-parished area must prepare an application for their desired neighbourhood area (often using established ward boundaries) but must also apply to be designated as a Neighbourhood Forum, requiring 21 signatories from local residents. The subsequent qualifying body (either the Parish or Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum) then engage with the community through consultation processes to develop an evidence base. A draft NDP is then produced based on the evidence and the views of the community. After consultation on the draft plan, the amended NDP is submitted to the LPA where it passes to independent examination to ensure that it meets legal requirements, including a set of 'Basic Conditions'. Importantly the NDP must be in general conformity with the LPA's strategic policies - and where a Local Plan is in place, the NDP cannot contain less development than the Local Plan has established. If the independent examiner is satisfied that conditions it passes to a community referendum where all those on the electoral register within the neighbourhood boundaries are eligible to vote. The referendum asks simply if the NDP should be adopted, with residents responding 'Yes' or 'No'. Where the NDP receives over 50% of the vote, it passes to the LPA who formally 'make' the plan.

This is the formal process or institutional frame of NDP production. As the presiding government department of neighbourhood planning, DCLG (2012a) have adopted a 'light touch' approach to regulation, meaning that there is a minimum duty to support on behalf of LAs, and the process is not overly prescriptive in terms of *how* the community wishes to achieve the above stages. This provides communities with a great deal of scope about how to go about producing an NDP, in particular with regard to consultation practices. Neighbourhood planning was initiated in 2010 with a tranche of 'Frontrunners' acting as pilot areas intended to test the process. Local Authorities were granted £20,000 per Frontrunner community to aid in this process. The policy was officially enacted in the

Localism Act (2011) and the associated neighbourhood planning regulations came into effect in April 2012. Subsequent reforms to central government policy and guidance, in the form of the NPPF have featured further encouragement for neighbourhood plans to be undertaken provided they are consistent with overall government policy aims of promoting economic growth and increasing housebuilding. Within DCLG, a dedicated team of civil servants oversees neighbourhood planning and related rights: during the first months of the policy roll out, communities had designated team members to aid them, although this process has been gradually phased out. The neighbourhood planning team is dedicated to ‘building a movement’ of participating communities and have been proactive in engaging with communities, practitioners and researchers to both widen participation and develop the policy. Since 2011, support for NDPs has taken a number of forms, including funding and direct support via a social enterprise entitled Locality which won the initial government contract to provide this service (this contract was renewed in February 2015). During the period of the fieldwork, communities could apply for a grant (£7,000) to help in the delivery of their NDP (this has increased slightly post the 2015 election). Local Planning Authorities are able to claim for up to 20 area designations (totalling £100,000 each) in each financial year and up to 5 forum designations (a further £25,000) (DCLG, 2013). Additional support for communities has been provided by a variety of advisory services, and a wealth of information and advice (both official and informal) has been provided online. Many communities have supplemented this advice with the use of private planning consultants; in mid-2014 it was calculated that approximately 70% of groups engaging in neighbourhood planning had employed private consultants (Parker et al., 2014). At the completion of the fieldwork in March 2015, approximately 1,400 communities were participating in NDPs across England. At this time, all 50 NDPs that had passed to the referendum stage had passed the community vote.

Participation in an Urban Neighbourhood Development Plan

‘Fairholme’ is an urban neighbourhood approximately two miles from the centre of a large English city in northern England. The neighbourhood has an approximate population of 17,000 which is predominantly white (85.5% White British, UK 2011 Census) with a low unemployment rate (1.5%, UK 2011 Census)¹⁶. The predominance of the NDP’s designated area is within the top decile of least

¹⁶ Figures are illustrative only since the Designated Area (DA) of the NDP does not correspond to Ward or LSOA boundaries. The Census data refers to an area code that corresponds to 69% of the Ward (based on 2011 boundaries) and therefore encapsulated the majority of the DA.

deprived neighbourhoods in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (UK Statistics Authority, 2010) with a portion of the neighbourhood in the top 2% of income domains in the country¹⁷. The neighbourhood has high proportion of occupant-owned housing but also a high student population. Predominantly middle-class, the neighbourhood is regarded as a desirable place to live, but due to a lack of developable land it is not currently under development pressure. During the course of the fieldwork, the City Council as the relevant LA decided that the pre-submission Local Plan had to be revisited meaning that Fairholme had no confirmation of new housing allocations, but due to the highly developed nature of the neighbourhood, the Forum did not anticipate any new development in any event. The prospect of new housing was not a significant motivation for the community (either positively or negatively), despite an increase in new housing being the *raison d'être* of neighbourhood planning (Stanier, 2014; Bradley and Sparling, 2017).

The Planning Forum and the community

The nine participants interviewed for this study made up the core membership of the Forum over the fieldwork period. The group was highly educated, coming exclusively from professional backgrounds, including architects, accountants, a university professor and a local councillor (one exception was a student who has since gone on to become a professional planning consultant). Direct observation of the Forum made clear that it was both highly motivated and highly capable of undertaking what was known to be a burdensome process (Parker et al., 2015). All participants showed an adroitness in engaging with both one another and members of other institutions (such as the City Council, DCLG, and the local University) throughout the fieldwork period. Forum meetings themselves followed a formal agenda and were administered by the Chair.

As per the neighbourhood planning regulations, the Forum was unelected (requiring only 21 signatories from the community to be designated as a Forum) and had no formal claim to representation. This was seemingly unproblematic for the participants and was left largely untouched during the interviews. Political authority to undertake an NDP is bestowed on Parish Councils or in this case a Neighbourhood Forum by the Localism Act (2011), however the surrounding political discourse has been bereft of references to representation (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013). As a consequence, the Forum saw itself unproblematically as acting in the 'community interest': several participants noted that the referendum at the culmination of the process was the 'acid test' of their

¹⁷ IMD data is based on 3 LSOA areas that broadly correspond to the designated area.

work, however there was little reflection on the nature of their role *within* the community. The lack of ambiguity in the minds of the participants over the concepts of representation and community was in line with DCLG policymakers' own unproblematic usage (see Stanier, 2014) - in particular the flattening out of complex community structures in policy discourse (Tait and Inch, 2016). This echoes prior research into a Single Regeneration Budget initiative by Edwards (2008: 1674) who found that participants viewed those speaking for their own interests more 'authentic' or 'real' than others (Edwards, 2008: 1674). In a similar fashion, the Forum's authenticity derived from the pursuit of their own interests; the implicit understanding that the group *was* the community - and this was evident in comments such as: 'nobody cares about our community more than the people who live here' (14). This interpretation of community comes close to the structural functionalist reading - predominantly emanating from the Chicago School - that conceptualises community as an object: an organic whole, usually contained in a small geographic location. The supposed homogeneity of neighbourhoods is predicated on a widely held belief that smaller social groupings are less likely to be the site of social or economic divisions, as Lowndes and Sullivan (2008: 57) explicate:

On the normative side, neighbourhoods are more likely than larger units to encapsulate homogenous [sic] communities and to be characterized by shared values, beliefs and goals. It is easier to address 'collective action problems' in the presence of small numbers and with the absence of significant social or economic cleavages ... it is easier under such circumstances for citizens to perceive a relation between their own self-interest and the public good.

In contrast, many contemporary academic studies within social policy and planning research lean towards an understanding of community informed by post-structuralist readings as diverse and fragmented, with no (necessary) link to a geographic location. 'Community' therefore can be seen an object of policy (a thing to be worked on), a policy instrument (the means by which policies become devised and activated), or a thing to be created (an end in itself) (Imrie and Raco, 2003: 6). As described in the subsection above, in this instance, community has been conceived as both an object and instrument by policy makers who believe that local neighbourhoods are stable sites of participation where citizens can translate local knowledge into sustainable planning policy (Stanier, 2014). This understanding of community has been taken up and echoed implicitly by citizens themselves. The consequence of this in Fairholme was that the issue of representation and how to conceptualise community did not figure in the workings of the Forum.

As discussed above, the reading of community as a policy instrument rests on the assumption that smaller collective units are more likely to be homogeneous. But smaller units of governance also

make it easier for local elites to dominate, and make it harder 'for diverging views to be expressed and accommodated' (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008: 69). In Fairholme's case, it was evident from both Forum meetings and participant interviews that the process was steered heavily by the Chair and Vice Chair, who undertook a significant proportion of the work, and in the Chair's case acted as a go-between connecting the Forum to the City Council and other local institutions. Despite this not being clearly explicated in either policy literature or the community's constitution, the role of core members comes close to 'local representation', meaning the members were 'there to represent a wider community, and to speak for and be accountable to [a] constituency' (Barnes et al., 2008: 4). This dependency on core members stemmed from the large amount of work conducted 'behind the scenes' and the significant amount of (necessary) organisation completed before the group's first AGM. One consequence of this was that the group's meetings were highly instrumental in character, and almost entirely focused on how to secure, in a technical sense, the Forum's aims, with the institutional frame of the NDP (Parker et al., 2017).

This instrumental focus was evident in the deliberations of the group, which were relatively rare, occurring on average less than once per month during the research period. The meetings were not employed to discuss the direction of the NDP or its policies, instead they were largely used to update the Forum on actions undertaken by smaller groups of residents dedicated to certain tasks, and to overcome on-going technical issues in the process. For example, the first meeting attended by the researcher covered: commissioning a designer for the group's logo, agreeing the wording of the Forum's revised constitution (followed by a vote), a discussion concerning securing grant funding, a proposal that core members attending a 'planning camp', and discussion of future opportunities for consultation. This was a typical agenda, with progress and important decisions being made but little deliberation of substantive issues such as policy directions or the community view. This approach was typified by Fairholme's five policy areas, which were not subject to a process of deliberation, and appeared to have been decided prior to the initial Annual General Meeting (AGM) in December 2013- an example of how local meanings (in this case community desires) can be fixed prior to 'deliberation proper' and then overlaid onto subsequent discussions. A further example concerned community consultation, where the majority of one meeting was used not to discuss what opinions should be sought from the community or on what topics, but how and where this consultation should take place. These were important questions yet the lack of reflection on the substance of issues rather than the process was emblematic of the pressure on the Forum to maintain momentum but also the

instrumental nature of participation derived from the local interpretation of community. The Forum's meetings were therefore more of a technocratic exercise in how decided outcomes could be achieved, as opposed to what the outcomes should be (beyond the adoption of the NDP).

The acceptance of community as an instrument of public policy in this sense was reflected during participants' interviews. The residents evidently enjoyed reflecting on their experiences, acknowledging that little time had been spent considering why they were involved with the Forum, or what the NDP might mean for Fairholme or neighbouring communities in the long run. The lack of time for reflection was revealing in terms of how participation in Fairholme should be analysed. The IPA approach stresses participants' subject-positions, and how they draw on particular discourses to make sense of their own actions and understandings. However, whilst participants appeared to enjoy discussing the wider implications of their participation, the conversation invariably returned to concrete issues, milestones in the process and the personalities involved. There was an absence of what might be described as developed discourses of participation during the interviews, reflecting wider political rhetoric that has moved away from these issues (see above). In addition to the framing of NDPs, this instrumental nature of the discussion was attributable to three core processes that permeate the analysis that follows. First, the NDP process was highly burdensome and the community received little support from key partners, this precipitated a need to focus time and resources on 'quick wins' rather than more exploratory intra-community discussion. Second, uncertainty over the meaning of neighbourhood planning and key aspects of the process (such as the evidence collection and on-going difficulties with the Council's interpretation of the legislation) meant that undue time was spent on highly technical issues including statutory consultation periods and wording of the Forum's constitution. Third, participation was centrally driven by the desire to achieve community control in light of prior negative experiences with the City Council. These processes left precious little room for participants to consider the nature of their own participation or reflection on the wider implications of the community's involvement - or indeed think deeply about the political discourses that permeated the participatory space.

This somewhat circumscribes the explanatory power of the interpretivist approach (Chapter 5), but it should not be overlooked that this constrained context is itself an important finding - one that reflects an inbuilt conservatism found in neighbourhood planning (Parker et al., 2017). The constrained nature participation also reflects the role of early policy interpretations made by the leading members of the Forum: in undertaking the necessary early work to initiate the NDP, core members were

responsible for interpreting the policy and its parameters, and in presenting it to the wider community largely set the nature and tenor of participation. The experience of one participant joining the Forum demonstrates how this dynamic operated - asked to join by the Chair, the participant noted her inexperience of community participation:

Well the Chair asked me, I know the Chair and [partner] - they were talking and said you know, she's a soft touch and retired and I didn't mind giving it a go, but I feel very inexperienced in it ... I've never been involved in anything like this before - I'm not a particularly political sort of person, and so I find some of the aspects to it a bit challenging; the Chair is very good at steering things through but some of those subtleties pass me by, I just like to have a job and get on with it. I didn't know what neighbourhood planning even was (3)

After struggling with the NDP concept early on and receive a steer from the Chair, the same participant relayed their understanding of the process:

I suppose that's part of my understanding of what neighbourhood planning is ... we have to focus down on what the plan can be, in relation to what it's allowed to be ... you have to focus on something that you can do. [We have] to draw together the things that are feasible and that fit within the framework. (3)

This response indicates how participation was 'taught' by core members and the subsequent interpretations of invited participants were largely received: from an early stage therefore, the NDP became about focusing efforts and achieving feasible outcomes. Therefore a large amount of responsibility was placed on a few individuals close to the centre of the process, and as will be discussed below, this led to some exclusionary practices:

I think there should be some sort of mechanism in areas where it's a forum to ensure that they group that is overseeing that formation of the neighbourhood plan, is in some way representative of the local community ... I don't know if anyone does truly think that these groups are representative but whether people truly believe that or not, they are being given a representative role to make decisions on behalf of a lot of people that may not even know they exist (1)

Agger and Larsen (2009) argue that despite negative connotations, exclusion is a critical mechanism enabling communities to navigate complex participatory initiatives. Indeed exclusion may well be a means by which participants sought to understand the parameters of their work; prior initiatives, notably NDCs, suffered from simply involving too large a population (Batty et al., 2010b). Prior research has demonstrated how participants are often intermediary bodies of sub-elites that act between the everyday public and public authorities (Agger et al., 2007). Since, broadly speaking, only those with the requisite political or professional skills, time, and contacts are able to participate (Young, 2000), it is arguable that sub-elites improve the quality of democracy as they can hold

power holders to account (Etzioni-Halevey, 1999). However where there is no guarantor of such action (for instance through elections), opportunities arise for sub-elites to be co-opted by traditional decision-makers, potentially alienating those less inclined to participate (such those on low incomes, young people, the elderly, transient populations and so on) thus jeopardising the promise of transformational participation. As Pieterse (2001: 413) notes, decentralisation often leads to the ‘empowerment’ of local elites unless attention is paid directly to combatting this eventuality: as a consequence participatory initiatives are susceptible to excluding certain groups’ interests and creating gated democracies (Agger, 2012). These issues were not lost on Fairholme’s Chair who emphasised his own efforts to engage existing groups in the community - although this did not materialise into sustained consultation: there appeared to be a recognition within the Forum that ‘deep’ participation cannot also be ‘wide’ (Farrington et al., 1993) and so this was way through which participants deemed their involvement to be legitimate, even at the expense of wider consultation.

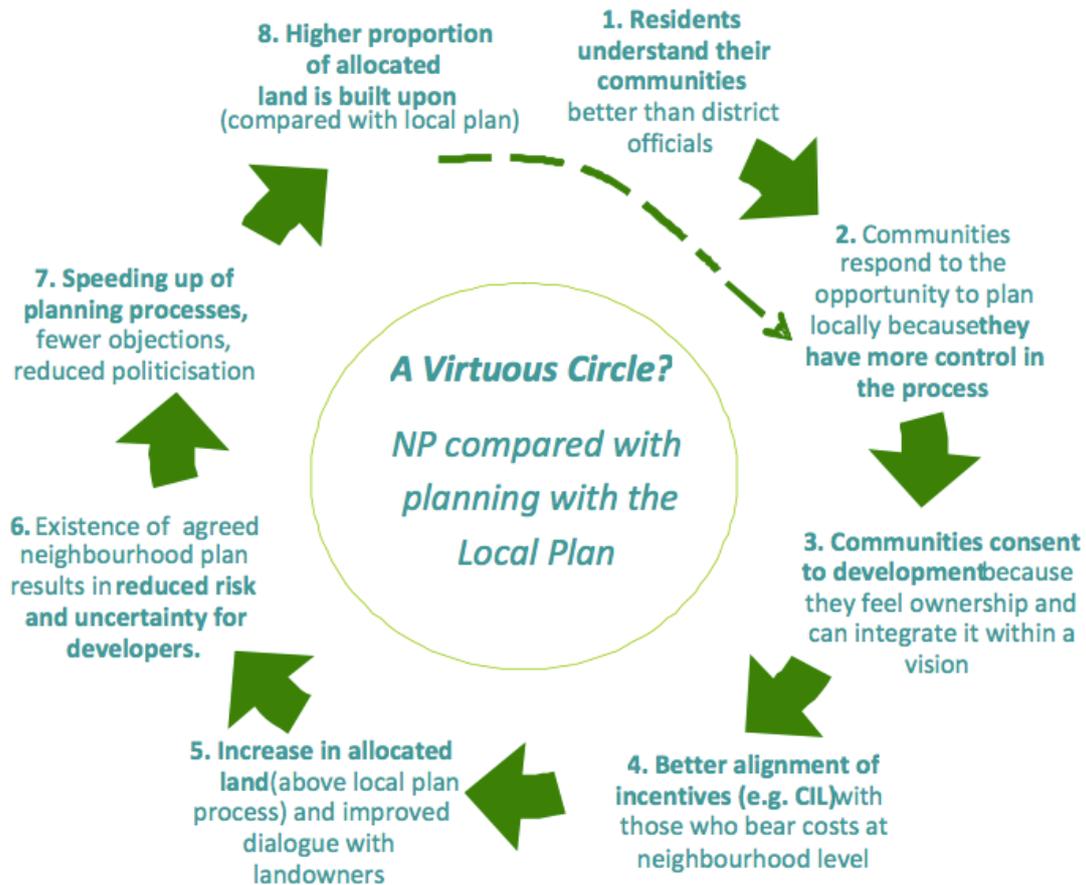
Fairholme’s example suggests that participation in NDPs remains questionable in terms of legitimate democratic representation (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013; Cowie and Davoudi, 2015). Despite the stated desire for ‘collaborative democracy’ (Conservative Party, 2010b: 1) and a wish to ‘strengthen local democracy’ (DCLG, 2011b: 18), the policy discourse pertaining to neighbourhood planning was devoid of references to inclusivity, representativeness or affiliated concepts such as legitimacy. This undoubtedly contributed to the absence of such concepts during participants’ own interpretations of the new democratic space. In a cognate vein, the concept of neighbourhood remains inadequately defined by the policy literature (Minery et al., 2009; Wallace, 2010; Natarajan, 2012) and this has had the effect of neglecting those in greatest need of representation by failing to acknowledge the dynamics of participation that have a tendency to exclude and the internal schisms that often occur (see the description of autonomous, homogeneous and spatially fixed localities). An example of this can be seen in the assumption that ‘[r]esidents understand their communities better than district officials’ (Stanier, 2014: 13), such an understanding lacks nuance and overlooks the potential for conflicting views within a neighbourhood, or that some views may be irreconcilable with strategic concerns. Similarly, despite the rhetorical promotion of local knowledge, this has been ill-defined, leading to an elision between this and the affiliated but distinct concept of local representation (which comes closer to the role of most steering groups, including Fairholme) (Barnes et al., 2008). Without greater problematisations of such concepts and recognition of the structural barriers to

participation, new democratic arenas will remain the preserve communities that broadly fit the conservative imaginaries described by Tait and Inch (2016), that is middle class communities with the requisite stability, abilities and resources. Therefore the framing role of central participants' interpretations in Fairholme was a crucial factor in the nature of participation that followed (and this was undoubtedly a constraining factor and in what passed for intra-community deliberation), however as the following section discusses, this was seen as necessary by the majority of participants and also crucially allowed for what might be described as a co-option of the participatory space.

Co-option and contestation

Fairholme residents understood the nature of neighbourhood planning in ways markedly different from that of policy makers. Civil servants created a policy model (Figure 9) that sets out the intended effects in line with research that suggests that greater community engagement correlates with lower levels of opposition to housebuilding, therefore increasing successful development (Sturzaker, 2011a). As Gallent et al. (2013: 564) describe, the familiar planning conflicts surrounding housing allocations and house-building have been presented not as a reaction to development *per se*, but rather a response to the manner in which decisions are reached. Neighbourhood planning was therefore devised to devolve circumscribed, local control to communities in order to lessen opposition to house building, reduce uncertainty for developers and speed up the planning system (Figure 9).

Figure 9: DCLG's Neighbourhood Planning Policy Model



Source: Stanier (2014: 13)

Largely due to the early interpretations of the Chair however, the Fairholme NDP has not been interpreted locally as a pro-housing, pro-growth policy, but as a means of local control over a wide range of wellbeing issues - representing a 'co-option' of the participatory space. The five key working groups that emerged were: promoting green spaces; creating travel corridors; improving the retail district; balanced communities, and development and conservation. The latter working group was concerned with creating design guides for future planning proposals but was not seeking to allocate land for development. In this way community control for Fairholme could be considered closer to the initial rhetoric of politicians to 'put more power in the hands of local people' (Conservative Party, 2009: 3) and '[e]mpower communities to do things their way (HM Government, 2010b: 3) rather than the specific motivations of the legislation to increase housebuilding by specifying 'what kind of development and use of land they want to see in their area' (Conservative Party, 2010b: 2). As one participant relayed:

... because of people focusing on their area, I think people have co-opted it nicely, I would love to look at these projects that people are doing ... what we've been discussing is the planning side of it, but all of these groups pretty well without exception have done some kind of project activity with it, including at the very high end [another area] has recently set up a development trust, it's amazing really (16)

Such processes of co-option are vital if participation in neighbourhood planning is going to foster a 'successful democracy ... [through] participation and social engagement' (Conservative Party, 2010b: 1), and avoid the paradox of increasing participation within new modes of governance without coincident citizen empowerment (Blakeley, 2010). As Blakeley (2010) has illustrated in similar initiatives in Manchester and Barcelona, citizens do not participate due to a form of 'false consciousness' but rather because they believe that their participation will make a difference, however small that might be. This positivity may be best harnessed through processes of co-option where participants ensure that they experience the positive externalities of participation by manipulating new democratic spaces to their own ends.

Once the initial stages of the NDP had begun to take shape, the attention of the Forum turned to how their objectives could be achieved. As the preceding sections have shown, this was heavily informed by the pre-AGM process. The work completed before the application to the City Council meant that those at the centre of the process had a large degree of ownership over both practical matters and the substantial issues of community discussion. A close relationship had developed between the core members of the forum who regularly attended both community and private meetings, forging their own group within the Forum. This was based on a 'professional volunteer' identity with the plan being treated almost as a full time job, distinguishing them from the more reactive members of the Forum. This placed a lot of responsibility on just a few members but also established much of the agenda prior to community deliberations and community-wide consultation. This sheds new light on the civic core concept (Reed and Selbee, 2001; Mohan and Bulloch, 2012) as active citizens not only undertake the majority of community-based work, but also have an important role in facilitating wider engagement by structuring the participatory space and interpreting regulations and official discourses, and therefore the nature of wider participation. This was manifest in practical issues such as how and where the community should meet, timeframes for completion, how the Forum should operate (i.e. central direction with smaller working groups) and how decisions were made. As one participant noted, this role extended to:

... break[ing] the jobs up into something small so that people can do them ... I think what the Chair has done by refocusing into working groups on particular issues,

really does set us on a much better path than we have been, you know the sorts of things he's done, stopping the monthly meetings and moving everything to the groups (3)

The working groups had the effect of ring-fencing the substantial policy issues, whilst the stopping the monthly meetings (towards the end of 2015) prevented what little Forum-wide deliberation was occurring. This process of agenda-setting gave a distinct impression of how the Forum worked to those joining after the AGM - one participant recalled:

...from a very early stage, without going 'this is our plan, we've drawn it already', [they] have basically said 'these are the things we care about, if you care about these things then come and join us' (1)

It was clear the Chair's professional knowledge of social policies designed to empower social groups directly informed his interpretation of the NDP as a vehicle to increase the community's quality of life, rather than to deliver policies solely designed to foster economic growth. Parallels can be drawn between this solidifying of key policy areas and the concept of collective action frames, used by social movement scholars to describe a sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate an organisation's activities (Tarrow, 1994; Benford and Snow, 2000). As seen in Chapter 4, the definition of such frames and the problems and issues that define them is a key site of contestation (Crossley, 2002). However in Fairholme, the other members of the Forum took their cue from these early interpretations (manifest in the group's policies) - and once the burdensome and bureaucratic process of the NDP had begun, there was little room for reflection on these priorities. This had the effect of foreclosing potential issues of contestation during community deliberations. As we have seen, a key means of contestation within deliberative systems takes place at the level of competing discourses (Dryzek, 2000; 2005), however participants actions were driven more prosaically by the need to jump through the hoops of NDP process. The deliberation that did occur focused on the 'how' of participation rather than the 'what', with the result that participants did not need to draw on particular discourses to formulate arguments, justify positions or make sense of their own actions. The lack of outright or clearly defined deliberation, meant that the community meetings were not a place where competing discourses were resolved or positions justified.

The homogeneity of the Forum was a further means by which contestation was avoided in Fairholme. The neighbourhood had one significant fault line between the 'permanent residents' and students attending the local University. As a body, students were initially represented on the Forum by the Students' Union president, who raised concerns that the working group on balanced

communities was a means to limit Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and therefore reduce the numbers of students Fairholme. Before this issue was fully aired within the meetings, the Union president completed his studies and moved away from Fairholme, leaving the group. Despite an invitation by the Forum, his place was not taken by his successor at the Students' Union. During the interview, the same participant reflected on the reception given to students:

I don't think students per se as individuals would be unwelcome at the door, but I think a lot of the issues that are talked about would conflict with the notion of having 'normal' students in the room¹⁸. And I also guess that there's just practicalities, students aren't around all the time, they're busy with University-facing stuff - their social lives often revolve around places like the Student Union, rather than the local community of [Fairholme]. (14)

The suggestion being made was that students would not feel comfortable with the issues being raised by the Forum, and that this perhaps explained their absence. The lack of students on the group was not framed as a weakness of the Forum's activities, although it often appeared to be an elephant in the room when discussing the HMO policy. On a practical footing, community consultation exercises also omitted students, with house to house questionnaires being conducted in 'permanent' residential areas and at a primary school fête. The resolution of this issues was achieved without substantive representation from the student body, and therefore without open contestation. Without a formal requirement to represent community groups (although the aforementioned attempts were made) and the wider shift away from discussion of such issues by policy makers, the Forum was able to continue deliberating on NDP policies without the input of students and a major fault line in Fairholme was simply circumvented.

For others, the strong central direction within the Forum was more problematic. One member involved during the early stages after the AGM resigned from the process altogether due to what was perceived as a lack of rigour in meetings and the 'undemocratic process' of decisions being made before consultation with the Forum, let alone the wider community (Fieldnotes, 23/04/14). A second member resigned from the Forum echoing similar concerns but wished to stay affiliated to the NDP in order to facilitate a connection with an existing community group. In both instances, the members involved appealed to the Chair for a change in the group's working practices, but both felt that the response received was inadequate meaning they could no longer continue on the Forum. These

¹⁸ The use of 'normal students' was a reference to a prior conversation with this participant where it was established that the researcher was not viewed as an 'ordinary student' by members of the Forum due sharing similar interests with the 'permanent residents'.

fissures between Forum members made the potential for internal conflict apparent, but rather than being aired and resolved, it was pointedly avoided.

Motivations and formation

Unlike the targeted interventions of the New Labour era, neighbourhood planning operates on a first come first serve basis. Under the voluntaristic principal, individual communities are encouraged to participate for their own benefit but are under no obligation to do so (Bailey, 2017). The formation of the Forum was in large part a response to a feeling of powerlessness regarding participants' past dealings with the City Council. Various participants described a shared feeling of disillusionment:

One of the other reasons besides planning policy that people in the area were so keen to get our own neighbourhood planning forum is that we really have tried over a decade to get meaningful conversations with the University and the Council as a community and have failed (14)

This framed participation as an opportunity to exercise control, in ways that had previously been denied. For one participant who had protracted dealings with the planning department regarding a development granted for a building next to his house, participation bordered on protest, a way to prevent others experiencing the same issue he had had previously:

I've got to try so that people don't have the same negative impact on their lives their households as we've experienced (11)

The severity of this participants' grievances were crucial to his on-going participation. Yet whilst residents were appreciative of the opportunities to participate in local decision making, they were also cognisant of its limitations:

I'm not sure giving communities the right to make their own plans without input from the council other than to say whether is legal or not, is necessarily the way forward and I think it does either mean that places are relying on having people in their groups that have extensive knowledge of the planning system from their own professional background or failing that private planning consultancies - and that opens up the whole issue of inequality (1)

Despite this, the process of coming together to exercise a community voice evidently enthused Fairholme's residents, but as a non-parished area the community had to first apply to become a Neighbourhood Forum and also propose a neighbourhood boundary. The rationale for this is that communities 'know their local area better than district officials' (Stanier, 2014: 13) and are therefore better able to define their own boundary. In a parished areas, the Parish or Town Council are

responsible for undertaking an NDP (if desired); this has several distinct benefits, not least an established boundary and a formal decision making structure. Parishes are also often able to obtain seed money (usually from a precept) in order to set the plan in motion. Such areas often also have less tangible advantages such as a sense of community, with corresponding levels of social capital and established networks. Fairholme did not have the immediate structural benefits of a Parish Council, so in late 2013 a small number of individuals began the process of forming the Forum and obtaining the requisite 21 signatories needed to submit an application to the City Council, who as the LPA have to adjudicate on whether the application is legally sound. A decision was by a few individuals driving the process that the area, topics and scope of the NDP were different from the operations of an existing neighbourhood group and also a community forum, meaning the Forum would not grow organically from an existing community group. After several informal meetings in December 2013 the application was sent to the LPA. The early stages of talking within the community and establishing a boundary were quite time consuming:

... it was a relatively slow process, certainly over many months, it involved many, many discussions both in neighbourhood groups, well we'd started to pull together a group of people by then, partly from the neighbourhood groups ... we talked to the councillors about it by that stage as well, their views about the ward boundaries ... Interestingly enough it was both complex to begin but relatively straight forward, particularly once you got to road by road really and started to get the shape (16)

This reflects the strongly felt sense of community in Fairholme - which had the result of neighbourhood boundaries crossing Wards, meaning the application had to be ratified by the full City Council. This was the first instance of the vagaries of new legislation causing a slowing of the process for the community, the following reflection exemplifies the feelings of frustration that participants had towards the Council's bureaucracy:

[Neighbourhood planning] is not a priority necessarily ... having this whole new thing they have to come to terms with and facilitate, and all of this is before other departments potentially become involved in terms of providing evidence into the production of the plan or actually helping in implementation ... I think the Council see it as a fair bit of extra work that they have to do and more constraints that they have to consider at a time when there's fewer and fewer resources and more expectations (18)

The delay in the group's designation was caused by two bureaucratic hurdles: first concerns in the Council's legal department over the wording of the Forum's constitution and second, the delay over ward boundaries. The neighbourhood planning regulations at the time required a period of 6 weeks public consultation for the establishment of the Forum, and a further 6 weeks consultation on the

proposed neighbourhood boundary. The Council's lack of familiarity with the new legislation meant that they were also heavily reliant on the advice of the legal department over the wording of the constitution; this resulted in a significant amount of back and forth between the Forum and the Council, a situation that one participant later referred to as 'an appalling example of the legal department messing about with the public' (16). The planning officers admitted a 'reliance on legal [services] for covering our own back' (Fieldwork 13/3/14); the delays resulting from this were felt to be particularly disappointing for the community as the same constitution wording had been accepted by a LA in another part of the country.

The Council's response to this situation was revealing. McAdam (1996: 27) notes that the (in)stability of the broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity is central to the political opportunity structure within which actors operate. The new legislation that both the Council and community were responding to, clearly represented a chance to open up the opportunity structure and facilitate greater partnership working between the two. However the Council's response to the potential instability caused by the new legislation, was to proceed cautiously and rely heavily on legal opinion which was not shared with the community. This suggests that there was not an institutional (or political) appetite to seize the opportunity that greater partnership working could present. This was picked up by the Forum, who noted that there was no precedent for partnership working within the Council:

... just dashing something off rather quickly without having any history to fall back on, and without having thought about it in advance [is not good enough] I would be confident to say that the legal department didn't say 'oh goody, the Localism Act, let's all read up about it guys, 17 people off on workshops and let's get fully up to speed and develop a policy for it, I suspect they got some memo from Planning saying this is a constitution under the Localism Act, what do you think?' (16)

This reflects the scepticism that participants held towards the Council, and goes some way to explaining the instrumental desire to take control. The same participant argued that central government should have forewarned local councils about the impending change, who then should have welcomed a policy that will 'give a boost to all sorts of parts of the city and our general wellbeing' (16). The same participant noted that in other areas of the country, LPAs driven by elected members have embraced post-2010 localism by making extra funds available, seconding planners to communities and setting up formal partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). Such incentives and the attitudes that undergird them were absent in City Council reflecting the relatively closed nature of the local institutionalised political system.

During the consultation period on the application, only one complaint was registered. The local University produced a substantial document outlining their objections to the Forum which caused consternation amongst the community and delayed the designation process by over a year. One participant relayed their astonishment at the time:

Mystified really, slightly annoyed about the use of University resources, money, to make objections which were clearly baseless, literally baseless, both in terms of the objections within the framing of the Act, and others which were effectively objections to the Localism Act, I thought that was rather extraordinary ... I ended up astonished about the poor quality of advice that they ended up commissioning and submitting as their view, so the whole process was one of astonishment rather than anything else to be honest (16)

This view was emblematic of the Forum meetings at this time, participants displayed considerable consternation towards the University's decision, but felt powerless to rebuff the complaint as the decision lay with the LPA. Another participant pragmatically reflected that 'there's a mutuality there [between community and University] that tends to get lost sometimes' (3), but ultimately the Council's actions generated uncertainty within the community alongside the feeling that their involvement was low on the Council's agenda:

I don't think anybody was incompetent about that certainly from the outside it felt like it was a very low priority from the Legal Department which I suppose it may well be, but nonetheless if you want to provide a service to the public and the government guidelines say you should agree something in roughly three to four months to take 13 is pretty weird (16)

Throughout the time that the objection hung over the Forum work continued on the group's core priorities, and the community appeared undeterred from the process. One participant put this down to the Chair's adroitness in managing the 'small-p political' processes. It was evident during the Forum's meetings that excess time would not be spent discussing the effects of the objection (since the complaint was thought to predicated on a misguided interpretation of the legislation - a point that was later vindicated), and that the Chair was in communication with both the Council and University to see if the issue could be resolved. It was evident that it was not the Forum's role to 'fix' this issue. The delay in formal designation took momentum from the community's efforts as it took up much of the Chair's and Vice Chair's time:

... it took a huge amount of energy out of the planning process itself to deal with that. From the organisational level, the people who were most involved had to stop everything and deal with that - it really costs us quite a number of months ... It was something that the Council [could have put] to rest very quickly (14)

In the event the University withdrew the opposition and the Forum were eventually designated in January 2015. The episode provided evidence of the need for significant community resilience as well as the ability to deal with large institutions with vast resources to call upon. In the event, the Forum was largely shielded from the disagreement between the University and the community due to the Chair's mediation role. As several participants noted, it is unlikely that without the high level of skills and experience within the community, that the Forum would have been able to withstand the University's initial opposition.

As a newly formed group, the Forum was not a natural concept for the wider community to grasp. Whilst the wider community were receptive to having a greater say in decisions that affected them, the NDP was a hard sell during the formative stages:

The whole concept of a planning forum has been really difficult to get across to the general public from the beginning ... we're talking about bigger issues and the future of the community rather than looking at the shape of the extension on the back of a house (14)

The same participant noted that she struggled with the concept of the NDP, noting she had 'never being involved in anything like this before':

I think perhaps what might be useful is a crib about how to talk to people about neighbourhood planning ... they ask: are you part of [another community group]? Do you link with them? Why isn't it this? And some of the question that I've had to ask myself I would have asked at the beginning so I think the ones with Parish Councils have a bit of a flying start ... Parish Councils are in a much better position really because they have the initial structure there and people understand what the Parish Council does (3)

This difficulty in conceptualising the neighbourhood planning process was shared by a number of participants who appreciated conversations with the researcher about what policy makers thought the process was, and what other communities' were doing around the country. The desire for a succinct definition of the process revealed the importance of basic understandings of the process for effective participation. Participants noted that this uncertainty undermined their ability to get their message across to the wider community. Despite over 1,000 communities undertaking neighbourhood planning at the time of the research, it remains a rather niche activity, as one resident noted: 'unless it's advertised to them, I don't think the general public know to look for their local neighbourhood plan and get involved' (5). This reveals an inconsistency at the heart of democratic participation: there is a general appetite for greater involvement, but such invited spaces are generally regarded as confusing and initial motivation is often dampened by the thought of administrative tasks or excessive

bureaucracy. Between 2008 and 2010 the city of which Fairholme is a part had a ward based approach to involving local communities in decisions about their area through a series of Community Assemblies. This sought to promote a deepening of democracy with an emphasis on devolving both choice and voice to the local level. Despite a respectable level of appetite within the city for these events, the Assemblies were withdrawn when the local political landscape shifted in 2010. However this left an appetite for participatory democracy amongst local residents, as one interviewee with close ties to the City Council noted:

... the community assemblies had two main components to them, firstly there was the funding that they were able to distribute that has now gone to the ward council level to be distributed and secondly there was getting all the councillors from the general area in one place ... to have a chat and share issues that were important to them. I know when it was proposed to abolish community assemblies there was a very strong feeling ... that they would very much like for the participatory element to be retained with some officer support in terms of dealing with queries and doing research and generally making sure people could be heard, even if it meant that all that local funding was actually lost (18)

The withdrawal of the Community Assemblies left a dearth of participatory spaces within the city, despite interest from both communities and local councillors for a dialogue. It is notable that what was missed was the connection between councillors and the public, rather than the specifics of funding allocation which are now dealt with centrally by the City Council. The same participant noted that the removal of the Assemblies was the reverse of what was desired: 'they've retained to be fair a decent amount of funding for local groups and the third sector but they've removed that participatory element almost entirely' (18). This would suggest that the inclusionary nature of democratic participation - the links created between governors and governed - assumes primacy over concrete decision making capacity. The Community Assemblies created a sense of unity between local government and local citizens, but in contrast, during the early stages of the NDP, participants recounted that the process placed them at odds with the City Council, exacerbating a slow and bureaucratic application process. The feelings of powerlessness reported - for example, the inability to force the Council's hand over the University objection - was reminiscent of the aforementioned motivations for participating in the first instance. However, due to the resilience of the community and sustained efforts of the Forum, the nascent stages of NDP production, such as community events and consultation continued during the protracted application process.

Community engagement and consultation

As in Fairholme, NDPs are often led by a small group of individuals, so achieving appropriate consultation is vital in harnessing the community voice and achieving a democratically legitimate plan. Due in part to its vicinity to the University, Fairholme is considered a ‘fantastically skilled area’ (3) - the difficulty for the Forum however was engaging with this resource, affirming prior research that established that sustained engagement beyond a civic core is unusual (Reed and Selbee, 2001; Mohan and Bulloch, 2012). Fairholme’s difficulty was in part due to a lack of public understanding of neighbourhood planning, one participant admitted they she had not full understood what an NDP was even whilst trying to recruit other residents. The process is also resource intensive, meaning that the Forum was reliant not only on garnering the views of the wider community but also on their expertise and volunteer hours. Participants recognised a natural limit to wider participation due to the focused effort require to produce the NDP:

... because you either have to have a lot of time on your hands and/or be very passionate about the project you’re working on to put that much time and effort into driving it, so to get loads more people involved and actively involved, is really challenging unless there’s a real pay off at the end (18)

... the wider community? Well I suppose it’s like most things isn’t it? 95% of people aren’t really engaged, well they certainly aren’t engaged in the form of active thinking about it, contributing to it or turning up on any kind of regular basis at all. I’d be surprised if more than 50% of people knew about it (16)

The rhetoric of the Big Society was invoked despairingly by a number of participants, and contrasted with the reality within the community:

... it’s easy to say perhaps in the Big Society everybody volunteers to do something but you know it’s tricky to find that volunteering time - and as I say, I don’t have networks in [the area] where I could say: ‘do you fancy doing this?’ (3)

Such a view marks the contrast between government rhetoric and frontline reality, but importantly participants recognised that the active citizens at the core of the initiative who drive the process and maintain momentum are necessary even if they at the expense of a more representative process. This interpretation was likely facilitated by the support arrangements discussed below. More widely, there was a feeling amongst the Forum that wider engagement was unlikely unless residents had a personal interest in planning issues: ‘you’ve got a personal interest about how it affects your property and your life etc. which is slightly at odds, could be slightly at odds with the overview of the plan’ (3). A further factor that determined wider engagement was existing networks and community cohesion. One respondent who had experience with working with other community

groups outside of Fairholme made the observation that the existing community relationships had a significant bearing on engagement levels:

Whereas obviously in [Fairholme] that sort of tight knit community is missing a bit ... if you didn't attend and event or a steering group event you wouldn't feel that guilty, whereas I think if you miss them in [another area known to the participant] everybody would be like: 'Oh they didn't go to the event, they didn't attend' - so maybe that sense of duty, a bit that's involved (5)

Whilst participants noted that 'there are a lot of people who care about the [local] environment and contribute to it sensibly and positively' (17), the area evidently lacked the cohesion that might have brought about wider participation. The importance of community networks was noted by one participant who personally did not feel connected to the local community, but recognised that the NDP process may facilitate better links:

I haven't got those links at all so I do feel the lack of those sort of in depth links but of course being part of the process builds those links ... if we'd had those links 10 years ago we might have known people better and you could have handed them things out when you went to the parties and things but it's just not possible when you've not had that (3)

Despite the professional backgrounds of the Forum members, there was a lack of experience in community organising; the same participant noted that community development practices should precede participation in NDPs in order to expedite the process. This lack of community networks beyond the civic core prevented the Forum from engaging with hard to reach groups, notably students, during the early stages of the plan. Despite the community's small geographical area, analysis of early consultation efforts (notably a questionnaire distributed at local events) reflected the homogeneous nature of the respondents. This effectively rubber stamped the pre-decided policy issues decided pre-AGM, but lacked a fully representative sample of the community. One participant noted that the early consultation processes were not as exhaustive as they might have been:

... you want to tick the boxes but do you really want to go above and beyond, and open up a wider debate than you need to if your end game is to get something out there that reflects a certain view? (1)

The inference being made was that there is no incentive for a community group to expand participation to fellow members of the community beyond a minimum acceptable level since it dilutes the authority of those running the process. This speaks directly to political rhetoric espoused during the early stages of the post-2010 localism agenda which called imbued a rational desire

amongst communities to achieve a tangible end product, often at the expense of slower participatory practices (Parker et al., 2015).

Consultation with the wider community is one of the largest costs associated with NDPs; for this reason areas without ready access to funds, consultation events are a difficult task. In parished communities, steering groups have been able to ‘piggyback’ on consultation evidence previously collected (especially through similar initiatives such as Community-led Plans and Parish Plans), however for newly established Forums there is often no immediate source of such information, and this was the case in Fairholme. With little information forthcoming from the Council (despite requests for help with housing and demographic data as well as mapping tools), the view was taken that evidence would have to be collected by the community from scratch. The difficulties in garnering community views meant that there was little innovation in the community consultation, despite the fact that the Forum recognised the need for innovation as a means of challenging seemingly intractable issues in the area:

... from what I’ve seen so far, there doesn’t seem to be a lot of appetite for garnering more than the bare necessity of opinion, or from dissenting groups or groups with different interests ... not just necessarily [here] at all, but what I’ve seen of these neighbourhood planning groups is that often they will do the bare minimum they need to do in terms of consultation with people who might not necessarily be singing off the same hymn sheet as them (1)

It’s one of those things about the area that it actually ... covers a lot more than that group of people who have been active for a long time and I think it’s up to us to try and target people from the other bits who perhaps haven’t been [as engaged] ... you know it’s off the wall and it probably wouldn’t work but it’s somebody coming in with a bit of lateral thinking, without that, a lot of the issues here a very intractable (3)

The levels and appropriateness of evidence required are adjudicated by an independent examiner when the NDP is submitted - this was a worry for the participants, and a further source of uncertainty:

... it could be difficult, I mean obviously we’ve looked at 50 plans that have gone through, we’ve looked at some of the examiners’ reports, there are some which are setting some pretty high bars for evidence ... in so far as we want to propose things which are fairly radical, then we might want stronger, better and well interconnected with the Council evidence ... some of the evidence we want the Council keeps very poorly, so HMO [Houses of Multiple Occupation] details for instance is extraordinarily bad in terms of the central database (16)

I think the ultimate aim is clear it's the steps to get there that aren't. We have some outside adjudicator who's going to come and review everything, which sees it's done properly, without understanding what they're looking for we could be not getting the right things along the way and we could have a situation where we can't formulate a policy because we don't have the right information and we don't have the time to go back and get it and that's a worry (14)

The lack of guidance on evidence collection had the effect of undermining participants' confidence in their actions. The Forum had clear preferences for quality of life issues such as access to green spaces and cleaner forms of transport, but as the above quotation indicates the sticking point was how these aspirations could be translated into policies, and what evidence was required. The Chair made clear that the better the process of community consultation, the better tailored the plan would be to the community's aspirations (also increasing the chance of passing the community referendum). However, despite the desire to consult, the issues of resources and representation were again central:

If we can get the information out there, but to do that requires money, time and effort - and we might not have them. It's all [a] resource issue isn't it? The more people that know about it the more people will be able to help and give their opinions ... we need to do more but it's whether we we've got the resources to do more (11)

... that kind of proactive outreach, although it's much more labour intensive, it's probably the best way of not the only way of getting hold of data ... if you only plant yourself somewhere [like a local community festival] and expect people to come to you, you're never going to get a representative sample (18)

These concrete limitations create boundary conditions within the regulatory framework of neighbourhood planning. Participant interviews reflected their constrained agency through a concentration on technocratic considerations and questions of resources, as the pragmatic quotations above show. Community consultation is a key means of igniting small-p political issues such as local neighbourhood problems - but on a symbolic level, it may also reveal points of contestation between the governors and the governed. The perfunctory nature of consultation in Fairholme was brought about by the pragmatic reasons relayed above, but it was a reflection of the underlining rationalities of post-2010 localism that seek to achieve greater local efficiency without disturbing underlying political antagonisms (Tait and Inch, 2016). The displacement of politics that limited consultation represents was evident for one participant, whose previous experience of the LPA had caused him some personal grievances:

It's a cold process, they're [the City Council] just doing their job - I try not to get personal about it but as it's effected me personally it's hard to separate the emotions from the objectiveness ... We're in their pocket a bit, it's a political game isn't it?
(11)

The description of the political game as a 'cold process' denotes the confinement of politics recognised by Honig (1993: 2) as 'the juridical, administrative, or regulative tasks of stabilizing moral and political subjects, building consensus, maintaining agreements, or consolidating communities and identities'. Despite this limited political interaction with the wider community, the Forum did manage to collect some consultation based-evidence: one Forum member noted that 'the neighbourhood plan will be a good snapshot of the mood' (18) and a local councillor confirmed that many of the issues that arose from the consultation chimed in with the results of his own canvassing (although he doubted that the NDP overall would reduce his personal workload regarding individual planning applications). The lack of evidence forthcoming from the Council and without relevant evidence from previous community work, the Forum had to forge their own path regarding community consultation and evidence collection. Despite the depth of professional expertise in the area, the community appeared to be feeling their way through the process, often referring to anecdotal evidence from other neighbourhood planning groups as a reference. Despite the Council's legal 'duty to support', their involvement in the formative stages of the plan significantly slowed the community's process and did little to reduce uncertainty.

Support and co-production

The speed of NDP production and the quality of subsequent plans is largely affected by the level of support offered by LAs, particularly in the form of co-production (Parker et al., 2014). The recent interest in co-production is arguably one of the few positive storylines in the public service narrative of long-term austerity (Durose et al., 2014). The concept can be defined as 'the provision of public services (broadly defined, to include regulation) through, regular, long-term relationships between state agencies and organized groups of citizens, where both make substantial resource contributions' (Joshi and Moore, 2004: 1). The recent interest in co-production is due in part to being austerity-compatible - but since the concept is rarely adequately defined it is laid open to colonisation by vested interests. Within the context of localism, the emphasis on delivering services that are locally appropriate means that uniformity in quantity and quality of service provision across jurisdictions is also highly unlikely.

Despite co-production becoming an important concept within the narrative of neighbourhood planning (Parker et al., 2015), the Fairholme community members reported little or no co-produced activity. The principal partners for communities in neighbourhood planning across England have been the LA and private planning consultants. Early on Fairholme decided against the use of consultants and Forum members expressed surprise when told that upwards of 70% of neighbourhood planning groups were using the private sector in this manner (Parker et al., 2014). As will be discussed in the following chapter, some communities have employed planning consultants to conduct the whole NDP process, reducing the communities' contribution to supplying local information. When asked why the Forum had decided against this, the Chair reported that there were two basic reasons for this: first, Fairholme is under no development pressure and so few substantive planning issues were tackled by the group (for instance the need to produce a Housing Needs Assessment or Strategic Environmental Assessment); and second, the large number of professionals and academics in the community provided an excellent skillset on which to draw. However when exploring in more depth, it was apparent that the group also had some concerns about losing control of the process by bringing in outside consultants, one participant noted that she 'would be worried or concerned that the essence of things would get lost in that process if you turned it over [to a consultant]' (14).

A more accessible co-production partner for the community was the LA. The City Council evidently struggled with the new legislation, and participants reported that whilst they paid lip service to supporting the community (as they have a legal duty to do), this had not materialised in action:

I think generally they are supportive but in a sense, so although they say they support what we do, they don't actually support in action (14)

Another participant believed that co-production was precluded by the *raison d'être* of neighbourhood planning, which was to 'pit LAs and local communities against each other', so that whilst there was potential for co-production it 'would go against the whole founding principle of neighbourhood planning' (1). Other perspectives pragmatically preferred to interpret the LPA's seeming indifference to support arrangements as attributable to financial constraints:

I can understand to some degree that the Council and other councils have been under the cosh and one doesn't know if one should pay so much money for local democracy if the cost of that is pre-school groups or looking after the old and so on, it is a balance ... Tonnes more could be done [to engage communities] but under cash constraints it's difficult, there used to be a number of Community Assemblies where ward councillors met with community groups and others, and they ditched those as you know, and now you're hard pressed to actually find a ward councillor these days (17)

I think it's pretty bleak that neighbourhood planning has come in at a time where funding to LAs has been cut so dramatically and where planning policy teams have been halved in the past few years in a lot of councils ... when neighbourhood planning came in, rather than planning policy departments being cut, they should have each have had to create with increased central funding two roles for people that exclusively worked on neighbourhood plans, because at the moment you have people who are doing it almost as a part time job within their actual job, which used to be the actual job of two people (1)

The individuals we've been in touch with have been fantastic, [a planning officer] seems to be very professional, very interested, but you know that they're just busy busy busy aren't they? ... if you see the LA as welcoming neighbourhood planning, if they do then if they could be slipped a bit of cash to organise things I think that would be the best thing (3)

The last response is emblematic of how individual LA officers and elected members are often seen to be helpful and engaging, whilst institutions are regarded as unwieldy or intransigent. The presence of elite allies can be a significant boon for communities when navigating local governance structures, and such actors are often key in opening up the political opportunity structure (McAdam, 1996: 27). In Fairholme whilst individual Council officers was regarded as helpful by the Forum, a 'wider elite' appeared unwilling or unable to facilitate the community:

We tried to get an MoU from the Council about what support they would provide, and how long it would take to get our designation and we never got that, and as you know the designation took ages, they really have not provided us with much support ... I don't see any evidence of it changing (14)

Such an institutional alignment was at odds with Government rhetoric concerning support arrangements for engaged communities (DCLG, 2011b) and this appears to connote a relatively closed opportunity structure. This may reflect the local attitudes in Fairholme where the NDP was understood by some to 'pit the Forum against the Local Authority' (1), which echoed early Conservative Party (2009) rhetoric stipulating a 'control shift' from regional government to communities. Crucially the devolution of power through post-2010 localism- shallowly conceived as being simply being 'redistributed' from central government to communities - disenfranchised local government (both financially and rhetorically) including local planner officers (Gunn and Vigar, 2012). This contrasted sharply with the double devolution under New Labour that fashioned a vital facilitatory role for local government, principally through partnership working (Mulgan and Bury,

2006). This policy shift has engendered a 'sink or swim' approach to localism at the LA level (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2012), that is now trickling down to frontline realities.

Whilst Fairholme was waiting to be designated, the City Council put on an invitation only workshop for communities who had expressed an interest in neighbourhood planning. This was designed to facilitate communication between planning officers and communities whilst setting out what the NDP process involved. The two hour session also touched on how the LA felt they could facilitate the process and what their immediate priorities were. For some members, this workshop was particularly useful in achieving clarity about the overall process:

One thing that was really useful in the beginning ... when the Council did the seminar, they had other groups there, I thought that was excellent and it taught me a lot about the process. If it hadn't been for that, I think I would have struggled even more with the ideas, so perhaps that's something that you know could be done a bit more? (3)

The information regarding the NDP regulations and process provided in the workshop was not new to the participants, however previously the information had been piecemeal and informally reported to the Forum. When the information was imparted by the Council it evidently aided clarity and confidence for the local residents present, even for those already months into the process. The workshop could have represented the initial stages of co-production, which is often broached through open sharing of information, offering an insight into the resources available that respective partners might utilise. However the workshop soon provided an insight into the Council's stance on localism: one officer intimated that the Council saw their role as 'regulatory not facilitatory' - stressing that their actions were predicated on 'our interpretations of central government's interpretations' - denoting the ambiguity felt by those responsible for helping deliver NDPs. Various reasons were given for this position, principally the need to complete the Local Plan despite a 'fundamental lack of capacity' (Fieldnotes, 13/03/14). The same planning officer admitted that the Council was 'lucky that more areas had not come forward' as they 'wouldn't know what to do' with more than three or four groups (Fieldnotes, 13/3/14). These issues were reiterated nearly a year later in personal correspondence (Fieldnotes, 12/2/15):

The key issue for our groups is around conformity with strategic policies of the Local Plan, and availability of up to date evidence whilst we are in the process of producing a new Local Plan and our current policies are quite old. It is difficult for us to advise on what a plan should include as far as level of growth for a specific area is concerned, until there is more certainty on the direction of the new plan. For housing policy (and any site allocations) in particular the advice is to wait for updated evidence and to work in parallel with us, and we do understand that this is frustrating for groups who are keen to maintain community momentum.

The lack of a Local Plan created uncertainty for the LPA who unable to provide advice to local community groups as most issues were highly contingent on future policies. Only so much can be read into the Council's attitudes regarding neighbourhood planning, as representatives from the City Council declined to be interviewed for this case study (Chapter 6), however two community members with inside knowledge of the Council reiterated the lack of institutional will behind neighbourhood planning:

It's a mixed bag, the planning department have been really quite positive, it gets people off their back in some ways and I think they have respect for the group and recognise it's not a NIMBY operation, amongst the professionals I'm sure there is support, amongst the old guard in the Council I'm less sure, I think they're being dragged into it screaming (17)

Another participant was even less positive:

The Council is incredibly bureaucratic and self-centred, I'm not a big fan. They had a few leadership changes that didn't help, 960 days [to become designated], they don't move fast, it's not a priority of theirs. Although we're trying to work in line with the planning department ... in my experience they like the path of least resistance, they're more likely to go with the professional than the householder, because the professional has more money and more expertise ... that's why we get steamrollered (11)

The duty to support is currently under revision by DCLG as early research has suggested that the guidelines about what this constitutes are too vague (Parker et al., 2014) - in Fairholme, the Council's wariness had precluded greater support being given to the Forum, as one resident indicated that the regulations are 'quite as open is not very helpful' (16). The Council's lack of enthusiasm was mirrored by some members of Forum who were reticent about greater co-operation for fear of being 'co-opted' into existing agendas:

I don't think I'd want someone from the Council to help us with that [writing policies] because I don't trust that they wouldn't have another agenda. Not that it would necessarily be [the Council's] agenda, but it would be the agenda of however they were taught to do things or whatever, which may not square with the way our community works (14)

This chimes in with national studies that found that community ownership is a key motivator for neighbourhoods across the country (Parker et al., 2014). However the fear of co-option by this interviewee, reflecting her own belief that citizens are too trusting of government, further demonstrates that the government rhetoric concerning local knowledge and crucially community ownership, had framed an participation as an opportunity to take control at the expense of local government rather than in a more co-productive relationship. This openly reflects the ethos of the Big Society that was underpinned by the notion that society could better prosper without the state's distorting effect on individuals and communities (Levitas, 2012). This evokes a form of localism where localities are the site of Burke's 'little platoons', or de Tocqueville's 'civil associations' - and reflects wider government discourses that portray state and civic activity as a zero sum game (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012). The community interest was a particular concern to the same participant who questioned whether those not living in the area could truly represent the desires of the community:

... it comes down to the problem that we find when we bring volunteers in from outside the community to help us, nobody cares about our community more than the people who live here ... an outside party will maybe not intentionally, but they just don't have the same inner need to make their own community great, it's not their community (14)

Such a perspective pre-empts meaningful co-production by precluding the ability of 'outside' parties from aiding in the community-led process. Despite the difficulties encountered, the Council's actions were interpreted by the community in light of their own experiences in getting to grips with the neighbourhood planning regulations - in short, how to interpret the new legislation was not just a priority for the community, but also for the Council.

There's a lot of supposition that it's incompetence, but the legislation was new and it had never been brought up here so they were dealing with a new beast ... which is very different from how the council is used to working. They're not really used to taking local concerns as a guiding principle but rather as something that they consult when they have to (14)

Because of the newness of this, it's new to the LA but it's new to England, it's a whole different ball game, so I do think you need some face to face discussions and as part of that forming a reasonably positive relationship in which is trusting is important (16)

Despite evident frustration in the Forum at being held up by the Council's actions, there was surprising amount of patience and understanding that they too were coming to terms with new legislation, even if this was partially precluding a way of a new culture of partnership working.

'Empowerment' and the political opportunity structure

As relayed in Chapter 4, concerted attempts were made under New Labour to target deprived areas through area-based initiatives aimed at combating various social ills, often through partnership working between communities and LAs. The Localism Act (2011) showed continuity with previous ABIs in its desire to enforce centrally agreed targets (housing allocations in the case of neighbourhood planning), but unlike New Labour's targeted approach, neighbourhood planning shifted the framing of participation as a proactive act chosen by communities themselves. Taking control of local decisions would now be on a first come, first served basis - with insights from 'nudge' theory applied to promote the 'home-builder' as a responsible form of citizenship in contrast to the 'NIMBY' (Inch, 2012). As we have seen, neighbourhood planning has sought to integrate collective participatory democracy into the top down plan-making carried out by LAs (Brownill and Downing, 2013), but beyond this it is important to consider how accessible the present political system actually is for participants. A number of elements of the political opportunity structure have been discussed in this chapter, including the (in)stability of elite alignments that precipitated the Council's cautious response in supporting the Forum, and linked to this, a lack of elite allies for the community to call upon to enact change, as summed up by one participant:

What neighbourhood planning seems to do is it does change individuals but it doesn't change the culture of the whole body which is what's needed, if we had an individual in the council who was convinced that this was a good thing and they went and changed the culture of the council that would work but I don't think any that we do will be able to impact that unless we happen to find the right person to bring about that change internally. You know, if we changed them and they changed the council but I don't think we can directly change the council (14)

The lack of elite allies has affected both opportunities for participation (notably a lack of contact with officials that might have been used to deliberate local priorities and goals in the Local Plan) but also how participants think about their participation. Notably it has precipitated a desire to 'go it alone' (14), with participants retaining scepticism of the Council's agenda and even proceeding without the use of consultants. The Council's interpretation of their role as regulatory not facilitatory was driven by a fundamental lack of capacity within local government, whilst access to significant new external resources, prospective alliances and political realignments - all identified by Taylor (2007) as key to successful collective action - were not present. In the context of an increasingly fragmented local planning system, it remains to be seen if neighbourhood planning provide greater opportunities for community governance due to increasingly blurred lines between state agencies and communities such as Newman (2005) has suggested. The experiences of the Forum in Fairholme

suggest that greater community involvement beyond the culmination of the NDP seems unlikely, in part due to the implicit boundary conditions of neighbourhood planning (Bradley, 2015; Parker et al., 2017). This suggests a relatively closed local opportunity structure, yet participants did retain hope 'hope' for local politics (May, 2008). This may have been due to the conflicting political traditions rhetorically drawn upon by post-2010 localism presenting fissures in the opportunity structure. As Tait and Inch (2016: 188) suggest, antagonisms such as those between neo-liberal and localist elements of conservative ideology will likely play out within new participatory spaces. Furthermore, as Raco (2003b: 91) sets out:

Structures are often seen as barriers to agency, rather than constructs actively reproduced by the actions of agents ... There has been a tendency to neglect the extent to which programmes of government are internalized and translated by target communities [yet] ... in practice government agendas are far from totalizing. They are contradictory, contested and influenced by the actions of subjects who respond to government agendas in a variety of ways.

Such a reading stresses the agency of actors within the ideological confines of neighbourhood planning's 'frame' (Parker et al., 2017). Beyond neighbourhood planning, the 'collaborative' planning system envisaged by the Conservative Party (2010b) has undoubtedly opened up new avenues for alternative forms of knowledge and power, although recent analysis suggest that such opportunities are less suited to communities than private interests, as Raco et al. (2016: 218) explain:

... the shift to localism has, in practice, opened up numerous opportunities for the mobilisation of expert knowledge and power, much of which is derived not from civil society but from the private sector ... Despite the rhetoric of co-production, pluralism, and localism seen in the planning field since the mid-1990s, we argue that the structures surrounding development planning have been transformed into a delivery-focussed system that mimics the structures and functions of private-sector organisations.

The exclusion of private developers by many neighbourhood planning groups, including Fairholme suggests that such a 'delivery-focussed' system may not be so easily overlaid to NDP spaces. For example, there is emerging evidence that suggests NDPs can be realised as an 'appropriation of space' and a movement towards 'the proponent of sustainability and social purpose in house-building' (Bradley and Sparling, 2017: 116). It is important to note that such a position must be tempered by contrary evidence elsewhere (for example Field and Layard, 2017) and the intrinsic conservatism of the neighbourhood planning process (Parker et al., 2017) - however, hope remains for progressive participation by means of co-option. In Fairholme, due to an early and proactive interpretation of neighbourhood planning (principally by the Chair) as a means to secure certain

quality of life objectives within the community, a number of participants were able to report instances of empowerment. Understandably, those closer to the centre of the process tended to feel more empowered and enthused by the potential of the NDP than those whose participation was more occasional. One participant linked this feeling to the process of translating local knowledge into concrete change:

I think it is an effective vehicle [for local knowledge], it does something that wasn't necessarily the case before, I think neighbourhood planning came to an extent out of pressure from communities on politicians who thought that they would have input in the consultation stage with the council (1)

A further core member indicated that neighbourhood planning constituted 'radical, empowering legislation' (16). In line with many participants' motivations for undertaking the NDP was juxtaposed with prior, individual experiences with the Council and in particular the planning department. As one participant noted, it was the difference between being 'listened to' rather than being 'trodden over' (5). However feelings of empowerment were neither ubiquitous nor total, but rather scarce and transient, as one resident reflected:

When I see people getting excited about the plan and really coming together, that energy passes to me and it makes me feel that we as a group can actually do something, and that's empowering - other times when it's just a slog and we're banging our heads against the wall about legal objections or the University blockading things it's very unempowering, or a neighbour saying 'what about my extension' - I think we've clearly failed here (14)

This response encapsulates the lived experience of empowerment as episodic. Despite the inherently positive feelings of acting collectively, when such actions are circumscribed by contact with traditional power structures, the feeling is lost:

... the only way that it's [the legislation] not empowering is in the sense that the planning system is not empowering, a developer can appeal against an unsuccessful development, but you can't appeal against agreement with a development (16)

... disillusionment is always a danger, and it comes down to whether [central government] are actually committed to changing the role of government or not and why they're committed to it. Sometimes I think they are committed to it [localism] because they think it will save them money or it will give them some political gain, rather than for the actual reason it should be which is to help communities have a voice ... If we got a statutory plan that would be much more empowering than the community development ... [if the plan passes referendum] it would encourage people to do it again, or to not be afraid to try to change how the council works with us (14)

This understanding of the NDP process as immanently empowering despite the injustices of the wider planning system is a significant one, as it promotes the benefits of participation as a means,

not just an end (see White, 1996). The second response demonstrates the importance of positive messages of support from central government for communities, whose actions rely on a belief that their voice will be heard¹⁹. The emphasis on securing a statutory plan was representative of this participant's scepticism that community opinions would otherwise be acted upon. This somewhat reductive perspective on empowerment (i.e. reduced to achieving a concrete outcome) reflects both the relatively closed nature of the opportunity structure, and the coincident low expectations of citizens regarding the ability of traditional structures of representative democracy to reflect the public's view.

An alternative means of empowerment could be labelled as a 'foot in the door' (5) with the large institutions with whom the Forum was engaging. The Forum remained in the dark regarding their status post-adoption, yet the NDP has created opportunities to engage with institutions (the LA, the university, utility companies, local political parties) in ways they were unable to before. This reconfiguration of the relationship between the community and larger stakeholders does not indicate parity, nor that the community has significant leverage in their dealings, but during the NDP's creation at least it has allowed the community to exercise its voice in a new way:

Now I like community involvement - and I hadn't been involved in anything like this before - and although I can't change what happened to us, I understand the process more, I've got more contacts, [the local councillor] has been round and had a look and spoke to the planning department and environmental health ... if through the neighbourhood plan we can get planning to have some sort of human aspect, stop it from being an audit process I'm happy ... the contacts and experience mean ... I can object again on a level playing field in a language that they understand and I can speak out and speak to the local councillors and put weight behind my plight
(11)

The 'foot in the door' has been one element of the democratic education that participation affords. Observations of the Forum revealed that even highly skilled and experienced participants learnt new democratic skills (contributing to meetings, create community groups, lobbying politicians), created or enlarged networks (both intra-community and with elected officials and local government officers), and gained the confidence to manipulate participatory spaces to their own ends. Through this education, the community has maintained their 'appropriation of space' or co-option of neighbourhood planning as explored at the beginning of this chapter.

¹⁹ An example of this would be the Secretary of State upholding neighbourhood planning policies (after appeals from developers) - which has occurred in a number of recent cases (Bailey, 2017). Despite the irony of central government ministers 'recovering' contentious local cases in order to make their own decision, this does suggest some commitment to localism since the 2015 election, as well as the presence of 'elite allies' (McAdam, 1996).

Therefore despite the subordination of localist empowerment to the growth agenda (Parker et al., 2017), the Forum identified positive outcomes from their experience:

... you are a legal body which is staffed by and powered by people whose interests and motivations and knowledge lie in a particular experience, a community experience, and they can use that experience in a relatively powerful way (16)

This view describes a direct translation of Fairholme's particular community experience into a form of bottom up power. For others, the recognition of a shared experience was a form of empowerment in itself:

[Interviewer: Has the NDP created a new community identity?] Yeah and because they know the people they are connecting with have the same thoughts, they want the same outcomes ... There's more and more people getting involved in let's go and talk to [a separate local stakeholder] type events, so it's more of just connecting the people together so that they have a bigger voice than they thought they had originally and I think they just feel a great sense of power as a whole than they would have done before undertaking the whole process (5)

This was emblematic of other participants' who felt energised to act based on the premise of a shared experience. It is worth considered here what was meant by collective identity: Melucci (1996) suggests that a shared identity is one that is 'contested and negotiated through a repeated process of 'activation' of social relationships connecting the actors'. Incipient signs of this activation appeared to be present in Fairholme, both for those who did not have prior experience of community working:

I haven't got those links at all so I do feel the lack of those sort of in depth links but of course being part of the process builds those links. (3)

But also those who did:

... it has the prospect of bring people together, especially the young and old bit, my slight concern with [another community group the participant attended] is that it was a slightly old age group, and very establishment, I'm not suggesting the neighbourhood planning group is a bunch of rebels, far from it, but it has a better demographic to it (17)

This recognition of the ability of neighbourhood planning to 'bring people together' coheres with Melucci's understanding in emphasising agency: identities (re-)created and negotiated on a recurrent basis (Barnes et al., 2006: 201; Barnes, 1999c) - not by simply being, but by doing. Taylor (2000) argues that the development of solidarity with others can elicit 'vitalising' emotions such as pride and joy associated with a collective's new positive self definition. It is arguable how far an 'identity by doing' extended to the wider community given the small number of participants in the Forum -

however undoubtedly participants displayed ‘feelings for place’ (Bradley, 2015: 107), for example when establishing the neighbourhood boundaries early on:

From the point of view of the community I would stay it [the boundary] is a surprisingly strongly felt ... people do feel quite strongly about what is and isn't their area and the lines that we drew, people did feel quite strongly about it (16)

This lends credence to Burke's (1790) contention that public affections begin in our families before extending to our neighbourhoods and habitual provincial connections - and by extension the key localist conceit that communities should be able to organically recognise their own boundaries, based on their ‘affections’ (Tait and Inch, 2016). Fairholme's identity appeared to be established over the course of the fieldwork through the play of affections in ways that enhanced the community experience, however it is questionable whether this process extended beyond the Forum to the wider community (see the discussion of consultation above). Nonetheless a community identity was fostered and was at least somewhat oppositional, as the NDP was an opportunity to achieve an outcome ‘that couldn't be ignored’ (14). This is notable since identities that individuals can valorize are essential to a productive pluralist system in both deliberative and agonistic traditions (Mouffe, 2005; Barnes, Newman et al., 2003), an idea that will be revisited below (Chapter 9). Moreover, the voicing of opposition is a key means by which local officials and policy makers can be made aware of the realities as perceived by citizens. The literal and figurative boundary work performed during neighbourhood planning (Bradley, 2015) was evident in Fairholme, allowing for an emerging collective identity tied to place; however it is worth bearing in mind Healey's (2015) contention that care is needed in setting such boundary rules, as frontiers can simultaneously enable as well as (necessarily) constrain participants in post-collaborative planning practice. Nonetheless, the emerging collective identity in Fairholme evidently facilitated a co-option of the participatory space and encouraged feelings of episodic empowerment among the Forum's participants.

Conclusion

This case study has relayed the early stages of producing an urban Neighbourhood Development Plan in northern English city. It has demonstrated the contrast between the community's motivation for involvement and the stated aims of DCLG, but also revealing how these new participatory spaces created up by neighbourhood planning are open to co-option. In this case, co-option was made possible by the early understanding of the policy by the Chair - whose professional background

informed his early interpretations, principally that the NDP could be an opportunity to exercise community wishes regarding wellbeing, rather than an instrument for growth. This was at odds, or at least tangential to, the stated aims of the policy (Stanier, 2014), and a promising indication of community resilience given the relatively closed opportunity structure that was indicated. This evidence of co-option is an important step in achieving greater citizen ownership of both decisions and the participatory processes itself, and therefore implies limited citizen influence over the rules of the game. However without a greater (and more overt) say over the institutional design of participatory spaces, it is unlikely that this can be sustained beyond the adoption of the plan. What is evidently required is a further integrated participatory space that allows emerging collective identities to engage more deeply with democratic structures in ways that foster community expression and develop capacity, rather than curtailing it.

The strong central direction of the Forum also contributed to a closing down of deliberative space, with few substantive issues were discussed within Forum, and almost no deliberation with the wider community or local government officers. Finite community time and resources were consumed by understanding technical aspects of the process, an issue exacerbated by a lack of support from key stakeholders and uncertainty over the meaning of NDPs. This left little time for more exploratory intra-community discussion. Issues of contestation that did arise resulted in members leaving the Forum, rather than deliberating points of difference. At the completion of the fieldwork, participants estimated the community had a further year's work ahead of them to produce the final plan that would go to a community referendum²⁰. The community undoubtedly benefitted from a wealth of skills and considerable existing capacity as it sought to navigate the participatory space, whilst residents themselves explicated that it was the shared experience of community that lay at the core of exercising a form of collective action. This emerging form of place-based collective identity was a (somewhat) empowering experience for the participants at the heart of the process, helping to develop a resilience within the Forum that was crucial to the on-going participation of the community as whole.

However these positive findings were tempered in three key respects: first, feelings of empowerment were episodic, limited to core members of the process and were not extended to the wider community. Second, due to the bounded nature of participation on offer, positive associations and feelings of empowerment were curbed by contact with authority in the form of representative

²⁰ The plan had not reached referendum by February 2017.

structures of government. Third, participants disclosed a sense of uncertainty regarding their overall role, a feeling that was exacerbated by the local government officials simultaneously seeking to understand the new legislation. This case strongly indicates that a greater political will at local government level (probably best achieved through greater capacity and additional resources) would greatly aid the progress of communities undertaking NDPs - speeding up the process and adding reassurance. The City Council's slow response to its regulatory role, whether intentional or not, proved a risk to the on-going participation of the community and there was little evidence of facilitation on behalf of local government beyond an amenable planning officer. The findings of this case - alongside emerging research that suggests that local innovation and enthusiasm are mixed with frustration and conservatism (Parker et al., 2017) - suggests that neighbourhood planning in its current guise is unlikely to be a catalyst for wider participation or radical changes to local democracy.

Chapter 8 Participation in Neighbourhood Development Plans in England

Introduction

This chapter analyses citizen experiences of producing Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) across England between late 2010 and early 2015. This is achieved through a thematic analysis of 120 structured interviews and 9 semi-structured interviews²¹. The findings concentrate on interviewees' experiences of participation and how they made sense of their participation whilst navigating the NDP regulatory framework. As such the focus is on the dynamics of participation rather than the efficacy of NDPs as part of the wider planning system. The chapter proceeds thematically, demonstrating issues and tensions that recur across the diverse range of communities engaged in neighbourhood planning across the country. The inherent tension in localist initiatives concerning the specificity of local context and the rollout of a national policy is also reflected in this chapter. Despite significant differences in local context and the characteristics of communities, common topics, themes and local interpretations have shaped the nature of participation. It is these consistencies across community experiences that form the basis of this chapter.

The dynamics of participation were marked by instrumentality, co-production and the suppression of conflict, and uncertainty. Each of these themes serves as an umbrella for a subset of issues that reveal how the regulatory NDP process was interpreted by communities based on their own experiences, dominant political discourses and normative views of what democratic participation should look like. A central concern of this chapter is to move past the 'rhetoric versus reality' style of analysis that typifies many research findings within political sociology and social policy. Policies rarely if ever play out as policy makers intend and neighbourhood planning is no exception. Whilst seeking to move past this approach, it is important to bear in mind that many participants felt there was a discrepancy between government discourse concerning empowerment and community control, and the lived experience of participation. There was a strong and near ubiquitous feeling that communities had been 'oversold' neighbourhood planning:

²¹ Quotations from the secondary Locality dataset of 120 interviews are marked 'L' followed by an identification number, e.g. (L.45). Quotations from the semi-structured nationwide interviews are identified by a number alone, e.g. (7)

... actually I think communities have been oversold what they can do ... I think we've been over promised if you want my honest opinion (4)

I still think the message of the neighbourhood planning policy is a bit misleading, because it's certainly wasn't boundless power to the communities (2)

People feel the process is futile - it's not lived up to the community's expectation (L. 2)

A central motivation for many participants was that as statutory planning document Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) 'could not ignore' (L.27) NDPs. This suggested a widespread 'buy in' to the dominant political discourses surrounding localism, advocating a smaller state and greater local control. The promise of citizens' actions holding legal weight was seen to offset the problem of collective action - that is, the up front costs of time and resources versus the uncertain potential benefits that may accrue (Rydin and Pennington, 2000). However many participants reported persevering with the policy despite it not representing the promised 'rebalancing of power, away from the centre and back into the hands of local people' (Conservative Party, 2010b: 2). This finding indicated that rhetoric did indeed not match reality, but more importantly the widespread recognition that this political discourse was largely devoid of meaning framed the subsequent nature of participation in many communities. The discrepancy had the effect of fostering mistrust and scepticism in many respondents who were unsure that their voices would be heard. A number of Judicial Reviews made by national developers against early NDPs compounded participants' concern. The discrepancy between the political discourse surrounding the policy and many participant's understandings of NDPs added unnecessary uncertainty that often precluded more progressive messages surrounding community participation. The focus on producing watertight NDPs that could not be legally challenged also had the effect of closing down more innovative policy solutions, with a number of communities dropping community projects in case they jeopardised their plan at examination. From an early stage therefore, participant experiences - shared via emerging networks of participants, academics and practitioners - underscored the precarity of the policy. This was bundled up with known difficulties with the existing planning system, leaving little room for the emergence of alternative discourses detailing what the benefits of participation were and what effective community participation might look like. Also central to the discussion that follows is the fact that neighbourhood planning is heavily structured 'from above' (see the regulatory structure in Chapter 7) with NDPs required to conform with strategic planning policies. Crucially this means that communities cannot reduce or object to housing allocations that have been pre-determined for their neighbourhood. Before participation had even begun therefore, the

post-2010 localism agenda was seen to be subordinate to a wider growth agenda, circumscribing the plenipotentiary powers on offer and framing the ‘bounded’ participation described below.

Instrumentality

The principles of localism suggest that communities ‘should be given the greatest possible opportunity to have their say and the greatest possible degree of local control’ (Conservative Party, 2010b: 1). This trope was undoubtedly influential in many communities and despite the misgivings mentioned above, the ethos of this message imbued community participation with a legitimacy that gave impetus to many participants that had previously felt powerless in the face of the planning system. Over two-thirds of respondents in the Locality data intimated that their primary motivation was simply to have a say over decisions made locally and to ‘get things done’ (L.21). Participation was heavily marked by instrumentality and the need to complete the process as quickly and efficiently as possible, often at the expense of deeper community consultation, deliberation over community aspirations, and more sophisticated community projects. This situation arose in part due to the staged nature of the NDP process that provided targets for communities to aim for, often within a particular timeframe. This staggered chronology provided a framework that encouraged participants to maintain momentum and ‘drive it through’ (L.85) despite evident struggles to make sense of the policy in some instances. The instrumental approach is central to understanding how communities navigated the NDP process. A dialogue was established between achieving local control and working within the regulations:

I suppose that’s part of my understanding of what neighbourhood planning is ... we have to focus down on what the plan can be, in relation to what it’s allowed to be (3)

Some communities might well have not engaged on this because they didn’t feel confident enough to deal with the regulations but I think you should always have somebody on planning/legal side of things guiding them through anyway (12)

We perhaps wouldn't signed up again if we knew we were signing our life away ... there’s an awful lot of bureaucracy and the requirements were too much ... [the planning system] obscures a lot of the regulations (L.10)

The perspective that the NDP process was imperfect, but nonetheless represented the best opportunity for the community say, demonstrated the pervasiveness of discourses emphasising the value of local knowledge. One member of an active Parish Council seeking to ‘protect the village’ noted a history of difficulties with the District Council not heeding their concerns, this was contrasted directly with the concept of local knowledge: ‘we have a great local knowledge - you

can't get people in for this, we know the Parish better than them [consultants]' (L.91). An often repeated sentiment was whilst communities 'can't take complete control ... it's better than the previous planning process where we had no influence' (L.19). In this way NDP production was often underscored by a ruthless pragmatism since 'planning doesn't change in the short term so we have to crack on and finish' (L. 68). A common manifestation of (or justification for) the instrumental approach was maintaining momentum, keeping voluntary community members 'on board [to] keep coming back' (5). Participation in this sense was a balancing act between building 'a head of steam' (4) in the community and delivering discernible progress:

On the one hand, there's a good reasoning behind the process ... and the length of time intended to allow enough time for everybody who might want to contribute of comment, have the opportunity to do so, the problem is that, is when there's not that many people that want to take this opportunity, it ends up being very drawn and seemingly endless really. On one hand, I think it's got to have enough time for thinking and reflection in it, on the other hand, if it has too much time, it just loses momentum, is there a happy medium? There probably is. Do I know what that is? I probably don't to be honest (2)

If I could have one wish granted from my experience is that each group should be gifted with dedicated support person throughout the process of the plan and that person would deem knowledge and understanding of the groups' requirements and act as a mediator with contentious issues within some forums and also help keep momentum rolling to ensure plan stays on target, [there is a] danger of interest dropping (L.14)

[What have been the biggest factors inhibiting progress?] people leaving the group, the time factor and keeping up momentum and interest (L.4)

One interviewee's experience distilled a series of common themes for NDP participants:

In 2012 we were looking at Localism Act but I didn't realise the wider implication. Personally, I fell for the mantra that communities will have the power to influence planning - and I sold it to the rest of the group ... [previously] we made an objection to a planning application and we got shafted, this was not dealt with transparently, and we were unhappy with outcome, we thought neighbourhood planning would mean we have a say. There's a conflict between doing something properly and doing something full stop - to do something properly takes a long time and the longer it takes the more likely it disintegrates - you have to stick to the timeline, when we worked out the date of the referendum, we wondered how is it possible to keep momentum in [steering] group and the community - the span is too long ... There are conflicts within the public consultation, community highlighted things included in the plan but if we were to change the draft plan we would have to another public consultation, referendum would be put off almost indefinitely so we had to expedite things wherever possible (L.3)

Here a feeling that the community had been hard done by during a prior planning application directly impacted the participant's interpretation of neighbourhood planning as a system of rebalancing power. This initial understanding of the 'mantra' of community influence that the interviewee described falling for (foregrounding the 'emptiness' of the community control discourse), directly

informed a perceived need to expedite the NDP process. This highlights a number of dynamics at play: first that wider community participation is often defined by the interpretations and decisions of core members; second, despite community members highlighting issues during consultation, the decision was taken to proceed rather than delay the process further (that is, wider community input is commuted in favour of expediency); and third, the pressure on participants to maintain momentum.

Consistency in community impetus was seen as crucial in preventing tasks being duplicated and retaining awareness in the wider community, but for some communities the instrumental approach was driven by pressure from developers and prospective planning applications. Developers were largely absent from the formal neighbourhood planning process, but their presence was often felt and they were often portrayed as predatory ‘circling the village’ (L.89). In response participants saw their role as defending the community - seeking to produce the NDP before outside parties were able to secure planning decisions. This reflected a pervasive feeling that positioned communities as powerless in the face of vested interests, particularly large developers. This drove many communities’ participation and engaged effectively with the ‘official’ discourses around local knowledge and control.

The desire to finalise the plan was set against the possibility of the ceding control to the usual decision makers within the planning system, as in the absence of an NDP the existing institutional structures would continue to make decisions, often despite significant opposition and against the wishes of the community. Barnes, Newman et al. (2004: 276) have argued that under New Labour, citizens were ‘well aware of the constraints that public agencies worked under-of funding, of capacity, of having to meet central government targets-and often made excuses for the lack of action’. In a similar vein, many participants recognised how LAs often had no choice but to accept speculative planning applications due to housing pressures and central government targets. This further enhanced the framing of NDPs as an opportunity for communities to gain control despite the known costs. Whilst participants recognised the difficult position of many LAs - a consequence of the ubiquity of austerity-discourse that surrounding public service provision - an important distinction was made between dealings with individuals (local government officers and elected members) and the abstracted actions of local government as an institution. Individuals were often thought to be supportive of community actions, whereas the LPA or wider LA were viewed as less supportive: at best they were ‘slow and under resourced’ (12) and at worst obfuscatory and ‘intransigent’ (L.17):

On an individual level they've been pretty supportive but when it comes to a departmental level its more sticky - they've been a bit slow ... getting decisions has taken time, we wanted the LPA to lend us people but they have had problems with that though we got them in the end, they don't have resources I think is the main issue (L.9)

As a consequence many communities felt the need to 'go it alone' (16) and expedite the process where possible. This instrumental approach can also be seen as a reaction to the light touch approach to regulation adopted by DCLG (2012a), which was adopted to allow for 'pro-active and innovative consultation techniques' (Locality, 2013: no page). Rather than encouraging innovation however, the lack of direction, for example over how much evidence was required and in what form, was problematic for many. The freedom offered to communities in how to provide evidence for their plans had the adverse effect of creating pressure to find the 'right' way of generating evidence:

I think the light touch is a good thing, but it's daunting spending a long time working on it. The big question is where do you go if it fails? You're going to make a lot of people unhappy if nothing happens I think (L.4)

The only difficulty was judging how much evidence to collate (L.55)

I'm pretty clear on where we're going with [the NDP], I'm just not sure we'll have what we need when we get there! (14)

I'm no newcomer - couldn't have imagined what needed to do for this [evidence collection]. Overwhelming – don't know how any group would be able to do this without professional support from planning experts (L.44)

The process would be substantially improved is DCLG gave advice to groups and had an arbitration service where disputes could be resolved (L.103)

I'd emphasis the shift from laissez faire to more clearly led guidance and again it's this move from centralism to localism, I guess I'm calling for a more clearly outlined vision [and] some encouragement for the less enthusiastic partners to get on board - there's no precedent as yet - a lot of visitors are enthusiastic but then they realise how much work there is and they back off, it's all a big change for everyone (L.7)

... in some ways you want slightly tighter parameters, because being given an awful lot of free rein in that case we didn't quite know what to start with, where to begin (2)

The lack of advice on evidence collection was tied directly to central government's desire to cut red tape (DCLG, 2011b: 1). This manifestation of the 'Big Society not Big Government' trope had direct consequences for the practice of participation, often adding time and expense as communities sought to find answers, and closing down the opportunity for greater community deliberation and community development activities. The lack of a strong central direction was juxtaposed with legalistic approaches taken by some LAs who were 'listening to the legal argument not the light touch, planning approach' (L.105). The result of the sandbox approach (that is, restrictions on what

decisions can be made, but the freedom to produce as detailed or concise an NDP as desired) initially paralysed this community as they did not know where to start. This underlying uncertainty undoubtedly fostered the instrumental drive of participants to complete their NDPs. This manifested itself in a strong message in favour of pro forma documents or templates for aspects of the NDP. It was argued that tools can be used to help structure plans, spark ideas and give communities confidence to follow their own agendas, or even just overcome the difficulties of 'staring at blank page' (L.108):

... templates are wonderful, most people are amateurs, learning as we go along (L.28)

One simple document for guidance for template would be a very good start - break into types, basic parish, commercial development, housing developments - can't generalise too much but a basic land use version would be great (L.56)

I'm sure that [templates] would help - there's a hugely important precedent now emerging that other groups could use (L.7)

We're looking for something in layman's terms, plain English - a guidance, a template of everything that needs to be put into the plan - an ideal timetable would be useful - a typical outline (L.91)

The support for templates was tempered by a coincident desire for adaptability and flexibility to ensure that local variations could be accounted for and creativity was not stunted. The use of templates was emblematic of a larger theme within participant responses: stressing the need not to stifle or constrain local innovation, specificity and beliefs about the best way to envision the future of communities - whilst providing the enabling factors that produce and sustain active participation:

I'm worried that some are too simple and some are too complicated - so it's striking a balance, guidance might be better, people forget to think for themselves when they have templates (L.120)

Yes [to templates] but simple ones! But yes, without certain individuals we would have needed something like this - it might have taken away our creativity a little bit - a model would be more useful, timelines would be great, a visual thing rather words (L.15)

I think headlines is fine, if you do too much you negate the local issues, you can't be too prescriptive and stop innovation. It's the generic headlines you need or an example of the community consultation statement (L.20)

The desire for templates reflected the complexity of NDP production and the uncertainty within communities about the how to participate in light of the sandbox approach. These processes permeated participatory spaces, often absorbing community time and energy. The light touch approach was meant to encourage innovation by not confining communities and allowing them to

interpret the legislation as they saw fit, but it had the unintended affect of destabilising participants who want to achieve the most effective route through the process.

Burdens

The instrumental approach of participants was also underscored by the burdensome nature of the process. More than 7 out of 10 respondents in the Locality dataset claimed the process had been more burdensome than expected. Difficulties broadly fell into two groups: ‘jumping through the hoops’ of the formal structure of the NDP process (e.g. consultation periods and other regulations), and the ‘learning on the job’ necessary to navigate the process. The former relates to the regulatory structure of the process:

... [the] process is fine, but need to jump through hoops, just wish hoops didn’t get smaller (L.45)

We sometimes feel there’s a huge expectation for lay planning people to get their head round some of these quite technical parts of the exercise - the further you go on the worse it seems to get ... hoops you have to jump through keep coming up (L.85)

... we send out regular newsletters and have plenty of support now, still some people not interested, probably now they have more understanding about the hoops we have to jump through (L.34)

There’s a huge amount of frustration over the process ... the hurdles are too high (L.19)

Government should be more trusting of local people ... seems like quite a lot of hurdles to overcome and it could all end in disappointment - there’s a fear there that it might fail and it may create conflict (L.36)

The ‘hoops’ reported by participants referred to the multiple consultation periods built into the process, the necessary conformity with existing planning policies (the Basic Conditions) and the possibility of conducting complicated planning procedures such as sustainability appraisals (SAs) and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs). Whilst participants undoubtedly found adhering to the formal regulatory structure burdensome, there was also a recognition that these are necessary in terms of due process in order to become a formal legal document. As with the desire for templates that did not curb local innovation, a balance was sought between the ease of the process and the need for plans to be legally sound. The second major burden was the steep learning curve required throughout the process. This was evident in many communities, even highly skilled ones, but the learning curve was not limited to communities:

... everyone is in a learning curve, consultants, planning officers etc. - they have a better grasp [than us] but still learning' (L.34)

I wondered who was leading whom at first, [we] had a bit of conflicting advice, everyone was learning - not a negative comment just a fact (L.56)

... to begin with [the consultant] was just as confused as we were - support was very welcome but very confusing ... all learning as we going along. Support has been second to none over latter stages of it, but at start they were confused which caused us to get confused (L.98)

The balancing act between becoming expert in the requisite skills and adhering to the regulatory framework was central to participants' experience, and left little time for reflection on the process overall.

A common line of argument amongst participants was that despite the regulatory burden of neighbourhood planning, obtaining some say over future decisions in the neighbourhood was better than none. Such arguments should be treated with caution, as Michels and de Graaf (2010: 489) have demonstrated, the exclusion of certain 'quiet voices' can lead to a lowering of public trust and a diminishing in the overall quality of democracy. Moreover, the potential for participation fatigue demonstrates that people have a finite amount of time (and patience) to engage in such activities, so a poorly conducted initiative may disincentivise future participation. If participation has an educative function in teaching how citizens might perform democracy (Pateman, 1970), then it follows that poorly designed or exclusionary processes will teach citizens inferior ways of going about democratic practice. Consequently excessive instrumentality and accepting some say over none, should be treated with caution if the full benefits of participation are to be realised. A more positive argument for the future of participation is that NDPs centre around specific and identifiable issues within a neighbourhood. This ensures that participation has a highly pragmatic orientation that communities can coalesce around whilst providing a commonly desired outcome. This possibility is currently being preempted by external pressures on communities - a key example being the need for communities to complete their NDP before speculative developers submit planning applications. This has created pressure that closes down the possibility of dialogic participatory spaces in a way that prevents innovative solutions to policy problems and other political issues that arise when communities come together. One participant from an affluent rural village explained how the community's financial resources had been drained after engaging a private consultant to fight a developer's speculative planning application. This not only hit the community's coffers but dominated steering group meetings and community consultation exercises: all public engagements

relating to the NDP were dominated by updates on legal advice and explaining the planning application process to interested residents. The result was that NDP became wrapped up in legal advice rather than a space of dialogue.

A further complaint amongst participants was the need to explain to other community members that neighbourhood planning cannot address certain issues, ranging from littering to school placements. The discovery of such 'other issues' are a crucial outcome of successful participatory initiatives and are often revealing of larger structural problems and ideological policy decisions. Whilst participation cannot simply be open-ended, between 'hoop jumping' and 'learning on the job' the vital exploration of wider issues during participation were heavily restricted in many neighbourhoods. Therefore whilst instrumental participation may result in more NDPs being made, it also prevents wider community development and the exploration of other policy issues. This raises the question of what success looks like for communities participating in NDPs. This was covered in some depth by one participant following a discussion comparing the NDP to a Community Plan (a prior initiative similar to an NDP but without statutory weight):

It depends entirely on how you measure outcomes, if you're measuring things done on the ground I imagine it's the neighbourhood plans [that are better] because that will be get to be a statutory plan, and things will get done on the ground that are in there, but in terms of articulating community views and making people feel good about their community, the community plan is probably the better one, because there's loads of times I've had to say to the Parish Council, you can't say that in a neighbourhood plan ... One of the really interesting things between the two is that because [the Community Plan] was non-statutory you could say what the hell you wanted, and it was 'hey let's go for this!' so we said things about bypasses and transport and we would like to see this - you can't say that in a neighbourhood plan! It was more aspirational, more innovative, more interesting in many ways ... It makes it a more accurate document in terms of what local people want absolutely
(12)

This illustrates how the bounded NDP policy model, where communities are restricted by higher tier planning policies, closes down the dialogic space preventing more innovative solutions to local problems in favour of incremental but conservative change. If the key outcome being measured is community control over the nature and design of new development, then NDPs trump Community Plans (or indeed making representations on Local Plans). However increased 'aspirational, ... innovative', and radical proposals to local problems are the opportunity costs, with the added effect that the NDP is unlikely to be entirely reflective of the community's wishes.

Instrumentality was also reflected in the pragmatic use of scarce resources with a lack of resources a critical factor in determining the nature of participation. Financial backing was frequently mentioned

by participants, but there was also a strong desire for professionals - mostly planning officers and civil servants - to recognise the volunteer status of community members:

... having worked so hard to become a community group to get approval, the partners now treat you as a complete corporate - they assume you there all the time, they assume that you lead everybody else, it's complete turnaround really ... there could be more done to understand that you're still a community group, you're still only as strong as the people you can get involved (4)

DCLG's agenda can be a pain a neck ... they tend to forget we're volunteers I think (L.15)

I'm only still here because of the work put it not because we think about about impact - demand on volunteers are unreasonable; being group secretary takes me as many hours as a full time job (L.3)

Participants expressed concern that the voluntary space was being professionalised, evoking concerns expressed in previous deliberative initiatives (Barnes, Knops et al. 2004). There was little evidence that participants regarded themselves as subordinate to planning officers and civil servants, however difficulties often stemmed from the professionalised discourses that surround planning practice. This had the effect that only a small number of community members had the time to get up to speed with the technicalities of the planning system, resulting in the vast majority of NDPs being driven by one or two individuals at the centre of the process. This often constituted a full time job, hence the predominance of retirees in key positions. However in a large proportion of NDPs, interviewees reported the community was not a sufficiently deep resource of expertise or volunteer hours to ensure momentum, and this has resulted in many communities turning to professional planning consultants for assistance.

Consultants and costs

The use of planning consultants in neighbourhood planning is widespread with approximately 70% of communities paying for external help (Parker et al., 2014). Professional services have been used across all aspects of NDP production including completing site appraisals, undertaking SAs and SEAs, undertaking community consultation, policy writing and providing general advice. In some areas, consultants have been brought in to manage the entire NDP process. This issue was explored in some depth with a planning consultant who was advising multiple communities and was a resident of an NDP community himself. A central rationality for consultant use was to depoliticise the process, adding distance between the qualifying body (Parish or Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum) and the decisions being made:

... it gives the Parish Council that little bit of 'well we didn't write in anyway!' and yes, I think that's fair enough because I am going to be a bit of a filter between what they want me to write and what I actually write ... it's a technical process, which I don't think they can do, even if you are a chartered town planner and you live in the village, it must be very difficult to be able to honestly say that that's an objective view, because that person lives in the village. I would strongly advise that at some point that an external, professional technical advice be used either to filter or just to write up, or to moderate, or whatever word you want to use ... I think if you give it to the external person, there's more of a chance, that what you're going to get is more of an objective view than giving it to the local person (12)

The experiences of this interviewee indicate that at least some steering groups wished to depoliticise the process through the use of planning professionals. Given the widespread use of consultants, this suggests a widespread interpretation of NDPs as an end (e.g. a technical planning document) rather than a means (e.g. community development). The same participant felt that the consultants did not undermine the legitimacy of the NDP, but did query the representativeness of the process: 'I would be far happier if there were a wider constituency of people commenting, involving, coming back and getting involved' (12). In this community, the role of residents was stripped back to providing local views and knowledge about their community, whilst the consultants navigated the policy's framework and undertook the substantive work. This precluded the community from developing new or deeper knowledge of the democratic practice. When asked if the community could have completed an NDP independent of external help, the respondent continued:

No, not necessarily wholly because of technical stuff ... it would have been time. It just wouldn't have worked, it's a resources question, and an organisation question and probably they would have been a bit too close to it anyway ... if anybody had drawn the plan up it would have been their pet little project that would have come to the fore, and I'm not dismissing those pet little projects, each one of those might have worked, but it would have been too close (12)

This community's approach here was the polar opposite to the approach seen in Fairholme where the community were highly wary of outside help. This demonstrates both the range of experiences of participation, but also how local interpretations radically alter the practices of participation. Whilst Fairholme's community deliberations were technically focused and avoided issues such as representation or identity, it did retain intra-community dialogue, albeit in a limited fashion. In the above case, the process represented an elaborate form of consultation rather than any close to a process of deliberation. This represents a marked departure from the explicit aims of community development and empowerment of pre-2010 community initiatives such as Sure Start and HAZs, and shows the influence of political opportunity structure in manipulating the nature of participation. In many communities, consultants have been used to expedite the process, substituting deeper

community engagement for efficiency. The widespread use of consultants ties into the instrumental designs of participants who wanted to ensure that their plans could not be exploited by developers finding loopholes or overturned by legal appeals.

The perception of NDPs as requiring technical knowledge was a common perception amongst interviewees, and this was often a source of worry and a justification for consultant use. Consultants commonly provided advice that sustained the idea of 'business as usual' regarding substantive planning issues - one interviewee who acted as a consultant noted that the local ideas were often excluded due to the uncertainty over the regulations:

... one of the guys on the steering group committee said I'm really disappointed we're not ... saying anything about traffic in this plan, and I started: 'we can say that but you know, how are you going to do this? How does that transpose into a planning policy? Will we get it through independent assessment?' He said 'I know, but we had such good ideas!' We had a really good discussion but at the end of the day I had to say I don't think I can get that through an independent assessment, and as soon as I say that they have to back off basically (12)

This not only reveals the subordination of local knowledge to professional expertise but also reflects wider structural changes to the planning system that localism has precipitated. As Raco et al. (2016: 218) contend:

... the shift to localism has, in practice, opened up numerous opportunities for the mobilisation of expert knowledge and power, much of which is derived not from civil society but from the private sector ... Despite the rhetoric of co-production, pluralism, and localism seen in the planning field since the mid-1990s, we argue that the structures surrounding development planning have been transformed into a delivery-focussed system that mimics the structures and functions of private-sector organisations.

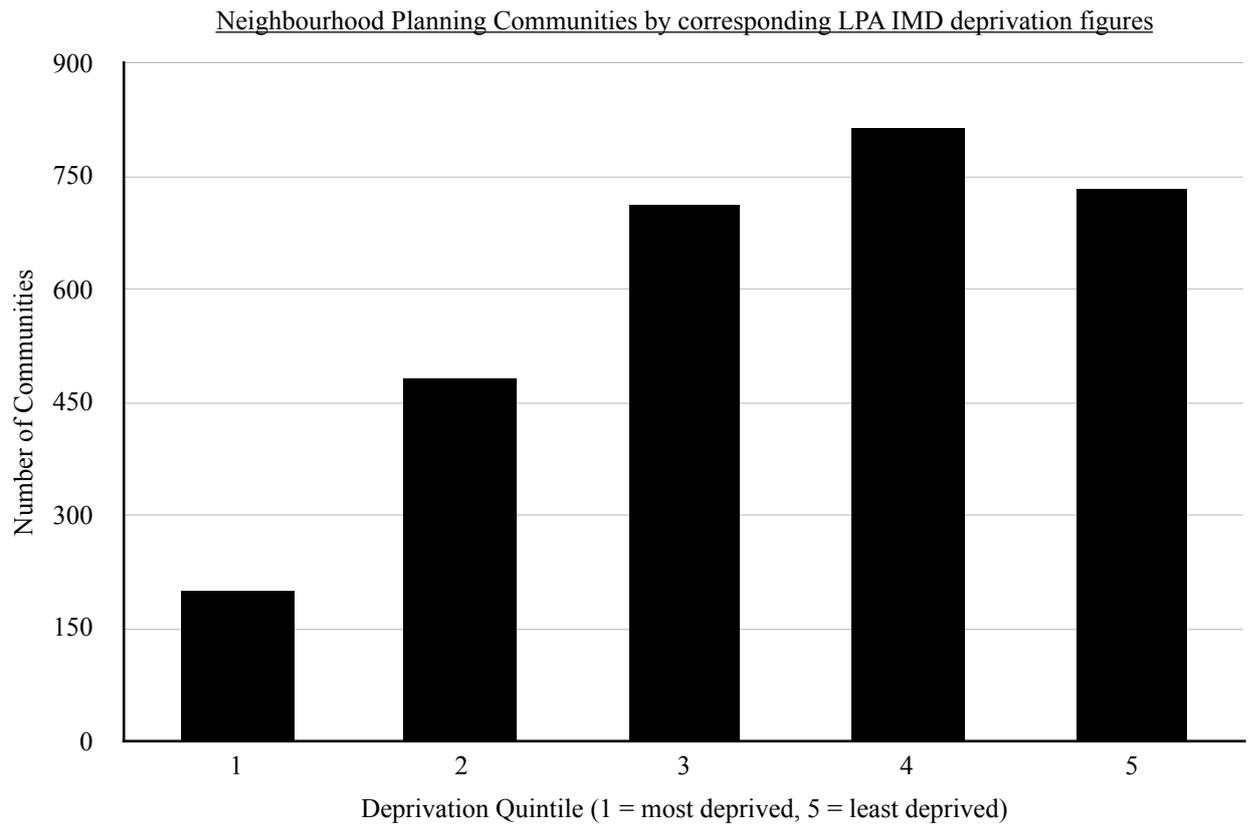
As noted by interviewees, exposure to planning officers and consultants increased the chances of community voices being railroaded or 'modulated', making authentic community voices less likely to emerge. Scepticism about working with planning consultants was not widespread but there was a recognition that working with those already intimately acquainted with the planning system was likely to curb creativity within community solutions. Research by Parker and Street (2015) has also shown how LAs can act to modulate community action through tactics such as deflection, delaying and withholding information. By virtue of their expertise, consultants had significant influence over the communities who paid for their services, with the result that local interpretations of neighbourhood planning were often scripted by consultants. In many instances this led communities to adopt conservative policies in their NDP as consultants provided circumspect advice that they

knew would work within the boundaries of established planning practice. As a result community actions were tightly bound within the norms of the planning system. The consultant in question was sympathetic to the disappointment of the community member but remarked: ‘my job is to get this bloody thing through independent assessment, I can’t promise the world and then have it fail, then everybody’s wasted their money’ (12).

Although communities notionally had control over their own NDP, without coincident attempts to legitimise local knowledge in the face of established expertise, many communities had little choice but to submit to the process of modulation. In this way consultant use framed participation, helping to dissuade and diffuse ‘challenges to the prevailing sociopolitical order’ (Parker and Street, 2015: 797) in the shape of more radical planning policies. The importance of this is emphasised by widespread use of consultants in neighbourhood planning, particularly in parished areas (Parker et al., 2014: 50); many respondents in the secondary dataset remarked that consultants were important or even necessary, with only two respondents noting that the use of consultants in some areas uncovered ‘issues of inequality’ (4) - since deprived areas are less likely to fund outside help - and that government funding for the production of NDPs would actually hand ‘public money to [the] private sector to carry out something the council could have easily done’ (1).

The use of consultants is just one of multiple financial costs that communities were expected to bear. During neighbourhood planning’s formative stages there was a fear that the initiative would be dominated by the affluent, rural communities, echoing previous research into policy capture by middle class communities who already possess the networks, skills and resources necessary to participate (Matthews and Hastings, 2013). As of August 2015, 2,944 communities were undertaking neighbourhood planning (including initial applications to the LA), and as Figure 10 shows, communities in more more affluent areas were disproportionately more likely to participate.

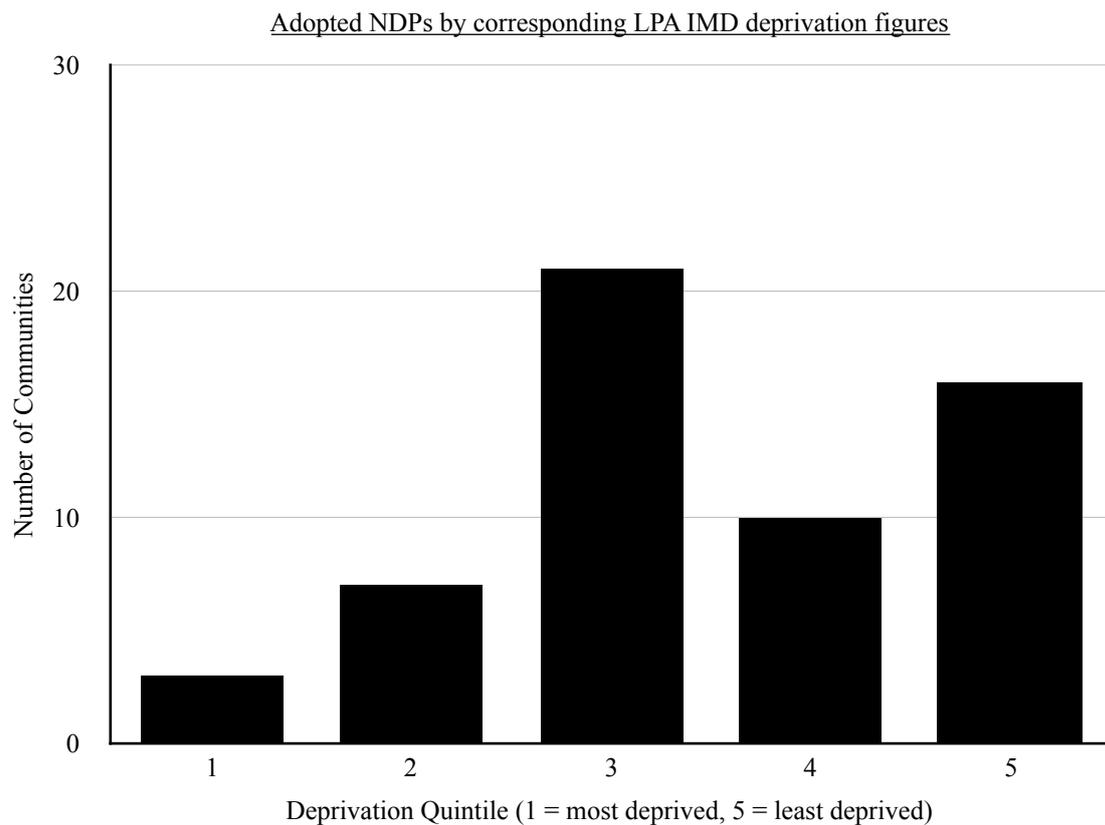
Figure 10: Neighbourhood Planning Communities by Deprivation



Data source: Planning Resource (2015)

This discrepancy is significant - the least deprived fifth of LAs were well over three times as likely to receive a neighbourhood planning application than those from the most deprived fifth. The same story can be seen when the communities who have progressed furthest is plotted against the deprivation (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Adopted Neighbourhood Development Plans by Deprivation



Data source: Planning Resource (2015)

The largest number of applications came from middle ranked LAs, likely reflecting the aptitude for, and knowledge of participatory initiatives, but perhaps also reflecting the development pressure placed on these communities. Many deprived communities remain in inner city areas that are heavily built up and therefore unable to accommodate significant development. In contrast many LAs contained in the middle fifth of deprivation have significant scope for development - this, coupled with an active middle class has driven up participation in these areas. As per initial concerns, research is now demonstrating that more deprived communities have been slower to take-up neighbourhood planning perhaps being deterred by increasing knowledge of burdens and the terms of engagement which shape the possibilities of neighbourhood planning (Gunn et al., 2015). One participant noted the concerns of many well skilled areas:

We've been wrestling for over a year and need someone to show how to [complete the NDP] - we need simple tools and direction ... everyone wants to try and reinvent the wheel and it's a waste - we're a well skilled community, I don't know how someone would be able to deliver in deprived community ... I am a Conservative, so for me to be saying this is terrible! (L.53)

There were indications that NDPs were being perceived as the preserve of leafy, rural, middle-class communities:

... it's been thought out that broadly to allow for both leafy, underpopulated, suburban, middle class communities and the same regulations apply to inner city, deprived, completely opposite type communities and I would say that, there's a need for a bit of differentiation to made at some point, somehow. Definitely I think the problems are very different ... You think it's going to means something but it does't ... the way the planning system works is so frustrating ... the processes hasn't been thought through in a way that allows communities like ours, you know that are quite deprived to participate in the same way (2)

There's a lot of bureaucracy. The key thing is not what, but how is it's expressed. We are highly atypical, DCLG need to step back and think about that. If DCLG want more areas like ours involved, then they need to address some of the phrasing and so on ... it's a very complex and jargonistic process - it's opaque and bureaucratic ... there's also a need to recognised an entirely different set of social circumstances in some communities. When they were talking about the Big Society agenda - I thought precisely which communities have you ever been in!? There's very little enthusiasm in communities like ours, I just think it's the whole thing needs to be thought through so you can sell it to a inner city community and deprived communities. To do that you need to have incentives, market it better and utilise the channels that exists, renewing funding groups for instance (L.16)

Such views foreground the weakness of the first come, first served approach, and demonstrate that the discourse of community ownership and control has not permeated all communities. The emerging figures (see also Parker and Salter, 2016) are suggestive of middle class capture (Matthews and Hastings, 2013), with poor uptake in deprived communities undoubtedly influenced by the interpretation that NDPs are an expensive undertaking for communities. The highest cost reported in the course of this research was £175,000 provided by a LA to a Frontrunner community (Fieldnotes, 20/07/13). The following response was emblematic of the need to use all financial resources available: 'we got the Frontrunner grant of £20,000 and then we got an additional grant, and had we not had that I can't quite see how we could have got through the process' (L.2). The high cost of participation was a further headache for many communities, even ones that considered their neighbourhoods relatively affluent. The funding for communities was fixed at a maximum of £7,000 (later increased to £9,000), which due to the large variations in community characteristics (existing financial resources, population size, capacity and so on) many participants felt was not enough for a large number of communities. The perceived lack of backing for the neighbourhood planning was the most common issue for participants in the Locality dataset, promoting a widespread belief that central government did not really 'believe' in the policy. The funding arrangements also highlighted the first come, first served approach to NDP delivery. The lack of nuance in support arrangements was foregrounded by a many respondents who advocated a targeted funding approach as an

alternative. The one size fits all approach gave the impression to one participant that their community was left behind:

... it's been thought out that broadly to allow for both leafy, underpopulated, suburban, middle class communities and the same regulations apply to inner city, deprived, completely opposite type communities and I would say that, there's a need for a bit of differentiation to made at some point, somehow. Definitely I think the problems are very different (2)

Financial stability was undoubtedly a significant area of concern across the majority of communities, whilst the high financial costs of participation was an insurmountable barrier to entry for some communities:

There's not enough money to do it from the point of view of the LA ... More money [would help]! Has anyone not said that? (L.116)

Pull your finger out [DCLG]! Money would help, but LA need to fund the process directly because it's helping them too (L.7)

We're not properly resourced - expected to provide evidence that stands up to inspectors, but we've no money (L.22)

Yeah, the number of times I've been to Parish Councils that say they'd love to do [neighbourhood planning] but can't afford it. A place like [here] has a massive income so they can afford it. They're funding it pretty much themselves, the £7,000 [Locality grant] is to physically produce the plan, they've done all this up to now on their own backs, so far it's cost them around £34,000 (12)

A number of participants from Frontrunner communities expressed incredulity that communities could complete an NDP using only the £7,000 Locality grant:

Money and resources - it takes a lot - the £7,000 was great but nothing compared to what was needed, you wonder how anyone does it without Frontrunner funding (L. 9)

I'm fairly sure that these days Neighbourhood Forums don't automatically get that sort of grant and I can't quite imagine how they do it without that grant (2)

The majority of participants found it difficult to estimate the total cost of their participation due to the process often occurring over many months and often in a piecemeal fashion. For many Neighbourhood Forums in particular, room hire and printing were particularly significant costs however this was often dwarfed by the volunteer hours undertaken. The majority of participants were keen not to downplay the number of volunteer hours required with many calculating this in the thousands. This was an issue of ownership for many respondents who were proud of the effort that had gone into securing their NDPs; this was a reflection of community ownership and an apparent

rejection of the increasing professionalisation of participation (Parker et al., 2015; Ishkanian, 2014) that might cause volunteer hours to be monetised.

Whilst the overall cost of participation was an area of concern for the majority of groups, the fact that no participant claimed that the cost of producing an NDP threatened the completion of their plan reflects a weakness of this study. The participants of this research were, by definition, still involved in the NDP process - but as Figures 10 and 11 demonstrate it is highly likely that costs were a barrier to entry for many more deprived communities who were not participants in this study - consequently it remains unknown just how high a barrier to participation the cost of producing an NDP really is. A minority of groups suggested that financial stability was less of an issue than support from professionals and one participant went so far to suggest that the government grant 'could be commuted for a trained person who could be attached to a group non-interfering expert that could help the organisation through the process' (L.13). Whilst support in the form of a critical friend or planner was widely desired, this was the only instance whereby such support was seen as an alternative to funding as opposed to supplementing it.

This section has shown the various ways communities undertook democratic participation in an instrumental manner, hoping to maximise community benefit within the regulatory structure of an NDP. Since the process is generally regarded as burdensome, participants were keen to pass the various check points, move through the regulatory structure of the participatory space, and 'get things done' (L.21). This, coupled with a lack of political enthusiasm from many LAs, has instilled a culture of needing to wrestle control from local government, often compounded by participants' prior negative experiences with institutional inertia. This reflects the discursive framing of localism as means by which to free local decision making from the constraints of central government - a concentration of a theme instigated under New Labour's 'new localism' (Corry and Stoker, 2002). The intertwined issues of consultant use and the cost of creating an NDP have also compounded instrumentality, since the longer the timeframe for participation, the more likely costs are to be incurred. The instrumental actions of participants also impacted on the relationship with other local partners, in particular local government officers and planning officials. Continuing to answer the first two research questions concerning the nature of participation on offer and how citizens are participating, the following section relays the ways in which communities operated in concert with local governance structures, consultants and other policy actors - with varying degrees of success - through the lens of co-production.

Co-production and Conflict

In line with a recent revival in interest in co-production in participation studies, emerging evidence suggest that NDPs are often produced through necessary acts of co-production between planning officers, elected officials, community members and consultants (Parker et al., 2015). However this study has found that such co-production remains limited and highly variable in form and coverage. Local Authorities have a 'Duty to Support' local communities undertaking NDPs but at present there is little clarity about what this means in practice, with no minimum requirements set out in legislation in line with DCLG's light touch approach. What is clear is the marked departure from the policy context developed under early New Labour administrations that saw public bodies having to demonstrate that were engaging the public via participatory initiatives (Barnes, Newman et al., 2003). In contrast, the Localism Act (2011) sets out only the bare minimum of expectations on LAs to support communities, with the result that local responses were highly variable. Some groups reported having enjoyed support from local government partners as well as other bodies such as the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), but that this was often irregular and too brief:

I think long term dedicated support for the forum, have one person dedicated once every week throughout the plan - point contact, stable and dedicated... awful a lot of confusion as to what a plan can deliver and what will be the true benefits at the end if there are really any (L14)

A lack of guidance has meant that our enthusiasm has waned a bit - I think a lot could be done with pro forma documents (L.2)

You can't set a hare running and then hold them back - it needs to be a combination of money and support (L.120)

... you should not underestimate that the process is extremely challenging - anything that can be done to simplify it or practical support for future groups would be extremely welcome (L.119)

Being tougher on LAs to support, make it easier for them to engage with the process proactively. We hear elected members putting people off doing NDPs in our area - what's the point of the legislation if that's the attitude? (L.115)

... we just need to get through technical hurdles, we know the council has had cuts but they've had money from central government (frontrunner grant) but don't think it's been used properly - the spirit of partnership that's required just isn't there ... we need support and technical knowledge - many other neighbourhood plans in the area have fallen away because of this (L.24)

Co-production was present in the development of some NDPs (although it was rarely termed as such), however the follow up interviews revealed less favourable relationships with co-production partners:

The LA haven't really read the thing, they say they engage with us and support us but actually people haven't really thought it through - it's understandable, I don't know if I would have done if I wasn't involved (4)

... a lot people do at the events always say 'well the LA are not going to listen to this, they're not going to make decisions based on what we're saying' ... whether there would be more scope for the LA to have a bigger involvement in neighbourhood planning - I think it should be defined as to how present they are, because they're going to be the ones making the final decisions in the end, based on the neighbourhood plan that's been created, with or without their knowledge or their input (5)

The Local Planning Authority will always have their own agenda, which might not be a bad agenda, but it will be an agenda ... on more than one occasion, several occasions, you know it's 'well you may say that you know but that's not what the community wants!' They're maybe not conscious of doing it, they're trying to steer us into things, and to be honest they've not been very helpful the last 2 or 3 months through possibly no fault of their own, I don't think they're being deliberately unhelpful but they caused us some serious extra work ... they played it very close to their chest and it has caused us a few problems (12)

As the above responses indicated, some participants had formed opinions of the LA before any serious dialogue concerning neighbourhood planning had begun. As in Fairholme, participation was often driven by individuals' and communities' previous negative experiences with the LPA. This framed the on-going relationship between communities and local government, and whilst dialogue with individual officers was often reported to be positive, there remained a scepticism towards LAs that pre-empted early co-operation. Despite this, LAs remain best placed to provide support to local communities although the need to produce an up to date Local Plan at a time of limited resources often took priority. Communities had internalised the persistent discourse of austerity since the change of national government in 2010, and acknowledged the lack of capacity and resources within planning departments.

Some participants expressed fear concerning formalising processes of co-production due to the shift it may cause in the relationship between formal governance structures and voluntary community groups. Suggestions such as Memoranda of Understanding between communities and LPAs were met with caution, as such arrangements were seen to place obligation on the community as well as on as local government partners:

... having worked so hard to become a community group to get approval, the partner now treat you as a complete corporate - they assume you there all the time, they assume that you lead everybody else, it's complete turnaround really. There should be more ... done to understand that you're still a community group, you're still only as strong as the people you can get involved, and you need to work hard at getting that involvement ... you forget you're talking to volunteers - they've got other lives, other responsibilities - and who don't have control over any of this stuff (4)

This process of entering a partnership with local government under the guise of co-production was interpreted by some participants as requiring lay volunteers to act in a 'professional' manner - to the extent that orchestrating an NDP can be the equivalent of a 'full time job' (L.3). The expectation that voluntary community groups might professionalise and become more entrepreneurial and business-like has been recognised elsewhere (Ishkanian, 2014: 347), whilst the disparity between partners during the NDP process bears out existing thought on partnership working from Barnes (2009: 36):

... while official discourses refer to partnerships with users and in the delivery of public policies, we know that if they are partnerships they are usually unequal partnerships and the elasticity of the concept highlights its ideological rather than analytical usefulness

The new participatory spaces created by the Localism Act (2011) undoubtedly require the reconfiguration of existing relationships between citizens and authorities. However for participants, this did not mean enveloping them in regulatory structures and formal systems of accountability. There was a recognition that citizens were often expected to act in the same way as planning officers and local government officers. The emphasis was therefore placed on communities to develop skills such as financial management and 'good governance' whilst learning new languages to translate their own perspectives into existing governing structures - continuing a trend recognised under New Labour (Newman and Clarke, 2009). Such expectations, as perceived by communities, was seen to be at the expense of extracting added value from lay participants in the form of new ideas, local knowledge and added capacity. The process of educating citizens into existing 'ways of doing' democracy at the local government level also proved to be a time consuming process, especially for those without prior experience:

Well to start with it was very difficult to understand the process because it was all in planning speak, and planning speak is not spoken by the normal person on the street, nor by myself for that matter. I guess we hadn't quite accounted for how much there was to understand about it, and there was an awful lot of reading to do which we just didn't realise was going to be the case ... And certainly the amount of work, nothing has quite prepared us for the amount of work that is needed (2)

'Speaking the language' was a regular complaint from participants. In some instances this was met with humour, but for others it was significant barrier. The requirement of communities to adopt technical language patterns - both in terms of terminology but also expression - highlights the disparity between the official discourses of promoting the value (lay) local knowledge and practice of citizens engagement with planning experts. The representation of those 'whose communication styles do not match official norms' (Barnes et al., 2007: 50) was therefore dependent on individuals'

abilities to learn and adjust to the established 'rules of the game'. Some participants perceived NDPs as a 'very complex and jargonistic process', suggesting that DCLG should 'address some of the phrasing' (L.16) if they were to 'sell' the process to deprived communities. This was a far cry from 'rules that are deliberately established to facilitate new dialogic activities' (Barnes et al., 2007: 61) - rather lay knowledges were expected to be rescripted to meet the norms and expectations of 'experts'.

In the vast majority of cases, the relationship with the LA was the standout variable in determining a community's progress. The need to learn the technicalities of the planning system also prevented participation with the wider community since it remains impractical to communicate such complexity to more than a handful of residents. This significantly limits the potential of neighbourhood planning to act as an educative tool, but perhaps more seriously indicates the professionalisation of citizen participation. If co-production is required to be consistent and long term, then it is likely that citizens as the 'new party', will have to adapt to particular ways of working already established at the local government level. However participants referred to local government officers being unaware of basic realities such as citizens participating in the NDP alongside full time jobs and family commitments. The community effort was a source of pride for many participants, however where this appeared to be taken for granted, participations displayed significant disapprobation. The approach to partnership working reported by many communities suggests that local government as an institution has failed to learn the lessons of co-option and over-reliance on the VCS sector witnessed during the New Labour period (Taylor, 2007). The professionalisation of participation through co-production was a cause for scepticism for other participants who saw the process as contradictory. Co-production implicitly assumes a workable consensus between (and within) the community and local stakeholders about the direction of travel of an NDP. In some areas, such a consensus evidently was not possible, and in a minority of cases the LA were seen to actively contribute to the breaking down of the initiative:

... people felt so unsupported, felt it was a conspiracy to be offered tokenistic input, [we] felt so shafted, felt like a conspiracy to keep do gooders (we were called do-gooders by local politicians) shouted at by developers (L.76)

The LA has Duty to Support but they're not good enough, but what are we going to do, take them to court? (L.17)

Such instances were rare, but the generalised lack of policy 'buy in' by local government heavily effected the approach of communities, many of whom recognised this reticence adding to the

processes of instrumentality and uncertainty reflected here. Processes of co-production can be extremely useful (dependent on the definition of the concept, even necessary) but without greater clarity on the how LAs should work in partnership with communities, outcomes will remain uneven. Where such important support systems are dependent on contingent factors (e.g. party affiliation of elected officials, resources in LPAs, existing relationships between community members and planning officers), NDPs are laid open to exacerbating inequality:

... the Localism Act has enabled those communities that were either very good, or potentially very good, to do something. It's probably just made the gap even bigger (4)

The composition of communities that are taking up neighbourhood planning is an important issue here, with early predictions that NDPs would be disproportionately taken up by affluent, middle-class communities being borne out (Figures 10 and 11). The evidence from participants here supports the idea that the process of completing an NDP is best suited to those with the requisite middle-class skillsets. Notwithstanding Barnes' (2009: 36) caution over the ideological rather than analytical uses of the concept of partnership working, co-production can be a useful lens through which to conceptualise the future of neighbourhood planning (Parker et al., 2015) if only to demonstrate that such practices are open both to interpretation, colonisation and in the present example neglect. Ultimately co-production is only worth pursuing as a beneficial process where certain conditions are met, secured by formal systems to ensure consistent coverage. The haphazard nature of co-production demonstrates how local interpretations of the legislation altered the dynamics of participation, but it also raises questions concerning the role of political passions and at times, conflict.

Conflict

When the details of the neighbourhood planning legislation materialised, much was made of the so called 'NIMBY's charter' and the ability of communities to oppose housing targets through neighbourhood planning (Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015). As we have seen however, the localist agenda is subordinate to the government's wider growth agenda, with NDPs designed to ensure additional development and stimulate economic growth by stipulating that they conform with higher tier planning policies. Central government has portrayed communities as collective political partners and the embodiment of a responsible public (Bradley, 2015; Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015), however

the bounded nature of decision making automatically framed communities as junior partners. The inability of communities to question or contradict centrally set targets explicitly excludes oppositional voices and negates open conflict on the central issue of new local housing. This section explores the ways in which conflict has been mitigated in the new participatory spaces opened up by the Localism Act (2011). The dynamics of participation in a number of communities is described to show how local policy interpretations, the regulatory structure, and lack of access to officials have prevented conflict. This highlights both a failure of policy makers to subscribe fully to the principles of deliberation (Chapter 4), but also the bounded nature of participation itself. The discussion also demonstrates how neighbourhood planning - despite the marked discursive shift away from New Labour's ABI policies - has failed to learn the lessons from previous locality based participation.

Despite being designed to resolve the contentious issue of housebuilding, NDPs were rarely sites of contestation and even less frequently of open conflict. However this was not due to the successful realisation of deliberative democracy, but because the regulatory structure of NDPs and the resultant local interpretations of the policy by community leaders served to limit successful deliberation and close down contentious issues. The desire for community control - a central plank of the recent discourse surrounding localism and therefore a key policy rationality - precipitated a focus on outcomes rather than process. This contrasted sharply with research into deliberative citizens' jury in Belfast where participants perceived success in the way in which difference was 'handled' rather than necessarily reaching an agreement (Barnes, 1999c). Many NDP participants saw contestation as a process to be avoided and crucially did not regard NDPs as means of conflict resolution:

I do think there is potential for conflict, the Chair manages it very well I think but you know you have people who take their stance and people have strong feelings ... but the Chair's got to steer through all of that ... I have to say of the way people act I'm surprised anything ever gets done. You have to focus on something that you can do, because if you try to do everything that you possible could for the community - there would be no end to it (3)

... if there was a major conflict, the neighbourhood plan doesn't really allow for a revolution does it? It hasn't been our case ... if there would be a major conflict it would grind to a halt and you couldn't move on (2)

The more common interpretation of an NDP's purpose was to solidify the community view in a statutory document, rather than seek to establish what that view was. This was particularly the case in parished areas where it was felt that 'piggybacking' on previous community work (for example Parish Plans or Village Design Statements) negated the need for further deliberation. Where communities did seek to elicit community views this was almost exclusively achieved by

consultation exercises, in some cases involving extensive effort, however in very few communities was the NDP framed as an opportunity for local deliberation over key issues. By virtue of interpreting participatory spaces in such a way, many communities were able to modulate their own internal tensions, preferring a pragmatic compromise even where this led to ‘watered down solutions’:

I think it’s a reality that sensibly we have to find a way to make our common home decent and if that involves some compromises ... well then we can all make it all right ... I suppose it does mean that in a number of circumstances won’t completely get your own way, and I suppose it does mean in some circumstances that you might end up with very watered down solutions which is perhaps unfortunate. I think it potentially allows for that conflict perfectly well and if run reasonably it should encourage it, potentially it has two sorts of mechanisms to sort it out, one is this atmosphere we have to find build way of coping with this and some sort of compromise which will involve compromise on different people and second there is a legal fallback, the constitution shouldn’t allow you to say ‘we don’t want any gypsy members of this group or something’ (16)

Despite the NDP ‘potentially allowing for conflict’ from this interviewee’s perspective, the likelihood of this was foreclosed by the emphasis on compromise and if necessary the legal prevention of extreme or illiberal views (as perceived by the Chair in this instance). The widespread belief that ‘you have to work with what you are given’ (4) demonstrated how the desire for control trumped concerns over the limitations of the process or crucially, attempts to change the process. The vast majority of NDPs were by only one or two individuals whose early interpretations of the policy shaped practical considerations and therefore the dynamics of participation itself, as one leading community member recounted:

... the way we had to do it was to take on board everybody’s individual [views] - because when they came they still had quite a selfish view of what they wanted to happen - but it’s our job to pick up each persons’ more selfish aspect and merge them into one - obviously none of them got a perfect result but it was sort of changed or shaped in such a way that they felt they had been listened to (5)

The process of merging community views into a cohesive community vision, by the select few at the heart of the process, necessitated a bracketing out of conflicting views through a pragmatic emphasis on homogenising perspectives by means of prioritising ‘reasonable’ positions. This is close to Dryzek’s (2005) reading of deliberation as means to allow contestation ‘at the margins’: that is, the self-policing of community spaces serves to modulate small differences of opinion whilst seeking to avoid head on conflict. In this sense many NDPs were successful, as there were very few reports of open conflict. However some participants recognised that such an approach had drawbacks:

I think conflict is always the basis for, well it's traditionally always been the basis for improvements or solutions, because without the initial negativity or issues there wouldn't be any requirement to improve whatever the issue is ... it's the negatives that people tend to get more passionate about, rather than supporting the good things that are already in existence that they want to keep or improve. and I think also when people feel that sense of anger it gets them galvanised to get involved more than somebody on the other side would - because you can see in the way people speak, how animated they get when they're shouting about negative things, that they've got such passion for solving it (5)

Political passions are often the inspiration for community action. The danger of modulating the 'initial negativity' lies in denying early motivations for involvement causing people to move away from collective participation. Many participants saw their role as a collaborative exercise between likeminded residents with the corresponding view that 'shouting about negative things' constituted a parochial response from residents who 'take things personally' and get 'very huffy', resulting in a situation where 'people weren't talking to other people [and] it all got very pathetic' (4). Such descriptions, along with the perceived roles of consultants as mediators (see above), is demonstrative of Martin's (2012: 167) acknowledgment of a 'dissonance between the norms of conduct embraced by public participants and those expected by the actors 'in charge' of deliberative processes'. In this instance however, those 'in charge' were the core community participants. Despite the clear commitment to their community by residents, such a response demonstrates a lack of appetite for contestation or robust deliberation. A key means by which community leaders tried to mitigate excessive deliberation was by establishing an agenda for meetings that concentrated on technical aspects of the process such as evidence collection, in order to 'keep people out of trouble' (16).

The problem with group meetings is with waffle, people like to talk and they can dominate the meetings. We found giving them agenda was best, it kept them on task. (L.75)

This is an example of how instrumentality manifested itself in one of the most fundamental participatory processes, the community meeting, serving to close down opportunities for deliberation within communities. This belief in what participation should look like was made possible by a confluence of factors. First, interviews revealed that many core participants' had long experience of working in their communities, often as parish and town councillors, with the result that they often felt they knew what the community wanted, negating the need for excess deliberation to determine the community interest. Second, as an initiative framed as an opportunity to shape local neighbourhoods, local identities were almost exclusively derived from associations to place rather than from experiences of difference, exclusion or disadvantage - as has been the case in many prior

ABIs (Barnes et al., 2006). In the first instance, such identities are not necessarily conducive to processes of community development and intra-community deliberation, as identity can be thought of as fixed, rather than a process of making sense of oneself or one's community.

Social movement theorists have considered the construction of collective identities through an analysis of 'identity work' (Snow and McAdam, 2000) with identities perceived as 'what people choose to be' (Melucci, 1996: 66). This emphasises agency, rather than more static concepts such as location, and is often studied through dialogue, given the attribution of social identities via the spoken word (Bradley, 2013). In Melucci's (1996) understanding identities are created and re-created not by 'being' but through action - a process that emerges out of choices made and which has a strong affective dimension (Barnes et al., 2006: 201). In the first instance for many NDP communities, local identity was perceived as fixed and essentially achieved by default, by virtue of being situated within a neighbourhood - and not necessarily the result of an active process of making sense of oneself or one's community. This was revealed in interviewees' consideration of neighbourhood boundaries, where participants often 'felt strongly' (16) about what was and was not their neighbourhood before any deliberation had begun. It should be stated the process of exploring shared grievances also led to community identities forged 'through doing', although this came later in the process and was often closer to 'a 'liberal professional' identity' Barnes et al., (2006: 204) have noted in previous research. The combination of many participants' long personal experiences tied to their communities and such 'pre-constructed' identities, especially in the early processes of participation resulted in many participants interpreting neighbourhood plans as an outcome rather than a process - that is, an opportunity to set down the community interest rather than explore it. The consequence of this was an instrumental attitude that often served to close the opportunities for wider participation or indeed contestation of ideas.

The framing of neighbourhood planning as a means to obtain control within a wider planning system often portrayed as weighted toward vested interests, drove many communities to expedite as much of the process as possible. Seeking to progress through the regulatory stages often came at the expense of extended community engagement activities and deliberation over community priorities. The technical nature of NDP production - particularly planning documents such as SAs and SEAs - frequently exhausted local resources and capacity to entertain alternative views:

There are conflicts with the public consultation, community highlighted things included in the plan but if we were to change the draft plan we would have to another public consultation, referendum would be put off almost indefinitely. This was disappointing, we couldn't raise issues by people who have bothered to respond - if we put our foot down and say we want to implement these changes and do the public consultation again, the planning authority - who are short staffed - will say this is as far as we could support you (L.2)

Further practical issues such as repeating consultation periods and achieving a timetable had concrete implications for participation, but as the above quotation shows LA support was often contingent on community expediency - preventing emerging community views from being acted upon. One participant reported that a schism had been created by the NDP process over a site allocation, however instead of trying to reconcile the conflict deliberatively the community referendum was to be used as the final judgement on the matter:

There has been a pressure group of 200 objectors who have given flak to the town councillors. Usually this is all dealt with by the principal authority and they deal with the flak so that's been something completely unexpected. We have one end of the town with a couple of hundred people who support it [the NDP] because their site is not being developed - and at the opposite on the other side of town a site is being developed and we have 200 people in opposition so it has split the community - but this is part of the process ... the danger is that apathy does reign and the negative groups will go out and vote ... We're incredibly miffed that we can't promote the plan [at the referendum], only publicise it. It's a shame because there will be groups that come out and try and raise negative points (L.99)

The community referendum was often referred to as the acid test of a planning forum's efforts - suggesting participation came to an all or nothing outcome. This points to a widespread understanding that neighbourhood planning was not a site of deliberation in the way that many advocates would recognise, with the need to seize control supplanting the normative ideals of access and inclusion in an unconstrained field of communication. Local interpretations were also heavily shaped by those facilitating the NDP process:

We were told early on in no uncertain terms by our consultants to get our skates on. We heard horror stories about communities being derailed by factions and interminable conversations - I know they now tell new communities to try and complete within a year to get [the NDP] in before developers can put in applications and appeals (L.105)

The demands of the process, in this case the consultation periods and the threat of premature development, made acknowledging conflicting understandings and new community issues an inconvenience rather than a means of productive engagement. This undoubtedly contributed to the instrumental behaviour of many participants that has recurred throughout. Early research into neighbourhood planning reported the burdens of the regulatory structure (Parker et al., 2014), and

this became manifest in local understandings about what an NDP could achieve, and how participants should act in order to achieve it. Consultants had a large role to play in curating and disseminating this message. In one parished community comprising a small market town, community fears concerning the environmental impact of several significant new housing developments were first compartmentalised and then excluded from the NDP process. The town had a significant history of flooding which had brought about an action group that had been lobbying the LA for prevention solutions and a limit on new development that might exacerbate existing problems. Throughout the community consultation stage of the NDP, representatives from the action group used the new platform to air their opposition to proposed developments. The group was described as a 'vociferous voice' (12) during the preliminary meetings, however it became evident that the action group were not aware of the regulations preventing NDPs from opposing development. The small team of consultants hired to lead the NDP were charged with explaining the regulations to the action group over the course of several community meetings:

The first sort of sense we get at each event is confrontation, so it's people coming thinking the event is one of 'we don't want this development to happen, that's why we're here' ... So each event starts out angry, quite angry, and so what we do is we tend to have the first 10 or 15 minutes dedicated to venting that anger ... residents tend to hold [the LA] as the main culprit in whatever's happening. So it's just a quick time for them to have questions, or to put across their grievances about the development, and for the council to say yes we understand but outline the background as to why it's happening, it's from a national level it's got to be done. And then we make quite clear that events that we run are not intended to stop development (5)

The dynamic between consultant and community in this instance served to constrain what were assumed to be 'negative' and confrontational attitudes. The action group had over some years developed an identity through 'oppositional consciousness', seeking to resist subordination, claim a positive identity, and rectify injustice (Mansbridge, 2001). However the role of the consultant in this instance - taking a lead from the explicit regulatory structure of neighbourhood planning - was to reject the oppositional identity and reaffirm the 'rules' of participation:

I think because we know that the development is going to happening, if they remain confrontational and negative then the development is just going to happen anyway, and they're not going to have any say in it, so we try to keep making that point again and again and again, that there's two options: there's do nothing and be angry which will lead to negative development, or there's embrace it and get involved and shape it, the development will still happen but it'll be the right type of development in the right places, that you'll feel happier to sort of welcome into the village (5)

In trying to defuse the tension in the room by explaining both the process and scope of the NDP, the consultant was actioning the top down structure of neighbourhood planning by drawing a sharp contrast between the ‘realities’ of pragmatic participation and potentially confrontational non-participation. The continued participation of the action group was achieved by framing participation as a manichean choice between forgoing opposition or non-participation. Unlike previous analysis which has suggested that an ‘insider/outsider’ analysis is increasingly hard to draw (Barnes et al., 2006; Cornwall, 2004), the suppression of oppositional voices made it clear that the aims of action group were illegitimate in the context of the NDP. Where participants choose to forgo their opposition and continue (as some members of the action group did), the consultant interpreted this willingness to see the potential of neighbourhood planning as resulting from participants’ prior experiences with local government:

... it tends to be that like I said at the start of the event there’s confrontation and negativity - at the end, at every single event, people leave happy, happier - not totally happy but the amount of people that have said we feel a lot better having come, we feel a lot better getting involved and shaping what’s going to happen, and I think it’s just because people are listening to them rather than being trodden over, like they might have felt in the past (5)

In this way, pre-existing conflict between a pressure group and the LA was bracketed out of the NDP process, despite the NDP relating directly to an issue causing significant worry to residents. The pressure group continued to lobby the LA but outside the formal, invited participatory space created by the NDP. It remains to be seen whether the existence of the NDP will weaken the voice of the pressure group. Previous explorations of the interface between social movements and invited forums by (Barnes et al., 2006: 205-206) has found that:

What appears rather more important than the ‘category’ of participative action is the way the purposes and methods of action are negotiated among participants, and the capacity of participants to create arenas in which dialogue can generate new meanings capable of transforming policy discourses.

Whilst the action group in the above vignette would not describe themselves as a social movement necessarily - oppositional consciousness is more commonly attributed to groups previously excluded by virtue of social divisions, such as disability (Barnes, 1999c) - what was evident was that the limited dialogue between the gatekeepers (in this case the consultants) and participants was not a process of generating new meanings but a ‘take it or leave it’ offer.

At least some communities are forgoing the right to challenge planning outcomes by accepting some influence over new development through NDPs. The completion of an NDP provides tacit approval or at least partial acceptance of new and future development, even where this may not be the express wish of the community. This finding is in line with prior claims that participatory planning processes are used in a tokenistic manner in order to manufacture public support (Innes and Booher, 2004) or even to reinforce power inequalities (Hopkins, 2010). The role of consultants in this process has been central. A further participant who acted as a consultant explained his role as one of expediting the NDP process as much as possible:

Our role is to get a result out of this, we have to all the time realise that is what we're being paid to do, you don't get a result out of having endless arguments left and right, however much credit there might be [to their viewpoints]. I try not to quieten those voices but to see a way through ... we've got to draw a line somewhere (12)

These micro-level, intra-community processes display how conflict is mitigated and suppressed through the legislation's regulatory frame but also through limited forms of co-production. Bracketing out of dissenting voices meant that the resultant intra-community consensus over the 'best' development, is one necessarily predicated on some form of exclusion. However deliberation between communities and officials was also restricted, with many attempts being hampered by issues of access. Some communities expressed frustration about the attendance rates of officials at community meetings despite the duty to support placed on LAs. Contradictory messages from elected members and planning officers was also a common occurrence, especially in the early stages of the policy.

It's a communication issue - we know officers and people are busy - but the need for communication is vital - we sat for six months not knowing what going on (L.3)

The lack of access prevented meaningful discussions at community meetings as residents were left to interpret technical planning documents and processes without the help of the 'experts'. Barnes, Knops et al. (2004: 105) have described how in participatory initiatives forms of knowledge can conflict with authority when the latter is challenged; however in many NDPs such a situation was often impossible since residents did not have the opportunity to challenge local officials. Planning officers, like consultants, were often seen as gatekeepers to the process rather than partners. This suggests that neighbourhood planning has not learnt the lessons of previous ABIs in accommodating deliberation between publics and officials through sympathetic design (Barnes et al., 2008). This was

accentuated by the fact that many groups recognised that their local knowledge was unlikely to influence the wider planning system without concomitant access to expert knowledge. The widespread recognition of a need to combine lay knowledge with expertise to achieve the right outcome clashed with planning officers' role as gatekeepers and a persistent scepticism of local government 'agendas' by participants.

As seen with in the preceding discussion of co-production, partnership arrangements between local councils and communities took on many forms and successful partnerships were rare. This should be regarded as distinct from previous, more complex attempts at partnership working under New Labour where partnership boards were the mainstay of many ABIs (Newman et al., 2004; Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). Whilst previous attempts at partnership working were criticised for complicating governance structures with different layers of fora and types of engagement - as was the case with the Single Regeneration Budget (Edwards, 2008) - they were at least actively pursued, with boards often charged with the strategic transformation of communities and services. In contrast, partnerships with local government via NDPs were more ad hoc and often held back by local government reticence (largely attributed to local government retrenchment) and community scepticism. The result was an uncondusive atmosphere in which the chance for social actors to produce new rules and norms, as per new institutional theory, were severely limited. The catalyst for these attitudes was the widespread understanding that NDPs were a means of bypassing existing governance arrangements rather than enhancing them:

I think the formation of it, people might not see it like that now, but the reason neighbourhood planning came about in my opinion is because the government didn't rate what councils were doing and because of pressure from their constituents, and instead of looking at how LAs could go through consultation, they basically said we're going to give people the right to bypass you and to overturn what you have decided, so quick fix isn't the right word but it's not, you know, it's saying our relationship is unworkable - we're going to do it another [way] (1)

This view reflects the political framing of current localist initiatives as a rejection of 'big government' - and a means of putting power 'back into the hands of local people' (Conservative Party, 2010a; 2010b), rather than one of achieving mutuality and positive sum working. As the quotation above indicates, this framing permeated the views of at least some community members, position the community in opposition to local government rather than a potential partner. Drawing from a long established political discourse originating in Burke's (1790) 'little platoons', social institutions built from the bottom up and independent of state institutions, a number of participants

saw the NDP as ‘a stick to beat the local council with’ (1) rather than as an opportunity for dialogue. The positioning of communities in opposition to local government created community scepticism but also reticence on behalf of local government actors who were often perceived as risk adverse by communities. The consequence of this was for local officials to close down the opportunity structure by limiting community policy options through over cautious advice:

Our plan has significantly decreased in scope, we’ve been given advice by the Borough Council that a number of original aims of the neighbourhood plan were inappropriate or did not meet the planning requirements. We had lots of environmental and social aims that we wanted in the plan that we couldn’t include ... we feel we’ve not got what we wanted, we had much greater aspiration but neighbourhood planning doesn’t have the teeth to do what we want to do, and the Borough Council because of issues they had with the Local Plan being found unsound have been very circumspect with their advice - they don’t want to tell us something is OK if it comes back to bite them. (L.72)

We started off with a very ambitious plan but things got knocked on the head ... In the end yes, it was more conservative. We had a clear thrust of what we wanted ... but the District Council didn’t like it because they want all the employment in the local towns and they’ve tried to sabotage one of our sites ... It would have created a lot of jobs, it was so shortsighted of the council who played it all wrong (L.5)

Without greater access to officials and genuine engagement in partnership working, the above NDPs were considered conservative by participants. The way in which participation unfolded was heavily dependent on risk averse LAs who often suffered due to the lack of certainty about the policy structure (see below). The effect was that NDPs rarely opened up spaces for deliberation between community and local government. In some areas, the lack of opportunity for productive and respectful contestation led to open and hostile conflict. In one community, unresolved conflict between a Neighbourhood Forum and a section of the community resulted in defamation and threats of physical violence:

... people felt so unsupported, felt it was a conspiracy to be offered tokenistic input, felt so shafted, felt like a conspiracy to keep do gooders - we were called dogooders by local politicians [down], we were shouted at by developers. There was a blog set up to attack me - ridiculed online. We are an unqualified and unexperienced group - genuine people coming together, [we] received emails threatening judicial review, had people shouting at [a local councillor] in street. Physical threats at a meeting ... in any community scenario - people are quite dangerous. I went to the police as I was quite worried. Bullshit advice from Locality – ‘hey maybe people could set up own police force?!’ They’re all for people getting involved in local area, but naïve about what is happening on ground. [We] need meaningful awareness of what is being attempted here (L.76)

Whilst a rare occurrence, the experiences of this community was a concrete consequence of the circumscribed participation described above. Despite attempts to unify the community through the Forum, deep divisions surfaced concerning a multi-million pound development that had the backing

of the LA and a local landowner. From an early stage participants recognised that community meetings were a highly inadequate forum for discussions between residents and those who had vested interests in the development. The respondent recognised that a large amount of time and effort had gone into establishing the group but that any nascent signs of collective identity were quashed by the perceived toxicity of the LA and naivety from Locality. The Forum was disbanded as the community had no recourse to opposition other than individual letters of objection. In other instances the role of the LA was even less conducive to deliberation, one of arbiter rather than partner. In neighbourhoods where more than one group applies for the role of qualifying body, the LA must adjudicate between them. In one London neighbourhood, such a situation led to an intense period of conflict between two community factions before the participatory process had even begun. Both groups made applications to the LA for forum designation and after a number of months the second group to apply were awarded the role. A member of the first group to apply regarded the LA's decision making process as unfair, possibly illegal, and ultimately never explained:

... the Localism Act is there but there's no authority to police it - the District Council didn't follow the law and just designated this other area - if a government department or local council aren't policing it - what's the point? An ombudsman needs to police it - it's frustrating, the enthusiasm's all gone now, no head of steam - we've been cut adrift (L.30)

The legislation provided no recourse to resolve the conflict within the community and the LA declined to meet the groups simultaneously due to the negative atmosphere that had developed. Subsequent to the decision, the interviewee declined to participate in the newly formed Forum and expressed anger and frustration at the whole process. This account matches emerging research in other NDP areas where tension has arisen between competing community groups as to who is allowed to represent community interest (Hoolachan and Tewdwr-Jones, 2015). In such instances the local decision making reverts to type with power resting with the LA to adjudicate and with no obligation to explain how decisions are being reached. The rigidity of the legislation and a lack of mediation between community and LA meant that difference could not be accounted for, with the consequence that conflict is not resolved or circumvented but becomes manifest in counterproductive and even more dangerous forms.

The above examples demonstrate how conflict and difference are explicitly bracketed out of the NDP process through the regulatory frame, but are also mitigated implicitly by the actions of participants who interpreted the policy as unsuited to contestation, and by inadequate deliberation

with local ‘partners’. Examples of local participatory dynamics have demonstrated how dissent is either modulated or rejected through the NDP process, different community views are excluded in the name of expediency, and community access to officials remains limited. Yet despite this depoliticisation of the NDP process, tensions still occur in local communities with further examples showing how this has resulted in a breakdown of NDPs rather than productive resolution of issues. Incentives for deliberation within communities and between the public and officials have not been enunciated by policy makers, and the opportunity structure has prioritised ‘claiming control’ in terms of achieving an outcome rather than recognising the benefits of a robust process. The result was a circumscribed participatory space that follows in the footsteps of similar initiatives that limit the scope of participation and prioritise decisions made in higher tiers of government. In this respect neighbourhood planning is unable to allow for ‘significant conflicts of interest’ (Wright, 2010: 161) either within communities or against traditional power holders, and it is in this respect that neighbourhood planning constitutes a form of bounded participation - with strict limits on what type of participation is permissible and also an expectation on how it should be undertaken. Such bounded participation therefore casts NDP as a largely technocratic (rather than ‘political’ in Mouffeian terms) exercise, with the community’s role being commuted to that of finessing predetermined policies, rather than establishing the need for new development or determining the means of their own participation:

[We have] been able to improve local knowledge ... [but we need the] ability to discuss, challenge or support the Local Plan (L.26)

Participation in NDPs preclude the ability of dissensus or conflict to act as drivers for the development of new ideas (Agger, 2012), and are thus laid open to the criticism that they are a form of centralism enacted locally (Parker et al., 2014). More radical participatory alternatives would depend on ‘recognizing and respecting difference and conflict as necessary elements of the decision-making process, rather than as aberrations that need to be overcome with power-laden consensus’ (Beaumont and Nicholls, 2008: 88). The findings relayed here suggest that the deliberative aspect of neighbourhood planning needs to be more clearly defined and its benefits articulated. This would be achieved primarily by greater access to officials and elected members, whilst communities need to be given time to develop intra-community relationships and in-built deliberative decision making encouraged. More than this, communities need the means to identify

‘windows’ of opportunity and ‘cracks’ in the power structure that can be opened up, securing community leverage (see Healey, 1997).

Uncertainty

Many participants spoke warmly of the opportunity to influence decision making and deliver better futures for their community. However when asked how this worked in practice participants struggled to define what this control would look like. In large part this was due to the uncertainty that hung over neighbourhood planning practice and future implementation. Interviews with early adopters of neighbourhood planning recognised their role as ‘guinea pigs’ (L.65), testing out the parameters of the NDP process and providing learning for subsequent communities. The Frontrunner cohorts were explicitly intended for this purpose, with the relevant LA granted £20,000 to aid in the delivery of each new NDP under their jurisdiction. The intention was that Frontrunners communities would ‘learn by doing’ and establish a precedent from which communities and planning officers could learn. However, despite evidence of incipient processes of horizontal learning, uncertainty remained a prominent theme:

If government in some way - perhaps through Local Authorities - could make an explanation about what neighbourhood plans are about in a local way [they] would move faster. Feel like we’re doing it alone. At the end of the year when have to spend grant by end of year [it’s] not clear as to what happens after. Uncertainty [is] not helpful. We feel like lack of certainty is not helpful. Confidence is an issue (L.47)

... it’s a massive piece of work, not sure the outcome is necessarily going to reflect the work that goes into it (L.44)

Need know have if the policy has teeth - there is uncertainty and mixed messages coming out (L.31)

... we don’t know how much consultation is enough - it’s this lack of certainty that has made the process difficult (L.91)

Communities need clarity - we’re on spending a large amount of time, for me it’s been a day job without getting paid - we need a reassuring message that at the end of the day this is will be worthwhile and that DCLG are not going to renege on their promise. There’s cynicism ... there needs to be more clear communication from DCLG and reassurance. (L.18)

For those who had few past experiences of community participation, the regulatory frame did not serve to facilitate action but rather curtail it, often in ways that the participants themselves could not understand:

The plan's got to follow a certain course but sometimes the process gets in the way, it has an effect on the way we operate in a way that I don't understand. (3)

This feeling was reiterated by those with longer histories of community action. One participant who had worked professionally in community development summed up how a lack of certainty was undermining an inherent feeling of empowerment generated by the opportunity to influence decisions:

... you don't feel empowered to say 'oh well we'll stop that development from happening' - our neighbouring ward were trying to stop something from happening in its area and they don't know as much about planning as we do and they were utterly convinced they would be able to stop it - and now they've had this terrible shock because you know they can't (4)

The pervasive feelings of precarity reported by participants were reflected in their 'asks' from central government. When asked to provide a key message to DCLG, the two most common answers from participants in the Locality were: a stronger message of support for neighbourhood planning from central government, and clarity over the 'end goal' of NDPs. This reflects the importance of certainty for participants, even above more practical concerns over financial costs and volunteer fatigue. Common causes of uncertainty regarded what type of evidence the community was required to gather (and how much), moving housing targets in emerging Local Plans, and what happens after the community referendum (particularly the legal status of Neighbourhood Forums, and who ensures that the NDP is being upheld).

One participant summed up a wider complaint, emphasising the complexity of the process as a major cause of uncertainty: 'you should not underestimate that the process is extremely challenging - anything that can be done to simplify it or practical support for future groups would be extremely welcome' (L.119). Many participants in the Locality sample reported that a strong message of support from central government (often specifically citing the Secretary of State for Communities or the Planning Minister) would go a long way in demonstrating 'commitment to neighbourhood planning' (L.111). It was felt that such a statement of support would help current participants convince others in the wider community to participate, and would also encourage new neighbourhoods to take up NDPs. This cohered with responses that desired greater clarity about what neighbourhood planning entails during the initial stages of the process, in particular the significant amount of volunteer hours necessary and what an NDP can ultimately achieve. One

participant argued that since the NDP was seen as 'a difficult concept', the wider community were unlikely to participate or lend support, others were more pessimistic:

[it's] not something that's immediately understood and so it's probably not as popular and as well attended as other things might be (2)

It's all very complicated, and people need to get their heads round it. We're trying to communicate with the community, with the best will in the world, they can't understand it (L.27)

There was an indication amongst participant responses that the devolution of power to communities reflected an increase in responsibilities rather than rights. One participant who had no experience of community working prior to the NDP complained that a large portion of her time was spent explaining how local government works rather than consulting residents on their vision for the neighbourhood. Whilst this may be understood as a positive process of democratic education, the effect was one of frustration and delays for the participants who felt that this was not their role. The lack of a coherent message from central government, often further complicated by local government interpretations, meant that many participants felt they were the ones who had to 'sell' the policy. However a number of communities conflated community involvement with the 'business as usual' planning system:

... a lot of people don't want to be involved because no matter what you say, they still think you're going to stop them from doing their extension, because they hear the word planning and it immediately puts their back up (14)

I would love it if there was more of public understanding of neighbourhood planning and that could be helped with more information from the council, all they've done is put up a website which is clear if you know what you're looking for, but there's no plain English mailings to people, or this is happening in your area, nothing like that - you know radio coverage, or even national coverage of what planning forums are about would help (14)

... holding up examples will be a big inspiration ... There are enough progressive landowners and developers for us to work with. There should be much better publicity about neighbourhood planning: magazines, websites, TV shows - everyone should do it (L.17)

Most frequently community explanations of neighbourhood planning centred on its inability to prevent development and how the process fits into the wider planning system. The perceived complexity of NDPs, even by those heavily involved in completing one, raises questions over access to participatory initiatives. Many communities reported having a higher than average level of expertise in their community (this is feasible given the preceding discussion concerning the predominance of middle class participants), often citing residents with professional backgrounds in

fields such as accountancy, consultation and the law - and a surprisingly high number of communities also reported having specific planning expertise amongst their group. A common response was that the community was lucky to have such expertise and that other groups may not have such a depth of knowledge. It is possible that the participants were underestimating the average expertise and capacity of neighbourhoods elsewhere, however if not then even communities with high levels of the requisite skills are struggling to come to terms with an NDP's complexity, a key source of uncertainty.

Transforming representative structures

In seeking to understand neighbourhood planning, a number of participants questioned its unusual position as a form of participatory democracy within a wider representative system. Not unlike prior initiatives under New Labour where some ABIs were criticised for complicating local governance arrangements (Taylor, 2007), neighbourhood planning was often seen by participants as awkwardly overlaid onto existing structures rather than enjoying a defined place within the planning system. Whilst the dysfunction of representative democracy was often remarked upon, participants seemed unsure whether neighbourhood planning was the best solution. Whereas initiatives under New Labour portrayed partnerships as a new way of working with citizens, public agencies and occasionally the private sector - here there remained a lack of clarity regarding how NDP participants should engage with stakeholders such as the LPA, landowners, developers and consultants.

Where this was discussed interviewees remained sceptical as to whether their participation might reform representative structures. Wright (2010) calls for state sponsored participation as a means to reform governance structures from the inside, however whilst participants saw some changes in the attitudes of individual planning officers and council representatives, there was cynicism about a culture change at the institutional level:

What neighbourhood planning seems to do is it does change individuals but it doesn't change the culture of the whole body which is what's needed, if we had an individual in the council who was convinced that this was a good thing and they went and changed the culture of the council that would work but I don't think any that we do will be able to impact (14)

It was suggested by two interviewees that the only way change could be effected would be through the political will of a senior individual (invoking the idea of a charismatic leader), who could effect

top down change. Whether culture change can be instituted in a top down manner is questionable, however some areas have seen elected members being credited for having driven the localism agenda as a leading proponent of neighbourhood planning practice (Fieldnotes, 06/08/13). The resigned attitude of citizens regarding previous engagement with LAs meant that some core community members felt their role was to keep the local council in check, rather than work collaboratively to achieve better outcomes. One respondent repeatedly referred to the neighbourhood planning group as the council's 'conscience':

I think that people often feel helpless, they see excess rules and regulations, what appears to be bureaucracy and so the opportunity to have a say - and you know to be honest, it sort of gives you permission to interfere which is great, because there's loads of stuff that you never knew why it was like that for ages, and then you can say, well why is that? And of course that makes you a complete pain in the arse for those people! ... someone's got to ask the hard questions, otherwise politicians live in this bubble (4)

The thing about representative democracy is that essentially what people are saying is trust me or be your councillor and you know I don't know if I do anymore. I don't distrust them but I don't want to give away my right to have an opinion to them anymore (4)

This suggests some disaffection with traditional forms of local democracy. Another respondent noted that NDPs were an 'effective vehicle' for community views, fulfilling a purpose that perhaps was missing:

... it does something that wasn't necessarily the case before, I think neighbourhood planning came to an extent out of pressure from communities on politicians (1)

What distinguishes an NDP from recent forms of neighbourhood involvement in planning is its status as a statutory document. Unlike a Parish Plan or similar initiatives which are essentially glorified consultation exercises, an NDP does equate to local citizens being involved in decisions. Whilst the statutory footing of the NDP document was evidently a driver for many participants, a 'made' NDP represented an end point to participation (in the current guise). This further illuminated an uncertainty about the future:

... so there's no evidence that I've seen, that's not to say there isn't evidence but I haven't seen or heard of neighbourhood planning being the instrument that has facilitated or stopped something from taking place and therefore I don't know what influence they will have (2)

One participant whose NDP had been made reported that the months after the plan became a statutory document had been mixed. When attending a LA planning meeting, the Chair announced after the participants' contribution that 'there had been enough talk', which the community member

took to mean that the community's input was over and now the politicians would make a decision. However on another occasion a prospective developer was directed to talk to the Neighbourhood Forum by the local council before going ahead with their proposal. The participant claimed this was the first instance of feeling a 'tiny bit of influence' since the plan had been completed. What became apparent with follow up meetings with this participant, was that the influence of the Neighbourhood Forum was only partially as a result of the NDP itself. Much of the success that the community experienced (it has been used by DCLG repeatedly as an example of best practice on social media and in policy literature) was made possible by the continued actions of the community beyond the scope of the NDP. This included 'beefing up' a community planning committee to deal with applications that might fall under the NDP's jurisdiction and a Community Trust to carry out the plan's proposed community based projects. Whilst feeling happy with the community's progress, the participant was conscious that this had to be fought for, and the period after the plan was a journey into the unknown (Fieldnotes, 28/2/15).

One option for this community was to become a Parish Council as part of a move by DCLG to facilitate local democracy in urban areas. This elision of participatory and representative democracy was met with cautious enthusiasm in one area where there was evidence of disaffection with existing representative structures:

... a Parish Council does seem to me to be an interesting [idea], I don't know anything about them, but it's an official thing, and [an existing community group] has been very successful over the years and people have different interests there, it would be an authenticated way of dealing with those issues (3)

The legitimacy that a Parish Council would bestow on a neighbourhood group further underscores the uncertainty and potential transience of present forms of democratic participation. However a move to institute Parish Councils in urban areas, especially after the completion of an NDP, is a move away from participatory democracy back to a local representative system (notwithstanding the minimal electoral legitimacy most Parish Councils have). The formation of Parish Councils was only discussed with a handful of participants in the follow up interviews as most felt this was either not feasible or at least not foreseeable - and with the one exception noted above, all participants were wary of pursuing this approach. Citizens seemingly do not perceive their own role as replacing representative structures, nor do they want to become enveloped in formal systems of accountability:

That's another reason why we don't want to [become a parish] - we shouldn't have to be the ones accountable! We should be able to be us, doing what we do, and not be another area of bureaucracy (4)

This is reminiscent of the role Habermas' (1989) attributed to the public sphere holding formal public authorities to account with the latter making decisions. In some respects, NDPs muddy the waters between the public sphere and established authorities since the community has limited decision making power but also appear to have a role in keeping the 'formal' political bodies to account. On this understanding NDP groups hold a dual role, both ensuring that representative bodies fulfil their duty to act in the public interest but also concurrently make decisions and represent their community. One participant explored the new relationship between representative and participatory democracy:

I mean I believe in representative democracy in this country because it's a large country and we can't have direct democracy and in my opinion neighbourhood planning is like a little wedge of direct democracy shoved into that representative pot and actually you know, so we're saying our representative system is broken I guess. But we're not trying to fix it, we're just kind of patch it up with bits of direct democracy (1)

The somewhat ill-defined line between direct and representative democracy that is brought up by neighbourhood planning needs to be better understood. For participatory theorists such as Pateman (1970, 1985, 2012) participatory spaces should be the first step in educating citizens and fostering more participation throughout society. As we have seen however, participation in NDPs essentially stops at the point of the community referendum (it remains to be seen what happens should an NDP fail at the referendum stage). With the majority of NDPs covering a 15 year period, the participatory element of an NDP is actually negligible.

This section has sought to relay the various forms of uncertainty that imbued participation in NDPs. Taken as a whole, interviewees are noticeable for their lack of experience in participatory democracy, with many indicating that they have not undertaken a process like this before, despite often being heavily involved in their communities. Citizen involvement is not yet the norm in England and this has undoubtedly shaped the nature and scope of participation. A lack of clear direction from both central and some parts of local government has devolved responsibility for navigating new participatory spaces to participants themselves. Whilst participants were keen that tools such as pro forma documents or templates did not stifle local specificity, there was a general consensus that a clear message of support from central government and greater knowledge of the

process at local government level could greatly expedite the NDP process and improve the quality of participation.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the experiences of neighbourhood planning groups across England, drawing on data from 120 structured interviews and nine follow up semi-structured interviews. A picture of participation in NDPs has emerged that is marked by instrumentality, co-production and the suppression of conflict, and uncertainty. These processes have been brought about by means of a significant 'buy-in' to localist discourses promising local control, played out against the backdrop of dominant liberal discourses concerning the failures of 'Big Government' and the inherent benefits of community ownership and local knowledge.

Drawing on the concept of the political opportunity structure - denoting how accessible a given political system is (Tarrow, 1994) - this analysis suggests that at present local governance systems are relative closed, despite the state aims of central government to devolve power to local people (Conservative Party, 2010a; 2010b). Both local planning officers and consultants, who were generally seen as gatekeepers to the NDP process rather than partners, have encouraged expediency (for example omitting more ambitious community plans that might fail at examination) and provided cautious advice, often requiring communities to speak a 'planning language' rather than engaging with lay discourses. The need to translate community views suggests that unlike previous examples of discursive arenas that have seen at least partial evidence of integration between lay and official discourses (Barnes et al., 2006: 205), the technical nature of NDPs and their position within a wider regulatory framework have been used to prioritise expert (planning) knowledge over local or lay knowledges. This required communities to 'up-skill' and emulate established patterns of (technocratic) or risk being left behind. The discrepancy between the localist rhetoric mentioned above and the position of lay knowledge (in relation to established experts) in practice, kept prospective outcomes (i.e. planning policies) within the norms of established practice, rather than facilitating innovation or a transformation of power relations between the respective actors.

The shift in neighbourhood based policy from New Labour's targeted approach to the Coalition's the first come, first served has not resulted in an extension of opportunity, with the participatory spaces appearing to be 'captured' by the middle class. Emerging figures demonstrate that more deprived

communities are significantly less likely to participate in neighbourhood planning (Parker and Salter, 2016), reflecting the Coalition's discursive move away from New Labour's concern with spatial inequalities (Lupton and Fitzgerald, 2015). These findings have shown that low participation in deprived communities was not simply attributable to NDPs being an expensive undertaking, but rather suggests that the policy was generally perceived as unfit to combat deep-seated social problems in such communities. Those who identified their own communities as deprived were pessimistic about how the regulatory and technical nature of NDPs would be interpreted by particularly residents of inner city communities, and how the policy was 'sold' to such communities. This perception highlighted a 'disconnect' between the policy's framing and the lived experience of some communities, exemplified by many 'residents finding [neighbourhood planning] a difficult concept' (2). The findings strongly indicate that there is a need for greater support for disadvantaged areas in terms of awareness and financial resources, but also that the 'policy opportunity' is extended to meet the self-defined needs of a wider range of communities. Further research on this issue is required as non-participation remains a 'known unknown' - however some suggestions about such opportunities are made in the following chapter.

Despite the belief that the public has been 'oversold' what NDPs can actually achieve, there was a near ubiquitous desire to achieve greater community control over future decisions made at neighbourhood level. This precipitated an instrumental attitude with many participants keen to secure community decision making by expediting the certain facets such as deeper community engagement and deliberation. Therefore despite the perceived weaknesses of NDPs, for example in areas without a five year housing land supply, citizens have been enthusiastic in its uptake, particularly in middle class areas. This enthusiasm has been reinforced by many communities' (but also participants' personal) prior experiences within the planning system. In many areas, a long standing belief that the community had been 'hard done by' or was otherwise subordinate to the vested interests of developers, has motivated participants to persevere with their NDP despite both the steep learning curve and numerous regulatory 'hoops'.

Whilst the process was generally considered arduous, for many it still represents the best opportunity for communities to exercise their voice. Experiences of participation in NDPs were naturally varied, with reports of co-production and support from LAs highly mixed, despite the statutory duty to support. Where processes of co-production were reported, participants reported greater self-assurance and were less frequently troubled by the need to 'speak the language' of planners, however

it remains to be seen if this will manifest itself in more ‘conservative’ planning outcomes through means of modulation (Parker and Street, 2015). The need for genuine co-production - for example to help widen participation to otherwise excluded communities - needs to be balanced against the risks of reinforcing established power differentials and ‘scripting’ of community voices. For many LAs, the need to produce a Local Plan took precedence at a time of limited resources, but perhaps more importantly many participants perceived a lack of genuine political will to support localism and greater public participation. This perception added to a widespread feeling of uncertainty regarding most elements of participation. For example, whilst collecting evidence was generally unproblematic for the majority of NDP groups, difficulties arose in knowing how much evidence was required and in what form.

The findings have demonstrated how, despite the marked shift in the discursive framing of participation compared to New Labour’s neighbourhood policy, neighbourhood planning has failed to learn the lessons from previous initiatives. In particular, the lack of clarity concerning the meaning and true purpose of participation. New Labour’s neighbourhood renewal approach was explicitly concerned with spatial inequalities - a rationality that is marked by its absence in post-2010 Coalition rhetoric. Although New Labour’s ‘joined-up’ neighbourhood policy programme was conceptually distinct from local economic development, in practice the two were often linked (Lupton and Fitzgerald, 2015: 5). In contrast, the Coalition’s localism programme, and neighbourhood planning in particular, explicitly links a pro-growth agenda with community participation (see Stanier, 2014; Conservative Party, 2009, 2010b; DEFRA, 2013), with ‘appropriate support and recognition [given] to communities who welcome new development (DCLG, 2011b: 18). The elision of localism/participation and pro-development/economic growth discourses was interpreted with uncertainty on the frontline:

[There is] lots of talk of growth and house building but not enough sell on NDPs, they [the government] will have to take account of the NDP but the District Council is under pressure to meet the housing targets - one doesn’t know how much weight they will be afforded (L.35)

... another thought that occurs to me has been the difficulty of cynicism about whether this is all worth it - people talk about the government changing and it will go out the window - and of course the developers will everything win on [planning] appeal. Government want growth, growth, growth so this is all irrelevant, - politicians will be commenting and neighbourhood planning is undermined, there’s localism on one side and then a load of top down ‘we’re going to let this happen’ on the other (L.85)

The uncertainty this created undoubtedly caused participants to question the meaning of their participation, as the above quotations indicate. This also fuelled the perceived need for expediency on behalf of participants, whilst local experiences fostered a scepticism as to whether participation might reform representative structures in a meaningful way. The second lesson that neighbourhood planning has failed to learn concerns the effect of the dead hand of central government targets. Research into numerous New Labour ABIs noted the considerable influence that central government had over key agents of local governance (Sullivan et al., 2004). The tension between the desire for central direction and commitment to local empowerment contributed to frictions on the frontline over competing meanings and aims, and arguably led to ABIs taking a backseat in the latter New Labour administration's social policy. In the case of neighbourhood planning, the subordination of local control and empowerment to the growth imperative has not been lost on participants - who, despite the initial enthusiasm for the Coalition's localist rhetoric have signalled that the desire to realise new housing development has preempted genuine localism or devolution of (political) power.

The confluence of the above factors - instrumentalism and expediency, patchy support mechanisms and the reticence of would-be partners, and pervasive uncertainty - added to a regulatory structure that served to close down participatory spaces, preventing extended deliberation, as well as wider community consultation and community development practices. The lack of contestation and conflict therefore was not due to the successful realisation of deliberative democracy, but a lack of it, brought about by the regulatory structure of NDPs and the resultant local interpretations of the policy by leading community members. This highlights both a failure of policy makers to subscribe fully to the principles of deliberation, but also how the bounded nature of participation itself. The resultant 'way of doing' participation in NDPs has therefore prioritised the outcome over the process in many areas, often caused by participants long associations within their neighbourhoods and the static conception of community brought about by associations to place. This, coupled with exogenous pressures caused by the political imperative of housebuilding, has led to core participants expediting deliberative processes in order to ensure a foothold in the planning system. This lack of contestation within these new participatory spaces leaves NDPs open to the criticism of seeking to manufacture local consent for centrally agreed policy targets. Such an interpretation of neighbourhood planning therefore suggests that citizen input was desired more for their experiential 'local knowledge' and understanding of local issues (see Barnes et al., 2008) rather than securing their specific input to wider decision making structures. The following chapter brings together the

findings from this chapter and the case study presented in Chapter 7 to further the discussion and analyse the potential for a greater role for contestation in participation by embracing the principles of agonism.

Chapter 9 Agonistic Participation Revisited

Introduction

The previous two chapters have explored citizen perspectives of participatory democracy under the Localism Act (2011) at the 'smaller than local' scale. The Fairholme case study demonstrated the discrepancy between the motivations of policy makers and local communities in the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs), whilst the national findings disclosed the pragmatic ways in which communities across England have responded to the challenges and opportunities of participation under post-2010 localism. Taken together these findings demonstrate various processes about that nature of participation - not least instrumentalism, uncertainty and conflict avoidance - that have contributed to the foreclosure of more radical or transformative spaces, denoting the bounded nature of participation on offer. Despite shortcomings in the neighbourhood planning regulations including the role of the institutional 'frame' (see Parker, et al., 2017), some promise has been evident in the continued willingness of communities to involve themselves in decision making and exercise their political passions. Overall this suggests that neighbourhood planning as a top down participatory space has failed to learn the lessons of previous initiatives that have constrained potential for transformation.

This chapter seeks to draw together the discussion so far. The empirical findings of this study are considered in light of the theoretical literature of participatory democracy (Chapter 2), prior research into invited participatory spaces and area based initiatives (ABIs) (Chapter 4), and the theoretical insights of empowered participatory governance (EPG) and agonistic pluralism (Chapter 5). In so doing the theoretical contribution of this thesis is set out - namely the development of a tentative model of agonistic participation that builds on recent debates concerning the relationship between deliberative and agonistic democracy (Markell, 1997; Brady, 2004; Martin, 2005; Knops, 2007; Gürsözlü, 2009; Bond, 2011). This seeks to move agonism away from 'iconoclastic resistance' (Wingenbach, 2011: 38) whilst providing constructive insight into how deliberative democracy can further address the problem of contestation - thereby moving beyond the increasingly well rehearsed debates between the two traditions (Inch, 2015). Therefore the analysis that follows engages with attempts by deliberative theorists to accommodate contestation (for example, Barnes, 1999c; Barnes, Knops et al., 2004; Dryzek, 2005), whilst advocating an overall model of agonistic

participation, informed by prior entreaties that suggest that productive engagement comes about between and across different theoretical traditions (Barnes et al., 2007: 183).

The theoretical contribution of this thesis is therefore twofold: first, a distinctive application of agonistic theory to participatory practice, one that translates the macro level theory of agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 2005) to the micro and meso levels. Second, an incipient portion of the literature that has sought to combine the insights of agonism and deliberation has been developed through re-imagining deliberation and agonism in a positive sum relationship where both modes of practice could be activated by communities where the requisite conditions arise or are created by communities themselves. This builds on the recognition that democracy requires modes of operation grounded in both consensus and contestation (Mansbridge, 1983; Blaug, 2002), in order to promote socially just change. Before this model is set out in greater detail, the following section addresses some of the discrepancies between the practice of participation and the typologies set out in the literature.

Typologies vs. Messiness

Many theorists have provided normative typologies against which participatory initiatives might be measured. However as suggested in Chapter 2, the heuristic advantages of typologies do not easily translate to real world participation which can rarely be pigeon-holed into categories. Indeed the findings of this study have intimated the messiness of participation and also the variations within, and specificities of, communities undertaking the same process. This section uses the above findings to address the continuing heuristic value of typologies in research into participation.

The ability of a neighbourhood to participate is dependent on many contingent internal factors, such as community capacity, historic patterns of participation, cultural capital, employment levels, financial resources and demographic make up. External factors also contribute - notably the political opportunity structure - such as the availability of support from local or national government, levels of facilitation from local stakeholders, the nature of invited participation on offer, and so on.

Typologies necessarily present a static picture that cannot account for changing processes over time such as motivations, knowledge and ability levels, or indeed changing power dynamics. Nor can they adequately account for the ability of specific groups to maximise opportunities for participation.

The national picture of NDP production has revealed multiple instances of changing dynamics

within neighbourhoods as communities became more skilled, in particular at how to engage local partners. Similarly, participants have articulated a feeling of episodic empowerment, feeling confident and qualified to challenge those in authority after deliberating within their community, only for this feeling to be undercut by contact with authority.

Such processes necessarily contain a temporal dimension which makes the evidence of participation in any given study difficult to categorise. This is demonstrated by Arnstein's (1969) seminal ladder of participation (see discussion in Chapter 2, and Figure 1): participation in this study revealed features of all three main sections of the ladder. A pre-requisite of the NDP process is to accept decisions made by the LPA in a Local Plan, this is a form of 'non-participation' since participants are required to rubber-stamp decisions made by higher tiers of government, with participants having to 'adjust their values and attitudes to those of the larger society' (Arnstein, 1969: 219). In some instances where NDPs are being produced alongside the Local Plan, processes of (informal) consultation occur, whereby local planners consult neighbourhoods on community views concerning new house building in their area. This is demonstrative of Arnstein's fourth rung: participant views are taken on board by powerholders, but there is no guarantee that these voices will be heeded. Finally, NDPs display some aspects of citizen power where they have ultimate decision making capability (albeit on delegated issues and within a wider framework), in particular Arnstein's sixth rung, partnership which draws parallels with the concept of co-production. Arnstein (1969: 221) sees partnership as a process of 'negotiation between citizens and powerholders' where 'have-nots' are able to engage in trade-offs with traditional power-holders. Neighbourhood planning is less a process of negotiation, since the devolved decision making capabilities are not open to modification in a strict sense, however citizens and state are in partnership where evidence and skills are shared in order to optimise decisions (and to a lesser extent decision making processes). In sum, facets of participation in NDPs can be placed all along the continuum typology - rather than falling within one rung.

The normative writings of early advocates of participatory democracy retain a partial power of explanation, however this analysis reinforces the view that a linear relationship between non-participation and citizen control are too simplistic (Bishop and Davis, 2002). This is compounded by the fact that Arnstein's (1969) citizen control has been definitely rejected by western liberal democracies, which now attempt to 'bolt on' participatory spaces to existing representative structures. Even more nuanced typologies are unable to fully reflect the multi-faceted nature of

participation: for instance, within White's (1996) table of participation (see discussion in Chapter 2, and Figure 6) neighbourhood planning displays characteristics from at least three forms:

Figure 12: Adapted Table of Participation for Neighbourhood Planning

Form	Top down	Bottom up	Function
<i>Nominal</i>	Legitimation <i>Neighbourhood planning adds legitimacy to the wider planning system and 'rubber stamps' decisions made at higher tiers</i>	Inclusion <i>Local citizens are further and more explicitly included in the planning process</i>	Display <i>Compared to Localism rhetoric, neighbourhood planning's function is to 'display' participation rather than devolve significant powers</i>
<i>Instrumental</i>	Efficiency <i>Neighbourhood planning is designed to speed up the planning process (Stanier, 2014)</i>	Cost <i>Heavy costs to participants in time and commitment, and monetary cost to community (consultants, room hire, printing etc.)</i>	Means <i>Participation is a means for the state to achieve cost-effectiveness by speeding up the planning process</i>
<i>Representative</i>	Sustainability <i>Neighbourhood planning is designed to produce sustainable housing stock</i>	Leverage <i>Participants see neighbourhood planning as a foot in the door with state, particularly local government</i>	Voice <i>NDPs are an effective vehicle for expression of community voice (if not community control)</i>
<i>Transformative</i>	Empowerment <i>Only evident in policy rhetoric</i>	Empowerment <i>Only instances of episodic empowerment by some participants</i>	Means/Ends <i>Unproven</i>

Nominal, instrumental and representative forms of participation are all evident during participation in NDPs, with only the fourth form, transformative participation, being problematic on the basis of the evidence in this thesis. Despite the 'top down' stated aim to empower communities (HM Government, 2010b), only a handful of participants reported episodic empowerment. Therefore neighbourhood planning can only be a partial means to transformative participation from both top down and bottom up perspectives. Due to the manner in which powers are devolved and the ways in which participation has been negotiated by participants, the use of typologies in revealing patterns of participation is limited. The nature of participation that is so difficult to categorise is, in part, due to the light touch approach adopted by DCLG, providing a 'sandbox' for participation with only the Basic Conditions as an indicative target. As White (1996: 147-149) notes, what needs to be addressed by typologies is a 'sense of [the] dynamic' and the acknowledgment that participation

changes over time. Furthermore, the Fairholme case study in particular has demonstrated a discrepancy between the stated aims of the state and the interpretation of participation by communities: this suggests that it is unlikely that in any given scenario top down and bottom up interests will match up, as White (1996: 150) claims:

While participation may be encouraged for the purposes of legitimation or efficiency, there is always the potential for it to be 'co-opted from below', and for a disadvantaged group to use it for leverage or empowerment.

This reflects the complexity of social relations, and more specifically the fissures in the citizen/state nexus, where conflict is an ever-present possibility. As we have seen, neighbourhood planning seeks to bracket out conflict and create a bounded form of participation, with familiar disagreements around future housing development reconstructed as a response to the manner of decision making rather than as a reaction to development in of itself (Gallent et al., 2013). However due to the primacy of conflict across all societies, tension has been created between differing state and citizen interpretations, resulting in incommensurate regulatory structures and messy participatory spaces. As one participant surmised: 'there's confusion with regards to what we ought to be doing: changing advice as a result, lack of clarity around procedural process [and] challenges from the public' (L.8).

Initiatives such as NDPs are frequently messy assemblages both within communities and between communities and power holders. The confluence of multiple agendas often result in convoluted and demanding work for the participants. Whilst it is known that participatory initiatives are often complex systems that function in between order and chaos, hierarchy and anarchy (Wagenaar, 2007), the findings of this study show that such complexity can lead to uncertainty. In turn, uncertainty has undermined timely progress and restrained participants from attempting to introduce more radical solutions to their neighbourhood's persistent problems (see Parker et al., 2017). Prior research into community initiatives such as the New Deal for Communities found that a lack of clarity over the meaning and objectives of community involvement can lead to various, often conflicting, interpretations the concept (Robinson et al., 2005; Lawless, 2011). However despite this warning, there remains a reticence on behalf of government to implement a more comprehensive support structure or clarify certain ambiguous regulations for fear of producing a 'one size fits all' approach that might hinder innovation. Given that the language of localism has, to a certain extent, provided a narrative through which the Coalition sought to differentiate itself New Labour (Tait and Inch, 2016), it is perhaps unsurprising that the lessons of prior ABIs have not been heeded. The lack of

comprehensive support has been compounded by an inherent difficulty of localism: that the specific knowledge and ideas created by communities do not lend themselves to horizontal dissemination for obvious enough reasons of local context.

On the other side of the debate, Wagenaar (2007) has suggested that messiness is a core strength of participatory initiatives since it correlates directly with the ability to deal with complicated matters, such as an extended network of participants or actors' contrasting agendas. This suggests a juxtaposition between messiness as a strength of participation, and uncertainty as a hindrance to participant confidence and timely progress. Whilst this study has shown that complexity is not an insurmountable barrier for middle-class participants who generally possess extensive skillsets and an ability to adapt, some participants who have not had exposure to similar experiences have struggled. This suggests that only certain participants are likely to exploit the benefits of ambiguous regulations. The benefits of messiness and drawbacks of uncertainty are not inherently paradoxical but the two must co-exist in a manner that allows participants to remain in control, since it is they who ultimately navigate the process:

The public always get confused over who does what - there's a limit to how much they want to know. We know people only really get involved when they're threatened, not for positive things like this necessarily (L.71)

I think the process confuses people. (L.5)

There are number of steps along the way make it a very long process, as I said I'm confused what we did when, there's a lot or paperwork. It's just such a long process, it seems convoluted so talking to wider community they can't understand why there are so many stages (L.62)

This balance can be achieved through allowing citizens onto 'the stage of social design' (Beck, 1994), or put more concretely, allowing citizens to help design and refine the regulations that frame participatory initiatives. This would most likely accentuate the agonistic features of participation (outlined below) given many participants' desire for greater community control and how this inevitably clashes with top down governance. Future participation could be better facilitated by providing adequate space and time for communities to develop key competencies, informed by comprehensive (and uniformly available) guidance. This community development phase (prior to an instrumental decision making phase) would allow participants to enter democratic spaces with the confidence and expertise to achieve their desired outcomes, rather than seeking to define these whilst making decisions:

... it's hard to get democracy, support needs to be for community development before neighbourhood planning, Locality need to support community development and that should precede neighbourhood planning, it's less expensive and you can't have one before the other (L.15)

[The biggest enabling factor has been] the employment of a community development worker ... the idea that the community can do this for themselves is a joke (L.22)

We're weakest on the representative legitimacy of it. That is where community development knowledge would be crucial but not something you hear about (L.109)

Importantly such a system could facilitate feedback on the institutional design of the initiative, setting parameters and defining and personalising support, serving both present and future participation. As we have seen, participation in NDPs is labour intensive and requires a great deal of commitment, often only sustained by an instrumental desire to finish what has been started. Therefore whilst the public may often be able to negotiate complex institutions and the requisite bureaucracy, those administering participatory spaces should recognise that communities' participation is voluntary and therefore often at odds with employment, family life, and various social and private commitments. Such pressures need to be accounted for when designing regulations for participatory initiatives, and it is also necessary for the terms of participation to recognise the process of interpretation that communities go through in order to participate: ambiguities, insufficient or inconsistent advice, and uneven levels of support can all produce uncertainty:

The council were involved in the initial consultation and put a notice in the paper about it and they conducted the first event but then left us to it, there have been five or six consultations, I think mainly to comply to the new regulations. It feels like there's always another eight week consultation all the time (L.24)

Research by McDermont (2007) challenges the traditional understanding of regulation as a top down affair, suggesting that participants are subject to regulation but also shape the regulatory space through their own actions. Regulation is not a process simply 'done to' social actors, rather participants 'make themselves subjects of a regulatory system through shaping their own identity, as well as the identity of others around them' (McDermont, 2007: 374-375 - emphasis in original). This recognises interpretation as a crucial process in regulation but also notes the existence of self-regulation and self-censorship during participation. To borrow a phrase from surveillance studies, regulation creates a form of 'habituated anticipatory conformity' (Norris and Armstrong, 1999: 6), the opposite of the intended motivation behind the removal of red tape (HM Government, 2010b: 2). In neighbourhood planning this has precipitated caution in both participants and independent

examiners (Parker et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2017). Where decisions have to be made, conflicting evidence has to be weighed up and practicalities have to be negotiated. Ambiguous regulations and uneven support exacerbates complex policy problems creating unnecessary work and adding to the possibility of participation fatigue (Cornwall, 2008) and in extreme cases anger and mistrust (Innes and Booher, 2004). One participant noted the inherent difficulties of ‘pitching’ regulation:

The regulations are alright but then I’m used to reading regulations, I can fully understand [another community] being a good example, they’ve read the regulations and want somebody to write it [the NDP] for them. They could be simplified still, but it’s law isn’t it? The trouble when it comes to regulations and law as soon as you get to plain English you introduce loopholes so I’d have to stay with a pretty tightly constrained written law ... Some communities might well have not engaged on this because they didn’t feel confident enough to deal with the regulations. (12)

Another interviewee reported smear campaigns and threats of physical violence, over contrasting interpretations of the legislation. Such experiences can - and this case did - lead to active self-exclusion. The findings of this study suggest that whilst complexity is inescapable - and messiness can be a ‘core strength’ (Wagenaar, 2007) - uncertainty need not add to the complexity by a lack of support. Participants’ frustration often stemmed from a lack of definitive guidance when seeking clarity on the regulations. The light touch approach may seek to foster innovation, however particularly in the early stages of participation, this often causes communities to duplicate work and pursue policies and projects that are not supported by the legislation. Such uncertainty can lead to significantly slower outcomes and self-doubt within communities, undermining the limited evidence of empowerment found here. This leaves neighbourhood planning open to the criticism that politics too often offers too much and delivers too little (Flinders and Dommett, 2013).

Where communities have the resources to resist slow and bureaucratic dealings with authority, as was the case in Fairholme, additional resilience can result. However this likely can only be said of communities with the existing infrastructure and experience necessary to persevere. For others, commonly neighbourhoods with lower socio-economic profiles, bureaucratic inertia and inadequate regulations remain significant barriers to entry. Where communities have been able and willing to participate however, we have seen the implicit and explicit structuring of community input, leading to a bounded participatory space. The following section imagines what an agonistic participatory space might look like by building on concrete principles from existing theories of participation.

Beyond Bounded Participation

The findings of this study have highlighted the constraints placed on citizen involvement through the framing of neighbourhood planning. As explored in Chapters 2 and 4, such a top down approach to participation is not new, with state-led spaces often ‘discursively bounded’ in ways that permit limited citizen influence through the ‘stifling dissent’ (Cornwall, 2002: iii). Early criticisms of the localism agenda have been reinforced by these findings, including how the freedom of LAs has been curtailed and by extension, that of communities themselves (Wilks-Heeg, 2011; Jones and Stewart, 2012). As identified by participants, a lack of capacity within LPAs has undermined their ability to help communities exercise new powers, connoting an ‘anti-state’ vision of localism that seeks to further an ideological ideal of the smaller state rather than establish a true commitment to decentralisation. This undoubtedly risks attempts to rekindle enthusiasm for participation at the local level, which appears shortsighted given that - as one participant noted - neighbourhood planning has unleashed ‘a bigger movement than [central government] realise’ (L.17). The enthusiasm with which growing number of citizens are participating suggests that the potential of civil society may yet be realised through a reconfigured and extended form of neighbourhood planning and similar participatory opportunities.

This section discusses this study’s findings in light of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 5, integrating Mouffe’s (1999, 2005, 2007) agonistic pluralism and the practical insights of Fung and Wright’s (2003) empowered participatory governance (EPG). The purpose of this section is to consider the potential of neighbourhood planning against the framework’s core principles, before the discussion moves on to a theoretical consideration of agonistic participation in the following section.

Deliberation and contestation

This study has demonstrated how the implicit and explicit framing of neighbourhood planning has circumscribed citizen participation, restricting it to a largely technical and instrumental activity. One facet of this bounded participations has been the lack of extended or deep deliberation. Another has been the lack of contestation within communities, or perhaps more importantly, between communities and other governance partners. A significant theme of participant responses was lacking time to engage the wider community views: ‘it’s a question of resources, we just don’t have enough time’ (L.7). Practical considerations such as this had the effect of denying participants the chance to ‘create and protect the conditions for deep and genuine civic discourse’ (Sager, 2009: 3).

Instead communities self-limited the scope of their actions: '[we have] deliberately restricted ourselves on the plan and we're not taking active part in specific planning sites or community projects' (L.54). It is worth engaging therefore with established learning from prior initiatives that has sought to account for contestation in participatory spaces - in particular deliberative ones - in order to establish the added value of agonistic participation. The argument presented here is that whilst deliberative and agonistic democracy retain irresolvable logics at their centre, where participation occurs between and across multiple levels and spaces, theorised by Gaventa (2007a), both agonistic and deliberative forms can operate in a positive sum relationship, allowing participants the means to exercise influence on the stage of social design (Beck, 1994).

We have seen how the regulatory structure of NDPs, the surrounding policy discourse, and the resultant local interpretations of community leaders, have served to limit successful deliberation and close down contestation. The political imperatives of economic growth at present supersede the rhetorical promise of localism, a situation compounded by the relatively 'closed' nature of the political opportunity structure - particularly access to local officials and would-be elite allies. The superficiality of the deliberation that has occurred is also problematic since, as discussed in Chapter 4, contestation in such settings requires certain specific conditions to be 'nurtured' to enable argumentation and challenge. For instance, deliberative theorists have previously employed the concept of collective action frames as a means to legitimate alternative representations, images and meanings within a group - that is an 'action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization' (Benford and Snow, 2000: 614) - these can be discursively negotiated, drawing on shared values to generate meanings that shape the interpretation of a particular event, initiative or space. Where deliberative settings allow, the definition of such frames is a key means of contestation (Crossley, 2002). As we have seen however, the framing of NDP participation has been not been a dialogic exercise between communities and governance partners, and nor has the tight regulatory scope allowed communities themselves to discursively negotiate alternate meanings concerning their participation. As seen in Fairholme, many participants did not feel the need to develop a sophisticated political analysis of their situation, instead, participants reasonably concentrated on the technical aspects such as evidence collection and ensuring general conformity to higher tier planning policy. The policy interpretations of the core participants understandably placed meaning and emphasis in securing outcomes for the community rather than seeking to negotiate (or contest) the boundaries of the

legislation. This can be understood as a pragmatic exercise in securing plenipotentiary powers - i.e. a legitimisation of the Forum's activities within the regulations - rather than an attempt to widen existing governance structures or secure powers or representation beyond the offered terms. Accordingly, the limited 'collective action frame' legitimated a narrow scope of actions that related directly to producing policies permissible under the existing norms of planning practice as they were locally understood. Nor was this frame negotiated (or contested) due to the top down structuring of the participatory space and the heavy influence of core participants that constrained other participants' roles. What was possible in Fairholme and other communities was an agglomeration of ideas, information, contacts, tactics and knowledge of the local political landscape that could form the basis for future collective action. With limited means of constructive dissent within NDP spaces, agonistic participation would promote the use of such an assemblage of resources including linkages in 'various demands, claims, identities, and interest' (Howarth, 2015: 130) to 'speak to others as sites of possibility' (Keenan, 2003: 186). In other words, the assemblage of drawn together local knowledge, identities, increased capacity, elite allies and so on could be used to legitimate and inform contestation in the 'interstices, in in-between spaces that have not yet come under the entrepreneurial gaze of the (local) state or in spaces where effective resistance can be mounted' (Paddison, 2010: 20). Therefore the democratic education afforded to participants within the bounded participatory space may provide a toolkit to secure community demands within a more agonistic system, should it be realised.

A second feature of the findings that has precluded contestation by means of collective action frames concerns community motivation. Unlike in many social movements where participants have suffered subordination and exclusion by virtue of a core element of their identity (such as disability or race for instance) NDP participants' motivations were significantly different: most commonly a feeling of disenfranchisement within the context of the planning system. Whilst the disparity in power between, for example, large housing developers and local communities is consequential, due to the nature of collective identities associated with place, this rarely goes to the core of participants' identity. Therefore where the symbols and narratives of previous struggles (see Tarrow, 1994; Barnes and Prior, 2009) were invoked during NDP production (such as, individual or community-wide frustration at a prior planning decisions) these were neither particularly nuanced or developed, and nor did they go to the heart of local identities. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, identities derived from associations to place within the context of NDPs, whilst still political, are fundamentally

different from those emanating from experiences of difference or disadvantage (although there may be times when the two are combined). The evidence from this research suggests that whilst participants often had strong emotional and historical ties to their community, these had a strong temporal aspect and were achieved more 'by being' rather than through a more active (re-)negotiation of shared cultural values. Participants recognised shared grievances and a commonality of views during NDP production, and this contributed to a nascent forms of collective identity or alternatively called up existing place-based identities, but as in the case of Fairholme this was circumspect, limited to core participants, and further curtailed by interacting with authority figures. As a consequence, identities derived from NDPs stop short of Melucci's (1996) definition of contested, negotiated and (re-)created identities, achieved through a repeated process of 'activation' - and instead should be thought of rather as 'emerging'. It follows therefore that such emerging political identities - which can be compared with those identified by Bradley (2015) - do not have the same wealth of lived experience, or the same motivations as actors commonly described in social movement theory. There is a need therefore to open up would-be deliberative spaces within communities during NDP production, to allow emerging identities to develop and deepen. This could be achieved by a number of means. On a practical footing this might involve facilitation, training and guidance in community deliberation, as well as further clarity in the regulations regarding the LA relationship with communities (i.e. greater access to planning officers and elected members). More important would be a 're-weighting' of the discursive framing of neighbourhood planning that would involve equal emphasis on the process as a deliberative undertaking and an exercise of community development, as well as the production of a statutory document. Such measures would allow room for deeper and more developed collective action frames to be negotiated, which might allow for greater argumentation and contestation over shared concepts, meanings and ideas - at least within communities - as described by social movement theorists.

Developing collective action frames in this way could help identify fissures in the local political environment that communities could exploit, even where the wider opportunity structure may be regarded as closed. However it remains difficult to develop new meanings within invited spaces given the aforementioned dominance of state actors in dictating the nature of participation, as recognised by Dryzek (2005: 223). This explicitly recognises deliberation's shortcomings in state-led spaces, where the state's ownership forecloses opportunities for genuine negotiation of collective action frames in the ways laid out above. The limitations placed on dialogic decision making has

prevented contestation of ideas and circumscribed the meanings attributed to participation in the case of neighbourhood planning. Furthermore, the sporadic and uneven nature of co-production in NDPs highlights that governance partners cannot be relied upon to enter constructively into dialogic governance arrangements. However the perseverance displayed by communities in light of regulatory burdens created by NDPs clearly demonstrates the fundamental resilience and capacity within those communities. Communities should therefore embrace their emerging identities, redeploy their resources and the democratic education that participation *has* allowed for, and seek to challenge the rules of the game beyond the would-be deliberative spaces. Without such a challenge, achieved through consolidated community identities that can combat the boundaries of participation, the aim of liberal democracy to get politics ‘over, and done with’ (Honig, 1993: 2) is fulfilled.

The recognition of different types and sources of knowledge is a further means by which deliberative theorists have sought to show how participants can contest meanings and legitimacy in deliberative spaces. Barnes, Knops et al. (2004: 106) have described how this can occur:

Creating the opportunity for officials and citizens to meet and discuss policy and service issues does not automatically mean that deliberation will ensue - it has to be nurtured by an awareness of the conditions necessary to enable argumentation and challenge. Such conditions relate not only to the recognition and legitimization of different types and sources of knowledge, to different discourses through which the meanings of events and circumstances are constructed, but also to different modes of expression, and to the significance of respect and recognition of the person as well as the substance of exchange.

However the discourse surrounding post-2010 localism has largely been bereft of a number of key progressive concepts, unlike various ABIs under New Labour (Barnes, Newman et al., 2003). One exception has been the passing references to local knowledge (Conservative Party, 2009; DEFRA, 2013; Stanier, 2014). Practical engagement with this idea ‘involves creating understandings through open, informal and deliberative relationships between citizens and professionals, managers and politicians’ (Barnes et al., 2008: 5). As discussed in Chapter 4, prioritising local knowledge can lead to questions around normative assumptions about traditional legitimacy by acknowledging personal experience, common sense and knowledge derived from social interests and advocacy (Renn et al., 1993). The concept of contested knowledges also implies a different source of authority from which to claim a right to take part in debate - in contrast to professional, bureaucratic or ‘formal’ political claims (Barnes, 2002). Setting aside the paucity of fully-fledged deliberation in NDP production, it is worthwhile to ask what knowledge has been prioritised in neighbourhood planning. The policy was intended to be ‘a strategy grounded in and reflecting local knowledge and objectives’ (DEFRA,

2013: 2), however despite the centrality of the concept, local knowledge has not been further defined or problematised in government literature. The result has been that the role of local knowledge has been defined in relation to, and subordinated by, existing structures of representative democracy and expertise - rather than being elevated to a position where it genuinely challenges 'formal' political knowledge claims. The clearest example of this was reflected in the need for communities to 'translate' their aspirations into planning language:

... you need someone to translate your vision into planning language. Communities need significant assistance moving ideas and theory to the plan and planning language (L.1)

The first stage was to pay for a consultant, we knew it would have to be written in planning speak, the inspector was very helpful but we needed more technical language, we put in the work but they translated it, I was quite happy that (L.15)

[What is needed is a] ... a professional to take text by lay people and translate it into text the inspector will understand (L.39)

NPDs are not proportionate, we know it's a legal document but it takes away the idea that this is what local people want - we had an aspirational document but then we had to change it to suit a planning enquiry - it takes away that local community view (L.70)

This process reveals the relative position of lay and professional knowledges, and how the present regulatory frame of neighbourhood planning has precluded the legitimisation of alternative types of knowledge. This was most clearly illustrated in Chapter 8 where one participant reflected on Community Plans (a similar but non-statutory community-led planning document) and deemed them more 'aspirational, more innovative, more interesting in many ways' and therefore a 'more accurate document in terms of what local people want' (12). The need to modulate community inputs and translate them into a larger legal framework, requires communities to replicate established patterns of language and terminology if their aspirations are to be integrated into the planning system. This suggests that future incarnations of neighbourhood planning are unlikely to be manipulated in a way that legitimates different types and sources of knowledge whilst concurrently cohering with higher tier planning policies - at least without a wholesale transformation of the planning system. As a consequence, the ideal deliberative setting that embraces alternative forms of knowledge and facilitates contestation in an epistemological sense, is an unrealistic goal in this context if NDPs are to retain their statutory footing. The present austerity-driven policy context also plays a role here, when the then Localism Bill was first introduced, DCLG (2011b: 4) stated that a key motivation was to give LAs 'more freedom to work with others in new ways to drive down costs'. The primacy afforded to cutting costs is significant as LAs are already voicing concern at

present levels of community-led planning given its resource intensive nature; it is unlikely therefore that the greater levels of access, support and resource needed to deepen deliberation will be made available.

As we have seen, the present political opportunity structure and the regulatory frame of NDPs has not facilitated an awareness of the necessary conditions required for argumentation and challenge. Indeed the findings have shown how many communities are keen to achieve a voice by, at least temporarily, forgoing concerns about higher tier decisions that they might otherwise argue against. In short, the necessary conditions needed for deliberation to flourish are unlikely to be met by neighbourhood planning in its present form. As with prior collaborative planning activities, NDPs have demonstrated a propensity for downplaying asymmetries of power and knowledge between participants in dialogic spaces (Huxley, 2000; Parker et al., 2015). More fundamentally, the findings have shown little genuine exchange between experiential and professional knowledge, circumscribing the possibility of transformation and change (Barnes, 1999c). Participants therefore have little or no scope to challenge pervading rules and norms that shape actors' thoughts, actions and interactions. These processes, along with the regulatory frame, have also impeded the (re-)creation of institutional rules and norms through participation as per new institutional theory. The broad acceptance of the scope of neighbourhood planning powers has precluded reformulations and adaptations of old rules and norms that may have precipitated greater contestation as per Lowndes' (1999) thesis. The relationship between many communities and LAs was more often one of 'critical dependency' (for legal interpretations, resources, evidence and so on) (see Parker et al., 2017) rather than one of partnership. Whilst participants were able to establish their own meanings and act on their own interpretations, the lack of access to officials precluded an ability to influence existing governance arrangements in this way. The uncertainty reported by participants is crucial here: without the confidence created by sustained state support, or indeed a wellspring of discourses of progressive participation and examples of best practice, communities were left *dependent* on rule makers, rather than in partnership with them.

This said, neighbourhood planning has brought about a state of flux at the meso level as seen in the uncertainty displayed by the City Council in Fairholme whilst interpreting the new regulations. Arguably this reticence at an institutional level to facilitate communities was a recognition of the possibility of greater citizen agency and the challenge posed to existing rules and norms. This opens the possibilities of deeper deliberation and the forms of contestation mentioned above; indeed as this

chapter explores, there is a real possibility that greater communicative action within emerging collective identities may be tenable where communities are given the time, support and resources. Research by Matthews (2013) has sought to reappraise Habermas' ideas by suggesting that deliberative values should not be considered a normative yardstick for what communicative planning ought to be, but should be thought of in abductive terms about what is. This somewhat more generous reinterpretation may allow greater time and space for communities to develop their own understandings of local circumstances and learn 'how to use them in their everyday practical discourses' (Matthews, 2013: 151). The procedural rules of neighbourhood planning at present appear to prevent such intersubjectivity developing. Therefore whilst the dynamic interface of the citizen/state nexus has shifted with the introduction of NDPs, the framing of neighbourhood planning and local government reactions at a time of public spending retrenchment have undermined the ability of local communities to establish their own clearly differentiated positions in ways that might have allowed productive conflict to occur.

Notwithstanding Mouffe's (2015) questioning of deliberative theory (Chapter 5), the purpose of exploring how contestation has previously been addressed by deliberation has not been to undermine the theory's core claims, but to demonstrate that such approaches have not been sufficiently prioritised and nor is the prevailing political opportunity structure sufficiently open to facilitate dialogue between officials and communities. What is apparent is the possibility of deliberative techniques to help foster collective identities within communities that can then contest hegemonic powers in future participation. Such an approach would ensure that contestation can be brought about *by* publics or communities, rather than forms of contestation that are 'undemocratic to the extent that it is controlled by public relations experts, spin doctors and demagogues' (Dryzek, 2000: 77). Present community participation at the 'smaller than local' scale is an exercise in technical rather than political power, and established planning practices have been protected from exposure to genuine challenge from local knowledge. Where deliberation has occurred it has commonly done so within communities, or more accurately steering groups. Furthermore, the ability of communities to author NDPs does not necessarily extend to partnership working with local government officers: where co-production (knowledge and evidence sharing, critical friend roles and so on) was actively sought it did not extend to a deliberative reflection on preferences let alone facilitate a renegotiation of interests or co-created rules. This suggests that deliberation during neighbourhood planning can be seen to work best *within* a given community - deepening place-based or emerging identities and

creating consensus around community interests. This process is aided by the ‘boundary work’ done during neighbourhood planning, which as Bradley (2015: 103) acknowledges is central to collective identity formation and the possibility of conflict:

The designation of a boundary has both practical and symbolic importance in not only setting the limit of a neighbourhood plan but in drawing a line between the planning authority and the neighbourhood, a political divide that constitutes collective identities and suggests the ever-present possibility of conflict

The neighbourhood boundary clarifies the limits of ‘nearness’ (Kearns and Parkinson, 2001: 2104), or the parameters of familiarity and trust indicated Burke in the late 18th Century. In Fairholme this manifested itself in comradely feelings towards Forum members, whilst in some participants’ views, the LA was deemed ‘outside’ the process (14). Moreover, Bradley’s (2015: 107) study of neighbourhood planning found that:

Neighbourhood planning recognises the neighbourhood as the collective locus of participatory democracy and establishes boundaries to integrate and contain it within representative politics and market rationalities. These boundaries are the conditions of possibility for democratic politics, as Mouffe argues ... Market models of aggregative voice are mediated by the relational complexities of “nearness” and the political practices of negotiation, bargaining and debate can all be evidenced in neighbourhood planning.

This represents an opportunity to link the processes of deliberation and agonism. The boundary work done in neighbourhood planning - both literal and figurative - can help bring about a constructed identity that communities can coalesce around. Such conditions would allow for communicative acts that can generate new local meanings through greater ‘negotiation, bargaining and debate’ within the delineated space. This in turn would be capable of transforming wider discourses within which policies are made and implemented (Barnes, Newman et al., 2004: 275). In sum, the bottom up creation of organic spatial boundaries help create some of the conditions necessary for deliberation. The limitations of deliberation in this setting at present is not entirely conceptual (as Mouffe would have it) - but as often recognised by theorists themselves, due to an absence of conducive conditions. In the same way in which deliberative theorists have drawn on social movement theories to enhance their project in praxis, the next section explores how agonistic participation might occur, building from the foundation created through greater intra-community deliberation. Agonistic participation therefore reconceptualises NDPs as a space where communities deepen their collective identity and then focus their efforts on identifying sites of contestation, pressure points and

‘countertactics’ (Parker and Street, 2015) - in place of largely apolitical process of translating their aspirations and knowledge into ‘planning speak’ (2).

Bottom up participation and pragmatic orientation

Participation in NDPs passes the rudimentary test of involving ‘bottom up’ participation that has moved past merely ‘expressive or symbolic’ participation (Wright, 2010). Neighbourhood planning has allowed citizens to have some say in local decision making, turning their ‘knowledge, intelligence, and interest to the formulation of solutions’ (Fung and Wright, 2001: 18). However the limited nature of involvement - now seen to be resulting in limited planning outcomes (Field and Layard, 2017; Parker et al., 2017) - has not loosened the grip of traditional political elites as much of the agenda has remained in the hands of ‘narrowly trained experts’ (Fung and Wright, 2001: 18), namely local planners and central government civil servants. The involvement of local residents can be seen as a technocratic exercise with conflict bracketed out, where local knowledge has been applied to finesse pre-arranged, top down policies.

It is questionable therefore whether present participation can be categorised as a radical democratic innovation. Neighbourhood planning would fall short of Smith’s (2009: 2) definition of democratic innovation since it does not involve citizens beyond the local level, however some participants noted that other forms of innovation were evident within neighbourhood settings:

... especially novel ways of engagement with the community, DCLG helped too, talked to other neighbourhood planning areas too to gather innovative areas - overall I think we did well (L.99)

... because it’s [the consultation] well structured they do offer a lot more and because they’re with people that they wouldn’t necessarily mix with, they’re picking up different things and then it’s sparking off thoughts or ideas that they maybe didn’t think of before (5)

... you know it’s off the wall and it probably wouldn’t work but it’s somebody coming in with a bit of lateral thinking, without that, a lot of the issues were very intractable (3)

Despite this, a pressing criticism is that the present incarnation of localism is aimed at manufacturing local consent - in this case to new housing development (see Parker et al., 2015) - rather than genuinely innovative solutions to policy problems (this runs parallel to the depoliticising political problems into technical solutions discussed below). To illustrate this, it is necessary to revisit the political rationale of the policy, namely promoting economic growth through increased housing

stock. The solution to this problem is largely considered to be reducing opposition to housebuilding (see DCLG, 2014a) and it is posited that having a say over local development will reduce opposition (Sturzaker, 2011a; Stanier, 2014). This sleight of hand reframes the conflicts commonly associated with local housing development as stemming from the manner of decision making (i.e. excluding or ignoring citizen input) rather than development itself. From this perspective it is clear that public participation is less concerned with creating innovative solutions concerning sustainable neighbourhoods, access to public services or better transport provision, so much as it is allaying public opposition to new development. Such participation falls short of the goals of localism, not least fostering local innovation and celebrating a diversity of provision (Bunt and Harris, 2010).

A shortcoming of EPG's desire for bottom up participation is revealed by the uptake of neighbourhood plans. Participating communities have been drawn disproportionately from middle-class areas (Figures 10 and 11 - also Parker and Salter, 2016). Deepening democracy by encouraging public participation is only synonymous with progress if those previously disenfranchised by political processes are given a voice: while localism remains 'supply-driven rather than demand-driven' those structurally prevented from participating continue to lose out. Neighbourhood Development Plans continue to be undertaken therefore 'by those with capacity rather than the need to participate' (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013: 565) thus undermining the bottom up nature of participation. However, the policy does deal with specific and concrete issues that have aided participants in sustaining their efforts over time. As one participant noted, 'we had the airy fairy ideas and [the planning consultant] made it concrete - [it's a] translation process from aspiration to planning language so it's robust' (L.86). The need for legally sound planning policies therefore focused communities' aspiration into pragmatic outcomes. Moreover the statutory outcome provided a strong motivation for participants, even whilst aspects of the process itself were beset by uncertainty. During the Fairholme study there was an understandable avoidance of overly abstract concepts (despite the presence of academics on the Forum) in favour of achievable outcomes, in order to keep the process 'on track' (16). Here, neighbourhood planning successfully espouses the goals of EPG, and turning to the work of Mouffe (2005: 25), in some cases has allowed place-based identities to form, a necessary process for people to act politically. Whilst the above processes have been found in evidence, this research has also shown how neighbourhood planning can bring about its own forms of exclusion. As Wright (2010: 162) theorised, a pragmatic orientation can reduce the 'sharpness of antagonistic interests', the evidence from this study suggests that instead of fostering

an agonistic respect for difference some leading community members have excluded oppositional voices rather than engaging with them.

Nonetheless the place-based collective identities that have been achieved are analogous to the clearly differentiated political identities identified by Mouffe (1999), necessary to create an us/them divide. These emerging identities have been circumscribed by the primary legislation's desire to reduce conflict within the planning system, thereby restricting the expression of identities by positing communities as a source of local knowledge rather than a wellspring of political ideas and action. Participation under these terms has not allowed for 'significant conflicts of interest' (Wright, 2010: 161) either within communities or against power elites. This has in part been because the practical orientation has not been supplemented with an overt consideration of the wider societal aims of participation, hence the lack of developed discourses (Chapter 7). Without an understanding of the wider meaning of democratic participation it is unlikely incipient signs of co-optation will be replicated or socially just outcomes achieved, since the likelihood of ideas being successful in the currency of knowledge is widely dependent on the contexts within which they are produced (Sibley, 1995). One participant succinctly summarised the confusing effects of competing processes playing out at neighbourhood level:

... there's an awful lot of things have changed since the start - but it seems to be made up as they go along. Westminster had the idea of letting the amenities carve up the area - you might think it preserves some inherent conservatism - maybe a more radical approach might have brought more people in, but it might have made things difficult too (L.37)

Overall, despite the bottom up nature and pragmatic orientation of the bounded participation on offer, it falls short of making structural changes to local level governance, let alone ushering in a more participatory system beyond the Localism Act (2011). In fact the evidence suggests that local government is struggling with maintaining public services in light of funding restrictions rather than looking outwards toward citizen involvement in decisions (although the reverse may be true in terms of service delivery). Whilst co-produced public services and participatory initiatives may be a move away from the consumer citizen model, the limited nature of participation is unlikely to shift underlying structures of the liberal democratic model in its present capitalistic composition (Wright, 2010).

(Recombinant) decentralisation and state centred institutionalisation

Empowered participatory governance requires decentralisation to be recombinant - that is, basic decisions about means and ends should be made at an accountable local level whilst the central authority maintains linkages of accountability and communication, whilst co-ordinating and distributing resources. This should result in the formation of ‘numerous component groups, each operating with substantial autonomy but not in isolation’ (Fung and Wright, 2003: 25). Participation in NDPs contains no direct mechanism of accountability between participants and their constituents (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013), although this was not a concern for the majority of participants in this study:

I understand we’re not democratic but we have councillors on board ... it’s about money not necessary legitimacy, we’ve not been tasked with that, we don’t want to come more bureaucratic [by becoming a Parish Council], we’re accountable to the LA (L.15)

A number of participants intimated that accountability is achieved via the local referendum, however turnout levels remain low²² and this process says little about outcome let alone the democratic process. Referendums are often seen as the zenith of democratic practice yet they are subject to several weaknesses. For instance it remains unclear how knowledgeable wider electorates are about neighbourhood planning (outside of communities where the plan has taken on notoriety). Given the consistently high ‘Yes’ votes seen so far, it is likely that local citizens perceive having some say over local decisions better than none. In addition, it is the substance of the NDP and not the process that is being legitimised (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013), nor does it necessarily indicate support for new development. The community referendum therefore is a form of output rather than input legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999). It remains to be seen how post-2010 localism deals with the accountability of local solutions, and whether communities will ultimately benefit from participation over the longer term. Whilst EPG requires units of localism to be held accountable for the performance of their solutions (Wright, 2010), it is unlikely that local decisions made under the auspices of neighbourhood planning can be extricated from the wider planning system given the primacy of the Local Plan.

One manner in which local citizens may engage in recombinant decentralisation is through shortening the feedback loop (Parker and Murray, 2012; Richards and Smith, 2015). Where correctly employed, the distance between decisions and actions at the local level can be reduced through

²² As of early 2017, average turnout for neighbourhood planning referendums is approximately 32%.

reconfigurations in the nature of participation, allowing for flexibility and responsiveness. At present, the opportunity for participants to reconfigure the legislation is limited: there are no formal feedback loops that operate in the short or medium term - indeed the Locality research was the first substantial opportunity for participants to report on the process. During the 'Frontrunner stage', vanguard communities were assigned a civil servant from DCLG to act as a port of call when issues with the new legislation arose - however this relationship was largely one way (government providing advice, rather than reacting to frontline issues). Participants' recollections of the efficacy of this help varied significantly, and central support was pared back as more communities took up neighbourhood planning. Whilst not as responsive as traditional feedback loops, there have been instances of what could be termed secondary participation - principally through consultation exercises, including one-on-one meetings with DCLG representatives, conference days, a seminar series and less formal communication - although the reception was again mixed:

DCLG have been quite good - contact has been good, symposia have been good, if you have the time (L.1)

DCLG are not helpful about sending out information - they say we'll get back to you, but I know things were developing with the policy and understand it's a difficult early process (L.4)

Been to a seminar at DCLG with people in the same boat, information sharing, spoken to DCLG - delightful so far (L.99)

We've had quite a lot of problems - because we were a frontrunner we spent first 6 months treading through treacle, it was rushed through, no guidance that we found helpful, nothing authoritative, lots of consultants trying to get on the bandwagon, DCLG were of very little use (L.119)

... we had such good relations with DCLG - my fear was that DCLG would say they can't wade in ... but we had a very good working relationship with them, they leaned on the District Council to get it going etc., I was pleasantly surprised by their approach to all of this - I thought they might have accepted a more passive role. If that isn't the case elsewhere they need to be - they're the fundamental point at which things are resolved (L.52)

Whilst attendees at consultation events represented a relatively narrow, (handpicked) cross-section of the population, there were opportunities for a small number of participants to liaise with policy makers and civil servants over the future of neighbourhood planning. On a wider footing, between 13th October 2011 and 5th January 2012 a formal government consultation was carried out regarding the draft neighbourhood planning regulations, eliciting 436 responses (DCLG, 2012a). A subsequent technical consultation was carried out between the 31st July and 29th September 2014, garnering 467 responses (DCLG, 2014b). Both consultations related directly to technical aspects of neighbourhood planning regulations, and responses unsurprisingly 'frequently concerned measures that could be

taken to support communities and others taking forward neighbourhood planning' (DCLG, 2012a: 4). As a result of the second round of consultation, DCLG (2014b: 20) has pledged to make £22.5m available between 2015 and 2018, to provide communities with expert advice, grant funding and technical assistance. In addition, new regulations have been put forward to speed up the process, introduced to Parliament as the Neighbourhood Planning Bill in September 2016. Consultation of this nature constitutes a long-term feedback loop; however there is no obligation on the government to implement respondents' views, even where there is significant consensus. Whilst secondary participation in this form does not necessarily succeed in fulfilling criteria of inclusivity or openness, it does represent an opportunity for participants to comment on the rules of the game, and some, albeit limited input at an additional site where power is exercised.

Empowered participatory governance calls for a reform of governance structures from the inside that seeks to institutionalise the on-going participation of 'ordinary' citizens (Wright, 2010: 165).

Attempts to achieve incremental change in this way can only be achieved through support from a strong central state. This is most evident in the failure of more spontaneous social movements working outside or in parallel to state activities to impact dominant political discourse (Levitas, 2012). Akin to many social movements, agonism desires pluralistic exchange between adversarial identities in such a way that the institutions themselves may be transformed and freed to combat inequality. This suggests a dual role for participation within an agonistic system, requiring both the credence of state-led spaces but also the ability to manipulate and remould those same spaces. As discussed above, present participation in NDPs is undoubtedly bounded yet citizens are relatively free from instruction as to how to participate within these spaces (the sandbox approach) - this presents an opportunity for citizens to embrace bottom up agendas - as was the case, in part, in Fairholme. The role of the state in facilitating such processes is complicated. Neighbourhood plans can only be successfully co-produced with state agents where certain conditions are met by the LPA, and at present too many areas are without adequate resources preventing them from playing a crucial supporting role, as Ludwig and Ludwig (2014: 253) point out:

... the notion of localism is clearly a political and artificial construct involving predominantly symbolic advantages, yet lacking any explicit roadmap for implementation or adequate financial and human resource support ... From the officers' perspectives, too many competing and contradictory priorities are received from government, resulting in diluted messages and guidance. Wide-reaching cost-cutting measures and staff redundancies had similar effects, in addition to lowering staff morale. The contradiction of the national government claiming to give more power to communities whilst really cutting local services without any compensation through additional financial funds is seen as particularly insurmountable.

This suggests that credence needs to be lent to local government initiatives in both financial and symbolic terms if communities are to be able to pursue more radical forms of participation. Recent research suggests that on the contrary an ‘odd assemblage of classical right-wing political thinking’ is precipitating a de-professionalisation of planners in ways that make it increasingly difficult to support community participation (Lord et al., 2017: 1). To rectify this, the light touch approach regulation (DCLG, 2012a) requires replacing with formal systems of monitoring and accountability. This need not be prescriptive but rather designed to ensure consistent coverage in support arrangements.

Instrumental change

For many participants the statutory outcome of NDPs was the litmus test of success. In this sense, participation has undoubtedly been ‘close to points of action’ by citizens ‘who possess intimate knowledge about relevant situations’ (Fung and Wright, 2003: 25) and this remains a key strength. Judgement has to be reserved as to whether NDPs will result in more socially just outcomes as Fung and Wright (2003) suggest EPG initiatives should deliver. Emerging evidence as to whether radical change has been achieved is, at best, mixed (Parker et al., 2017). Some studies do suggest that neighbourhood planning may promote sustainability and social purpose, coming into conflict with the corporate interests of a liberalised housing market (Bradley and Sparling, 2017). Achieving a realignment of the neo-liberal aims that presently define the planning system will depend on the inclusion of policies that target social justice through alternative forms of development, in particular addressing the needs of older people, young families and households with disabled residents, increasing social and affordable housing allocations, and promoting self-building and smaller, local developers - all commonly desired by NDP participants:

... if we end up with the limited development, so we provide some more housing with some affordable housing and protect the green spaces I think we would be satisfied (L.10)

... we’ve been achieving the right housing numbers over last few years, we’re now looking at affordable housing. One of the aims of the plan is to get to more affordable houses. Too many millionaires’ houses but people we want to help are those who can’t get on the housing ladder (L.117)

A lot of things come up [in consultation] that want to alleviate problems there - need for affordable housing and for those who want to downsize (L.75)

... in starting out we didn't think about allocating affordable housing for people with a local connection with the parish. As we understood housing need, we realised lots of people in parish who live outside that needed housing and couldn't afford to buy (L.55)

Yet as Field and Layard (2017: 111) have found, these aims remain hindered by:

... the conventional models for housing supply (land, permission, finance and skills) premised on open market value (especially in times of austerity), as well as dealings with 'specialists' and 'experts', have made delivering these new forms of housing both difficult and challenging.

The wider conditions of a liberalised housing market are therefore constraining the likelihood of socially just outcomes. Arguably reconfiguring the planning system to give added weight to citizens' concerns is an innate form of social justice, but as discussed above this also requires mechanisms designed to include those structurally prevented from participation, uniform support, and concrete change. Only where outcomes are secured *and* rooted in inclusive action specifically aimed at securing rights and participation for previously marginalised and subordinated groups (Pieterse, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2004) can localism be conceived of as 'more democratic'. At present, the voluntaristic element of neighbourhood planning (Bailey, 2017), combined with too few rules governing membership of planning forums undermine representativeness (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013) has meant that participants have come from disproportionately affluent and rural neighbourhoods (Parker and Salter, 2016). With regard to those who are participating, EPG desires both broad and deep participation - however as we have seen, democratic spaces tend to be *either* broad or deep, and are unlikely to be both (Farrington et al., 1993). Instead the appropriateness of participation - or optimum participation (Cornwall, 2008) - should be prioritised. Fung and Wright (2003: 27) suggest that EPG is reliant on popular engagement as a central productive force, allowing 'channels of voice' to become established so that the issues of importance participants care deeply about are addressed: neighbourhood planning appears to be a productive vehicle for community views within the parameters of the regulations, however the values of EPG implicitly promote a breadth of opportunity to participate such that all relevant social issues are addressed, and this continues to be a failing of the policy.

This study has shown there is significant appetite within sections of civil society to improve locally made decisions, however certain preconditions are required alongside the changes in institutional design mooted above. First, a programme of proper resourcing is necessary to sustain and widen participation, with particular emphasis on reaching those communities currently 'priced out' of

participating. Preferably communities would continue to have control over their own budgets (less the present restrictions on what funds may be used where and in what time frame) in order to maintain local financial responsibility and allow funding to reach the areas in most need. Second, an emphasis on the community development stage of NDP participation is required, allowing for communities to strengthen networks, identify common causes and develop capacity - thereby improving the quality of engagement whilst also instilling an understanding of what agonistic participation might look like. Third, continuity is required in centrally co-ordinated support systems to ensure feedback loops and shared learning, thereby deepening understanding and encouraging accountability. In addition, the rights of neighbourhood planning groups within the planning system should be extended - for example, Neighbourhood Forums might become statutory consultees on any decision made using the NDP. This would cohere with emerging evidence that suggests that increasing numbers of NDP groups are unhappy with the interpretation of their plans by planning officers post-adoption. Rights could also extend to involvement in strategic concerns, perhaps through charrettes with local planners or a consortium of NDP groups having formal input into the creation of Local Plans. Neighbourhood Forums in particular present opportunities to extend citizen involvement in decision making post-adoption as their legal status remains ambiguous at best (whilst moves to promote urban Parish councils are failing to gain traction). Whilst these stipulations require significant commitment to deepening participation, only with increased trust in participants and sufficient space for contestation can the enthusiasm of present initiatives be sustained.

A Mixed Game

As per the EPG thesis, the above discussion has explored various ways in which a 'deeper' form of citizen involvement might challenge present forms of bounded participation. This section directly addresses the ability of future initiatives to combat hegemonic interests through agonistic participation. In line with Barnes et al.'s (2007: 183) contention that productive engagement comes about between and across different theoretical traditions, agonistic participation embraces elements of both deliberative theory and agonistic pluralism. The agonistic project is an on-going one whose 'parameters are not yet fixed', making it a fertile ground for future research and experimentation (Jones, 2014: 28). Agonistic democrats are committed to building democratic institutions, but as yet the project has failed to move beyond 'iconoclastic resistance' (Wingenbach, 2011: 38) and so the model of agonistic participation set out in this chapter is an attempt to move pure critique and to

demonstrate the value of agonistic thought through a discussion of how contestation can be accommodated into participatory spaces. In so doing it builds upon the ways in which contestation has been considered in previous work, whilst seeking to further Mouffe's original insight. Just as theorists have turned to other schools of thought to bolster the credentials of deliberative theory in practice, the argument here suggests that deliberation can play a part in a wider agonistic system.

Agonistic participation

As we have seen, agonistic institutions must encourage mutual respect, where irresolvable positions can be held whilst maintaining dialogue, rather than circumventing contentious issues through exclusion or nihilistic opposition. Recognising Mouffe's (1999: 753) view that we must 'acknowledge the existence of relations of power and the need to transform them, while renouncing the illusion that we could free ourselves completely from power', the aim of such democratic processes must be not to eliminate or suppress power relations, but to reformulate them so that they are compatible with democratic values. However, given the dimensions of undecidability and contingency that mark every social order (Mouffe, 2005: 17), any future agonistic initiative may also be required to be potentially self-undermining. This suggests a further tension between participation itself and a reflexive questioning of the nature of participatory spaces. In practice this means trying to achieve what Mouffe (1999: 756) described as a 'mixed-game', one that is 'in part collaborative and in part conflictual and not as a wholly co-operative game as most liberal pluralists would have it.' Both deliberative and agonistic theory is too often conceptualised as promoting only consensus or conflict respectively, rather than recognising the need for both modes of participation across a democratic system. This section develops a positive sum understanding of the relationship between conflictual and consensual modes that is required to produce progressive and socially just outcomes through participation.

The agonistic approach is a response to depoliticisation, or 'the oldest task in politics' (Rancière, 1995: 19). Despite the radical origins of participatory democracy in the 1970s, subsequent decades reconfigured the meaning of participation such that it was increasingly deployed to uphold traditional governance orthodoxies (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). The introduction to this thesis asked why increasing numbers of governments are ceding power (or claiming to cede power) to citizens via localism, and this reconfiguration of participation's meaning reveals the answer: as White (1996: 143) summarises: '[i]ncorporation, rather than exclusion, is often the best means of control'. That is

to say that participatory democracy has been welcomed only where it poses no challenge to the spatial hierarchies of power (Taylor, 2007). Such ‘participatory depoliticisation’ (Abram, 2007) has arguably been enabled by a depoliticising of the public sphere itself (Newman and Clarke, 2009), with the result that participation represents a weak counterweight against the rolling back of the state (Corbett and Walker, 2013; Bunyan, 2015). This study has demonstrated elements of what Cooke and Kothari (2001) termed the ‘tyranny of participation’ in both the bounded nature of participation and the instrumental actions of the public in new democratic spaces. In short, a political problem (a lack of public support for new housing at the local level) has been depoliticised by being translated into a technical problem to be dealt with by communities. As we have seen, the resultant democratic space is bereft of reflexive discussion of the meaning or purpose of public involvement, and this is further revealed through government consultations (DCLG, 2012a, 2012b) that have concentrated exclusively on the technical nature of participation, rather than acknowledging the wider ramifications for democratic practice. By emphasising technicalities over locally created meanings or practice in this way, empowerment is presented as a de facto conclusion to the participatory process. Issues that address uneven power relations are largely ignored creating a ‘modified, sanitised and depoliticised’ version of citizen involvement that helps to maintain the status quo (Leal, 2007: 543).

Despite this, democratic participation cannot be disregarded wholesale. Solutions lie in combatting the problem of exclusion (Booher, 2004; John, 2009), redressing the insubstantial commitment to community development that neo-liberal hegemony has fostered, and embracing respectful contestation. In the absence of conflict in invited spaces (whether this be framed as subversion, counter-agency, radical politics and so on), there is the risk of a dichotomy between social movements (being ‘more radical’) and invited spaces (being exclusionary and overly instrumental). Whilst the current form of localism has not foreclosed instances of episodic empowerment (Chapter 7), it has demonstrated Cornwall’s (2008) contention that regardless of stated intentions, initiatives are necessarily structured by those that provide them. Consequentially, neighbourhood planning does not - at present - allow for the incipient ‘clearly differentiated’ political identities necessary for agonistic exchange to flourish.

A number of participants in this study recognised neighbourhood planning’s unusual position as a participatory initiative ‘tagged on’ to larger representative institutions. Extending participation to incorporate an agonistic alternative is also reconcilable with this approach. As Laclau (2005) makes

clear, radical democracy does not innately require a general opposition to liberal institutions, but rather questions their specific roles in a certain spaces, and their function in the populist leanings of political constitutions. Coelho et al. (2015) argue we should consider the institutions, processes and incentives that underpin the formulation of policy in our model of governance in order to create policy solutions that address structural weaknesses in society. This drives at the heart of agonistic participation as it requires participants to reflexively consider the institutions and processes of decision making through mechanisms that promote both inclusion and difference. Such inbuilt reflexivity widens the acceptable domain of interests that are considered in the formulation of public policy, thereby increasing the likelihood that structural weaknesses can be targeted and redressed. These values have been called for before, for example by deliberative theorists drawing on new institutional theory to suggest that new institutional rules and norms might be formed through dialogue (Sullivan et al., 2003; Barnes et al., 2007). However unlike Mouffe's (2005) original arguments, and those of deliberative theorists, this thesis contends that *both* processes may fulfil this role and are suitable at different times and in different fora. Indeed the contestation between 'new' rules and norms (for example those produced by deliberation within a community, social movement or other collective identity) and those already established is an obvious potential wellspring of agonistic relations between the powerful and the (relatively) powerless.

This suggests therefore that deliberation has a role within communities, helping to forge local collective identities that can then interact with governance structures in the most appropriate way. Importantly deliberation within communities does not require existing power-holders (e.g. local planners, civil servants, elected members) to be present, let alone willing to display the dispositions necessary for transformational deliberation (Chapter 4). Embracing agonistic citizenship would recognise citizens' ability to know when to engage deliberatively and when to deploy alternative countertactics (Parker and Street, 2015). Such tactics might include amplifying demands through the use of social institutions (such as legislation); driving wider collective action (such unifying and formalising citizens' demands); deflecting attempts to modulate community demands (such as restricting flows of information); or utilising elite allies to help navigate local governance structures (McAdam, 1996). Sympathetic institutional designs may therefore explicitly promote deliberation whilst remaining sufficiently reflexive and flexible so as to be vehicles for social change (Mouffe, 2005). Crucially, the ethos of agonistic participation means that change can be achieved endogenously through the efforts of citizens targeting opportunities for agonistic exchange, rather

than waiting for exogenous events (such as financial crises, technological change, or even the devolution of genuine political powers) to act as a catalyst.

Bridging the gap?

Various authors have sought to (re-)define the relationship between agonistic and deliberative theory beyond the assumption that they are mutually exclusive. In considering Habermas' model of the public sphere, Markell (1997) suggests that a deliberative political system cannot only withstand agonistic behaviour but requires it - acting as a necessary corrective to a consensus-driven approach. This is possible due to an understanding of communicative action that emphasises 'orientation toward agreement' rather than declaiming that 'all speech is governed by the ultimate *telos* of arriving at a consensus' (Markell, 1997: 387-390). This circumvents the criticism that discourse in the public sphere must *necessarily* delegitimise and discourage 'speech which seeks to challenge agreements, [or] to reintroduce a plurality of opinion' (Markell, 1997: 387). Similar arguments are put forward by Brady (2004) who, also writing from a deliberative perspective, suggests that political contestation can support the achievement of consensus. In essence, Brady (2004: 345-356) argues that the 'attenuated nature of the theory-practice link' in Habermasian theory 'opens up a space for political contestation': since Habermas does not set out a normative framework of political action for individuals to adopt within the public sphere, the requisite amount of political contestation may be decided by actors as is 'proper to their particular historical situation'.

From a more critical position, Martin (2005: 355) argues that Habermas' work does show a genuine overemphasis on consensus, relegating dissent to a 'marginal ancillary position'. Yet using the example of revolutionary America, Martin (2005) argues that radical thought can be fostered within a 'dissentient public sphere', not least through publications that promote 'opposition voices' (an example of a New England newspaper is given). In a cognate vein, Knops (2007: 125) argues that deliberation (and rational consensus) can be seen as agonistic by equating deliberation to the Wittgensteinian process of explanation and language:

The understandings reached through either process are partial and defeasible, formed from an encounter with difference. In this sense, there is always the risk of an agreement or consensus resulting in the erroneous projection of one party's understandings onto another, constraining their meanings – it is fraught with the possibility of hegemony. We must guard against such hegemonic tendencies by remaining open to every possibility of their exercise, holding discourses up to careful scrutiny of the language and assumptions that might underlie them. Not only will this help resist power, it will also assist in building deeper and better understanding, or more rational consensus.

As before, this connotes a form of agonism that is feasible within a wider deliberative system. Knops goes on to argue that Mouffe's project is not only compatible with deliberation but actually presupposes a deliberative framework. Mouffe's aim is to mobilise collective action through 'shared norms of reciprocity and equality in the exchange of reasons' in order to eradicate oppressive uses of power - which Knops (2007: 125) argues, is ultimately a deliberative concept. This significantly underplays the ontological assumptions that distinguish the two schools, namely the unresolved and contingent nature of the political (Mouffe, 2005) versus the ultimate rational ground required for deliberative theory (Dryzek, 2005). Nonetheless - akin to Markell (1997), Brady (2004) and Martin (2005) - Knops (2007) claims these arguments as evidence that deliberative and agonistic democracy are in fact 'mutually dependent'. This collection of arguments builds from the deliberative perspective so it is questionable whether Mouffe's (2005) claims about the primacy of conflict in social life are properly reflected in their interpretations, nonetheless the linkages that are identified do further the otherwise stultified debate between the two approaches.

Versions of these arguments have played out elsewhere. For instance Young (1996: 123) has claimed that 'deliberation is competitive' - an argument Dryzek (2000) dismisses on the basis that Young's claim is based on strategic rather communicative rationality. Undoubtedly the divide between the two approaches has been compounded by unsympathetic readings of the other: for example Young's (1996: 122) contention that for all deliberative theorists 'the goal of deliberation is to arrive at consensus' - which Dryzek (2000: 72) labels 'simply wrong' and which underplays attempts by deliberative theorists to consider the role of conflict and non-rational communication in deliberation (Chapter 4). On the other hand, Dryzek (2005: 221) argues that Mouffe's interpretation of democracy 'has no obvious place for collective decision making and resolution of social problems' - despite Mouffe's (1999: 756) explicit acknowledgement of the need for temporary forms of consensus. As Honig (1993:15) explains, an emphasis on contestation does not preclude arriving at collective decisions since to 'affirm the perpetuity of the contest is not to celebrate a world without points of stabilisation; it is to affirm the reality of perpetual contest, even within an ordered setting'.

An alternative reading can be found in the work of Karppinen et al. (2008: 18-19) who advocate a 'theoretical eclecticism' whereby 'there is no need to choose any one theoretical approach, and pretend that it offers an end-all account of the nature of social and political reality'. This is closer to readings by both Kapoor (2002) and Gürsözlü (2009) who see the two schools as ultimately irresolvable but that such differences are fruitful and educative. Gürsözlü (2009: 367), with a hint of irony, therefore pragmatically suggests that a 'vibrant constructive agonism' might be fostered between the two approaches. This is echoed by Bond (2011: 178) who promotes a 'critical, adaptive and reflexive' democratic ethos that recognises that 'governance situations often display characteristics that can be explained in terms of both theoretical framings'. In order to encourage relevance in policy and practice, Bond (2011: 179) advocates a 'non-foundationalist' (i.e. without a universal basis), normative framework that allows for 'reflexivity in interpreting and judging practices while maintaining a focus on the effects of power'. In short, Bond (2011) co-opts the principles of deliberation into Mouffe's understanding of ontology. This is a pragmatic argument that is unique in the above commentary in that it privileges Mouffe's ontology and concept of hegemony (Bond, 2011: 178), rather than seeking to elide elements of the two approaches from a broadly deliberative perspective.

This is also the basis of the agonistic participation model set out in thesis. The 'mixed game' framework does not emphasise elements of agonism within deliberative practice (or vice versa), or even seek to find a genuine mutuality that could 'collapse' the theoretical gap - instead it conceives a positive sum relationship between the two approaches. This claims that both approaches can find traction within a system of politics that takes place on the contingent, ontological level of 'the political' (Mouffe, 2005). In short, pockets of deliberation can occur and should be encouraged within a wider system that seeks to harness productive conflict. It goes further than Bond's (2011) 'two-pronged' approach by setting out a tentative framework for agonistic participation using insights from EPG, and through the introduction of Gaventa's (2006; 2007a) spatially-led analysis of power to elucidate how the positive sum approach might work. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is little practical value in disentangling the differing accounts of power into a single, comprehensive concept (Göhler, 2009) in a 'global postmodern world' defined by 'the fragmentation of power' (Innes, 2004: 16). Instead each theory of power has a local usage which makes sense to a given context (the 'space' and 'level' in Gaventa's terminology) but is unlikely to be universally applicable (Haugaard, 2006). This role of different forms of power has also been recognised by

deliberative theorists. Hendriks (2009: 173) argues that 'coercive forms of power may be needed by some marginalized groups to push their issue onto the agenda, while more generative forms of power can inspire actors to engage in collective thinking'. This follows the shift in deliberative theory from 'bracketing out' power from deliberative settings to embracing it - as Hendriks (2009: 181) explains, the 'challenge for practitioners is to expand their efforts beyond designing out 'power-over' from micro deliberative forums, towards encouraging more generative forms of 'power-with''. This recognises that 'different arenas facilitate critiques of power from different directions' (Mansbridge, 1996: 56) and reflects Gaventa's (2006; 2007a) recognition of the specific interplay of power within a given configuration of forms (visible, hidden, invisible), spaces (closed, invited, claimed), and levels (local, national and global). Where Hendriks' (2009: 181) envisaged multiple forms of power within an '*entire* deliberative system', the mixed game framework does the same within an agonistic system.

It is possible therefore to conceive of different forms of power operating within different spaces and within/across different levels. Furthermore, it is evident from the discussion of past initiatives that different approaches to participation are commensurate with different spatial levels and call upon differing understandings of power. A local, invited space may well be conducive to a deliberative approach and forms of communicative action/'power to' (Arendt, 1958: 200); concurrently, collectives acting at the meso level may be able to employ agonistic countertactics against vested interests - embracing 'clearly differentiated' political identities (Mouffe, 2005: 25) to identify and exploit 'moments of opportunity' and 'cracks' in the power structure that may be opened up (Healey, 1997). Linking the plurality of interrelated agonistic sites at which collectives can apply leverage is crucial given the forgoing analysis of neighbourhood planning that has rejected the premise that conflicts can be nullified simply by 'opening up' the public sphere through dialogue between people with different interests (see Parker et al., 2015). Citizens therefore need to go beyond deliberation to secure their aims - requiring new space(s) for conflict that can authentically challenge existing hegemonic articulations through the on-going prioritisation and expression of difference.

The agonistic framework therefore proposes radical and innovative democratic solutions beginning at the local level, but also that agonism must be a wider mode of 'doing democracy' rather than an approach confined to marginalised groups or compartmentalised within one type of participatory initiative. Opportunities for agonistic participation should therefore 'speak to others as sites of possibility' (Keenan, 2003: 186), fostering a form of agonistic citizenship and identifying future

spaces for citizen involvement. This means recognising the full plethora of political sites: local and national formal political spaces, trade unions, transnational political parties and international 'single issue' movements - alongside spaces created by social movements, pressure groups, public assemblies and rallies - right down to workplaces (especially guilds, co-operatives and mutuals), schools and universities. In speaking to other sites in this way, a repository of participatory methods, tactics and tools can be established that allow citizen groups to uncover and manipulate the contingency of political structures, revealing further possibilities for participation.

Within invited spaces, the scope of participation should extend to participants addressing the nature of the participatory space itself: this can be achieved through practical considerations such as who participates and where, decision making techniques, unifying the demands of likeminded groups, co-opting elite allies and so on. From this foundation, local groups will be able to challenge authorities and seek to influence future decision making processes. Particular emphasis should be placed on inclusion and establishing a voice for underrepresented groups, remaining attentive to inequalities of power and combatting unequal relationships through mechanisms such as capacity building and advocacy. This is necessary to prevent inequalities arising from an 'overrepresentation of interests ... [that] can to some extent can be countered through the careful design of the participatory processes' (Agger, 2012: 31). Such processes will also equip citizens with the ability to participate in decisions that move beyond the local level - for example in relation to neighbourhood planning, this means that community input at both neighbourhood and strategic level decision making. This would have to be reconciled with evidence that suggests that local communities struggle to engage with policy decisions at a strategic level (Newman et al., 2004; Matthews, 2012) - however the agonistic participation described should allow for specific knowledge and capacity to accrue in communities that would facilitate this, in addition to greater community cohesion and intra-community communication that are all demonstrably occurring in NDPs presently as prior commentary suggested that it might (Parker, 2008; Michels and De Graaf, 2010). In practical terms this might mean communities with adopted NDPs, or a consortium of such groups, challenging evidence and strategic directions of decisions made at local government level. Participation is therefore instigated at the local level but then expanded to strategic decisions where agonistic exchange can be developed between the meso and macro levels. Akin to Pateman's (1970) model (Chapter 2), agonistic participation creates the opportunities and conditions necessary for its own existence and

development - although it stops short of Pateman's fully participatory society by advocating genuine plurality including between participatory and representative spaces.

This form of agonistic education will also allow multiple opportunities for 'conflicts to shape the more mundane operations of politics' (Wingenbach, 2011: 79) through a broad engagement by the public across the multiple sites where power is exercised. In other words, agonistic practice should extend beyond areas of policy that have increasingly sought to introduce participation, inculcating an agonistic citizenship that recognises the ability of citizens to know where difference is being suppressed and consensual forms of politics are actually an expression of hegemony and not an honest opportunity for change. In this way the positive sum approach provides citizens with the greatest number of opportunities and broadest range of approaches to resist co-option and set the agenda in ways that might facilitate a 'pluralisation of hegemonies' (Mouffe, 2009: 553).

Challenging hegemony and the positive sum approach

Understanding the role of hegemony in power relations remains central when considering how agonistic participation might take hold within a mature democracy. As discussed in Chapter 5, power does not 'take place' between two pre-constituted identities but constitutes the identities themselves (Mouffe, 1999: 753); it is vital therefore that new collective identities are created that can challenge existing structures, including how democracy itself is practiced. This can only occur by opening up new spaces that encourage the respectful recognition of difference and the ability to challenge the status quo, either in place of or beside existing structures. In other words this requires alternative ways of thinking about democracy whilst still embracing the ethico-political principles of liberty and equality for all (Mouffe, 2005: 32). This may seem unlikely given the dominance of liberal democracy in the West (including the pursuit of deliberative democracy), but as Gürsözlü (2009: 358) argues whilst hegemonic power represses alternatives ways of thinking, such alternatives 'can always be reactivated.' So despite hegemonic articulations instituting social relations in a primary sense, independent of any a priori social rationality (Laclau, 1996), the 'lack of a final ground' (Mouffe, 2009: 549) allows alternatives to be imagined where conditions allow. It is this recognition that requires a would-be transformative participatory sphere to be predicated on the contingent understanding of 'the political' - since it is the fundamental undecidability that allows for alternative solutions to emerge (Bond, 2011).

This understanding builds on established learning concerning deliberative initiatives, in particular identifying and fostering of collective identities through shared experience. Collective identities based on political positions are central to the ‘us/them’ distinction that allows for the expression of citizen interests and through which productive confrontation may become manifest. Deliberation has a role here, as Knops (2007: 124) explains:

While consensus through rational argument cannot be guaranteed, it cannot be ruled out either. The only way to find out whether it is possible or not is through argument. In addition, that process of reasoning, or explanation, is itself a process in which we are made more aware of difference, through the projection of language to describe others’ forms of life.

The shared use of language is central to forging collectives - in particular the ‘explanation or the clarification of usage across different forms of life’ (Knops, 2007: 122) - and also, crucially, in identifying areas of difference. Barnes (2002: 329) has argued for the need to ask ‘fundamental questions of the exercise of power through control of the rules of the game’ if deliberation is not to reinforce existing exclusions. By situating deliberative spaces in a wider agonistic framework, ownership of those same rules can be negotiated (or created) prior to deliberation itself - in ways that prior deliberative spaces have struggled to do (Chapter 4). The use of boundaries in neighbourhood planning, both literal and figurative, provides a good example of how deliberation might work within collective identities. Boundaries help delineate bottom up spaces where collective identities may be deepened through deliberation, before communities seek out opportunities for agonistic practice, operating with greater confidence and capacity. The use of distinct but complementary deliberative and agonistic modes in this way echoes Gürsözlü’s (2009: 367) contention that ‘a healthy relationship can only be based on clarifying the differences between the two approaches as well as commonalities’. The ability to combat hegemony is realised in remaining open to both modes but with caveats to both: deliberation must seek to decentre the exclusive role of rationality, as some theorists have sought to do (Barnes et al., 1999; Barnes, 2002; 2008b; Barnes et al., 2007; Davies et al., 2006; Martin, 2012) and recognise the contingency of any given outcome - meanwhile agonism must accept the possibility and value of ‘rational’ consensus, albeit in a temporary and non-foundational form. The ethos that underpins this model therefore is that citizens require multiple weapons in their arsenal if they are to secure ownership of participatory spaces (particularly state-led initiatives) by means of co-option.

If agonistic participation is to start within smaller, local participatory spaces, then it is necessary to establish how such a radical element might be achieved whilst retaining the legitimacy of state-led democratic spaces. Blaug (2002: 105-6) alludes to this conundrum in making a distinction between incumbent and critical forms of democracy. The former 'seeks to improve, though at the same time control, participatory input, by channelling, simplifying and rationalising it through institutionalised conduits'. The latter 'occurs within local and peripheral sites and involves resistance to elite governance. It is characterized by increased participation and empowerment, often on the part of people normally excluded from political activity'. Incumbent democrats believe that 'democratic participation necessitates a central institutional and representative core', and reforms are designed to maintain the 'stability and effectiveness of the representative core by protecting it from excessive participatory input' (Blaug, 2002: 107-8). This is Habermas' (1992: 453) point when arguing that deliberative spaces should ideally be 'self-limiting' - incumbent democratic reforms wish to encourage participation but also limit its aims to optimise and preserve existing institutions. Participation within the spaces provided by the Localism Act (2011) can be categorised as an incumbent democratic reform: manufacturing consensus within communities in a way that adds legitimacy to decisions made at higher levels, thus both preserving and necessitating a representative, institutional core. In contrast, agonistic participation would constitute a form of critical democracy that seeks 'to resist management and to empower excluded voices in such a way as to directly challenge existing institutions' (Blaug, 2002: 107).

Over-reliance on either of these approaches will either maintain the status quo or be dismissed by power holders as illegitimate (see the treatment of the Occupy movement) - therefore achieving a balance between these two modes is the most realistic option for progressive change through participation. On a wider footing - not specifically relating to participatory democracy - this point has been recognised by Mansbridge (1983: x-xi):

I believe that every polity contains both common and conflicting interests and that every polity therefore needs both unitary and adversary institutions to make democratic decisions. Unitary democracies that ignore or suppress conflicting interests can do as much damage both to themselves and to their members as can adversary democracies that ignore or fail to develop their members' common interests. ... Indeed, the unitary model of democracy may produce more overt and angry conflict than adversary democracy, because if a political problem has an underlying correct solution, it often pays to argue things through until everyone concerned accepts this solution as correct. If there is no solution that serves everyone's interest, more debate will not usually produce agreement

The parallels here again are evident. Deliberation, like unitary democracy, 'is most effective when participants share underlying common interests and social bonds such as friendship, and when the problem under discussion has an identifiable, "correct" solution' (Delli Carpini, et al., 2004: 329). Adversarial democracy - or agonism - is required either where underlying interests are different, when parties are less closely tied together, or where the problem lacks a single identifiable or acceptable solution. Mansbridge (1983) is clear that conflict can exist in both unitary and adversarial democracy - and it is clear that deliberative mechanisms can work even where parties are deeply divided, the crux of the argument is that theorists from deliberative and agonist schools have recognised the necessity of both approaches depending on specific context.

Transformative democratic innovations as envisaged by Smith (2009) require both forms of incumbent/unitary and critical/adversarial democracy. Elements of the former are required to bestow legitimacy on practice, whilst the latter introduces radical and empowering aspects of participation, including the otherwise excluded and challenging institutions. Whilst inviting forms of radical process may often be perceived as anathema to established institutions, the practice of NDP production has introduced a number of these aspects: namely the mobilisation of local political passions and the identification of collective identities (see the boundary work done by NDPs). Furthermore, despite the bounded nature of participation, the policy does suggest a further node of power beyond local and national government - a recognition of the pluralism that is at the heart of the agonistic project (Mouffe, 2005).

The model of agonistic participation distils this argument into concrete principals. A particular benefit of this model lies in its alignment with an ideological drive (begun in earnest under New Labour) to pass on both rights but also responsibilities to citizens. Whilst remaining mindful of the dangers of passing too much responsibility onto citizens in lieu of vital work undertaken by the state (Corbett and Walker, 2013; Kisby, 2010), it is possible to recognise an opportunity for communities to dominate new democratic spaces and beyond, embracing these rights and developing agonistic principles that do not rely solely on access to officials or the willingness of officials to deliberate. This approach places emphasis on communities to find fissures in the state edifice, use evidence and countertactics to further their cause, and adopt the tools necessary to emphasise citizen interests in the face of vested interests. In this sense, agonistic participation is actually an extension of existing principles in post-2010 localist policy which has continued an agenda of devolved responsibility (Peck and Tickell, 2006; Rose, 1999) whereby communities are increasingly encouraged to 'take

control' (DCLG, 2011b: 19; Conservative Party, 2009). The logical consequence of rhetoric that claims that '[r]esidents understand their communities better than district officials' (Stanier, 2014: 13) is that citizens utilise participation opportunities to challenge the very same officials - in this way, the discursive framing of neighbourhood planning set out at the beginning of Chapter 7 should make the introduction of critical/adversarial/agonistic forms of democracy more palatable to political elites. Moreover, central to agonism is need for citizens to have the possibility of choosing real alternatives (Mouffe, 2005: 29), and indeed the choice between consensual and conflictual approaches when dealing with power holders is just such an alternative.

Conclusion

There is now an established body of empirical work that highlights the limitations of participatory initiatives to truly transform methods of governance (White 1996; Rowe and Shepherd, 2002; Innes and Booher, 2004; Newman et al., 2004; Barnes et al., 2007; Cornwall and Coelho, 2007; Agger and Larsen, 2009; Flinders and Dommett, 2013). This can, in part, be attributed to a failure to understand the primacy of conflict in social relations, hence a growing school of thought that advocates the accommodation of conflict within fields of social policy (not least planning), with agonism often central to this analysis (Hillier, 2002, 2003; Stratford et al., 2003; Pløger, 2004; Martin, 2005; Purcell, 2009; Bäcklund and Mäntysalo, 2010; Bond, 2011; McClymont, 2011; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012; Jones, 2014; Bradley, 2015 - see also Metzger et al., 2015; Brady, 2004; Gürsözlü, 2009; and Gualini, 2015).

Hall (2011: 723) coined the phrase 'disaffected consent' as a description of the present status of democratic participation in the UK, arguing that:

... there is as yet no overwhelming majority appetite for the neo-liberal project. But as far as disenchantment of people from politics itself and the idea of collective resistance is concerned, a massive de-politicisation has done its work.

Alternatives to bounded participation are therefore required in order to undo the work of de-politicisation and propose alternatives to exclusively neo-liberal imaginaries. Not to do so, democrats would be guilty of protecting elite institutions from critical attack and propagating the ideological assertion that democracy is a unified, and universally understood political project (Blaug, 2002). At present neighbourhood planning neither allows for conflict to be resolved by deliberative means - as the requisite conditions are not in place, in particular access to officials, but also more

fundamental issues such as the recognition of alternative forms of knowledge (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004) - nor agonistically since the circumscribed plenipotentiary powers deny a fully active role for political passions. Additionally, there is no scope for communities to extend their interests beyond the NDP space. In seeking to address this problem, this chapter has explored the theoretical ramifications of agonistic participation based on the understanding that the likelihood of progressive change can only be heightened by a combination of unitary and adversarial modes of democracy (Mansbridge, 1983; see also Blaug, 2002). This chapter has reorientated agonistic pluralism's macro level insight to explore how agonistic participation might operate in practice at the micro and meso levels. This has employed the principles EPG, including deliberation, particularly within collective identities. The two modes of practice would largely operate at different sites and this analysis has not sought to collapse the theoretical gap between the two traditions, but instead retain the benefits of each through a positive sum relationship that may serve the needs of participants in different spaces at different times.

This chapter has sought to bring together the findings of this study and explore them in light of the previously reviewed empirical research and theoretical literature. Potential institutional designs for agonistic participation have been tentatively put forward. The suggested framework allows for a plurality of sites for action and contestation throughout the democratic process, promoting sites of deliberation but also agonistic challenge. Designing and managing agonistic spaces will require time, understanding, evidence, learning and resources - as well as flexibility and continuity in all of the above. Evidently this is a significant undertaking, but without adequate space afforded for the play of passions in political life, and processes to account for power asymmetries, present participatory spaces will continue to fall short of producing radical and sustainable alternatives.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

In order to overcome the increasing levels of political disillusion (Chapter 1), complex societies require sophisticated ways of making democracy work beyond the top down institutions of representative governance. Yet despite the theoretical insight of various strands of progressive democratic theory (see Pieterse 2001: 411), there remains a paucity of alternative or radical forms of participation beyond deliberative democracy. In seeking to address this, this thesis has employed the insights of agonistic pluralism to analyse the post-2010 localism agenda and consider the potential of agonistic participation. Primary and secondary data have been used to analyse participation in Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) from the citizen perspective. This has identified a significant appetite for greater citizen involvement in decision making, yet despite moves by the Coalition government to devolve power to community level, real influence remains circumspect. The case for agonistic democracy has been furthered by moving beyond critique and towards a tentative but pragmatic democratic model that has refocused Mouffe's (2005) macro level theory of agonistic pluralism to the local level democratic practice by integrating the concrete principles of Fung and Wright's (2003) empowered participatory democracy. In so doing a positive sum approach to agonistic and deliberative democracy has been set out. This chapter revisits the research questions that have been addressed by this thesis before concluding with the implications for a policy audience and suggesting directions for further research.

Research questions revisited

Empirically this research has focused on citizens' interpretations of democratic participation at the micro and meso levels. An in depth case study and nationwide data concerning new participatory spaces opened up by the Localism Act (2011) have been used to examine both the nature of participation on offer and how citizens are operating within these spaces. The three research questions at the centre of this thesis are as follows:

1. What is the nature of the participation being offered by UK Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015) and how is this demonstrated by policy and practice?
2. How are citizens participating within the new democratic spaces opened up by the Localism Act (2011) and what informs this practice?
3. To what extent do contemporary forms of participation allow for agonistic forms of democratic practice?

The first research question has been answered through an analysis of primary and secondary data in Chapters 7 and 8. This paid particular attention to the regulatory structure of NDPs and both the explicit and implicit assumptions made on behalf of policy makers and local officials concerning what citizens may decide and how. Focusing on local interpretations, this demonstrated the bounded nature of participation on offer, in particular how oppositional voices have been excluded. The second research question has been addressed in Chapters 7 and 8, and in the theoretical discussion in Chapter 9. The findings show the instrumental manner adopted by the majority of participants who are seeking to obtain a voice in future decisions concerning their neighbourhoods. This has been informed by an undercurrent of uncertainty evident in many participants' interpretations of the regulatory frame of the Localism Act (2011). Exceptions to this rule have been found where processes of co-production (primarily between communities and willing LAs) have been successful. Chapter 7 also illuminated how some communities have sought to co-opt the process (in a manner closer to the Coalitions's rhetoric concerning the Big Society and post-2010 localism) and achieve a vision for their neighbourhood beyond the narrow scope of land use policies.

The empirical questions at the centre of this thesis have not concerned the efficacy of NDPs from a governmental perspective (that is, their ability to deliver higher levels of development) or planning outcomes, but have examined the relationship between how participation is being offered and how it is being undertaken. This has exposed the contrast between policy rhetoric and reality, which - although not the foremost intention of interpretive policy analysis - helps answer why increasing numbers of governments are claiming to cede power to citizens. The regulatory frame and bounded nature of participation mean that present forms of localism are, to a large extent, a form of centralism wielded at the local level - manufacturing local consent for pre-ordained decisions. The third research question has been addressed primarily in Chapter 9, informed by the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 5. This reinforced and extended the previous discussion concerning conflict in democratic spaces and demonstrated how difference and contestation, both necessary conditions of agonistic participation, have been bracketed of neighbourhood planning spaces. Despite nascent

processes of collective identity delineation and creation - achieved primarily by the 'boundary work' performed by neighbourhood planning - and signs of local co-option of the participatory space, the suppression of contestation has circumscribed the emergence of agonistic democracy.

Contribution to Knowledge and the Future of Participation

This thesis has sought to contribute to knowledge in two central respects. First on an empirical level, this study has presented and analysed both primary and secondary data concerning local level participatory democracy under the Localism Act (2011). This has concentrated on how participants navigate participatory spaces and manage their relationship with the state, detailing how citizens are both enabled to act but also constrained by an explicit (regulation) and implicit (modulation and instrumentality) structuring of the participatory space. In this sense, neighbourhood planning shares similarities with both past planning initiatives (see for example Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, 2012) and local participatory democracy more generally (Taylor, 2003; 2007; Barnes et al., 2007) - demonstrating that post-2010 localism has failed to heed lessons from past attempts at locality based participation. In particular this has demonstrated how the regulatory and rhetorical frame of NDPs has fostered both uncertainty and instrumentalism on behalf of participating citizens. Through this exploration, the expected contrast between policy rhetoric and frontline reality has been demonstrated, revealing a bounded form of participation and showing the extent to which present forms of localism are an instrument designed to achieve central government objectives. These findings go some way to answering why increasing numbers of governments are ceding powers to the local level, despite the fact that this appears to contradict traditional interpretations of hegemonic state governance.

Second, the theoretical contribution concerns the application of agonistic pluralism's macro level analysis to democratic practice at the micro and meso levels. Due in part to its own radical ontology that emphasises contingency and undecidability, agonism has previously been unable to proffer adequate 'ways of doing' of democracy and has been limited to an 'iconoclastic resistance' of contemporary liberal democracy (Wingenbach, 2011: 38). The agonistic participation model has built on the evidence from this study of nascent forms of identity delineation and creation, as well as increased community resilience, capacity and expertise - all of which that suggest some promise for agonistic participation. The enthusiasm of citizens has also fed into the recognition that greater allowances should be made for the play of political passions (as well as the immutability of conflict

in social life) if participation is to be genuinely transformative. The proffered model has drawn on the practical insights of empowered participatory governance (Fung and Wright, 2003; Wright, 2010) to establish a pragmatic framework for participatory democracy that furthers an underdeveloped portion of the literature that has sought to bridge the theoretical gap between deliberative and agonistic forms of democracy (Markell, 1997; Brady, 2004; Martin, 2005; Knops, 2007; Gürsözlü, 2009; Bond, 2011). by developing a positive sum relationship. This resultant model adopts Mouffe's (2009: 549) ontological position by rejecting the exclusive use of any mode of democracy that purports to be a 'manifestation of a deeper objectivity' - but has considered the ways in which contestation has been considered in past initiatives (e.g. Dryzek, 2000, 2005; Barnes et al., 2007; Barnes, 2008b) to advocate an agonistic system that utilises pockets of deliberation within a 'context of contingency' (Mouffe, 2009: 549). By embracing both incumbent and critical forms of democracy (Blaug, 2002; also see Mansbridge, 1983), the discussion has advanced the 'increasingly well rehearsed debates' between the two traditions (Inch, 2015: 406).

When researching neighbourhood planning through participants' experiences, it easy to overlook that thousands of citizens have been attracted to participate in democracy through the simple promise of making their own decisions. Despite many participants feeling that the rhetoric of localism 'oversold' the powers devolved to communities, citizens remain willing to participate in significant numbers. This problematises, at least partially, the perceived anti-establishment standpoint illustrated by Flinders (2015) and others: the following responses are representative of a widespread view concerning the future of participatory initiatives:

If governments are going launch these things you have to let them happen, it's not doing what we want if they insist on interfering. It's the confused message - walk the talk, put the authority down to neighbourhoods (L.85)

I know it's early days but if NDPs were given more clout - we've had to get over the scepticism of the community: 'no-one will notice, developers will win over' etc - NDPs need more weight from DCLG 'selling' the process (L.63)

... having gone this far they have to run with it ... Need more central government commitment to neighbourhood planning (L.111)

... you need to provide resources to help them through it. You can't set a hare running and then hold them back (L.120)

They've underestimated the number of people that will get involved, [it's] a bigger movement than they realise - they'll be overwhelmed ... it will become a powerful lobbying movement (L.17)

It is fair to argue therefore that more radical democratic reforms that devolve genuine political powers to the local level are likely to encourage further participation, acting as a counterweight to instances of democratic malaise. Such an extension of participation cannot simply be a case of encouraging engagement between citizens and democratic structures, but requires the structural transformation of those institutions (Corbett, 2014). This thesis has argued that such a remaking should be geared towards achieving agonistic participation as the best means of securing genuine and sustained citizen influence, embracing productive conflicts in order to challenge the present hegemonic articulation of neo-liberal consensus. This should be an iterative processes of reformulation, where citizens are able to simultaneously contribute to, but also shape, democratic institutions themselves. Placing this added responsibility into citizens' hands acts as a rejoinder to 'end-of-the-pipe citizen mobilisation' identified by Inch (2015: 422). Care should be taken in increasing demands made on 'ordinary citizens', especially since a greater role for citizens requires 'the cultivation of specific civic virtues, including particular conceptions of how the common good should be understood and what constitutes legitimate political behaviour' (Inch, 2015: 409). The proposals suggested here (and elsewhere) undoubtedly precipitate increased demands on the citizenry, yet this is necessary if future participation is to rescue the vestiges of the Big Society, which otherwise would be dominated by 'largely by well-meaning, well educated people living in nice places - mostly rural - with time on their hands' (Hall, 2011: 60). In this sense, localist policies should not be about a romantic return to community decision making, but rather a struggle between the centre and the local such that all institutions to play an active role (Stoker, 2004a).

Implications for Policy

This section briefly explores the concrete implications for neighbourhood planning stemming from the radical new direction of travel for UK democracy suggested by this thesis. Participants were unified in their desire for the process to be simplified as per Parker et al.'s (2014) recommendations. Wherever possible regulations should be unambiguous and accompanied by explicit guidance that all communities can interpret and implement. The desire to remove red tape has had the adverse effect of driving bureaucracy (and concomitant uncertainty) down to community level, resulting in higher workloads for participants and creating delays. For instance, there needs to be clarity over: what may or may not be included in an NDP (in particular in terms of non-land use policies); timescales for LPAs responses and decisions, the modulatory role of examiners, who can campaign in support of an

NDP at the referendum stage, and the status of NDPs within the planning system post-adoption (in particular where LPAs cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply). Where sufficient support is achieved and communities freed from the remaining regulatory uncertainty, they could concentrate on encouraging and enhancing community-wide capacity to avoid simply compounding the skills of active citizens (examples might include participatory appraisal, charrettes, action learning or citizens' summits). Such efforts should be introduced alongside mechanisms that encourage the participation of marginalised groups within communities, preferably through frontloading consultation practices. This process could be incentivised by central government by offering consultation bonuses in the same way as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) incentivises supporting development. Ensuring deep participation in this way may constrain the ability of local elites to establish themselves as experts and position others as amateurs (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004).

Many of the improvements that could be made within the neighbourhood planning policy revolve around the role local government. The Big Society was to be dependent on local government 'framing opportunities for engagement ... and ensuring speedy and honest responses from decision makers and those who allocate public resources' (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012: 32). This study suggests that such a situation has not materialised - or at least not with uniformity. Clarity is required over the 'duty to support' placed on LAs and mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure consistent coverage across England. Where co-production is undertaken with genuine commitment on behalf of the community and LA, faster (and most likely more robust NDPs) result. There is a need therefore to reflect on how LAs are supporting communities: innovations may be required at a time where local government funding is being reduced, but where capacity allows, critical friend roles would be appreciated by many communities. Similarly, consolidated and definitive advice would remove the possibility of outdated and conflicting guidance being provided. Ambiguities also need to be addressed regarding the legal status of planning forums after the completion of NDPs - many of whom do not wish to apply to become Parish Councils. It also remains unclear how neighbourhoods might adjust or extend NDPs over time, or how they might monitor future LPAs decisions that relate to NDP policies. Efforts should also be made within LAs to ensure that planning policy teams (who predominantly deal with NDP communities) pass on contacts and expertise to colleagues in development management teams who are responsible for interpreting made NDPs. Scrutiny around support arrangements should not stop at LAs: private planning consultants have an

important role in establishing and maintaining the norms of the planning system. This study has shown their role is often highly instrumental and can shut down the opportunity for processes of democratic education for participants.

A firm message of support for NDPs from central government would go a long way in reassuring participants that their considerable effort is worthwhile. This could primarily be achieved by a publicising the benefits of neighbourhood planning to encourage wider participation. Finally, central government should consider providing additional resources to undergird to participatory efforts. Increased funding should be awarded to communities but also to LAs who are struggling to provide adequate support to participating communities, let alone future participants. As per the first come, first serve model, there is no attention being paid to equalising the opportunity of participation at the local level, with emerging research suggesting that neighbourhood planning is disproportionately popular in affluent areas (Parker and Salter, 2016). As research into post-2010 localism develops, it is becoming clear that more needs to be done to address quality of access. Socio-economic status goes some way to explaining local variation in a wide range of participation activities (Parry et al., 1992; Lowndes et al., 2006) but there are evidently further structural and attitudinal barriers to participation. Without sufficient orchestration at the centre, particularly concerning the fair allocation of resources, participation will continue to be partial, unequal and dominated by those with greater access to resources and pre-existing skills (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). The homogeneity of participants in this research would indicate there is a need for forms of positive discrimination to give voice to the excluded groups such as the frail and elderly, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and to some extent younger generations. Without interventions such as advocacy to combat structural exclusion, 'the possibilities for transformative action within the discursive spaces of 'localist action' remain circumscribed and accessible to only those individuals with access to the necessary resources, infrastructures, and repertoires' (Parker and Street, 2015: 806). These amendments, coupled with the above argument in favour of widening the scope of neighbourhood planning, would increase the chances of a genuine renegotiation between the central and local government by providing communities adequate resources and greater control over their own participation.

Directions for Future Research

Researching the views of those engaged with democratic participation enables an understanding of the motivations that drive an active citizenry. If, as has been claimed here and elsewhere, bringing citizens into the decision making processes is a means of overcoming disaffected democracies, then a much wider and more representative tranche of citizens must become engaged. It has become apparent throughout this research that some of the most pertinent questions about the future of participation in the UK (and likely elsewhere) need to centre on those presently not involved - by means of both self-exclusion and structural exclusion. Investigating this is inherently difficult due to issues of access. It is important to uncover why formal sites of participation are perceived as only for the particularly active citizens in the civic core: a view that is shared by policy makers and practitioners, and even participating citizens themselves. One way such research might be achieved is considering why particular subsets of the population are underrepresented. To take the common example of young people, it is often stated that this demographic is uninterested or does not have sufficient skills or time to participate in decision making. Research over the life-course, for example through the use of participant diaries may shed light on whether or not such received wisdom is true, whilst policy makers may need to reconsider how participatory initiatives might be reimagined to pique interest or utilise the skills of young people. Whilst targeting groups that are traditionally underrepresented is crucial to encouraging wider involvement in a shared democratic future - as well as securing social just outcomes - future research should also consider attitudinal non-participation. That is, self-exclusion from democracy amongst those with the requisite forms of capital (skills, qualifications, capacity, experience, time and so on). Anecdotal evidence uncovered during the course of this research points to a worrisome political disaffection amongst able, middle-class young adults - shedding light on this particular form of non-participation may well prove as fruitful to instigating a democratic revival as would a concentration on structural exclusion.

Whilst a large proportion of the population does not engage in the state-led participation that was the topic of this thesis, participation covers a vast range of activities (Chapter 2), especially informal forms, so we should remain sceptical of diagnoses of mass disaffection or the inexorable decline in the quality of democracy. Finally, transformative democratic participation is not just a matter of introducing or perfecting techniques of citizen engagement, rather it rests on the ability of the public 'to challenge dominant rules and norms and to question the ways in which the rules of the game are defined' (Barnes et al., 2007: 201). Therefore the potential of participatory initiatives is dependent on

communities influencing how initiatives are constructed, as well as participating within those structures. Communities and individual citizens are far more likely to participate in democracy and retain enthusiasm if they feel their efforts are self-defined. It is therefore vital that future invited democratic spaces allow citizens to express their political passions through participation but also determine the nature of their own participation.

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