Climate and Community – Building back better

How within a community organisation setting people are coming together to tackle the climate emergency, alongside responding to the social crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Tackling the climate emergency is the biggest challenge of our time. Radical changes are needed across society, yet it is not clear how communities can play their part. Whilst there is a pressing and urgent need for climate action, communities are also grappling with intersecting crises from austerity and COVID-19. Rather than viewing these as separate issues, I explore how people are coming together to tackle climate change, alongside the social crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic. To gain insight into how these issues interlink, I use ethnographic and action research methodologies through a case study of a community organisation in Leeds. I apply a community resilience framework to analyse their strategies, tactics, and programmes of work. The key strands of community resilience that I employ are community resilience as adaptation, coping, and transformation. Community resilience as adaptation focuses on how the organisation adjusted to the neoliberal political and economic environment to enable them to build a stronger community institution. One of the aims of adaptation was to help the community to cope, which was based on supporting people to manage and minimise adverse impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community resilience as transformation was about trying to bring about more radical change as a response to crises. There are two contributions that this research makes to fill gaps in the current literature. Firstly, I show how different strands of community resilience can co-exist, interact, support, and inhibit one another. Secondly, I demonstrate how community resilience as transformation can be built using symbiotic and interstitial strategies, which again can interact within single projects. Applying these ideas to climate action, I argue that effective action in a community setting must be collaborative, take account of the community context, and it does not necessarily start from a position of tackling the climate emergency. To be effective, fair, and to improve life for people, climate action cannot ignore the realities of how community led approaches operate and it must seek to make our communities better places to live.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 The Background and purpose

This research focuses on how people in a community organisation worked together to tackle the crises of austerity, COVID-19, and climate change. Through an in-depth case study of a Leeds based Community Benefit Society, the Kirkstall Valley Development Trust (KVDT), I was able to observe how the crises and the social impacts they created were viewed within the organisation and how the organisation developed a range of strategies to respond at the community level. At the beginning of my research, I was interested in community responses to the climate emergency and wanted to conduct a study that combined ethnography and action research. My intention was to focus on analysing and developing community activities that contributed towards tackling the climate emergency. However, when I began my fieldwork, it became evident that whilst KVDT had a range of strategies for creating local sustainability and contributing to community-based climate action, climate action within this setting could not be divorced from the wider aims of the organisation, which entailed supporting the community through austerity and COVID-19. Thus, I was researching how the three crises intersected with one another and what this means for developing community action for tackling the climate emergency in a period of broader crisis.

A key element within this research is that communities are grappling with vulnerabilities caused by neoliberal political, economic, and social policy prescriptions (Wright, 2021). The national and local austerity and the COVID-19 policy responses, both underlined by

neoliberal ideas, created the context in which KVDT operated. This was evident in terms of the what the organisation was responding to, such as a reduction of services, a lack of ways for the community to come together, vulnerability due to low pay and insecure work, or social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The neoliberal context also shaped key elements of how the organisation itself could function. This was evident in areas such as acquiring funding, interacting with the council and council processes, and strategies for acquiring and developing community assets. Therefore, through this research I explore how this community organisation navigated the prevailing political, economic, and social policy environment. I look at the barriers and opportunities that were evident, and the range of strategies and tactics that they developed to succeed in this environment. This entailed adapting to the political and economic context that they operated in, and how alongside this they attempt to develop and pursue strategies for creating more fundamental transformative change within their community.

The approach that I take is to connect the strategies and actions that I observed and helped to develop, to ideas about community resilience. Community resilience is defined within this research as how social groups "sustain and advance their well-being in the face of challenges to it" (Hall and Lamont, 2013, p. 232). This means that I look at the links between social and contextual conditions and community efforts to respond. Whilst KVDT themselves did not talk in terms of resilience, (instead people talked of "building community" or "bringing the community together"), they were motivated by a desire to tackle what they saw as the most pressing issues facing the community, such as a lack of local services caused by austerity, food insecurity, and social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside this they had strategies focused on creating more environmentally sustainable projects in response to the climate emergency. My analysis categorises KVDT's efforts into two: resilience as adaptation and resilience as transformation. Where my research makes a unique contribution, is to show, when looking at efforts to tackle the climate emergency, community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation interact, both supporting and detracting from one another in critical ways.

The contribution that this research makes it to demonstrate how the community organisation that I spent over a year researching moved between non-transformative and transformative strategies across the range of issues that they were dealing with, and that this is a key dimension of understanding community efforts to tackle the problems that they face. For those that want to push more radical and transformative climate action approaches, my research suggests that this must be based on the local context, must take account of differing motivations, and that the reality of seeking change at the community level requires strategies and actions that may not directly contribute towards tackling the climate emergency. Through this research, I show how taking account of this context can highlight limitations in the power that communities have. Conversely, it can also demonstrate how climate action can be developed in a way that takes account of different forms of vulnerability, how it can tackle the impacts of other crises, and what meaningful solutions look like when generated by the community. I want to contribute towards understandings of how climate action can improve life in the local context, something that my research suggests should be central to community-based climate mitigation work. Furthermore, I want to highlight the role that research itself can play in contributing towards this improvement and how it can support community led efforts to tackle the intersecting crises that they face.

1.2 Research Objectives

In this section, I outline the three research objectives before explaining how the research sets about meeting them. The three research objectives are to:

1. Understand the barriers and opportunities for effective community climate action through a lens of community resilience.

2. Investigate how a community organisation is responding to intersecting crises through empirical evidence.

3. Explore how a collaborative approach between the researcher and participants can contribute towards the aims of the organisation, including climate action.

To meet the research objectives, this research begins by shining a light on how KVDT were working to mitigate the social impacts felt after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the subsequent UK austerity programme, and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This can broaden our understanding of community driven action, with implications for what climate action means within this context. To achieve my three objectives, I used a case study of a community organisation in Leeds. Merriam (2009, p. 39) defines a case study as, "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system." I focused on one case with the aim of contributing towards community resilience theory on how communities are coping with the impacts of neoliberalism, adapting to these impacts, and seeking to create transformation. Using a case study enabled me to dig into the 'how' of their work and explore their approaches, strategies, and programmes. This meant looking at how they worked within the current system and their work to build alternatives outside of, or beyond, the current dominant neoliberal environment. Through this, I could create more generalised conclusions that are of interest to academics, policymakers and people working within not-for-profit organisations.

1.2.1 Understand the barriers and opportunities for effective community climate action through a lens of community resilience

The initial motivation for this research, as outlined in objective 1, was to contribute towards understandings of the barriers and opportunities that were evident when developing community level climate in the UK. Through this, I contribute towards a research agenda about the role that community action can play in the move towards net zero. Through a range of ethnographic approaches, that included participant observation, interviews, and workshops, I was interested in how those seeking to transform their communities used a range of strategies and tactics. The strategies and tactics that I observed entailed working within current political and economic structures, alongside strategies to create projects that built beyond those structures and were outside of neoliberal values. In this way, when applied to tackling the climate emergency, my research was about understanding how community action to tackle the climate emergency entailed efforts to create healthier, fairer, and a stronger place-based community.

Through my research I was able to observe how KVDT generated strategies and programmes of work that aimed at playing a role in tackling the climate emergency, but I was also able to see how these activities served a broader purpose of being part of responses to the social impacts of austerity and COVID-19. KVDT's ability to develop climate action was impacted by stresses and strains that were placed on the community during the period of COVID-19. Analysis of the neoliberal approaches to governance and the social impacts that it generated at the community level contributed to this research objective through illustrating the range of ways in which this policy environment shaped community level conditions and action, including the ways that KVDT approached responding to the climate emergency. Through highlighting these linkages, I contribute to a key area of study about what role community organisations can play in the move towards net zero in the coming decade.

1.2.2 Investigate how a community organisation is responding to intersecting crises through empirical evidence

I set out to investigate how my case study organisation responded to intersecting crises. My experiences when in the field highlighted to me that climate action could not be divorced from the broader crises that communities were dealing with. The neoliberal policy environment is the context in which community organisations operate in the UK. Wacquant (2012, p. 66) defines neoliberalism as a political project that is "an articulation of state, market and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third." In the UK context, following the 2008 financial crash, this entailed a rolling back of the functions of the state and a pushing of market principles into more aspects of society (Aiken et al., 2017). However, Peck and Theodore (2012) argue that the form of neoliberalism that exists is a context specific process that creates crises and has a "lurching dynamic", which includes policy failure, opportunism, and contradiction. I investigate how this was expressed through interactions between the local council and KVDT, how the council responded to the crises generated by the neoliberal policy agenda, and how the council sought solutions to those crises through working with a community organisation. The "lurching dynamic" is explored through the range of responses, often designed within a fragmented system and as short-term

remedies to specific problems, which suggested a lack of an overall blueprint for dealing with the crises that communities faced. I look at how KVDT interacted with the state, and agencies connected to the state, to tackle vulnerability, to attempt to generate community transformation, and secure resources necessary for their work and necessary for KVDT to survive as an organisation within a neoliberal environment.

To meet this objective, I analyse how KVDT responded to the austerity environment of reduced services and look at how they developed strategies to create community support structures and programmes of support, such as their work on education and the COVID-19 response. I am also interested in how KVDT adapted the organisation to the restrictions of operating in a neoliberal environment. This was important, as alongside the reduction of state services there were opportunities for KVDT to work within the system to acquire funding and develop partnerships to meet community need, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This component of the research contributed to this objective through understanding the barriers that the neoliberal policy environment generated to prevent effective community action across the range of issues that they were grappling with during my research.

1.2.3 Explore how a collaborative approach between the researcher and participants can contribute towards the aims of the organisation, including climate action.

Objective 3 was a key component of this research, as I wanted to explore how a collaborative approach between myself and participants could contribute to the aims of the organisation. I was able to do this through an action research approach. Through action research, I was able to play an active role in developing strategies for creating, imagining, and co-producing inspiring alternatives to the current status-quo (Chatterton, 2019). The research approaches combined ethnography and action research qualitative methods, which contributed to how research can generate partnerships for knowledge generation. This enabled applied practice based on how research can contribute towards solving practical problems in the world (Angelstam et al., 2013). Thus, it supported an approach to research that is interested in contributing towards tackling some of the major and complex issues that we face today.

My fieldwork took place over roughly thirteen months from June 2020 to July 2021. During this period, I conducted a range of approaches to immerse myself within the workings of KVDT, employing a range of qualitative techniques to generate data and develop a "thick description" of what was happening within the organisation (Merriam, 2009). I conducted participant observation at all levels of the organisation. I observed around eight board meetings, two annual general meetings, attended the farm strategic and planning groups, attended the 'After School Club' for three months, planted vegetables on the farm, observed the COVID-19 food distribution, as well as working as a volunteer carrying out food deliveries throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. The range of activities I observed and participated in enabled me to build relationships with people in KVDT from board level through to paid staff and regular volunteers. This ethnographic approach supported the development of research that explored the culture of the organisation through understanding the day-to-day activities and practices.

1.3 The context: an intersection of three crises

In this section, I outline the three crises that were evident in my research setting, as the focus of this research is on placing climate action in a community setting within the broader context of the impacts of and responses to austerity and COVID-19 at the community level. In the United Kingdom (UK), there has been a period of state retrenchment and the weakening of the social safety net, alongside calls by the government for communities to become more resilient and deal with the challenges that they face (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). The 2008 financial crash and the subsequent great recession became an opportunity for the government in the UK to further push the cause of neoliberalism through austerity and a shrinking of the functions of the state to pay off the debts created by bank bailouts (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018). Through austerity there has been an expansion of the neoliberal agenda to roll back the state and roll out neoliberal principles into more aspects of society (Hall and Lamont, 2013; Aiken et al., 2017). The impacts have been felt at the community level, especially in cities in northern England, such as Leeds, with people suffering from

low pay and insecure work, a reduction of important services, and a fraying of community support structures (Johns, 2020; Wilson and Buzzeo, 2021).

This austerity context informs this research in two ways. Firstly, this research seeks to understand the impacts that austerity has had on communities. Secondly, I contend that we need to understand how communities themselves are responding to the impacts of austerity, the ways that they attempt to tackle the vulnerabilities that processes of austerity create and exacerbate, and how they seek to build community resilience in the face of the challenges that they face. Developing strong organisations able to support the community is important within a context of public institutions, especially at a community level, being under threat or disappearing (Klein, 2014). In short, how organisations are building community resilience is an important aspect of the urban social struggle in contemporary neoliberalism (Deverteuil, 2015). Through digging into their response to austerity during my research, I was able to understand how they adapted to this environment and attempted to pursue strategies to support the community and to build a strong organisation in the environment of austerity.

In reference to COVID-19, Wright (2021, pp. 114-115) observes that, "existing policy agendas have acted to shape prevailing patterns of vulnerability, inequality and disadvantage which affected how the pandemic has affected different groups." This quote highlights the links between the situation generated by austerity and the conditions when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Many people in the lowest paid jobs or insecure work found themselves at the forefront of a social crisis with jobs losses, reduced hours, and lack of certainty about entitlement to state financial support (Sandor, 2021; Wilson and Buzzeo, 2021). To respond to this social crisis, in Leeds, the council model that developed was one of partnership with newly established community care hubs and the council empowered the hubs to respond to the specific needs in their location (Gordon et al., 2022). Whilst not set up to for this purpose, and emergency response was outside of their strategy and expertise, KVDT shifted their focus and became the community care hub for their area. My research took place during this period, so I was able to observe how the COVID-19 response operated.

The response to the social crisis that was generated by COVID-19 tells us much about the interaction between top-down policy responses and the ways in which community resilience is generated as a result. It offers a window in which to explore the co-constituted nature of community resilience in an urban setting (Deverteuil et al., 2021). It also shows that rather than being continually strengthened, community resilience can be weakened by being forced to deal with a series of crises (Harrison, 2013). Through the community response to the COVID-19 crisis, I explored what this demonstrated about the ability of communities to work with others to tackle vulnerability, what it showed about community strength and flexibility, and what it suggested about the barriers and limits to this form of community action.

Alongside the immediate crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic, a larger crisis is unfolding, the climate emergency. The UK Climate Change Committee, which can also be referred to as the Committee on Climate Change, (CCC) argue that concerted action across all aspects of how we live in the UK is essential if we are to reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and make considerable progress towards net zero by 2030 (CCC, 2019; 2019b; 2020). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to limit warming to 1.5 or even 2 degrees it requires "accelerated mitigation actions at all scales" (Grubb et al., 2022, p. 153). To achieve this transformation, we need profound changes to how we live, work, and play across the whole of society (Shove, 2010). In the UK, the Climate Change Act (2008) and recent commitment to net zero by 2050 are heralded as the most ambitious climate plans in the world and are central to the UK's self-image as a leader on climate mitigation (Lockwood, 2013; CCC, 2019a). In the UK, the CCC (2021, p. 11) calls for a "whole of society endeavour" to dramatically reduce carbon emissions in the coming decade.

The scale of the challenge requires far-reaching changes that cannot be achieved from a purely top-down policy approach, and needs active participation and collaboration of people, business, and civil society (Howarth et al., 2021). However, what this looks like, and how community is operationalised within this collaboration, is ill-defined and uncertain (Howarth et al., 2021). I want to add to debates about the role of civil society

and community organisations in responding to the climate emergency. I explore what factors shape their responses, how their responses link to their broader efforts to tackle vulnerability and build a sense of community. I want to understand how this places climate action within a broader agenda of community response to the intersecting crises that communities face and what this tells us about the opportunities and limitations for communities to play an active role in tackling the climate emergency over the next decade.

1.4 Core concepts that are used in this research

In this section, I outline the key concepts and theories that I will use throughout this research, which are community resilience, neoliberalism, and symbiotic and interstitial strategies for transformation as outlined by Eric Olin Wright (2010, 2018). This research is focused on the 'how' of community resilience within a community organisation. As Twigger-Ross et al., (2015) argues, efforts to build resilience do not exist in a vacuum, therefore this research provides insight into how the policies and approaches to governance created the conditions in which KVDT were operating, shaped the options that were open to them, and impacted upon their strategies, which I link to ideas around developing community resilience. Through looking at how KVDT operated within the neoliberal policy environment during a time of intersecting crises, I base my analysis inside a community resilience framework. In this way, this research contributes towards a growing body of academic work that aims to advance community resilience as a concept by exploring how current structures generate vulnerability and how communities respond to this vulnerability through a range of strategies and tactics (Wright, 2021). In my research, I am interested in the relationships between top-down policy approaches that are evident within UK, how these policy approaches create crises that require communities to be resilient and shape the responses that are open to communities (Deverteuil et al., 2021).

Resilience has been criticised as a catch all term, which can be vague and uninspiring (Humbert and Joseph, 2019). However, in my research, the two key strands of community resilience that I explore are the ideas of how self-organisation can be

focused on adaptation and transformation (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Where my research contributes to the development of the concept of community resilience is through demonstrating how the different strategies, tactics, and programmes of work that are evident in community resilience as adaptation and transformation are linked and have a relational dynamic. Therefore, my research explores the relationship between the impacts of neoliberal policy at the community level and how those seeking to build community resilience use a range of strategies to achieve it.

1.4.1 The neoliberal policy context

Wacquant (2012, p. 66) defines neoliberalism as a political project that is "an articulation of state, market and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third." Within the UK context, following the 2008 financial crash, this entailed a rolling back of the functions of the state and a pushing of market principles into more aspects of society (Aiken, 2017). This research explores how this created the context in which my case study organisation was responding to community need and were attempting to develop community transformation, and how it shaped the approaches of the organisation, around areas such as building community assets and securing funding.

The neoliberal policy environment is the context in which community organisations operate in the UK and whilst my study foregrounds community resilience, understanding the relationship between community resilience and neoliberal policy is an important dimension of the framing of my research. My aim is not to provide a complete account of what neoliberalism is, or is not, instead I seek to use neoliberalism as a framing for the crises that my case study organisation responded to during my research period.

Peck and Theodore (2012) argue that neoliberalism is a context specific set of processes that generates crises and has a "lurching dynamic", which means that rather than being a clear blueprint or following a linear trajectory it includes policy failure, opportunism, improvisation, and contradictions. Within my research I explore how the pushing of market principles impacted on the case study organisation and how the lurching dynamic was evident in a range of policy approaches to deal with the

intersecting crises generated by austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency. I apply this to interactions between the local council and KVDT.

How the council responded to the intersecting crises that form the context of my research and how they sought solutions to those crises through working with a community organisation is explored within this neoliberal framing through the range of approaches undertaken, often designed within a fragmented system, and as short-term remedies to specific problems. This suggests a lack of an overall blueprint for dealing with the crises that communities faced. I look at how KVDT interacted with the state and agencies connected to the state to tackle vulnerability, to attempt to generate community transformation, and secure resources necessary for their work and for KVDT to survive as an organisation.

The immediate backdrop to my research was the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period there was an increase in state intervention in the lives of ordinary people both through the lockdowns that were in force for much of my research period, food distribution, and other interventions such as the furlough scheme. This speaks to an important component of neoliberalism in that it is not monolithic and, like capitalism itself, is better understood as a hybrid system with variants in how state, economic and civil society power operates (Olin Wright, 2010). Deverteuil (2015) argues that neoliberalism is not a complete project and there are gaps and ambiguities in how a neoliberal approach is implemented. Therefore, whilst neoliberalism is the dominant power structure and dominant logic within the UK, it lacks coherence in certain respects and does not govern all activities (Olin Wright, 2010). However, I argue that despite this unprecedented state intervention in response to COVID-19, it does not mean that we should disregard neoliberalism as an important unit of analysis, as I show through my findings chapters, as the interventions were time bound and once the crisis began to recede there was a return to a largely neoliberal agenda.

1.4.2 Symbiotic and interstitial approaches to transformation – the Olin Wright framework

To support the idea of community resilience as transformation I apply the thinking of Eric Olin Wright (2010; 2018). In his work he critiques capitalism and proposes

strategies of change. Within my research there are two key dimensions that I use from Olin Wright that enable me to advance the idea of community resilience as transformation, which are symbiotic and interstitial approaches.

Olin Wright (2010) describes symbiotic approaches as those in which groups seeking change work in partnership with the powerful to solve practical problems when their interests converge. Symbiotic strategies, when applied to areas such as community organising rely on associational power, which is the ability to organise in a voluntary capacity to join together to assert their interests (Olin Wright, 2010). Through this research, I apply this to how my case study organisation attempted to work with the state on projects aimed at transformation. Through a combination of a lack of resources after over a decade of austerity budget cuts and the scale of the COVID-19 crisis, many councils have sought different approaches to supporting community, which has the potential to create new possibilities for partnership between councils and community organisations to tackle complex challenges (Cottam, 2021). For instance, many councils have declared 'Climate Emergencies' and developed participatory processes with people, promising bold and urgent action (Willis, 2020; Howarth et al., 2021). As a response to COVID-19 a new spirit of mutual aid was forged with partnerships between civil society and councils (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020). I am interested in how these strategies represent a symbiotic approach and what they say about community resilience in a time of intersecting crises.

Interstitial strategies are "various kinds of processes that occur in the spaces and cracks within some dominant social structure of power" (Olin Wright, 2010, p. 322). This supports what I have outlined regarding neoliberalism, in that it is an incomplete project that is not rolled out in monolithic ways (Deverteuil, 2015). Through applying ideas about interstitial strategies, I explore how my case study attempted to build relatively small, alternative non-capitalist structures within the margins of the overall system (see North et al., 2017; Featherstone, 2013). In the Olin Wright framework, the aim of these approaches is to increase civil society power without directly challenging the power held by political and economic actors (Olin Wright, 2010).

Within my case study I am interested in how interstitial approaches promote logics outside of profit and market rationality, how they are experimental activities grounded and are grounded in the local context (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). I show how KVDT worked within the cracks or on the margins of this incomplete project to attempt to grow and exert their power. Developing the idea of community resilience as transformation by using the ideas of Olin Wright enables me to explore the relationship between civil society, the state, and economy during a time of crisis. It also supports the research to look at what these relationships tell us about the possibilities and challenges of creating alternatives within or beyond the current neoliberal system.

1.4.3 Resilience as adaptation

The first aspect of community resilience that informs my study is community resilience as adaptation. Adaptation resilience can be defined as "adjusting to a new normal…accepting that your world has changed" (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014, p. 2). Therefore, this research explored how the community organisation adjusted to this new normal within the social context of austerity, COVID-19, and the need to develop action to tackle the climate emergency. I was interested in how they navigated this adjustment, what they prioritised, and how they tackled vulnerability and developed community strength. I look at how they did this by working within existing structures, such as seeking funding from and delivering programmes for the council, which was evident in the education programme and the COVID-19 response. Within this I highlight the aspects of how this work went beyond coping to include non-transformative change (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014; Wright, 2021). Through exploring how the organisation attempted to provide services that had been lost through austerity, how they supported people that were vulnerable to the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they attempted to work with the council to further their objectives and support the community, I draw out the dynamic elements of resilience contained within adaptation and show how community resilience as adaptation can be actively produced, generate agency at the community level, and alter social relations (Deverteuil and Golubchikov, 2016).

1.4.4 Resilience as transformation

The second strand of community resilience that is important for my research is community resilience as transformation. Resilience as transformation is about "owning the need to change" (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014, p. 3). Resilience as transformation brings in ideas of how communities are working to change their situation to meet both current and future threats (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014). Community resilience as transformation is useful in thinking about responses to the climate emergency, as it is explicitly concerned with change (Wright, 2021). I contribute towards ideas about what these changes could look like at the community level and how they could contribute towards developing alternatives to business as usual and challenge the status-quo (Schmid and Smith, 2021). I did this through engaging with the different projects of KVDT, such as the Kirkstall Valley Community Farm, and through developing action research projects that focused on creating change. In the action research component of this research, I generated projects that engaged with the council and projects that fostered community activism and sought to generate street level changes.

To support the idea of community resilience as transformation I applied the thinking of Eric Olin Wright (2010; 2018). In his work he critiques capitalism and proposes strategies of transformation. There are two key dimensions that I use from Olin Wright that enabled me to advance the idea of community resilience as transformation. The two key strategies of transformation that were evident within KVDT were symbiotic and interstitial approaches. Olin Wright (2010) describes symbiotic approaches as those in which groups seeking change work in partnership with the powerful as their interests converge to solve practical problems. I analyse how KVDT interacted with the council to develop the Kirkstall Valley Farm, as well as other projects that attempted to gain control of former mills in the area and develop them for community benefit. I look at what these strategies represent, as well as how developing them through symbiotic approaches created opportunities but had limitations. Interstitial strategies are "various kinds of processes that occur in the spaces and cracks within some dominant social structure of power" (Olin Wright, 2010, p. 322). I show how KVDT worked within the

cracks or on the margins to attempt to grow and exert their power. Developing the idea of community resilience as transformation using the ideas of Olin Wright enabled me to explore the relationship between civil society, the state, economy, and to look at what these relationships tell us about the possibilities and challenges of creating alternatives within or beyond the current neoliberal system.

1.4.5 The interaction of resilience as adaptation and transformation

The third dimension of community resilience that this study explores is how community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation interact within my research setting. I apply this to KVDT's work to tackle the climate emergency. Through a single case I was able to explore the interaction between the different elements of community resilience and show how they could co-exist within a single setting, and in some instances, how strategies to pursue certain elements of community resilience could limit the ability to deliver on others. My case study generated empirical evidence of community resilience through an in-depth analysis of the organisation's strategies, its programs, activities, people, and the processes that make up the organisation (Cresswell et al., 2018). I add to resilience thinking by demonstrating how adaptation and transformation could be co-present within a single setting and that there can be a relational dynamic between community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation.

I apply this relational dynamic between different community resilience strategies to how KVDT were tackling issues around austerity, COVID-19, and what the implications of their approaches to tackling intersecting crises says about the potentials and limits to tackling the climate emergency at the community level. By drawing together ideas of how climate action sits alongside action to tackle other crises and showing how strategies for community resilience can co-exist within a single setting, I am contributing towards understandings of climate action that are relevant to academia, policy formation, and civil society. Through this, I contribute towards academic understandings of how place-based change can be brought about in a world of intersecting crises, uncertainty, inequality and of unequal power. I show how the concept of community

resilience can be applied to community efforts to tackle the climate emergency through approaches that can be characterised as community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation.

1.5 Research Questions

To support my research objectives (see section 1.2), I have one overarching research question that will be answered via three sub questions. The sub questions are answered over three findings chapters. This research addressed the following questions:

How are people coming together within the case study organisation to tackle climate change, alongside the social crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. How did the case study organisation support community resilience as adaptation to the impacts of austerity and COVID-19? (Chapter 4)
2. Within KVDT what were the key strategies developed to build community resilience as transformation? (Chapter 5)
3. What do the community resilience approaches outlined in this research suggest about tackling the climate emergency at community level? (Chapter 6)

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This research looked at the three crises that KVDT faced in austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency, and the role that neoliberal policy played in either creating, perpetuating, or constraining community level responses to those crises. In Chapter 2, I use the literature review to highlight the several aspects of discussion on the concept of resilience and the neoliberal policy environment. Following this, Chapter 3 outlines the key aspects of my methodology and my ethnographic and action research approaches to generating the empirical data that forms the basis of my findings. In Chapter 4, I begin my findings by looking at austerity and COVID-19 and how KVDT attempted to

work within the system to tackle the social impacts that they saw in their area. I link this to adaptation resilience, showing the vulnerabilities that existed within their community, how they attempted to secure resources to tackle those vulnerabilities and the strengths and weakness of this approach. In Chapter 5, I answer the second sub question, moving on to community resilience as transformation. In this chapter I look at the range of strategies that were developed in KVDT to achieve transformation. This includes internal organisation within the group, as well as the external strategies that were developed to build community resilience as transformation. Finally, I bring this back to climate change to show the interaction between the different resilience strategies and the different crises that the community was confronted with.

1.6.1 Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The literature review explores the different dynamics of the concept of resilience and the neoliberal context in which my research took place. I demonstrate how diverse ways of thinking about resilience impact upon how it used in research, as well as what my research contributes towards the concept and thinking about resilience. To do so, I begin by outlining what I mean by a critical conception of community resilience. I demonstrate that a focus on how resilience operates at the community level can enable a politicisation of the problems that top-down neoliberal policies and discourses generate. Finally, I go into more depth about the ideas contained within the strands of resilience that are relevant to this research. I build on the work of Twigger-Ross et al., (2011; 2015) and Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) looking at community resilience as adaptation and transformation. Alongside an exploration of the key academic work on resilience, the literature review explores the relevant national and city level policy context in the UK. This frames the research findings within the neoliberal policy agenda and approaches, which is a key component of how I develop ideas about community resilience.

1.6.2 Chapter 3 – Research Methods

The research method supports the twin objectives of seeking to create research that contributes towards interdisciplinary thinking and a research project that contributes

towards the aims of the case study organisation. It does so through a range of qualitative techniques under the broad banners of ethnography and action research. Ethnography is a deep immersion within a group as a participant and observer to understand the culture within the group (Merriam, 2009). In this research, ethnography enabled me to understand how the organisation operated, what drove the people that led it, worked for it, and volunteered. This made it possible for me to connect the practices that were evident in the everyday with their strategies and ambitions to build a picture of how the different elements of community resilience were conceived and built. Based upon the understandings gained, and my experiences of being a participant observer, I was able to generate action research projects to contribute towards KVDT through developing climate focused actions. The action research element was focused on creating projects that would support local efforts to contribute towards tackling the climate emergency. The projects and approaches were experimental and action orientated. The aim was to support those that took part to play a positive role in creating the local area that they wanted to live in (Gibson-Graham, 2008).

1.6.3 Chapter 4 - Working within current structures to build resilience

This chapter answers research question 1, how did the community organisation support community resilience as adaptation to the impacts of austerity and COVID-19? I begin by focusing on the 'how' of working within the current political and economic structures to build community resilience during austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic. This required looking at how KVDT developed the community organisation, how vulnerabilities were generated within the community, and their strategies for tackling them. The focus of this chapter is on community resilience as adaptation and the relationship between top-down policy approaches and community level approaches. This contributes to my research goal of developing an account of community resilience by exploring the role of social and economic policy in shaping the context of adversity and vulnerability within the community (Joseph, 2013; Deverteuil et al., 2021; Wright, 2021). Through looking at strategies and plans that were developed by KVDT and how the organisation interacted with the state, I build a picture of how they sought out opportunities to establish and strengthen the organisation and support the community.

Finally, I discuss the limitations inherent within this approach and how dealing with multiple crises can deplete community resilience (Harrison, 2013).

This chapter contributes towards literature on community resilience as adaptation through analysing how austerity and the COVID-19 crises intertwined and were felt at a community level (Arrieta, 2022). This is the first element of how this research contributed to understandings of the relationship between top-down resilience agendas and community responses (Deverteuil et al., 2021). I add to debates by illustrating tensions that exist between how top-down governance operates through favouring short-term solutions that fix the symptoms rather than causes, and how this impacted on KVDT's ability to generate longer-term stability for the organisation and support for the community. I highlight how community organisations were seen as useful for the council if their work supported the council's short terms aims.

1.6.4 Chapter 5 – Community resilience as transformation

After analysing community resilience as adaptation in Chapter 4, this chapter moves on to community resilience as transformation. This chapter focuses on research question 2, within a community organisation setting what types of transformations do they promote and what are the key strategies that can be developed to create change? It does so through an exploration of the types of transformations that were promoted within KVDT and through the action research projects that I developed. Through looking at the processes and projects, I outline the key strategies that were used to try and generate transformational change within KVDT's context. This chapter also introduces the action research components of my project and analysis of how action research contributed towards strategies for creating place-based transformation. I begin by looking at the internal dynamics of KVDT and the action groups that I created. I argue that processes of organising at the community level were important to develop an environment in which alternatives could develop. This applied to a twin focus on developing new practices and altering social relationships (Moulaert et al., 2005; Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

The chapter then looks at external strategies of transformation through a community resilience lens. To do so, I answer questions of the contributions of symbiotic and

interstitial strategies alongside one another, as in many instances both were present in different elements of a single project. I look at the links between symbiotic and interstitial strategies and how the two complemented each other when developing community resilience as transformation. Community resilience as transformation was about attempts to develop spaces outside of the market, for community benefit (Gibson-Graham, 2008). The first example used is of the Kirkstall Valley Farm, which was a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project. The farm demonstrated how an approach of collective property, social production and social organisation could build alternatives beyond capitalism in the here and now (Chatterton and Pusey, 2020). In this way, it was an interstitial project as it was built in the gaps of neoliberalism to develop a social economy "in which voluntary associations in civil society directly organize various aspects of economic activity" (Olin Wright, 2010, p. 140). I use the example of the Kirkstall Valley Farm to demonstrate the relationship between interstitial and symbiotic approaches by demonstrating how acquiring an asset through a symbiotic approach can further interstitial approaches to community transformation. A further example of the symbiotic approach to developing community assets was how KVDT attempted to develop partnerships with local actors to bring neglected buildings back into community control. In this chapter, I highlight barriers to achieving change through symbiotic approaches, due to a mixture of power dynamics and being forced to compete in an environment that prioritises the market.

Following this, I illustrate how through action research I developed projects that aimed to engage and mobilise the community in neighbourhood activity, outside of KVDT controlled spaces. This involved engaging in political processes to increase agency, underpinned by the value of democracy. Democracy as a value was about people having a say over decisions which affect them (Olin Wright, 2010; 2018). It also entailed building networks with other local actors. This work was centred around efforts to develop active travel within the local area. What was important in the action research through the *A65 Sustainable Travel Group* and the Craftivist project was tackling the issues that people faced and playing a role in making the area a better place to live, with a stronger sense of community (Christakopoulou et al., 2001). In many ways this approach was experimental, the politics was not fully formed at the outset and was

developed through activity (Pickerill, 2021). The groups focused on projects and approaches that were practical and achievable (Berkes and Ross, 2013). Through this chapter, I demonstrate how self-organised groups tried to assert their agency, showed solidarity with other people and groups in their area, and focused on issues alongside attempting to build a sense of community.

1.6.5 Chapter 6 – What does this research suggest about tackling the climate emergency?

In the final findings chapter, I draw together the ideas that have been developed in the previous findings chapters to look specifically at what this research suggests about tackling the climate emergency at the community level. This answers research question 3, "what do the community resilience approaches outlined in this research suggest about tackling the climate emergency at community level?" However, this is not simply a summary of those chapters, I build on the ideas, arguments, and propositions to contribute towards the concept of community resilience in relation to tackling the climate emergency. This entails looking at dominant UK policy approaches to dealing with the climate emergency and what impact this has on the perceptions, ideas and strategies that are open to those working in civil society. Following that, I return to the idea that at the community level KVDT are tackling intersecting crises and that this impacts on their ability to work towards tackling the climate emergency. Within this, I add in another idea of Olin Wright about social power. He defines social power as, "power rooted in the capacity to mobilize [sic] people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions of various sorts in civil society" (Olin Wright 2010, p. 121). To operationalise this in relation to my work I relate it to the ideas of adaptation and transformation resilience to show how the important dynamic is between dealing with vulnerability, which often entails short-term approaches, and attempting to work towards more long-term trajectories of change. Finally, I contribute towards another dimension of the climate emergency discussion by looking at how time is a crucial factor and what the policy environment and the strategies that I observed and helped develop suggest about community approaches for tackling the climate emergency at the speed required.

I focus on community resilience as illustrated through the work of KVDT and draw together the work of adaptation and transformation resilience as they co-exist within my research setting. This contributes to the overall question of how climate action is developed within a context of intersecting crises. I develop ideas on the realities of community resilience through exploring the interaction of adaptation and transformation resilience activities. Through this chapter, I highlight the distinct role that community led action can play as part of the broader mix of approaches to tackling the climate emergency. I relate this to community resilience by arguing that climate action in this setting should be based on an interplay of knowledge, vision, strategy, and opportunity (Wright, 2021). A key argument that I develop is that climate action in this setting was about starting from the context of the community, namely the interplay between tackling vulnerability and building alternatives.

1.6.6 Chapter 7 – Conclusion

I finish by drawing together the research elements and how they contribute towards answering the overall research question (see 1.5). I also set out how this research contributes towards the broader body of research that is interested in answering questions about how at different levels we tackle the biggest challenge of our time, the climate emergency. What I highlight is how, when working at the community level, approaches must take account of the broader challenges that communities are facing. This is imperative, as that is how the community that I researched approached tackling the climate emergency through their work.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review Introduction

This chapter sets out the relevant literature and how it relates to my study of community resilience in a community organisation setting. The first aim of this chapter is to outline the important literature on the concept of resilience and how my research contributes towards furthering this concept, through an exploration of community resilience, based on empirical evidence. After setting out the broad ideas of resilience, I look at the various aspects of resilience that are prevalent in resilience research and how they relate to community resilience. This enables me to relate my research to the important dimensions of community resilience that were evident in the literature, such as acquisition and mobilisation of resources, strategic leadership, agency, and networks. The elements of community resilience that I detail are focused on processes of adaptation and transformation (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011, 2015; Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013).

To add to the idea of community resilience as transformation, I draw on the work of Eric Olin Wright. Olin Wright's (2010; 2018) anti-capitalism thinking critiques capitalism and proposes strategies of transformation. This is alongside a focus on where processes of social empowerment in civil society sit in relation to the state and economy. This creates space to explore what these strategies and processes can tell us about the possibilities or challenges of creating alternatives, either within or beyond the current neoliberal system. I show how Olin Wright's ideas for strategies of transformation based on working interstitially and symbiotically can support strategies of community resilience as transformation. By linking the work of Olin Wright to a community resilience framework I contribute towards academic understandings of how place-based change can be brought about in a world of crisis, uncertainty, and a climate emergency.

To contribute towards my research goals this chapters begins with an outline of the way that I understand resilience and how my research contributes towards a critical

understanding of the concept of community resilience. I then focus on the key aspects of community resilience and how they relate to my research. Following this, I discuss the roots of resilience across academic disciplines and how this has impacted on the concept and its usage. This leads to a discussion of the ways that resilience is a contested term, how this contestation informs my study and how my study can either incorporate criticisms or provide evidence that can overcome them. As resilience is a response to a crisis or emergency, I then outline how the community resilience in my study was based on responses to austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency. I do this through exploring the important UK national and council level policies and the literature that relates to them.

2.2 Community resilience and how it relates to my research

Resilience is used across multiple disciplines, but when in relation to people and social systems it can be applied at an individual, community, national or international levels to show how actors at the respective level of focus respond to adversity or crisis (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011; Humbert and Joseph, 2019). Rather than exploring individual traits or systems thinking, community resilience focuses on the social aspects of resilience and the collective conditions that necessitate the need for it (Wright, 2021). What is common across all definitions of resilience is that it is a response to some form of adversity, change, uncertainty, threat, or crisis (see Macrae, 2014; Magis, 2010; Twigger-Ross et al, 2011; Humbert and Joseph, 2019). Thus, the first task of community resilience thinking is to understand what it is that groups and communities are responding to (Department for International Development, 2011). Much work on resilience tends to focus on large-scale disasters and emergencies, but there is also the need to understand how communities are responding to more localised and common events (Johnson and Osuteye, 2019). When explored from the community level, this can lead to a focus on the everyday practices that people and communities develop in response to the crises that they are facing (Ryan, 2015).

There is no agreed definition of community resilience but some of the core ideas are based on a response to an emergency or crisis, in which the community self-organises

to tackle vulnerability and/or build community autonomy, which can consist of adaptation, coping, and transformation to improve life in the present and prepare for future challenges (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015). This links to the work of Humbert and Joseph (2019, p. 215), who state, "resilience relies on ideas of self-organisation, adaptation, transformation and survival in the face of adversity or crisis." In some ways this provides flexibility for academics, policymakers and communities that are developing resilience strategies, as people are free to develop resilience processes in ways that matter to them (Wilding, 2011). There is a risk that this flexibility and range of ways of viewing resilience can make it a vague term that limits its value as a working concept (Mikulewicz, 2019). Norris et al., (2008) argue that resilience is more of a metaphor, meaning that it is a useful way to explain a range of actions that are undertaken in response to crisis.

Another aspect contained within the various ways of looking at community resilience is people and communities self-organising (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011). This can lead to a focus within resilience research on the processes that are developed in response to crisis, either in anticipation, preparation, or during the crisis itself (McCrea et al., 2014). Across the literature there are many different types of process that are considered. Firstly, strategic thinking, which includes elements such as vision, leadership, and planning (Walton et al., 2013). Secondly, the importance of developing social networks and of relationships between people and place (Berkes and Ross, 2013). Allied to this is the importance of developing expertise and knowledge that can support action (Berkes and Ross, 2013). This leads to an approach to resilience research that explores the notion of agency and collective action as central processes in developing community resilience (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Magis 2010). Thus, within resilience as a set of processes, what matters is vision, leadership, expertise, knowledge, and how these are used to mobilise people for collective action to tackle vulnerability and build community autonomy.

To support the development of community resilience processes, community resources are important. For Magis (2010, p. 401), resilience is "the existence, development, and

engagement of community resources by community members". This links the importance of the existence of resources, the processes that are in place to develop those resources, and to what ends they are deployed. The resources can be based on people, culture, associations, the economy, and infrastructure (Magis, 2010). Therefore, in and of themselves resources do not lead to resilience, but they can be important within the development of processes that enhance resilience capacity (McCrea et al., 2014). This makes a focus on the various resources a key component of resilience as they enable communities to build capacity, networks, and institutions of support that can be rooted within the area (Twigger-Ross et al.,2011). These capacities often exist before the emergency but can be drawn upon to navigate the period of crisis (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014). Thus, community resilience in these understandings is about the processes developed to respond to crisis and the existence, development, and deployment of resources to navigate a crisis.

Brown (2014) critiques the idea of resilience as a process, arguing that more attention needs to be paid towards imbalances of power and the conflict that can occur over resources. This suggests that more attention needs to be paid to how developing community resilience and responding to different crises may incur costs that can make a person or community less able to be resilient over time (Harrison, 2013). Thus, more work is needed that looks at how resilience can be strengthened but how resources can become depleted and acquiring them can deplete the ability to become resilient to different crises (Harrison, 2013). This means we must explore power imbalances and potential conflicts that exist within resilient processes and strategies (Brown, 2014). Community resilience approaches can support this through exploring the power dynamics that exist between community groups and the state and how responding to a range of crises can deplete their capacities and the resources that they need to function.

2.2.1 Place-based and values-based ideas of community resilience

Using the term community resilience adds complications to the notion of resilience as there are variations in ideas about what community is and means (Norris et al., 2008).

Two important aspects to draw out are place-based and values-based ideas community. What matters to Hall and Lamont (2013) is the idea of how communities are "bound together", which can be through place, an organisation, or through other characteristics, such as class. Community is a complex idea, which takes in a variety of elements from the built geography, the local economy, the natural environment, and the social dimension (Norris et al., 2008). A focus on place is important in building resilience, as place plays a key role in shaping patterns of risk, relationships and belonging so can underpin resilience (Wright, 2021). Another dimension where geographically bounded community is important in resilience is that from a governmental perspective place is recognised within bounded administrative areas (Horlings, 2016). This shapes places due to the services that are available, the assets that exist, and economic resources (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2017). Place is relevant as structural processes, for instance decisions by national or local government or how the economy and market operate, shape places differently and shape the opportunities and barriers that exist within a place (Horlings et al., 2020). This means it is important to understand how place provides opportunity and constraint, be it through the physical geography, job opportunities, or the impacts that are felt from political, economic, and social processes that impact upon it (Routledge, 2017; Horlings et al., 2020). This means that when looking at crises, for instance the social impacts from austerity and COVID-19, we should look at how they unfold in a specific area. This leads to an approach that recognises the role, or potential role that people can play in shaping their local community around issues that matter to them (Marsden, 2013).

In a simple sense, community can be thought of as collectives that tie people together (Bauman, 2001). Olin Wright (2010, p. 79) takes this further and describes community as "any social unit within which people are concerned about the well-being of other people and feel solidarity and obligations towards others." This suggests a need to understand how community is constructed by those involved, how relationships are formed, and what values and motivations drive the community. This can support the development of community resilience thinking through a focus on how people articulate ideas of what community is and means, it draws in ideas of what stories they tell about their community, the perceived vulnerabilities, and strengths. This matters in reference

to community resilience as it relates to the strategies that communities develop, how they attempt to mobilise the community, and how they support people who are suffering from the social impacts of the crises that they face. It also requires a focus on the values that underpin this, which are important to the types of relationships that can develop, how committed those relationships are, as well as to the types of strategies that develop out of them (Walton et al., 2013). Thus, community as place and community as values matter in terms of the material conditions that exist, the connections that people feel, as well as the meanings that people attach to the place (Adger et al., 2011). Where community as place and community as values thinking can be built upon is through highlighting how crises unfold in a specific place and the ways in which communities respond, the types of processes that they develop, the values that underpin them, and the outcomes that they work towards.

2.2.2 Community resilience and community wellbeing

Many writers about resilience highlight the links between resilience and wellbeing (McCrea et al., 2014; Magis, 2010). In these accounts, resilience is a process which aims to "sustain wellbeing in the face of challenges" (Hall and Lamont, 2013, p. 232). Thus, the challenge, or crisis, is the starting point, resilience is the process, and wellbeing is the outcome (McCrea et al., 2014). Within the literature there are several dimensions of wellbeing that relate to community resilience. For instance, "the satisfaction with the local place of residence taking into account the attachment to it, the social and physical environment, and the services and facilities" (Forjaz et al., 2011, p. 734). This links community resilience and wellbeing to the importance of place, the social dimension of community, the impacts of geography, and access to services that people need to support them. Where wellbeing can support accounts of community resilience is through taking ideas of satisfaction, attachment, services, and facilities and exploring how these factors inform the strategies, approaches, and motivations that underpin community resilience processes.

Magis (2010) argues that resilience is about how you build and deploy community resources to support the community to thrive in the face of uncertainty. There are

several elements of this that relate to the literature on wellbeing. Firstly, how this informs strategies to improve life for people with approaches that focus primarily on community level solutions. What is important here is tackling the issues that people face and playing a role in making the area a better place to live, with a stronger sense of community (Christakopoulou, 2001). This relates to a 'eudaimonic' conception of wellbeing, that is primarily concerned with how people can flourish in society (Brand-Correa et al., 2020). At the community level, this idea of wellbeing relates back to resilience strategies and approaches as it necessitates looking at how resources are acquired and deployed, how this is done to enable people to flourish within a strong community, and which strategies are generated for creating the right conditions for the community to flourish in the face of crisis.

A second aspect that links community resilience and wellbeing are the ways that community resilience aims to increase wellbeing by creating processes that remove barriers that people face to participate in society (Brand-Correa et al., 2020). It also means understanding how, within a local place-based context, organisations can build a sense of community in which belonging, and fulfilment of need are met through cooperation (Forjaz et al., 2011). This points to the important aspect of the community dimensions of resilience, and how areas like co-operation and collective approaches to flourishing are vital characteristics. Secondly, is the idea of the barriers that prevent people achieving wellbeing. This means that we must explore what those barriers are, with a focus on the structures that create the barriers that communities face.

The final dimension of wellbeing that informs my study is based on two elements. Firstly, there is the interaction between individual and collective scales (White, 2010). Whilst I am interested in community resilience, it is a reminder that when seeking to tackle vulnerability and create an environment in which the community can thrive, part of this work is about supporting individuals, which can be especially true during a period of crisis. The idea of scales from the individual towards collective is important when thinking about how organisations are developing community resilience in the face of crises, threats, and emergencies that are created at the national and international levels. Secondly, there is an approach to wellbeing that looks at how it relates to and

prioritises the satisfaction of human need (Pirgmaier and Steinberger, 2019). In a resilience framing, this can be linked to ideas of vulnerability and how people and organisations work to help people to meet needs in the face of crises. For community resilience thinking this leads to a need to further understand how efforts to support people to meet their needs impacts on the strategies and approaches that are undertaken to develop community resilience during intersecting crises. This highlights the links between improving wellbeing for individuals, seeking community level solutions, and working through a collective endeavour.

2.3 A critical conception of community resilience

Through this study I will contribute towards a critical conception of community resilience. Key to this is viewing resilience relationally, between how the government uses it, often to further justify the abandonment of communities, and how resilience at the community level is forged in response to crises that government policy prescriptions generate and exacerbate (Deverteuil et al., 2021). Whilst acknowledging how resilience as a top-down imposed strategy can be problematic, it is important to go beyond a narrow conception of resilience and understand how it manifests itself in strategies and actions employed by those seeking to support communities (Wright, 2021). We must reject the idea that resilience is binary, either generated by purely government policy or through community endeavour, or overwhelmingly positive or negative, and resist the notions that resilience is purely about people and communities becoming apolitical subjects adapting to political, social, and economic changes outside of their control (Deverteuil et al., 2021; Wright, 2021). To forge a critical conception of community resilience, we must interrogate the political, economic, and social structures in which resilience strategies are developed to understand how social conditions, such as economic downturns and welfare policies, influence, limit, or undermine resilience (Dagdeverin et al., 2016).

This research starts from the position that the UK is seeing a profound change to its welfare system and that the dominant approach within this threatens certain groups (Deverteuil, 2015; Wright, 2021; Deverteuil and Golubchikov, 2016). The crises that communities face are generated through a complex mix of global, national, and local

factors, and this combination is making everyday life more difficult (Wright, 2021). There are also ever-present risks, such as from a changing climate and economic difficulties (Beck, 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated how unexpected crises can happen and how new crises intersect with the vulnerabilities that already exist within a community (Wilson and Buzzeo, 2021). Thus, a key component of understanding community resilience is to explore the "role of policy and government in the production and distribution of risks" (Wright, 2021, p. 2). This means that the starting point is to explore how neoliberal governance of a reduction of welfare provision, deregulation of the labour market, and pushing market rationalities into more aspects of society creates crises within communities (Harvey, 2005; Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020).

Rather than viewing resilience as a tool that can be used to gloss over issues such as accountability, inequality, or the role that governance approaches play in generating crises, as Mackinnon and Derickson (2013) argue that resilience does, I contend that a critical approach to community resilience can highlight the social impacts that are felt in the community, as well as how communities struggle to tackle the crises that they face. Donoghue and Edmiston (2020), describe the paradox within contemporary neoliberalism as neoliberalism generates structurally created crises, but the dominant thinking that informs policies and pushes communities to be more resilient also strips them of the tools with which to be resilient. I shall explore this more in Section 2.6, as I look at the policy context of austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency.

Alongside an exploration of the intersecting crises that communities must deal with, a community resilience framing can be used to explore the creative responses developed to tackle the constraints that communities face (Hall and Lamont, 2013). A critical approach to community resilience is about "making links to higher levels of analysis and broader scales" (Wright, 2021, p. 7). In this way, a critical conception of community resilience is less about individual traits, but a combination of resilience as imposed from above and the social frameworks that are created at the community level in response to the crises that they face (Hall and Lamont, 2013). In other words, when looked at from above, policies and strategies that promote or call for resilience are new ways of

justifying the removal of support for social groups (Deverteuil et al., 2021). However, when viewed from the community level, resilience can incorporate tactics and strategies that attempt to achieve change from below (Ryan, 2015).

This ties a critical approach to community resilience back into the ideas contained with resilience as a process, as it requires us to explore the processes that are developed within the community, how they seek to develop community strength in the face of crises, and what their efforts to self-organise tell us about the challenges and opportunities that are open to communities in times of crisis (Berkes and Ross, 2013). This means that community resilience is both an imposed condition by the powerful, but responses to it suggest that communities are not simply passive and powerless (Wright, 2021). In this way, using the concept of community resilience critically can help us to develop a better understanding of the urban struggle (Deverteuil, 2015). The aim is to politicise the conditions that communities are operating in by exploring how crises are generated, the constraints communities face in responding, and what the reality of those responses are (Deverteuil et al., 2021).

Through a critical approach to community resilience, the aim is to explore how individuals and groups are operating within a complex environment, where different forms of vulnerability intersect (Wright, 2021). As communities are facing a range of intersecting crises, resilience framings can be applied to different forms of community resilience as they exist in response to both smaller-scale localised crises and in response to more seismic events that impact at national and even international levels (Johnson and Osuteye, 2019). To do so, a critical conception of community resilience can focus on how individuals and groups think about resilience, its desirability, and how it can entail a combination of reactive and proactive processes to create change (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011). It can draw attention to how the different strands of community resilience processes are active and dynamic (Deverteuil and Golubchikov, 2016).

2.4 Resilience as a contested term

2.4.1 The Roots of Resilience

Resilience as a concept is used across multiple disciplines, such as ecology, engineering, and psychology, with increasing usage across political science, sociology, international development, and disaster planning (Martin-Breen and Anderies, 2011). In many ways, this contributes towards the discrepancies in views about how it should be theorised and how it should be applied. The roots and multidisciplinary aspects of resilience thinking have impacted upon how resilience has been used in social science and within political policy and discourse. It has led to accusations it is a vague term and therefore lacks the clarity needed to be useful (Humbert and Joseph, 2019). Resilience thinking has its roots in ecological science, in which resilience is celebrated as an ability of an organism or a structure to withstand disturbances and maintain function (Derickson, 2016). In ecological thinking, Gunderson (2000) identifies two key strands. The first, centres on the capacity of an ecosystem to withstand disturbance alongside the amount of time it takes for it to return to a stable state following the disturbance. The second is adaptive capacity, which introduces the idea of modification and how a system can have multiple stable states. This means that, following the disturbance, the system can return to an equilibrium but be modified away from its state prior to the disturbance. Thus, ecological thinking introduces two ideas that inform broader discussion on resilience and lead to contestation over the usage of the term in social science (see 2.4.2), which are the ideas of maintaining function and returning to a stable state in the face of a disturbance, even if there is some form of modification.

In engineering, resilience is about how a structure can maintain equilibrium when put under stress (Bourbeau, 2013). This leads to a way of viewing resilience as how structures can recover quickly from some form of damage, which may be slight or catastrophic, and may have long-term consequences in terms of the viability of the structure (Blockley, 2015). A second important aspect of resilience within engineering is how structures maintain function following a disturbance (Martin-Breen and Anderies, 2011). Third, is adaptive capacity, in which buildings can be reorganised following a

crisis (Martin-Breen and Anderies, 2011). Another aspect prominent within engineering is a focus on how to design and build buildings so that they can be resilient to future risk (Blockley, 2015). Dias (2015) argues that resilience in structural engineering is about recovering from a shock or stress, but he argues that resilience is a metaphor for several actions that may be contained within this recovery process. Thus, like in ecology we have ideas of recovering from a disturbance or stress, maintaining function, and modification. Engineering resilience introduces two further ideas that are evident in social science resilience thinking, looking at resilience in relation to future risk and how it is a metaphor for different types of actions that develop resilience.

Resilience is also prominent in health and psychology literatures. In these fields it is often applied to individuals and viewed as a trait more than a process (Luthar et al., 2000; Anat et al., 2021). Jacelon (1997) explored literature within health and argued that it showed that resilience is viewed as a trait primarily, but it is also a process through response to environmental stimuli. In the psychology literature, resilience as a trait is seen as the ability to cope with and adapt to stressful events whilst maintaining mental and physical health (Anat et al., 2021). Across both Jacelon (1997) and Anat et al., (2021) they proffer several personal traits that aid resilience, such as high intelligence, emotional strategies, self-reliance, positive family life, being active in social activities, and a positive outlook. The idea of resilience as a trait and the approach that seeks to uncover attributes of resilience, which are seen as positive in relation to those that are less resilient, have informed the use of resilience in policy and social science.

There are three elements from the multidisciplinary use that inform how it is used in social science and create challenges for its use as a critical concept. Firstly, there is the idea that I have identified across ecology and engineering about returning to a previous state, with the potential for some modification. When applied to social systems this is often viewed as how they bounce back from and adapt to a crisis (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014). Secondly, across the three disciplines outlined, resilience is seen as a positive and something that either should be celebrated or aspired towards. This is controversial in social science, as I shall explore in detail in 2.4.2. Thirdly, resilience from a governmental perspective is often viewed as a trait and something that is a

characteristic of successful individuals or communities and groups (Wright, 2021). Once again, this is controversial and ignores how resilience can be depleted as well as enhanced by the need to respond to crises (Harrison, 2013). How it is used in ecology, engineering, psychology and health, impact upon its use and what some see as its desirability in social science (see Derickson, 2016). I shall now explore the contested nature of the concept of resilience within social science and examine how this has impacted upon my use of the concept of community resilience.

2.4.2 Resilience as a contested term

Part of the contestation over the term resilience in social science originates from its roots in ecological science and engineering, with a concern that resilience as a concept "naturalises" a social system, removing agency, conflict, and power, and therefore tends to be used as an apolitical concept (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013; Dagdeverin et al., 2016). Owing to how it has evolved from natural sciences into social science and policy thinking, among other areas, there are those who argue that it is an inherently conservative term (Mackinnon and Derickson, 2013). When applied to how groups are working to envision and create alternative economic and environmental approaches, it can be seen as an "uninspiring political vision that fetishizes the status quo" (Derickson, 2016, p. 161). Thus, resilience thinking puts communities in the position of reacting to political and economic processes outside of their control and lacks emancipatory potential (Derickson, 2016). This leads to important challenges to the idea and desirability of applying resilience thinking in a time of intersecting crises, and whether from a community perspective resilience can be about more than simply returning to an unsustainable state (Deverteuil et al., 2021). Rather than discard resilience on the grounds of it being a conservative concept, as Derickson would have us do, we need to look at the range of responses that are undertaken to tackle the vulnerabilities that exist within communities and what this suggests about power and agency within a community setting (Wright, 2021).

The second strand of the critique of resilience is that it is used by those with political and economic power to justify the rollback of the state and the rollout of markets into

more aspects of society (Donoghue and Edmiston 2020; Donoghue, 2022). This leads to debates about the extent to which the term has been co-opted to justify governmental approaches that push market competition into more aspects of society and support the reduction of the welfare state (Joseph, 2013). In this context, especially when used by governments, resilience is portrayed as a binary state, in which individuals and communities are either resilient or not (Bourbeau, 2013). Within this framing, the idea and discourse that communities ought to be resilient is seen as troubling when applied to the idea that they must accept the current unjust status-quo (Bourbeau, 2013; White and O'Hare, 2014). To address this, resilience thinking needs to consider power, analyse who decides which needs are being met, and explore the politics that underpins and manages the distribution of resources (Brown, 2014). There is nothing inherently positive or negative about resilience, the key areas to examine are about who is wielding the term and to what ends (Deverteuil and Golubchikov, 2016). As I argued in section 2.3, a critical conception of community resilience can highlight the barriers and opportunities for communities to create change within a period of political, economic, and social crisis, such as has been experienced with austerity, the COVID-19 pandemic and with the climate emergency.

The governmental promotion of resilience can feed into deficiency narratives that enable politicians to abdicate responsibility for dealing with social problems, instead blaming individuals and social groups for the adverse situations that they find themselves in (Donoghue, 2022). This is evident across a range of issues, such as family breakdown, worklessness, alcohol and drug use, rather than highlighting structural causes of inequality and poverty (Derickson 2016). A significant critique of resilience argues that governmental and powerful groups conceptions and promotion of resilience are used to discipline people living in poverty (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). Both through a reduction of state support and a pushing of marketisation, commodification and financialisaton of welfare, resilience becomes a governmental tool to tie people into the neoliberal system (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020; Donoghue, 2022).

The promotion of resilience, especially by the government, is used to shift responsibility for dealing with social problems on to individuals (Joseph, 2013). Therefore, rather than exploring how the social structure generates vulnerabilities, vulnerability is individualised (Dagdeverin et al., 2016). Citizens are reconceptualised within this model as active citizens who have the agency to overcome socio-economic problems, which justifies the removal of support and creates a policy and discourse environment in which individuals should have the tools to overcome crisis (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020; Joseph, 2013). Whilst my research is based on community responses to the crises that they face, including the long-term impacts of the financial crisis through the politics of austerity, deciding on the validity of the idea of resilience as a tool to discipline people living in poverty is outside the scope of the study. However, what is important is placing resilience outside of individualised notions and within the social structures that exist (Dagdeverin et al., 2016).

What the critiques of resilience demonstrate is that taking a resilience framing can have both regressive and progressive potentials (White and O'Hare, 2014). Creating resilient communities cannot be naively thought of as inherently positive, for instance people living in poverty may be forced to be resilient to cope with a situation that they cannot change (Berkes and Ross, 2013). In a situation where the overarching government policy is state withdrawal and increasing market power, communities are expected to continually adapt as the economy and environment changes and resilience framings can foster a sense that the right response is to "keep taking 'knock after knock' and get better at coping" (Derickson, 2016, p. 163). Bourbeau (2013), refers to this as the dark side of resilience, as it may not always be desirable and pursuing resilience may stand in the way of creating more positive change. The climate and COVID-19 crises bring this issue to the fore, as we must ask whether it is desirable to attempt to build back to what existed before the pandemic, especially with the urgent need to address the climate emergency (Deverteuil et al. 2021). To Derickson (2016), this means we need a more radical and transformative framing than resilience enables. However, taking a broader view of resilience can support looking at strategies that involve coping,

adaptation, and transformation in the face of crises and threats (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013).

2.5 The Key Strands of Community Resilience in my research

2.5.1 A community resilience framework

Having outlined the concept of community resilience, the roots of resilience, and some of the challenges to the idea of resilience, I now review the literature for the key strands of community resilience as they relate to my research. Twigger-Ross et al., (2011) identify four strands of resilience for analytical purposes. They are resilience as resistance, bounce back, adaptation, and transformation. In terms of resistance, this is a form of resilience that focuses on pushing back against the crisis (Ryan, 2015). Resilience as bouncing back is an attempt to return to business as usual, get back to how things were prior to the crisis, or simply recover back to a similar state to before the crisis. In this conception, resistance and bounce back resilience are reactive, either attempting to oppose the change through resistance, or recover from the disturbance in the case of bounce back. Adaptation resilience is about adjusting to the impact of the crisis, accepting that things that will not return to the prior state, and trying to begin to operate in a way that reduces vulnerability in the face of the changing circumstances (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014). Transformation is about taking control of the need to change, with future hazards and threats in mind (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014). Adaptation and transformation are seen as more proactive in this model. Both adaptation and transformation approaches seek to reduce vulnerability whilst recovering from the crisis whilst attempting to develop processes that prepare the individual or community to be better able to navigate future crises. Transformation is more explicitly focused on creating radical change with the intention of dealing with future threats (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014).

Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) outline a framework for resilience based on three aspects: coping, adaptive capacity, and transformation. Coping is focused on managing within and trying to overcome crisis. Coping in this framework is reactive, short-term,

and with a low chance of altering the status-quo (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Adaptive capacity has backwards and forward-looking elements, is more of a long-term project, and has some potential to create incremental change (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Transformation within their framework is about creating capacity to meet future crises by developing alternative social forms and institutions. Whilst there are many similarities between the two frameworks, Keck and Sakdapolrak's (2013) model adds some important dimensions to that developed by Twigger-Ross et al. (2011; 2014). Firstly, the idea of coping, whilst sharing similarities with bounce back resilience, gives a sense of just trying to get through the crisis and surviving. Their notion of adaptation, again whilst similar, focuses more on how communities use past experiences to adjust and prepare to face future crises. Finally, both frameworks see transformation as radical change with the most potential for altering the status-quo and the strongest forward-looking dimension. Both frameworks also highlight the need for resilience to be a process and based on building strong institutions.

Wilding (2011) argues that resilience is more of a metaphor in which many different actions and processes can be present. Outlining the different dimensions of resilience is important for analytical purposes, but this idea of resilience as a metaphor, especially in a period of multiple crises, means that we must look at how those different strands of resilience can co-exist and influence each other, both positively and negatively, through exploration of the types of responses communities generate. This means looking at strategies, tactics, and activities, as well as what motivates those that are working to support their communities. Within intersecting crises that span considerable time, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, coping may be the only option open to individuals and groups for certain periods of the crisis, or adaptation may be prevalent to deal with the ongoing crisis and its changing nature. It is important to look at how groups and individuals adjust strategies and tactics, what options are open to them, and how vulnerability shifts throughout a period of crisis. This may mean that within the response to a crisis there are elements of all the strands of resilience that are within the framework.

Another important aspect is that there is a tendency in social science to either focus on vulnerability or transformation and that this may miss a key point, that groups can combine everyday coping and adaptation and use these strategies to create spaces in which more transformative strategies and projects can develop. Whilst the desire to focus on "spectacular evidence of transformation" (Deverteuil, 2015, p. 219) is understandable, and receives much attention, it ignores a whole strand of struggle that is focused on being active and adaptive (Deverteuil, 2015). Resilience strategies can be a response to extraordinary events or through pressures of more mundane everyday stresses (Johnson and Osuteye, 2019). Thus, in the face of a myriad of challenges, groups develop collective capacity to sustain, renew and create new trajectories (Wilding, 2011). What needs to be explored further, through analysis of the strands of resilience as they present themselves at the community level, is how this can entail shifting between different forms of resilience. What is required is an exploration of strategies and tactics that are a mixture of reactive and proactive responses, and may have elements that do, and some that do not, attempt to challenge or shift power dynamics to any great extent. This means we should explore the relationship between the different forms of resilience that are evident and how they can support or detract from one another. I shall now explore resilience as adaptation and transformation in more depth, as these are the two strands that are most evident within my research setting.

2.5.2 Resilience as adaptation

Within this section, I explore how resilience as adaptation can relate to the idea of community resilience. As outlined in 2.5.1, adaptation resilience is about adjusting to a new normal but can go beyond merely coping and include some change (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015). The aim is to mitigate some of the worst impacts of the crisis and support people to cope through adjustment and compromise (Bouchard, 2013). Within the literature there is a connection made to coping which, as I have shown, can also be viewed as its own strand of resilience. In terms of community resilience, this relationship between coping and adaptation needs further exploration. Community resilience strategies may involve supporting people to cope but the overarching strategy may be

one of adaptation. For instance, community resilience strategies may be about helping people to cope in a crisis, but central to achieving that may be adaptation, as the organisation engages with decision-makers in the local council or attempts to secure resources in the form of money and community spaces, which can be used to help people to cope. What is of interest in terms of community resilience as adaptation is what the strategies tells us about how the community actors are adapting to the broader political and economic environment so that they can support people at an individual and community level. Connecting how the organisation operates to function in this environment with their community level ambitions and programmes of work can shed light on the relationship between coping and adaptation.

A crucial element of community resilience as adaptation in the present context is about how individuals and communities adjust to roll back and roll out neoliberalism (Deverteuil, 2015) (see 2.6.1 for more detail). These processes impact on civil society as government logics, from quantification of results, to creating a civil society that adheres to market-based principles of organisation and delivery, are pushed onto the range of actors that fill the gaps left by the state (Aiken, 2016; Espiet-Kilty, 2016). Aiken et al., (2017) argue that community organisations that exist to counteract the erosions that come from this have these logics forced onto them if they wish to work with state actors. This leads many to dismiss the potential of much community action to challenge this status-quo, and worse, it is easily co-opted into this environment and community practices can reinforce, strengthen and further advance the very forces that they are acting to negate (Swyngedouw 2011, 2014). This means that we must look at the limits of what community resilience as adaptation can achieve for altering power dynamics and challenging the status-quo. Through viewing resilience as adaptation as a relationship between governmental approaches and community responses, we can create a fuller understanding of the dynamics of community resilience as adaptation. Rather than dismissing this form of action, or overly celebrating its potential to create fundamental change, we should explore both the opportunities and limits that exist in this environment, seeking to understand what working with state actors, such as local councils, can achieve.

Exploring the possibilities and limits of community action is important in the present as many social structures that communities rely on to help navigate through and protect them from the potential impacts of crisis are under threat or disintegrating (Bauman, 1999; 2001; Klein, 2014). Wright (2021) argues that there is a limit to community resilience and that repeated crises do not necessarily generate more resilience. In fact, they can deplete it and create new vulnerabilities (Harrison, 2013). Community has become a governing technique where, with a reduction of state support, people and communities are asked to step into the gaps that a reduction in state support creates, both in the everyday and in response to crises (Aiken, 2016). This leads to a need to explore the ways in which the very things the government is calling on communities to cope with, adapt to, and bounce back from are in the main the social impacts created by the processes that they have unleashed.

Within the critique of resilience as a concept, part of the argument advanced is that it is conservative in nature, either through seeking to return to a previous pre-disturbance state, or through lack of challenge to an unjust and inequitable status-quo (Mackinnon and Derickson, 2013; Derickson, 2016). An important dimension that this argument does not pay enough attention to is how community and social systems more broadly are unstable and constantly evolving spaces (Vale, 2014). When viewed in this way, research on efforts to adapt to crises can open avenues of exploration around future trajectories of urban spaces that incorporates the complexity that co-exists within them. This is partly a question about the relationships between adjusting to the present situation and a focus on potential future trajectories (Wright, 2021). Even if the focus is primarily on supporting the community to cope or adapt to political and economic context within a crisis or emergency, organisations can develop participation, networks, and a longer-term vision for change (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015). This draws out the dynamic elements of resilience contained within adaptation, showing that it can be actively produced, create agency, and alter social relations (Deverteuil and Golubchikov, 2016).

2.5.3 Community resilience as transformation

Community resilience as transformation is concerned with many of the same elements as other strands of resilience, for instance acquisition of and engagement of resources and community infrastructure, developing networks of people, strategic thinking, leadership, and engagement with politics (Magis, 2010; Berkes and Ross, 2013; Walton et al., 2013). As discussed in 2.5.1, resilience as transformation is about taking ownership of the need to change in response to a crisis, with a focus on creating change in the present alongside a forward-looking element (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013). This brings into focus the idea that community resilience as transformation needs to look at the crises, the processes developed, the strategies employed, and the types of futures that those involved want to create.

Within the literature there is a dual aspect that is of interest, which can be explored further when applying a critical conception of community resilience. The first aspect is how community resilience processes use local expertise, local networks, the economic resources that exist within the community, and the local institutions that can support the response (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011). The community level response should then be set in the context of how vulnerabilities are generated by economic and social policies that may limit the capacities at the local level (Wright, 2021). Where there is a gap in the literature is in how strategies are developed to build the local capacity to develop community resilience as transformation and where those strategies sit in terms of engagement with the state, the economy, and broader civil society. This is where the work of Olin Wright (2010; 2018) can add to community resilience as transformation through a focus on the values that underpin the processes, as well as the types of strategies and approaches that groups develop to build alternatives to the current status-quo. I shall now explore these in more detail.

2.5.4 The values that underpin the key strands of community resilience

The work of Olin Wright (2010, 2018) points to the importance of community, solidarity, equality, fairness, and increased participation in democracy as key values that can

support the building of alternatives to capitalist market-orientated logics. Olin Wright acknowledges that there is a lot of crossovers in these categories. For instance, building a strong community based on participation and solidarity can enable an increased participation in democracy and more influence over the decisions that affect the area. Equally, supporting the community to engage in these decisions can strengthen social relationships and community bonds. What needs to be considered is how both processes and the outcomes that are being worked towards are important, which includes developing a value set that transcends capitalist values (Pirgmaier and Steinberger, 2019). Moulaert et al., (2005) argues that creating an environment in which social relationships can develop and be transformed can play a key role in developing alternative processes. In relation to community resilience, the processes that are developed and the values that underpin them can be applied to how those within the community aim to build community strength and harness the power that exists within the community (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

Rather than being an abstract idea, where an exploration of the values that underpin community responses to crises is important, is in how processes that are forged and the values that underpinned them can generate practical ideas for action (Berkes and Ross, 2013). This supports questions of how through empowering the community through involvement, innovative ideas for transformation can be developed. In an environment in which there is much uncertainty about the ability to develop alternatives successfully, understanding the methods as well as impacts matters (Oosterlynck et al., 2013). This supports the development of the concept of community resilience through looking at how increasing collaboration, fostering social connection, building autonomy, and social recognition can play a role in developing an environment in which transformation strategies can be developed (Olin Wright, 2018). This leads to a need to focus on the new forms of social relationships that are generated, and how this contributes towards creating innovative ideas and fresh solutions (Ayob et al., 2016).

Underpinning resilience are the notions of power and agency, which can be to affect decisions, to self-organise, or to effectively mobilise people and the community (Magis, 2010; Berkes and Ross, 2013). For Olin Wright, power within civil society and the

voluntary sphere is based on the ability of voluntary associations of people to come together, mobilise, and work together for communal ends (Olin Wright, 2010). This means that how a community functions is a key element of their ability to tackle the problems that they face and to exploit opportunities to improve their area (Christakopoulou et al., 2001). This draws together ideas of making their area a good place to live, building a social community, a political community, and fostering a sense of belonging (Christakopoulou et al., 2001; White, 2010). This relates back to the values that drive action towards areas such belonging, ability to fulfil need through cooperation, reciprocal influence, and emotional connection (White, 2010; Forjaz et al., 2011). Therefore, there is an emphasis on the relational between individuals and collective processes to meet human need and tackle crises.

2.5.5 Interstitial strategies for building community resilience

In this section, I want to highlight how work in human geography and sustainable transitions literature can support a fuller conception of community resilience. This is through exploring how those literatures' view and analyse different types of interstitial approaches to achieving sustainable transformation. Interstitial projects are those that occur in the gaps and cracks of the dominant capitalist structure (Olin Wright, 2010). This builds on the argument that neoliberalism is not all-encompassing or rolled out in monolithic ways, and therefore there are opportunities to build alternative structures within the margins of the overall system (see North et al., 2017; Featherstone, 2013). In the Olin Wright framework, strategies that work at the margins or in the gaps of neoliberalism are about how non-capitalist structures and programmes can be developed at relatively small scales, the aim of which is to increase civil society power but not attempt to directly challenge the power held by political and economic actors (Olin Wright, 2010). Gibson-Graham (2006) argues that these types of projects are about an ethic within community economic development that prioritises non-capitalist forms of organisation and this can also be applied to how services and community structures are run and delivered. In this context, interstitial approaches are about promoting logics outside of profit and market rationality through experimental activities grounded in the local context (Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

Within sustainable transitions literature, an area of focus that relates to interstitial strategies are 'grass roots innovations', which are community-based projects that develop innovative organisational approaches, harness technology, and generate locally led projects to create greater local sustainability, often in relation to production and consumption (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016). Moulaert et al., (2005) introduce the idea that key elements of grass roots innovations are about satisfying a local need. Building on Middlemiss and Parrish (2010), one of the issues for communities is that there are limitations in terms of their power, resources, and influence, which threaten to limit the potential of these types of projects through lack of funding, local buy in or burn out of volunteers. Community resilience can contribute to this argument by highlighting the role that crises play in exacerbating these factors, the relationship between national and local policy, how local economies exist within the broader economy at city and national levels, and showing the range of strategies and activities that communities generate to tackle the intersecting crises that they face. A critical conception of community resilience can build on sustainable transitions approaches by linking interstitial strategies to the broader structural context to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of this type of approach to creating community level sustainability in a time of crisis.

Another dimension of interstitial literature sits in human geography and tends to focus on projects of prefiguration or post-capitalism (see Pickerill, 2019; Chatterton and Pusey, 2020). Jeffrey and Dyson (2021) argue that prefigurative politics is about embodying the change that you want to create alongside improvisation to imagine and enact the alternative futures that you wish to see. In this way, there is crossover between the ends and the means of the activity. There are similarities between ideas of interstitial and prefigurative strategies, but interstitial approaches are more pragmatic in terms of working in the gaps alongside working within the system, which entails negotiations and compromises (Bouchard, 2013). This leaves space to consider how projects are not completely removed from people's everyday experiences of life in capitalism and how the politics is developed through action, experimentation, and not necessarily ideological or a complete blueprint at inception (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010; Pickerill, 2021). Analysis of interstitial strategies can build an understanding of

community resilience as transformation through showing how the strategies and the projects are developed alongside, through or within efforts to adapt to life under capitalism.

Post-capitalism literature focuses on how a commons approach of collective property, social production and social organisation through co-ownership, co-production and co-management can build alternatives beyond capitalism in the here and now (Chatterton and Pusey, 2020). These approaches can help go beyond the dominant logic of individualism, alienation, greed, and self-interest that defines much of the current status-quo (Olin Wright, 2010). Much of this literature is interested in the community level and how place can be a site of local transformation through developing alternative economic structures within a politics of possibility, rather than looking at the barriers that dominant capitalist approaches create (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This links to the idea of interstitial strategies through the idea of generating collective approaches to production, organisation, and property. The work of Gibson-Graham incorporates how research and action can prioritise supporting local communities and the environment with a commitment to creating social connection. Where community resilience can contribute to this literature is through showing how strategies that encompass these elements play out as part of a wider set of projects, and what this says about the reality of building alternatives in a broad-based community organisation responding to intersecting crises.

2.5.6 Symbiotic approaches to community resilience

Olin Wright (2010) highlights symbiotic strategies as those that try to solve certain real-world issues that are faced by elites, dominant groups, the capitalist political and economic system, as well as those seeking to create change from the community or civil society level. This is about transformation through partnership between elites and other less powerful actors. Olin Wright applies this analysis to production, exchange, and politics. Symbiotic strategies, when developed from below rely on associational power, which is the ability of the working class to organise and influence state policy, most notably through trade unions (Olin Wright, 2010). This can also be applied to how civil society or community organisations attempt to work with the state on projects aimed at transformation. This is particularly pertinent at present as austerity has seen

sever budget cuts within local government and from this context the COVID-19 pandemic emerged to put even greater strain on councils and communities. With fewer resources and diminished local council power due to financial restraints, many councils have been forced by circumstance to seek different approaches to supporting community (Cottam, 2021). This is where community resilience as transformation can connect with symbiotic strategies to highlight the opportunities and limits of engagement between the community level actor, the council and other powerful actors to engage in partnerships for transformative change. This can be applied broadly to community transformation to tackle the crises that communities face and more specifically to efforts to engage symbiotically to tackle the climate emergency.

In spite, and in some cases a result of the difficulties described above, there are new possibilities opening at a local level in terms of climate change and as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In part, this is due to necessity but also to harness the energy of local communities to help tackle complex challenges (Cottam, 2021). In some instances, communities are coming to the fore to tackle the issues that they face and the local state is recognising that innovative approaches to community engagement, whether through choice or necessity, can help to reimagine the relationship between the state and communities (Cottam, 2021). Both in response to climate change and COVID-19 there have been attempts to reconfigure the relationship between the local state and community (Cottam, 2021). For instance, many councils have declared 'Climate Emergencies' and developed participatory processes with people, promising bold and urgent action (Willis, 2020; Howarth et al., 2021). As a response to COVID-19 a new spirit of mutual aid was forged with partnerships between civil society and councils (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020). These participatory processes need to be analysed around how much they are supporting adaptation to threats and problems, how much they are simply about seeking to bounce back to the previous unsustainable state, and in what ways they are demonstrative of possibilities to transform towards a new normal (Deverteuil et al., 2021). This draws together the community resilience framework and the work of Olin Wright on symbiotic approaches to transformation by looking at how the context shapes responses, what the process and aims of those responses are, and how

the relationship between the state and civil society creates barriers and opportunities for achieving significant change.

Another dimension where community resilience can link to the work of Olin Wright is through how people and community groups can engage in politics to tackle the crises that communities face. One of the issues that he identifies is that people do not have a say in many of the decisions that affect them (Olin Wright, 2010). This creates an urban environment in which many feel locked out of decision-making, that the political and business elites are doing things to them rather than acting in their interests, and that often these decisions are based on furthering the interests of capital (Chatterton, 2019). This means that a key question when engaging in democracy or with institutions that make decisions that impact on communities, is whether people can participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect them (Olin Wright, 2018). From a community resilience perspective, mobilising and creating conditions in which people can engage with the political decisions that affect them can be empowering and renew belief in the political agency that exists in a community (Poupart, 2007). From the community perspective, drawing people together can strengthen the community by enabling people to participate in community activities and engage with local politics (Doyal and Gough, 1991). This can link to the idea of community resilience as a process in which communities self-organise and develop strategies to influence decisions that impact on their area (Berkes and Ross, 2013). By viewing how symbiotic strategies are developed in times of crisis can add to understandings of community resilience and where the opportunities are to push for different types of change.

2.6 The intersecting crises of austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency

In the *Community Resilience Development Framework (CRDF)* the government called for strong action in response to emergencies from within communities and promoted the idea that, "Community resilience is enabled when the public are empowered to harness local resources and expertise to help themselves and their communities" (Cabinet Office, 2019, p. 2). This framework aligned resilience thinking with broader strategies of governance towards security, industrial strategy, working with civil society, and tackling issues such as loneliness. It can be seen as a continuation of a broader policy agenda

for a more limited role for government in all but the most severe emergencies, and an increased role for local authorities, civil society, and individuals (Wright, 2021). Resilience is also promoted in the latest Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government strategy (2019, p. 6), "Integrated and resilient communities with high levels of participation and trust can support local prosperity, improve health and wellbeing, and help protect and enhance the local environment." The government talks of the importance of strong communities in terms of supporting wellbeing, creating prosperity, identity, a sense of belonging, access to amenities, and community spaces. They underscore the value of knowing neighbours, taking part in social life, and how vibrant local civil society can help create this. Taken together, these two strategies highlight what Donoghue and Edmiston (2020) refer to as the rise of 'active citizenship', in which rather than the government seeking to intervene to create the conditions in which communities can thrive, or deal with the crises that they face, the government promotes the view that communities themselves can generate the resources and manage the processes that will support community resilience. In this section, I discuss the three crises of austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency. Whilst calling for stronger communities and community resilience, the policy approaches from national and local government makes developing community resilience more difficult and exacerbate the crises that communities face.

2.6.1 Austerity, rollback, rollout neoliberalism, and community resilience

The current political, economic, and social structures that are prevalent within contemporary capitalism are central dynamics that generate crises at the community level (Deverteuil, 2015). With a dependence on market expansion and perpetual growth, capitalism is prone to crises (Hall and Davis, 2021). Furthermore, in the early part of the twenty first century, partly because of these inherent conditions of the capitalist system, society is confronted by risks, such as economic shocks and climate change (Beck, 2009; 2016). In part, this is due to a rearticulation of the state and society that Wacquant (2012) argues is the political project of neoliberalism. In this political project state power is used primarily to further the interests of capital and push the market into more aspects of society (Harvey, 2005). In practical terms, the key to understanding

modern political solutions to societal problems is how pro-growth economics, corporate expansion, commodification, marketisation, and individualisation have become the dominant values driving political approaches (Chatterton, 2016). This complements how resilience is promoted from the national government level and makes a certain conception of resilience appealing to government in the UK policy context, as it links well with the idea that there is no alternative, and thus we must adapt to the crises and learn to cope (Joseph, 2013).

The first major economic crisis of the twenty first century was the 2008 financial crash and the great recession that followed (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018). This crisis became an opportunity in the UK to push austerity, which entailed a shrinking of the functions of the state to pay off the debts created by bank bailouts (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018). In the UK, at a national level, this entailed a reduction of state spending on social services and local government, a more punitive welfare regime, and less focus on the state as a force for redistribution, leading to a rise in inequality between individuals and communities (Hall, 2019; Lobao et al., 2018). A complementary aspect of this rollback of the state and services was a focus on getting communities and individuals to be responsible for dealing with social issues and delivering services (Hall and Lamont, 2013; Aiken et al., 2017). This was typified by David Cameron's "Big Society" idea, in which the aim was to make individuals and non-state actors more responsible for tackling social problems, with the notion that community groups, amongst other actors, could fill the void left by the retreat of the state (Cameron, 2011). To many, this was simply turning community into an instrument for delivering on tasks that were previously the preserve of government (Aiken, 2016). This rollback of the state to achieve fiscal consolidation was accompanied by a narrative that people and communities must become more resilient, take ownership of their problems, and respond to the challenges that they face (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). There is a gap in this literature in terms of looking empirically at the social impacts of austerity and how the accompanying narratives on resilience impacts on the strategies, approaches, and ideas of those attempting to develop community level solutions to the problems that have been created.

At a local level, the 2008 financial crisis and the decade of austerity that followed has created a profound crisis, as local government has endured the severest budget cuts in decades (Bailey et al., 2015). Having faced many rounds of cuts there have been inevitable service reductions, impacting upon council's abilities to support communities, with lower-income groups feeling the main impacts of national level austerity (Lowndes and Gardner, 2016; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011). During this time, there has been a narrowing of innovation as austerity has meant there are fewer resources available, and the dominance of a market led philosophy limits the range of approaches that government and councils pursue (Cottam, 2021). From 2009 to 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government saw an 86% cut in their spending (Johns, 2020). This created a fragility within the local state that limits its reach and has diminished local state power (Cottam, 2021). This raises questions of the ways in which those seeking to develop community resilience are filling in the gaps in provision that have been created, how this rollback process informs the approaches that they take, and whether these are seeking to adapt to this environment or use the space created to build beyond the status-quo.

In contemporary neoliberalism, complementing the rollback process is a roll out process, which has seen a re-engineering of the state to support the interests of capital and push market rationality into more spheres of society (Wacquant, 2012). Drawing on the work of Harvey (2005), who focuses on the political-economy dynamic of neoliberalism, the primary function of the state is to create an institutional framework that promotes "private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Privatisation and deregulation of business are key features that limit the power of the state to control business practice (Harvey, 2005). One of the impacts of this has been a rise in precarious employment, zero-hours contracts and the gig economy during the post-2008 period (Clarke and Cominetti, 2019).

A second aspect of roll-out neoliberalism is that state action is focused on creating markets in areas that they do not exist, for instance welfare provision, healthcare and much that is traditionally thought of as public sector (Harvey, 2005). This is within a loose set of political beliefs that sees market mechanisms as the primary way of

organising goods and services (Thorsen and Lie, 2007). This has involved, in the UK, privatising many aspects of welfare service delivery and selling public assets (Lobao et al., 2018). Within this framework, institutions are less responsive towards new demands of social justice and equity, making bringing about policy change outside of neoliberal approaches difficult (Forno and Graziano, 2014). These approaches of government are aiming to reimagine community and the relationship between civil society, the state, and the market (Hall and Lamont, 2013; Olin Wright, 2018). More evidence is needed to analyse how this environment creates vulnerabilities, limitations and barriers that impact on those attempting to support the community. Alongside this, community resilience thinking can help us to understand how this environment also creates opportunities for community organisations in terms of resource acquisition and relationships with the state. Therefore, community resilience ideas can help to draw out the relational aspect between government policy and how communities are responding to the context and developing community resilience strategies, which can create a fuller picture of community resilience in a time of austerity.

To support the processes of roll back and roll out neoliberalism there is a broader cultural narrative that believes we thrive or fail due to our own individual actions (Aiken et al., 2017; Webster and Rivers, 2019). This is a process characterised as individualisation where, "each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being" (Harvey, 2005, p. 65). Individualisation has two core elements. Firstly, there is a top-down antipathy towards collectivist strategies and the institutions and approaches that foster them (Peck and Tickell, 2002). In place of collective strategies, the government calls on individuals to be resilient to reduce the responsibility of the state to address social inequities and to place the individual at the centre of developing strategies to overcome issues that are generated by the structural context they find themselves in (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). Secondly, this process involves a shift of welfare policy towards disciplinary and punitive measures for those that may rely on state support (Wacquant, 2012). In many ways, this has led to a stigmatisation of vulnerable, marginalised, and poorer people by citing dependency culture within those who rely on the welfare state (Espiet-Kilty, 2016). Rather than dismissing resilience in this context as purely a vehicle to advance the idea that

individuals and communities must take responsibility for tackling the issues that they face, we should look at how this environment informs community approaches and how the community envisages creating alternatives from within this context. In this way, community resilience can illustrate the relationship between government policies, discourses, and community level solutions for developing resilience through collaborative and collective strategies of social support.

Despite acknowledging the dominance of neoliberal approaches and values through rollout and rollback neoliberalism, it is important to understand the limits of neoliberalism (Pinson and Morel Journel, 2012). The term itself is seen as a "slippery" concept in which critics put many of the ills that they see within society (Peck and Theodore, 2012, p. 4). When viewing neoliberalism as a process we must explore where other rationalities exist within policy, its incompleteness in terms of how it has been rolled out, and how neoliberal ideas for policy mix with other approaches to produce hybrids (Pinson and Morel Journel, 2012). When looking at the crises generated or exacerbated by the current system, we need to explore how neoliberalism can be challenged and where spaces form to create alternatives (Peck and Theodore, 2012). Where community resilience can contribute to this is through looking at how those who want to tackle vulnerability and build community autonomy go about this in the current context, the factors that limit their ambitions and abilities to deliver on developing community resilience, and how they develop strategies to exploit the contradictions that exist.

2.6.2 The COVID-19 social crisis and community resilience

In December 2019, the Chinese government reported a new coronavirus, which caused "a pandemic of acute respiratory disease, named 'coronavirus disease 2019' (COVID-19), which threatens human health and public safety" (Hu et al., 2021, p. 141). It quickly spread across the world, the World Health Organisation declared a global health emergency, and the UK recorded its first case in late January 2020 (Aspinall, 2020). The UK's first national lockdown came into force on 26th March 2020 and was scheduled to be in place for twelve weeks (Institute for Government, 2022). The government's initial response conforms to the principles outlined in the *Emergency*

Response and Recovery guidance, "At a high level these will be to protect life, contain and mitigate the impacts of the emergency and create the conditions for a return to normality" (Cabinet Office, 2013, p. 10). The COVID-19 pandemic was an emergency that required an immediate response at national and local levels, but what sets the COVID-19 emergency apart from many other emergency scenarios the government guidance is aimed at, is that it continued at various levels of severity for over eighteen months. COVID-19 was a public health emergency, but it was also a social and economic emergency as it intersected with the social, political, and economic conditions that had been created within UK capitalism over the preceding decade (Sandor, 2021). These factors created a situation in which the state intervened in ways that were unimaginable just a few months earlier (Mair, 2020).

To help people to cope during the emergency the government introduced a series of pieces of legislation. These are important as they shaped the economic and social impact of the pandemic upon individuals and communities. To prevent millions of people being made redundant, especially in "accommodation and food, administrative services, arts and entertainment, aviation, and wholesale and retail" (Pope and Shearer, 2021, p. 6), chancellor Rishi Sunak introduced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, commonly known as furlough. The scheme was initially due to run until May 2020 but it was extended, finally finishing in September 2021 (Pope and Shearer, 2021). In the initial stages, the furlough scheme supported people who could not work with up to 80% of their wages, with a cap of £2,500 per month (Pope and Shearer, 2021; Quilter-Pinner et al., 2020). It is estimated to have supported over 11 million jobs during the pandemic and cost more than £69 billion (Pope and Shearer, 2021; Atkinson, 2021). Another important support measure was the raising of Universal Credit by £20 per week, alongside an easing of the process via which claims could be made (Edmiston et al., 2021).

The measures to support incomes and jobs were important throughout the period of enforced social distancing, yet many people in the lowest paid jobs, or insecure work, found themselves cut adrift through losing their jobs, reduced hours, or lack of certainty about whether they were entitled to state financial support (Sandor, 2021; Wilson and

Buzzeo, 2021). Many of those in less secure work prior to the pandemic were in the sectors that were shut down, and many fell through the cracks of government support, meaning that other forms of community support were needed to help people cope during the COVID-19 emergency (McDoland and Sandor, 2021). Many of those people were already struggling to escape poverty or were experiencing in-work poverty prior to the pandemic, and this was exacerbated by the onset of the pandemic (Sandor, 2021). This highlights how the crises of austerity and COVID-19 were intertwined and how the impacts of the austerity policy agenda meant that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted upon groups that were already vulnerable (Wright, 2021).

Outside of public health impacts, the other defining feature of the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic was an increase in food insecurity across the country. Over 2 million people deemed vulnerable to the health impacts of the virus were asked to stay in their homes and away from others, which was known as shielding (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020). The national government provided funds for food packages, which councils distributed, and many councils created their own schemes to expand the criteria towards those that had to self-isolate or were deemed vulnerable to food insecurity, due to poverty (Lambie-Mumford et al, 2021). As well as the national government and local council driven COVID-19 policies and initiatives, informal mutual aid groups mushroomed at the hyper local level (Curtin et al., 2021). In Leeds, as in many other areas, council led food initiatives were delivered through partnerships with third sector organisation, a response that was "unprecedented in their scale, operationalisation, co-ordination and the level of resources required" (Lambie-Mumford et al, 2021, p. 5). This leads to questions about how this complex web of groups and activities interacted, the ways in which the more formal response of council community partnerships was organised, and the ways in which the community delivery represented mutual aid in the sense of generating solidarity to fulfil unmet needs (Spade, 2020).

In terms of the formal response, the third sector partnerships between the council and local organisations were critical to the success of the local response to COVID-19 (Gordon et al., 2022). In some ways, this demonstrated an innovative approach to community engagement from councils in many areas as they facilitated the locally led

work and supported it financially, dispensed with a top-down approach, and supported a more community driven form of delivery (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and the social crisis it generated, as well as the interaction between government policy, council initiatives, and community responses, can further many of the debates within resilience thinking. For instance, whether this crisis was another example of short-term responses in which community filled gaps within government welfare provision, whether the COVID-19 response can be seen as a focus on resilience as adaptation, or did it offer a glimpse of resilience as transformation with a new way for the council and community organisations to deliver real change. Thus, ideas contained within community resilience concepts can be applied to the COVID-19 pandemic to look at how responding to this major crisis strengthened community resilience or potentially weakened it.

2.6.3 The climate emergency and community resilience

In 2008, the UK first set out a framework for reducing carbon and adapting to climate change with the UK Climate Change Act, which was the world's first such plan and created a sense in the UK government that they were an international leader in climate change mitigation and adaptation (Lockwood, 2013). The 2008 act set out an emissions reduction goal of 80% by 2050 and ambition was raised in 2019 with a legally binding commitment to reach net zero by 2050 (CCC, 2020). In the *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener* (2021) strategy, the government set out its main aims of reducing emissions by decoupling emissions from economic growth, whilst maintaining the latter. They also set out their position of supporting the creation of green industry and jobs, linking this to their place-based agenda known as levelling up. A further element of their approach was a reliance on advancing technology to reduce carbon and the key role of the private sector to deliver the transition to net zero. Within this strategy, resilience is promoted in terms of adapting to the impacts of climate change and reducing hazards. There is a focus on ensuring that sectors, from farming, energy, fishing, and other areas

like biodiversity, adapt to the impacts of climate change and continue to function in a changing climate.

Within UK climate change policy, place has a role within resilience framings, primarily related to reducing risks and the need for climate adaptation, rather than within mitigation discourse (Evans, 2022). At a national level, the UK government has called for evidence to create a new national resilience framework. Their focus is "anticipate, assess, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from known, unknown, direct, indirect and emerging risks" (Cabinet Office, 2021, p. 43). At a regional level, the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Action Plan states that resilience is needed to, "protect our homes and communities, our water, energy, transport and communications infrastructure, our farming and food systems, and our nature and biodiversity from climate impacts" (Gouldson et al., 2021, p. 7). They link this to the need to protect health and wellbeing as climate change threatens the infrastructure people in the region rely upon. Both the national and regional plans require a focus on place, as a site of risk, and require the mobilisation of community to play a role in acknowledging, preparing for, and bouncing back from anticipated climate impacts. This highlights the importance of a focus on place to understand the links between the climate emergency, its impacts, and how resilience is perceived at national and regional levels of government. What is lacking is analysis of how resilience and community resilience can play a role in climate action focused on mitigation.

A key criticism of government efforts to move towards net zero is that in an era when the prevailing policy approach is state withdrawal, the promotion of markets, and the power of the private sector, there is a lack of ambition to rise to the challenge that decarbonisation presents and a lack of willingness to engage in the strong state action that is needed to reduce carbon at the rate that the science demands (Klein, 2014). Howarth et al., (2021) argue that the UK has created a strong narrative with climate policies and targets but that a change of approach is needed, with a national framework that supports council and community level action. The Committee on Climate Change (CCC, 2020) argued that a national plan is needed to engage people across society, especially over the coming decade when urgent action is required. At the national level

climate change is downplayed and presented as manageable by the government (Willis 2020). There is a lack of a clear national framework for comprehensive action and a lack of resources available to meet the challenge (Marsden et al., 2014; Howarth et al., 2021). The ambition to reach net zero by 2050 is important, yet there is little discussion of the far-reaching implications of what climate action entails (Willis, 2020a). There is a real risk that mitigation policies will be ineffective or rejected if the public do not understand the significant issues (Lorenzoni et al., 2007). For those seeking to push more transformative solutions and approaches the national context presents a serious barrier (Bailey and Wilson, 2009). It is neither a policy nor discourse environment in which the values of social justice are discussed as part of the climate solution (Demski et al., 2019).

Within climate change at a local level, there have been moves in recent years to experiment with new institutional models that foreground partnerships and inclusivity (Howarth et al., 2021). This can be seen through citizen's assemblies and climate juries that have happened across the country. Those that have analysed the assemblies and juries have concluded that this form of deliberate democracy, in which citizens are informed of the issues and debate them, often leads to them recommending more ambitious and far-reaching policies (Cherry et al., 2021). These are promising developments as they can make citizens central to democratic decision-making (Cherry et al., 2021). Within Leeds, a climate jury was set up by the Leeds Climate Commission and a representative sample of local people were given evidence from academic, policy and business experts, before making recommendations for action (Bryant, 2019). Their priority recommendations included taking the bus franchise back into public ownership, drastically reducing car usage, community action to retrofit homes, creating a green investment fund, and climate change education (Bryant, 2019). Leeds City Council also declared a climate emergency, with the ambition of making Leeds a carbon neutral city by 2030 and called on the national government to support this through funding and increased powers (Leeds Climate Commission, 2019). This demonstrates a willingness to look at innovative approaches to citizen engagement and developing policy within climate change.

Despite some promising signs, there are clear limitations in council and community engagement and a lack of a framework to support community level mitigation efforts (Howarth et al., 2021). Across the UK, community action provides inspiring examples of what communities are doing and can serve to motivate further climate action, as well as inform council level policy processes (Evans, 2022). However, to build truly broad-based community level action there is a need to understand how to mobilise a diverse range of people in climate mitigation actions (Howarth et al., 2021; Tiratelli et al., 2021). The analysis on community level climate action shows that carbon reduction is often only one element, alongside other areas such as attempting to have more say over decisions that affect communities, or through projects to improve the areas where people live and tackle the challenges that they face, for instance around food, cost of living, community cohesion, or active travel (Tiratelli et al., 2021; Evans, 2022). Research that focuses on community resilience can build on this work and inform current debates on community-based climate action by linking it to the political context of austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency. More research is needed that shows the ways in which communities navigate these crises and the types of climate actions that they develop in this context.

2.7 Conclusion and next steps

Through exploring dimensions of community resilience, I make two key contributions towards the resilience literature. Firstly, I show how adaptation and transformation can both be evident in a single setting, drawing out the relational dynamic when it comes to tackling the climate emergency as part of dealing with intersecting crises. Linked to this, I show that organisations can be pragmatic and pursue both strategies as part of a broad response to a single crisis. What I add to the literature is to demonstrate how community resilience as adaptation and transformation intersect and interact, with potential positive and negative implications. Secondly, a further contribution of this study is to the idea of community resilience as transformation, especially in relation to how it can play a role in climate mitigation activities.

Through my conception of community resilience, I create a fuller picture of how those working on the ground in communities, dealing with emergencies, threats, and everyday challenges, adapt to their context and build beyond it. In this way, I am filling a gap in the academic literature by illuminating the relationships between the broad challenges that neoliberalism creates at the community level, how its intersecting emergencies place strains on communities and generate vulnerabilities at the community level, and the different strategies and tactics that communities develop in this context. Whilst often research either focuses on efforts to adapt to the political and economic environment or build alternatives at the community scale, I highlight how these distinctions do not always reflect the reality on the ground within communities. When applied to efforts to rise to the challenge of tackling the climate emergency, this research contributes toward academic thinking on this subject by framing climate mitigation efforts at a community level alongside the broader challenges that people face, the policy environment in which mitigation is taking place, and an understanding of how these intersect with the potential to bolster and limit one another.

Having set out the main arguments across the key literatures, this research proceeds as follows. In Chapter 3, I outline the key methods that I used to generate the data that informs the findings. I discuss some of the limitations that this created, as well as how it positioned my study as critiquing contemporary neoliberalism. My research sought to contribute to finding solutions to the problems that the community faced. Following that, I set out my findings across Chapter 4, 5, and 6. I begin by looking at how KVDT developed community resilience as adaptation and supported the community to cope during the intersecting crises of austerity and COVID-19. Following that, I turn my attention to processes and strategies that were developed to build community resilience as transformation. Finally, I bring this back to the area of the climate emergency and what the combinations of resilience approaches and strategies can contribute towards understandings of tackling the climate emergency at the community level.

Chapter 3 – Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines my methodological approach to the research, the research methods that I used, the difficulties that I encountered, and how my research method supported answering the research questions. To answer the overall research question, "how are people coming together within the case study organisation to tackle climate change, alongside the social crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic?", I conducted an in-depth study of a Leeds based community organisation, KVDT. I begin this chapter (3.2) by outlining how my research used an interdisciplinary approach that brought together sociological and human geography literatures and methods. Following this, I show how I used ethnography and action research as the two main research approaches (see 3.3). Ethnography allowed for deep immersion within the research site to examine people's interactions in their natural setting (Merriam, 2009; Cresswell et al., 2018). Using a case study approach (see 3.4), this immersion complimented the action research, and I was able to observe the activities of the organisation and therefore answer questions of how they developed strategies for community led approaches for dealing with the crises that the community faced. What I achieved through a combination of drawing together different disciplines and methods was to bridge the gap between critiquing the current situation and contributing to projects that sought to work towards a more sustainable future.

I used a range of qualitative research methods within the combination of ethnographic and action research approaches. In section (3.5 and 3.6), I outline how I used several methods from participant observation, interviews of staff and volunteers, workshops, as well as creating action groups to create a range of locally based activities. As the research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, I discuss the impact that this had on the research approaches (3.7). After exploring the methods that I used, I finish by discussing some of the broader aspects of the research approach in terms of my own positionality (3.8), data analysis (3.9), the ethical considerations that my research had to

navigate (3.10), and finally some of the issues that I encountered withdrawing from the research site (3.11).

3.2 An interdisciplinary research approach

This research takes a distinctive, interdisciplinary approach by drawing on substantive insights and methodological approaches from sociology and human geography. An interdisciplinary approach was a good fit for the topic that I was exploring, as bringing together different strands of knowledge and approaches to research is a useful way of tackling the complex problems that the world faces, such as climate change (Burawoy, 2013). An interdisciplinary approach provided a range of perspectives and approaches that impacted upon forming the research objectives, questions, and the ways that I went about the research (Wright, 2021). Working across disciplines supported the central aim of the research, to contribute towards understandings of the barriers and opportunities that there are for tackling the climate emergency at the community level, as I was able to integrate the ideas and approaches contained in both disciplines (Serrao-Neumann et al., 2015). What motivated me was to develop a research project based on applied practice and how research can contribute towards solving practical problems (Angelstam et al., 2013).

As my research question was about exploring barriers and opportunities for taking climate action at the community level, there was substantial cross-over between the two disciplines, as both are concerned with the impacts of, and efforts to create change within the constraints of the prevailing socio-economic system. Sociologically, I am interested in the interaction of the state and market with civil society and the power dynamics that are evident within these interactions (Burawoy, 2005). Human geography is also concerned with neoliberalism, and this perspective contributed to my research as I explored how neoliberalism operated at a community level (Pickerill, 2019). Most importantly, both disciplines seek to support efforts for transformation through advocating for a more equal society in which people can participate and thrive (Burawoy, 2005; Pickerill, 2019).

The ethnographic methods (see 3.5) of participant observations and interviews supported my research to contribute towards critiquing the impacts of neoliberalism (Burawoy, 2005a). Through action research methods (see 3.6), I was able to play an active role in the community that I researched, and my research was able to support the aims and objectives of that community (Gibson-Graham, 2008). In this way, my research was interdisciplinary, and drew on insights and methods from sociology and human geography. By bringing together critical sociological and human geography processes and literatures, this research makes an important contribution to methodological thinking, as through applying both disciplines through insights and research methods I was able to synthesise the different disciplinary approaches (Neef, 2005). My research contributed to furthering thinking by critiquing the impacts that political, economic, and social structures had upon the strategies, activities and tactics that were employed in my research setting. However, I was able to go further and use the insights that were developed through ethnographic approaches to inform community level strategies for tackling the climate emergency and building alternatives to neoliberal approaches. Thus, my research was about the interaction between barriers and opportunities for people to create change in their local context.

3.2.1 The sociological dimension of the research

A sociological lens led me to a particular interest in the ways in which social policy, through austerity and COVID-19, impacted upon the community that I was researching, and the collective responses that the community developed in response. This was important during a time of crisis and a sociological approach enabled me to explore questions of collective power at the community level (Wacquant, 2016). I tied this into broader ideas of neoliberalism, a key concern of sociology, and to how those at the community level attempt to navigate the inequalities that are produced within neoliberalism, how they respond to the pushing of the market into more aspects of society, and how people organise to develop resilience to the negative impacts that they face (Burawoy, 2005; 2015). Through this insight, I wanted to understand how organisations can contribute towards urban sustainable environments that tackle the climate emergency, which was about combining understandings of the barriers with

understandings of the types of opportunities that the political, economic, and social structures generate (Cottam, 2018). Sociological approaches were important for my theoretical framework of community resilience as they provided insights into the collective conditions that were generated by the social policy context, as well as insight into agency and vulnerability at the community level (Wright, 2021).

3.2.2 The human geography dimension of the research

From a human geography perspective, the research approach was focused on exploring understandings of the role that community organisations can play in developing alternatives that challenge the current status-quo and contribute towards tackling the climate emergency. Urban sustainable futures thinking is concerned with creating, imagining, and co-producing inspiring alternatives to the current urban reality (Chatterton, 2019). Climate change represents a fundamental challenge to social structures and there is a great need to imagine effective responses (Brulle, 2015). Therefore, by playing an active role in supporting the development of community action and building community resilience more broadly, human geography approaches in my research supported the development of academic knowledge of how, with regards to climate change mitigation, we might respond more effectively at a community level (Norgaard, 2018). Thus, as well as critiquing the current situation through sociological enquiry, I was interested in developing community action that could inform the practices of the people and the organisation in which my research took place. This was through focusing on important social issues that mattered to people in or associated with my case study organisation (Cresswell et al., 2018).

3.2.3 How I brought sociology and human geography together

I wanted to understand the issues that existed in the community, the links to place, and how solutions could be developed at the community level (Pickerill, 2019). Alongside this, I am interested in how a focus on place-based responses, in which people are not merely victims but are attempting to assert their autonomy, work together to build their community, and attempt to explore the possibility of developing alternatives to market,

led to the development of strategies and practices for achieving change in their local area (Gibson-Graham, 2003). Thus, an interdisciplinary approach supported meeting the research objectives and answering the research questions. Sociologically I was able to explore the barriers for effective climate action, and human geography ideas were used to look at the types of opportunities that were evident at the community level for effective community action for tackling the climate emergency. By drawing together literatures and methods from sociology and human geography, I could critique the current situation by exploring issues of power, inequality, and the impacts of social policy. In terms of meeting my research objectives, I used empirical evidence to understand how a community organisation was responding to intersecting crises at the community level. Through this approach I could answer my overall research question, "How are people coming together within the case study organisation to tackle climate change, alongside the social crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic?". Answering this research question entailed a focus on the structural causes of the crises that the community faced, alongside understandings of the types of futures that they were attempting to build.

3.3 Ethnography and action research as the key methodological approaches of this research

3.3.1 Ethnographic methodological approach

A key component of my research was immersion within the settings that make up my case study organisation. I wanted to become familiar with the surroundings and practices to gain an insight into the perspectives of those within it (Hine, 2017). This enabled the development of a theoretically informed and rich account of those practices (Hine, 2017). This ethnography explored the social processes that took place within the various settings of my case study, with an interest in how they reflected and supported their strategic approach, theory of change, and informed the activities that were undertaken by the case study organisation (Denzin, 2006). To increase my understanding of the organisation, participation and observation across their

programmes and activities was vital (see 3.4 for detail of the methods). Rich description of the experiences and practices of people and organisations that engage in action can lead to an appreciation of the conditions that shape the possibilities open to those seeking social and political change (Mahler, 2006). Through an ethnographic approach I was able to connect questions of how the organisation functioned with why it functioned the way it did (Tilly, 2007).

An important aspect of my ethnography was being flexible based on what I was seeing, both in terms of theory and towards what was happening in the day-to-day activities and broader operations of the organisation. Through this I was able to be on the lookout for surprises that revealed "rich points" for exploration (Agar, 2006). Within my research, I used an iterative approach to ethnographic inquiry and was open to pursuing topics and angles that I had not decided in advance, pursuing themes based on a growing understanding of the organisation and the political and social context in which they operated (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2018; Benzecry and Baiocchi, 2017). A key part of my research was to understand the impacts of this broader context on the strategies, approaches, and activities of the organisation. A further element of my iterative approach was that repeat observation helped to focus the study on what was really happening, so I funnelled down from the array of observations until repeat observations were no longer revealing new patterns (Agar, 2006).

3.3.2 The action research methodological approach

The second overarching methodological approach was action research. This involved working with the case study organisation, their volunteers, and supporters, to develop climate action projects and activities based in their community. This connected the action research to the human geography element of this research through highlighting how space and place were important dimensions of participation (Kindon et al., 2007). Developing action research within my study contributed towards my first objective of understanding the barriers and opportunities for effective community action for tackling climate change. As my case study organisation worked across multiple issues, using an action research approach enabled me to develop projects that had a specific climate

focus. I analysed the projects, the processes, the aims, strategies, and activities, which contributed to answering the overall research question in terms of how people came together within the case study organisation to tackle climate change. Whilst there are many ways that answering this question could be approached, action research added value to the research as it focuses on developing participation and a form of inquiry that foregrounds action to address issues that the community themselves highlight (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Another aspect that made action research a good way to meet the objectives of this research was that it entails working towards social change through action, which aligns with objective 1 (see 1.2.1) and is committed to an ethos of sharing and learning between the researcher and those participating in the research (see 1.2.3) (Macdonald, 2012).

As with the ethnographic side of the research, the action research was about collecting rich and meaningful data from which to build theory (Duesbery and Twyman, 2020). This strand of the research used participatory approaches to bring together people who wanted to create social change and work on the issue of tackling the climate emergency at a local level (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2007). Using a collaborative approach to action research meant I could explore the barriers and opportunities for effective climate action (objective 1). I could also gain an understanding, both from inside KVDT and those that took part in the action research groups about how the climate emergency, and strategies to tackle it, intersected with the other crises that were impacting on the community (objective 2). The action research processes and the strategies that were developed supported the research objectives, the overall research question, as well as contributing to answering questions about strategies to build community resilience, especially in reference to developing symbiotic and interstitial strategies.

3.3.3 Combining ethnography and action research

Ethnography and action research fit well together as qualitative processes. Through ethnography the researcher can be a participant and observer, which means that the action research can be based upon the understandings gained through participant observation (Duesbery and Twyman, 2020). This was certainly true in my case, where

the action research did not commence until three months into the fieldwork, after several observations and interviews had been conducted (see 3.5 for more detail). The action research programme that I worked on contained climate change mitigation focused initiatives and the findings include analysis of the processes and the outcomes achieved from the projects undertaken. In line with the values underpinning the research, the aim was to generate projects and approaches that were experimental and action orientated (Gibson-Graham, 2008). This enabled the development a programme of work to contribute towards the objectives of the case study organisation. Thus, this strand of the research was aimed at making a small contribution towards creating the world that we want to inhabit (Gibson-Graham, 2008).

3.4 A case study approach

A case study is defined as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). Whilst this can be approached in many ways, in this research I explored the chosen organisation's strategies, its programs, activities, and the processes that make up the organisation (Creswell et al., 2018). Furthermore, I analysed these activities in relation to their goals, as well as how the broader political and social context in which they operated impacted on how successful they were at achieving those goals. In this research, the "bounded system" was the Kirkstall Valley Development Trust, a community organisation based in Leeds. Whilst this was one case, the aim was to contribute towards a critical understanding of how communities are responding to the intersecting crises that they faced through austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency. These are issues that resonate more broadly than with just this community, which is a key element of using a case study approach (Yin, 1993).

With a focus on the intersecting crises, within a theoretical framework of community resilience, immersing myself within KVDT through ethnography and action research enabled me to explore in depth how the different elements of community resilience interacted, co-existed, and in some instances limited one another through the various strategies, projects, community programmes, and in the motivations of the people that

made up the organisation. Therefore, whilst my research is focused on a specific organisation, its findings can contribute towards theory and broader understandings of how community led strategies emerge within the neoliberal context of the UK. Through ethnography and action research, I was able to develop research that is "richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). This rich description was achieved through studying one case in great depth and applying my interdisciplinary approach. I was able to relate what I saw through immersion in the research site to sociological ideas of how people developed resilience in a time of crisis, state withdrawal, and the dominance of market thinking (Burawoy, 2005; 2015). I was also able to use a single case to look at how, in this environment, people sought to create alternatives at the community level (Chatterton, 2019). Thus, the findings from my case study can contribute towards theory and broader understandings of how community led strategies emerge within the neoliberal context of the UK.

3.4.1 Developing the research through co-production with the case study organisation

According to Horner (2016), co-produced research entails an equal partnership between academic and non-academic participants across all the phases of the research. Within this definition my research was not co-produced, as the overall focus of climate change, the research questions, and the subsequent theories were not developed in partnership with the case study organisation. However, within this research many aspects were co-produced, with members of the organisation helping to inform the direction of the research, the research outputs, and the intended impacts of the action research. Once in the field, the research approach was one of flexibility and a focus on action through partnerships (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016). Through the understandings that I gained through ethnographic immersion, building relationships and familiarity with their work, I could work with the key staff members to shape the conduct of the research, so that the research fitted with the vision and aims of the case study organisation (see 3.4.4 below for more detail of the aims).

A key dimension of my collaborative method was being flexible towards developing approaches and partnerships based upon what I was seeing and learning through my

engagement with KVDT. For instance, during my research I worked on three funding bids, as it became apparent that securing funding was of vital importance to ensuring that the organisation could survive. I supported this in a practical sense, as this work helped KVDT meet their needs, and this work also contributed towards my research findings about how they operated in relation to the ever-advancing market (Burawoy, 2005; 2005a).

The direction and impacts of the research were emergent, non-linear, and responsive to what was happening in the research setting (Darby, 2017). I felt throughout the research that I could contribute towards KVDT's work and that their established position as experts in their local community contributed towards the research process. As Darby (2017) highlights, a case study partner can bring expertise and experience to the research project. I recognised within this that the people working for and with KVDT had an expertise about their organisation, the community that the research took place in, how to create change through their work, and that this provided valuable insight and direction during the research process (Dryzek et al., 2019). Often, as the project progressed, this was about dialogue between myself and the people that I had gotten to know in the organisation. I could share my ideas with them, my ideas were used by them to inform their work, and I was also able to test my ideas and adapt them based upon conversations and input from people in KVDT.

3.4.2 The limitations of a single case study

Through a case study I was able to develop an in-depth analysis of a single case. As Yin (1993) states, this is with the intention of exploring broader phenomenon, in my case of neoliberal governance and community resilience in the face of it. The knowledge that is derived from this is partial and context specific. This means that the vulnerabilities that other communities are tackling, the types of organisations that they develop, how they prioritise, and the approaches that they take may differ. Thus, my research was context specific in terms of an unprecedented pandemic and place specific. This means that a similar organisation outside of the UK, in another area of the UK, or even within the city of Leeds, may generate different results.

3.4.3 Sampling

The decision to work with the case study organisation was purposive sampling, as they are an established organisation with experience of working at a grass-roots level (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). By focusing on one case, this type of purposive sampling was homogenous, as the aim was to investigate the group in considerable detail (Emmel, 2013). Working with the case study organisation supported my first two objectives. Firstly, understanding the barriers and opportunities for effective community action for tackling the climate emergency and secondly, using empirical evidence to understand how a community organisation is responding to intersecting crises at the community level. These objectives highlight my motivation to explore climate action at the community level but as part of understanding the wider context that the action was taking place in. Through my case study organisation, I wanted to contribute to a climate agenda that sees climate action as part of a broader range of actions to "tackle social and economic inequalities" (Howarth et al., 2021, p. 5). By choosing them I could contribute towards understandings of the interactions between climate and non-climate activity, and how they support and inhibit one another in a period of crisis (Tiratelli et al., 2021).

3.4.4 How the case study organisation functioned

KVDT, having launched in 2016, are officially registered as a "not for profit community benefit society". A community benefit society exists to "serve the broader interests of the community" (Co-op, n.d.). There are over 900 development trusts in the UK, which makes KVDT a case study of an organisation that is part of a broader movement (Development Trust Association Scotland, n.d.). Trusts develop with specific reference to their contexts, so differ in many aspects from each other. However, "While there is no one model for Development Trusts, they do have common characteristics of being concerned with the regeneration of an area, not for private gain, aiming for long term sustainability, and community based and accountable" (Wilcox, 2004). KVDT had a strong vision and strategy that supported their ideas for community transformation, but

also implicitly left space for programmes of work that supported vulnerable people, without necessarily seeking to develop transformative action. This was articulated in their strategy as tackling pollution, the climate emergency, and social inequality alongside developing facilities and activities to support elderly people, young people, and vulnerable groups.

In their strategy, KVDT outlined a broader approach to supporting the community, building an inclusive community, and building community led sustainability. This meant that much of their approach was inspired and informed by asset-based community development (ABCD). ABCD is an approach to community development that focuses on developing the assets and strengths that exist in the community, rather than starting from looking at perceived deficits (Scott et al., 2018). Assets that are built can include skills, networks, institutional capacity, and place-based assets (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). This made KVDT a good case study for developing ideas about community resilience, as many of these assets align with important dimensions of resilience as outlined in section 2.5.

During the research period, KVDT operated from two sites, including the community centre, commonly referred to as "Unit 11" and the Kirkstall Valley Farm, which was a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project. Within the organisation there were a mixture of formal and non-formal structures, with a constitution, as well as steering groups, tasks groups and more informal groups that developed, delivered the work, and created priorities. As a community benefit society, they were part of the co-operative movement. This meant that members, whether farm members, KVDT members, or KVDT shareholders, could vote in matters of KVDT. The organisation was comprised of an elected board of directors of eight people from the local community and they had three paid staff at the beginning of my research, but this rose to ten paid staff during my research. During COVID-19, the KVDT volunteer list grew to around 350 people from the local area and there were also roughly 250 members.

As a development trust, KVDT were working to support the community, which was evident in their programmes, such as their work with children and families, coffee

mornings for older people, as well as events that they organised around things such as Halloween, Easter, Bonfire Night, and Christmas. People were also able to volunteer at the community centre or on the Kirkstall Valley Farm. The farm depended on volunteers to play key roles in the strategy and operational groups, as well as people becoming involved in planning and maintenance on the farm.

Shortly before my research began, KVDT shifted their work to play a prominent role in the COVID-19 pandemic response as the official 'Community Care Hub' for their local area. For this, they worked in partnership with the council to support people that were vulnerable due to the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that embedding my research in the group enabled me to answer research questions that focused on how community led responses to the climate emergency took shape within the broader crises that communities were dealing with. As well as their extensive experience of working in their community they had ambitious plans and ideas for generating local transformation, including for increasing sustainability. This was evident through the Kirkstall Valley Farm as well as in ideas that they were pursuing to regenerate two derelict former mills in their local area. This made them a good case for understanding community led strategies for creating transformation. This range of projects, programmes, strategies, and ways of organising provided the opportunity for me to explore how they worked in their local context and connect it to the broader political context (Horner, 2016).

3.5 The ethnographic methods used and how they contributed towards the results

The two ethnographic methods that I employed were participant observations of the case study organisation and interviews with key people in the organisation. Through this, I was able to understand KVDT and their approaches. My fieldwork took place over roughly thirteen months from June 2020 to July 2021. During this period, I engaged in a range of different activities to immerse myself within day-to-day work of the case study organisation, combining participant observations and interviews to generate data and develop a "thick description" of what was happening within the organisation (Merriam, 2009).

3.5.1 Participant observation method

I conducted participant observation at all levels of the organisation. A brief overview is provided in Table 1 (below).

What I observed or took part in	Dates	Brief description
Board meetings	Sept 2020- Dec 2021	I attended eight board meetings. The first two as an observer and six as a participant and observer. I continued to attend board meetings after the official research period ended. The board meetings focused on overseeing the running of KVDT and setting the strategic direction of the organisation.
Annual General Meetings (AGM)	Nov 2020 Oct 2021	There were two AGMs that I attended. The AGMs were an opportunity to showcase KVDT's work to supporters and for supporters to raise questions, vote on issues, and input into the direction of the organisation.
Farm strategic and planning group	Feb 2021- June 2021	I attended six meetings of the farm groups. These groups were overseen by the farm director and attended by farm volunteers. The issues ranged from oversight of the farm, finances, strategic direction, and practical aspects of running and developing the farm project.
COVID-19 food distribution	Sept 2020- June 2021	I observed the food distribution work at the Unit 11 hub. Through this, I spent time with those running and volunteering on the project.
After School Club	April-July 2021	This was a COVID-19 project to create a space in which children and families could interact, with some educational elements. It took place on the farm.

Volunteering activities	March 2020-Sept 2021	I volunteered as a COVID-19 food deliverer. I also, on occasion, did supermarket shopping, dog walking, and medicine delivery. This was mainly done once a week throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also volunteered on the farm, planting vegetables on several occasions in the spring and summer of 2021. This enabled me to speak with the growers and farm volunteers.
KVDT events	Sept 2020-Sept 2021	I attended several events, such as a scarecrow trail, a Halloween event, Easter egg trail, and Christmas events that took place on the farm or at Unit 11.

Table 1

As the table above shows, I observed and participated in activities at all levels of the case study organisation. By viewing activities, from board level to volunteering, I could document what happened in KVDT through spending time in the natural settings of the organisation (Hammersley, 2018). As my research questions focused on the 'how' of the work of KVDT, and how this related to the political and economic environment in which they operated, through observation I could focus on what people did and why they did it (Hammersley, 2018). By observing the organisation across the different levels, I was able to gain an understanding of the perspectives of people that set the direction of the organisation, those that volunteered their time, and those that were paid employees. This was important as organisations, such as KVDT, have multiple objectives and ways of carrying out their work (Eliasoph, 2011). Through observing them over a long period, I was able to see how different strategies developed, how constraints changed, how that was perceived by people across the organisation, and how their motivations informed priorities and activities.

The range of activities I observed and participated in enabled me to build relationships with people in KVDT. This ethnographic approach supported the development of

research that explored the culture of the organisation through understanding the day-to-day activities and practices. Through analysis, I was able to connect these practices to the strategies and ambitions of the organisation, based upon an understanding of the context in which they were developed. I was able to look at the various aspects of how the organisation developed community resilience, how they constructed meaning from their activities, and how their activities were shaped by the broader environment in which they operated. As Luhtakallio and Eliasoph (2014) argue, this deep immersion enabled me to "open windows" on what was happening in the organisation. This enabled me to answer research questions about the barriers and opportunities within a community organisation for tackling the climate emergency alongside the other challenges that they faced.

3.5.2 Interviews as an ethnographic method

As well as participant observation, my ethnographic approach also involved carrying out ten thirty minutes to one hour long individual interviews with the KVDT board members, paid staff, and volunteers (see Table 2 below for a brief overview). I conducted two interviews with KVDT board members, both around one hour in length. My intention was to conduct interviews in person but this was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, as well as availability of people. Therefore, I conducted one board member interview in person and one online, using Zoom. I carried out three interviews with KVDT paid staff, all in person, and these ranged from forty minutes to one hour in length. I did interviews with the board and paid staff before progressing the interviews with volunteers. In part, this was practical as I had built a relationship with the board and paid staff due to the types of events that I was observing and it took longer to do so with volunteers. I did carry out five interviews with volunteers, three of which were in person and two of which we conducted online, using Zoom.

Type of interview	Number/how conducted	Dates	Aims
KVDT Board members	One in person interview at participants place of work One online interview using Zoom	October 2020	Understand how change happens through KVDT Get an understanding of how KVDT functions – both on a strategic level and in the day-to-day Understand people's motivations for being involved in KVDT Get ideas about how this project can contribute towards local sustainability and climate action
KVDT paid staff	Three in person interviews at the KVDT community hub	October 2020	Understand how change happens through KVDT Get an understanding of how KVDT functions – both on a strategic level and in the day-to-day Understand people's motivations for being involved in KVDT Get ideas about how this project can contribute towards local sustainability and climate action
KVDT volunteers	Three in person interviews at the KVDT community hub	March 2021- May 2021	Get an understanding of how KVDT functions in the day-to-day

	Two online interviews using Zoom		Understand people's motivations for being involved in KVDT
			Get ideas about how volunteers see the role of KVDT in supporting the local community
			Understand how volunteers see the issue of climate change and climate action

Table 2

I recorded the interviews and the transcribed them afterwards. Transcription enabled me to develop an accurate record of the interviews and was the first stage of the process of analysing the interviews (see more on the analysis process in Section 3.9). For each interview I was able to highlight themes that were relevant to my research questions and create categories based on this (Merriam, 2009). I used comparative analysis to see which categories and themes were recurring in the interviews and relate those to the categories that I was developing through my participant observations (Coffey, 2018). See Annex A for an outline of the interviews and a list of questions that I used. However, the interviews were conversational and I adapted the questions depending on responses and created follow up questions to ensure that I was able to draw out the views, ideas, and experiences of those that I was interviewing.

The semi structured interviews contributed to multiple elements of the research. For instance, they contributed to the problem definition that informed the development of the action research agenda. The interviews helped to shape the research questions, as well as providing rich data about KVDT and the local community, from a range of perspectives. The board members had important knowledge and experience of the organisation, its strategies, and activities, thus giving me and an insiders' view (Kings and Horrocks, 2010). By interviewing paid staff, I was able to gain an understanding of the day-to-day aspects of how the organisation was run through the eyes of those that were running it. An important aspect of my research objectives and questions was to gain insight into how KVDT sought to improve life in the local area and mobilise the

community towards that end. The perspective of volunteers was an important dynamic in gaining an understanding of what a better local area looked like to them, what role they saw KVDT playing in this endeavour, as well as what they felt the organisation should prioritise. As a key objective of my research was based on creating climate action, it was also useful to understand the motivations of the volunteers for being part of KVDT, to see how climate action fitted alongside other reasons that they had for giving their time to support the work of KVDT.

Through the interviews, alongside the observations that I was undertaking, I learned about the organisation, information that I used to shape the workshops that formed part of the action research element of this research (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). The interviews focused on people's personal experiences within and understandings of KVDT, and the social processes involved in the workings of the organisation (Kings and Horrocks, 2010). The interviews produced situated and contextual knowledge based on people's perspectives (Mason, 2002). I also used the interviews to get people's ideas on what my action research should focus on. This was to ensure that the projects that I developed, and the observations that I generated, were specific to the context (Mason, 2002).

3.6 The action research methods used and how they contributed towards the results

There were two central components of the action research method. The first was a workshop (see Annex B for an overview) that I devised and ran with KVDT supporters and the second was the action groups that I created. The first of these, The A65 Sustainable Travel Group (The A65 Group), was created as an outcome of the workshop and the second, the Kirkstall Craftivists, was developed in collaboration KVDT. The workshop, and subsequent action groups, were designed to achieve a specific goal, give people the opportunity to learn more about the climate emergency and create an environment in which people could participate and influence the direction of the projects (Orngreen and Levison, 2017). See Table 3 for a brief overview of all action research methods.

Action research method	Dates	Brief description
Workshop 1 – 'The zero carbon challenge' (See Annex B for an overview)	November 2020	An online workshop attended by between 20-30 people to build on the KVDT 5-year sustainability strategy The workshop consisted of all group and breakout discussions to identify the local challenges and to get ideas for action around key areas of transport, energy, green space, and making KVDT more sustainable The researcher wrote up the meeting notes, contacted participants and proposed the creation of The A65 Sustainable Travel Group
A65 Group meetings	November 2020- December 2021	A group of around ten people, with meetings regularly attended by between four-six people met bi-weekly for over one year to create active travel projects within the local area. Researcher captured the research data from these meetings either through diary reflections, meeting minutes, as well as writing a terms of reference for the group, a theory of change, and a strategy for the group We also fundraised for the group to buy e-bikes and materials to support our Clea Air Day event
Kirkstall Craftivists	November 2020 June 2021-	Researcher met with other craftivist groups, conducted research about Craftivism and fundraised to create the group

	Deember 2021	The group met once a month to create sustainability projects Wednesday Walker – met once a week on guided walks around the valley Green Hearts Project – KVDT took part in a national campaign prior to COP 26
A65 offline events	February 2021- December 2021	Guerilla Gardening – Researcher attended two different events that did path clearing, litter picking and wildflower planting Clean Air Day – Researcher attended two events, one to make signs about reducing car use and another for Clean Air Day E-bike project – Group loaned out e-bikes to KVDT supporters
Workshop 2 – Transport Consultation event strategy (See Annex B for an overview)	March 2021	KVDT online meeting online with Leeds City Council department of transport representative. The format was a presentation from the council followed by small breakout groups and a main plenary. The discussions focused on getting clarity about the ambition of the strategy, people's ideas for what was needed at the city level and at the local level.

		Following the meeting researcher created shared documents to draft a response to the Transport strategy.
		This response was shared with attendees for comment before being redrafted and submitted by the researcher.
		The researcher shared the response with the local councilors and through the formal process.

Table 3

3.6.1 The importance of the workshop in developing the action research

Part of the value of the relationships that I built with KVDT staff was it helped to create the overview and goals of the action research workshop that was conducted. The aim of the workshop was to bring together the multidisciplinary skills that existed in the KVDT staff team, volunteers, and supporters to analyse the question of what community led responses to tackling the climate emergency could focus on. For instance, the KVDT staff team and I decided collaboratively on the categories that we discussed in the workshops, which were active travel, increasing greenspace, and community energy. The first element of this was to use the participatory approach of a workshop to bring clarity to the problems to be tackled (Sufi et al., 2018). The workshop was a means to develop the practices, generate ideas for the projects, and delve into the complexity of creating change (Orngreen and Levinsen, 2017).

I had two aims for the workshops. Firstly, I wanted to solicit ideas for what problems we could address and what a programme of work could look like. Secondly, I wanted to begin to create programme documentation, such as a logic model, timeline, and project delivery plans. Thus, the workshop was structured to set out the climate problem, elicit ideas for what this meant to people in the local area, before finally generating ideas for local actions that we could develop together. The workshop highlights how participation

and co-production were central aspects of the research process. For instance, I wanted to ensure that my design process was participatory, in terms of defining the zero-carbon challenge in the local context, ensuring that outcomes were built with the support of those involved, and that we collaboratively generated ideas on activities to carry out.

As a researcher, I used the workshops in an ethnographic way to uncover relevant factors relating to my broader theoretical perspectives (Orngreen and Levinsen, 2017). For instance, in the workshop I began by clarifying the crisis of climate change before creating small groups in which people could discuss some of the barriers and opportunities that they saw for contributing to tackling it at the local level. During the workshop, most of the energy was towards the transport group, in terms of the number of people that attended that session and the number of action ideas that were generated. Therefore, I decided to prioritise this area and we decided to form The A65 Sustainable Travel Group (The A65 Group) to develop actions around these issues. The workshops also generated outputs in terms of the write up summary, the logic model that underpinned the activity, as well as agreement on which area to focus on. Following the workshop I developed a campaign proposal, framing the overall problem that we wanted to tackle. This information was captured and used as data to contribute towards answering the research questions. This workshop grounded subsequent work within this local expertise and the desire to satisfy local needs (Oosterlynck, 2018).

The workshop took place online and was part of a broader event, with the first part being dedicated to the launch of the KVDT Sustainability Strategy '20-'25. This meant I had forty-five minutes to run my session, which was a smaller amount of time then I would have liked for such a session. However, this was the most sensible and practical way to deliver on the twin priorities of KVDT, to launch their strategy and develop activities. Due to the pandemic, and the various levels of social distancing rules that were in place throughout the period of my research, like much of my action research, this event took place online. The issue of time is relevant here as there was a feeling that KVDT could not run too many events. A few weeks before this workshop there was the Annual General Meeting, and there were concerns raised internally about event fatigue. This related to the fact that it was a small pool of people from within the broader

supporter lists that engaged actively in the running, management, and design of KVDT. There was around thirty people in the session for the introduction to the strategy, twenty-four people who watched my "zero-carbon challenge" presentation, and twenty-one people who took part in the group discussions in the breakout rooms.

The event was promoted through existing KVDT email and social media channels. I was able to make use of their email list of around 1,200 people, their Facebook page of around 500 people, and their Twitter account with around 900 people. I knew in advance that this would lead to what one KVDT leader described as the "community of engaged" taking part. This highlights a limitation on reaching out more broadly to more marginalised people in the process of co-design and collaboration, which was heightened by the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Added to this, I was working with KVDT on a broader event and so was reliant on them for promotion, which was useful due to their institutional reach but also limiting. KVDT did not have a coordinated online promotion approach, with different people being responsible for different elements, such as Facebook and Twitter. This meant that it was difficult to reach beyond KVDT's core audience and engage with others.

3.6.2 Developing the action research groups and how they contributed towards the research

The main element of my action research was The A65 Group. The group ran for seven months during my fieldwork and continued working together for over a year after my research ended. The group comprised a core membership of six people from the local area. We met bi-weekly throughout, and when COVID-19 restrictions allowed, we organised a range of activities and events. This included a workshop with Leeds Council to discuss the draft transport strategy, guerrilla gardening events, a Clean Air Day event, developing an e-bike project, and supporting each other in street level activism through street parties, road closures, and path clearing. Other people joined the group for activities, such as other local groups and residents taking part in the guerrilla gardening, and around twenty KVDT supporters taking part in the workshop with Leeds City Council on their draft transport strategy consultation.

I chaired the group, but it was a collaborative approach to carrying out the work, deciding on areas of interest, and creating priorities for the group. The group functioned through participation and collaboration and the processes of the group and the activities that we undertook contributed towards the research data. Once The A65 Group was set up, in the initial meetings we co-produced a Terms of Reference, a theory of change, and an action plan. Once we had carried out actions, we reviewed them as a group, and came to consensus about which activities to pursue next. This was done without hierarchy and with mutual respect between the researcher and those taking part in the research (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016). The main data generated was about ideas, strategies, and tactics for building community resilience and what this says about community led approaches for tackling the climate emergency. The diary extract below gives an idea of how the group was set up and the role that I played as a researcher and activist within this.

> Following the workshop and ahead of the first meeting I began to draft a Terms of Reference for the travel group, using the outcomes of the workshop as the foundation. This was to create a basis for discussion within the meeting. I then used it as a form of collaboration where we could work on the document and agree it together. This was a pragmatic choice based around the fact that we were restricted to meeting online. Whilst I wanted this group to be about developing action, it was important that it had a sense of self, a collective identity needed to be formed and we needed clarity around the problems that we wanted to tackle and how to go about tackling them. This was to ensure that our actions were strategic, we could make use of our limited resources, and that the group worked and promoted values of collaboration, solidarity, and social justice.

Developing the projects involved asking what the group would like to do and how they would like to do it (Cottam, 2018). Moulaert et al. (2014) defines outcomes as improvements in social relations and collective empowerment. The key outcomes that this process led to were social learning, collective action, and mobilisation for achieving grassroots led alternatives for a sustainable future (Oosterlynck, 2013). The main research outputs from The A65 Group were project plans that we developed collaboratively, observations that I logged based upon what happened during the meetings, the observations taken from the activities that we undertook, as well as the

thoughts, feelings, opinions, and ideas of the group members that contributed (Macdonald, 2012). This data was grouped within the emerging themes from the ethnographic work and used to either refine or further the themes that were developed (see more on data analysis in 3.9).

The second action research project was the Kirkstall Craftivists project, which was designed using the understandings that I had gained from the ethnographic element of the study. The key learnings that informed this project were the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the KVDT objective of finding ways to bring people together, tackle social isolation and build a sense of community. Craftivism is a form of activism that uses craft-based activities to allow people to express themselves, voice opinions, and challenge the status-quo (Freeman, 2010). It is a gentle form of activism intended to appeal to people that do not necessarily see themselves as activists or are not comfortable within traditional activist settings (Corbett, 2017). This project was developed through collaboration with Amy, a leader of KVDT. Amy and I felt that this type of activism would work well with KVDT's community and would support the organisation's priorities as well as the research agenda.

In the early stages, Amy and I connected with an established craftivist group in Leeds to discuss how we might get involved in their work. The initial project that KVDT supported was a "Green Hearts project" that aimed to raise awareness of and push for more ambition at the COP 26 United Nations International Climate Change Conference taking place in Glasgow in November 2021. I worked with a small team to develop this project, before securing funding to run a craftivism project through KVDT. For the Craftivism project, we employed two event leads and hosted the events at the community hub, one of the few community spaces in the valley, encouraging more people to engage with the space and develop relationships within it. This project was seen as benefitting KVDT by helping to build the vibrancy of the space through facilitating a new kind of activity within the area. Once the group was set up, it self-managed to decide on activities and how it would function. An interesting outcome of this was that as well as supporting activities

that sought to generate local sustainability, the group also carried out activities supporting other areas, like refugee rights.

3.7 The impact of COVID-19 on the research fieldwork - how my field site was on and offline

The research coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown and social distancing measures impacted upon how social research could be conducted during this period (Hine, 2020). For practical purposes during restrictions, and to approach the research with an intention to use all the tools available, the field site in my research was a blend of physical and virtual spaces (Burrell, 2009). In terms of offline fieldwork, throughout the pandemic I volunteered on the COVID-19 food distribution and as restrictions eased, I was able to spend time in the Unit 11 community hub. Through the spring and early summer of 2021, I took part in activities at the Kirkstall Valley Farm, such as the vegetable planting and the after-school club. As these activities were outside, they could continue despite restrictions that were in place to limit interaction indoors. My interviews were a mixture of online and offline, with seven in person and three online. COVID-19 had a big impact on my research as it dictated how my ethnographic immersion could take place. Many aspects of KVDT activity took place online, for instance, KVDT board meetings and the farm strategy and planning meetings took place online using Zoom.

In relation to the action research, COVID-19 also shaped the approaches that I took and influenced the data that that I generated. Working online impacted the development of The A65 Group, as over the first three months, due to social restrictions, we were not able to carry out offline actions. To limit this impact, I shifted some aspects of the research to focus more on the strategies that we developed rather than the activities that those strategies led to. However, The A65 Group did carry out some in person activities, such as guerrilla gardening and Clean Air Day. Therefore, I did generate data on activity, although not as much as envisaged when the research began. We also carried out an online activity with Leeds City Council to respond to their draft transport

strategy. As stated above, ethnography is about deep immersion and COVID-19 did limit my opportunities to interact with the people that joined The A65 Group. This meant that it took longer to form relationships and gain understandings. Thus, COVID-19 limited the study in terms of how observation could be carried out and how I could forge the relationships that are essential elements of ethnography and action research. The following extract from my diary (see 3.9 for more detail on how I recorded my data), written after the action research workshop, explored this.

> The key issues of online research that I am seeing are about the barriers that conducting this type of participatory research has. Zoom is a forum that presents challenges to inclusivity, you need a device, you need confidence to interact in this type of forum, and this could put people off. Joining a set piece event needs time and people that work irregular hours or have caring responsibility might find it difficult to attend such an event. It was also difficult on Zoom to develop relationships between people, and it is these relationships and personable interactions that can be fundamental components of developing activity. As the event lead it was difficult to "read the room" as I was staring at a computer screen and this made it challenging to find ways to build bonds between myself and the participants, and the participants with each other. It was difficult to know the overall impact of this on the outcomes of the meeting.

There were four further challenges that were apparent within my online research. Firstly, as identified in section 3.6.1, and highlighted in the diary extract above, outreach to people not already engaged in KVDT was challenging and engaging in an online workshop has both a technological barrier as well as other barriers, around things such as confidence. Secondly, as the extract highlights, but was also an issue when attending other KVDT meetings, playing a participatory role within observations when the meetings were online could be difficult (De Seta, 2020). Thirdly, a challenge in The A65 Group was building group identity and enabling the development of bonds between people. Fourthly, in both the interviews and the meetings, despite people having cameras, it was difficult to read social cues and body language, which are important aspects of communication (Janghorban et al., 2014). Thus, across interviews, observations, and action groups, uncovering the practices, a key dimension of what I was researching, was difficult, as people adjusted to carrying out previously in-person activities online. However, using online methods provided a set of tools that enabled the

research to take place. The blend of online and offline approaches meant that, despite the social restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was still able to generate rich data and develop projects that supported an exploration of my research questions.

3.8 Positionality and reflexivity within my research

Whilst not seeking to become a full insider to KVDT, playing an active role allowed me to remove the insider/outsider dichotomy to build rapport and gain greater insight into the culture under observation (Rubin, 2012). To achieve this, as Hine (2017) argues, I was an outsider who could spot practices of interest and an insider to the extent that I empathised with the norms, values, and practices of those I was immersed with. To generate the outcomes, I was involved in and planned workshops, meetings and activities as important methods of documenting and analysing the group dynamics and culture. What my immersion with KVDT showed was that as well as the need to not treat insider/outsider as a dichotomy or mutually exclusive, my position relative to the group changed during the period of my research.

This change was in part due to the relationships that I formed and because I became more knowledgeable about the organisation and the context within which they worked. Through this, I became a more valuable member of the group in terms of how I could support the organisation. This was either through organising workshops, engaging with other community organisations, engaging with the council on behalf of the organisation, or through the understandings that I was developing through my research activities. In terms of Hine's (2017) argument, being an outsider enabled me to support the organisation to reflect on their practices and approaches and to help them to refine those to increase their impact in some areas. As my fieldwork went on for over one year and took place during a period of crisis and ongoing uncertainty, reflecting on practice during a time when strategies and projects were in flux was valuable for the organisation. My positionality shifted throughout my research as my understanding of the organisation increased, my roles in the organisation changed, and due to the relationships that I was able to develop with people (Gelir, 2021).

By empathising with their ambitions, I was able to help KVDT to achieve those ambitions in some areas, such as supporting projects, strategy development, and through fundraising. This shows that the insider and outsider dichotomy needs to be broken down, as I did not have a single status with the group. Rather, I had an inter-related set of statuses that affected my perspective (Merton, 1972). This aided my study as the strongest revelations come from being part of the flow and rhythm of social interaction (Juris, 2007). My aim in immersing myself in the research site was to breakdown the distance between myself and the organisation and therefore I do not claim that this research is value free (Kings and Horrocks, 2010).

My positionality within the research was multidimensional, ambiguous, and shifted both over the course of the research and within the different dimensions of the research (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). This was in part because I was conducting ethnography and action research. My positionality was more akin to what Herr and Anderson (2005) describe as existing on a continuum from outsider to insider and was difficult to define. Within the action research setting, the groups that formed the study were initiated by me and I took part either in leadership or participatory roles alongside others. In The A65 Group the relationship could be described as insider to insider in which people were co-learning and generating collective action (Herr and Anderson, 2005). This entailed working together to form action plans, organise activity and collaborate on developing an agenda (Herr and Anderson, 2005). As part of my role, I project managed the creation of projects, so was responsible for overseeing key programme documentation and delivery plans for this work. I also chaired meetings of The A65 Group and helped to organise activities. My research was interested in strategies for change, looked at issues such as social empowerment, and this entailed reflecting on both the practice of generating action and the actions themselves (Herr and Anderson, 2005). This was to support the research objectives of exploring what the processes, strategies and activities demonstrated about creating local change for tackling the climate emergency. My positionality within The A65 Group was that of a co-inquirer seeking to create change, explore opportunities, and addressing problems that were identified through the research process (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014).

The ethnographic and action research approaches created partial knowledge, developed in a specific context, and as I was the researcher generating this knowledge through collaboration, it required me to be reflexive towards my own understandings and appreciate the expertise of those that I was researching with (Rose, 1997). My background impacted on my understandings both prior to the research being carried out and during the conduct of the research. I had a professional background working at a large International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) for over ten years. In this role I worked on many international advocacy campaigns, worked on fundraising from institutions, and project managed large-scale projects. Skills that I developed in my previous roles were useful for KVDT, and whilst community organising operates very differently, I brought some of those approaches to my research. For instance, at the outset of The A65 Group we developed a Terms of Reference and a Theory of Change, which are important components of developing advocacy campaigns. Equally, my previous work meant that I started from a mindset that I wanted to contribute towards creating positive change through my research and immerse myself in the organisation to contribute towards this (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

Positionality and reflexivity "are tools to explore the impact of the researcher's identities and correlated emotions on field access and data collection, which in turn influence the results of the study" (Fort, 2020). Throughout the study, I was conscious that my research was an interaction between my developing theoretical understanding, professional experience, and expanding knowledge (Kings and Horrocks, 2010). In some ways this means that there is a limit to the generalisations that can be made from this research. Another element linked to this, that adds to the specificity, was that I was an individual researcher and therefore my own positionality and reflexivity impacted on access and data collection, which impacted on the results of the study (Fort, 2020). This adds to the idea that this knowledge is partial, as my own experience as a researcher, as well as my professional background of working on campaigns and advocacy within an INGO, impacted upon the approaches I took and the analysis that I developed.

An aspect of what Fort (2020) describes as my identity in relation to the organisation, those that I was working with, and the emotional attachments that I had generated

through my fieldwork, related to exiting fieldwork. This was not a straightforward process, and this withdrawal process has informed the results of the study (Michailova et al., 2014). This is because my positionality continued to shift once the official fieldwork was completed and emotionally, I was still engaged with many of the people and processes that I had been observing and taking part in. This continued engagement meant that I was still contributing to KVDT and the projects that I had developed. This related to the emotional attachments that I had formed with the people involved and because I was aware that power dynamics are important in qualitative research. If I had simply left after collecting the data that I needed I felt I would be abandoning those that had supported the research, given their time, and had invested themselves in the projects that we created (Michailova et al., 2014). By remaining involved, I was still seeing elements of the phenomena that I had observed and that I was in the process of categorising and conceptualising through my data analysis and the writing process. As Fitzpatrick (2019) notes, projects are never finished, and my proximity to the research site, my relationships with those that I was researching, and my commitment to a research approach that wanted to bring about social impacts in terms of benefitting those I was researching, meant that my positionality and reflexivity continued to develop once the official research period had ended. This impacted on the overall study, as I continued to observe phenomena as I was categorising, analysing, and writing about.

3.9 Data Analysis

3.9.1 Data analysis development through building a data set

For the data analysis part of my research, I was guided by Merriam's (2009) approach for analysing data in qualitative research, as data collection and analysis were simultaneous processes during my fieldwork. This guided the development of the study, in terms of which areas to focus on. I developed a broad range of data from several different data collection methods as outlined in this chapter. This meant that I built a complex data set based on participant observations, interviews, workshops, action group meetings, the projects themselves, and their outputs. The project outputs included funding bids that I took part in writing and analysis of the activities that we undertook. I captured the data in several ways. Firstly, I wrote a diary following every

visit to the field site, after every board meeting and action group meeting. By doing this, I could capture what I was seeing whilst it was fresh in my mind.

As the research progressed, I used comparative analysis within the data sets, be it the interviews or my own participant observations (Coffey, 2018). I also conducted analysis across the data sets, for instance comparing emerging patterns that were coming through the action research with ideas people had articulated in interviews and my own observations. I transcribed the interviews, which enabled analysis to begin through the transcription process. In the workshops, people wrote notes, which I could analyse later alongside my diary reflections. Following the workshop with Leeds City Council, with participants from the workshop we co-wrote a contribution to their draft transport strategy, which I also used as data in the research.

Based on this comparative approach throughout the fieldwork, the first step in my data analysis was to categorise the information into themes, a process also known as coding (Creswell et al., 2018). This enabled comparison between different pieces of data, the development of descriptive and interpretive themes based on my own observations, thoughts, and ideas, as well as themes I was drawing out from the data derived from the range of methods that I was employing (Thorne, 2000).

3.9.2 Constructing categories and coding

Constructing categories is an inductive process in which the researcher develops a "classification system reflecting the recurring regularities or patterns in your [sic] study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 181). This coding and classification process was useful in the initial ethnographic stages of my research due to the detailed descriptions that I was generating through my observation diary based upon my participant observations (Creswell et al., 2018). As I showed in 3.9.1, I was able to also compare patterns between my observations, interviews, and the action research methods that I was conducting. This first stage of categorisation enabled me to develop a form of descriptive analysis and break that data down into distinct categories, which can also be described as themes (Angrosino, 2007). From my observations, I was able to draw out themes in terms of broad categories, such as the impact of COVID-19 on the organisation, how they worked with the council, and the importance of space and place.

This enabled me to develop interview questions (see Annex A) that dug further into these themes. By developing categorisations early in the field work I was able to make links between the different data sets that I was developing (Coffey, 2018).

As I gathered more data, I reviewed the categories based on repeat visits to the various field sites, the interviews, workshops, and action research (Burawoy, 2003). Through repeat visits, as well as the process of developing the action research component of my study, I was able to refine categories, add further categories and subsume categories into one another based upon the themes and patterns that were emerging (Merriam, 2009). For instance, as the research progressed, I developed the original categories into new themes such approaches to community, space and place, being political, ambition and the everyday. I further developed these as I built my data set. This process was a combination of my own descriptions, interpretations, and systematic analysis derived from the data I was collecting, so that my findings reflected the complexity of the research setting (Coffey, 2018).

3.9.3 Moving to deductive analysis and data saturation

The third step in the data analysis process was a move to a more deductive approach once the categories were beginning to stop generating new insights and meanings (Merriam, 2009). This stage still entailed testing the categories against the data and it began during the data collection and continued once all the data was there to be analysed. As the research progressed, patterns and themes were repeated, or developed, but new themes were not emerging and this is how I knew that I had reached data saturation (Coffey, 2021). In this stage, I revisited the data that I had collected throughout the fieldwork to ensure that I had a rigorous and systematic approach to utilising all the relevant data (Coffey, 2021). The deductive stage of categorisation and analysis, just like the inductive phase, was a complex undertaking as I had a range of data types that were collected across different settings. Once I had finished my field work, I then moved to the process of applying my categorisation to a theoretical framework.

3.9.4 Finalising a theoretical framework and the final thematic categories

Once I had formally finished my fieldwork, I began to analyse my findings further, which involved revising the themes and finalising the themes that I would use by connecting them to my theoretical framework (Merriam, 2009). The final stage of data analysis within my study was theoretical analysis (Angrosino, 2007). In this stage, I took the descriptions, concepts, and categories and began a further refinement process in which I sought to relate how the component parts fitted together within a theoretical framework. Whilst I had explored several potential theoretical approaches prior to my fieldwork, and this had been an important dimension of my data analysis once in the field, once I had a complete data set, I revisited potential theoretical approaches on which to base my findings. Through this, I decided upon the final categorisations based around understanding the data through the lens of community resilience theory and undertook a final thematic categorisation based around the core ideas of community resilience as outlined in Section 1.4. In this section, I outline two theoretical approaches that I explored before deciding to use community resilience as the main theoretical approach.

A potential theoretical approach that I looked at prior to the field work beginning was applying the capability framework for climate mitigation activity. The capability approach focuses on people and group needs, their capacities to satisfy those needs and how this relates to wellbeing (Sen, 2001, 2005). Capabilities approaches focus on the ends of well-being, for instance being nourished, confident, participation in political decisions and community activities that enhance people's lives (Kronlid, 2014). That made it a potentially useful framework for operationalising within this study, as it could enable me to frame climate action, and the ability to carry out mitigation activities, as issues of social justice, explore how to generate inclusive and socially acceptable community level transformations, with a focus on increasing the wellbeing of those involved (Kronlid, 2014; Demski et al., 2019).

In the early stages of the research, I kept in mind Sen's approach and deliberated on whether to frame interviews and workshops around creating a list of capabilities, which would lead to a research approach of generating projects that explored how people's

needs and wellbeing could be met through activities. However, following initial observations and discussions with KVDT leaders, I decided not to pursue this theoretical and methodological approach for two key reasons. Firstly, as this research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic the organisation was already stretched (as I discuss in Chapter Four) and I decided that the methodology required would be too intensive with a small team. Secondly, and related to this, the organisation was interested in practical community level approaches that linked to how they currently organised and so a more flexible approach to action research, through broader workshops and action groups, was a better fit for the organisation as it was more in line with their goals and their ways of working. As much of KVDT's work was framed by the context of crisis and based on community level strategies for tackling these, community resilience offered a theoretical framework that was closer to the reality on the ground.

A second theoretical approach that I explored in relation to my research data, before my fieldwork began and then once it had ended, was social movement theory. Whilst KVDT were not a social movement, some aspects of social movement theory were still relevant to them, as social movement theory seeks to explain how people and groups are presenting a challenge to the current status-quo (Crossley, 2002). Furthermore, many social movement theorists argue that social movement theory can encompass a broader range of actors than those that identify as social movements (Della Porta, 2015). Social movement ideas were applicable to my case study as they focus on understandings of collective action and how grass-roots organisation can drive social change within society (Lozano, 2018; Fuchs et al., 2016). Social movement theory offered the opportunity to explore how KVDT could be viewed as part of this kaleidoscope, the theories of change they developed, and the alternatives that they generate at the community level.

One aspect of social movement theory that held particular promise was resource mobilization theory, which seeks to understand the importance of resources in terms of people, time, and money (amongst others) to understand why some grievances rise to prominence and gain traction within contentious politics (Crossley, 2002). Giugni and Grasso (2018) argue that the internal characteristics of the organisation, internal

structures, the amount of resources that they can deploy and degree of organisation inform the strategies that organisations pursue, and the types of political approaches that they undertake. This relates to the goals of the organisation, the scope of work both thematically and in terms of geographic level, and the types of political challenges that they are prepared to make. There was potential to deploy resource mobilisation ideas within this in my research, as many of the categories that I developed related to resources in terms of money, community assets, and people, alongside how KVDT interacted with the council. Therefore, in a broad sense I was interested in how the availability and deployment of resources impacted upon KVDT's strategies and tactics.

Whilst social movements, and the contentious politics that they engage in, are developed by alliances of ordinary citizens, often in informal networks, where I decided that social movement theory did not fit with my data was that the aim of social movements is broadly to mobilise people in sustained interaction with opponents (Crossley, 2002). Whilst this can take a range of forms, social movements engage in political contestation in a broad sense (Della Porta, 2015). In line with Mouffe (2014), these networks or organisations should be involved in a range of counter-hegemonic practices opposed to current neoliberal approaches by forging conflict with dominant practices and beliefs. Whilst, as I show in Chapters Five and Six, some practices of KVDT were about developing alternatives to current neoliberal practice, the organisation did not see itself as a social movement, many of those involved did not see themselves as political actors, and many of their activities were not in line with key characteristics of social movement ideas. Therefore, I needed a theoretical framework that could encompass a broad array of strategies, activities, and motivations, some of which were seeking transformation and others that were about simply making life more bearable in a time of crisis. Therefore, community resilience combined with the ideas of Olin Wright (as described in Section 1.4) provided a better fit with the data that I had collected.

Once I had settled on community resilience as the theoretical framework that I would deploy, the final task of my data analysis was to finalise the themes and categories that I would use. This entailed relating the categories that I had created to the core concepts

that would be explored. Firstly, I looked at how categories such as community assets, working with the council, being political etc related to the ideas contained within community resilience as adaptation. I revisited the data set that I had built in line with this. Secondly, I repeated the task looking at community resilience as transformation alongside Olin Wright's ideas about symbiotic and interstitial strategies for achieving change (see Section 1.4 for more detail). This process gave me my final thematic data set in line with the community resilience theoretical framework.

3.10 Ethics

Ethical considerations were important throughout the research process, from decisions at the design, conduct, writing phases, as well as in disseminating findings as they developed (Markham and Buchanan, 2012). As ethnographic work changes over its course, from creating a research design to responding to emergent phenomena, it presented ethical difficulties that I had to manage. Ethical considerations were practical and because of the values that underpinned the research approaches. In practical terms, I focus on the role of gatekeepers, informed consent, and privacy issues. From a values perspective, I discuss benefits of the research, dissemination of the findings throughout the process, the outcomes of the research, the decision to name the organisation in the research, and finally ending the fieldwork and withdrawing from the research site.

3.10.1 Building trust and the role of gatekeepers

An important aspect of my access to the case study organisation was that my supervisor was a board member of the organisation when my research began, this presented an ethical element before the case study had been chosen. This dual role, as part of the research team and the organisation, helped to build trust between myself and the case study at the beginning of the research. My supervisor introduced me to the organisation, but I had to make a presentation to the board about the proposed research before they then voted on whether to allow the research to take place. My supervisor recused himself from this decision to avoid a conflict of interest. An important way of limiting the impact of this type of gatekeeper role was that once the research

began my supervisor did not control the topics or findings of the research (Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorket, 2008).

Trust between the researcher and participants is key to building the relationship (Emmel et al., 2007). Alongside the connection of my supervisor to the case study, I already had experience of being involved with their work through previous workshops between Leeds University and KVDT, participating in 'Kirkstall Valley grants' awards evenings, and by volunteering in their COVID-19 mutual aid programme prior to my fieldwork beginning. Alongside the role of my supervisor as an initial gatekeeper, these other interactions formed a strong component of gaining access to the organisation by building relationships and trust. It demonstrated to them that as well as seeking to fulfil my research objectives, I was actively interested in their work and wanted to contribute towards the aims of the organisation.

3.10.2 Informed consent

Informed consent was an important dimension of the ethical approach I undertook (Hammersley, 2018). Informed consent can be defined as, "the individual understands what the goal of the research is and what they are agreeing to do, the potential risks and benefits of taking part, and have details of alternative options that may benefit them" (Eynon et al., 2017, p. 23). Whilst retaining flexibility within the research process, I was transparent at all stages about the nature and purpose of my study, before, during and after I left the field, and treated informed consent as a continuous process throughout (Boellstorff et al., 2012). When taking part in groups, meetings, chats, and forums I made my research status clear (De Seta, 2020). I ensured that group and individual consent could be withdrawn, and this was especially important as the research evolved over the time that it was being conducted (Eynon et al., 2017). This was done by being open and transparent about my role, as well as continued dialogue between myself and people within the organisation about how the research was progressing and what the findings were.

Within ethnography there is an ethical consideration around privacy, anonymisation and the grey area of private and public information (Hine, 2017). With regards to identifiable information of the research participants, I anonymised names and roles. Ensuring complete anonymity is challenging as there is the chance of deductive disclosure by people who are familiar with the research participants (Eynon et al., 2009; Boellstorff et al., 2012). This is especially true in a small organisation where the people are well known to each other (Guenther, 2009). Creating complete anonymity of people in a small organisation is unachievable, as the board, paid staff, and volunteers are familiar with each other and the roles that they undertake (Saunders et al., 2015). However, I made people aware of this at the outset of my fieldwork, before interviews, and during group discussions. To minimise the identification of individuals I also removed job titles and have classified people as either KVDT leaders, volunteers, or A65 group members throughout the research. Leaders are people who were either paid staff or board members. Volunteers are people that volunteered either in the community hub, farm, or as part of the action groups. I gained consent for publishing, even when altering identifiable details, when the information was revealed in private chats with me, discussions in the groups that I set up, or in the interviews obtained on or offline (De Seta, 2020).

Ethnography follows the routine aspects of social life to build a narrative that unearths the social structures that guide it, but this can also lead to uncovering more private and sensitive information (Boellstorff et al., 2012). As the case study organisation was a small and tightly knit organisation, I stayed away from discussing people's personal lives in the research and focused on the work, strategies, and approaches of the organisation and of the action groups. However, through the interviews, observations, or in the action research, I came to know many of the people well and we shared lots of personal information with each other. People would tell me personal stories, especially in terms of personal circumstances that motivated them to be involved in community work. To respect people's privacy in a complex research setting, I have not used these stories and instead focused on people's ideas for what an organisation like KVDT could achieve, what local activism meant to them, and what strategies and activities they wanted to undertake to achieve their goals. I have tried to reflect these with honesty and

accuracy, whilst all individuals may not agree with all aspects of my analysis, I approach my writing in a way that respects all the individuals who took part in this study.

A key ethical dilemma was the issue of privacy within a semi-public space (Hallett and Barber, 2014). When I spent time at the community hub or on the farm, privacy in a public space was an important consideration in my ethnographic work. This was especially important as many of the volunteers and staff were used to having me around during my fieldwork, as ethnography is deeply immersive (Duesbery and Twyman, 2020). I was constantly aware of the expectations that people attached to the different venues and the context of the venues. For instance, I would not take quotes from conversations that I overheard, I would ask if it was OK to use information people gave me about their work, and I would be clear when I was speaking to them if I wanted to use the information for my research (Markham and Buchanan, 2012). It was important that people could feel comfortable in the spaces of KVDT, especially as it was a time of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, so I had to be mindful of people's expectations within different spaces, so this means that my research was led by how the users defined public and private areas and I respected their expectations of privacy (Boellstorff et al., 2012).

For ethnographic research, building relationships of trust are key and even in a public forum people can feel that they are within a trusted community (Eynon et al., 2009). This issue of privacy in public has no simple answer but through taking precautions and being aware of the intricacies of privacy in public settings, online and offline, I could minimise risk to people that are in the research setting (Nissenbaum, 2009). My guiding ethical principal in this area was to be led by what the research participants deemed important and always be aware that there are group cultures and individual expectations regarding privacy (De Seta, 2020; Markham and Buchanan, 2012). Thus, in the research I discuss strategies, activities, and ideas that I observed and how the work supported community resilience. However, I only use direct quotes from interviews or meetings where it was made explicit in advance that this may happen. If I was involved in a group activity, such as arranging deliveries, when I attended a craftivist session, or

the after-school club, I may have used observations in my findings, but I was clear not to use quotes, names, or identify individuals that took part in those groups.

3.10.3 The decision to use the real name of the case study organisation

In agreement with KVDT board and leaders I have used the real name of the organisation in the research. There are two reasons for this decision. Firstly, the research was guided by participatory principles, and this extended to whether to use the name of the organisation. In discussions throughout the research, from when it began to right up until its finalisation, I had dialogue with KVDT about whether to name them, and it was their wish for me to do so. The leaders and volunteers who took part were proud of their work and pleased that it was getting attention through this research. Therefore, out of respect for those that took part in the research I have used the name of the organisation (Manzo and Brightbill, 2009). I was clear with volunteers and leaders that this would happen ahead of interviews and in the action groups, and they were happy to take part on that basis. Naming the organisation was done with an ethic of seeking to give voice to the organisation and to empower them to decide on whether they wanted to be named (Giordano et al., 2007). It also gives them a voice in the research, rather than muffling that voice behind a pseudonym (Giordano et al., 2007).

The second aspect of the decision to use the real name of the organisation relates to contextualising the research within the location that it took place (Nespor, 2000). For instance, KVDT's work was during a time of crisis that impacted differently in different locations and their work sought to focus on improving their community. In my research I refer to interactions with the local council, efforts to acquire mills, and their work on the farm and in the community centre. If I removed their name but referred to them as being Leeds based, anonymisation in this context would have been relatively weak. It would be easy to deduce the organisation as there are few development trusts in Leeds and none have a similar profile of work or community spaces. Therefore, there would have been limits to anonymisation in this research (Stein, 2010). As part of my research approach is to relate their work to the local context through looking at council initiatives, approaches, and policies it would have decontextualised the research to remove the

location. Once again, it would have also been easy to deduce that it was Leeds and then it would only be a small step to working out the specific organisation. Therefore, to give voice, respect autonomy, and contextualise my research I have used the name of the organisation in conjunction with their wishes.

3.10.4 Ensuring benefits of the research for those that took part

Ensuring that the case study organisation benefited from the research was an important objective of the research and an important ethical consideration for my study. This was approached in two ways. Firstly, the research was embedded within KVDT and responsive to their needs (Pain et al., 2011). For instance, research activities were developed through the combination of ethnographic and action research processes, and this entailed deliberation with people at various levels of the organisation (Darby, 2017). This deliberation was carried out through a combination of participant observations and in interviews. This informed my research agenda and ensured that my research activities included elements that would benefit KVDT. This had practical implications for the direction that the research went in. For instance, from the ethnographic side I focused much more on their work to tackle the social impacts of COVID-19 and the impact that the pandemic and funding model had on the organisation than I had intended to prior to my fieldwork commencing.

An example of how I sought to further my research and benefit the organisation was that during my time with KVDT I worked on three funding proposals to support their work. This was not something that I had envisaged before the research took place. However, through my ethnographic work, funding became an area of interest and an area that I understood to be important for KVDT. Therefore, I was able to use my skills to support KVDT to fundraise, which was essential for the organisation. However, this also meant that funding models and their implications became a larger area of my study than I had intended at the outset. Thus, my work in this area contributed towards the organisation and created data to answer my research questions. Researchers often gain more from their research than participants but seeking ways that the group could benefit, in collaboration with them, was a key task (Boellstorff et al., 2012). This

collaborative research approach created processes and outcomes that would prove beneficial to KVDT, which was important to the research objectives and the ethics that guided my research.

Another aspect of the ethical component of benefits of the research is timeliness, as producing academic work is a slow process (Pickerill, 2014). I was able to use other forms of representation of my work and the ideas underpinning it through project outputs, workshops, presentations, and through contributions to the KVDT board. This ensured that they realised benefits in a timelier way (Pickerill, 2014). This was achieved through dialogue with KVDT staff members and the board to ensure that the learnings of the study were communicated with them on a regular basis. This served two purposes. Firstly, it ensured transparency in the research process, so that they were aware of the theoretical dimensions and the findings. Through communicating the research during the fieldwork, I could ensure that the research direction continued to benefit KVDT. By being open about my findings, the arguments that I was developing and conclusions, I could maintain informed consent and build and maintain trust. Secondly, by reporting regularly on my research activities I was able to ensure that we looked to maximise practical benefits directly from the work I was undertaking. For instance, when we developed an event through The A65 Group for Clean Air Day, we were able to support a separate event developed on the Kirkstall Valley Farm.

A significant benefit of the research process for KVDT was simply having the extra capacity that I brought to the team. The importance of this is highlighted in Chapter 4, when I look at the impacts of the intersecting crises of neoliberalism and how they can stretch small teams. It is also relevant within Chapter 6, where I discuss the issue of time, and how voluntary associations can struggle to get time commitments from people to support their work. Ethnography and action research particularly lend themselves to benefitting the organisation as creating projects and activities can support the goals of the organisation and generate valuable projects towards that end.

3.10.5 The ethics of withdrawing from the research site

The research approach did create an ethical dilemma around my withdrawal from the research site and disentangling myself from the organisation. As Iversen (2009) shows, the relationships that researchers develop are significant, so withdrawing once I had the necessary data felt like it had real consequences for KVDT and for the action groups that I was involved with. For instance, KVDT still wanted to use my skills to work on funding bids, to support the board in overseeing KVDT, and for me to continue contributing to the projects that I ran with The A65 Group. This meant that from an ethical standpoint I could not simply stop all my activities with the organisation. Therefore, I continued to support KVDT and those that I worked with on local activism once the research was formally concluded. This related to one of the benefits of the research for the organisation being about having capacity to generate and manage projects that support the community.

Whilst I felt that I had reached sufficiency with the data required to answer my research questions, my withdrawal was also based on the practical aspect of the constraint of finishing my research within a given timeframe (Snow, 1980). However, I still felt responsible to many people in KVDT and The A65 Group as I had built relationships and bonds with them over the course of the research (Ortiz, 2004). As the work of the organisation and action groups was ongoing and not designed to be timebound this gave me a "sense of unfinished business" (Snow, 1980, p. 105). Another aspect of this was that, in line with my approach to data analysis, my ideas about the data continued to change once my research period had formally ended (Fort 2020). This meant that my understandings of the organisation altered. By continuing to input into the organisation through the board, working on funding, and leading The A65 Group I was able to use these understandings in a practical way to support KVDT and their work. As Snow (1980) argues, research is often viewed as a process, but to those that I was immersed with, collaborated with, and developed action with, I was another person that was helping to support the community and create local level action for tackling the climate emergency. Those needs did not change because of my research schedule, so ethically I felt compelled to remain part of activities as best I could. I felt responsibility towards

those that I had spent time with and collaborated with over the course of my research (Fitzpatrick, 2019).

3.11 Conclusion and next steps

In this chapter I outlined how my research used an interdisciplinary approach that brought together sociological and human geography literatures and methods. My key methodological approaches were based on ethnography and action research. Through immersion within a case study organisation, I gained an understanding of the structures, strategies, activities, motivations, and ideas the guided the case study organisation (Merriam, 2009; Cresswell et al., 2018). Following this, I set out how this immersion informed the development of the action research, which was focused on developing strategies and activities for achieving place-based climate action. To support this methodological approach, I used a broad range of methods focusing on participant observation, interviews, workshops, and analysis of programmes and activities. I then highlighted the impacts that COVID-19 had on my research through social restrictions and the need to conduct many elements online. I discussed my own positionality and how that affected the results. Finally, I explored a range of ethical considerations from informed consent, naming the organisation, ensuring the case study organisation benefitted from the research, and how I navigated withdrawing from the fieldwork.

Having outlined the literature that informed my study and the methods that I used to conduct my study; I shall now move on to discussing the findings. I have broken down the findings into three chapters, each relating to a specific research question. I begin with Chapter 4, looking at how KVDT developed community resilience by working in the existing political, economic, and social structures. I focus on how the strategies, approaches and projects involved in responding to austerity and COVID-19 highlight many important aspects of community resilience as adaptation. In Chapter 5, I explore community resilience as transformation and outline their approaches to social empowerment alongside developing symbiotic and interstitial strategies. Finally in Chapter 6, I look at how working in ways that seek to tackle vulnerability and support community transformation relate to the climate emergency and look at the strengths and limitations of tackling the climate emergency through this form of community organising.

Chapter 4 – Community resilience through adaptation to austerity and COVID-19

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on the 'how' of working within the current political and economic structures to build community resilience during austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter I explore how KVDT worked within the political and economic structures to develop the community organisation, what vulnerabilities they tackled, and how at organisational and community levels they adapted to this environment and supported the community to cope. To understand how this occurred within my research setting, I draw together the relationship between top-down resilience governance approaches and bottom-up community level approaches (Jospeh, 2013; Deverteuil et al., 2021). Through this, this chapter contributes to my research goal of developing a critical account of community resilience as experienced on the ground by exploring the role of social and economic policy in shaping the context of adversity and vulnerability within the community (Wright, 2021). I look at strategies and plans that were developed and how the organisation interacted with the state to seek out opportunities to build the organisation and support the community. Finally, I am interested in the limitations of this approach and how dealing with multiple crises within this policy environment can diminish as well as strengthen community resilience (Harrison, 2013). To contribute to the overall research question, this chapter has a main question, 'How did the community organisation support adaptation to the impacts of austerity and COVID-19?'

Working within the structures predominantly led to a focus on adaptation resilience, which is about adjusting to a new normal within existing structures but can go beyond merely coping to include some non-transformative elements (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014; Wright, 2021). What I demonstrate is how adaptation works in three important ways. Firstly, the organisation was adapting to the policy environment to meet its own needs for resources. This thrusted them into the marketized system to secure funds and acquire places to operate. Secondly, these resources enabled the organisation to

support the community to adapt to the prevailing policy environment and the social impacts felt through austerity and COVID-19. These social impacts were felt through loss of services, the rise in poverty, and the dwindling of the welfare safety net that made many people vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirdly, acquiring resources and building capacity to self-organise in response to austerity proved important for dealing with the unexpected crisis that was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I contribute towards literature on community resilience as adaptation through an exploration of how austerity and the COVID-19 crisis intertwined and were felt at a community level (Arrieta, 2022).

This touches on important debates about the nature and extent of neoliberalism through austerity and COVID-19 policy and the social impacts of this policy environment. I explore the ways in which the need for adaptation strategies were shaped by the impacts generated by the policy environment of austerity and COVID-19. Therefore, the first part of the framework that I employ is to look at austerity policy and how its community level impacts shaped the strategies of KVDT. Austerity entailed a reduction of state intervention and social support, a pushing of market-based approaches into more spheres of society, a deregulation of the labour market, and a growing stigmatisation of those who relied on welfare support (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). This was an expansion of the neoliberal approach of rollbacking the functions of the state and a rolling out of markets into new areas of social life (Aiken et al., 2017). Austerity politics meant that there were fewer resources available for local councils, creating a fragility within the local state, which limits its reach and has diminished its power (Cottam, 2021). Despite a call for communities to show resilience and fill the gaps created by the retreat of the state, communities need state support to step into the gaps in provision, and the state needs to provide support to solve practical problems that austerity and COVID-19 created. A key component of community resilience is "the existence, development, and engagement of community resources" (Magis, 2010, p. 401). Throughout this chapter I explore how KVDT worked within this environment to acquire those resources and how they adapted their approaches to succeed within it.

To explore arguments about the nature, extent and limitations of resilience, section 4.2 goes into depth about the programmes and activities that the organisation created using the resources they acquired. This section focuses on the key strategies that were developed to support the community to react to and recover from austerity and COVID-19. Building on the strategy of acquiring resources, I detail their programme of work alongside outlining the impacts and vulnerabilities that KVDT were tackling. I briefly touch upon their programme prior to COVID-19 before outlining the COVID-19 response that took place during my fieldwork. In partnership with Leeds City Council, KVDT became the Kirkstall Food Hub during the pandemic. In part, the COVID-19 response from the Leeds City Council was due to necessity as the local state was less able to meet the needs of their constituents after over a decade of austerity budget cuts, but also shows a willingness to harness the energy of local communities to help tackle the complex challenges that local government faces (Cottam, 2021). The evidence I present on how the COVID-19 response unfolded within the community setting adds to understandings of the role of mutual aid through the pandemic and what service delivery means in this context of emergency. I argue that this work did not politicise the problems the community faced and had elements of more charity like and service orientated approaches. However, this is not to dismiss this work, as it was vital in helping people to survive. Working in this way enabled KVDT to support the community by promoting other values such as compassion and a community building ethos. Section 4.2 builds on my community resilience framework by demonstrating the links between adaptation and coping within a community setting.

In section 4.3, I look at some of the strengths of strategies that I characterise as community resilience as adaptation. In section 4.4, I look at how working within a context of limited resources puts constraints on the organisation and how this can diminish their ability to build resilience in an environment of vulnerability and crisis. This chapter also contributes towards debates about the concept of resilience itself. For instance, I look at whether this approach pushes a neoliberal agenda and supports the status-quo at the expense of creating more radical change (Joseph, 2013; Derickson, 2016). I outline the constraints that the neoliberal context places upon the options that those working within my case study perceive as open to them. I add to understandings

of the relationship between resilience notions as promoted by the national and local governments and community led responses to the crises that they are dealing with (Deverteuil et al., 2021). I do this by detailing the tension between how national and local governance operates, by pushing short-term solutions that fix the symptoms and not the causes of the problems communities face, and how this leads to a situation in which community organisations are working towards the agenda of the local council, often existing in a situation of precarity. This leads to a key argument that this environment is not conducive to the community organisation establishing strong foundations on which long term change can be built.

4.1.1 The data and analysis used to inform the findings in this chapter

The analysis and findings in this chapter are based upon my ethnographic work and is comprised of comparisons between the different forms of data collected, which was thematically analysed through the descriptive and interpretive themes based on community resilience as adaptation. The findings are based on my own observations, thoughts, and ideas, as well as themes I was drawing out from the data derived from interviews, participant observations, and conversation that I had with key people throughout the fieldwork (Thorne, 2000). In section 4.2, I discuss funding in relation to community resilience as adaptation and base my arguments on information I gained from participant observation, such as board meetings, planning meetings, and discussions I had with key staff when spending time in the community hub. As Coffey (2009) notes, in ethnographic studies, a close analysis of the data is combined with the researcher's own interpretations and understandings gained through spending time immersed within the research site.

As outlined in section 3.9.1, I was able to also compare patterns between my observations, interviews, and the action research methods that I was conducting. Within the themes based on community resilience I had a large data set that comprised of descriptive analysis (Angrosino, 2007). In section 4.3, I draw on interviews for more direct quotes, the quotes I use are either indicative of broader sentiments or capture specific views from individuals that were prominent in setting the direction of KVDT and their strategic approach. To draw the interview data out into arguments and conclusions

I compare the thrust of what people said to general observations that I made, interactions I had, meetings of the board that I attended, and my own reflections from being part of the organisation. This combination of information means that my findings are based upon analysis between the ethnographic data sets.

Diary reflections help to capture the essence of conversations that I had when in the hub during COVID-19. My own reflections on KVDT's COVID-19 work are based on participant observations, conversations, and interviews. The findings and conclusions that I present in section 4.3 are based on a combination of analysis of these data sets, which includes my own perceptions and the ideas that I was generating whilst immersed in the settings of KVDT. Therefore, my findings in this chapter are based on a combination of my own descriptions, interpretations, and systematic analysis derived from the data I has collected (Coffey, 2018).

4.2 The austerity policy environment and acquiring resources to support the community

Neoliberalism took shape in the UK during the Thatcher government of the 1980's, and through New Labour reforms under the guise of state modernisation neoliberal ideas continued to be rolled out into more aspects of how state provisions were run (Fuller and Geddes, 2008). Following the first major neoliberal crisis of the twenty first century, the 2008 financial crash and the subsequent great recession that followed, neoliberal ideas would be pushed even further by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018). This was done through austerity, which entailed budget cuts and a shrinking of the functions of the state to pay off the debts created by bank bailouts (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018). In the UK, this entailed a reduction of state spending on social services and local government, a more punitive welfare regime, and less focus on the state as a force for redistribution (Hall, 2019; Lobao et al., 2018). Between 2009-2019 Local authorities were particularly badly hit with an 86% cut for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Johns, 2020). In Leeds, between 2010-2020 there was a cumulative cut of around £1.7 billion in the council's budget (Beecham, 2020). These cuts to local council budgets were severe, compounded by the increase in demand for services, and accompanied by

a transference of responsibility for dealing with impacts of unemployment, ill-health, disability, and old age away from government and towards individuals, communities, and local councils (Bailey et al., 2015).

During this period of austerity, the concept of resilience rose to prominence in government policy and discourse (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). The challenges of dealing with the social impacts of poverty and austerity were framed around the idea that communities could rise to meet them if the government stepped out of the way (Harrison, 2013). This was typified by David Cameron's "Big Society", which aimed at making individuals and non-state actors take on more responsibility for tackling social problems, under the belief that community groups, amongst other actors, could fill the void left by the retreat of the state (Wright, 2021). The government called for meaningful participation by people within communities to tackle social problems and deliver services that were previously seen as the responsibility of the state (Wright, 2021). Civil society, third sector, and community organisations were seen by the government as potential partners to fill the gaps and lead on tackling local issues (Macmillan, 2013). Resilience became a way for the government to describe how communities could overcome the challenges that they faced (Wright, 2021; Harrison, 2013). This top-down resilience agenda demands that communities help themselves during emergencies, become more self-reliant, and adapt to the adverse contexts that they face (Mackinnon and Derickson, 2013; Joseph, 2013).

Part of KVDT's strategic approach to this policy environment was to work with the state and other actors to obtain the resources they needed to support the community. The overall thrust of austerity was a reduction in state spending but there were opportunities for community organisations to acquire resources to support their work (Macmillan, 2013). The aim for KVDT was to work within the system to mitigate some of the impacts of austerity and support people to cope. Working within the current system was a key component of KVDT's strategic approach as it enabled the development of community resources by pursuing opportunities to acquire funding, build partnerships, and develop community infrastructure, which are key dimensions and foundations of community resilience (Magis, 2010; Lerch, 2015). Funds enable communities to build capacity,

networks, and institutions of support that can be rooted within the area (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011). KVDT were a small but growing organisation during the period of my fieldwork. Their finances were built upon short-term and multi-year contracts from a range of sources. Their main source of grant funding was from the National Lottery Community Fund, and they received smaller grants from various trusts, foundations, and contracts from Leeds City Council. Like many community organisations, securing funding was central to everything from survival through to supporting their daily activities and programmes. Therefore, understanding the funding of KVDT underpins all the other elements of their work.

The funding approach from the state is a continuation of the broader government resilience agenda. This can be characterised as communities taking responsibility for and acquiring the resources to build their own resilience and take ownership of dealing with their problems (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). By working with a range of established actors to secure money, KVDT had to compete for contracts and grants and demonstrate efficiency of delivery (Evans et al., 2005). Thus, adaptation in this context was about working within the logic of the market and the government resilience agenda (Jospeh, 2013). The key funding that supported KVDT was a large grant from the National Lottery Community Fund. This funding was for the establishment of KVDT, giving them the finances to develop the community centre, employ staff members, and create programmes and activities to support the community. The National Lottery Community Fund is an important provider of money to communities, a key aim of the fund is to support community resilience by enabling communities to develop community infrastructure, local assets, and develop shared spaces in ways that are non-profit making (Iqbal and Hall, 2021). KVDT were awarded a grant in 2016, as their work was seen to support this aim. The idea underpinning this fund is that communities could develop important community infrastructure in which services could be delivered, and community bonds could be formed and strengthened (Iqbal and Hall, 2021).

This approach to supporting community organisations can be viewed in relation to the government agenda of rolling back the state and the removal of services. This money provides funds for communities to step into the gaps that were created through the

austerity programme and reduce the costs of delivering those services for the state (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014). The National Lottery Community Fund is overseen by the Department for Culture Media and Sport and the funding body echoes much of the governmental approach to community through the "Big Society", "When people are in the lead, communities thrive. People understand what's needed in their communities better than anyone" (National Lottery Community Fund, 2020, p. 3). The quote highlights how the discourse is based on communities taking the lead and that resources are there to help them build autonomy, which is not dissimilar to KVDT's approach. What the approach to funding also demonstrates is that even in a time of a rolling back of the state there is a recognition that money is required to build social infrastructure and enable social networks to form, which are key elements of building community resilience (Magis, 2010; Berkes and Ross, 2013). However, this cannot distract from the fact that by seeking to work within existing structures, organisations like KVDT are operating in an environment in which market-based approaches and logics of competition and public-private partnerships dominate (Jospeh, 2013).

KVDT also secured money from a range of trusts, foundations, and the local council. These tend to be smaller in nature and programme specific. As well as the COVID-19 mutual aid fund (see 4.3.2 for more), there was other small pots of money from the council for the 'Energy Heroes', 'Healthy Holidays', and the 'After School Club' that KVDT ran. The latter three programmes were focused on children and aimed to fill a gap that austerity had created for poorer families with child centred activities, food provision, and educational support work. KVDT's strategic approach of working with the council and adapting to this funding and programme delivery environment has important implications for the types of programmes that could be developed, as I demonstrate in section 4.3. One of the important aspects of this approach from the council was that the funding tended to be project specific and therefore short-term and limited in how it could be spent. I will discuss the implications of this in sections 4.3 and 4.4.

One of the important things that the funding enabled was for KVDT to acquire spaces in which they could work. In the simplest terms, as Karen, a KVDT leader told me, "You need the places to get the people together to achieve things." Prior to receiving funding

from the National Lottery Community Fund, they did not have a base, with meetings taking place in coffee shops or in people's homes. This has two important implications. Firstly, Amy, a KVDT leader, told me, "It makes it difficult to develop large scale work." Secondly, as was made clear in my first meeting with Clive, a KVDT leader, "it gives you an identity and a home within the valley, from which you can build your profile and become known." These quotes demonstrate how acquiring funding was important for helping them to reach people that might benefit from their work and to become more visible to potential funders. Developing community infrastructure was also seen to provide the opportunity to generate income, as they could hire out the buildings and the land. This can play a role, as Amy told me, in spending less time chasing money and more time on focusing on delivery. For the period of my research, KVDT was based across two sites, a community centre, and The Kirkstall Valley Farm. Acquiring funding to support these community spaces was vital, as they were the key resources of KVDT and central to their community building ethos.

Within a policy environment that called for communities to be resilient in a context of reduced state support and a pushing of market-based approaches, KVDT sought to work within this context to acquire resources to support self-organisation. This demonstrates how they built community resilience through adaptation to this environment and attempted to build a strong institution that could fill gaps, deliver services, and exist within neoliberalism. Despite a call for communities to fill the gaps created by the retreat of the state, communities needed state support to be able to build community institutions that could support people in their local area. Within the KVDT context working in this way was important to secure funding for the organisation, develop community spaces in which their work could be carried out, and through this work develop relationships with other local actors that could support the community. For the local council it enabled them to still provide services but reduce the costs of delivering those services (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014). This illustrates the relationship between top-down and bottom-up approaches to community resilience. KVDT wanted to tackle vulnerability and the state wanted to find new and cheaper ways to support other actors to tackle vulnerability. In this way, the two approaches converge, driven together by the twin processes of rollback and roll out neoliberalism.

4.3 Dealing with vulnerabilities and the strategies developed to tackle them

4.3.1 The intersecting crises that the community faced

Having explored how KVDT generated the funding to develop community infrastructure and a programme of work, in this section I outline how the focus of community resilience as adaptation was dealing with impacts of the economic and social policies that were developed during austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic. I demonstrate how the strategy of acquiring resources helped to develop capacities that could be drawn upon to navigate austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an important aspect of community resilience, as resources acquired for other purposes can be useful in different crises that the community faces (Twigger-Ross et al., 2014). I support a growing body of literature that aims to re-politicise these struggles by exploring the political conditions that necessitated the need for resilience (Deverteuil et al., 2021). The following diary extract from the first day of my fieldwork shows the intersecting nature of the crises that KVDT were responding to.

> It was my first day at the community centre, Unit 11 as it is known, to meet with Amy and Yvonne, two of the KVDT leaders. The community centre is a repurposed shop with a main room for the activities and a small backroom that has been turned into a kitchen and storage area. There is no functioning office, so the kitchen is where we come to talk and "get away from it" in Amy's words. I want to learn more about Kirkstall, the organisation, and about how climate change fits into their work. They describe Kirkstall as an area with no centre, with major road arteries that cut through it and cut it off from itself. This, they say, makes it tough for people who are on the margins of society, poor or lonely. These people, they tell me, are not part of how Leeds sees itself as a vibrant, growing, and affluent city. I ask them about how sustainability and climate change fits with their current priorities. Amy leans in and says, "the issue is, if you stop many of the people that live around here and tell them that you are going to tackle pollution, or cut cars, or whatever, and that would be great for their health, and they would live longer. Most would tell you they are not interested as their life is pretty shit." We talk some more, and it becomes clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has made problems worse, but the roots go back further. As Amy says, for many, life was not great before COVID-19 came along.

My research was primarily exploring the potential for climate action within a community setting. However, what was evident from the outset of my fieldwork was that developing climate action would have to take account of the other challenges that the organisation was tackling, as was evident from the diary extract on my first day. This would also entail understanding the strategies that the organisation undertook towards its broader work. This is an approach that is advocated by many thinkers and activists. For instance, Klein (2014) argues that meaningful climate action within the community must take account of the broader injustices and inequalities that people face. Working in this way has been advocated by those such as Raworth (2017), who argues that as well as lowering emissions and reducing our impact on the planet we must work in a way that improves life for people who are not having their needs met. Taking aside the conception expressed about what tackling climate change involves, which I will deal with in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, this extract highlights two key points around the motivation of those working at KVDT. Firstly, tackling poverty and supporting those in poverty or feeling marginalised. In the discussion that we had, that I paraphrased in the above extract, they talked about poverty and isolation alongside one another. There is also a sense of abandonment from the council, which I noted as them feeling that they are supporting people who are not part of how Leeds sees itself. The other element is building a sense of community. This was expressed as Kirkstall being an area with no centre, and due to poverty, or feeling disconnected, people were not engaged or lacked opportunities to build community.

The environment of austerity played a key role in creating poverty and marginalisation, as across local government there were many rounds of cuts in the decade after the financial crisis began, leading to inevitable service reductions. These reductions have impacted upon the council's ability to support communities, with lower-income groups feeling the main impacts of national level austerity (Lowndes and Gardner 2016; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011). Within the KVDT context this was significant, as through austerity services that people relied on were cut, as the following quote from my interview with Yvonne highlights,

"The fact that people have got somewhere to come [is significant] because, you look at Kirkstall, where is there to go? Nowhere. We've got no library, no community centre...there's just absolutely nothing here."

In the Kirkstall Valley, the library was closed during austerity and the quote demonstrates how a lack of community infrastructure, in this case the library and a community centre, were seen as examples of how the austerity policy environment was impacting on community services. The reference to there being "absolutely nothing here" is aimed directly at the lack of services and community infrastructure, after a decade of cuts and little investment in these sorts of facilities. Within KVDT they wanted to take a lead on stepping into the gaps that austerity had created to remedy the fact, as Yvonne put it, "there's just absolutely nothing here." Whilst the government agenda was for communities to rise to the challenges and fill the gaps, it was its own policies that were creating problems for communities to deal with. As well as specific issues, the broader sense that I got from observing KVDT and interviewing people was that a key issue from KVDT's perspective was a sense of a lack of community that was created by the austerity drive. As Karen, a KVDT leader told me in her interview,

"I think Kirkstall has not really had a heart, it's not really had a centre, you know. It's a massive housing area [and] it's got some facilities, but it's not really had a heart to it. [KVDT want to] Create a community where there isn't really a big community at the moment."

This relates directly to having community services and places that the community can come together. In this way, the rollback of the state in an environment in which urban areas are given over to corporate interests, with the privatisation of land and facilities (Chatterton, 2019), was making it more difficult to create a community. This was a key motivation for the strategies of community resilience that KVDT employed and adapting to the broad neoliberal thrust was an important way of trying to tackle the vulnerabilities that it created.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Unit 11, which was only secured in August 2019, had provided opportunities for local groups to meet and hosted local activist meetings, a knitting group, a board games evening, yoga classes, and children's groups. In the six

months prior to COVID-19 KVDT had delivered 92 sessions with over 1733 participants and they had recruited 14 regular volunteers. In many ways, the community centre and its activities conform to what Oosterlynck et al. (2013) describe as emerging pragmatically in response to people's basic needs not being met. In this instance, this was around creating spaces locally in which people could interact socially without having to spend money, and creating dedicated community spaces in which community activities could take place. Primarily, these spaces were designed to meet a social need and to create an environment in which new social relationships could be developed (Ayob et al., 2016). It was summed up in an interview with Michael, a KVDT volunteer,

> "Making the library a welcoming place, which I think was the most important part [of my role] because people, particularly sort of older people would come in, "what's this here?" "Oh, it's a library" [I would tell them], you can sit and read here, or you can take books home, you don't have to bring them back, or whatever. You can bring different books back. We started to get a regular flow of people and because the library was just the other side of the wall from where the little kids played, we got the older folk in sort of watching the little kids for a bit, and then they'd come in and sort of talk about it with us in the library, and have a cup of tea and sit and read, and it was nice and warm. It was a really, sort of welcoming set up."

Whilst having a library area in the community centre helped to adapt to the loss of that service, it had a wider value in providing, as Michael put it, a welcoming place where different social groups could interact. The informal nature of the community centre, or the hub as KVDT referred to it, was evident in the above quote. The idea of creating a welcoming space was important to KVDT, as it was seen to help tackle isolation and as a way for bringing different social groups together. The following quote from Amy sums this up,

> "I expected us to be all about older people because that's the isolation, there's no library in Kirkstall but it wasn't. We get a lot of older people in here at normal times, but it wasn't [the only group that used our spaces] it was younger people on maternity leave etc., because they don't know anyone in the same situation, so they feel isolated and lonely."

What this approach demonstrates is that KVDT were working to fill gaps created by the rollback of the state, but they were not simply trying to deliver a service. Their approach

supported community resilience through tackling vulnerability, which in the above quotes was linked to social isolation, and increasing wellbeing by developing a social community in which people could be supported (Christakopoulou et al., 2001). Although this approach does not challenge the structural issues that people faced, and the scale is small, it was about compassion and caring, and as Karen said, bringing people together to create a community,

> "They're really creating a community in Kirkstall, you've got the farm and the hub were, you know, it's [KVDT] becoming a place where people can come together to make it better for everybody really. To me, that's what KVDT can achieve."

Thus, KVDT were not simply delivering services that were formally the responsibility of the government (Aiken, 2016), they were building relationships with people and spaces for people in which relationships and a sense of community could develop.

4.3.2 Dealing with the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

So far, I have outlined how the prevailing policy environment of austerity shaped KVDT's strategic approaches and informed the social problems that motivated their work. However, my fieldwork took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, so it was the response to the social impacts created within this that dominated KVDT's work during my research period. As outlined in section (2.6.3), the COVID-19 pandemic was an emergency that required a rapid response at national and local levels. It was a public health emergency, but it created a social and economic crisis as it intersected with the social, political, and economic conditions that had been created within the UK through austerity (Wright, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic response highlights many important aspects of community resilience. Firstly, I will highlight how the KVDT response illustrates many aspects of community resilience as adaptation, as the organisation took a lead in their local area supporting people, adapting their activities and ways of working to meet this immense challenge. In terms of how their work supported the community, I show how this was more closely related to community resilience as coping, as they attempted to ensure that people could manage during the pandemic and overcome the many difficulties that it created (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Wilding (2010) argues that resilience is a metaphor in which many different actions can be contained, the

examples in my research supports this idea and show how organisations can shift between different actions and approaches at different stages of the crisis.

One of the important elements of the COVID-19 pandemic response was that it highlighted how the state could intervene in major ways, something that prior to the pandemic was seen as very unlikely (Mair, 2020). Outside of public health impacts, the main feature of the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic was an increase in food insecurity across the country, as over two million people deemed vulnerable to the health impacts of the virus were asked to shield (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020). This required mobilisation at the national level, through food packages for those asked to shield. Councils were responsible for distribution within their area, and many created their own schemes to expand the criteria towards those that had to self-isolate or were deemed as not having access to food due to poverty (Lambie-Mumford et al, 2021). In Leeds, the council model that developed was one of partnership with newly created 'Community Care Hubs', with the specific intention of empowering the hubs so that they could take a lead in responding to the needs in their area (Gordon et al., 2022). This response was unprecedented in scale, required co-ordination, and large amounts of resources (Lambie-Mumford et al, 2021). Without any previous experience of emergency response or food aid, KVDT became the 'Community Care Hub' for Kirkstall.

Working with the council was important within the KVDT context, as across the country, it was difficult for informal networks to maintain the prerequisite resources to provide for the needs or maintain their efforts over the eighteen months of the pandemic (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020; Curtin et al., 2021). However, as Amy said, this was not straightforward,

> "When COVID hit I said to the council, "whatever you need just tell me." And they were nervous because we were an organisation with one employee for four days a week saying that we'd provide food parcels for Kirkstall, saying yeah, we can do that and I had to say to them if we feel out of our depth, I'll tell you and I won't let it all go to pot."

What is evident from this quote was that KVDT were able to pivot their work and respond to need quickly, which was essential in the early stages of the pandemic (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020). In this sense, there was an element of their response as

slightly informal and spontaneous, having no previous experience of this type of emergency work. As you may expect with the rapid onset of an emergency, this does not mean it all went smoothly. As Richard, a KVDT leader, and one of the people that helped to manage the food hub in the initial stages said, "at the very start when we were looking at doing food distribution in the Kirkstall area, we started out a little bit disorganised, learning as we were going along." In this first phase of the pandemic, it was common for organisations to struggle to adapt due to "uncertainty and panic" (Lambie-Mumford et al., 2021, p. 9).

Another dimension of the initial stages of the pandemic was the uncertainty in KVDT about whether they could rise to meet the needs of the local area. This was outlined in the quote from Amy above, as she referenced that they were a small organisation. As Richard's comment shows, they learned as they went along. Overall, this also sheds light on the impacts of austerity, as the council were left with few options in terms of local partners that could support the community in a time of need. This speaks to what Cottam (2021) identifies as the fragility in the local state and the need to look at new ways of working following budget cuts and reduced capacity. In KVDT, at the beginning of the pandemic, they were able to adapt and adjust to the impact and changing circumstances that COVID-19 created, which are central characteristics of community resilience as adaptation (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011).

When I began my fieldwork in July 2020 restrictions had eased and the food distribution operation was at a much lower level than during the first few months of the pandemic. However, much of the activity was still focused on food insecurity and the pandemic response, as the following diary extract outlines.

> At the entrance to Unit 11 there was a table with pay as you feel goods; tins of beans, tomatoes and soups sit alongside bags of pasta and cereals. Behind that are volunteers doing a range of tasks; filling trolleys and bags with food ready for the deliveries, phoning people to check what they need, cleaning fridges, a mother and daughter were making scarecrows, the beautician preparing her small cubicle behind a couple of office divides. There is an area with children's books that looks like it has been out of action some time, piles of school clothes are heaped over them all. The kitchen is crammed with rows of shelves filled with food, nappies, sanitary, and household cleaning products.

The community hub had been envisaged as a place for the community to come together, a place in which KVDT could actively build a sense of community. However, as the diary extract above highlights, it had been transformed during the pandemic into the 'Kirkstall Valley Food Hub'. When COVID-19 became an emergency and the lockdown began, KVDT staff believed that they had a vital role to play. Their strategy was to work with the council, other local organisations, and businesses, to support the community. Through their local councillors they offered their premises to the local authority for COVID-19 response work to address emergency community needs. Despite the uncertainty and anxiety of operating in this period of heightened risk, the organisation, its staff, and volunteers committed themselves to do whatever was needed. As the diary extract above shows, the community centre had been transformed to carry out the COVID-19 response. KVDT had only recently secured this space but without it they would not have been able to play their vital role in the pandemic, highlighting how resilience relies on the development and engagement of resources (Magis, 2010). In the KVDT context, resources in terms of the council funding and their community space enhanced their resilience capacity (McCrea et al., 2014). Without these resources they would not have been able to play the role that they did in the pandemic response.

The needs that were identified during the social emergency of COVID-19 had their roots in the policy approaches of neoliberalism and austerity. The furlough scheme was introduced to support incomes and jobs, however, many people in the lowest paid jobs or insecure work still suffered through losing their jobs, reduced hours, and in the early stages of the pandemic there was confusion as to who was entitled to what levels of state support (Sandor, 2021; Wilson and Buzzeo, 2021). KVDT's support was needed, as it was people in less secure work who saw their sectors shut down, with many unable to access government support, certainly in the initial weeks, which meant they turned to other forms of community support to help them cope in the COVID-19 emergency (McDoland and Sandor, 2021). Thus, the COVID-19 exacerbated existing vulnerabilities because of previous government policy and the conditions within the labour market (Sandor, 2021).

One of the defining features of the response to the pandemic was the rise of what was called mutual aid. This was a broad term that was used to encompass both informal and the more formal responses that developed in communities across the country. Mutual aid has been traditionally defined as "informal groups of people that came together spontaneously to support vulnerable people in their communities" (Curtin et al., 2021, p. 2). There is currently debate about the nature and extent of COVID-19 mutual aid groups in terms of their relationship to the state, their level of politicisation, their organisational characteristics, and the level of reciprocity that existed within them (Mould et al., 2022; Singh Dhillon, 2020, O'Dwyer, 2020, O'Dwyer et al., 2022). Thousands of groups formed in the early stages of the pandemic (O'Dwyer, 2020) and they completed a range of tasks, "supplying food and medicine, connecting with people who feel isolated, and organising community resources for the benefit of all" (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020, p. 7). Like many others, as well as food delivery, KVDT provided signposting to services, hot meals, food shopping, prescription collection, and a range of other types of support, including emotional. In KVDT's case, as Amy told me, this work was carried out in line with their ethos of "we get the job done." In the KVDT context, there was a relationship between community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as coping. At the organisational level, KVDT adapted the organisation, its focus, and ways of working to respond to the crisis. However, the aim, certainly in the initial phase of the pandemic, was to support people in the community to cope.

Loss of jobs, reduction of hours, and difficulty with getting benefits meant that, as was seen across the country, demand for KVDT's support was high. In the first four months of the pandemic, between March-July 2020, they delivered over 2,500 food parcels and close to 5,000 hot meals. Their volunteer lists grew, and they recruited a part-time coordinator for the emergency response. Volunteers delivered food, collected prescriptions, did supermarket shopping, and undertook a range of activities to support the community. An uplift in community engagement is common across emergencies as people want to do their bit and support people that they perceive as vulnerable (Wright, 2021). The KVDT example, both in how the organisation grew through community involvement and how they organised their response, shows how people were coming

together to support the wellbeing of others. KVDT attributed some of this to the furlough scheme, as it gave some people more time to engage in community work. As Berkes and Ross (2013) argue, developing networks and relationships is an important characteristic of resilience, and the volunteer network that KVDT developed was essential to their pandemic response and a vital component of community resilience in the COVID-19 crisis.

The work of KVDT does not fit neatly into either mutual aid or more charitable service orientated types of support. As was evident in the quote from Amy, they were not a food distribution organisation prior to the pandemic and pivoted to meet local needs within a spirit of "whatever you need just tell me." They were also not a large organisation and relied on a growing volunteer network to deliver the community care response. Lack of sufficient staffing levels was identified as one of the risks of them taking on the role of being a food hub. Therefore, KVDT's response had formal and informal dimensions, people volunteered to show solidarity with others at a time of crisis, so it cannot be dismissed as a form of mutual aid, but it does not have some of the characteristics identified, as the focus was on service delivery rather than politicisation (Wein, 2020).

The sudden stopping of economic activity created an immediate social and economic crisis for many people across the country. For the people that turned to KVDT, not knowing where else to go, it demonstrates how precarious work, a feature of the neoliberal state (Harvey, 2005), left people vulnerable in the initial stages of the pandemic. Precarious work is defined as, "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker" (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2). This is entangled with neoliberal policy prescriptions that were expanded through austerity that resulted in the,

> "flexibilization of the labour markets, insecurity, uncertainty, and risks across social strata. The implications include a shrinking of worker rights and informalisation through outsourcing, temporary jobs, sub-contracting, and related processes" (Jorgensen, 2016, p. 961).

Despite employment levels recovering after the financial crisis of 2008, the decade that followed saw almost one in five workers remaining on low pay and average real wages remained below 2008 levels (Clarke and Cominetti, 2019). Another feature of the jobs

recovery in this period was a rise in 'atypical' roles "'such as self-employment, zero hours contracts or agency work" (Clarke and Cominetti, 2019, p. 7). These types of roles are common in certain sectors, such as hospitality, and within certain groups, such as single parents (Clarke and Cominetti, 2019). Thus, those in precarious employment were exposed to greater financial risk during the pandemic (Sandor, 2021). This was highlighted in an interview with Michael, who volunteered at the hub throughout the initial stages of the pandemic,

> "I was standing there, there was all the fruit veg that we had at the time (points over his shoulder) and there was a couple standing outside, sort of looking in and you got a lot of people thinking what do they do in there and they'd been standing there for ages, so I went out and said, "It's Kirkstall Valley Food Hub" and the woman started crying, tearing up. They said they'd both lost their jobs that week and they didn't know what to do. You can't leave them standing there, you've got to [help], [so] invited them in, had a chat with them. At that time, we had loads of advice sheets on who to get in touch with. If you haven't been in that position before you don't know what to do. So, this is the number to phone for food, these are the numbers [for other services]. We gave them two or three food packages to take with them. That, I felt, this is what this place should have been all about helping people like that. That was just a one off, they never came back again, I suppose they got sorted out. They said that they both got paid weekly and balanced it so that they had enough to get by and nothing else. They were living week to week. We got quite a few people like that. When you get a mother coming in with the kids and the mother's coming crying because she can't feed the kids that really hits you. And we had a lot of younger people as well coming, late one evening they said I don't get my money until the Friday, and this was the Tuesday and I've got twenty pence. I said, "don't worry about that, hopefully this will be enough until Friday." We got a lot of those little one-off things at the beginning."

This is one example among many of how they gave food and other types of support to people that came to the hub or contacted them outside of official council referral schemes. It demonstrates that KVDT did not simply deliver the service that was stipulated in their contract and that they supported anyone who came to them in need, without necessarily directing them through official routes. Their approach was a form of universalism, they trusted people when they said they were in need and built an atmosphere of care and social connection (Shabi, 2021). A second related issue that

the above quote illustrates graphically, through the reference to twenty pence in her pocket, an interaction that clearly had an impact on Michael emotionally, was that low pay meant many people were already living week to week, managing tight finances but getting by, although unable to cope if there was an unexpected shock or disturbance. A combination of squeezed wages, rising costs in areas such as housing and childcare, and little access to state financial support had left millions of people in the UK "vulnerable to sudden changes in income" (Finch, 2016, p. 17). I raised this with Yvonne when I was at Unit 11 ahead of doing my food deliveries, highlighted in the following diary extract.

> We sit drinking a cup of tea and chatting between her phone calls to find out what food and other essentials people needed delivering. She tells me that there are broadly two main types of people that need KVDT's support. Firstly, there are those that have lost jobs or been furloughed. These people, she says, were already living week to week and did not have any slack. These people need the food deliveries because they do not have the money to support themselves.

This chimes with the broader national experience and demonstrates how, like many other third sector organisations, KVDT were not just helping people cope with the impacts of lockdown. KVDT were helping them cope as the impacts of the last decade of service cuts, precarity, and lack of state support intersected with the public health emergency. The intersection of broader neoliberal policy had made many people more vulnerable to this crisis. In one board meeting there was an exchange about the priorities of KVDT. Amy talked of having no capacity to focus on their broader strategy and said that she spent her time worrying about children going to bed hungry. She tells me in a later conversation that she lays awake at night worrying about it. Increased financial hardship was a common experience across the country with many people getting into debt, struggling to pay bills and other housing costs, or skipping meals (Summers et al., 2021).

Many of the people coming to KVDT in the early weeks of the pandemic were new to the benefits system, as it was the decrease in money that pushed those who lived week to week, such as the young people with twenty pence in their pocket, that struggled to adjust to their new financial situation, as many of their costs were fixed and budgeted

based on their work income. The pandemic brought many new people into KVDT's orbit, which again was common for many third sector organisations, as a broader range of people needed support (Edmiston et al., 2021). This was noticed by KVDT, with Amy telling me that for those that had been on universal credit before the pandemic, it was not that bad. She pointed to the twenty-pound uplift in Universal Credit and how, with socialising prohibited, people could not spend money on many things that they would before the pandemic. However, for those in low and insecure work that found their circumstances changed by the pandemic, there was considerable hardship, especially as they waited the five weeks for their first Universal Credit payments (Summers et al., 2021). This demonstrated how the broader context of the welfare system shaped how the social impacts of the pandemic were felt and therefore shaped the priorities and strategies of KVDT. The top-down neoliberal agenda that called for communities to be resilient during austerity shaped the social impacts of the pandemic, played a significant role in creating the conditions in which councils were responding, which created the conditions in which organisations like KVDT were operating.

In the conversation I had with Yvonne she mentioned a second broad grouping that were relying on KVDT for support, people who had other problems, such as mental health issues, difficult home lives or some such. Yvonne told me that she speaks with these people, often at great length, and often they phone her at all hours of the day and night. She says that these people were already falling through the cracks, as services were stripped back during austerity, they were already isolated and lonely, and the COVID-19 crisis had made it worse. Yvonne feels that the time she spends talking to them, listening to them, and finding services for them is more important than the food. When I speak to Yvonne or overhear her talking to people on the phone, I can sense that for these people she has warmth, caring, and understanding. This ties in with the ideas that Amy and Yvonne had talked about in my initial meeting with them, as a fraying of community social support structures were already creating a situation of isolation for many. This was heightened during COVID-19 within the Kirkstall Valley, as across the country, with forced social distancing, isolation, quarantine, and the shutting down of social space that lockdown entailed (Williams et al., 2020). The pandemic was experienced by many as losses of interaction, income, structure, and routine, which was

especially prevalent in the impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of people struggling with low-pay or precarious jobs, as well as of older people (Williams et al., 2020; Robb et al., 2020). As South et al., (2020) observed more broadly, the work of KVDT in providing practical or emotional support in this complex public health emergency contributed to community resilience in supporting people to cope with the crisis.

Throughout the pandemic I volunteered on the mutual aid support scheme, doing a range of tasks from supermarket shops, dog walking, medicine delivery, to my regular weekly food deliveries. On these, many of the people would ask me about the council system that gave them access to this food. Many did not know how to navigate the system, and they would worry about the deliveries stopping. They were not sure who to speak to so that they kept receiving the food and many did not know their rights and what they were officially entitled to. In these short interactions people were worried about catching the potentially lethal virus, many of them were older and talked of health complications that increased their risks. This stress was compounded by the stress of not knowing how long food support would last, and a fear that it could be taken from them. For many people, this support was a lifeline without which they would not be able to cope or potentially survive.

To return to the quote from Michael, "They said they'd both lost their jobs that week and they didn't know what to do." As was common across the UK, many of those that found themselves needing state support at the beginning of the pandemic were new to the system (Summers et al., 2021). As Michael told me, "If you haven't been in that position before you don't know what to do." Although the government boosted the capacity of the Department for Work and Pensions to cope with the unprecedented demand that the pandemic created, many people still needed other types of support to navigate the system and understand eligibility and entitlement (Robertshaw and Edmiston, 2021). Information signposting, such as was delivered by KVDT, was a crucial part of supporting people during the pandemic (Curtin et al., 2021). However, from the position of the person needing support, they had to navigate a benefits system that they were unfamiliar with or did not understand. People also had to navigate a local system for

food provision, and as my experience showed, often it was one that they did not understand. Other support services that people had relied on before the pandemic were closed or went online. The role of KVDT in taking the time to talk to people, as was highlighted by Yvonne, support them, and help them through these processes within this complex web of systems was invaluable to vulnerable people.

KVDT also showed flexibility within how they approached providing food to those that came to them through the council. One of the criticisms of the government and council food box schemes was that they lacked "suitability, variety, nutritional quality and duplication (sic)" (Gordon et al., 2022, p. 4). One of the advantages that KVDT had, due to its farm and the relationships that they developed with local businesses, was that they recognised this and rather than just delivering what was in the contract, they made efforts to add variety and suitability to the boxes that they delivered. This was a source of immense pride in the organisation and as Michael said, they "found treats for people." The following diary extract highlights how they supported wellbeing through food delivery.

> I was at the hub preparing to make my deliveries when a car arrives loaded with Christmas food, stuffing, cranberry sauce, angel delight, biscuits. We start making up food parcels. Everyone starts helping unload the car and putting items in boxes. We add in food bags from the "normal delivery" that is food provided through the council. KVDT take these parcels and add in the other food that we have unloaded, "so that people get variety. You can live off what they send but it's not great." Michael tells me as we put the packages together. KVDT add in other items that they have sourced through the partnerships that they have developed with local business and other organisations, such as the churches. We add in fresh food that they have sourced as well as toiletries, nappies, virtually any essential that the people they support say they need.

It was not just about ensuring people had the food they needed to survive, it was about compassion, treating people as individuals and being respectful to people's situation and needs. During the third phase of the pandemic, that started in late 2020 following the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant, the numbers of people needing food parcels began to rise again as people shielded, were forced to isolate, and businesses closed once more. KVDT once again began delivering food aid to large numbers of local people. What the above diary extract demonstrates is that local organisations built

partnerships, there were elements of solidarity with other actors in the local area, and that supporting people's needs and wellbeing were important dimensions of the emergency response.

Strong place-based organisations like KVDT were a critical component of developing community resilience during the initial stage of the pandemic. In the Kirkstall Valley there was no other organisation willing or able to provide the support at the scale required. As a locally based organisation that worked in partnership with other local actors and with volunteer lists of local people, they had intimate knowledge of their local area, all the way down to individual streets and households. This enabled them to respond quickly and flexibly to local needs, which could differ even in one suburb. KVDT also knew which services existed locally, so could signpost people effectively. Local knowledge, effective signposting, and ability to mobilise volunteers were key elements to enabling people to cope in the COVID-19 emergency (Curtin et al., 2021). The initial stages of the pandemic demonstrated how the COVID-19 social crisis overlapped with the impacts of austerity. This was evident in terms of the vulnerabilities that people entered the pandemic with, in terms of employment, poverty, and precarity, but also the situation that the council found themselves in, in terms of funding and ability to provide services. From the KVDT perspective, building community resilience in this complex environment required adaptation to both the political context and the social context in an environment of uncertainty. What the examples offered in this section highlight is how KVDT's demonstrated community resilience as adaptation in this response and how much flexibility and perseverance was required by the organisation in such a challenging crisis.

4.3.3 Phase two of the pandemic and building community resilience

The pandemic response lasted for over eighteen months and went through various phases of lockdowns and easing of restrictions. KVDT undertook a range of strategies for supporting the community and the varied needs that arose at different stages of the pandemic. Following the initial emergency phase from March-July 2020, restrictions began to ease. As the number of people needing food deliveries reduced, KVDT could

focus on other types of support that the community needed. Within phase two, I focus on how the KVDT response shifted to what KVDT leaders characterised as building community, which was identified before the pandemic as a vital component of KVDT's strategy. The focus in this section will be on the work with children and families and the Christmas food deliveries that KVDT undertook in December 2020. Underpinning this work was the partnerships with the council, local schools, businesses, and the work of the network of volunteers and groups that were part of KVDT. This means that this work builds on the idea of what community resilience as adaptation meant in the context of the ongoing and evolving crisis of COVID-19.

There were two important strands of the families work during my research period. The first was an after-school club and the second was a holiday scheme called 'Healthy Holidays'. Both schemes were primarily supported through council funding, which was designed to support children impacted by COVID-19, and support families during the school holidays. Karen, a KVDT leader described what she saw as the aims of the projects,

> "I'd say that this is providing elements that are missing for some children in terms of their wider education. Children will only learn when they're happy children."

This quote highlights how for the council the scheme was about helping children to catch up with education that they may have missed due to school closures during the first lockdown period, but that KVDT were interested in delivering the programme in a way that supported children's broader wellbeing. Karen also built in what she saw as an appropriate education element,

> "I've gone for building in skills that will support them in their education...So we're doing a lot of STEM challenges and themes that they must think about, and problem solve. So, we're building in learning behaviours. It's not in itself going to catch up their maths and English skills."

Both quotes show how KVDT could interpret the scheme and deliver it in a way that they felt would have the biggest impact, within the agenda set by the council. The council was worried that school closures and home teaching had impacted upon children from poorer families and that children in lower income groups were falling behind in education, due to difficulties that some faced through lack internet access or

access to devices, meaning that they had not continued their education during the period of lockdown and home schooling (National Literary Trust, 2020). Karen's reference to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) is because this was a priority area for the council. The education initiative from the council can be seen as an attempt to help children bounce back from the impacts of the pandemic on their education. Karen's comment, "It's not in itself going to catch up their maths and English skills", highlights the perceived limitations of how a twice weekly two-hour club can achieve this but her reference to "happy children" illustrates how KVDT could implement the project in a way that focused on children's wellbeing rather than seeing the club as an extension of the school curriculum.

Another aspect of the after-school club that surprised Karen was that,

> "We seem to be getting a lot of families with key stage one children who have only got one child...and I think that it's a social thing as those families are really feeling the isolation more than the bigger families."

This demonstrates the different challenges that families faced during this time. The education groups took place on the farm, so it was a safe outdoor environment in which children and parents could socialise, with parents sharing stories about home schooling and the challenges of the pandemic with others in a similar position. The 'After School Club' was more about wellbeing of children and parents, enabling them to get out of their homes and have activities, when most children's activities were still closed. This also supported those who were in financial difficulty as they were free. Once again, this demonstrated how access to funds to support the work was crucial, yet in delivering the work KVDT responded to what they saw as the need in their area, focused on wellbeing and provided spaces in which social relationships could develop. This highlights how building community resilience as adaptation through delivering projects on behalf of the council required working to the council's agenda but that those leading this work in the community could develop broader strategies that met the needs of those that interacted with those services.

At the September 2020 board meeting there was an update on the 'Healthy Holidays' programme and how it was a success as it provided meals and gave families an activity

to do together. 'Healthy Holidays' over the summer of 2020 saw KVDT provide lunches for school children and activities down on the farm, responding to the broader worry across the country at the time that increased poverty would lead to parents not being able to afford meals during school holidays. Over the summer of 2021, over one thousand people made use of the scheme. Versions of the scheme were also run during half terms, Christmas, and Easter holidays. The scheme also enabled KVDT to foster links with local schools and organisations in the area. Schools were able to refer children on free school meals and KVDT began conversations with the schools about how the farm could be used to support their curriculum work once COVID-19 restrictions eased. Other organisations close to Kirkstall also developed schemes and KVDT were able to share their learning and resources with those organisations to support them. The farm space gave families in an inner-city area the opportunity to enjoy green space and learn about issues around food and farming. This became vital during the COVID-19 pandemic as it provided an outdoor area for the school's programme, this meant that it was able to run for longer periods when there were tighter indoor restrictions. Once again, demonstrating how community resources could be repurposed to support community resilience in a time of need.

In the run up to Christmas 2020 KVDT built on their experience of food aid to run a scheme that focused on community building and supporting the wellbeing of vulnerable people. This was through special Christmas meal deliveries and activities, which KVDT paid for through their own money in partnership with a local business and other community organisations in the area. People across the valley could nominate someone to receive a special Christmas hamper. Here is my diary entry from taking part in this.

> When I arrived early at the hub it was buzzing with Christmas music blaring out, someone painting a floor to ceiling picture of Kirkstall Abbey in a Van Gogh starry night theme. In the kitchen, puddings are being assembled and turkey dinners are being plated. Each person gets a meal, pudding and two gifts. One of the gifts is a blanket that has been knitted by the *Hookers and Clickers*, a small group that meet in the community hub to knit and socialise. There are soaps for women and a box of biscuits for men. There are more volunteers than normal, people wrapping presents, writing cards, preparing meals, and putting the packages together. There are 135 deliveries over the week. An ice-cream van

transports the meals and a man dressed as a reindeer and one as an elf hand out parcels. People are grateful when I give them the packages, some do not seem to know they are getting them, why or who they are from. However, they are happy, and it does not feel that it is just for the food, or the presents, it seems to be that someone has thought of them, that someone cares. The following week KVDT build a sled that will be towed around the valley by the ice-cream van, with a Father Christmas in it and Christmas music. What this shows is that KVDT were about more than providing a service, they looked for ways to bring the community together, support the community and let people know that others cared, as well as trying to find ways to brighten up the area with fun activities and events.

As well as the strains that were placed on the organisation, COVID-19 was seen to provide opportunities for an organisation that was still in many ways in development. It was felt that rising to the challenge of being the council's mutual aid partner had, as Amy said, "put us on the map" with the council and demonstrated their ability to deliver on a key area of work, one in which they had no experience leading into the pandemic. These activities significantly raised their profile within the valley as new volunteers signed up to support the work, more local people engaged with KVDT, and it enabled them to strengthen links to local schools and other organisations that ran mutual aid schemes across the city. The COVID-19 mutual aid approach and the success of the response points to the potential of community power to respond to the great challenges that we face (Tiratelli and Kaye 2020). This case study demonstrates how organisations can be adaptable, pragmatic and can be partners for change if given the right support. Rather than being an approach that lacks inspiration (Derickson, 2016), my evidence suggests that community resilience as adaptation is actively built, requires pragmatism, imagination, and can provide essential support during the crisis.

Throughout the pandemic, KVDT's approach demonstrates how they straddled the dichotomy of informal, formal, organised, and spontaneous, outside of and working with the state (Singh Dhillon, 2020). In a formal sense, they worked with the council to support the community, but they were not set up to do this work, instead pivoting from their earlier strategy to help the community cope in the COVID-19 emergency. The policy framework and financial support from the state enabled this. However, the

evidence provided points to the fact that this partnership approach with not-for profit actors created a response that was not just about meeting the need, as KVDT went further to support wellbeing and develop strategies to build community. Whilst not getting out of the giver/receiver dichotomy in the food deliveries, KVDT did try to support people's wellbeing and the underlying ethos of KVDT meant they practiced a form of universalism. There were also elements of the informal in how they approached their work, and they could prioritise values of compassion and caring, which are important components of developing alternative futures (Chatterton, 2019). This adds to community resilience thinking and broader analysis of the community led pandemic response. It shows how understandings gained in one phase of the crisis were used to inform a broader programme of work in later phases, as people tried to adapt and cope. Many studies focus on the impact of food, or loss of finance, but this case study demonstrates the intersecting causes of those issues and how the response was attentive towards the intersecting social impacts. Strategies to support people to cope in the emergency phase built organisational knowledge and expertise that informed efforts to adapt at the later phases and bounce back as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to unfold.

4.4 The limitations of community resilience in relation to austerity and COVID-19

This section looks at some of the limitations of community resilience as adaptation, as was evident in my research setting. I extend my critical conception of community resilience and contribute towards understandings of how despite efforts at self-organisation, structural causes can perpetuate vulnerability and deplete resilience in the current context (Wright, 2021; Harrison, 2013). This draws on ideas of how processes of community resilience, when generated at the community level, are shaped and, in many ways, limited by governmental policy and resilience agendas (Deverteuil et al., 2021). In terms of top-down resilience, I draw out how this form of neoliberal governance created vulnerability through a culture of short-termism that sought to treat the symptom and not the causes of the problems. In doing so, this form of governance further embeds precarity within communities and hampers efforts to build strong and long-lasting

organisations. Within this section, I build on the arguments of this chapter by showing how it is a form of governance that seeks solutions to problems within a narrow framework that draws people and organisations into the market, thus supporting roll out and rollback neoliberalism, and to an extent it disciplines how organisations can act. I draw on experiences towards the end of my fieldwork, from an away day with three leaders of KVDT, funding bids that I helped to write, the transition out of COVID-19, and the forced move from Unit 11 to new premises. These insights demonstrate how community resilience is tested and constrained within the organisation and in the community that they are trying to support. The following diary extract from the away day highlights what KVDT saw as the key issues as they emerged from COVID-19.

> I organised an away day with three of the KVDT leaders, Amy, Karen, and Yvonne. The aim was to support them to develop a one-year operational plan. We start by discussing the challenges that they face and immediately the talk turns to the fact that they are a small team working to tackle a myriad of problems. They are painfully aware of the need that exists within the community and talk about the precariousness of people's lives and a feeling that the community lacks a voice and power to make change happen. They are passionate when they talk about how they want to face these challenges, but they are aware of their limitations to do so, due to the size of their team and the scale of the task. They acknowledged that this means that often they focus on being reactive, and do not have the time to complete training and undertake rigorous planning. They also discuss the challenge of "worrying that we'll have a roof over our heads." Next door to the community centre is a charity shop and they are interested in extending into KVDT's premises and could take their rolling six-month lease off them. KVDT cannot stop this, an acknowledgement of the precarious situation they are in as an organisation when it comes to their home. They also worry that whilst the National Lottery funding and the COVID-19 funding have enabled them to establish the organisation, much of the money is short term for specific project delivery. They also cannot run money generating activities at scale due to the pandemic and the government-imposed restrictions.

This extract highlights three important themes. Firstly, how the ongoing crisis continued to create vulnerability in the community and how trying to support the community through this could overwhelm the organisation, which relates to Harrison's (2013) idea that we need to think about how responding to crisis can enhance but also make people, or in my research an organisation, less able to be resilient. Secondly, existing

within the marketized environment created precarity for the organisation in important ways, in terms of financially and in terms of the security of their community space. Thirdly, and related to the first two points, as the council looked to move on from COVID-19 emergency work, rather than exploring how to build back better, it was an attempt to return to business as usual. Thus, the approach from the council was much more akin to resilience as bouncing back than resilience as transformation, which risked leaving people vulnerable in the face of crisis (Donoghue, 2022; Deverteuil et al., 2021).

The limitations of KVDT's ability to keep responding to adverse situations is highlighted in the above extract as issues were raised in terms of "the myriad of problems", the small team, and the fact that they felt they were often reacting to events. This links to the negative side of resilience, as people and communities are expected to keep responding to crisis after crisis (Derickson, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic work placed a great strain on the organisation, with key volunteers and staff working twelve-hour days six days a week in the early part of the pandemic response. Burn out was a common feature within mutual aid groups as the pandemic dragged on for eighteen months (Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2021). This was a risk for KVDT, as it was difficult to sustain the early surge in volunteer numbers and commitments, especially as people's time commitments changed due to home schooling or returning to work. This is common across many types of emergencies where early enthusiasm dissipates over the course of the emergency (Wright, 2021). This demonstrates that when thinking about community resilience over a longer period it is important to look at how it is generated, how it is sustained, and how it may diminish over the course of a crisis. The factors that may cause the latter may be due to circumstances in the community but may also be driven by factors outside of their control.

KVDT were proud and passionate about the work that they did with food distribution during COVID-19. The KVDT leaders talked in the away day about being a small team and working within a local context that stretched them. The issues that people faced before the pandemic, of poverty, precarious work, and social isolation, were still prevalent and the need to support the community to cope and adapt to this environment was still a priority for the KVDT leaders. In the longer term, this could impact on the

transformation agenda of the organisation as resources were focused on dealing with immediate needs rather than on transformation. This was especially relevant moving out of the emergency stage of the pandemic as the council sought ways of managing just under £118 million of a budget gap in 2020-21 (Golding, 2020).

Despite the mutual aid scheme winding down in June 2021, in the final weeks of my field work, the council sought to make a short-term fix to help people that still relied on food aid support. KVDT became a community partner in developing a new food distribution scheme between July 2021-March 2022. This model was described as a "community anchor" approach in which community organisations are multi-purpose (Henderson and McWilliams, 2017). In this case providing food support and signposting people to relevant services for other issues that they faced. Where this work differed from the COVID-19 food hub was that they created a "Food pantry" model. The idea was that people no longer received deliveries but that they came to a hub and paid a small fee of £3.50 and received about £20 worth of food. At one board meeting, when this was discussed, there was concern that they may not know that the most vulnerable were being supported. This was because people may have not engaged with the council, which links to KVDT's earlier experience of food support when people in need would be referred to them from a range of sources. There were also practical concerns, such as people not being able to get to the hub as it was not close to a bus stop. There was also a lack of clarity from the council and in KVDT as to what success would look like. In the initial stages, the pantry was supporting around thirty-five families a month. KVDT were concerned, as Amy put it, that this was a sticking plater to a bigger problem and was about developing services without the necessary investment. This approach placed KVDT in a position of delivering services, in a context of crisis management, rather than tackling the structural inequality that caused this crisis (Henderson and McWilliams, 2017).

Coming out of COVID-19, rather than innovative approaches from the council, this extension of food aid can be seen as a continuation of the top-down resilience approach that seeks to draw people and organisations into the market while others deliver services on behalf of the state (Donoghue, 2022). In discussions with Amy, she told me

that the concern from the council was that the food delivery model during the COVID-19 emergency had created dependence, which speaks to the idea that people in poverty need to be disciplined by being drawn back into the market (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020; Donoghue, 2022). It also shines a light on the broader top-down view of supporting communities through the crisis and beyond, as by dispensing with broader support, it demonstrated that the overall aim of the council was for communities to bounce back to something equating to earlier functioning before COVID-19, rather than looking at how they could use the emergency to build back better.

With a looming cost of living crisis, KVDT were concerned that people would be negatively impacted, which links to the rise of in work poverty, rising housing costs, inflation, and soaring energy costs in the UK (Hourston, 2022). As the UK moved out of worst of the COVID-19 health crisis, the insecurities of low pay, lack of services and job insecurity that exacerbated the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were still prevalent and creating stresses and strains at the community level. The rollback of the state and the rollout of neoliberalism created a situation in which community organisations post-COVID-19 were still delivering services and supporting those that fell through the gaps and cracks of provision.

The range of strains felt by the broader community and individuals during COVID-19 created a situation in which the approaches identified in the KVDT strategy around community transformation, with high ambition for tackling problems like the climate emergency had to fight for time and space whilst the organisation dealt with the many difficulties that existed in their local context. This points to potential limitations for the role of community organisations in tackling the climate emergency in the short term, as other emergencies, such as austerity and COVID-19 take on a greater urgency in the daily approaches that organisations take. This was evident in the away day that I ran, were the ethos of "we get the job done and we react to the needs" was expressed. In a time of social need this was understandable and comes from a place of being concerned primarily with people, and that activities needed to benefit people. In effect, this led to a situation that was quite reactive to events. Time and resources were focused on relieving immediate pressures within the community and alleviating direct

problems that people faced, at the expense of having the space to focus on broader questions of transformation.

4.4.1 The impacts on the community organisation of the neoliberal policy environment

A second element that threatened to deplete resilience was the vulnerability and precarity that the organisation faced. This was primarily caused by having to exist in an environment that prioritised market led approaches. This was evident in the funding model, which was a consistent issue throughout the period of my research. As the COVID-19 mutual aid funding wound down funding issues became more prominent towards the end of my research period. Due to this, more of my fieldwork time was taken up supporting the organisation with identifying funding opportunities and contributing towards writing funding bids. During my research I worked on three funding bids, two of which were successful and one that was not.

Towards the end of my research period the National Lottery Community Fund grant was ending and KVDT applied for a follow-on grant from the funder. As the funding was substantial and up to five years, it could be a vital resource for many community organisations in the country. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the funder had pivoted towards the agenda of supporting communities towards building back from its adverse impacts. For KVDT, this follow-on grant was vital, without it they would be in a financially perilous state within six months. When preparing the funding bid, we discussed how vital it was to enable KVDT to continue to provide its core programme and important services for the community. There was real concern that without it, as Amy said, "we won't be able to keep the lights on." Thus, the funding model of short-term grants and project specific grants meant that KVDT, like community organisations across the country, existed in a state of precarity, which consumed the time and energy of the organisation and made long-term planning more difficult.

This precariousness emanated through the organisation and led to a focus on the short-term. It also impacted on the development of funded projects as budgets were stretched and barely covered the work that was needed. Often many of the staff delivering on these projects worked more than the stipulated hours that were funded. Another effect

was that even if projects were successful and KVDT could see that it met a need, if the council or the trust involved decided to discontinue that funding stream, then it would simply have to cease. In a broader sense the funding model adhered to what Aiken (2016) identified as community groups becoming neoliberalised in the sense that they fill in the gaps created by the roll back process, and the roll out process entrenches market principles within community. Another way that this was evident through funding was that to prove their success, reporting was often based on how many people were reached, which speaks to the desire to quantify (Aiken, 2016). KVDT were not passive in this process and they also in part judged their success through how many people they reached, whether being proud of being able to deliver twenty to thirty food parcels a day during the pandemic, or the number of families attending their events. Demonstrating to funders that they could meet their objectives was important, and did influence how projects were developed and assessed, therefore conforming to these dominant values was perceived to be necessary. However, as I have demonstrated, this must be balanced against the fact that in KVDT's case the funding also enabled them to build relationships with the community, ways of working that could foster relationships, and processes that pushed back against these dominant values. Thus, it can be seen as correct to argue that "the preferred form of knowledge becomes abstract, disembodied and fungible" (Aiken, 2016, p. 20). However, it is not correct in the KVDT instance to see this as replacing more relational forms of knowledge within the organisation itself.

The funding model also limited the types of programmes that could be created. The programme funding that I have outlined can be categorised as supporting adaptation, coping, and bouncing back. One key barrier that was evident during my research was based around the idea of being political. The National Lottery Community Fund does not allow money to be used for political activity or lobbying. The council funded projects that I have discussed throughout this chapter focused on remedying the negative impacts of austerity and COVID-19. This made it difficult to use this money to challenge the structural causes of those problems. By relying on council funding, they were in a position were publicly challenging the council could risk the relationship with the council and the funding on offer. In discussion with Amy, we talk about the council, she stated

that she would be reluctant to "call out" the council publicly and would prefer to do it behind closed doors. This highlights how focusing on vulnerability and working with the council does limit the organisation and work to discipline them in terms of what they feel able to say and do.

Towards the end of my field work an issue that had been bubbling up throughout the early part of 2021 came to a head. KVDT had been on a rolling tenancy agreement with the commercial owners of the Kirkstall Retail Park. This was useful for KVDT, as their short-term finances meant that they were unable to commit to a long-term lease. However, this meant that they existed under the risk that their home, as they called it, could be taken away from them, which it was at the end of June 2020. This highlighted how community organisations were not exempt from the precarity that the market-based system created more broadly within society. A larger charity was able to offer the owners a higher rent and therefore KVDT were left in the position of needing to find a new home for their operations. This created a lot of stress and uncertainty within the organisation.

At a time when they were also planning and writing funding applications for the next stage of the COVID-19 mutual aid support a significant amount of time was spent on trying to find new premises. This was not an easy task as one of the reasons that KVDT came into existence was due to the lack of community orientated places. This meant that there was not an abundance of potential locations for them to move to. Once a location was found KVDT had to pack up Unit 11 and move everything across to the new site. With no budget in place to support this, it relied on volunteers helping to take down shelves, pack up all the stuff, and help transport it. KVDT tried to keep the programme going during this period and were successful for a while but the stress that this placed on their capacity to organise events, and with staff starting to feel burned out from the competing demands of the move and the programme, the decision was taken to suspend activity for a few weeks. The farm also suffered from precarity, although the lease for the farm was for five years. However, although that was only officially signed towards the end of my field work period, it was already in the minds of the KVDT leadership that there was no guarantee that the council would extend this, especially if a

commercial developer offered more money than KVDT could afford. Hence, there was a sense that they had to demonstrate the value that the farm added, in the words of Adam, a KVDT leader, make it "politically toxic not renew."

The farm illustrated the complexity of working with the council, funders, and businesses. Many of the meetings that I attended of the farm strategic and task groups, as well as board meetings, were taken up with discussing and trying to navigate the arduous processes that they had to go through to advance the project. One of the key issues that persisted for a few months was signing the lease with the council. KVDT recognised that the council was stretched but there was a long delay on getting it through. This had knock effects as other funding streams were reliant on this lease being signed, which meant that there was uncertainty as to whether they could hire a grower or undertake structural work for things like developing vegetable storage for the winter. The delays in signing the lease, and the uncertainty of who in the council was responsible, how they could get them to move the process on, created a lot of stress within the farm group.

This stress was compounded by the fact that for other elements of the farm work they also had to file applications for planning permission, for instance to build polytunnels, there was uncertainty over the boundary edge, which needed to be agreed with the council, impacting on growing space. To make this project work they had to work with both the council and private companies. Other issues came up during the period, such as the bridge to the farm needing to be reinforced, problems with water pipes and each required separate processes and decision-makers to be resolved. This highlighted the fragmented and bureaucratic nature of decision-making, a complex environment that KVDT had to navigate to develop the farm. The combination of ongoing crises, short-term funding, short term leases, and complex bureaucracy, embedded a precarity within the organisations and led to short term decision-making and prioritisation that made tackling more long-term problems more difficult. What the farm example highlights, is that KVDT had a vision, were providing community leadership, and attempting to self-organise in the community, these are important elements of being able to develop resilient communities (Walton et al., 2013; Magis, 2010). However, my research shows

that when pursuing ambitious projects whilst also having to adapt to succeed in a policy environment that makes creating community led change complex to achieve, developing resilience is hard work, without guaranteed success, and this in large part is due to structural barriers and hurdles that skilled community operators must be able to navigate.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored how the intersecting crises of austerity and COVID-19 have generated a range of negative social impacts that required tackling. Before looking at how they seek transformation in the following chapter, I have explored how they have worked within current structures focusing on adaptation and coping as key elements of their resilience strategies. In the first section I outlined how the policy environment of austerity and the extension of roll out and rollback neoliberalism created impacts at organisational and community levels. Added to this, the discourse of top-down resilience from the government was used to justify the withdrawal of the state. This discourse supported the rollback neoliberal approach and focused on getting communities and individuals to be responsible for dealing with social issues and delivering services (Hall and Lamont, 2013; Aiken et al., 2017). Within roll-out neoliberalism much state action is focused on creating markets in areas that they do not exist, for instance welfare provision, healthcare and much that is traditionally thought of as public sector (Harvey, 2005). The social impacts are felt at a community level through a reduction of service provision, increased poverty, deregulation of the labour market and an increase in vulnerability through precarity (Harvey, 2005). Furthermore, there was a feeling in KVDT that what they were tackling was a broader sense that the area had no heart, or that it was difficult to build community in the austerity environment. This was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic as this crisis intersected with the impacts of austerity to create a new social emergency. During this time, the organisation had to support the community to react to, cope with and attempt to adjust to the new reality of the COVID-19 emergency.

Despite a call for communities to fill the gaps created by the retreat of the state, communities needed state support to step into the gaps in provision and the state provided support to solve practical problems that austerity and COVID-19 created. Therefore, the first key strategy observed was to build resilience through acquiring community resources in terms of money and to develop community infrastructure. Across all three phases of the COVID-19 pandemic these resources were key elements that enabled KVDT to respond. Resources are a key component of community resilience but do not themselves create resilience (McCrea, 2014). As Amy said, without Unit 11 KVDT would not have been able to play the role of mutual aid partner. Without the Kirkstall Valley Farm they would not have been able to support social activities and the education programme, due to the nature of social distancing restrictions. The money to secure these spaces was not acquired to support an emergency, but it was able to be repurposed to do so. This demonstrated how building institutional capacity and non-commercialised spaces within the area were key to facilitating the emergency response.

The organisation worked in partnership with the state on a range of programmes. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when KVDT became the mutual aid partner. The council facilitated the locally led work and supported it financially but dispensed with a top-down approach and supported a more community driven and relational form of delivery (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020). This showed that during an emergency there could be gaps in roll out neoliberalism that those seeking bottom-up approaches could exploit. Whilst having many elements of service delivery and charitable style giver/receiver approaches the KVDT COVID-19 mutual aid work was impressive in its scale, its breadth, and its longevity. What was evident was a compassion, caring and various forms of universality. As the COVID-19 pandemic dragged on there were efforts at supporting the most vulnerable and building community, most notably through a programme of work for young people. Whilst not getting out of the giver/receiver dichotomy KVDT did try, where possible, to support people's wellbeing. In Leeds, the council model that developed was one of partnership with the community care hubs and this empowered the hubs to respond to the specific needs in their location (Gordon et al., 2022).

The response demonstrates that adapting to a shock and disturbance like COVID-19 can provide space to foster values outside of dominant neoliberal approaches. Whilst much of this activity was focused on providing people's necessities, the staff and volunteers prided themselves on going beyond what was stipulated in the contracts and doing all they could to do more than meet basic needs. Their approach was a form of universalism, they believed people when they said they were in need and built an atmosphere of care and social connection built on trust (Shabi, 2021).

The policy environment shaped strategies of community resilience as adaptation and created barriers that threatened to overwhelm the organisation and limit its ability to build community resilience. This could be seen in three ways. Firstly, the organisation had to continue to respond to the crises and negative social impacts generated by neoliberal approaches. This was seen through austerity, COVID-19 and continuing crisis as COVID-19 restrictions eased. Secondly, the form of governance meant the organisation existed in a marketized environment (Joseph, 2013). Thus, top-down approaches meant that they were vulnerable as they existed in an almost perpetual state of precarity and competed for resources in terms of money. Due to the governance approach this money was short term or project specific, ensuring that the long-term future of the organisation was not secure. Much of this money was used to deal with the symptoms of the problems rather than tackle the structural causes. Thirdly, the community spaces that they developed were not secure, for instance they lost the tenancy on their community hub and the farm contract was only for five years. Another aspect of this environment was that they must deal with bureaucracy and council processes, which is time consuming and uncertain, thus limiting their ability to focus on more transformative change. In this way, the political and economic context in which they operated created vulnerability, exacerbated crises, and threatened to diminish and deplete community resilience.

Chapter 5 – Community Resilience as transformation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on answering the second sub question, what where the key strategies developed to build community resilience as transformation? In its simplest sense, community resilience as transformation is a proactive process with communities taking ownership of the need to change through developing strategies to challenge the status-quo in response to crisis (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011; O'Brien, 2012). The aim of this research is to contribute towards community resilience theory by exploring the 'how' of community resilience in a community setting. To do that, I draw upon elements of resilience frameworks that are relevant to my ethnographic observations and the action research that I undertook. My research illustrates how community organisations can attempt a range of approaches to transform their local area and that their projects of transformation start from a position of being broadly defined against the status-quo. To contribute to the literature and theory of community resilience I apply thinking of Eric Olin Wright (2010; 2018). His work enabled me to demonstrate how strategies of community resilience as transformation can employ symbiotic and interstitial approaches to creating change at the community level. In this chapter, I build on the work of Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) to demonstrate how community resilience can be future orientated and pre-emptive in responding to the need to change in the face of intersecting crises.

There are three core components to community resilience as transformation in my research. The first is based on social empowerment, and I look at how this was developed in the organisation based on values of collaboration and solidarity (5.2). The idea was to create an environment in which people could develop social relationships and contribute towards developing ideas for change (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003; Moulaert et al., 2005). In this chapter, I demonstrate that social empowerment based on values is actively produced, gives a voice to people, and enables them to explore their agency, which are important dimensions of community resilience as transformation (Deverteuil and Golubchikov, 2016). Section 5.2 explores how within the organisation

KVDT were developing community resilience through increasing agency and self-organisation (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Walton et al., 2013). I argue that approaches to self-organisation in a community organisation can also be an interstitial strategy. This is evident in approaches to hierarchy, empowerment, and methods of organising (Pickerill, 2019). My participant observations, interviews, and the action research projects that I developed enable me to explore how processes of social empowerment are developed in the community setting. Through the work of Twigger-Ross et al., (2015), I connect the idea of social empowerment to community resilience as transformation. I show that developing participation and collaboration supports community resilience as transformation by dealing with community concerns, influencing the local agenda, and creating strategies based on these elements.

The second and third components of community resilience as transformation are based on Eric Olin Wright's (2010; 2018) conception of interstitial and symbiotic strategies for achieving change. This supports one of the ideas running through this research, that neoliberalism is an incomplete project and community led approaches to tackling crises in this environment can exploit the gaps and contradictions in how neoliberalism is applied (Deverteuil, 2015). By working interstitially, in the cracks or on the margins of this incomplete neoliberal project, community organisations can grow and exert their power and make changes that improve life in the here and now (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010). In this way, an interstitial approach has strong elements of creating autonomy within the community (Pickerill, 2019). Symbiotic approaches are when the interests of the powerful and those seeking change converge and they work together to solve practical problems (Olin Wright, 2010). In this chapter, I apply this to how KVDT, a community actor, were either empowered to or attempted to collaborate with local actors in the form of the local council and local businesses. Whilst Chapter 4 dealt with how they worked within current structures, which often involved collaboration with local powerful actors, the difference here is that KVDT were attempting to affect more fundamental change in their local area.

I connect their interstitial and symbiotic strategies to a community resilience lens. In section 5.3, this is shown through the development of community assets (Berkes and

Ross, 2013; Walton et al., 2013). Where community resilience supports this is through exploring how asset acquisition and development was a response to problems associated with neoliberal model of urban development, such as the dominance of market approaches. Transformation in this context was about seeking to develop spaces outside of the market and for community benefit (Gibson-Graham, 2006; 2008). I will highlight this through the example of the Kirkstall Valley Development Farm, which is a form of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). This section also focuses on the partnerships that KVDT attempted to develop with local actors to bring neglected buildings back into community control. There was also a strong interstitial focus in this work, and I use the example of the Kirkstall Valley Farm to demonstrate the relationship between interstitial and symbiotic approaches. I do so by demonstrating how acquiring an asset through a symbiotic approach can further interstitial approaches to community transformation. This interstitial project contributed towards community resilience through building a diverse and innovative economy (Berkes and Ross 2013).

In section 5.4, I look at efforts to engage and mobilise the community in neighbourhood activity, outside of KVDT controlled spaces. This involved engaging in political processes to increase agency within the community, alongside building networks with other local actors. This work was centred around efforts to develop active travel in the local area. Once again, I demonstrate links between symbiotic and interstitial approaches to creating change by exploring the political opportunity that was created through Leeds City Council declaring a climate emergency in 2019. I demonstrate how people used this to engage the council and how the declaration of the climate emergency provided a context in which people could come together to develop projects in the cracks and on the margins of the neoliberal system (Macgregor, 2021). This work was climate focused but also sought to tackle other problems that were discussed in Chapter 4, around social isolation, and the perceived neglect of the local area. An important contribution that my research makes to understandings of community resilience as transformation is through highlighting the links between social empowerment, interstitial, and symbiotic strategies for transformation.

5.1.1 The data and analysis used to inform the findings in this chapter

In this chapter, I combine my ethnographic data of observations and interviews with the data that I collected from my action research, which includes the workshops, the action group meetings, and data from the activities that we carried out. In section 5.2, I combine personal observations from meetings that I attended with quotes from interviews with KVDT leaders and volunteers. By doing so, I build up arguments about community resilience as transformation, using quotations that directly show the ideas and views of the people involved, with my own reflections based on attending meetings, such as the various farm group meetings that I observed. I use interview quotes, particularly in relation to the farm (5.3), from people that were leaders on the farm project, to give a sense of their ideas about how it functioned and the role that it could play in relation to alternative approaches to agriculture. I use these quotes and apply them to my community resilience framework to create arguments and conclusions, which was a dialogue that I undertook between observations, interviews, and the theory that I applied (Burawoy, 2003).

In section 5.4, I base my analysis and the findings on the action research strand of my fieldwork. Whilst this data is primarily diary reflections that I made at different stages, such as after events like guerilla gardening and Clean Air Day, I also use information that was captured from the workshop events, which is a combination of inputs from participants and my own reflections. I analyse the meeting notes that I created during The A65 Group meetings, which were shared with participants to ensure that they were accurate accounts of what was discussed. The workshops and meetings were based on a participatory approach, which involved developing practices, generating ideas for the projects, and working together on the complex task of creating change (Sufi et al., 2018; Orngreen and Levinsen, 2017).

5.2 Developing social empowerment within KVDT through practices and social relationships

One of the broader problems that was identified in Chapter 4 was that people in KVDT believed there was a lack of community in the area. As I argued, KVDT tackled this by creating an organisation that supported ways in which the community could come together through community events, as well as supporting people during the COVID-19 pandemic through emergency food distribution. Drawing on my participant observations and my action research with The A65 Sustainable Travel Group (The A65 Group), in this section I show how building a sense of community through collaboration was an important dynamic in the organisation. In this section, I argue that in the KVDT context, the emphasis internally was on increasing collaboration through meaningful activities and building a sense of community through social connection, autonomy, and social recognition (Olin Wright, 2018). This collaboration helped to generate different forms of solidarity that were fostered between the organisation, the volunteers, and amongst the volunteers themselves. Secondly, the processes that KVDT developed and that I developed through action research were important in generating practical ideas for action by empowering the community through involvement (Berkes and Ross, 2013). This was important in further enhancing the social connections, in the generation of ideas for transformation, and in providing a supportive environment of collective endeavour. In this section I explore how social relationships can be an important dynamic within community resilience as transformation.

5.2.1 Collaboration for social connection, developing autonomy, and social recognition

Since 2019, KVDT has involved over 350 people as volunteers from the communities around Kirkstall. Their volunteering scheme aimed to enable people to use their skills to support community development. In Unit 11 and the farm collaboration was important for making people feel valued and supported and various structures were put in place to aid collaboration within the workings of KVDT. For instance, the farm had a strategy group and operational group were volunteers and members could come together to

manage and carry out the workings of the farm. While the structures of the various aspects of the organisation felt fluid and continued to develop throughout the course of my research, as the organisation expanded and priorities changed, collaboration was an aspect that was important to the volunteers. When I attended the farm strategic meeting in which they were reviewing the governance structures, there was concern from some of the participants that the proposed changes took away from elements of collaboration on the farm. As Peter, a KVDT volunteer said during the meeting in reference to collaboration, "It's part of the reason that I'm involved." This comment gave a sense that it was not just the outcomes that people wanted to be part of delivering, they wanted to feel a sense of working with others in a shared endeavour. Peter's comment demonstrated how he wanted to feel that he was connecting with others and that he could contribute to the overall direction of the farm. This matters in developing an environment in which alternatives can develop, as building alternatives is both about the methods and the destination (Oosterlynck et al., 2013).

KVDT itself was not a flat structure, there was hierarchy that existed from the board, paid staff through to the volunteer network. The sense that it was a shared endeavour for those involved was a key component of the dynamic that existed. As Chloe, one of the volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic told me in her interview:

> "There should be no reason for, not that there would be, any reason of hierarchy or anything, you know what I mean, this should surely be the purest sense of being a team and acting as one."

This comment demonstrated the collaborative and non-hierarchical atmosphere that existed within the Unit 11 community hub amongst the volunteers. This chimes with many of the conversations that took place in the various farm groups that I attended and was highlighted by Peter's comment above. In the farm meetings people spoke of wanting to work together and feel empowered by being involved in their work with KVDT. This speaks to three essential elements that demonstrate why the fostering of social relationships in the process of building alternatives is important. Firstly, the approach and processes contrast sharply with the capitalist and neoliberal approach to work and structuring of society more broadly. The capitalist world is dominated by

alienating work and individualism, meaning that people are often disconnected from the work that they do and those that they work with (Graeber, 2018). Secondly, alternative approaches to structuring the organisation and the work of the organisation help to foster a sense that another way of doing things is possible. What the comment from Peter demonstrated was that this was important for motivating those people that chose to offer their time. Thirdly, as was alluded to in the comment by Chloe about the purest sense of team and acting as one, this was based around the link between the processes inside the organisation and the outcomes that people felt they were working towards in the community. There was a sense in discussions that if people wanted to create alternatives in the outside world, then alternative ways of functioning must be developed to realise that. In this sense, there is a link between alternative processes and alternative outcomes. In this way, people are co-operating both for their own and others' well-being, in a spirit of reciprocity, and this took the approach into one of fostering solidarity (Olin Wright, 2018).

Within the volunteer network there was further evidence of building solidarity, using the situation of COVID-19 to generate solidarity within the organisation and between the organisation and the volunteers. As discussed in Chapter 4, KVDT, like many organisations delivering COVID-19 mutual aid work, struggled to find ways to move out of the service provision role and into one of reciprocity with those that relied on food support. In the volunteer network there was evidence of using the situation of COVID-19 to generate internal solidarity inside the organisation. This was evident between the volunteers, and between the KVDT leaders and the volunteers, were a spirit of support and reciprocity was a key concern of the KVDT leaders. Like in many parts of the country, KVDT's volunteer network grew during COVID-19. More people wanted to support their community due to the nature of the pandemic forcing a shutting down of many aspects of society, therefore allowing them to use their free time to volunteer, as was shown by the example of Chloe,

> "I wanted to get involved because it's a time I was furloughed from a bar I was working at and I knew the bar would start opening when things were lifted, and it felt so far away, and I guess it was [as] there was still two months left [of

lockdown]. I just love being around people and being part of a team and I also selfishly love being busy, and I kind of go crazy when I'm not being busy."

It shows that an organisation like KVDT has many types of people, some that have political aims and others that come to it from enjoying, as Chloe said, being part of a team. As was discussed in Chapter 4, many of the volunteers were motivated by helping people and making the area a better place for vulnerable and marginalised people who were struggling. What this demonstrated was that KVDT played a role in fostering collaboration within the community by playing a facilitating role in the community self-organising, with inclusion and belonging as important impacts (Berks and Ross, 2013).

Another dimension of the volunteering was the relationship between the organisation and the volunteers. I have discussed some of the volunteer's motivations for being involved but the motivations of Amy, a KVDT leader, were interesting and further our understandings of collaboration in this context. An important dimension of the volunteering approach of KVDT was to provide people with skills to help them to get a job. I was often told by Amy that she did not want people to volunteer for years, she wanted to support them so that they could flourish beyond KVDT. In this way, KVDT were actively building community resilience, as an organisation providing a space to support marginalised and vulnerable people, with the aim that they could contribute to making the area a better place to live and improve their own circumstances. For Amy, the work of KVDT through the volunteer network was also about empowerment of those people that got involved. During my interview with her she tells me about one volunteer who came to KVDT to escape a difficult homelife. Amy tells me that this person was low on confidence and self-esteem. Volunteering at KVDT enabled her to feel useful and develop friendships with other volunteers. It was with delight that Amy told me that she was flourishing within the organisation. In her interview Amy showed her attitude to supporting volunteers,

> "You've just got to build relationships with the ones who want to stay and want to be part of it. There's nothing worse than people who are volunteering and feeling like they are names and faceless and just, just there for being a dog's body. That's not OK."

Thus, for Amy the work with volunteers was about giving voice, supporting education, and training, and using the institutional capacity of KVDT to develop people's skills. KVDT saw their role as not just making use of volunteers but supporting them to gain skills, experience, and to help them to use these to move on from the organisation and get jobs. This was a two-way relationship, KVDT benefited from people's input and the volunteer process contributed towards enabling people to thrive outside of KVDT. In this way, there are strong elements of developing solidarity within KVDT internally, even if the COVID-19 response struggled to develop this more broadly. This speaks to important elements of developing alternative processes from Olin Wright's framework. It supports social connection and social recognition between the KVDT volunteers and KVDT leaders.

Another aspect of solidarity inside the organisation was between the volunteers themselves. This aspect of solidarity speaks to the ideas of cooperation between people for mutual benefit, which is integral to solidarity (Olin Wright, 2010; 2018). This chimes with the community aspect of collaboration that Peter talked about in the farm group, but it goes further than a community of people working on a range of tasks to improve the community, it was about the importance of cooperation and mutual support to improve wellbeing amongst the participants, and that takes it into a form of solidarity. The following diary entry supports this idea.

> I arrived one Tuesday just to see if there was anything that needed doing. There was an impromptu birthday celebration in the kitchen for a volunteer. I get handed a plate with homemade chilli and rice, there are dips, salads, bucks' fizz, and a cake. All the volunteers are tucking in. Over lunch, we chat about parenting difficulties during lockdown, about how COVID-19 and lockdown has affected us personally. People are open, sharing, they are seemingly friends primarily. They are people from the area, and they rely on each other for support and practical help. This aspect matters to them, they are creating an internal community as well as volunteering to support the wider community. Unit 11 and farm are more defined by the relationships of the people within them and how the personalities of the people are embodied in how the place is run. It feels like a second home for the volunteers, and they are all clearly close.

Creating an environment in which trusting and respectful relationships can develop is a key component of community resilience (Walton et al., 2013). In KVDT, this way of thinking about community was based on shared interests, developing bonds, and outside of a market orientated conception of organisation (Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2005). In a community resilience framing, drawing together people can create social cohesion through engagement and participation (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011). In terms of people that benefitted from the work of KVDT, I set out in Chapter 4 how they aimed to tackle the negative social impacts generated by the intersecting crises of austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic, such as increased poverty for individuals, precarity due to uncertain work, food insecurity, and the social isolation that was felt at the community level during the COVID-19 crisis (McDoland and Sandor, 2021; Hwang et al., 2020). Internal collaboration supported those aims in several ways. As the examples used in this section demonstrate, volunteering enabled people to develop skills and to be part of a community in which belonging and fulfilment of need were met through co-operation (Forjaz et al., 2011).

5.2.2 Collaboration to generate practical ideas for transformation

Within the organisation, KVDT built an agenda for transformation in their local area through developing new practices (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015). Analysing their approaches can further understandings of community resilience as transformation thinking as deliberate processes are developed to create pathways for change (Skerratt, 2013). In this section, I focus on how collaboration was a core element to priority setting, planning, and strategy development. This collaborative approach was important, and I demonstrate how it became a vital component of developing The A65 Group and the Kirkstall Craftivist project. Having shown how the process of developing new practices based on collaboration and co-operation mattered for internal organisation, I now want to explore its contribution towards external strategies and tactics (Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2005). This links to the development interstitial and symbiotic strategies (see 5.3 for more), as well as linking to community resilience. Social empowerment is a key component of community resilience as transformation, as using ideas, knowledge, and capacities that exist in the community can aid the development

of community initiatives that build responses to a range of issues based on the concerns and priorities that matter to the community (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015).

I have already outlined the participatory methodology that I used to develop my action research in Chapter 3, showing how framing the problems and deciding on priority areas were key elements. Therefore, in this chapter I draw out how collaboration was important for the development of The A65 Group and deciding upon the types of actions that were taken. As discussed in Chapter 3, collaborating on the Terms of Reference, vision, strategy, and creating activity were important for increasing participation and for fostering social relationships amongst The A65 Group. This was because using the skills, experiences, and ideas of people set the direction of the group and informed the areas of focus. Both The A65 Group and the Kirkstall Craftivists were informal networks based on an emerging idea of the problems the groups wanted to tackle, and what a better place to live would look like. This extract from my observation diary explored this.

> To foster collaboration in the group, at the third meeting, two members presented their areas of interest. Jackie presented her street level activism and Valerie presented her masters research on e-bikes. Both presentations were used to generate activities around the group carrying out street level work, in the form of guerrilla gardening and to develop an e-bike scheme. The reason for the latter was that, in the workshops, the gradient of the valley had been raised as a barrier to active travel. Following the presentations, the group decided collectively and through consensus that we should focus activity based on these two areas.

This extract highlights how collaboration was a process of people coming together to agree on shared priorities (Tiratelli et al., 2021). It demonstrates that whilst the overall focus of the project was decided, following a workshop with the broader community, this was not the end point for the process to create pathways for change (Skerratt, 2013). In line with Twigger-Ross et al., (2015) using collaboration to develop community resilience was achieved through building on people's areas of interest, their knowledge, and their skills.

In the Kirkstall Craftivists, collaboration was also a central element. As discussed in Chapter 3, this project was planned by a small core team who set the broad parameters

and applied for the funding. However, once the group was established, a key component was collaboration. This was done in the sense of deciding on areas to focus action and the types of action that would be undertaken. For instance, creating "welcoming cards" for refugees, knitting activities, making benches in support of a local campaign, sourcing materials to make the activity, working together on the activities, and deciding what to do with the actions. Thus, both groups demonstrated how collaboration was developed to empower people, further their involvement, and generate practical ideas to tackle problems. As Ayob et al., (2016) argue, this form of collaboration was about fostering new types of social relationship, in this case in a community setting, which aims to generate innovative ideas, focused on solutions that have a positive communal benefit.

Initially, the Craftivist group was set up to focus on local and place-based climate orientated sustainability projects. Once the group was established and functioning it was self-managed based on collaboration. As the example of welcoming cards for refugees shows, people in the group broadened out the remit to also be about developing action on what they saw as the most pertinent issues in that moment. The fact that the group decided on acting in other areas, such as supporting refugees and local activists who were trying to get benches returned to a local shopping centre, demonstrated how for people in the area, climate action was seen as part of a broader effort to increase connections locally and support other important issues. When thinking about developing activities that include social empowerment, this example demonstrates that the outcomes may differ from the initial intentions of those organising the groups. This links social empowerment and community resilience as transformation through highlighting how change is non-linear, and how what is important is a mix of a long-term vision and a focus on activities that develop community participation (Burch et al., 2014; Twigger-Ross et al., 2015).

In The A65 Group, collaboration was important for generating ideas and creating an environment that could support people through the difficulties of creating change. For instance, Jackie was interested in street level activity, and she wanted to have temporary road closures for a street party. Her broader aim was to reduce traffic in her

neighbourhood, and she wanted to create a low traffic neighbourhood. Her efforts centred around building community on her street and using political engagement to achieve changes. Another group member, Rachel, wanted to close a road near where she lived, as it served primarily as a "rat run." Both people contacted the council to push for the changes. Initially, group members shared ideas on how to approach neighbours and councillors about the proposed changes. When the two group members were having difficulty in getting the changes, the group was there to provide support, to help keep them motivated, and to be a place where they could share their frustrations and feelings as the processes unfolded. Thus, fostering social relationships, a supportive environment, and collaborative approaches were important dimensions of community resilience as transformation. This was through generating practical ideas, involvement, and social connection, which could then support developing activities based on people's concerns and priorities (Norman, 2012; Berkes and Ross, 2013; Norman, 2012; Olin Wright, 2018).

In this section, I argued that in the KVDT context the emphasis internally is on increasing collaboration through meaningful activities and building a sense of community through social connection and social recognition (Olin Wright, 2018). This could be seen within the volunteer network, where collaboration was an important motivation for people that gave their time. Through this collaboration different forms of solidarity were fostered between the organisation, the volunteers, and amongst the volunteers themselves. Fostering solidarity was a key component of developing social empowerment as it enabled people to play an active role in how the group functioned and generated reciprocal benefit. The second part of this section focused on how collaboration was an important dimension of generating practical ideas for action by empowering the community through involvement (Berkes and Ross, 2013). This further enhanced social connections, helped to generate ideas for transformation, and produced a supportive environment of collective endeavour. Social empowerment and efforts to expand agency underpinned the wider programme, which was important in attempting to generate community resilience as transformation. I will now discuss this further, exploring strategies of transformation through community asset building and community activism.

5.3 Generating community resilience as transformation through community asset building

In this section, I discuss two different examples of community asset building that are relevant to thinking about community resilience as transformation. Firstly, I discuss KVDT's attempts to acquire former mills to create a sustainability centre, a permanent base, and develop social housing. I explore how the strategies employed to do this required symbiotic engagements with the council and local businesses. The second project that I discuss is the Kirkstall Valley Farm. This project demonstrates how, once they have advanced projects symbiotically, they can develop interstitial projects in the community. The KVDT strategy sets out their plans for developing community assets,

> "By 2030, we will have established a portfolio of community resources and assets to promote community-led sustainability in the Valley. We are committed to sustainability in its many forms; protecting the environment, promoting social equality and also allowing people to thrive."

The projects to renovate old mills alongside this ambition demonstrated that they were attempting to build community assets with the purpose of developing shared spaces outside of the commodified, privatised and market driven paradigm of contemporary capitalism, spaces in which needs could be met and community autonomy could be built (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2015). The statement also shows that, like many communities, "They wanted to work together to bring about the social, economic and environmental futures collectively envisioned" (Derickson, 2016, p. 162). Generating community resilience through community asset building was a process that could support sustainability and environmental goals, as well as areas such as social equality. This highlights that community resilience, when community led, can be broad based and tackle many of the issues that communities face.

5.3.1 KVDT's symbiotic engagements to acquire community assets

As a former industrial area, there are many places in the Kirkstall Valley that are former industrial mills. With the decline of the industries that used these mills, many of sites have been left to fall into disrepair. This is thought of as negligent by many people in

KVDT. This negligence is perceived to be because of the desire by the council to sell the land for maximum profit, with private developments for housing or office space being seen as the most likely purchasers. This links to the problems that were identified in Chapter 4, namely that within urban development pro-growth economics and a desire to strengthen and further market practices through neoliberalism prevents communities taking ownership of their local area, and can lead to neglect (Chatterton, 2019). The following quote from Jacob, a KVDT leader, illustrates where many in KVDT lay the blame for this situation,

> "[It is] Entirely the fault of the council officers. The mill has a negative value, and the community is saddled with the incompetence of the council development department."

It is the dominance of the market and market thinking that has created this problem and created a barrier to the community taking transformative action within their area. This is an important dimension of my critical conception of community resilience, and one I shall explore further in chapter 6. It highlights the structural constraints to creating change and building alternatives for organisations seeking to work within, against and beyond the current system.

Developing community assets was a key part of KVDT's strategy for two reasons. Firstly, it would give KVDT a permanent home, which as discussed in Chapter 4, plays a role in giving the organisation an identity from which a profile can be built, which is a vital foundation of resilience (Lerch, 2015). Secondly, in line with Bresnihan and Byrne's (2015) analysis, claiming space for community use and ensuring it remains outside of the market led approaches of contemporary neoliberalism can be a key part of building alternatives. KVDT's efforts to realise the projects sheds light on the symbiotic approaches to transformation that they undertook to develop community assets. The following extract from my observation diary, taken during a KVDT board meeting, highlights this.

> The discussion moved on to the KVDT presence within the valley and their desire to find a permanent home at Abbey Mills. This is a long-term plan to develop community housing and a headquarters for KVDT. There are two interesting things happening here. It makes their current home at Unit 11 feel like a

temporary location or a steppingstone. There is good reason for this, as they are at the mercy of landlords and cannot develop it, so it feels precarious to the board. However, they are running into problems in acquiring the new sites due to a funding short fall and demands of the council around an access road. There was quite a lot of annoyance with this situation, and dismay and anger at the council who are thought of as having an obligation to support a development that is for the community and sustainable. There was a sense within the board that the council almost owe the area due to what the board perceive as them having done a terrible job of managing buildings in the area. There are quite a lot of disused mills that have fallen into disrepair, and KVDT see this is as mismanagement by the council.

To advance this project KVDT combined an approach that sought to empower the community and then work with the council to reach agreement on the development. To do this, KVDT issued shares so that residents could buy a share within the organisation and the money generated would be used for the project. KVDT also got grant funding from a partner organisation. However, as was discussed at the board meeting, this money was not enough to buy the land outright at market value and carry out the work required to transform the site. Therefore, KVDT entered discussions with the council to attempt to reach an agreement that would work within these constraints. What can be seen in the board discussions was that KVDT were appealing to the council to work symbiotically with the community, based on a commitment to regenerating the area and supporting community development, rather than regeneration based on market principles. It was an attempt to forge a partnership with the council based on principles that run counter to privatisation, commodification and marketisation. Added to this, it was an appeal to the council to pursue alternative priorities, in this case community benefit.

Another process underway was to develop St Anne's Mill with a sustainability centre. To progress this project KVDT were in discussion with a locally based major corporate partner to work together to develop the project. This was a long-term process and there were uncertainties about the corporate partners willingness to embark on this project, due to the impact of COVID-19 on the finances of the business, and uncertainty as to what the ambitions of the owners of the corporation were within the Valley. KVDT board members committed a lot of time to this project and entered numerous rounds of

discussion with the corporate partner. Within this, KVDT realised that they were relying on an appeal to the partner to commit to regeneration and transformation, and that this was outside of direct corporate interests.

Both projects shed light on the limits and difficulties of attempting to build community assets through symbiotic approaches. It demonstrated a limit to the power of community organisations vis-a-vis the council and private companies, in this instance when the outcome was to create community projects that would take assets out of the market to be developed for community benefit. The ongoing struggles that KVDT had dealing with the council and private companies also demonstrated the opaqueness of decision-making and a lack of a framework for decision-making to support community benefit. I will explore this further in Chapter 6, by looking at the relationship between top-down governance and community led efforts to create place based changed. In this section, I will now demonstrate how once an asset is acquired symbiotically, it can be developed to generate interstitial change.

5.3.2 Interstitial strategies to develop community assets - the Kirkstall Valley Farm

Whilst during my research KVDT were not successful in acquiring permanent sites, a community asset that they leased from the council was in operation. The Kirkstall Valley Farm demonstrated the link between symbiotic and interstitial approaches. It does so, in the sense that having got agreement from the council to develop the land as a form of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), KVDT could then develop the community asset in an interstitial way. CSA has grown in popularity since around the 1980's. The aims are to produce food locally, connect consumers to the growing process, connect consumers to the farmers that grow their food, reduce risk for farmers, and increase ecological sustainability within food production (Goland, 2002; Feagan and Henderson, 2009).

Having outlined in section 5.1 how collaboration was an essential element of the functioning of KVDT, and the farm within that, I now outline how the farm contributed to community resilience as transformation. The outcomes that this project worked towards were greater autonomy for the community, developing a more sustainable alternative

food system outside of the market, bringing space back into the public domain, and building a sense of community. The project also illustrated the messy nature of building alternatives, as it had to balance competing demands between wildlife, agriculture, and community priorities. The farm demonstrated how an approach of collective property, social production, and social organisation could build alternatives beyond capitalism in the here and now (Chatterton and Pusey, 2020). This can help go beyond the dominant logic of individualism, alienation, greed, and self-interest that defines much of the current status-quo (Olin Wright, 2010).

The Kirkstall Valley Farm demonstrated how community assets could show the possibilities that exist to create local transformation (Gibson-Graham, 2006). The Kirkstall Valley Farm was part of an interstitial strategy, as it was being built in the gaps of neoliberalism to develop a social economy "in which voluntary associations in civil society directly organize various aspects of economic activity" (Olin Wright, 2010, p. 140). I demonstrate how the benefits of this approach were social and focused on helping the community (Bergman et al., 2010). Whilst working within current structures enabled this project, this project was based around an interstitial strategy of change. It demonstrated how KVDT aimed to build spaces which "counter the processes of enclosure and increasingly disentangle our lives from the market and the state" (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014, p. 101). When speaking to Adam, a KVDT leader, I put it to him that KVDT were trying to build a local level alternative within urban agriculture that could display how things could be different. His response was interesting,

> "That's exactly it. The food system going forward has to be community led. That's how I see it. Because of the labour intensity we need to move away from a system where you're producing food commercially."

Adam was linking the approach of Kirkstall Valley Farm to CSA approaches more generally, by promoting it as an alternative to the capitalistic form of organisation within industrial agriculture. In this way, it was part of the broader tradition of CSA, as it functioned "in contrast to market structures, economies of scale, and short-term profit maximization which tends to undermine environmental integrity" (Feagan and Henderson, 2009, p. 204). In Adam's comments he was clearly thinking about the future, when talking about "the food system going forward" and "we need to move away

from". This shows the links between this interstitial strategy and community resilience, as community resilience as transformation has an eye on potential future crises and attempts to counteract them through developing alternatives in the present (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013).

The benefits of CSA are seen in terms of the relationship between growers and consumers (Goland, 2002). In the KVDT example, the growers were not professional farmers looking at alternative ways of managing a private farm. Instead, it was a community endeavour based on voluntary association. Thus, as a CSA it represented the development of an economic activity outside of the dominant market led approach and contributed to social well-being and environmental regeneration (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Adam acknowledged that within the current agriculture, which is dominated by market-based and profit driven principles, this model would not be promoted, due to approaches to labour that meant it was not scalable,

> "It doesn't scale, it's a really labour intensive, you can't mechanise it much, it's all got to be done by hand."

Thus, this project stands in opposition to the dominant neoliberal system that sees competition as the key mechanism for developing new products, production methods, and organisational forms (Harvey, 2005). It also stands in contrast to the idea that social life should be built upon pro-growth economics (Chatterton, 2019). This is an important dimension of building alternatives, as it can help strengthen community by pushing back against the presence of the market and market thinking (Olin Wright, 2010). As the comments from Adam shows, the aim was to showcase an alternative model rather than scalability. In this way, it was important for community resilience in the sense that it highlighted strategic thinking, as the aim was to transform their community whilst demonstrating the viability of alternative forms and institutions (Walton et al., 2013; Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013).

The farm's very existence meant that a large tract of land was run for community benefit and therefore not commodified or used to generate profits that leave the local area. It also tackled the issues, as Adam put it, that people are disconnected from how their food is produced, and that large scale industrial farming is part of the unsustainable

practices that drive the climate emergency (Springmann et al., 2018). More than that, it was another aspect of building an alternative to a fast-paced urban lifestyle within cities, disconnected from the natural world (Chatterton, 2019). This was by creating low-tech seasonal food production that relied on people as the major input.

Developing the farm in an inner-city area was important for showcasing an alternative model of food production. The farm was cultivated on a forty-acre area of land tucked behind a major arterial road that runs through Kirkstall. In their thinking, KVDT were attempting to demonstrate that supporting the future populations will require new areas to be opened-up to farming. In this way, the farm was an attempt to create a local model that highlighted how a new food system could be built on unusual or in unexpected places. This was primarily by demonstrating how new, and in some ways unexpected areas of land, could be given over to farming. Most importantly, it aimed to show how farming could be conducted in a way that was outside of the profit driven environment. This style of CSA was a form of production that was more balanced with the environment in which the food was produced. As Adam says,

"A lot of it is done over time and in balance with the ecosystem."

Typically, there is a stronger focus within CSA's on supporting the broader ecological environment (Goland, 2002). Part of this balance, in the Kirkstall Valley Farm, was that the farm contributed to ecological sustainability due to less reliance on chemicals. Another dimension was that the KVDT farm was producing seasonal vegetables that were for residents, a central component of the CSA approach (Lang, 2010). Therefore, it was contributing to sustainability through the reduction of food miles, less use of agrochemicals, and the commitment to supporting ecology through land management (Saltmarsh et al. 2011). Using an interstitial approach, the Kirkstall Valley Farm was a grassroots project that was a response to unsustainable mainstream agriculture and envisaged more sustainable approaches to the production and consumption of food (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016). Whether talking about producing food locally, creating a more community led model, or balancing food production and environmental concerns, it was clear that the alternative food system that Adam envisaged, that the farm

represented, was about moving away from the current dominant commercial farming approach.

Resilience is about a balance of a "healthy environment with a vibrant economy and social justice" (Cahill, 2010, p. 262). The farm played a role in this, as it had to generate revenue to support its costs, revenue that remained within the area, which contributed towards creating a local economy. As well as providing locally produced seasonal vegetables to people the KVDT CSA was a key part of building community resilience. As Adam said,

> "they're much more productive in terms of the volume of food that you can produce per acre but they're also productive beyond that in terms of community cohesion, because it's so labour intensive it becomes a shared endeavour."

The KVDT CSA model was strong on the community dimension. As is common across CSA's, people in the KVDT model did not buy food per se but became a member of the farm through buying shares, with an upfront fee and set price, which entitled them to a share of the produce that was grown (Lang, 2010; Schnell, 2013). Developing a CSA in an urban environment means that it is part of a broader movement of urban agricultural food cultivation that includes community gardens, urban farms, and guerrilla gardening, amongst others (see Tornaghi, 2014). Urban agriculture movements aim to experiment through generating new collaborative forms of work that contribute towards meeting social need and developing community empowerment (Cumbers et al., 2018). As I have noted, volunteering was a strong component of the KVDT CSA model, with strategic and planning groups as core elements of the structure, as well as the work being volunteer led.

During the period of my research, the farm was in its initial stages of development but towards the end of my research the first "veg boxes" began to be delivered to people in the local community. Another interesting contribution to the community dimension was that KVDT were keen to ensure that the benefits of the farm produce could be enjoyed by people with lower incomes. Thus, as part of the share offering people could sign up for a "solidarity share." This meant that they paid a small amount extra, and this money was used to subsidise vegetables for other families that may not have been able to

afford the cost of a share in the farm. The farm produce was also used within the COVID-19 food response to supplement packages for people in the area. A final dimension that sought to strengthen the role of community within the farm was that shareholders automatically became members of KVDT and had voting rights over decisions on the farm. Thus, the farm contributed to community resilience as transformation through attempting to reduce vulnerability, foster solidarity, create a strong local institution, and develop networks of people that acted for community benefit (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011; Twigger-Ross et al., 2014).

Another aspect of sustainability within the farm was that it represented an attempt to preserve wildlife and biodiversity. The Kirkstall Valley farm corresponds to what Arbell et al. (2020) describe as the messy nature of community challenges to market logics through alternative forms. This was due to the process of developing the farm, its structures, the co-production elements, as well as the external ambition of the farm. As Adam said,

> "You have to balance the wildlife, we have to balance the food production, we have to balance the community all together because that's what you're trying to prove to people it's possible to do. Because that's the route to future sustainability."

It was clear in the discussions that took place within the farm group that balancing the three priorities of community, wildlife, and food was a constant task. As such, the different areas often fell into tension within one another. As Adam said,

> "At the end of the day the wildlife aim is to preserve wildlife at all costs and every time you plant crop, you're destroying habitat. Every time you cut something down, you're destroying habitat. That's a constant battle about what's acceptable and what's not, and what you're going to do about it. Community is the same, they want space as well."

The tensions were in part due to the collaborative nature of the groups that managed the farm. It sat within the broader structures of KVDT, which had a community development focus, but many of the people involved in the farm planning and strategic groups were motivated by different ecological, agricultural, and wildlife concerns.

As well as offering opportunities for people to come together and volunteer, the farm supported the broader community programme through hosting 'Healthy Holidays' and 'After School Club'. This was one way in which Adam saw the farm playing a broader role in KVDT,

> "I think it's part of the whole [the farm] because it dramatically increases our footprint. So, if we're trying to increase community spaces the farm instantly brings a massive, extra amount of pure space."

The 'Healthy Holidays' programme enabled children to visit the farm, eat nutritious meals, they took recipes based on the farm produce home with them, and they learnt about growing food. The Kirkstall Valley is a densely populated area, with many people living in terraced and back-to-back housing. As has been noted, the busy roads make much of the area uninviting for residents, as the space is dominated by cars. During the COVID-19 pandemic KVDT were concerned about social isolation and people's mental health following lockdown. By developing the farm space as a community asset KVDT could support community resilience by creating a community space in which people and families could come together.

What the farm highlights, is that self-organisation was an important aspect of this interstitial project, but that this it was difficult thing to navigate and balance between generating an alternative farming model, supporting wildlife, and supporting the community. The farm was a resource that could enhance the capacity to generate community resilience, which is an important dimension of resilience (McCrea et al., 2014). It also showed that community resilience relied on developing community resources through local networks of volunteers coming together in a strong institution (Twigger-Ross et al., 2011). This example adds to thinking about how resilience relies on creating, developing, and engaging resources (Magis, 2010). Through combining a symbiotic approach to securing the farm with an interstitial approach to how it was developed, what my research illustrates is that how community resources are created and managed is complex and requires skill, vision, and compromise.

5.3.3 Connecting the strands of strategies to develop community assets

What KVDT hoped to achieve by developing community assets was a process of collective opening of space in which people could take control (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2015). The aim was to contribute towards urban transformation as an "escape from the state-capitalist enclosure of the city and the creation of alternative social practices" (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2015, p. 38). The mills provide an example of how KVDT approached working symbiotically. The first stage was to build collaboration within the community to gain support for acquiring the mills and formulating a community plan for what do with them one they were under community control. Following this, KVDT then engaged with more powerful stakeholders to attempt to redevelop assets in ways that could contribute towards community resilience. Their ideas centred on creating social housing, a permanent base for the community organisation, and a sustainability centre. What the examples of the mills demonstrated is the problems of working symbiotically in a neoliberal environment that is dominated by market led solutions and the power of private capital (Harvey, 2005; Arbell et al., 2020).

The projects identified point towards the messy nature of working in this fashion, as well as the potential limitations of symbiotic engagement. It also highlights an important element of community resilience as transformation that builds on Deverteuil et al., (2021) idea of the co-constituted nature of resilience. Building community assets aims at making the community stronger, more autonomous, and better able to deal with current and future crises. However, even if KVDT were able to mobilise the community in support, their ability to create this form of community resilience was dependent on more powerful actors acting outside of neoliberal thinking and in support of community benefit. Thus, it highlights the interaction of top-down governance and community resilience for transformation, with much of the power in the former. I will return to this in Chapter 6, where I look at community power in the neoliberal system and what this says about the role of community in tackling the climate emergency.

Viewing CSAs as part of a community resilience agenda, and the example of the Kirkstall Valley Community Farm, can add to community resilience theory. The

development of the CSA was a response to the climate emergency and the desire to transform farming away from unsustainable practices. KVDT also wanted to transform urban land towards more sustainable and ecologically friendly uses, and to do so in a collaborative manner that built community ownership. This project highlighted the links between symbiotic and interstitial strategies and how the latter can develop out of the former. It also showed that once interstitial projects were developed, success still required the support of the council. Therefore, despite being an interstitial project, it was never really divorced from the system that it was attempting to transform. Thus, despite, in a Twigger-Ross et al., (2015) sense, wanting to take ownership of the need to change, the neoliberal system still put in place limits on building autonomy and community resilience as transformation.

5.4 Community activism to develop active travel

The projects that I focus on in this section outline community resilience as transformation based upon the action research elements of my study, The A65 Group and the Kirkstall Craftivists project. Through The A65 Group the aim was to take local level action that contributed towards challenging the dominance of cars within communities. It was based on the need to reimagine urban space for people, where alternatives to cars as the dominant form of transport could exist (Chatterton, 2019). The second action research project was the Kirkstall Craftivists project, which was part of creating activities that provided opportunities for people to come together after the COVID-19 pandemic. As discussed in Chapter 3, craftivism is a form of activism that uses craft-based activities to allow people to express themselves, voice opinions and challenge the status-quo (Freeman, 2010). It is a gentle form of activism intended to appeal to people that do not necessarily see themselves as activists, or are comfortable in traditional activist settings (Corbett, 2017).

Building community resilience as transformation through tackling problems associated with transport, most notably the dominance of cars in communities and cities, is a key component of finding solutions to the climate emergency, as transport emissions are a significant percentage of domestic emissions in the UK (CCC, 2018). The domination of

the car in cities is responsible for several modern ills, for instance roads deaths, pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and streets given over to cars ahead of the people that live there (Chatterton, 2019). Moves towards reducing carbon in transport primarily focus on low-carbon technologies and behaviour change through individual choice (Marsden et al., 2014). What is required is fast and radical change across transport, but the transport sector is characterised by inertia, whether in planning policy, infrastructure, or technology (Oldbury et al., 2022). It is against this background that the community activism element of my research took place.

The approaches of The A65 Group and Kirkstall Craftivists were experimental, the politics of the groups were not fully formed at the outset, but developed through activities (Pickerill, 2021). Whilst the groups experimented with types of actions and areas of focus, one of the important aspects was that the groups focused on projects and approaches that were practical and achievable, which Berkes and Ross (2013) argue is an important dynamic in developing effective resilience strategies. The ethos in the groups was based on showing that people could play a role in tackling the climate emergency by coming together to improve the quality of life in the local area, rather than simply being about reducing carbon. Thus, the groups wanted to generate change in the everyday (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010). Adapting ideas that already existed, using knowledge of the local area, and building on the experience of group members were key to the projects that were developed (Farmer et al., 2018). This work contributed towards community resilience as transformation through a focus on improving the quality of the local environment, increasing community attachment, and through expanding agency. A key part of this process was to engage people to show that the community in which they live could be different if people acted together. Through engaging in the political process people attempted to exert influence on their local area. The engagements that I outline ranged from city-wide political processes to neighbourhood and street level changes. I show how groups linked local issues, such as transport and active travel, to the climate agenda. The aim was to contribute towards tackling the climate emergency alongside other issues that people faced.

5.4.1 Participating in political processes for climate action

Participating in politics is an important aspect of creating alternative futures and developing community resilience (Magis, 2010; McCrea, 2014). In this section, I explore community resilience through engaging in politics and how, in line with Brown and Westaway (2011), people became active in the development of their local area through engaging with political processes to push for change. In Olin Wright's framework (2010; 2018), having a say over the decisions which affect you is an important dimension of achieving change through expanding democracy. I begin with the Leeds City Council declaration of a climate emergency and the participatory processes that they developed in the form of the 'Big Conversation'. I demonstrate how this decision and process created a political context in which those seeking transformation towards dealing with the climate emergency could operate. In my research setting, this led to interstitial projects that aligned with some of the ideas from earlier sections around building collaboration, attempts to assert agency by building autonomy, and build networks within the community and more broadly. There was a symbiotic element in approaches to local activism through attempts to influence the council. The aim was to push for stronger action to deal with the climate emergency by focusing on creating stronger and more vibrant communities. Where this symbiotic engagement differs from what was evident in community asset building, was that it was attaching to a council led process for tackling the climate emergency. I demonstrate that interstitial and symbiotic approaches reinforced each other and helped to shape one another.

In Leeds, the Leeds City Council (LCC) declared a climate emergency in 2019, aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030. The Leeds City Council Climate Emergency declaration called for the active participation of communities and people to make Leeds a better place to live (Leeds Climate Commission, 2019). In 2019, the council also convened a Leeds Citizen Jury to recommend priorities for carbon reduction, and transport was their number one priority. They recommended that extensive positive action be taken to make the use of private cars a last resort (Bryant, 2019). The importance of transport within the move to net zero was a significant reason it became a focus area in the

community workshop that I ran. The mission of The A65 Group aligned closely with the aims of the council. The group defined theirs aims as follows,

> "Through the A65 Sustainable Travel Group, the people of the Kirkstall Valley will be engaged so that we can imagine, collaborate, design, and carry out activities aimed at achieving an increase in active travel - walking, cycling, scooting and public buses. This group also aims to lobby for a reduction of car usage on the A65 and its feeder roads. This will support community transformation towards net zero by 2030 and further social and climate justice within the valley."

This statement highlights the three important components of community resilience as transformation that my research identifies. Firstly, it highlights social empowerment through engagement, collaboration and developing activity. Secondly, this activity would be interstitial through carrying out activities in their local area. Thirdly, the group looked to engage with the council, a form of symbiotic strategy. Finally, while the aim was to make changes in the here and now to improve the local area, it highlighted how this was part of playing a role in tackling the climate emergency. Therefore, it furthered community resilience through network building, community mobilisation, taking part in politics, and attempting to take ownership of making changes in a future orientated approach (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015, McCrea, 2014, Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013).

During the period of my research, Leeds City Council released a draft transport strategy and undertook a consultation process with individuals and community groups. This can be seen as a more participatory and relational approach to problem solving (Cottam, 2018). The council recognised that there was a gap between the climate change targets and what the strategy would achieve. The council were reaching out to community groups to push for further ambition and to highlight gaps in the current strategy. The Leeds City Council vision for transport has an impressive ambition of making Leeds a city where you don't need a car (Connecting Leeds, 2021). A key aim of the project to engage the council on the consultation process was to empower the community to create a community led response. A representative of the council came to an online workshop, with around twenty KVDT supporters, to talk through the different components of the strategy. Following a talk from the council, I ran a workshop to get people's ideas on what the strategy should address. Following this, a response was

drafted collaboratively. This process highlights how we undertook a symbiotic approach with the council but also used it to support the broader aims of KVDT to empower the local community to engage in political processes. This was about raising the voice of people and was underpinned by the values of democracy, in terms of Olin Wright's (2018) conception of people having a say over decisions that affect them.

Whilst this was a city-wide process, when working with other members of The A65 Group to frame the workshop, it was agreed that it was important to get the views and ideas of people across the Kirkstall Valley, to ensure that the area had a strong voice, and the ideas reflected changes that people wanted to see in their locality. This meant that the aim was to create a response informed by people's experiences locally. An important dimension of this was about how a city-wide process must take account of how life could be improved in local areas. This is evident within the following extract from the response.

> "We are especially excited about the ambitions to make Leeds a city where you don't need a car and the focus on "creating healthier streets, spaces and communities." These have the potential, in our view, to transform life, both for local residents in the Kirkstall Valley, as well as those in the wider area."

What was evident through the workshops and in the above extract was that this form of symbiotic engagement was based upon being constructive with the council, rather than a politics of antagonism. This extract also supports the wider KVDT strategy of supporting transformative action that can make life better for people through creating stronger communities, rather than an approach that looks at forcing people out of cars. This ties in with Olin Wright's conception of equality, in the sense of creating communities in which people can thrive (Olin Wright, 2018).

Another element of the response was to link into the ongoing crisis of COVID-19. The response put forward the idea that the council should dispense with a top-down approach once it was time to implement the strategy. Instead, the response proposed that the council should work with communities to co-produce the changes. This speaks to the ideas of furthering social empowerment and increasing power within communities around a progressive and change orientated conception of what communities could be. This can be seen in the following extract.

"Communities, like those in the Kirkstall Valley, are facing many challenges - the COVID recovery, the climate crisis, and for too long an economy and planning system that does not meet their needs or focus on their well-being. To meet these considerable competing challenges, we would like to see bolder ideas, and bolder approaches to realising these ambitions, that put social justice and co-production at the centre."

Other aspects that were addressed were around improving active travel infrastructure, redesigning neighbourhoods, and taking into consideration the needs of people who did not have a car.

"Many people, especially less well-off people, already do not have a car so reflecting that and understanding how to make Leeds a city that better meets their needs through a focus on improving neighbourhoods should be central to the transport strategy. This requires greater focus on things like improving bus services, making them cheaper and greener. In the Kirkstall Valley context, improving the ability to move within and across the local area, rather than the focus on moving in and out of the city centre. It also requires more ambition on active travel infrastructure and an e-bike revolution. This should work towards the realisation of the 15-minute neighbourhood across Leeds, something that would improve life for many people in areas such as the Kirkstall Valley."

This symbiotic engagement demonstrated how a community-based group could work collaboratively with its supporters and local decision-makers to increase agency within the political process, especially when there was a political opportunity and structures within which this engagement could take place. The above extract shows how the group focused on aspects around how to tackle the climate emergency alongside building a better future. This better future was defined quite broadly and involved elements such as the council being guided by the needs of people in the valley, more active and vibrant communities, and more active travel. There was also a desire for social and climate justice to be at the forefront of the transition to zero carbon. As I go on to show, this engagement supported activism at different levels, from influencing the council to street level activities. Whilst these activities had modest potential, as Macgregor (2021) says, there is value in operating at the cracks and the margins.

Mobilising and creating conditions in which people can engage with the political decisions can be empowering and renew belief in the political agency that exists within

a community (Poupart, 2007). Olin Wright (2010) identified that within capitalism people do not have a say in many of the decisions that affect them. This creates an urban environment in which many feel the political and business elites are doing things to them and not in their interests. Often, these decisions are based on furthering the interests of capital and privatise the spaces that people rely on for their well-being (Chatterton, 2019). Having agency within the political process and being able to influence decisions that affect the community is an important part of community resilience (McCrea, 2014). What I have shown in this section is that the move from the council to recognise the climate emergency and create participatory processes does create space for communities to develop symbiotic engagement. What came out of this process was evidence that at the community level there was support for expanding council level ambition for climate action. A second dimension was how people promoted ideas of improving their areas as part of a broader city-wide transformation. I now go on to discuss how this fed other approaches to tackling unsustainability within transport.

5.4.2 Linking activity to broader issues and COVID-19 recovery

Part of the contribution that this research makes is through showing how community resilience can be developed in a period of interesting crises. An important aspect of this in my research was that strategies and activities served a dual purpose. Firstly, strategies sought to tackle issues from the social impacts of austerity and COVID-19, such as a perceived lack of community and social isolation, which required supporting the community to cope through community resilience as adaptation. Secondly, in tackling these issues, there was a focus on how community resilience could serve to act as a catalyst for transformation. For instance, KVDT obtained funding to develop a craftivist project, which was framed as supporting the community to thrive as part of "building back better" from COVID-19. Through the project people could come together to self-organise, talk, meet, and take a range of types of community action. It was experimental and centred around people in the community building new relationships through KVDT facilitated events. Craftivism is about bringing people together in an activity that uses a gentle form of activism focused on well-being and mindfulness (Corbett, 2017). Thus, as well as taking political action for sustainability and a more

climate friendly area, the idea was to bring people together to tackle social isolation, which was identified by KVDT as one of the key social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the project began, it was community led, as KVDT volunteers and supporters used the first event to discuss what they would like to do as part of the project, how they would like to organise, make decisions about how they proceeded, and decide on topics and actions.

The group began, as envisaged, as creating a local voice dealing with issues around sustainability. An important element was that the crafts developed would be bright and colourful and be taken out into the community, to highlight the issues and bring local art to communal spaces across the valley. In this way, it supported the broader approach that KVDT undertook by aiming to show how through the local activism things could be different. An activity that was developed through the craftivism project, linked to the transport strategy consultation event, was a campaign to 'Save Kirkstall Footpaths.' There were several footpaths that were under threat from being removed as public rights of way, unless there was evidence that they were used as footpaths.

The 'Save Kirkstall Footpaths' project had two parts. Firstly, at the monthly Craftivist meeting people made colourful knitted decorations and signs that were placed at some of the paths. This alerted people to the risk and asked them to contact the council. The second element was that a group was created, the 'Wednesday Walkers'. Every Wednesday this group would meet to walk some of the paths and then sign to say that they had done so. The walk was promoted as a chance for people to get together with others in a COVID-19 secure environment, have a group walk, and enjoy their area. It was seen by KVDT as a chance to promote an activity that was healthy, brought people together, and contribute towards enabling active travel in the local area. This project demonstrated how community resilience involved leadership from KVDT, using the organisation to secure funding, bringing people together, taking a political action, supporting people's wellbeing, and building a sense of community post-COVID-19. This approach sought to build community resilience through increasing feelings of attachment to the area, improving facilities, and enhancing social connection (Forjaz et al., 2011).

5.4.3 Interstitial action at street level

People in The A65 Group were determined to focus on action. The actions supported community resilience as transformation, as the group developed activities that, however modestly, worked towards a vision for a better future (Wilding, 2012). Through street level activity the group wanted to support improving neighbourhoods. This work had three dimensions. Firstly, activities like street closures and street parties were seen as a way of creating car-free spaces and bringing people together. Secondly, there was a desire to increase green spaces. Thirdly, the group wanted to highlight the problems of pollution. The different strands of this work highlight interesting elements of working in the gaps and on the margins of the current system. It also adds to understandings of the outcomes that those working within a community setting want to achieve, as people and the groups wanted to contribute to carbon reduction, but also sought to improve life for people by showing how their neighbourhoods could be different. The approach attempted to foster participation to create more active neighbourhoods as part of zero carbon planning. The projects demonstrate the contribution of innovative, niche, and experimental approaches to community resilience (Wright, 2021).

One of the activities that The A65 Group undertook was guerrilla gardening to create wildflower meadows. Guerrilla gardens are defined as activities that "beautify the neighbourhood, increase local diversity, and provide food for people, animals, and insects" (Flores, 2006, p. 241). As is common in guerrilla gardening, the approach was to identify underused strips of land and turn them into what the group called wildflower meadows (Adams and Hardman, 2014). We picked a location that was alongside a congested road and close to an area of social housing. People were keen to plant in this area as it was seen as neglected by the council due to its location alongside a busy commuter road. We connected with neighbourhood groups and met to plant flowers and clear an overgrown footpath, making it easier for people to choose to walk. The activities involved litter picking, removing weeds, marking the path, and planting wildflower seeds.

In discussing what this activity meant to the people involved, participants spoke about the importance of showing that people cared, that the area could be different, that it did not need to be ugly, overgrown, and neglected. There was also satisfaction that groups of local people could be mobilised to act. The action showed that it was possible to take control of small areas of land and that the places that people lived could be reimagined. Thus, through guerrilla gardening we were working at a very localised level within the cracks and margins (Macgregor, 2021). It demonstrated an important dimension of community resilience as transformation, as people attempted to explore and increase their agency and their capacity to shape their local area for the better (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Drydyk, 2013). By connecting and working alongside other groups and mobilising residents, it demonstrated solidarity via working together for each other's and broader community benefit. Whilst guerrilla gardening does not directly reduce carbon, The A65 Group felt that it contributed towards the agenda for climate action as part of the ambition to make Leeds a better city in which to live.

The second type of street level activity that The A65 Group members focused on was attempting to get street closures, either as permanent changes or for street parties and communal activities. This type of activity could be seen as having both interstitial and symbiotic dimensions. For instance, one of The A65 Group members was lobbying for a road closure on an area of land where the road was next to a play park, was often used for parking by people visiting a nearby site, and this road cut between two fields that children played in. Closing the road, it was argued, would increase safety for children, make the area more people friendly, and it would remove a road that was primarily used to avoid congestion on the main road that ran parallel to it. On the road closure near the park there was push back from some residents of a nearby housing estate, as those residents used the road to avoid congestion on the busy main road nearby. Following this, the council refused to sanction any further work on this project. A second project undertaken was to support street parties on the street where Jackie lived. This was promoted as a way for people to come together after the COVID-19 pandemic, free up road space for children to play, build a sense of community, whilst showing people what it could be like if the road space was not dominated by cars. Jackie hoped that this would be a way of building support for turning the road into an active travel

neighbourhood. To make the road closure and the street parties happen, it required support from the council, showing the symbiotic nature of this approach. However, after an initial event was held, there was some complaints from a small number of residents and therefore the council would not allow anymore events, saying that there had to be unanimous agreement.

During the response to COVID-19, like in communities across the country, what I showed in Chapter 4 was that the community was able to come together and take drastic action. As Wright (2021) observed, in part this was because people felt they were acting out of necessity in the face of a large-scale emergency. However, these community resilience as transformation projects demonstrated that, as the climate emergency is still in many ways perceived as a future threat, it was more difficult to create radical change. As argued in Chapter 1, my research was a combination of a place-based community and a community based on progressive values seeking to create alternatives. However, the street level actions highlight the tension that exists in this. In line with Skerratt (2013), through collaboration the action groups wanted to develop pathways for change. Berkes and Ross (2013) argue that people can be empowered through involvement and that resilience strategies often focus on projects that are practical and achievable. This was certainly evident in the examples that I have provided and, in many ways, led to small-scale and a highly localised focus. However, despite working on projects of this type, and projects that were in line with the council's own ambitions for a reduction of car use and building more vibrant communities, there was no mechanism to resolve tensions that existed between those seeking change and residents who wanted to keep the status-quo. I shall explore this further in Chapter 6, relating it directly to the climate emergency. Therefore, the two road closure projects demonstrated current limits for those wanting to create more sustainable communities through symbiotic and interstitial approaches.

Building on the street level projects, I want to highlight how this form of interstitial activism supports what Chatterton (2019) describes as the need to lock down unsustainable activity and unlock imaginative responses. I do this through a 'Clean Air Day' event, an annual event to raise awareness about pollution, that The A65 Group

held. The A65 Group ran an event at a busy intersection outside KVDT community hub. For the event, the group produced signs highlighting the issue of pollution and promoting active travel. The signs were visible to people walking along the street and to people in their cars travelling through the area. However, the event was more than awareness raising. For the event, the group set up a bike garage where people could bring their bikes and get them cleaned and have maintenance carried out. While bikes were being fixed, there was time to have conversations with residents about climate change, active travel, and get their views on what was needed to encourage more people to take up active travel options. There was a reading corner and placard making for children, the children were taught about the importance of clean air and encouraged to make signs that they could take home and put in their gardens. This type of interstitial approach worked as a way of promoting active travel options and highlighting the impact of using cars, as well as attempting to inspire others, for instance cyclists and children, through positive activities. Tiratelli et al., (2021) describes this as a "virtuous circle" in which there is both peer pressure and inspiration, which are important dynamics in climate action.

The event brought together different streams of the work outlined. It raised awareness of pollution and linked current forms of transport to climate change. When discussing the event with The A65 Group members, Jackie said it was important to do it somewhere busy as lots of people would see it. This was not only in the sense that it might encourage them to think about their car use, but it also showed "that people in the area care about these issues." This adds to the idea that the outcomes were to foster collaboration in the community, challenge people to think about their choices, and bring the community together towards a positive vision of how the community could be different. This links the different threads within this chapter about developing collaborative activities, the idea of bonding through solidarity within the group, and generating connection towards place through a positive idea of how people in the community could work together to create change. Thus, it was about reducing the domination of the car and unlocking an idea of how the community could imagine alternative ways that it could function.

Twigger-Ross et al., (2015) argues that community resilience in relation to climate change depends on developing participation, interest, and engagement. Alongside this, it must deal with community concerns, connect to, and influence the local agenda. The e-bike scheme that The A65 Group developed conforms to these elements and adds dimensions in terms of being pragmatic and opportunistic, which my research shows are important dimensions of proactive community resilience strategies. The A65 Group pursued an opportunity to obtain a grant to buy two e-bikes. This tied in with a barrier that was identified in the initial workshops, the gradients of the Kirkstall Valley. Many people felt that this made it difficult for people to cycle. Also, there were few bus services that crossed the valley, as most of the bus service focused on moving people into and out of the city centre. Therefore, many people felt that they had no choice but to use their cars. A potential solution to this was e-bikes, however the costs were seen as prohibitive. Therefore, Valerie had seen an opportunity for a small amount of funding for community activity and the group submitted a bid for the funding to buy two e-bikes. The idea behind the project was to loan the bikes to KVDT supporters so that they could try them out and see the difference that they could make in their daily trips around the local area. A further strand of the project was that people would keep a diary and highlight the benefits and some of the difficulties that they found. The A65 Group would then use this information to lobby the council to improve infrastructure in the area. Whilst this project was small, it was about demonstrating the barriers that people faced in taking more sustainable transport options, as well as giving people the opportunity to try out a different type of active travel.

Due to funding delays the project was only just starting when my research period ended. However, some of the early feedback was based around difficulty in storing the bikes, due to their size, and many people living in terraced back-to-back housing, as well as concerns over security of the bikes due to a lack of safe storage around the area, considering how expensive the bikes were. On the positive side, early participants noted how the bikes made a difference in terms of short journeys that "feel a little long to walk" and how rather than taking the car, the bikes made these journeys easy and quick.

5.4.4 Connecting the strands of community activism

What was important within community resilience as transformation through street level activities, through The A65 Group and the Kirkstall Craftivists, was tackling the issues that people faced and playing a role in making the area a better place to live, with a stronger sense of community (Christakopoulou et al., 2001). The Leeds City Council's declaration of a climate emergency provided an important context and gave impetus to the groups to push for local solutions to problems around car dominance and active travel. This entailed symbiotic engagements with the council, as well as developing interstitial approaches. Seeking opportunities to support transformation across different areas and at different scales enabled the groups to push for more ambition and test different areas, such as pushing for street closures. This approach also enabled network building, thus contributing towards collaboration, and altering social relationships, which as I showed in 5.2, was an important dimension of community resilience. Street level actions also sought to expand agency within the area and generate community power. Community resilience approaches provided opportunities to link climate and broader social justice issues (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015). Working in this way was a dynamic process that integrated climate action with the broader challenges that people faced (Klein, 2014; Wright, 2021). Street level action aimed at challenging the status-quo and building alternative ways of being and doing. The approaches were not static, there was opportunism, and approaches were not based on fully formed blueprints, as people felt they were acting from necessity (Pickerill, 2021). However, the ethos was based on creating thriving communities, rather than simply reducing carbon.

5.5 Conclusion

Within this chapter, I demonstrated how KVDT's approaches to community resilience pushed beyond adaptation and towards community resilience as transformation. This work had climate mitigation at the fore but went beyond that to account for the wider issues within the community (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015). Developing community resilience in terms of transformation, seen as owning the need to change (Twigger-Ross

et al., 2014), can be difficult in the face of intersecting crises and tackling their social impacts in the present. The key research question in this chapter was, within KVDT what were the key strategies developed to build community resilience as transformation? I showed that the three key strategies that were developed were social empowerment, interstitial, and symbiotic strategies for developing community resilience. Whilst the projects that I highlighted to support the exploration of the strategies had different aims, ranging from developing CSA, through to supporting neighbourhood and street level activism, there were commonalities that I drew out and linked to the community resilience as transformation framework. As many of the projects had a combination of interstitial and symbiotic approaches, I disentangled the different elements based upon aspects of building community resilience.

As my research is interested in the "how" of community resilience, I began the chapter by asking how are processes for social empowerment developed in the KVDT context? This required looking at the internal workings of the organisation and action groups to discuss how they worked towards developing agency and self-organisation by building social relationships based on collaboration, which are important dimensions of community resilience (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Walton et al., 2013). What I demonstrated was that KVDT were developing processes that aimed at expanding agency so that people and the organisation could build a social community and foster a sense of belonging (Christakopoulou et al., 2001; White, 2010). Through generating connections between KVDT and the volunteer network, the organisation was able to foster a spirit of collaboration and solidarity that aimed at altering and developing social relationships within the group. This contributed towards community resilience as transformation by playing a facilitating role in the community self-organising, with inclusion and belonging as important impacts (Berks and Ross, 2013). The second dimension was how collaboration was an important dynamic in generating ideas and creating pathways for change (Skerratt, 2013). This was evident within KVDT and through The A65 Group, and the Kirkstall Craftivists. These projects, in line with Twigger-Ross et al., (2015), showed that developing participation and collaboration could support community resilience as transformation by dealing with community

concerns, influencing the local agenda, and creating strategies based on these elements.

The second part of the chapter looked at the strategies for change that these processes worked towards, through acquiring and developing community assets. This explored how KVDT developed interstitial and symbiotic strategies as part of their approach to community resilience. This involved creating or attempting to create spaces outside of market control and for community benefit. I looked at what engagements with local business and political actors hoped to achieve in terms of transformation. This demonstrated the first dimension of the symbiotic approach of KVDT, as they engaged with local actors to find ways of working in partnership to try and develop local buildings for community benefit. A proposed housing project and sustainability centre were seen as ways that inequality and the climate emergency could be tackled in the local area. This symbiotic approach built on ideas of social empowerment and increased agency as KVDT attempted to forge partnerships with the council and a local business to turn former mills into community assets. I then highlighted the links between symbiotic approaches and interstitial approaches with the example of the Kirkstall Valley Farm. Kirkstall Valley Farm was an interstitial project developed out of a symbiotic agreement with the council to lease the land to KVDT, in return KVDT created a CSA that also functioned for community benefit. Within this CSA, the project was co-produced and co-managed (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014). KVDT were developing the farm to bring about sustainable change within food production, whilst also creating broader socially desirable change from the community upwards (Kirwan et al., 2013).

The third part of the chapter looked at reimagining the local area through neighbourhood and street level action. This explored how building networks and engagement with political processes were key elements of community resilience (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Magis, 2010). In line with Wright (2021), the resilience strategies and activities were experimental, niche, and attempted to deal with the intersecting crises that the community faced, including contributing towards tackling the climate emergency. Once again, this entailed a range of symbiotic and interstitial

approaches. Symbiotically, there were projects that expanded agency by engaging with democracy to raise the voice of people within the area. In line with Olin Wright (2010) and his symbiotic strategy, projects engaged with local political programmes aimed at supporting the council's approach to rising to the challenge of the declaration of the climate emergency. Once again, using local knowledge and experience was important to this engagement and informed ideas for change that emerged (Farmer et al., 2018). As within KVDT, The A65 Group and Kirkstall Craftivists focused on the pragmatism of building alternatives (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010). The core principles of the groups were based on reducing reliance on the car to meet the Leeds climate targets for 2030, and neighbourhoods playing an active role in shaping this. This grounded approaches in the every-day and supported symbiotic and interstitial strategies that had one eye on the present and one on the future.

Having explored community resilience as adaptation in Chapter 4 and community resilience as transformation in Chapter 5, I now turn my attention directly to the climate emergency. In Chapter 6, I take a broader look at the implications of community resilience when thinking about the climate emergency. I explore how neoliberal governance impacts on community level approaches, and the potential and limitations of community to play a role in the urgent and radical shifts that need to take place in the coming decade. I look at how the interaction of the different strands of community resilience impact on climate action and I develop arguments about the role that community action can play in tackling the climate emergency.

Chapter 6 – Community resilience and tackling the climate emergency

6.1 Introduction

Having outlined community resilience strategies in relation to adaptation and transformation, I now turn to the question of what my case study suggests about tackling the climate emergency through community action. To do so, I build on key themes that I have developed and contribute towards a critical understanding of community resilience as it applies to current approaches to tackling the climate emergency at the community level in the UK. I show how climate related policy and discourse at the national and city council level created barriers and limitations for community action and impacted upon perceptions, ambitions, strategies, and the tactics of KVDT in relation to climate action. As my research is concerned with how crises intersect, I explore how climate policy aligns with the broader policy agenda in the UK. Following this, I focus on community resilience, as illustrated through the work of KVDT, and draw together adaptation and transformation resilience through exploring the interaction of adaptation and transformation resilience activities.

To explore the relationships between the policy environment, the social context that it created, and community responses to tackle the crises that they faced, or as Deverteuil et al., (2021) frame it, the co-constituted nature of resilience, I apply Olin Wright's concept of social power. He describes social power as, "power rooted in the capacity to mobilize [sic] people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions of various sorts in civil society" (Olin Wright, 2010, p. 121). I apply the idea of social power to link together the different strands of community resilience, as it enables me to draw together community strategies focused on tackling vulnerabilities and support community adaptation, alongside more transformative strategies that seek to develop community autonomy and challenge the current status-quo. I show the interaction of the two strands of community resilience and how community resilience as adaption can limit community resilience as transformation. Following that, I explore what the strategies of transformation suggest about the role that community led, place-based approaches can

play in tackling the climate emergency. Finally, I look at the question of time, in the sense of the urgency of acting towards net-zero versus the difficulties of generating community action, and the limits of social power to bring about the scale of change required.

Sections 6.2 and 6.3 contribute towards the question of the role of community organisations in tackling the climate emergency by linking neoliberal governance approaches to climate change and how they support or limit community organisations responses to the climate emergency. It is the neoliberal policy environment which sets the political and economic context in which community efforts at climate mitigation take place. This matters in the context of an organisation that pursues a range of strategies that work within, with, and beyond the current political, economic, and social structures. In 6.2, I argue that national level climate governance does not provide a strong national framework for tackling the climate emergency and hampers local council and community climate mitigation action. In section 6.3, I look at local council level approaches, building on the argument from Howarth et al., (2021), that there is a lack of a comprehensive framework between the local council and community organisations for creating climate related transformation. I add to this argument, showing in practical terms how this lack of a framework limits the ability of community actors to achieve ambitious change that could have greater impact on tackling the climate emergency.

In Section 6.4, I look at how the work of KVDT contributes towards understandings of what community action means, by relating their efforts to generate community resilience to questions of the climate emergency. The key area that I explore in this section is what their approach to generating community resilience in an environment of intersecting crises tell us about the limits of climate action within this setting. To explore this, I look at the interaction of KVDT's approaches to adaptation and transformation to show how mobilising people and meeting people's needs is a mixture of tackling vulnerability and working to increase community autonomy. This entails looking at the mixture of short-term approaches to meet the considerable need, against the longer-term ambition of achieving change at the community level. Overall, activity in this setting is context specific, in terms of supporting the community through crises, and tackling

specific impacts in their local area. Therefore, in section 6.4, I look at the interaction between dealing with structurally created vulnerabilities and attempts to generate and build social power within the community.

In section 6.5, I look at how climate action sits within attempts to build social power through creating a strong local entity that can support the community. This leads to a further contribution of this research to understandings of what this action represents, arguing that it is not political in the sense of antagonism, but the politics emerges around issues and through action. This means that climate action within this setting must be informed by this context and understanding of the opportunities and barriers that exist. The final issue that I discuss, in section 6.6, is the issue of time within climate mitigation. Overall, while there are many positive contributions that community level action can have, which must be harnessed as part of transforming communities as part of the move to net-zero, my research suggests limitations on the likelihood of achieving ambitious targets within the timeframe that the climate emergency demands.

6.1.1 The data and analysis used to inform the findings in this chapter

This chapter has two key dimensions of analysis related to the findings, which contributes to the overall research question, "How are people coming together within the case study organisation to tackle climate change, alongside the social crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic?" The process for developing the arguments and representing the key findings is partly done by using ideas and interpretations, drawn from across the ethnographic and action research data, in relation to the community resilience framework.

The first dimension, in 6.2 and 6.3 begins with an outline of the broader climate policy nationally and locally in which community climate action is taking place. This analysis sets the context of my thinking and I relate this to data that I collected, for instance interviews with KVDT leaders and volunteers. For instance, in 6.2.1 I use comments made by Richard, a KVDT leader, who talks about incremental and non-transformative change. Whilst his comments were not necessarily representative of everyone in KVDT's views, he was a prominent figure in the organisation when my fieldwork began,

so they do reveal an attitude that existed in the organization, which can also be compared to findings in Chapter 4 regarding community resilience as adaptation. My overall analysis approach employed comparative analysis of the different ethnographic data sets.

In section 6.3, I relate the local policy context and approaches with some of the activities that I observed throughout my research, such as the Kirkstall Valley Farm and the activities that were generated as part of the action research, such as guerilla gardening and street closures. In 6.3.1, I use a combination of interview responses from KVDT leaders and my own participant observation reflections from attending 'After School Clubs' and the COVID-19 pandemic response to relate the different strands of data to one of my key arguments, that community climate action should be understood within the intersecting nature of the crises that communities are facing. The arguments and conclusions in 6.2 and 6.3 are based on my interpretations of the KVDT data in relation to the broader policy environment.

The second important dimension of my approach in this chapter draws together the analysis of Chapters 4 and 5 to explore the relationship between community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation (6.4). I draw this together to look at the potential contribution of community climate action. I use ideas that I thematically analysed from participants in interviews, conversations with people that took part in the action research, the action research projects themselves, and participants views on what those projects meant and what projects the groups should undertake. I use this information to build my ideas about the role that community organisations can play in 6.5 before highlighting some barriers around time (6.6), the latter based on my own ideas and interpretations gained from my experiences of both ethnographic and action research.

6.2 The climate policy environment

In this section, I outline the key dimensions of the national climate policy agenda, linking it to the broader governmental approaches of rolling-back state functions and supporting

the primacy of the market over concerted state action (Peck and Tickell, 2002). As critics have noted, this sits well with a government resilience agenda for limited state intervention in the crises that people face, as well as promoting individuals as responsible for dealing with social problems (Joseph, 2013). I argue that this policy environment impacts upon how some people within KVDT viewed the problem of the climate emergency and the potential role that KVDT could play in finding community level solutions. I also link this to the work of Willis (2020, 2020a) to show that the lack of urgency within national government filters down to the community level. This is important due to the varied pressures that the intersecting crises of austerity, COVID-19, and latterly the "cost of living crisis" were creating for people and community organisations. I argue that the pressures from the more immediate crises, and the fact that communities are grappling with these without adequate state support, suggests limitations upon the impact that communities can have on tackling the climate emergency.

6.2.1 The national policy environment and its impact on climate action at the community level

The IPCC continues to sound the alarm that without more ambitious mitigation action at all levels the 2015 Paris Agreement commitment of preventing warming of 1.5 or 2 degrees will not be met (Grubb et al., 2022). The next decade is key if we are to limit the impacts of climate change, and the recent report from the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) on progress in reducing emissions sets out the scale of the task ahead:

> "Embedding climate action across society. Reducing emissions and adapting to climate change will require a whole-of-society endeavour. Success will require the public to be engaged in the challenge, building public consent for the changes with a broader understanding of what is required and why" (CCC, 2021, p. 10).

To achieve transformation, we need profound changes across the whole of society (Shove, 2010). In the UK, the Climate Change Act (2008) and recent commitment to net zero by 2050 set ambitious targets. However, this does not guarantee that the UK will makes the changes required at a national political level (Lockwood, 2013; CCC, 2019).

Indeed, with a focus on marketisation within climate solutions, faith in technocratic solutions, and a depoliticised response to climate action, the UK government is part of a broader trend of pushing non-transformative solutions that draw attention away from more substantial and effective measures (Bludhorn, 2015; Lamb et al, 2020). Therefore, what is missing is a plan for how to engage people and communities in this vital task. There are key national barriers, as climate change is presented as manageable, there is no clear strategy for hitting the ambitious targets, and there are too many uncertainties in how the UK will move at the pace required (CCC 2021; Willis 2020a). Howarth et al., (2021) goes further and argues that there is a lack of a clear national framework for achieving national targets and a lack of framework to support council level and community action. Furthermore, there are a lack of resources available to meet the challenge (Marsden et al., 2014).

In April 2021, ahead of hosting COP26 the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in a speech at the World Leaders Summit, displayed many of the elements of what Lamb et al. (2020) termed discourses of climate delay. Johnson touted technological solutions, especially around unproven carbon capture and storage, and for net-zero flying, all within a paradigm of green growth. He pointed to the fact that the UK has cut emissions by around 42% on 1990 levels whilst seeing the economy grow by 73% (Johnson, 2021). This green growth paradigm pushes technological solutions, downplays the scale of change, and pursues solutions that preserve the neoliberal approach of marketisation, commodification, individualism, and the protection of capital (Schmid 2019). It presents a rosy picture, with little discussion of the far-reaching implications of climate change or the changes that are needed (Lamb et al., 2020; Willis, 2020). This policy and discourse environment has impacts at the community level, which was evident in my research. KVDT is not monolithic and there are a broad range of views within the organisation, as well as a broad range of motivations for people being involved. For instance, Richard, a KVDT leader who was instrumental in setting up the COVID-19 food hub told me,

> "We have environmental issues that we all have to face there's absolutely no escaping that, my take on it is that we have to deal with it in a more sort of practical, realistic manner.... I was going to say a gradual, gradual reduction in

sort of fossil fuel usage but at the same time preserving the way of life that we currently have. Let's do this as efficiently, [be as] non-disruptive as we can."

Richard's comment speaks to what Willis (2020) noted, that the national political environment has a knock-on effect for the public, as many feel that climate change cannot be such a threat if the government is not taking a lead with a coherent strategy. Firstly, he acknowledges the issue, saying that "we all have to face" the problem of climate change. Much like the government, he talks about a gradual reduction and "preserving the way of life." The ideas of "efficiency" and being "non-disruptive" add to the sense of a business-as-usual approach, without the need for urgent and major changes being carried out. In this sense, this approach is in line with the governmental approach and a belief that climate action can be achieved without too much disturbance of the status-quo, through making small, gradual adjustments.

Another element of the government approach within climate change, and more broadly as was seen through austerity policy, is to make individuals and groups responsible for tackling social problems (Joseph, 2013). Once again, within my research there was examples of how the discourse of the primacy of individual action, over structural approaches to tackling the climate emergency, was evident. When discussing with Amy, a KVDT leader, what approach climate work within KVDT could take, ahead of developing the action research element of my project, she thought that it could focus on educating children. This seemed sensible as KVDT had strong projects supporting education. Amy's idea was to educate children so that they could inform and pressure their parents. This would be around things like turning off plugs, not filling the kettle too much when making a cup of tea and so on. This demonstrated an idea of climate action focused on influencing personal choice and individual change, rather than a focus on tackling the structural issues (Brownstein et al., 2022). Whilst the two do not have to be mutually exclusive (Brownstein et al., 2022), it does sit in opposition to the collectivist strategies that underpin KVDT's approaches to achieving change.

In resilience terms, the national policy environment highlights how within the climate emergency there is a relationship between top-down government policy, discourse, and community responses. Or, as Deverteuil et al., (2021) would argue, how the two are co-

constituted. This backs up Willis (2020a) in that the top-down environment does not create a national policy or discourse framework that supports the urgency needed to tackle climate change. Thus, in this way the national political context created barriers to building transformative solutions (Bailey and Wilson, 2009). The ideas that I highlight from Richard and Amy suggest the ways some of those barriers express themselves in how the problem is viewed and the approaches that are advocated.

6.3 Local approaches to tackling the climate emergency – the Leeds context

6.3.1 The council moves towards recognising the climate emergency

Much of the onus for climate action has been shifted to the local council level (Howarth et al., 2021). Here, there is some cause for optimism, as ambition has been raised in many parts of the country. As of 2020, 74% of District, County, Unitary & Metropolitan Councils, and eight Combined Authorities/City Regions had declared a 'climate emergency' (Howarth et al, 2020). Within climate change at a local level, there have also been moves in recent years to experiment with new institutional models that foreground partnerships and inclusivity (Howarth et al., 2021). This can be seen through citizen's assemblies and climate juries that have happened across the UK. These are promising developments that can make citizens central to democratic decision-making (Cherry et al., 2021). Those that have analysed the assemblies and juries have concluded that this form of deliberate democracy, in which citizens are informed of the issues and debate them, often leads to more ambitious and far-reaching policy recommendations (Cherry et al., 2021).

Leeds City Council undertook a 'Big Conversation' and ran a citizen's jury before declaring a climate emergency, committing to net-zero by 2030 (Leeds City Council, 2019). The climate jury was commissioned, and a representative sample of local people were given evidence from academic, policy and business experts before making recommendations for action. This demonstrates a willingness to look at innovative approaches to citizen engagement and policy development within climate change. This is a form of symbiotic strategy between the council, citizens, academics, and

businesses to create a participatory approach to the climate emergency. Like in many councils, the need to shift the focus to dealing with the pandemic shortly after the climate emergency declaration has slowed down the momentum that was built up through the participatory processes (Howarth et al., 2020). This speaks to another theme that runs through this research, that crises intersect and that this impacts on tackling the climate emergency at several levels and in multiple ways.

Upon declaring a climate emergency, Leeds City Council stated the following:

> "Challenging as it is, the future also holds out the prospect of a better city with good housing, improved transport, healthier lifestyles and a greener, more attractive environment. The vision can only be achieved with the active support of the citizens of Leeds, public and private sector institutions, the third sector and national government" (Leeds City Council, 2019, p. 8).

The Leeds climate emergency declaration demonstrates both the scale of the challenge and an acknowledgement of how changes are needed across all aspects of how the city functions and people live in it. It also shows that the change cannot be achieved from a purely top-down policy approach, and needs active participation and collaboration of people, business, and civil society (Howarth et al., 2021). In Chapter 5, I argued how this declaration was useful in providing direction and framing for the climate action work that KVDT undertook. For instance, the prioritisation of active travel by the Leeds citizen jury was used to support the idea of pursuing active travel through the creation of The A65 Group. I also discussed how the political opportunities that the focus on the climate emergency created led to a range of symbiotic strategies, such as the engagement with the council on the transport strategy consultation, as well as engagement with individual councillors and council departments on areas such as road closures. Thus, community organisations can use the space and opportunities that the climate emergency declarations create to support and legitimise their own efforts at transformation, both working with the state and outside of it. It can also provide a focal point to mobilise supporters to begin building alternatives to the current status-quo at the community level. This shows that there is a local policy environment that tentatively supports the idea of a more collaborative approach between the council and community.

As I argued in Chapter 5, engaging in the political processes is important for community resilience, as it can increase social empowerment and expand agency. However, I argue that what this looks like and how community is operationalised within this collaboration, is ill-defined and uncertain. This is a barrier towards communities playing an active role in shaping the changes needed to meet the ambition of the climate emergency declaration. The examples of the KVDT engagement with the council on the draft transport strategy is illustrative of a wider problem that inhibits action in a variety of ways. Despite engaging in the council process, including hosting a workshop, which the council attended, as well as sending the community response to the department, and all the council representatives of the area, that was the end of the process. The framework for engagement was about informing what will remain a top-down council driven process. In Olin Wright (2010) terms, this was not part of a broader move to shift power away from the state and towards the community, the problems of which I will now explore.

6.3.2 Council-community interaction lacks a framework for transformation

Despite moves towards more participatory processes as outlined in 6.3.1, there lacks a proper framework for this engagement between council and community groups, which is essential to make the urgent changes that are necessary to rise to the climate emergency (Howarth et al, 2021). I argue that despite community led efforts to engage in building community resilience as transformation in the face of the climate emergency, the governance approach remains a significant barrier. On the other side of this, my research demonstrated that small moves to prioritise community led climate initiatives could make a significant difference in efforts to meet the ambitions of the climate emergency declarations. At multiple levels, my research provided examples of innovative, imaginative, ambitious, and experimental approaches to building community resilience. From the COVID-19 emergency response, the plans to acquire community assets for a sustainability centre and social housing, the Kirkstall Valley Farm, and across more micro-level actions like guerrilla gardening and street closures, it was evident that the community wanted to take ownership of creating change. To build on Howarth et al., (2021), I argue that what is lacking at the local level is a framework that

shifts power into the civil society or to the community level. This is evident when viewed through the approaches that KVDT undertook to community resilience and it makes tackling the intersecting crises of austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency more difficult. In essence, it limits our ability to tackle the climate emergency.

In The A65 Group, when we discussed ambitions in the early meetings there was enthusiasm for working towards the creation of active travel neighbourhoods. This supported the twin aims of reducing car usage and transforming neighbourhoods. The group researched what was needed to make this happen, looking at creating a community consultation process, going door-to-door to discuss with residents, and creating community meetings to develop proposals for the council. However, on further investigating this idea, and speaking with active travel campaigners across the city, we realised that this idea would not be worth pursuing. There was no process for building a partnership with the council, the council already had areas that they were working on for active travel, so lacked capacity. Therefore, if the community led on conducting community engagement, the council would then do their own consultation, meaning our evidence would be irrelevant. What this evidence points to is a lack of a comprehensive framework in which community and the local council can come together, share knowledge, experience, and build a joint endeavour to create action (Howarth et al., 2021, Willis, 2020a). This furthers understandings of what Deverteuil et al., (2021) call the co-constituted nature of community resilience. What I add is that top-down governance approaches inhibit community resilience, even in an environment where people are actively working on transformation in response to the climate emergency and working towards the stated ambition of the council.

The examples from Chapter 5, where Rachel, a volunteer, petitioned her councillor to close one specific road and Jackie, another volunteer, tried to get permission to occasionally close her road for street parties, points to a gap in local level approaches from the state for creating progressive change that reduces car use and opens space for community activity. This is despite the council acknowledging that both car reduction and community space are part of tackling the climate emergency and making communities better places for people to live. This ties in with an issue that was raised in

Chapter 4, how fragmented decision-making within the council makes pursuing community led work slower, less likely to succeed, and more arduous. Decisions and processes were handled in different departments, by different people with different views, there lacks a commitment to enabling communities to create even small-scale change that supports the ambitions of dealing with the climate emergency. There was a lack of will and processes in place to match the climate rhetoric with a policy environment that could support transformation.

The Kirkstall Valley Farm illustrates important aspects of how there is potential for symbiotic partnerships between the council and community organisations, but also a lack of a framework for transformative climate action that hinders community efforts. As argued in Chapter 5, the farm was an interstitial project that required symbiotic partnership with the council. As was noted in 6.3.1, there have been moves by Leeds City Council towards more participatory approaches for tackling the climate emergency. The example of the Kirkstall Valley Farm also points to the fact that community organisations could work with the council to develop a symbiotic strategy for achieving community level change. Besides agreeing to the farm, local councillors have been supportive of KVDT's ambitions on the farm. The farm provides a good example of how council and community partnerships can achieve important change that develops community resilience and plays a role in contributing towards more sustainable communities. However, the examples of the two mills projects, that KVDT struggled to realise in the time of my research, suggests that the council approach to supporting projects with the potential to create community transformation is quite ad-hoc, rather than being a step-change in the council's relationship with community led strategies for transformation.

Despite the farm aiming to be part of developing an alternative food model, it was not completely removed from the market. The farm had to generate income to cover the rent, and for the different things that were needed for its running, such as food storage, polytunnels, and other equipment. As Amy, a KVDT leader said in a planning meeting, "[KVDT] need a productive farm that can stand on its own two feet." This highlights how projects aimed at transformation are still in some ways subject to capitalist pressures.

KVDT have leased the land off the council and there was concern that when the five-year lease runs out, the council would not renew it. As Adam, a KVDT leader said,

> "My aim is to make sure that this project is absolutely politically toxic not to renew. So, it really does drive me. I have to make sure that the council are happy to give us that land to get us established and I have to be sure that we can demonstrate what we're doing in a clear and effective way."

This quote shows the tensions that existed and points to some of the constraints of working in partnership with the council. Firstly, the comment about demonstrating what they are achieving highlights the importance of the farm being able to raise the funds to support itself. Secondly, it meant that within this Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project they had to show the council that the community element was strong and easily demonstrable. The combination of showing financial viability and a strong community benefit would, in Adam's words, make the lease "politically toxic" not to renew. Therefore, despite the project focusing on developing alternative food models and strengthening community, it still ultimately required the council to support it. Thus, in many ways it had to operate like a business in terms of finance but with community organising principles. A local framework that prioritised and supported alternative sustainable models, in which council backing shifted power to communities in a way that limited precarity, would provide a mechanism to unleash the creativity, ambition, and the innovation that exists in many communities around the country.

6.3.3 Climate emergency within intersecting crises

Having looked at how climate policy approaches at the national and council levels impacted on community action, I now look at what approaches to austerity and COVID-19 suggest about the opportunities and barriers for tackling the climate emergency through partnerships between the council and community organisations. This is to highlight how climate action is part of a broader issue of intersecting crises, and to explore the types of community resilience that council approaches favour. Having identified weaknesses in the council approach to supporting transformation, I argue that the experience of dealing with the cutbacks of austerity and tackling the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that they favour a framework of council-community

cooperation that is short term and promotes reactive forms of community resilience in coping and bouncing back (Twigger-Ross et al., 2015; Sakdapolrak, 2013). The combination of the intersecting crises and the types of community resilience that is favoured through council policy approaches suggests a limitation in what can be achieved for tackling the climate emergency.

The process of austerity and the roll back of the state in response created a budget crisis in local government and reduced their capacity to provide services that communities relied upon (Bailey et al., 2015; Lowndes and Gardner, 2016). As Cottam (2021) argues, this compromised local state power and reduced innovative responses to problem solving, within a philosophy that favours market led approaches. Amy explained how she perceived this and how it impacted upon the work of KVDT,

> "So, there is the service delivery and filling in the gaps that the council can't but it's about making people understand that it's not the council that is choosing not to. The council has been hammered and their income is bad, and also that they [people] deserve better and that they can ask for that and demand [it]."

Amy's comment suggested four things. Firstly, it showed a sympathy towards the council's position as they have been "hammered" and that "their income is bad." This is in relation to the impacts of austerity, COVID-19, and government cuts to local councils, which almost led to Leeds City Council declaring bankruptcy (Johns, 2020). Secondly, it suggested that Amy is not expecting a step change towards a more transformative and forward-thinking approach from the council. In part, this informed the motivation for KVDT to focus on building their own responses to the intersecting crises, which points to the interstitial strategies that they developed (see 5.3.2). However, the sympathetic tone is indicative of why KVDT could partner with the council on projects ranging from the 'After School Club' to the COVID-19 response. Thirdly, it showed a certain level of empathy towards the council's situation, rather than viewing them as an adversary, despite the social problems that KVDT were remedying in their locality. The comment from Amy points towards the idea that KVDT see themselves as having to develop community resilience as adaptation and support the community to cope through service delivery and filling in the gaps of council provision. This comes on the back of COVID-19 exacerbating many of the issues that austerity created. Fourth, the final aspect to

highlight in the above quote is that people "deserve better" and that they should "ask for" and "demand" it. This points to the desire in KVDT for community transformation in response to crisis. Within this quote are the tensions and desires to pursue multiple strands of community resilience by KVDT, which I explore in 6.4.

The national and local level political response to COVID-19 demonstrated "how quickly and effectively governments can intervene to completely reshape society and lifestyles" (Howarth et al, 2020; p. 1108). During my research, in many conversations that I had there was an optimism that this meant that things could be done differently, that rather than a constant push to reduce state intervention, the state could become a force for tackling the crises communities faced. During the COVID-19 pandemic lifestyle changes due to lockdown and the shutting of many areas of the economy caused a lowering of greenhouse gas emissions in many sectors in the UK (CCC, 2022). However, once the economy opened-up many of those sectors saw a rebound and an increase in emissions to pre-COVID-19 levels or greater (CCC, 2022). In meetings, people spoke of how COVID-19 had shown how a reduction in car use could transform our streets, that mutual aid could become a way for communities to support each other, and that some of these ideas could help to guide how we tackle the climate emergency. However, those sorts of comments and ideas represent the idea of community resilience as transformation, yet in Amy's comments there is an acknowledgement that what the council wanted from the likes of KVDT was "service delivery" and "filling in the gaps".

Despite COVID-19 demonstrating that there could be radical change in how the national government, council, and community interacted to deal with a public health and social crisis, this did not translate into a fundamental transformation over the long term. The top-down resilience agenda in this instance was short-term and centred on supporting the community to cope during lockdown and bounce back to something equating to previous functioning once the COVID-19 crisis slowed. Despite recognising the positive dimensions of the partnership approach to funding, complemented by community-led delivery, Leeds City Council felt continuing to support community organisations in this way around the issues of food insecurity, was unsustainable in the long term due to

their internal structures and their accountability to central government (Bachmann, 2022).

This COVID-19 experience points to the short-termism that exists, the funding crises that local government face, and the lack of a real framework for long-term collaboration and partnership between the state and civil society. This suggests that it is unlikely that such a partnership environment will emerge to work on climate mitigation, and despite some moves towards participatory processes, they are unlikely to result in significant shifts for large-scale transformation for tackling the climate emergency. The council approach to generating community resilience in the face of austerity and COVID-19 demonstrated that in prioritising coping and bouncing back, it was not an attempt to shift power to civil society or community organisations in a long-term and transformative way. As I argued in 6.3.2, this suggest reasons for pessimism about the role that communities can play in tackling the climate emergency through symbiotic strategies for transformation.

6.4 How community resilience as adaptation can limit transformation and what this says about tackling the climate emergency at the community level

Having summarised what the climate change and broader neoliberal policy environment suggests about tackling the climate emergency through community level approaches, demonstrating the opportunities and constraints that this environment generated, I return to KVDT's approaches to tackling the intersecting crises of austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency. Specifically, I explore what their approach to generating community resilience within an environment of intersecting crises tell us about the challenges of climate action in this setting. This entails drawing together community resilience as adaptation and transformation to argue that what underpins the work, and connects the two, is the idea of generating what Olin Wright (2010) describes as social power. Social power, as a concept, can underpin understandings of KVDT's efforts at building community resilience through tackling vulnerability, adapting to the political, economic, and social context, and their more anticipatory and future looking climate change work. Highlighting the ways that community resilience as adaptation and

transformation co-existed, and interacted within one another, adds an important dimension to what building community resilience for tackling the climate emergency means.

The work of KVDT focused on creating change through community-led processes that worked within, against and beyond the current dominant neoliberal policy environment. This has important implications for the nature of climate action that emerged in this community setting. Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) demonstrated that you must take a nuanced view to understand those that are taking part in local activism over every-day struggles. This is because people in this setting may act against capitalism, but they are not set apart from the present, and their efforts at building alternatives are likely to be messy. Community resilience can help us to understand how KVDT were mobilising people for cooperative, voluntary, collective actions through the interaction between tackling vulnerability and increasing community autonomy. It is through the interactions between dealing with structurally created vulnerabilities and attempts to generate and build community autonomy that various strategies developed and unfolded.

In 2.6.3, I discussed how analysts proposed the idea that a range of community activities that do not necessarily focus on climate action can still be useful for creating an environment in which climate action can emerge. For instance, developing community capacity to influence public services, influencing policy in non-climate areas, projects that tackle issues such as community cohesion and food poverty, could all increase community capacity and community influence (Tiratelli et al., 2021; Howarth et al., 2021; Evans, 2022). My research supports these ideas, showing how social empowerment, engaging in the political process, and acquiring community assets, can all have climate action benefits. However, my case study also points to ways that the political, economic, and social context influences strategies, forces community level actors to adapt to this context, and that this can hamper efforts towards tackling the climate emergency.

In Chapter 4, I argued that KVDT were trying to work within the current political and economic structures and that this led to community resilience approaches characterised as adaptation to austerity, COVID-19, and supporting the community to cope during

COVID-19. To tackle vulnerability to the social impacts of these crises, KVDT worked within the market system and filled in gaps that had been created through withdrawal of the social provision in key areas, for instance delivering educational activities and developing community infrastructure. This work was viewed as necessary by KVDT due to a political environment in which the retrenchment of the welfare state was accompanied by a rhetoric of self-help and self-sufficiency (Dagdeverin et al., 2020). In Chapter 5, I looked at KVDT's approaches to building an organisation and environment that could facilitate community resilience as transformation. This was through fostering an internal environment in which social empowerment could grow, using symbiotic and interstitial strategies to build community assets, and foster community activism to create change at the community level. Thus, their approaches combined solving immediate problems using short-term remedies with more ambitious long-term projects. The projects focused on community resilience as adaptation still sought ways to bring the community together and build social power, which can create a context more favourable for generating transformative projects (Tiratelli et al., 2021; Evans, 2022).

What was evident throughout my research was that KVDT took a pragmatic approach and like many others seeking to create change in the here and now this involved struggles and bargains (Chatterton, 2018). As I noted in Chapter 4, in the initial meeting that I had with Amy, when we discussed issues like traffic congestion and the resultant pollution, it was put to me that if we told many of the people that KVDT interacted with that by cutting traffic and pollution we could increase life expectancy, many would simply shrug and say that they do not care. This was linked to people not enjoying fulfilling lives in the present. This supports Evans (2022) view that climate benefits can be additional to tackling what people see as more pressing concerns. Amy's view informed the strategies that KVDT undertook, for instance with the Kirkstall Valley Farm the main aim was to create an alternative model of farming through CSA and locally produced food. There was also a desire to maximise the potential of the farm for community support work, such as running education programmes on the farm. The latter was not primarily about climate change, and there was tension that it could detract from the primary function of the farm. However, building the community benefit aspect was seen by Amy as essential for maintaining council support for the project. This

highlights how working in the system involved struggles and bargains, but how projects focused on transformation could create space for projects focused on adaptation.

One of the arguments that I have developed builds on Harrison (2013), that increased community vulnerability caused by structural issues can undermine community resilience. This was certainly the case with the impact that the COVID-19 emergency response had on the organisation, as it stretched KVDT's resources and pushed them into a more traditional charity service delivery mode that continued beyond the pandemic response. Added to this, the precarity in the organisation due to a lack of permanent home and the constant need to acquire funding meant it was difficult to make long-term plans. Furthermore, many of the funding opportunities were for projects more closely aligned with helping the community adapt to or cope with the social impacts of the crises generated. This, I argue, hampered efforts to develop more transformative change, as resources and time were absorbed by these projects and short-term issues, which limits the role that community organisations are likely to play in tackling the climate emergency. It is this interaction, between a desire to create long-term change and the need to deal with short-term issues that means we should not be overly dismissive of community action to challenge neoliberalism and play a role in tackling the climate emergency, nor should we be overly celebratory or optimistic about what can be achieved.

An important dimension of a focus on short-term projects or working in an emergency context like COVID-19, was how it impacted on the motivations of those that were involved in the organisation, as well as on the types of strategies that the organisation pursued. I interviewed Richard, a KVDT leader who had been involved with KVDT for several years, and his motivation and view on the role of KVDT was interesting,

> "Well, KVDT is a slightly different beast in as much as I didn't necessarily join it so much for the change side, almost more of a support [approach], I think. In my eyes you're more or less maintaining the status-quo."

Within this he referred to the work with children and families, as well as the COVID-19 response. What this demonstrated is that a policy environment that pushes resilience as a top-down governance technique, and that expects communities to absorb crises, does

filter down to some of those that are motivated to be involved in a voluntary association, such as KVDT. This can be seen broadly, in terms of KVDT's overall mission, but also impacted upon how Richard viewed the role that KVDT should play in tackling climate change, which as I showed in 6.2.1 was to support a "non-disruptive" approach. Another interaction during a KVDT board meeting related to this, showing how even those who see KVDT as playing a role in community transformation were pushed towards community resilience as adaptation approaches. When discussing creating time for focusing on the strategies of developing community assets through acquiring two derelict former mills, Amy responded that she spent her time "worrying about children going to bed hungry." Therefore, within KVDT there was a balance between short-term immediate priorities to tackle vulnerability and longer-term more transformative change strategies. The COVID-19 public health and social crisis was an example of how that balance could be tipped towards focusing on community resilience as adaptation and short-term priorities to help the community to cope, at the expense of long-term transformation.

The fact that KVDT continued to focus on working to support vulnerable people after the COVID-19 pandemic response ended suggests that the more immediate crises have continued to push the organisation in this direction. The policy environment that Joseph (2013) argued demanded communities adapt to state withdrawal in the time of austerity, was still the dominant approach that resurfaced after the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, as the UK moved on from the COVID-19 crisis, another crisis began to emerge around the cost of living, as energy costs grew rapidly, inflation rose, food bills increased, and wages did not keep pace (Hourston, 2022). This meant that KVDT were still focusing on supporting a local food pantry many months after the project was supposed to have ended. It also meant that their plans for the winter of 2022-2023 were focused on turning the community hub into a "warm hub", so that people who could not afford to heat their homes would have a warm space that they could use. Community organisations being pushed into a service delivery role has important implications for the potential role that they can play in tackling the climate emergency. My research shows that following COVID-19 small community organisations continued to grapple with a tough social, political, and economic environment in which community resilience

was tested, stretched, and potentially depleted. Without a strong framework from national or local government for tackling the climate emergency, small community teams will struggle to manage competing demands, as community needs grow, finances become stretched, and they are forced to make tough decisions between long-term projects and short-term support.

As we have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than innovative approaches to state and civil society partnership that can help us to "build back better", civil society, third sector, and community organisations such as KVDT still needed to play a role as partners of the state in filling the gaps and leading on tackling local issues. This aligns with the government resilience agenda that calls for communities to help themselves during emergencies, become more self-reliant, and adapt to the contexts that they face (Mackinnon and Derickson, 2013; Joseph, 2013). Or, as Derickson (2016) would argue, top-down resilience requires communities to keep taking knocks and coming back from them. The case of COVID-19, and the subsequent cost of living crisis, are evidence of this.

What is important to note is that KVDT wanted to work on projects like the COVID-19 Food Hub, the food pantry, and other projects that supported the community. The COVID-19 work also, in the words of Amy, "put us on the map" with the council and demonstrated that KVDT could deliver on important work. This led, in some respects, to a lack of desire to challenge the council publicly, an approach that sought to establish themselves as a credible partner for the council, and as highlighted in 6.3.3, when Amy spoke about the council getting "hammered" by cuts, empathy towards the difficult position that the council was in. As Amy said,

> "Sometimes I am really critical of Leeds City Council, and I would never, would never slag them off publicly, it would always be behind closed doors."

This comment seems to point to how working with the council can lead to depoliticised responses to the problems that communities face and supports the view that top-down resilience from the government and council can work to discipline those that interact with them (Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). However, what my research suggests is that working in this way to tackle vulnerability was perceived within KVDT as a way to

generate social power. This was through increasing the power of the organisation with the council, or "putting us on the map" as Amy said about working with the council on the COVID-19 response. This reputation was seen as important and could increase KVDT's influence with the council. By becoming a knowledgeable and experienced voice for the community, it could increase their ability to shape the community. This was by becoming a stronger organisation in the area, and through increasing their visibility and presence. Thus, this supports the idea that projects that are not necessarily transformative can increase social power, in this case by seeking to use the experiences and relationships developed through the COVID-19 response to increase influence, support more people, and find ways to bring the community together.

The complexity involved in trying to increase social power through tackling vulnerability and working with the state placed the organisation in a difficult position. However, it speaks to what many theorists of contentious politics acknowledge, that in the age of neoliberalism, progressive movements often find themselves wanting more state intervention to protect people from the negative social impacts generated by the market, rather than less (Bauman 2007; Della Porta, 2015). In reference to the implications for climate action at the community level, it certainly reinforces what Howarth et al., (2021) describe as needing a strong framework between the local state and community for achieving climate-based transformations. What my research shows is that this framework must be broader than simply actions to lower carbon and must work with communities to address the vulnerabilities that they face in their specific contexts. Under a community resilience framing, this should be based on conceptions of community resilience as transformation, rather than seeking adaptation, coping, or bouncing back to an unjust status-quo.

Another aspect of the COVID-19 response was that it enabled KVDT to build relationships with other organisations across the city and within the valley. Building networks is an important dimension of social power and community resilience (Olin Wright, 2010; 2018; McCrea, 2014). During COVID-19, this included being part of a city-wide network of community care hubs that worked with the council through a partnership model that fostered a community led approach to delivering this critical work

(Bachmann, 2022). KVDT was able to develop new relationships with local businesses, schools, churches, and other community organisations. Whilst this does not change the key point that the work was fundamentally about delivering a service on behalf of the state, it demonstrated the complexity of how community resilience is developed, and how a crisis such as COVID-19 can have unintended consequences for organisations.

For KVDT the unintended consequence was moving them into a new area of work, and with an ongoing social crisis post-pandemic, the relationships with schools, churches, and other local organisations have strengthened their capacity to support people and families. In one way, this detracts from tackling the climate emergency, as it pushes KVDT into an ongoing service delivery role. However, it also develops community resilience through interaction between civil society groups and between civil society groups and others within their area, the relationships that form have the potential to build community strength (McCrea, 2014). This is important within the neoliberal context, where public institutions are under threat (Klein, 2014). Developing strong networks of progressive institutions is an important dynamic of developing community resilience, as they can create supportive relationships and help mobilise the community for actions of several types (Berkes and Ross, 2013). The relationships created across civil society have the potential to play a vital role in tackling the climate emergency (Klein, 2014).

Within resilience literature, I have acknowledged the critique of resilience, that it is used to push neoliberalism and its logics, that it is uninspiring, upholds the status quo, and that there is a dark side to promoting resilience, as it can perpetuate inequality (Joseph, 2013, Derickson, 2016; Bourbeau, 2013). This critique of resilience has value in its critique of top-down resilience, and I support the implicit desire of those thinkers for radical action focused on transformation. However, in dismissing actions that fail to push for transformation creates a high bar for what type of activity is deemed acceptable (North, 2017). Equally, it ignores the fact that by understanding community capacities to create community resilience and to challenge more powerful actors and structures, as well as the limitations that they face, can help us to build a more complete understanding of urban struggle in the present (Wright, 2021; Deverteuil, 2015). By

demonstrating throughout this research that community resilience can, in line with Twigger-Ross et al., (2015), contain proactive and reactive elements, as well as showing that community resilience as adaptation and transformation interact, in ways that can limit or enhance transformative potential, I show that community resilience as built in the community is complex and nuanced.

Within KVDT, projects and strategies of adaptation and transformation co-existed. Sometimes the strategies were quite separate, and, in some instances, they fed off each other and supported one another. This supports the Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) view that working within a community setting to achieve change is "messy". In effect, KVDT wanted to mitigate some of the worst impacts of the neoliberal environment in which they existed by building an organisation and structures that could minimise some of the negative consequences for people and the community (Ryan, 2015). It also demonstrated a desire to own the need to change and how community organising could be built around this (Twigger-Ross, 2015; Brown, 2014). This intentional approach could support practices that contradicted neoliberalism and create spaces that existed beyond it (Magis, 2010; Deverteuil and Golubchikov, 2016). In the case of KVDT, this was articulated as sustainable action to tackle the climate emergency through tackling local problems, whilst promoting social equality in an inner-city area. However, the needs generated by austerity and COVID-19, alongside the lack of a comprehensive political framework for creating changes, limited the ability of KVDT to enact this vision and saw them move between proactive and reactive forms of community resilience.

6.5 The role of community-based action in tackling the climate emergency

In this section, I look at how the form of community led place-based climate action that was evident in my research can contribute towards tackling the climate emergency. To do so, I want to add to two key debates in climate literature and contentious politics literature, to position my research and the nature of the community action within broader climate debates. Firstly, this entails exploring whether this activity is political in nature. Secondly, I relate this to building community led alternatives. This supports an important

argument of this chapter, that a key element of climate action in this setting was about starting from the context of the community, namely the interplay between tackling vulnerability and building alternatives. A second argument is that a key element of climate action in this type of setting should be based on locally contextualised knowledge, vision, strategy, and opportunity. This develops an approach to building community resilience based on efforts to create a "positive sense of place" (Wilding, 2011, p. 2). This work can become "the 'seeds' of transformation" (Burch et al., 2014, p. 469). Building on this idea, I argue that it does not necessarily create linear change for dealing with the climate emergency.

Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) observed when working with local groups in Leeds that many groups, and individuals in those groups, did not clearly articulate against an opponent. As discussed in section 6.4, KVDT's approaches moved between community resilience as adaptation and transformation. It was in this context that their efforts to tackle the climate emergency existed. In this section, I relate this to broader discussions about climate action and contentious politics in a neoliberal environment. Many people dismiss the potential of community action to challenge the neoliberal status-quo of market domination and individualised solutions, that it is easily co-opted into this environment, and their practices reinforce, strengthen, and further the advance of the very forces that they are acting to negate (Swyngedouw 2011, 2014). There are clear connections between this dismissal of the potential of community action with critiques of resilience, such as by Mackinnon and Derickson (2013), who argue that resilience approaches do not tackle structural inequalities and perpetuate domination.

In line with Mouffe (2014), thinkers such as Swyngedouw (2011, 2014) argue for an overtly politicised response by groups seeking to challenge neoliberalism. This entails networks or organisations being involved in a range of counter-hegemonic practices opposed to current neoliberal approaches, by forging conflict with dominant practices and beliefs. To Mouffe (2014), being political entails challenging the configuration of power relations within the social structure, based in part on antagonism between competing visions, through which a struggle emerges. Climate action in KVDT did not conform to this notion of being political. However, the politics emerged through issues

and action. There were efforts to challenge power, but the focus was on transformation through developing a positive sense of place based around a positive sense of what the future could be (Wilding, 2011; Jeffrey and Dyson, 2021). This places community action within a setting such as KVDT outside of this antagonistic approach, but I argue that there is still a significant role for this style of community led response in tackling the climate emergency.

6.5.1 Contributing to climate action through creating a positive sense of place

Climate action in KVDT sat within attempts to build community resilience as transformation. The symbiotic and interstitial strategies outlined in Chapter 5 were important for developing, or seeking to gain ownership of community assets, influencing local political processes, and looking for opportunities to generate local activism. Here, I draw out what this tells us about the nature of climate action within KVDT. Secondly, this work demonstrated the importance of improvisation, how protected institutionalised community spaces could further action, and how actions were aiming to have a wider societal impact within their area (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2021).

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Kirkstall Valley Farm was a project that developed an alternative non-market-based economy through CSA. This project aimed to increase social power through increasing autonomy over economic activity in relation to local food production. It also sought to build social power through the acquisition of land to develop community assets, with a focus on community benefit over profit. To develop this project, in the initial phase KVDT had to interact with the state to secure land. This enabled them to turn this land into community space, outside of the market. Thus, increasing the community control within the area. When combined with thinking about their efforts to secure other sites for community ownership, it presents a picture of developing social power in relation to politics and the economy through the transfer of assets to community control (Lent and Studdert, 2021). Another dimension of the projects to develop and control community assets was that they were about "developing new forms of place-based identity and community" (Cumbers et al., 2018, p. 134).

These transformative projects represented a sense of building a progressive community and strengthening community autonomy.

What linked community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation was that both approaches were seeking to build social power through bringing the organisation closer to the community, demonstrating that their area could be different, and that the community does have strength within it. The political, economic, and social context created barriers in terms of realising ambitions, but KVDT were pragmatic. Whilst they were pursuing a vision, it was a spirit of wanting to prove that they could achieve important outcomes that made their local area a better place to live that motivated them. The farm played a key role in this as Adam, a KVDT leader, put it,

> "I remember at the start of the farm project people saying to me, "there's no way you'll be able to start a farm in the middle of a city, that's just insane" ....It can be done, you've just got to get in and see how it can be done and if you can put that out to other people and sort of inspire them to do it."

What Adam's comment demonstrated was that KVDT were experimental, that they hoped to inspire others in the community, and people in other communities. In this way, approaches to climate action through a broad-based community organisation were about understanding the local context, both the vulnerabilities and opportunities that existed, and generating community led transformation through a variety of means. The Kirkstall Valley Farm and the attempts to develop and control community assets demonstrated that the nature of climate action within a community setting could be ambitious. It intertwined ideas about creating community led sustainability through building a strong institution, alongside being opportunistic and being prepared to improvise (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2021).

An important aspect, which creates uncertainty about how effective community action for tackling the climate emergency can be, is that there was no certainty of success at the outset of the farm or any other ambitious projects. What may appear to be gaps and opportunities that the community can exploit, may turn out not to be. This is an important dimension of my argument, as it highlights structural constraints in creating change and building alternatives for organisations seeking to work within and beyond

the current system. The ongoing struggles that KVDT had in their unsuccessful attempts to acquire former mills demonstrated the opaqueness of decision-making, and a lack of a framework for interaction between the state, business, and civil society to support community benefit, shift power to the community, and tackle the climate emergency.

What the strategies, perceptions, and ideas that existed in KVDT can add to understandings of community led climate action is the idea that it must be informed by the context of the community, the crises that they are tackling, and how it combines making a difference in the present, with an eye on long-term transformation. A meeting that I had with Natalie, a volunteer who was interested in joining The A65 Group, highlighted another dimension to this. The following extract is from my meeting with Natalie and taken from my observation diary.

> Within the discussion, Natalie was interested in ideas around 'Play Streets' and 'walking to school days.' We talked about my research and how it fits into climate and sustainability. Natalie made the point that talking about climate change and sustainability "often goes over people's heads and that you have speak to them about the things that matter in their lives." This chimed with discussions that I had with Jackie, were we discussed children having the chance to play out and how cars ruin this, how car parking clutters the streets, or ruins the verges. Jackie felt that tackling this was a way to engage people in ideas of more sustainable practice and improve life for people at the same time.

In a community organisation with a broad focus there was a balance between what the climate science tells us needs to happen, in terms of speed and nature of the changes required, the desire to take political approaches, and the need to meet the community within their context and understandings. It was from this basis that context relevant strategies and activities could be developed. Natalie argued for this approach, talking about how climate change could be abstract, or concepts of sustainability would not engage people unless it spoke to things that mattered in their lives. This was evident in The A65 Group, as the group wanted to focus on actions that reduced car usage in the Kirkstall Valley, yet activities began to centre on how people could play a role in improving their area and neighbourhoods. Through engagement with the council and developing interstitial projects the group supported alternative ways that people could move around their locality, which could be seen in activities like path clearing and the

'Save Kirkstall Footpaths' campaign. Thus, the politics conformed to Wilding's (2011) notion of generating a positive sense of place, and the politics shifted depending on the different opportunities and activities that were being pursued.

Through The A65 Group there were interesting dimensions to what climate action within a community organisation looked like. Firstly, the group was autonomous from KVDT, but it was able to leverage the institutional capacity of KVDT. For instance, KVDT as an organisation could support funding bids, through KVDT the work of the group could be promoted, new members recruited, and KVDT facilities hosted meetings once COVID-19 restrictions lifted. The activities that the group focused on contrasted with the dominant state approach to tackling climate change that I have characterised as technocratic, market led, and tend towards individualisation within solutions for the climate emergency, such as a focus on individual practice or people's carbon footprints (Bergman et al., 2010; Paterson and Striple, 2010). The goal within the group was to create progressive change for a more people friendly and environmentally friendly local area. In many ways, reflecting the relative power of the group to the state and economy, the work undertaken was action focused, experimental, and aimed to contribute to the beginnings of a broader transformation (Burch et al., 2014).

In one meeting of The A65 Group, we discussed the types of actions that we should undertake. Valerie, buoyed by the success of the wildflower planting, felt that this was the scale that the group should operate at, in her words to get "quick wins". Valerie thought that this could be achieved through activities like finding ways to make the "everyday walking routes more attractive and appealing." Whilst it is important to acknowledge the small-scale of this type of activity, I do not think we should dismiss it. For the group, it was playing a small part in challenging the dominance of the car in their community and asking questions about what public space was for and who it was for. Jackie commented, "We're not brought up to think of public space as belonging to the community." For her, actions like path clearing, wildflower planting, and litter picking were about "Inspiring people to care about public spaces." The group perceived its role in supporting active travel by contributing to minor changes that could remove barriers that people faced when choosing between the car or active travel. As Jackie put it, "It's

lots of little problems that makes walking around the neighbourhood undesirable." This highlights that this form of activity contributes to developing alternatives through what Chatterton (2019) argued, that a key part of transformation is about making changes alongside developing new narratives about how things can be different.

In The A65 Group the activities and types of solutions that people supported were about contributing to creating a positive sense of place and looking to remove barriers that prevented people from taking sustainable options. As well as the smaller actions that used the interstitial strategies outlined in Chapter 5, there was also a desire to support larger-scale change. For instance, the group was interested in how infrastructure was needed to enable people to take active travel options, such as an affordable public transport system that was fully integrated, and active travel infrastructure like dedicated cycle lanes, improved road surfaces, and safe bike storage. Through the transport consultation the group wanted to enable people in the area to articulate what the positives and alternatives could look like to current unsustainable travel practices. This was an approach to climate action based upon tackling the barriers that existed in the local area, through mobilising the community to play an active role, with a positive sense of place. It was an approach that was interested in how people and the community could thrive, and how we could tackle the climate emergency through this, rather than looking at individuals and their choices. This is a different form of politics, one that seeks transformation through improvisation, opportunism, and tied to an idea that communities can play a role by coming together to create change in their local community.

Through engaging with broader political opportunities and moments for climate action, KVDT and The A65 Group were able to create new connections, both with other organisations and with political processes from the international to local level. For instance, KVDT connected with an established craftivist group to discuss how they could work together. The initial project that KVDT supported was a "Green Hearts" project that aimed to raise awareness and push for more ambition at the COP 26 International Climate Change Conference, which took place in Glasgow in November 2021. The idea was that people would make green hearts, which could then be sent to

MPs calling for them to support more ambition. This was an experimental project to explore how KVDT could mobilise people to engage in the political process and to create new networks. By engaging with other networks, KVDT were fostering social connections across the city. KVDT were also mobilising supporters to act and connecting supporters to the global dimension of the climate emergency. Climate action in this setting did not always have to have a sole focus on climate change and climate change mitigation (Lent and Studdert, 2021). What the examples in this section illustrate, was that the "how" of community resilience was about the range and depth of community connection, built on self-organisation, shared values, and connections between people and place (Berkes and Ross, 2013).

6.5.2 Different perspectives of community-led approaches within KVDT

In interviews, I broached how people in KVDT thought about being political, to get a sense of the range of perspectives that existed in the organisation. For instance, when I was interviewing Yvonne, a KVDT leader, I asked her what challenges KVDT could make to local or national government. Her response was, "For me it's more about the community." She went on to discuss how KVDT should be about bringing people together and talked in terms of activities for people and spaces for people to mix. Richard, a KVDT leader, went further,

> "I'm not interested whether you're Tory, Liberal [Democrat], Labour, hard-left or whatever, erm, I'm not interested anymore. It's too, too irrelevant I would argue. I don't want it to be a political organisation, and if it became that we were, and we started to have political aims, then I'd step back. But I don't think anyone wants that."

Yvonne and Richard's comments are interesting, and indicative of many of the responses that I received when I raised this subject in the interviews. Firstly, there was a tendency to frame the answers around the idea of party politics. Secondly, there was Richard's comment that he did not "think anyone wants that." This ties in with Yvonne, who when pushed on this reverted to talking about KVDT as a place for community. This ran through the organisation, from board members, paid staff, to the volunteer network. In Chapter 4, I related my interview with Michael, a regular volunteer before

and during COVID-19, when I asked about the difference that KVDT could make to people in crisis, he talked of helping people that needed food, people who turned up at the hub with nowhere else to go. He thought that KVDT should be an organisation that supported vulnerable people and provide a space for emotional support, saying "that's what KVDT should be about."

The prevalent attitudes convey a sense of how the environment in KVDT created the opportunity to pursue strategies of community resilience that do not challenge the status-quo. When contrasted with Adam's ideas about the farm being part of building an alternative food system and his attitude of "it can be done", it points to how the organisation can incorporate community resilience as transformation and community resilience as adaptation. Where the two approaches converge is that the main objective was to build a sense of community, a strong community that tackle the problems it faces, and bring the community together. When applied to efforts to tackle the climate emergency, this suggests that climate action in an organisation such as KVDT occupies a niche space between contentious politics and state led strategies.

An important dimension of the contribution that the KVDT form of place-based change could make to tackling the climate emergency was that for many people involved in KVDT this type of community action complemented other forms of activism. As Schlosberg and Coles (2016) observe, individuals may take part in more than one type of struggle so may not be ideologically committed to particular tactics or levels of politicisation. I spoke to Jessica, a volunteer, she was interested in regenerative practice and community work and had been involved in the wildlife group, the vegetable growing group, and subsequently became engaged in volunteering on the COVID-19 pandemic response. Outside of KVDT, she was a committed activist on a range of causes, from activism that she described as focusing on anti-fascist work, through to supporting refugees and LGBTQIA+ activism. For her, being involved with the work of KVDT complimented her other forms of activism, as it was "actively doing something, fun to do [community activities] with other people of the same mindset." For her, working with KVDT was important as, in her words, it was a way to "empower individuals" and "gives people an opportunity to learn more."

The ideas of building community that run throughout this research also motivated people, like Jessica, to be involved with the work of KVDT. As the example of Jessica or Jackie in The A65 Group shows, many of the people involved were also involved in a range of other groups and movements. From neighbourhood planning groups, Extinction Rebellion, professional campaigning organisations as paid staff, or volunteering with other networks or action groups. Being involved in KVDT appealed to people because it was different to those groups, and the nature of the climate action was different, due to being place-based and focused on building a sense of community and improving their community. Some people were motivated by questions of global justice. For instance, during COP26, out of frustration with being unable to achieve change through the council, Rachel, an A65 group member commented,

> "we're asking people [in the global South] that don't have enough to eat to make big changes and stop things like deforestation and we can't even close a small road because it makes some people unhappy."

KVDT offered a broad array of ways that people could be involved. From supporting the development of a CSA, volunteering in the education programme, being in the community hub to talk to people that came in for a cup of tea, to engaging in activist activities. Taken together, these examples of how different people viewed taking voluntary collective action through KVDT demonstrated that there was a broad range of ways that it could appeal to people. Rather than a focus on ideologies or a fixation on working in, against, or beyond capitalism, people were drawn in by supporting their community and creating a strong place-based community. The strength within KVDT was that it could appeal to people who liked agriculture, nature, community support, those who linked local action to climate justice, or people motivated by place-based activism. This meant that a range of transformations could be developed, and a range of strategies pursued. Undoubtedly, as Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) argue, this means that understanding this is messy. However, I argue that it is this messiness that demonstrates how this type of approach to creating change can sit alongside social movements or overtly political approaches.

The politics within groups aiming to challenge the status-quo and build alternative ways of being and doing were not static. In line with Pickerill (2021), the politics did not need

to be fully formed, especially when people felt they were acting from necessity. Their approaches were not necessarily ideological in their opposition, and alongside adapting to life under neoliberalism, they pursued a range of tactics that, even if not deliberately, slowed and replaced capitalism within the community (Chatterton and Pusey, 2020). KVDT practiced a politics based around how people and the community could tackle the climate emergency together, by focusing on how to make the area a better place to live. This is a different form of politics, and one that can play a significant role in the climate emergency, by generating community resilience as the starting point.

6.6 Time, the neoliberal policy environment and community action for the climate emergency

As outlined in 6.2.1, urgent action is needed to reduce carbon and limit global warming. When thinking about the role that community led strategies can play alongside international, national, and local policies to move towards net zero, time is an important element of how effective the activity is. Therefore, I finish this chapter with analysis of the relationship between time and the processes, strategies, and the likely impacts that community led action of the type outlined in my research can make. I begin by placing this in the context of the national and council level policy environment and the contradiction between the need to move at pace to tackle the climate emergency and the lack of urgency for dealing with the challenge, as well as a lack of long-term policy planning and direction (Willis, 2020). In community-led approaches to tackling the climate emergency, there are three important dimensions in relation to time. Firstly, attempting to pursue symbiotic strategies in the current political and economic context was time-consuming and there were many uncertainties and barriers to success. Alongside this, the range of challenges mean that community resilience as adaptation could limit the time that KVDT had to pursue more ambitious plans. Secondly, I broadly support arguments that participatory approaches that foreground social empowerment, and tackle a range of problems that communities face, is important (Howarth et al., 2021; Tiratelli et al., 2021; Evans, 2021). However, community organising processes take time to develop and the impacts of projects that are derived from this form of

organising do not necessarily have a carbon reduction benefit. Thirdly, due to the many pressures that people faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was difficulty mobilising the community due to the time pressures that people faced in their lives in this time of crisis. These time related factors ae important for assessing the role that community action can play in the climate emergency.

6.6.1 Time and the neoliberal policy approaches to the climate emergency

Top-down policy approaches that favour technological change and individual responsibility over collective transformations are unlikely to happen at the speed required (Lamb et al., 2020). This is an issue of the dominance of neoliberal policy and the favouring of markets, market led responses, and an individualisation of the problem of the climate emergency (Bludhorn, 2015). As discussed throughout this research, an important characteristic of neoliberalism is that it is not a complete plan for governance (Peck and Theodore, 2012). One of the impacts of this for national government approaches is that they lack the framework for long term decision-making that is necessary for dealing with the climate emergency (Willis, 2020; Howarth et al., 2021). Long-term planning and decision-making are vital for tackling the climate emergency, to give confidence to business and communities about the direction of travel, as well as to ensure that time is given for policy impact to be felt (Bray and Ford, 2022). Another aspect of the problem with a top-down policy model for dealing with the climate emergency is that politicians do not feel significant pressure to prioritise tackling the climate emergency and often de-prioritise it in favour of other more short-term priorities (Willis, 2018; 2018a). This creates a political environment in which leadership for radical change is lacking, and that without this the public either do not understand or are unwilling to accept many of the changes that are required (Willis, 2020; 2020a).

The prevailing policy environment makes it difficult to develop and implement action at the necessary speed that the climate emergency demands. This policy environment hampers efforts at transformative change outside of a belief in solutions that can be found within the narrow parameters of marketisation, commodification, endless growth, and exploitation of natural resources (Middlemiss, 2014; Chatterton, 2016). In terms of Howarth et al., (2021) argument, that there is a lack of a framework from national to

local and local to civil society, my research demonstrated how this hindered bringing about change at the community, neighbourhood, and street levels. As the case study of KVDT demonstrated, community organisations and activists struggled to engage the council to make progressive changes in line with the priorities of the council's own climate emergency. In my research, this was evident in issues such as creating low traffic neighbourhoods and acquiring community assets. The case of developing community assets highlighted the impacts of governance that favoured capital and the private sector and suggested a limitation to developing community resilience through asset development. The aspect of time is relevant, in the sense of policy priorities and processes acting as barriers to achieving changes at the community level in line with, and with the urgency, that the climate emergency demands.

6.6.2 Time, community resilience, and climate related transformation

As I have discussed throughout this research, efforts to build alternatives at the community level were difficult in a time of intersecting crises. Across a range of areas, the KVDT experience of working with the council was time consuming, bogged down in bureaucratic processes, and the broader funding model for community organisations meant that there was precarity within the organisation and within the projects undertaken. Examples throughout this research, whether working on funding proposals or with the projects to take ownership of or develop community assets, these projects took time to develop. Whilst the projects to develop the farm and the mills pointed to interesting approaches to developing community resilience in the face of the climate emergency, there was the issue of uncertainty as to what the outcomes of these strategies and approaches would be. By their very nature, community organisations that often rely on volunteers, have limited resources, are often overstretched, and have limited power (Middlemiss, 2010). Without a policy framework in place that enables communities to be well funded, take control of local decisions, and supports them to develop community assets, time consuming projects are undertaken with little certainty of success.

6.6.3 Time and developing participatory processes for tackling the climate emergency

The third dimension of time that was important within my research setting, and links to potential barriers for a community led response to the climate emergency, was the issue that developing community resilience processes that foreground participation, consensus, and creating new forms of social relationship, are themselves time consuming. However, a key component of generating alternatives is through increasing social power, and in a voluntary setting this should be done through developing new practices based on collaboration and co-operation (Olin Wright, 2010; Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2005). Building alternatives was both about the method and the impacts that those methods aimed to foster (Oosterlynck et al., 2013). Building a participatory approach was vital, as there was no certainty of success, and even if you fail through impact, you have still contributed in some way towards transformation through altering social relationships and developing new ways of engaging people in innovative action (Moulaert et al., 2014). However, this can be a slow process when urgent and far-reaching change is required.

This issue of time within developing collaborative methods was evident from my research. My fieldwork was around one year in length, and it took time to understand KVDT as an organisation, through this understanding I developed the action research component of my fieldwork. As I found, participatory processes are slow, as priority areas need to be agreed and creating frameworks in which groups operate takes time. Once the groups were set up, relationships had to be developed and become established, the group had to build consensus around a vision, a strategy, which actions to take, and where to focus effort and limited resources. Linked to this was the idea discussed in this chapter of developing contextually informed actions that are meaningful to those participating. This meant supporting activity that responded to either unmet need or priorities that were established by the community. As discussed by Tiratelli et al. (2021), this can mean that even with a climate focus, not all activity has a direct impact on tackling the climate emergency. Climate activity is part of a broader swathe of actions that seek to generate social power, and this means that action is not solely focused on carbon reduction. When viewed alongside the need to tackle the

intersecting crises of neoliberalism, this means that there is a need to be realistic about the contributions that this type of community action can make in the short term.

6.6.4 Time and the pressures on people through the intersecting crises that communities face

Across this research a range of issues have been explored that come together to point towards time as a barrier for people who want to engage in collective action. There was nuance within this, for instance KVDT's volunteer list grew during the COVID-19 pandemic due to an increase in free time through lockdown and the furlough scheme for many of the volunteers. However, many others, especially women, struggled during the COVID-19 crisis, as issues such as home-schooling, or increased caring responsibilities, meant that they had to focus their time on caring priorities (Power, 2020). For instance, Mary wanted to join The A65 Group, as she was passionate about reducing cars in her local area, but she had to drop out to care for her mother. Natalie wanted to join but she had a young family and a job that meant that she worked irregular hours. Thus, for several reasons of time-pressure both did not feel able to commit to contributing to the group. Developing change at the community level is a lengthy process that requires energy and commitment. The nature of paid work in the UK, with insecure jobs, low pay, and precarious employment makes it more difficult for many people to pursue volunteering for the collective good (Graeber, 2018). As the COVID-19 crisis receded, it has been replaced with other crises, such as the cost of living crisis, that will continue to exert pressure on many people and leave people without support for tackling the range of issues that they face, this will inevitably place more burdens on people, and make creating strong community-led movements for tackling the climate emergency difficult in many communities. This speaks to how efforts to create community resilience are hampered by top-down government resilience agendas, and that these agendas, rather than strengthening the capacity of communities to generate resilience, deplete it further (Harrison, 2013).

6.7 Conclusion

The empirical data and arguments developed in this chapter contribute towards the concept of community resilience by exploring the co-constituted dynamic between top-down policy prescriptions and community responses in the face of crises (Deverteuil et al., 2021). By applying this idea to current approaches to tackling the climate emergency at the community level in the UK, I add to understandings of community resilience by showing how this environment created barriers and limitations for community efforts to tackle the climate emergency. In section 6.2 and 6.3, I explored the question of the role of community organisations in tackling the climate emergency by asking how do neoliberal governance approaches to climate change support or limit community organisations responses to the climate emergency? I argued that national level climate governance does not provide a strong national framework for either tackling the climate emergency through local council initiatives, or for communities to play a role within climate mitigation.

Based on the argument from Howarth et al., (2021), that there is a lack of a comprehensive framework between the local council and community organisations that want to support action on the climate emergency, I showed the practicalities of how this policy environment limits the ability of community actors to achieve ambitious change that could have greater impact on tackling the climate emergency. Despite the climate emergency declarations by many local authorities and the beginnings of some participatory approaches at the council level, there still lacks a comprehensive framework to support transformation at the community level. In many ways, council led processes still aim to develop a top-down climate response through policy rather than community empowerment. The COVID-19 pandemic response demonstrated that a much stronger partnership approach is possible, but participation was still based on the council's priorities, and was limited in scope and nature.

I contribute to a critical understanding of community resilience by demonstrating how broader neoliberal approaches have depleted resilience (Harrison, 2013). Through exploring community-led approaches that generate community resilience within an

environment of intersecting crises, I looked at the limits of climate action in this setting. I looked at the interaction of KVDT's approaches to adaptation and transformation to show how mobilising people and meeting people's needs is a mixture of tackling vulnerability and working towards creating place-based transformations. I built on Olin Wright's (2010) conception of social power to link the two aspects of the work. Through this idea, I showed how KVDT attempted to mobilise people and resources both to support the community to cope and adapt to the context of austerity and COVID-19, alongside developing strategies that could create transformation in their community in a range of areas. This was evident in Community Supported Agriculture as well as in the interstitial projects that The A65 Group developed. My research furthers ideas of community resilience by showing the relationships between the different strands of community resilience and how they can support and inhibit one another. For instance, I argued that the intersecting crises of austerity and COVID-19 pushed KVDT into strategies and projects that focused on community resilience as adaptation at the expense of community resilience as transformation.

A further contribution of this research is to understandings of what this action represents, arguing that it is not political in the sense of antagonism (Mouffe, 2014). However, the politics emerged around local issues and through locally targeted action. This meant that this type of community-led approach for climate action compliments other forms of more contentious actions. The type of climate action identified in my research was primarily about generating a positive sense of place (Wilding, 2010). Furthermore, the politics shifted depending on the different opportunities and activities that were being pursued. The strategies incorporated ideas about creating community led sustainability through building a strong institution, being opportunistic, and based on improvisation (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2021). I argued that this was still a vital component of tackling the climate emergency and that, in line with Pickerill (2021), projects should be valued for what they achieve, not what they lack. In some ways, as Burch et al. (2014) argue, the main contribution is that the work can become the beginnings of transformation without necessarily creating linear change for dealing with the climate emergency.

The final aspect that I looked at was the issue of time in relation to the urgency of the need to take climate action and the difficulties of taking this action in a neoliberal policy environment. A lack of urgency at the national level in the UK, a narrow range of proposed solutions that rely on market thinking and technological fixes, means that change is not being created at the speed required. At the community level, dealing with intersecting crises depletes resilience and prevents organisations dedicating the time needed to develop climate action. Attempting to pursue symbiotic strategies in the current political and economic context is time-consuming and there are many barriers to success. Alongside this, building participatory approaches takes time to develop, and mobilising community is difficult due to the time pressures that people face in their lives in this time of crisis. Having outlined the findings of my research, I now move on to the conclusion and show how I answered my research questions, met my objectives, and what my research contributed to closing gaps in existing knowledge.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

7.1 How my findings answered the research questions

The overarching research question was, "how are people coming together within the case study organisation to tackle climate change, alongside the social crises generated by austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic?" What my research demonstrated was that in KVDT, a Community Benefit Society in Leeds, people were coming together to attempt to build a strong community organisation that could tackle the vulnerabilities that were created by austerity and exacerbated by COVID-19. Alongside this, KVDT were trying to build a more sustainable urban environment that could play a role in tackling the climate emergency. The approach that KVDT undertook to tackling the climate emergency was through symbiotic strategies that entailed working in partnership with the state, and interstitial strategies in the gaps and margins of the neoliberal system. Through a qualitative research approach that combined ethnographic and action research methodologies and methods I was able to show how KVDT built community resilience to the various crises. By developing ideas based on community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation I demonstrated that KVDT had an approach to the intersecting crises that combined working inside and outside of the neoliberal system.

By developing the idea of community resilience, I showed how top-down governance approaches created vulnerability and impacted on community approaches to tackling the range of crises that the community faced (Wright, 2021; Deverteuil et al., 2021). My research employed Twigger-Ross et al., (2011; 2014; 2015) strands of resilience to show how strategies to tackle the climate emergency were part of broader community resilience work. This work was focused on community resilience as adaptation and community resilience as transformation. I illustrated how KVDT worked within current political, economic, and social policy structures and that this required community resilience as adaptation so that the organisation could succeed in this environment. This was evident through their attempts to secure resources to support the community,

develop programmes of work that tackled vulnerability, and deliver services on behalf of the state. Alongside this, KVDT were attempting to create transformation in their local area based on creating strategies for change that involved symbiotic and interstitial strategies.

What was interesting about the KVDT case was that the different strategies of transformation could be co-present within individual projects. My research demonstrated the complex relationships between the policy approaches contained in austerity and COVID-19 and community responses. By applying the lens of community resilience, I was able to show the complex relationships between the different strands of resilience as adaptation and transformation. I showed that these relationships could enhance as well as detract from one another. This research provided evidence about the role that communities can play in ongoing efforts to tackle the climate emergency, but neoliberal approaches of governance create many barriers that must be overcome. To answer the overarching research question, I had three sub-questions, which I discuss now.

7.1.1 How did the case study organisation support community resilience as adaptation to the impacts of austerity and COVID-19?

Chapter 4 answered the question, how did the case study organisation support community resilience as adaptation to the impacts of austerity and COVID-19? To contribute to the concept of community resilience as adaptation, I began by looking at how the social crises were generated by the policy approaches of austerity, which created vulnerabilities that were exacerbated following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this research began by exploring the intersecting crises of austerity and COVID-19 and the range of negative social impacts that were felt at the community level. It argued that the social crises were generated by the policy environment of austerity and the extension of roll out and rollback neoliberalism. Connected to this was the discourse of top-down resilience from the government that justified the withdrawal of the state and supported the neoliberal approach of getting communities and individuals to be responsible for dealing with social issues and delivering services (Hall and Lamont, 2013; Joseph, 2013; Aiken et al., 2017).

The social impacts were felt at the community level through a reduction of service provision, increased poverty, deregulation of the labour market, and an increase in vulnerability through precarity (Clarke and Cominetti, 2019). In KVDT, they linked these issues to a broader impact of a lack of community, which was expressed by people in KVDT through statements such as the area "had no heart", or that it was difficult to build community in the austerity environment. The COVID-19 pandemic intersected with the impacts of austerity to create a new social emergency, due to a series of national lockdowns and the shutting of many aspects of the economy. There were two key arguments that I developed when looking at the neoliberal policy environment. Firstly, the UK government called on communities to show resilience and fill the gaps created by the retreat of the state. However, at the community level, community organisations such as KVDT still needed state support to step into the gaps in provision. Secondly, whilst the overall direction had been a reduction in services and welfare provision, the state still provided support to solve practical problems that austerity and COVID-19 created.

After setting the context through analysis of top-down neoliberal approaches, I highlighted KVDT's responses, looking at how they adapted to this prevailing neoliberal policy environment and attempted to work within it to build the organisation through acquiring resources. This was evident in their approaches to securing funding for their programme work, such as the education programme, and to secure community spaces, "Unit 11" and the Kirkstall Valley Farm. Once the COVID-19 pandemic began, the infrastructure that they had developed through acquiring resources was used to support the community through the COVID-19 emergency. During the COVID-19 pandemic, their community resilience approaches were based around supporting the community to cope by working in partnership with the council. By playing the role of the local Community Care Hub, the organisation supported the community to react to, cope with, and adjust to the new reality of the COVID-19 emergency. This meant that they supported people through food distribution, shopping, education programmes, collecting medicine, and attempting to create some projects that built social connection. An interesting dimension of the COVID-19 response was that Leeds City Council facilitated

the work and supported it financially, but it was locally led and community driven (Tiratelli and Kaye, 2020).

The COVID-19 work demonstrated that during an emergency, new forms of partnerships could be developed between community organisers and the council to meet people's needs during the crisis. KVDT's COVID-19 work was primarily based upon service delivery and pushed the organisation into a charitable style giver/receiver dynamic. However, the KVDT COVID-19 mutual aid work was impressive in its scale, breadth, and its longevity. How KVDT responded to COVID-19 shows that within adaptation resilience there was also space to foster values outside of dominant neoliberal approaches. Much of the activity was focused on delivering people's necessities, but the organisation was proud that they went beyond their contractual obligations and used their role to try and build community strength and connection during a period of social isolation.

Finally, I looked at how developing adaptation resilience by working in the current structures presented significant limitations, which hindered and depleted community resilience efforts. I argued that it was the dominant top-down political and economic approaches that exacerbated vulnerability. There were four key ways that the policy environment shaped KVDT's strategies of adaptation and created barriers that threatened to overwhelm the organisation and limit its ability to build community resilience. Firstly, KVDT were responding to the crises and negative social impacts generated by neoliberal approaches, as was seen through austerity and COVID-19. As COVID-19 restrictions eased, a new crisis was forming around "cost of living" that meant that KVDT were continuing to tackle structurally created vulnerabilities. The second important aspect was that governance approaches meant that attempting to work within the system, to acquire resources and deliver projects, required KVDT to conform to a marketized environment (Joseph, 2013). This made the organisation itself vulnerable, existing in a state of precarity as they competed for the resources that they needed to function. Many of the contracts that they relied upon for their programme work and to support paying rent and wages were short term or project specific, this meant that the long-term future of the organisation was not secure.

The third limitation of this top-down approach was that many of the projects were designed to deal with vulnerability through coping before bouncing back to normality, rather than tackle the structural causes and support more long-term transformation. Finally, the short-term funding approach existed in the marketized system, this meant that the community spaces that they worked so hard to develop were not secure, which was highlighted during my research as they lost the tenancy on their community hub and the farm contract was only for five years. Working within the structures meant dealing with bureaucracy and council processes, which was time consuming and lacked certainty of outcome. This limited their ability to focus their small team and limited resources on more transformative change. Therefore, the political and economic context in which they operated favoured community resilience as adaptation over transformation, generated vulnerability, created and exacerbated intersecting crises, and could deplete community resilience.

7.1.2 Within KVDT what were the key strategies developed to build community resilience as transformation?

I showed that KVDT developed approaches to community resilience that pushed beyond adaptation, primarily through actions that contributed towards place-based approaches to achieving community transformation. In line with Twigger-Ross et al., (2015), I demonstrated that community resilience as transformation also tried to tackle the wider issues within the community, as identified in Chapter 4. I showed that the organisation promoted an array of transformations, from the types of social relationships that they wanted to foster inside the organisation, developing alternative economic futures through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and neighbourhood and street level changes based on activism projects. I linked these different approaches to community resilience as transformation. Based on the work of Olin Wright (2010; 2018), I showed that the projects had a combination of interstitial and symbiotic strategies. The evidence provided was drawn from my ethnographic work and from the action research projects that I developed during my fieldwork.

The first dimension of exploring the key strategies that were developed to build community resilience as transformation necessitated a focus on the internal workings of the organisation and action groups. This led to analysis of how they worked towards developing agency and self-organisation by building social relationships based on collaboration (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Walton et al., 2013). There were two important components of this approach. The first was how developing new practices were designed to build community resilience through creating an environment in which social relationships could be fostered and transformed (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). This was evident through the different structures that existed from the board, the farm strategic and planning groups, and the volunteer network that delivered the COVID-19 community support work. Internally, KVDT were able to generate solidarity, as people were co-operating both for their own and others well-being (Olin Wright, 2018). Solidarity and collaboration were central dynamics of community resilience as transformation in KVDT. Their approaches to internal management ran counter to the individualism and alienation that are by-products of neoliberal approaches (Olin Wright, 2010).

The second important dimension was focused on how processes and practices aimed to develop strategies and ideas for building alternatives at the community level (Moulaert et al., 2005). Within this, I argued that collaboration was an important dynamic in generating ideas and creating pathways for change (Skerratt, 2013). Social empowerment through collaboration underpinned strategies for transformation that ran counter to the dominant neoliberal logics, policies, and approaches. I built on the work of Twigger-Ross et al., (2015) to show that developing participation and collaboration supported community resilience as transformation. This was through collaborative approaches to develop strategies that were focused on dealing with community concerns, influencing the local agenda, and using the knowledge, motivations, and ideas that existed in the community. This was achieved through developing networks of people and bringing together local participants, using the knowledge from the local context so that projects were formed by people's experience (Farmer et al., 2018).

Building on how KVDT was organised, I answered research questions based the external strategies of KVDT and their interstitial and symbiotic approaches (Olin Wright, 2010; 2018). The aim of these strategies was to create spaces outside of market control and for community benefit. Using Olin Wright's framework added depth to the ideas of community resilience as transformation. Building on the work of Chapter 4, I returned to how KVDT attempted to develop community assets. Firstly, I used the example of the Kirkstall Valley Farm, which was an interstitial project developed out of a symbiotic agreement with the council to lease the land to KVDT. The CSA was co-produced and co-managed, it aimed to create sustainable change within food production alongside broader socially desirable change, through strengthening the community (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014; Kirwan et al., 2013). The Kirkstall Valley Farm contributed in line with Gibson-Graham (2006; 2008) and how community could be a site of local transformation for creating new economic futures within a politics of possibility.

Throughout this research, I was able to highlight potentials and limitations of attempting to pursue symbiotic strategies. KVDT attempted to forge partnerships with the council and a local business to turn former mills into community assets. The aim was to transform disused spaces into community assets to solve practical problems around housing and sustainability. However, they were unable to achieve these goals, either because of an inability to buy the property at the market value or because the private business wanted to develop the land for its own ends. My research provided practical evidence that demonstrated how efforts at bringing assets into community control and outside the market were hampered by neoliberal policy approaches and priorities. Neoliberal governance, that seeks to push the market into more aspects of society and forces community organisations to compete in a market environment for assets, hindered efforts to develop community resilience as transformation.

My action research provided further insights into the questions of what symbiotic and interstitial strategies could look like for community resilience. The projects that I initiated through The A65 Group and the Kirkstall Craftivists were interested in reimagining the local area through neighbourhood and street level action, building networks, and engagement with political processes (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Magis, 2010). Supporting

the work of Wright (2021), these projects highlighted that community resilience as transformation involved strategies and activities that were experimental and niche, whilst tackling various aspects of the social crises that existed, including contributing towards tackling the climate emergency. Symbiotically, there were projects that engaged with democracy and raised the voice of people in the area. The A65 Group and the Kirkstall Craftivists, like KVDT's broader programmes, were action orientated and experimental. The groups attempted to deal with issues like the domination of the car in urban environments, highlighting barriers that people faced in taking more climate friendly active travel options. The groups developed projects that attempted to reimagine what their local areas could be, through activities like guerrilla gardening and road closures. The approaches and strategies were grounded in the every-day, with one eye on improving life in the present and one eye on our collective futures.

7.1.3 What do the community resilience approaches outlined in this research suggest about tackling the climate emergency at community level?

The data and arguments developed in Chapter 6 contributed towards an empirically informed account of what the community resilience approaches outlined in this research suggest about tackling the climate emergency at community level. It supports Deverteuil et al., (2021) argument that resilience must be viewed through the interaction between top-down and bottom-up resilience. Where my research added to the concept of a critical conception of community resilience was by demonstrating the impacts that top-down approaches had on the generation of community approaches in relation to the climate emergency. I argued that top-down approaches created limitations in community efforts aimed at tackling the climate emergency by highlighting how climate policy sits within the broader neoliberal policy framework and how national level climate governance does not create a framework in which climate action can be developed at the scale required. I also highlighted, by building on the arguments from Howarth et al., (2021), how the lack of a comprehensive framework between the local council and community organisations impeded community efforts to tackle the climate emergency through local level action.

I showed that with the declaration of climate emergencies by many councils there are the beginnings of some participatory approaches, such as the Leeds Citizens Jury. During my research, we did engage on a council led consultation for a transport strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic response showed that the council could work in a radically different way, with a much stronger partnership approach to deal with crisis. However, the participation that we engaged in, just like with COVID-19, was based on the council's priorities, and was severely limited in scope and nature. The COVID-19 partnership model, whilst impressive in scale, was short-term and sought to return to business as usual and bounce back to pre-pandemic states. In climate emergency consultations, the aim was to support a top-down climate response through policy, rather than community empowerment and autonomy. Thus, the council level approaches limited the power of communities to transform their areas.

The second element of understanding what community resilience approaches suggest about tackling the climate emergency at the community to level was to explore how climate action was developed during a period of intersecting crises. Through looking at the different strands of community resilience I was able to argue that work to focus on tackling short-term vulnerability can limit the capacity needed to focus on the long-term work of transformation. To do so, I analysed the relationship between community resilience as adaptation and transformation. This was demonstrated under the idea of social power (Olin Wright, 2010). In the KVDT context, the aims of the group mixed mobilising people to tackle vulnerability and mobilising to increase community autonomy. KVDT were working to solve short-term problems generated by structurally created vulnerabilities, alongside attempts to develop community autonomy, so that they could transform their locality in the longer term. Ultimately, they wanted to create a strong place-based organisation that could support the community based on values of collaboration, solidarity, and achieving changes that tackled isolation, inequality, and contributed towards a more sustainable local area. My research showed that efforts to build adaptation resilience and deal with vulnerability in the short-term detracted from efforts to build long-term community transformation. This is important in relation to the climate emergency, as tackling the crises of austerity, COVID-19, and the cost of living, stretched the resources of the organisation and this can come at the expense of the

more transformative projects that are more closely aligned with tackling the climate emergency.

Chapter 6 reflected on how this form of community led place-based climate action could contribute towards tackling the climate emergency. What my research illustrated was that the action that emerged within the community was not ideological or political, in the Mouffe (2014) sense of antagonism. However, the politics emerged around local issues and through locally targeted action. This action was designed to build a sense of community, look at ways to improve the local area, and to provide people with the opportunity to engage in more sustainable practice. In this way, my research highlighted what Wilding (2011) argued, that community actions are designed to build a positive sense of place. Much of the activity in the action groups, either through engaging with the council on the transport strategy, through the e-bikes project, or with the footpaths project, was to highlight the barriers that people faced that prevented them from engaging in more sustainable choices, especially around transport. In a sense, it was about building action that recognised the challenges in the specific area and seeking strategies of climate action that could improve life for people in the area. As Pickerill (2021) says, community projects should be valued for what they achieve, and I showed that community led action can complement other types of activity that may have more radical and overtly political aims.

Another aspect of the limitations of building community resilience in the face of the climate emergency was the issue of time, which I argued has four important dimensions. I explored the issue of time in relation to the urgency of the climate emergency and the difficulties that I have presented in generating action and impacts within an environment of ongoing and intersecting crises at the community level. Firstly, top-down policy approaches lack urgency for dealing with the challenge. This was evident in terms of the lack of long-term policy planning and the lack of frameworks in place to support action at all levels (Willis, 2020; 2021; Howarth et al., 2021). Secondly, when KVDT did attempt to work on transformative strategies, such as working with the council by pursuing symbiotic strategies, doing so within the current neoliberal political and economic context was time-consuming, there were many barriers to success, and

there was no guarantee that an investment of time would lead to creating long-term change. Thirdly, within my research, both through the ethnography and the action research, it was evident that a commitment to collaboration and participatory approaches take time to develop, which is a real dilemma when urgent action is needed. A commitment to collaboration means being guided by the priorities of those that are involved, and this may mean that not all action is climate focused (Evans, 2022). Finally, in contemporary neoliberalism, especially during periods of crisis, it is difficult to mobilise people in the community, as many had different pressures in their lives that demanded their time.

7.2 How the research addressed the objectives

7.2.1. Understand the barriers and opportunities for effective community climate action through a lens of community resilience

The first objective was to understand the barriers and opportunities for effective community climate action through a lens of community resilience. As the findings demonstrate, I was able to meet this objective through an analysis of the political, economic, and social drivers of those barriers and their interaction with community efforts to develop effective climate action. My research points to the need to understand how neoliberal governance more broadly, including the policy approaches and the discourse of roll out and rollback neoliberalism created negative social impacts and vulnerabilities in the community (Aiken, 2016). Through a community resilience lens, I showed that neoliberal governance was a key component of the barriers for climate action. Through my ethnographic work, I was able to uncover how working in this context and responding to the community vulnerability generated by austerity and COVID-19 had an impact on approaches taken to climate action. I illustrated that attempting to acquire resources within this context meant that KVDT existed in a state of ongoing precarity and were forced to compete in an environment that favours marketized response and resilience as coping and bouncing back.

Short-term strategies to problem solving by the council and funders made it difficult for the organisation to establish strong foundations and to develop ambitious community

level projects for transformation. The impacts were seen in strategies to build symbiotic and interstitial projects, as local council priorities did not sit easily with community organising objectives. My ethnographic work, through interviews, attending board meetings, farm meetings, and observing projects, enabled me to create a picture of how this unfolded in my research and how it related directly to efforts to tackle the climate emergency. Therefore, my research suggests that there are reasons to be reserved about how effective community action is likely to be for creating the breadth and depth of change needed to tackle the climate emergency.

Despite the reasons to be reserved about community action, my research pointed to some evidence to be optimistic. Through ethnography and action research I was able to explore the opportunities for community actors to build community resilience as transformation. Donoghue and Edmiston (2020) decry resilience as a weapon to discipline people in poverty and Aiken (2016; 2017) sees interactions between the state and community as a mechanism to further neoliberal goals. My research suggests that at a local council level, within a broadly neoliberal thrust, the crises that were generated by austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency have exposed the contradictions created through short-term thinking and fragmented decision-making. My research highlighted how the council struggled without a long-term plan for tackling the community level crises that the neoliberal structure had generated. This created gaps that could be exploited for climate action through symbiotic and interstitial strategies, strategies which can work together in harness. For instance, Leeds City Council was supportive of the Kirkstall Valley Farm and through action research we were able to work in the margins of the system on projects such as guerrilla gardening.

7.2.2 Investigate how a community organisation is responding to intersecting crises through empirical evidence

This research contributed to the development of the idea of community resilience based upon the data that I gathered through my ethnography and action research. Wright (2021) argued that many accounts of resilience are theoretical and do not engage in empirical examples. Therefore, my research was important as it added to resilience

thinking through empirical evidence generated through an in-depth study. An important contribution of my research was towards community resilience theory by applying the ideas and concepts of resilience across a range of intersecting crises. Firstly, I was able to look at the response to austerity at a community level. Secondly, I was able to look at the COVID-19 pandemic response. Finally, I was able to explore community resilience in reference to the climate emergency. Therefore, my research project gave insight into how community resilience could manifest itself in numerous ways within a single setting. My research was able to show the complexity of community resilience through an exploration of the relationships between policy approaches and discourse in the UK and how they created crises that required communities to develop resilience. My empirical example supports and furthers Deverteuil et al., (2021), by providing evidence of how the top-down approaches shaped the responses that are open to communities.

Community resilience provided a good framework in which to explore how the climate emergency intersected with other crises at the community level. From my first interactions with KVDT, it was evident that this objective was important from a research perspective and from the perspective of those that I was researching with. The intersecting crises component of the research was an essential element of how I was able to develop a critical understanding of community resilience. It was a core part of how the neoliberal policy environment generated crises, as vulnerabilities from one crisis could leave people and the community exposed to damaging social impacts from another. Tackling the range of vulnerabilities that existed in the community was central to how KVDT operated, as well as to image that KVDT had of themselves as people who "get the job done".

I was able to meet this objective by showing how the two strands of community resilience, adaptation and transformation, were present in my research and how they could both be present in a strategy or in a single project. This led to the idea that what KVDT were attempting to harness was what Olin Wright (2010) called social power, which I linked to KVDT's efforts to mobilise the community and resources to build community resilience as adaptation and transformation. Whether through observations, such as in the community hub or on the Kirkstall Valley Farm, or in the action groups

that I developed, I was able to show how from a strategy to a project level KVDT responses to tackling the climate emergency took account of the broader context and aimed to tackle the intersecting crises and the social impacts that they created.

7.2.3 Explore how a collaborative approach between the researcher and participants can contribute towards the aims of the organisation, including climate action

Many elements of this research were founded upon co-production and collaboration between researcher and participants. This was not a partnership across every phase of the research, the overarching research design, research questions, and the theoretical dimensions were created by me. However, once in the field, collaboration was essential to how the research developed. For instance, the action research was built out of the ethnography and in discussion with the KVDT leaders. Through this understanding and collaboration, the action research was designed to focus on tackling the climate emergency and support the aims of the organisation. What was evident in my fieldwork was that from the organisational perspective, one of the key benefits of the research process was the extra capacity that I brought to the organisation to support their work. I was able to contribute towards aspects such as strategy development and fundraising. Mobilising people in a voluntary capacity was difficult and responding to crises, especially of the scale of COVID-19, stretched the organisation. Therefore, having extra capacity to contribute to developing and delivering the work was an important benefit for KVDT. Thus, a combination of extra capacity and the collaborative approach to the conduct of the research contributed to the aims of the organisation.

A second aspect of how the research contributed to the realisation of the aims of the organisation was that taking part in research provided opportunities for those that were involved in the organisation to reflect upon their work and their approaches. This was possible in discussions that I had whilst undertaking participant observations, as well as through the interviews that I carried out. Since leaving the field, I remained involved with the work of KVDT, and as my research ideas developed and consolidated, I was still able to contribute to this reflection. Therefore, through a process of collaboration I was able to ensure that the research benefited the participants in multiple ways. This

collaboration also benefited the research, it informed the direction of the research, the outputs, the questions, and the impacts.

In the action research, co-production was central to the development of The A65 Group. The aims and strategy of the group were developed using participatory techniques and collaboration was important in developing the focus areas and the activities. Participation and collaboration contributed towards the research data, as I was able to generate data though recording and analysing the ideas, strategies, and tactics that the group used. With the Kirkstall Craftivists the idea for the group was developed in partnership with KVDT. The actions, such as 'Save Kirkstall Footpaths', were developed and prioritised through discussion with KVDT. The collaborative approach to developing the action research meant that it contributed to the ideas about community resilience as transformation, as well as supported the aims of KVDT.

7.3 The significance and implications of my findings

7.3.1 Community resilience is a complex set of processes to tackle a complex set of problems

This research contributed to a critical understanding of community resilience and demonstrated how community resilience can contribute to community efforts to tackle the crises that they face. My research findings support the idea that we must reject simplistic notions of what resilience is (Wright, 2021). In line with Deverteuil et al, (2021), the research supports the idea that community resilience should be viewed as a relationship between top-down and bottom-up conceptions of resilience. By looking at how community resilience was developed in a place-based organisation, through working with the state and outside of the state, I have illustrated how developing community resilience involved undertaking a complex set of processes to attempt to tackle a complex set of problems, which contributes towards a more nuanced understanding of community resilience. I have built on the work of Wright (2021) to show how social impacts are a result of structurally created vulnerability, such as a lack of service provision, low-pay, insecure work, social isolation, and the weakening of community structures.

By developing the strands of resilience of Twigger-Ross et al., (2011; 2015) and Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013), I showed that the community responses to this situation were multi-faceted. There was evidence of adaptation resilience within KVDT as they tried to build a strong organisation in a neoliberal context. Alongside this, they attempted to create projects of transformation, either by working with the state or developing alternatives in the gaps of neoliberalism. Therefore, what became clear was that community resilience was not just an interaction of top-down and bottom-up resilience, but it was also an interaction of different strategies of resilience. The challenges of each could support or detract from one another. This was evident in the successful response to COVID-19 pandemic, through the development of the Kirkstall Valley Farm, as well as the unsuccessful projects to take control of disused mills. What was significant about my research was that I showed how strands of community resilience as adaptation and transformation interacted and I applied this to arguments about how this impacted upon community efforts to tackle the climate emergency.

Some critics dismiss resilience as vague and unimaginative, a neoliberal construct that furthers neoliberal aims, justifies the abandoning of communities, and that it is used to discipline people living in poverty (Humbert and Joseph, 2019; Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020). Bourbeau (2013) points to the dark side of resilience, highlighting that calls for individuals and communities to be resilient can be calls for a return to an unjust status-quo. Derickson (2016) builds on this idea and argues that we should dispense with the term due to the neoliberal connotations. In terms of top-down resilience, I have shown how from the government there is enthusiasm for a certain notion of resilience. In this version of resilience, communities become responsible for tackling problems and are less reliant on state intervention (Wright, 2021). Another problematic aspect of resilience from the government is that it is often viewed as a state, rather than a set of processes, and this can lead to blaming individuals and groups for lacking resilience, implying that it is their own fault, as other individuals and communities can be resilient (Wright, 2021).

What my research contributes to these discussions is that when viewed from the perspective of communities that are developing resilience, it is a more nuanced picture

that emerges. Community resilience is a set of processes that are deliberately pursued, but there is uncertainty as to the outcomes from the forms of action undertaken. In some instances, such as the COVID-19 response, KVDT were pursuing the only courses of action that were realistically open to them and were aware of the limitations of their actions. Therefore, I concur with many elements of the critique of resilience when applied to how it is used by the government. Top-down ideas of resilience can help the government to abdicate responsibility for tackling crises and supporting vulnerable people, it can justify a withdrawal of the state, it is part of a discourse and policy environment that hinders transformation and supports the upholding of the status-quo. However, what my research demonstrated is that this is not the whole picture, that community resilience existed, that like many forms of struggle, it had strengths and weaknesses in the face of more powerful actors and structures, and this makes it worthy of exploration.

Where my research departs from the academic critiques outlined above is that it showed we should not simply dismiss the term and leave the terrain of resilience to those with a top-down perspective. Instead, it highlighted the importance of exploring how communities are undertaking resilience approaches. This enabled this research to use the intellectual scaffolding that the concept provides to politicise the problems and the crises that communities are facing. Within my research, I highlighted how KVDT were adapting to the overarching neoliberal political and economic environment that they worked within, and how these approaches led to some successes and some failures.

For instance, KVDT were able to work within the structures to acquire the resources to sustain the organisation and support their work. As Magis (2010) argues, the development and engagement of resources are important components of resilience. Working in partnership Leeds City Council enabled KVDT to acquire essential resources to support the community. However, working in partnership with the council also limited how KVDT could deploy those resources in some instances. As the case of COVID-19 showed, working with the council enabled KVDT to undertake a vital piece of work to support the community through the crisis. However, once the crisis receded the

structural causes of vulnerability that existed prior to the crisis were still there, and in many instances had been worsened. What my research added to discussions was that community resilience must be understood as a complex set of interactions, compromises, and negotiations between the community and more powerful actors. As Deverteuil (2015) argues, community resilience should not be dismissed out of hand by those seeking to understand the reality of the struggle taking place in many communities in the UK.

7.3.2. Changes at national and council level could make a significant difference to tackling the climate emergency

A significant contribution of this research was to use community resilience to show the barriers to achieving effective responses to the neoliberal generated crises at a community level. What is especially significant is when you apply this to the climate emergency. For instance, my research support Wright's (2021) assertion that communities want to be resilient. The evidence that I provided through the responses to the social impacts of austerity and COVID-19 demonstrated that communities could rise to meet the challenges that they faced. Through COVID-19, I showed how the state can partner with community organisations to solve problems. My research contributed to the work of Cottam (2018) and illustrated that when communities take the lead, a more people centred approach emerges, which can be part of reimagining the relationship between people and the state. The relationships and alliances that were built up through other work strengthened community and created conditions in which climate action could grow (Tiratelli et al., 2021). However, what I also showed was that governance approaches at national level and at local council level created significant obstacles to enabling communities to play a full role within the changes that are required to tackle the climate emergency.

Many of the council approaches, such as during COVID-19, were short-term and focused on supporting the community to cope in the pandemic before attempting to return to business as usual. Through the work of Olin Wright (2010; 2018) I added to understandings of community resilience as transformation by exploring symbiotic and

interstitial strategies. Through this, I illustrated that community organisations could be strong partners for achieving local level change. However, the partnership model that was on offer from the council, in relation to both COVID-19 and the climate emergency, was still primarily to either meet council defined priorities or to inform a top-down policy agenda. Alongside this, I captured the enthusiasm, energy and ideas that existed in the community to create more radical transformations. Therefore, my research supports the idea that if the council dispensed with a top-down model, prioritised the climate emergency, and developed mechanisms to hand control of space and decisions to the community level, then we would be able to move faster towards net zero, whilst building stronger place-based communities.

7.3.3 Community level approaches to climate action involve tackling intersecting crises

My research suggests that actions that focus on social empowerment and improving life in the local context should be central to community-led climate mitigation work. In my research setting, KVDT did not always treat the different challenges that the community faced separately, so climate action could not always be seen as distinct from other activities that aimed to improve life in the here and now. Thus, my research suggested that place-based community level climate action should begin from the context that the community finds itself in and be motivated by making transformations at the community level that help to tackle the myriad of social impacts that neoliberalism creates. My research points to the fact that this is the way to support community empowerment and further social justice within the climate movement. My research is significant because it supports arguments that communities can play a significant role in making place-based changes for climate mitigation. However, strategies for change should be developed based on understandings of what matters to communities and be integrated with practical actions that can improve life in the present, as well as thinking about the future.

7.3.4 Intersecting crises threaten to undermine the potential of climate action

Through looking at the community resilience responses to intersecting crises, I was able to contribute to understandings of tackling the climate emergency. What my research

showed, was that the intersecting crises were of such a scale and longevity that they threatened to diminish the role that organisations like KVDT could play in tackling the climate emergency. KVDT had a strategy for transformation that aimed at creating a more sustainable local area, they had ambitious projects, such as the Kirkstall Valley Farm, and wanted to transform two derelict mills into sustainable housing and a sustainability centre. These projects were difficult to realise within the neoliberal policy environment that favours profit and market led approaches to local development. Alongside this, vulnerability was increasing through COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. What I observed within a small organisation was how the focus shifted to short-term projects to deal with the vulnerabilities that these crises created. Organisations only have limited resources, often rely on small teams, and therefore focusing on efforts to tackle vulnerability, which are admirable in many ways, can detract from efforts that focus on more ambitious and transformative projects.

7.3.5 Communities want to play a role in tackling the problems that they face

What my research points to is that communities want to play a role in tackling the climate emergency. I showed how this contribution, when based in the community, can be innovative, experimental, and action focused. I also contributed to the idea that community action is multi-faceted, it is not wedded to ideologies of being against, outside of, or within capitalism. People in the community cared about practical action that could make their areas better places to live, even if only in small ways. This creates a challenge for academics who want to work with communities on projects of transformation, as it suggests that we must step outside of disciplinary bubbles and look at how we can support a range of activities. Some of these activities will be genuinely transformative, some at the scale required for the climate emergency, and others will aim to satisfy community desires and needs in that moment.

7.4 The academic contribution the study makes

Through developing the idea of community resilience, this research makes a unique contribution towards a growing body of academic work that advances community

resilience as a concept through exploring how current structures generate vulnerability and crisis, and how communities respond through a range of strategies and tactics (Wright, 2021). Whilst I make a unique contribution that advances the concept of community resilience, in part this contribution is an advancement of other work in the resilience field. As Wright (2021) argues, much academic work on resilience is theoretical, therefore, through empirical evidence this research advanced the concept of community resilience by using it to politicise the crises that communities face. This research was developed using Twigger-Ross et al., (2011) and Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) resilience frameworks, focusing on adaptation and transformation as the strands of community resilience that were evident in KVDT. What my account of community resilience achieves is to show the linkages between the strands of community resilience, how they co-exist, how they support one another within community responses to crises, and how they can be constrained.

Some, such as Deverteuil (2015), argue that resilience should primarily be used in relation to resilience as adaptation. Derickson (2016) urges us to use the idea of 'reworking' when talking about transformation, owing to the idea that resilience is a neoliberal term that supports ideas of adaptation within an unjust system. However, in my research, I have demonstrated how community resilience can also be about transformation in the community context, and how this can be applied in relation to climate mitigation activities. What my research contributes to debates about the ideas contained within resilience is that I show how there is a complex set of interactions between top-down policy and community-developed responses, as well as between the different strands of resilience as they existed at the community level. I was able to show how processes that focused on adaptation could support the development of processes that aimed at transformation. For instance, acquiring resources through the council or other organisations to support work for adaptation could be used to support transformation. Equally, as I argued based on Harrison (2013), resilience can be depleted due to the range of crises that communities must deal with. KVDT's work to tackle vulnerability sometimes came at the expense of pursuing strategies of transformation. Bringing together the two strands of community resilience as adaptation

and transformation supported the development of a fuller and richer account of how community resilience is developed.

In line with Deverteuil (2015), my example demonstrated that community resilience was an important aspect of urban struggle. Acknowledging the critiques of resilience has meant that I have been cautious not to be overly celebratory of community resilience or overly dismissive. My research demonstrated across multiple crises of austerity, COVID-19, and the climate emergency, that community resilience was a viable strategy, sometimes the only realistic strategy available, and it was actively developed. A further contribution that my research makes it to show how community resilience was developed by working within the system, adapting to the impacts of the different crises, alongside efforts to create transformation at the community level.

By applying the thinking of Olin Wright (2010), I have added to the concept of community resilience as transformation by showing how organisations can pursue interstitial and/or symbiotic strategies. Combining the ideas of transformation that Olin Wright developed within a resilience framework strengthens both. Olin Wright's work was able to provide conceptual clarity as to what community resilience as transformation meant within KVDT, through exploring the different processes that were evident in interstitial and symbiotic strategies. Furthermore, I add to the work of Olin Wright, as I showed how interstitial and symbiotic strategies could work alongside each other and how they interacted within the projects and strategies that KVDT developed. This meant that my research also contributed towards human geography thinking as it demonstrated that organisations could simultaneously be working within the system and attempting to work beyond the system, which is an important and often overlooked dynamic.

Finally, this research provided an important contribution to community resilience as a concept because it demonstrated how it could be applied to thinking about tackling the biggest crisis of our time, the climate emergency. By looking at community strategies across the range of resilience strands and through what Deverteuil et al., (2021) describe as the co-constituted nature of resilience, I was able to create a thorough account of the motivations, ideas, approaches, strategies, and tactics inherent in

community resilience. I applied these understandings to develop ideas about what community resilience to tackle the climate emergency through place-based approaches at the community level looks like, and how it happens alongside efforts to tackle other crises that communities face. As urgent action is required over the coming decade, these learnings are useful to academics, policymakers, and community activists. Thus, my research adds empirical weight to Wright (2021) and her call for academics to use the ideas of resilience to politicise the problems that communities face, and I did so through a focus on community resilience within the climate emergency.

7.5 Areas for further research

7.5.1 Community Resilience within community climate action

This research focused on community resilience within an organisation that had a broad approach to tackling community vulnerability, generating community autonomy, and projects for sustainability. A potential research avenue that would complement this research would be to conduct similar research in a more climate focused organisation. This could range from looking at other place-based community organisations, for instance those concerned with community energy generation or transition towns and explore community resilience from their perspectives. This would create questions of how the intersecting crises of neoliberalism impact upon their ambitions, approaches, and agendas for tackling the climate emergency. This could take the form of asking how the vulnerabilities in their community shape their work and impact upon their ability to create transformation in relation to climate action.

A further aspect of this within a community resilience research agenda would be how other climate focused organisations are impacted by the neoliberal political, economic, and social structures. For instance, much research in human geography focuses on interstitial projects through the lens of actions of prefiguration, which is seen as actions that embody the future that people want to see in the present (Pickerill, 2019). Much of this research focuses on activities that are outside of or beyond the structures of neoliberalism, or within autonomous spaces (Chatterton and Pusey, 2020). However,

what my research has demonstrated is that even when building interstitial projects there were still many interactions with the state and that KVDT were constrained by these interactions. Exploring the links between the state and intentional communities, community gardens, and alterative communities could be an interesting research agenda.

7.5.2 The barriers between council and community engagement from a council perspective

Another aspect that my research touched upon was the relationships between Leeds City Council and KVDT. The relationship between local governance and the community organisation was important in several respects. For instance, how they worked together to fill gaps in services, to deliver the emergency response to COVID-19, and in support of more transformational projects, such as the Kirkstall Valley Farm. In relation to climate change specifically, a research agenda could be built from Howarth et al.'s, (2021) conclusions that there is no substantial framework that exists between councils and communities for climate action. My research highlighted how this limited KVDT and the action groups from taking transformative action. This creates questions about what are the barriers to creating this type of framework at the council level? My research highlighted that there was an appetite in the community to play a full role in tackling the climate emergency, how could a framework be created to unleash and maximise this motivation? What are the changes to decision-making processes that could enable communities to take more control and take actions that support the climate emergency declarations?

7.5.3 Explore the links between social movements and place-based movements

In my research, many of the people that I engaged with, especially during the action research, were part of other movements and took part in other types of action. For instance, people were part of issue specific civil society movements, joined climate change marches, and were involved in diverse ways in actions organised by the likes of Extinction Rebellion. This opens questions of how and why activists that are involved in civil resistance or advocate more radical approaches take part in the types of

mobilisations that community organisations aspire to. This would support the agenda of this research for understanding the overlaps between different movements, several types of action, and how they influence each other.

7.6 Concluding thoughts

This research explored questions about the types of strategies and activities that community organisations can create to support efforts to move the UK to net zero in the next decade. As part of completing this PHD, I have taken part in many events that have asked broader questions, such as what policy approaches are required for net zero, or how can we bring about changes to our lifestyles in the UK. At many of these events, I would ask what role communities can play in bringing about change and I often found that the panels did not have an answer or talked of things like reducing consumption or car use. This motivated me in my empirical research to look at how KVDT attempted to develop collective community level solutions.

Through my time with KVDT, I saw that climate interventions at the community level could not be divorced from broader efforts aimed at tackling the range of crises that communities were grappling with because of austerity and COVID-19. What I also observed, through ethnography and when developing action research, was that those who volunteered their time in these sorts of endeavours were passionate and committed about making a difference to their community. However, this passion and commitment was pragmatic, and people would put their energies into a range of strategies and programmes that worked within the prevailing neoliberal structures, against the values of neoliberalism, or outside of it all together. As I have discussed, this could entail working in partnership with the council, it could involve developing resilience and adapting to the broader neoliberal context that they worked in, with the constraints that went along with that.

The people that I met were ambitious, whilst realising that the amount of power that they had to confect change could be limited by money, time, and political opportunity. Despite this, people that took part in my research also wanted to develop ambitious projects that responded to the intersecting crises of austerity, COVID-19, and the

climate emergency. This was through strategies and projects that could be transformative for their area. This highlighted to me that for those of us that are focused on tackling the climate emergency as a core goal, to promote community level action we must take account of the community context, must be prepared to work on projects that do not necessarily start from a position of tackling the climate emergency, but instead seek to collaborate with others on projects that make the local area a better place to live. This complexity may make tackling the climate emergency at the speed required more difficult, but in the experience of my research that is how communities operate and that is how community action must be built.

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Annex A – Overview of the interviews and list of questions

Aims of the interviews

1. Understand how change happens through KVDT
2. Get an understanding of how KVDT functions – both on a strategic level and in the day-to-day
3. Understand people's motivations for being involved in KVDT
4. Get ideas about how this project can contribute towards local sustainability and climate action

Questions for KVDT leaders

(Bold are those that I will lead with, non-bold are potential areas to explore and follow up questions).

1. **Tell me a bit about your role in KVDT?**
2. **How does this contribute towards the changes that KVDT want to see in the valley?**
3. **What motivates you to want to work with KVDT?**
4. Can you tell me a bit about the aims of KVDT?
5. **What are the changes that you think the organisation wants to see?**
6. How is this reflected in how its set up/how projects are devised and run?
7. What's your assessment of the political situation nationally and locally, and what impact do you think it's having within the area?
8. **What are the main challenges facing KVDT?**
9. How important for KVDT is trying to influence local politics and politicians?
10. **What are the main challenges in supporting the community/and or mobilising the community?**
11. Can you tell me a bit about how KVDT sists alongside other groups within Leeds – and what value do you see of working together?
12. **In terms of climate change, what changes would you like to see within the valley?**
13. What excites them about this project?

14. What do they think we can achieve?

15. I;ve noticed that "the place" element takes up a lot of time/energy - ie building management – do you think that's fair?

16. There seems so many challenges that you're trying to take on, it feels there's lots of "stuff" around the organisation, how do you think it comes together?

Questions for volunteers

(Also use questions for KVDT leaders were appropriate)

1. Tell me a bit about your role in KVDT?
2. What motivates you to want to work with KVDT?
3. What do you enjoy most about volunteering with KVDT?
4. What difference do you think KVDT makes to the valley?
5. What changes would you like to see – and how can KVDT play a role in making that happen?
6. What challenges do you face in giving time to being part of this?
7. Do you see KVDT as political?

Annex B Overview of the workshops

Workshop 1 – The Zero-carbon Challenge

Overall aim: Build on 'Community-Led Sustainability in Kirkstall Valley' 5-year strategy by identifying the zero-carbon challenge in the Kirkstall Valley

Objectives

1. Begin to coproduce a zero-carbon road map by identifying the key challenges and ways to tackle them
2. Identify what the opportunities and barriers are to change
3. Use an interactive and participatory approach to begin developing a plan for climate action
4. Identify the key priority areas
5. Encourage those present to be involved in developing and delivering the plan

Agenda

Agenda	Tools/Approach	Outcome
Introduction (5 minutes) 1. Introduce myself, my research 2. Set out the zero-carbon challenge globally and for Leeds, using key stats 3. Build on previous sustainability work in KVDT 4. Outline what the workshop should achieve 5. Set out the format	All group session	People clear on what we will do and feel enthused

Identifying the key challenges (5 minutes) 1. Ask the participants to put into the Zoom chat what they see as the key areas of the zero-carbon challenge	All group Chat function Call on some people to elaborate Researcher to capture the key points	Decide on 3 areas that we will discuss in breakout groups Researcher to capture the different ideas
Activity 1 – Where should we end up? (15 minutes) 1. Discuss the problems we want to address and agree them as a group 2. Create a headline for what success will look like in this area	Break out group Session 3 groups based on the agreed priority areas Identify 1 leader in each group to capture the notes and share screen in plenary Others free to move between groups	Develop the problem statement-outcome elements of a theory of change
Activity 2 – How do we get there? (15 minutes) What might some of the activities be over the next year that can get us there	Break out group session 3 groups based on the agreed priority areas	Develop the activities Uncover key elements of how

1. Think about impact in relation to the problem/end results 2. Who do we need onboard/who might we need to challenge/influence to get there 3. What resources do we need to make this happen	Need: 1 leader in each group, capture the notes and share screen in plenary Others free to move between groups	we make the change happen Uncover what resources are needed
Feedback (10 minutes) Each group to feedback in plenary	Group leaders feedback to the main group	Everyone aware of the discussions
Next steps + Conclusions (5 minutes) 1. Agree on priority area 2. Get volunteers to join action groups	Researcher to conclude	Consensus on the focus following the meeting Volunteers to be part of the development

<u>Transport Consultation event</u>

<u>Aim</u>

Generate a community led response to transport transformation in Leeds supporting the ambition where Leeds can become a "city where you don't need a car".

<u>Objectives for the event</u>

1. Engage people in creating a transport consultation response
2. Increase awareness + get new members for the A65 group

Objectives post event

1. Use this as a springboard for zero-carbon active travel planning in Leeds

Follow up email to encourage responses to Transport Consultation, KVDT response + A65 Sustainable Travel Group joining

2. Increase visibility and ability to influence council level decision-making for KVDT

Send response to councillors, travel dept, other groups in Leeds - as well as KVDT event goers and broader list

Agenda	Tools/Approach	Outcome
Introduction 10 minutes 1. Welcome people to the event 2. Outline the research that this event is part of 3. Outline the event schedule 4. Welcome Leeds City Council representative	All group session	People clear on what we will do and feel enthused
Outline of the Leeds City Council (LCC)ambition (20 minutes)	Get an emoji or word in Zoom chat about how people feel about transport in Leeds	People clear on the draft transport strategy People have the opportunity to get clarity

	Presentation from LCC to outline transport strategy Q and A	
Outline KVDT work on transport (10 minutes) 1. Highlight some of KVDT's work on transport 2. Refer to previous workshop 3. Introduce the A65 Group	Presentation from researcher Q and A	
Breakout group 1 (15 minutes) "What excites you about the strategy and what would you like to see in the final version?"	Set up shared doc for people to capture in groups Researcher to create breakout groups Feedback in plenary	Crowd sourced ideas about what people are excited about Crowd sourced ideas about what people feel is missing from the strategy
Break out group 2 (15 minutes) "What does this mean/what should this look like in the Kirkstall Valley?"	Set up shared doc for people to capture in groups	Crowd sourced ideas about what this means for the local area

	Researcher to create breakout groups	Crowd sourced ideas about what people want transport in the local rea to look like
	Feedback in plenary	Crowd sourced ideas about what people think is needed to make these ideas a reality
		Focus on how transport changes can improve life in the local area
Next steps (5 minutes)	Researcher to outline possible ways to build on the event	People know how they can respond individually
		People know how they can be part of the KVDT response
		People know about and can join the A65 Travel Group
		People understand what KVDT will do with the event ideas and outcomes