

**The Social Quality of
Participatory Democracy:
Social Empowerment in the
Workplace and Local
Community**

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Abstract

The social quality approach is proposed as a participatory democratic and social justice oriented alternative to the dominance of neo-liberal individualism in much contemporary policy, practice and theory (Therborn, 2001; Walker, 1998, 2005). This thesis develops the social quality concept of social empowerment (Herrmann, 2012) in relation to participatory democratic theory and practice. In empirically-driven but theory-laden case studies of a democratic workplace and a democratic local government initiative the thesis asserts the close relationship between social empowerment and democratic participation, along with the multi-dimensional nature of empowerment. The case studies are situated within the context of different typologies of possible democratic societies. They are both underpinned by the democratic dialectic (Bernard, 1999), which assesses the values of liberty, equality and solidarity as a normative grounding for the research.

The critical realist and social quality theory philosophical foundations of this work are set out in Chapter 2. This chapter discusses the critical methodological approach that these foundations presuppose and the justification for the case study methods. Chapters 3 and 4 critically review power and empowerment theories and democratic theories, which develops the concepts of social empowerment and participatory democracy. The second part of Chapter 4 introduces three ideal typologies of liberal, social and participatory democracy that are used to frame the analysis, while Chapter 5 develops the democratic dialectic as the normative guide for assessing the democratic complexion of the case studies.

The case studies are presented in Chapters 6 and 7, and analysed in Chapter 8. The findings suggest that social empowerment is present to different extents, and in different ways, in the two case studies. This is contingent on factors including historical development, the form of power relationships in economic, social and political relations in the context of wider liberal democratic values in the UK, and the extent to which the democratic dialectic values are realised in practice. The conclusion reviews the argument in this thesis and suggests implications for policy-makers, practitioners and future research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Democratic Society and Social Quality

In Britain today there is a generalised distrust in politicians (a projection - rightly or wrongly - of instrumental rationality and selfish interests onto political actors, Hay, 2007), an increasing disengagement from the political process (a decline in voter turnout and a prevalence of an anti-political culture, Stoker, 2006; Flinders, 2013), and disassociation between the everyday lives of ordinary people and the bubble of corporate politics in Westminster (Blond, 2010; Glasman, 2010). Recent scandals in major political and economic institutions such as the 2008 financial crisis (which has provided the impetus for a political retrenchment of the welfare state in Britain, with a disastrous impact on the poorest and less well off, Corbett & Walker, 2013), the public anger at the MPs' expenses scandal, and the betrayal of public trust by major news organisations have increased the sense that British democracy is increasingly a discredited system of political organisation. Moreover, the UK is increasingly coming to be dominated by political and economic elites to the extent that we are now said to reside in a 'post-democracy', where the capacities of ordinary people to have an influence over the political process (and by extension their everyday lives) is severely constrained (Crouch, 2004).

As a remedy to these problems there has been a growing interest in increasing citizen participation, engagement or involvement in a wide range of democratic processes, including new democratic innovations (Smith, 2005, 2009; Stoker, 2006; Zittel & Fuchs, 2007; John et al., 2011; Geisel & Newton, 2012). More radically, drawing on New Left participatory democratic theory (Pateman, 1970; Macpherson, 1977; Mansbridge, 1980; Barber, 1984; Gould, 1988), some proffer fundamental changes in the structure of social institutions in favour of a more participatory society that is less *liberal*

democratic and less capitalistic in its composition (Fung & Wright, 2003; Wright, 2010). Associated with this are arguments for a transformation in the nature of contemporary citizenship, from a consumerist orientation in the context of neo-liberal capitalism, towards a more participatory conception of citizenship by learning the values and skills of democratic citizenship through the process of democratic participation itself (Pateman, 1970, 2012; Pinnington & Schugurensky, 2010).

This thesis engages with normative and empirical arguments for democratic innovations, citizen involvement, and participatory democracy as remedies to the current malaise of British democracy. The thesis focuses on power relations and democracy, assessing especially the concept of social empowerment (Herrmann, 2012) in participatory democratic settings, drawing on empirical case studies of a democratically owned and controlled worker co-operative (workplace democracy) and a local government participatory budgeting process (local community democracy). This necessitates an exploration of theories of power and empowerment, theories of democracy, and typologies of democracy in practice. Further, the thesis draws on a normative theoretical foundation for empirical research by adopting a critical social science approach (Sayer, 1992, 2009, 2011). It describes and critiques the values of liberty, equality and solidarity that make up the democratic dialectic (Bernard, 1999) as a means to assess social empowerment in participatory democratic settings.

This introductory chapter firstly discusses contemporary problems with democratic *politics* and expands these concerns to a consideration of the social quality of democratic *society*. Secondly, a set of research questions which frame the theoretical and empirical analysis are highlighted. Thirdly, the contributions that this research makes to social scientific knowledge are discussed, and fourthly, a brief overview of the argument of this thesis describes the content of the chapters that follow.

Political Disenchantment, Neo-liberalism and Social Quality

Dalton (2004, p.1) argues that contemporary democracies face a challenge posed not by an external competitor, but 'from democracy's own citizens, who have grown distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned about how the democratic process functions'. This is a problem for both mature and new democracies as Stoker (2006, pp.35-44) describes a rise in 'political disenchantment' in the USA, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and also in the newer democracies of central and eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, East Asia and India.

Citizens appear to be disillusioned by democracy in practice, but not necessarily in principle, and there has been a marked increase in distrust in politicians since the late 1960s (Stoker, 2006). This is manifested in a lack of trust in government information with 59 per cent of the UK population believing that official figures are used 'dishonestly' by the government in 2005 (Stoker, 2006, p.34). For Hay (2007), such political disenchantment is due to two interconnected factors: neo-liberalism and globalisation processes. Neo-liberalism can be defined as 'a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey, 2005, p.2). Crouch (2004) argues that in terms of citizens' rights neo-liberal ideology and policy has contributed to an over emphasis on negative rights such as guaranteeing private property and the protection of the 'individual' against others, especially the state.

Neglected positive citizenship rights on the other hand, relate to abilities to participate in political society. This has negative consequences for democratic politics:

[n]eo-liberalism, informed by public choice theoretical assumptions suggests the value of a highly delimited political sphere which does not encroach upon the essentially private realms of economic and social

exchange, encouraging a profoundly suspicious, sceptical and anti-political culture (Hay, 2007, p.5).

Moreover, the associated processes of globalisation, including the increasingly unfettered nature of capital downplay the capacity of democratic politics within nation-states to produce collective outcomes and consequently increase the power of multinational corporations over the national political process. Although, as Hay (2007, p.151) points out, the extent to which national policy-making is constrained by globalising processes is overplayed: 'if policy-makers believe that their autonomy is greatly diminished and that, in an era of globalisation, their policy choices must be driven by the perceived imperatives of competitiveness, they will deny themselves the political autonomy they might otherwise enjoy'. British democracy is skewed towards the interests of business, increasing especially since the 1970s, and has provided 'flexibility' in the form of low corporate taxes, low labour standards, weakened collective bargaining rights, and poor quality public services (Crouch, 2004, p.36). This means that neo-liberalism and globalisation processes combine to provide the conditions for 'democratic decline' in the form of a 'major imbalance now developing between the role of corporate interests and those of virtually all other groups' (Crouch, 2004, p.104). Hay (2007, p.5) sees neo-liberalism and globalisation together as conspiring 'to discredit the 'political' in contemporary societies'.

Crouch (2004, 2011; also Duménil & Lévy, 2004, 2005) suggests that this trend is part of a renewal of elite politics that has weakened democracy to the extent that we have moved into an era of 'post-democracy'. Such a transition has particular salience for parties of the left whose electoral base has become marginalised in the era of corporate politics. For example, the development of New Labour policies in the 1990s that sought to accommodate the minority interests of economic elites through continuing the privatisation of public services reflected a 'shift from a party suited to democratic politics to one prepared for post-democracy' (Crouch, 2004, p.64). This ultimately means that the relationship between citizens, the government and the private supplier of public services such as transport, utilities, services in schools and

in the NHS grants great power to business interests (with the support of the state) but not to the public:

[t]he citizen has a link, through the democratic electoral and political system, to government (national or local). Government has a link, through the law of contract, with the privatised supplier. But the citizen has no link, neither of market nor of citizenship, to the supplier, and, following privatisation, can no longer raise questions of service delivery with government, because it has contracted such delivery away. As a result the public service has become a post-democratic one: henceforth the government is responsible to the *demos* only for broad policy, not for detailed implementation (Crouch, 2004, pp.101-102).

The solution to this crisis in representative democracy proffered by Flinders (2013, p.176, original emphasis) and many others is to provide more opportunities for citizen engagement in ‘a deepening of *democratic* politics, as opposed to an individualised form of market-based *life* politics’. That said, there is much disagreement on the extent of participation desirable or feasible (Chapter 4). For Crouch (2004) this could be through direct public funding of parties and citizens’ assemblies in local and regional government, empowered with the decision-making capabilities to influence and positively change their everyday lives. This indicates that the distinction between representative democracy and moves towards a more participatory democracy is an important issue in contemporary democratic societies, and is a central concern of this thesis.

Democratic Values

The discussion so far has considered major problems for contemporary democratic societies in the form of disenchantment with the ‘political’ and the sense of powerlessness for people that is compounded by the eroding of democracy, the growth of professionalised political elites and increase in power of economic elites, and the dominance of neo-liberal economic ideology and practice as a political project. Deepening democratic participation in the polity is seen as a possible corrective to this. But these problems also have broader and significantly negative consequences for the notion of the ‘social’ in democratic societies (Walker, 2005; Corbett &

Walker, 2013). This can be explored through the scale of social and economic (and therefore, political) inequalities which since the late 1970s have posed an increasing threat to democracy itself (Lindblom, 1977, 1982).

In the UK, Dorling (2011) estimates that the percentage of wealth (excluding pension rights and main residence housing equity) owned by the top 1% of the population has increased from 21 per cent in 1976 to 53 per cent in 2008. Over the same time period, the top half (excluding the top 5%) have seen a decrease of their share of wealth in the UK from 54 per cent to 31 per cent, with the bottom 50 per cent of the population having 8 per cent of national wealth in 1976 and 6 per cent in 2008. As equality is a fundamental value of democracy (Anderson, 1999; Bernard, 1999), this extent of social and economic inequality is highly problematic. Following Tawney (1952), Walker and Walker (2011, p.276) argue for the value of equality: for social justice in a democracy there should be an 'equalisation of life chances... [t]his does not imply perfect equality... but a clear distinction between individual or personal differences between people in terms, for example, of intelligence and identity, and social differences derived from the structure and organisation of society'. While the former provide for the richness and diversity of human life, the latter act only to restrict the life chances of some and enhance those of others on the basis of social, economic and consequently, political inequalities.

This suggests that attention to the design of democratic institutions, the role of normative values such as equality in this, and the consequences that these at the structural level have on the everyday quality of life of citizens is paramount. Further democratic values are freedom and solidarity, which along with equality exist in a dialectical relationship because they can be in conflict in democratic societies (for example, equality is characterised by liberals such as Berlin (2002) as restricting freedom), but for full democracy these values must be optimised in a 'positive equilibrium', rather than the maximisation of one or two over the others (Phillips, 2006, p.161; Bernard, 1999). Under the influence of neo-liberalism, for example, negative liberty is maximised, which reduces equality and 'provokes a dislocation of the most

basic social consensus' (Bernard, 1999, p.10). However, the three democratic dialectic values are each subject to contrasting interpretations and require sustained exploration to assess democracy in this thesis.

Social Quality and Social Empowerment

This thesis assesses participatory democracy in this context from the perspective of social quality, which aims to provide a holistic consideration of the 'social' as the basis for policy-making, rather than the narrow economic concerns which tend to dominate current politics (Beck et al., 1998, 2001; van der Maesen & Walker, 2012). Indeed, Walker (1998, p.109) asserts that in the western European context, the aim of the social quality project is to 'create a social policy that has its own independent rationale and legitimacy so as to counterbalance the dominance of economic and monetary policy within the EU'. Social quality refers to 'the extent to which citizens are able to participate in social relationships under conditions which enhance their well-being, capacities and potential' (Beck et al., 2012, p.68). This has relevance for democratic politics as it focuses on participation in the systems of governance of everyday lives in order to improve quality of life. This concern with participation can be broadly interpreted to refer to the social, political and economic spheres of people's lives (democratic society, over the narrow democratic polity), hence the concern with workplace democracy and local community democracy in the empirical case studies.

The 'social' is theorised as emerging from constitutively interdependent social relations between processes of self-realisation and the participation of individuals in forming collective identities (Beck et al., 2012; Chapter 2). This focuses on the agency, character and conduct of individuals but also the social structural conditions in which people interact. Such a view of the 'social' adopts a relational and contingent understanding of human societies and rejects utilitarian, methodological individualist or structural determinist approaches. The theory of social quality also conceptualises four factors relating to the conditions of social quality: socio-economic security, social

cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment (van der Maesen & Walker, 2012)

Social empowerment is central to analysis of participatory democracy from a social quality perspective as it refers to ‘the degree to which the personal capabilities and the ability of people to act are enhanced by social relations’ (Herrmann, 2012, p.202). This concept focuses attention on both the social structural and historical conditions of human interaction and self-development, along with the personal capabilities and abilities to act. In this way, social empowerment relates to Mills’ (1970) concern with the intersection of history and biography as the locus for the sociological imagination. For the study of participatory democracy, this necessitates attention to the design and structure of democratic institutions and the human relationships and actions that take place within them and suggests a critical realist understanding of structure and agency (discussed in Chapter 2).

Therefore, this thesis adopts a critical social science approach that is theoretically grounded, but empirically-driven (Sayer, 2011). The study’s first aim is to examine theories of democracy and the normative values that underpin different conceptions (or ideal typologies) of democratic society: liberal, social and participatory. The second aim is to theoretically develop the democratic dialectic to assess the conditions of social empowerment in participatory democratic settings. This is then applied to two empirical case studies. This study is interdisciplinary. It draws on a theoretical perspective developed within social policy and concepts drawn from political theory in order to conduct a political sociological study of participatory democracy.

Research Questions

The following three research questions are addressed in this thesis:

- *How can the democratic dialectic values of liberty, equality and solidarity be optimised in a ‘positive equilibrium’ most appropriate for democratic society?*

This question is primarily considered in developing the normative guide in Chapter 5 that underpins the empirical case studies.

- *What kind of democratic society is the optimisation of the democratic dialectic most suited to?*

This question is addressed in Chapters 4 and 5 which considers liberal, social and participatory democracy. Chapter 4 introduces the three as ideal typologies and Chapter 5 relates these to the democratic dialectic values.

- *To what extent, and in what ways, do participatory democratic settings display evidence of social empowerment?*

As indicated by this introductory discussion, this is the central research question that guides this thesis and the theoretical groundwork for answering this question is conducted in Chapter 3 (on theories of power and empowerment) and in Chapter 4 (on theories of representative and participatory democracy, and democratic typologies). The empirical evidence for this question is presented in Chapter 6 (on workplace democracy) and Chapter 7 (on participatory budgeting), and analysed in Chapter 8.

Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis contributes to knowledge in several ways. Firstly, the social quality theory and research framework has undergone considerable theoretical development since it was introduced in 1997 by *the Amsterdam Declaration on the Social Quality of Europe* (Walker, 1998). An extensive range of indicators have been developed by the *European Foundation on Social Quality* (van der Maesen & Walker, 2005; van der Maesen, 2009). These have often been applied in quantitative-based research (Monnickendam & Berman, 2008; Abbott et al., 2011; Abbott & Wallace, 2012a, 2012b). Therefore this research contributes to the development of the social quality project by operationalising an aspect of social quality theory - social empowerment - in qualitative research. Further, it develops social quality beyond the discipline of social policy, as this research adopts a political sociological approach to the study of democracy.

Secondly, the democratic dialectic has had some theoretical and empirical development from Bernard's (1999) original model. It has been applied to an empirical study of welfare regimes (Saint-Arnaud & Bernard, 2003), and it has been critiqued and theoretically developed by Phillips (2006; 2007). This thesis further critically develops the theoretical components of the democratic dialectic by investigating the contested nature of the concepts of liberty, equality and solidarity and linking them to different typologies of democratic society drawn from Esping-Andersen's (1990; 1999) typologies of welfare regimes. Further, the model is used for empirical qualitative research, where previous work has been theoretical development and quantitative analysis.

Thirdly, this thesis engages with political science and political theory literature on democracy and associated values in order to provide a broader political sociological analysis of the social quality of participatory democracy. It contributes research on empirical cases of democratic innovations in economic and civil-society/local government contexts. This research is focused empirically on micro to meso levels, with theoretical attention to the macro implications. It contributes to theoretical and empirical knowledge about the possibilities for participatory democracy in contemporary society in existing debates about democratic innovations (Smith, 2005, 2009; Geisel & Newton, 2012) and the real utopias project on 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung & Wright, 2003; Fung, 2004; Wright, 2010). Moreover, following Pearce (2010a, p.323) this thesis adopts a necessarily critical approach because the theory and practice of participatory democracy is

desirable but problematic; it is not a utopian vision; nor is it a worthy but anachronistic legacy of Ancient Greece; nor a short-lived moment of 'people power'. Participatory democracy has begun to be studied seriously, because we have a growing number of experiments to learn from, as well as a growing body of new theoretical debate.

Fourthly, the two case studies are an application of the social quality perspective and the model of the democratic dialectic to these empirical settings for the first time. The democratic workplace studied is relatively unique amongst co-operatives and the participatory budgeting process is

amongst the most extensive and longest running in the UK at present. This exploratory research is also an application of concepts derived from social quality to these cases for the first time. This is especially pertinent for the empirical exploration of the settings and social empowerment. The research findings (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) suggest multiple dimensions of social empowerment in different social settings that can be used to further refine the theoretical components of social quality and develop the concept of social empowerment.

Thesis Plan

Chapter 2 outlines the philosophical foundations, methodology and methods used in this thesis. It begins with a description of the practical process of carrying out the two empirical case studies, including exploring potential case studies, gaining access, the fieldwork experiences, and writing up. Following this the ontological and epistemological foundations of the thesis are explicated by a discussion of social quality theory and critical realist approaches to research (critical social science). Next, a critical methodology is developed from the philosophical foundations which requires reflexivity in empirical research. The methods used are then explained, which includes a justification for the choice of the case study method and a description of the 'five stages of critical reflexivity', drawn from critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996). Next, the methods of direct observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews are described, along with the file folders method for thematic analysis of the data. Lastly in this chapter, some possible criticisms of the methodology and methods used are considered, along with ethical issues encountered in the fieldwork.

Chapters 3 to 5 develop the concept of social empowerment, typologies of liberal, social and participatory democracy, and the normative guide (democratic dialectic) that underpins the empirical research. The strong focus on the theoretical aspect of this research is necessary as it adopts a theory-laden but empirically-driven approach to the case studies (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 critically reviews power theories. It begins by drawing on the

Hobbesian roots of modern theories of power, which provides the philosophical origins of the elite power and 'faces of power' debates that took place during the twentieth century. The second part of this chapter switches attention from perceived weaknesses in these approaches, including scientific naivety, methodological individualism and implicit political conservatism, to new theories of power. This focuses especially on the communicative and realist theories of power developed since the 1970s. New critical theories draw on structural and agential understandings of power which highlight the social relational aspect of the concept. This provides the context for explicating the social quality concept of social empowerment that underpins the empirical research.

Chapter 4 briefly discusses the historical development of democracy from Ancient Greece to modern capitalist democracies. The distinction between representation and participation is central to the tensions in the historical development of modern democratic societies. This is followed by a critical analysis of representative and participatory theories of democracy. This section distinguishes between direct and deliberative conceptions of democracy and a range of participatory innovations. It suggests that, rather than viewing these as rival concepts, they can be subsumed under the participatory theory of democracy which suggests the need to expand democratic participation from the political sphere to the social and economic spheres. Moreover, dichotomous conceptions of representative democracy and participatory democracy (Blaug, 2002) are rejected in favour of a continuum between more representative and more participatory democratic processes.

Continuing with the notion of a continuum, the next section applies this theoretical discussion to typologies of democratic society, drawn from Esping-Andersen's (1990, 1999) influential typologies of welfare regimes and discussion of citizenship. Key distinctions between liberal democracy and social democracy as actually existing democratic ideal types are made which include the nature of citizenship rights, the role of the state, and the relationship between state, market and civil society. These ideal types do not correspond exactly to existing societies but allow for 'greater analytical

parsimony' (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.73). The two typologies are conceived as opposite ends of a continuum that are not opposed, but are two competing means to interpret democracy and reconcile it with capitalism. Participatory democracy is proposed as a possible alternative, focusing on institutional innovations that may deepen democratic participation. This section ends with the contention that in assessing institutional innovations it is necessary to draw on underpinning democratic values and their competing interpretations.

This issue is taken up in Chapter 5 on the democratic dialectic. The model is firstly critically developed, which suggests a plurality of conceptions of liberty, equality and solidarity which fit with different democratic typologies. The chapter discusses each of the three values in turn, settling on the concepts of freedom as self-development, relational egalitarianism and social and system integration as appropriate for the optimisation of the democratic dialectic values. These also suggest a more participatory conception of democracy, enhancing the normative value of a possible participatory democratic typology.

The importance of this is not just as a normative guide to the empirical research of participatory democratic settings that follows, but also in relation more broadly to democratic societies. This is explored in the final section of this chapter which returns to the discussion of neo-liberalism introduced above. The final section highlights how neo-liberalism is corrosive of democracy and severely constrains the optimisation of the democratic dialectic in contemporary societies. Attention is drawn to the current context of a hegemonic neo-liberal ideology and policy, which in Britain poses an existential threat to its democracy, and tentatively suggests that social quality could form a counter-hegemonic perspective which could reassert democratic values. However, the central aim of this chapter is to elucidate the democratic dialectic as the normative guide for the assessment of participatory democracy in an economic context and local community context.

This is taken up in Chapter 6 which describes a case study of workplace democracy in a wholefood wholesale co-operative called Suma in West Yorkshire. The chapter begins by discussing the history of the worker co-operative movement. It then discusses the history of Suma, drawing on existing research on the co-operative which elucidates the historical development of the organisational structure. Next Suma's participatory democracy is discussed including the principles that underpin it and some criticisms. Social empowerment in Suma is conceptualised as a range of dimensions from the solidaristic bases of empowerment to passive empowerment and active empowerment. This highlights a strong notion of social empowerment in the organisation linked to its egalitarian and democratic culture.

Chapter 7 looks at a participatory budgeting (PB) process called You Choose in Tameside, Greater Manchester, which is run by the local council. The chapter begins by tracing the historical development of PB from its radical origins in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to its adoption and adaptation by the World Bank, and its implementation in the UK as part of a technical fix to the problems of democratic representation described above. Given this history, the structure of You Choose is explained with reference to the local context of Tameside and the disillusioned political culture in Britain. Despite this there are some positive aspects of participatory democracy in You Choose and incipient dimensions are identified that have potential for fuller social empowerment.

Chapter 8 brings the discussion together by analysing the findings of the case studies firstly in relation to the democratic dialectic and then with regards to social empowerment. Issues relating to the development of participatory democracy encountered in Chapter 4 are also discussed here. Next, some tentative comparisons are made of the similarities and differences between the two cases and the findings are related to the social quality theory that underpins this research. Chapter 9 then concludes by summarising how the research questions have been answered, the main contributions of this research, policy implications of the findings, and possible directions for future research.

Chapter 2

Critical Realism and Social Quality: Philosophical Foundations, Methodology and Methods

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology adopted for the theoretical exploration of the concepts of power, empowerment and democracy (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) and the two empirical case studies (Chapters 6 and 7). It also describes the methods employed in the fieldwork. The methodological position used is critical reflexivity which requires an explication of the social quality and critical realist ontological and epistemological foundations of this research. The methods employed are qualitative case studies which use direct observations and in-depth interview techniques.

The chapter firstly provides a chronological re-telling of the process of conducting the empirical work. This section introduces some issues for the methods, methodology, and ethics, which are elaborated on in the discussion that follows. Secondly, the methodological approach is set out with reference to social quality and critical realism and their ontological and epistemological foundations. Thirdly, the case study methods employed are critically examined. Fourthly, ethical issues are discussed.

The Fieldwork

The initial project proposal identified four potential case studies from Internet searches. These were a homecare social enterprise in Northern England, a harvesting co-operative in Sheffield, participatory budgeting pilots

conducted by local governments across the UK, and a community-owned post office in Sheffield.

In 2010 and 2011, literature reviews of the concepts of power, empowerment, and democracy were written. The potential case studies were critically considered and initial inquiries were made. It was decided that the empirical component of the thesis should assess two examples of participatory democracy, ideally one in the economic sphere and one pertaining to civil society, outside of the formal political sphere. This is because early work on the thesis developed the notion of participation as requiring the expansion of democracy in social and economic life, as advocated by Pateman (1970), Macpherson (1977) and Gould (1988) (Chapter 4). Two cases also allowed some comparison of similarities and differences between the democratic settings (Chapter 8).

Two cases were selected: a democratic workplace and a participatory budgeting initiative. This was because of the radical potential of economic democracy in view of the anti-democratic nature of neo-liberal capitalism (Chapter 6) and the social justice aspirations of the original participatory budgets in Brazil (Chapter 7). This suggested that these case studies would be fertile for critical sociological inquiry and would concern the themes of participatory democracy and social empowerment. The parameter for the two cases was the UK, as the discussion of democracy in Chapters 4 and 5 indicates that the UK combines elements of both liberal democracy and social democracy, which is a contrasting macro context in which to situate the case studies.

Workplace Democracy Case Study

Internet searches highlighted many co-operatives in the Sheffield area and a practitioner's insight was gained from a meeting with an organisation that supports the development of UK co-operatives in April 2011. This revealed that some co-ops are less democratic than others with different organisational structures, all of which require different worker mind-sets to capitalist

businesses. Many UK co-ops were described as small businesses with only a handful of members, but one, a vegan, organic and wholefoods wholesaler called Suma had around 130 members and had been running since the 1970s. Further discussions with members of Sheffield-based food co-ops revealed that Suma was viewed as the leading co-op in the region.

Further online research revealed that the size and longevity of Suma, and its claim to have a democratic system of management and an equal wage policy would make it a relevant and practical case study. Initial telephone contact was made in June 2011, and after meeting a member of Suma in July, a brief proposal was submitted explaining the nature of the research and what the case study would entail. Confirmation of access required patience. Distinct from hierarchical businesses with formal command structures, democratic approval from Suma members was needed before the researcher was allowed to conduct the case study. With this approval came the condition that access to the organisation for interviews and observations would need to minimise disruption.

In view of this, and especially that Suma is a private-setting, it was agreed that the gatekeeper would recruit interested members of the co-op via internal email, using a research brief prepared by the researcher, for interviews proposed to begin in January 2012. Although this had the potential for the gatekeeper to manage the selection of interview participants (Lofland et al., 2006), given the private setting of the co-op it was conceded that this was the best way to ensure access. The sixteen participants chosen had a range of experiences and backgrounds, and once the fieldwork was underway it was possible to recruit a further five from informal discussions with Suma workers and an interviewee recruitment poster.

The fieldwork took place during January and February 2012, in which time the researcher observed six different meetings. All six involved a variety of Suma members, and generated contextual and reflective field notes which enhanced the researcher's understanding of how Suma operates and its culture. Added to this contextual data were some internal documents and

Suma member statistics which were acquired during the fieldwork. Twenty-one in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Suma workers, fourteen of which were men and seven women, twenty were members of the co-op and one was a contracted worker (non-member). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full, and transcripts were shared with the participants to confirm accuracy (Fielding & Thomas, 2008).

The case study was bounded by the premises of Suma. The relative ease of access to research participants once onsite and the time spent on the premises waiting to meet interviewees allowed the researcher to become immersed in the day-to-day workings of the organisation. This provided a stimulating atmosphere in which to begin analysis and develop understanding of the organisation while in the field. By the time that the fieldwork was complete, a great deal of data analysis had already taken place and the outline of the case study had been constructed.

Upon completion of the interviews in late February 2012, a small discussion group with two interview participants was held to discuss the initial findings and clarify some facts about the co-op's operational structure and working practices. A short summary of the research findings was provided to Suma. The research data, fieldwork notes, and existing analysis were then used to complete the case study from March 2012 until late May 2012 using the file folders method (Merriam, 1988). The methods used to collect and analyse the data are discussed in more detail below.

Participatory Budgeting Case Study

In mid-2011 Internet searches produced a list of recent UK participatory budgeting (PB) trials, especially using Government reports (DCLG, 2010) and the PB Unit website, an NGO that encourages the implementation of PB in the UK. This revealed that variety of forms of PB had been used, some of which had more citizen participation than others. They have been used by local councils, parish councils, housing associations, and local police forces. For example, an evaluation document of a notably extensive pilot by Tower

Hamlets Council (2009) revealed that deliberative methods of decision-making were used and the process involved citizens in core-budgets, which are some aspects of the original Porto Alegre model (Baiocchi, 2005). Local councils involved in PB pilots were contacted via email and phone, including Newcastle, Salford, Scarborough, Sheffield, and Tower Hamlets. It was immediately apparent that no confirmation could be given about future PBs until around April 2012 when local budgets were renewed.

In October 2011, the researcher visited a PB event for funding local community groups run by Sheffield City Council, which turned out to be a purely networking event as not enough groups had applied. Coupled with the uncertainty over future budgets and some councils (including Sheffield) changing their political administration in May 2011, the prospects for a viable case study were unclear. Over winter 2011/2012 email contacts were maintained while the focus of the research shifted to the fieldwork for the workplace democracy case study. The scope was expanded and initial inquiries were made into some housing associations in Sheffield and Salford that had used PB in the past, which revealed that they would no longer be running them. In the Sheffield case, this was because the outcomes were not to the liking of the housing association or its customers.

The researcher also met with other academic researchers interested in PB, council officers from Sheffield City Council, and liaised with a member of the PB Unit, to gain a fuller picture of the state of PB in the UK and to highlight possible case studies. From this, it was decided that Newcastle, Scarborough, and Tameside Councils may run PB in 2012. In April 2012 Sheffield confirmed that they would be running one small PB process for young adults, Newcastle had no further plans, a parish council in Scarborough had confirmed that they were to run an event and were open to a case study, while Tameside had not only decided to run PB, but had produced a programme of nine events for funding local voluntary and community group projects to run throughout 2012.

Tameside was chosen for the case study due to the clear commitment to PB, a voting process that engaged citizens reflectively, and also because it involved

a number of PB events across the borough which allowed for multiple observations, and opportunities to recruit interview participants from a wider cohort than at a single event. The innovative method of funding the process, through money saved by household recycling, and openness of the council officers to the possibility of a case study were additional factors.

Following telephone contact with a council officer in charge of the PB process in April 2012 and a meeting in mid-May 2012 at Tameside Council offices, it was agreed that the researcher could attend the PB events to observe, but had to recruit interviewees outside of the formal voting process in order to minimise disruption. Councillors would be informed about the research but would only participate in interviews if they were personally interested, and the assessment panel that runs prior to each PB event would not be open to the researcher to observe due to the sensitive nature of the discussions (relating to legality of the applications). A research brief was submitted via email, and the researcher agreed to write a summary for the Council on the practical findings. It was also agreed that the gatekeeper would arrange interviews with three senior council officers involved with the running of the process (held in July 2012).

While this agreement came too late to observe the first PB event, the following eight were all open to the researcher. Enough data was collected, and interviewees recruited, from four PB events held between mid-June and mid-September 2012 (Chapter 7). This enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of how the events work and the democratic relations involved. Twenty-three interviewees were recruited, including the three council officers selected by the gatekeeper, a further council officer, three Councillors, and sixteen citizens (each citizen attended one of the events, and only one of the sixteen had no association with any of the groups involved in the process). Of these twelve were female and eleven were male. In-depth semi-structured interviews took place in the weeks following each event either at the interviewee's home, the Council offices or at public places in the borough.

In contrast to the Suma case study, the less clear boundaries of the case (Yin, 2009), the time gap between PB events and between interviews held at disparate locations in Tameside meant that the process of conducting the second case study was intermittent between mid-June and late-September 2012. This created difficulties in building momentum for analysing and making sense of the data, with gaps of days and weeks between interviews and observations. The stop-start nature of the fieldwork meant that it wasn't until the interviews were almost complete in September that the researcher was able to conduct a sustained analysis of the data.

The case study was written up by the end of November 2012, during which time further contact was made with Tameside Council to procure contextual data to enhance the case study findings. Again, the process of file folders (Merriam, 1988) for developing, categorising, and linking themes was used to organise the data from interview transcripts, observation field notes and council documents. In mid-November a summary report was produced for Tameside Council. By late November, the empirical component of the thesis had been completed, with reworked theoretical chapters and further analysis (Chapter 8) completed in the following months. The methodology and methods used in the fieldwork are explained in detail in the following discussion.

Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

This thesis is theoretically grounded in the social quality perspective (Beck et al., 1998; 2001; van der Maesen & Walker, 2012) and critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978; 1979; 1989). Social quality pertains to the extent of participation by people in social relations that enhance their 'well-being, capacities, and potential' (Beck et al., 2012, p.68). For social quality a theory of the 'social' is required (Herrmann et al., 2012). This draws on the transformative model of action (Bhaskar, 1979, 1989), and distinguishes social quality from various other social scientific perspectives such as utilitarianism, voluntarism, dialectical materialism, and structural functionalism (Herrmann et al., 2012). It also helps the social quality perspective to avoid the neglect of theory and

overly individualistic accounts in other quality of life perspectives (Phillips, 2006; Wallace & Abbott, 2007). Social quality operationalises the ontological and epistemological roots of critical realism as a theory of the social. This philosophical groundwork forms the meta-theoretical basis for the critical methodology and methods used in this study.

Social quality theory is based on six assumptions which require explanation to foreground the ontological and epistemological position adopted here. This section addresses the six assumptions, followed by the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin this research, and the critical methodology that is justified by these philosophical foundations.

Six Assumptions of Social Quality Theory

The first assumption underpinning social quality theory is that humans are social beings in which ‘individuality is an expression of the social nature of people’ (Beck et al., 2012, p.45). The centrality of this Aristotelean principle allows social quality to develop a theory distinct from, on the one hand, the Benthamite roots of utilitarian philosophy, and also voluntarism, both of which place excessive emphasis on the individual over society, and on the other hand, dialectical materialism in much of the Marxist tradition, and Durkheimian structural functionalism, both of which focus on structure to the detriment of human agency (Herrmann et al., 2012).

Individuals are not in contradistinction to society, as atomised economic agents, nor subsumed within social structure, but rather, are dialectically relational (Bhaskar, 1993). This is expressed in the critical realist theory of transformative action. In Bhaskar’s (1989) model, society always necessarily predates people, and as such, society and people are two very different things. Society is ‘an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions that individuals reproduce or transform’ (Bhaskar, 1989, p.76). Therefore, society provides the necessary conditions for human action, and this action can intentionally (or unintentionally) reproduce or transform society, thus setting the social context for further human action. This places the focus on social

relations, within the context of societal and historical change. In a stratified social system (e.g. capitalism) with unequal power relations, this has implications for the kinds of human action that are available to individuals, and it is argued in this thesis that human organisation in participatory forms of democracy rather than liberal or social models (Chapters 4 and 5) has the possibility of positive transformative action. As Bhaskar (1989, p.6) puts it

[f]rom the critical realist perspective, contrary to the tradition of contemporary social democracy, socialist [democratic] emancipation depends on the transformation of structures, not the amelioration of states of affairs... it consists in a move or transition from unneeded, unwanted and oppressive, to needed, wanted, and empowering sources of determination. This might include, for example, a switch from a situation where production is determined by the pursuit of private profit and subject to arbitrary fluctuation, to one where it is subject to democratic negotiation and planning.

Therefore, under this assumption, it is necessary to theorise the social as constituted by social beings, temporally shaped by - and with the capacity to shape - the organisations, associations and structures that make up society. Explaining how this happens, or why it does not happen and how it could happen, is one of the tasks of critical sociological inquiry.

This understanding of structure and agency presupposes the second assumption of social quality, that individuals within society are constitutively interdependent (Beck et al., 2012). This means that

people as social beings (first assumption) interact with each other, and these interactions constitute a diversity of collective identities which provide the contexts for their self-realisation and which lead to manifestations of the social... a person's self-realisation is enabled through interaction with various collective identities (Beck et al., 2012, p.46).

Three stages of constitutive interdependency can be identified in which the social is realised through processes of interaction between several tensions (but it is not *produced by* these tensions) (Beck et al., 2012, p.49). The first stage is the 'framing structure' in which tensions between processes of individual self-realisation and the formation of collective identities are

constitutively interdependent (Beck et al., 2012, p.47). Second, constitutive interdependency between the framing structure and self-referential capacities allows individuals to develop the competence to act and configure human interrelationships in organisations, institutions and companies. This second level focuses on everyday practices and how they relate to theoretical abstractions. The productive and reproductive relationships that result from this form the third stage of constitutive interdependency which realises the social (Beck et al., 2012). This places Bhaskar's conception of structure and agency at the heart of social quality.

In social quality terms, this means that the social is 'an expression of the always changing [societal] totality as an open process' (Beck et al., 2012, p.48). The recognition of the historical context for social (in)action highlights the third assumption that underpins social quality theory, whereby the historically determined context for constitutive interdependency is formed by interplay between two basic tensions - between societal processes and biographical processes as opportunities, and between systems, institutions, organisations and communities, families, networks, groups as interactions (Beck et al., 2012). This third assumption of a historically determined but changing context forms the basis for the realisation of the three-fold concept of constitutive interdependency (the second assumption) (Beck et al., 2012).

Stemming from this, the fourth assumption proposes that there are varying points of departure for four constitutional factors (human security, social recognition, social responsiveness, human capacity), four conditional factors (socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion, social empowerment), and four normative factors (social justice, solidarity, equal value, human dignity) of social quality (Beck et al., 2012). The three sets of factors are not the *causes* of the transformations in human conditions, but rather are 'instruments for unravelling and analysing processes that result in the transformation of human interrelationships' (Beck et al., 2012, p.54). For this research, the nature of existing democratic settings is constitutional, and social empowerment is the conditional factor, while the democratic dialectic provides the normative guide.

The fifth assumption of social quality emphasises that normative factors are necessary ethical considerations for assessing the processes that help to realise the social, while the sixth assumption proposes that analysis of the constitutive interdependency of aspects of social quality will produce new points of departure for policy options which are historically and theoretically grounded (Beck et al., 2012). In this research the normative values of self-development (freedom), relational egalitarianism (equality), and social and system integration (solidarity) optimise the democratic dialectic (Chapter 5). These values form the ethical considerations and theoretical grounding for the case studies. As Sayer (1997) points out, the need for a normative grounding is pertinent to ensure that criticism of existing social relations takes place from a standpoint that has a vision of an alternative.

Further, the implications of this theoretical and empirical research suggest potential policy changes aimed at improving social quality, especially through participatory democracy (Chapter 9). This means that focus on the social as distinct from, but reproduced or changed by, human agents acting in the context of historically shaped social structures stresses social relations, contingencies and constitutive interdependency. Recognition of this is the basis for describing social empowerment in the participatory democratic settings.

Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

Given these six assumptions the critical realist ontological and epistemological foundations which underpin social quality can be explicated in more detail. They provide the basis and justification for a critical methodological approach taken in this research. As described above, in contrast to utilitarian, voluntarist, dialectical materialist, and structural functionalist perspectives, social quality avoids the classic dichotomy of individual actor and society and conceives of 'interacting individuals as social beings, i.e. praxis as a matter of historicity' (Herrmann et. al, 2012, p.86). Indeed, a recurring theme in this thesis is the rejection of methodological individualist epistemological views, present in both utilitarianism and voluntarism, and an emphasis on the social

relational concept of social quality. Much work in the social sciences does not properly acknowledge the social, focusing too much on either individuals or on structures.

Social quality theory draws on the critical realist ontology, and its central proposition that reality is stratified. This is explained by Bhaskar (1989, pp.180-182) as the 'intransitive' dimension; 'a conception of reality, including knowable reality, [which is] only contingently, partially and locally humanised'. Danermark et al. (2002, p.199) describe the stratified nature of reality as consisting of the level of the 'real' where generative mechanisms exist (whether they actually produce an effect or not). The level of the 'actual' is where these structural mechanisms produce a factual event, which may or may not be experienced. Should an event be experienced, it falls into the domain of the 'empirical'. This means that the domain in which empirical sociological research works - the empirical - is a smaller subset of a wider ontological realm. The world is therefore independent of our beliefs about it, and it is differentiated and stratified (Benton & Craib, 2001). This necessitates the use of theory in sociological research to explain the unobservable aspects of reality.

This focus on ontology over epistemology is distinct from much philosophy of social science, especially the influential logical positivist movement and Weberian sociology. Danermark et al. (2002, p.8) explain that in much positivist influenced social science '[o]ntology is reduced to epistemology... in this perspective reality becomes 'flat'', whereas critical realism involves 'the criticism of that reduction of reality which does not take into account deep structure with its underlying mechanisms, and thus restricts our understanding of the world'. This is the epistemic fallacy, whereby 'statements about being can be reduced to or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge' (Bhaskar, 1978, p.36).

Instead, Bhaskar (1979, p.69) describes society as 'a complex and causally efficacious whole - a totality, which is being continually transformed in practice. As an object of study it can be neither be read straight off a given

world nor reconstructed from our subjective experiences'. Further, this transformative model of action is explored by social scientists in an open system, whereby 'the generative mechanisms [studied by social scientists] operate in a complex interaction with other mechanisms, which either cooperate with or work against the mechanism in question' (Danermark et al., 2002, p.199). The critical realist epistemology therefore, derived from the ontological view that reality is independent of knowledge of it and that it is also stratified in an open system, proposes that that social scientific knowledge has a social nature. This is the transitive dimension (Bhaskar, 1989). Harvey (1990, p.2) argues that because 'knowledge is structured by existing sets of social relations', critical researchers must use a methodology that engages with both empirical data and theoretically with social structures.

Sayer (1997; also Hammersley, 2002) has questioned critical realism and other critical social sciences (e.g. Fay, 1987) on the grounds that they assume that *ought* follows straightforwardly from *is*, and often neglect the role of *normative* theory in critical studies. Sayer (1997, pp.477-478) argues that criticism necessarily presupposes the possibility of a better alternative, which must be shown to be feasible from a critical standpoint, not in terms of blueprints, but rather 'through the likely tendencies or mechanisms of different forms of social organisation', exploring 'as far as possible what the causal powers and liabilities of alternative forms of social organisation are likely to be'. The alternative proposed here is participatory democracy, and the critical standpoint adopted is derived from the values of the democratic dialectic and participatory democratic theory (Chapters 4 and 5).

For social quality theory constitutive interdependency is a characteristic of human societies, and sociological research must acknowledge this, especially from an ontological point of departure of the stratified nature of reality. This means that social scientific knowledge claims must be grounded in - but not determined by - normative theory, in order to identify and criticise deeper lying structural mechanisms in relation to material practices from the standpoint of a better alternative. As Sayer (1992, p.116) puts it;

[a]bstract theory analyses objects in terms of their constitutive structures, as parts of wider structures and in terms of their causal powers. Concrete [empirical] research looks at what happens when these combine.

The empirical findings are tentative and contingent on future transformative action in society, and use research methods that explain social processes from a critical standpoint based on a normative view of possible alternative forms of social organisation (Sayer, 1995). Questions on the feasibility of such an alternative conception of democracy are considered in Chapters 4, 5 and 9, but these foundations presuppose a critical methodology.

Critical Methodology

The ontological and epistemological foundations described above have implications for the methodology used. Outhwaite (1987, p.56) posits that research based on realist principles involves attention to ‘an object of inquiry which is already defined in certain ways in the world of everyday life and ordinary language’. This object is typically re-described by the researcher in order to bring out its complexity, and the relationship that it has with ‘its internal and external environment as an outcome of a multiplicity of interacting factors’ (Outhwaite, 1987, p.57). A dialectical approach to theory and empirical data is necessary because of the critical realist conception of the stratified nature of reality described above. Crucially, the object of inquiry indicates the methods appropriate for the research, with no particular bias towards a prescribed set of methods or research paradigms and no special status for empirical work (Outhwaite, 1987; Danermark, et al., 2002; Morrow & Brown, 1994).

This thesis has adopted a methodology that is theoretically grounded but developed by empirical case studies. The central object of study is participatory democracy, as distinct from liberal democratic and social democratic variants, which involves competing definitions and different kinds of democratic relationships. A second object of study is the concept of social empowerment: how power relationships in social settings can enable individuals to develop their capabilities and potential, and especially how this

features as a part of specifically democratic relationships between people. The theoretical component to this thesis in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 investigates and re-describes the concepts of power and democracy in relation to the wider structural aspects of society (using the normative guide of the democratic dialectic).

Following this, qualitative methods are appropriate to describe the participative democratic experiences of individuals in relation to the contingent social structures which frame these experiences in the case studies. Through a process of critical reflexivity (Anderson, 1989) the experiences of individuals in these participative democratic settings have been interpreted, described and contrasted with wider political, economic and social contexts. The research describes the tensions and contradictions between the empirical practices of participatory democracy in the two case studies and the theoretical analysis of wider social structures. Further, this also demands attention to the contingent nature of power and democracy in everyday life with reference to constitutive interdependency and the transformative model of social action (Chapter 8).

Outhwaite (1987) argues that realist research is ontologically bold, but is cautious in terms of what can be inferred through empirical sociological research, describing tendencies in social phenomena, rather than causal relationships. The critical realist emphasis on the contingent nature of social relations is pertinent here, social quality theory and the democratic dialectic assume the possibility of structural changes through human action which has the tendency to create such changes - depending on circumstances - but this is not a given, casual reaction. Structures are often constraining and well as enabling, but an understanding of these deeper mechanisms in relation to everyday social practice, can work towards the possibility of positive social change (Sayer, 1995). This strategy ensures that the empirical research is theory-laden, but not theory determined (Anderson, 1989; Bhaskar 1989; Lather, 1986), and draws on critical reflexivity in the collection, interpretation and analysis of empirical data.

Critical reflexivity requires reflection on the link between theory and data, self-reflection on the researcher's biases and 'reflection on the dialectical relationship between structural/historical forces and human agency' (Anderson, 1989, p.254). In practical terms this has involved the theory-laden interpretation of emergent empirical data described above, self-reflection by the researcher has involved compiling field notes in observations, reflective notes following observations and interviews, redrafting interview schedules based on emergent themes during the fieldwork, and reflection on the relationship between the constitutive interdependency of individuals and social structural transformation in the post-fieldwork analysis.

This process avoids a concern with positivist issues of 'reliability' or 'validity' in qualitative research as empirical '[d]ata are meaningful only in terms of their theoretical context... data must not be treated as independent of their socio-historical context' (Harvey, 1990, p.8). Instead, the critical reflexive approach developed here draws on the concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is not necessary to reject the critical realist ontology in favour of a constructivist account of multiple realities and its associated methodological paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), but some principles of naturalistic inquiry have been appropriated to increase the practical quality of this research (Seale, 1999a; 1999b).

The concern here is with techniques for increasing the probability of credible findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation as techniques to this end. Ensuring sufficient time in the field to build understanding of the culture of the social settings, testing the emerging data against misrepresentations by the researcher or the research participants, and building trust are aspects of prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Persistent observation has the purpose of identifying 'characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.304). A secondary concern of persistent observation is to avoid spending too little or too long in the field, which can reduce credibility. Multiple sources and methods are aspects of triangulation proposed by Lincoln

& Guba (1985, p.305), which here requires the use of observations and interviews. Triangulation in this way is pertinent to the critical reflexive approach as it encourages reflexive engagement, helping to link empirical data to theory while ensuring that fieldwork is empirically-driven and theory-laden.

Combined with these practical techniques for credibility, the trustworthiness of the account is enhanced by a critical standpoint in research and analysis that does not determine or bias the findings. The researcher does not ‘‘construct’ the object of study: the same ‘object’ can be examined for a large variety of reasons, under a large variety of motivations, and yield the same findings’ (Carspecken, 1996, p.6). The empirical findings require caution as drawing on triangulation can help to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the account provided here, but it is not an infallible technique. The following discussion describes the methods used in the fieldwork and analysis, focusing on the systematic application of the critical reflexive methodology.

Methods

The empirical component to this research comprises of qualitative case studies of two democratic settings. The empirical research uses methods drawn from critical ethnographic research (Carspecken, 1996). This is useful for critical-dialectical analysis in which the researcher begins with ‘the structural relationships and then undertake[s] an ethnographic inquiry in order to facilitate structural analysis’ (Harvey, 1990, p.12). This section describes the methods used and a five step guide to the practical process of collecting, interpreting and analysing the data in a critically reflexive way, and some criticisms of the fieldwork. Ethical issues are considered in the next section.

Case Studies

Morrow & Brown (1994) argue that the case study method is useful for providing explanatory empirical data in relation to critical theoretical assertions. This is due to the intensive nature of qualitative research design that considers limited cases 'in terms of a great number of individual properties' (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p.250; Sayer, 1992). A benefit of having a theoretical orientation that provides grounding and guides the case study is that it can help to focus the vast amount of data generated in qualitative work, with attention to particular data that is relevant to the theoretical concerns of the research (Yin, 2009). In addition, the case studies draw in part on ethnographic methods; direct observations and in-depth interviews, but these are used for an explanatory focus (rather than interpretive), and aspects of ethnography such as 'thick description' and participant observation are not necessary to elicit the data required here (Morrow & Brown, 1994, pp.251-252).

Hammersley (1992, p.184) defines a case as 'the phenomenon (located in space/time) about which data are collected and/or analysed, and that corresponds to the type of phenomena to which the main claims of a study relate'. This definition relates to study of a single case, which invites criticisms such as the limitations of the method in both analytical power and pervasiveness (also generalisability, discussed below) (Verschuren, 2003). However, in this research each 'case' is 'bounded by time and activity' within the social setting (Creswell, 2003, p.15; Lofland et al., 2006). Since the phenomena under study (objects of inquiry) are participatory democracy and social empowerment, the case studies are bounded by theoretical aims of the research, and more practically, the 'processes, activities, and events' pertaining to the research interests within the two democratic settings (Creswell, 2003, p.183).

Defining practical boundaries are important in order to situate the objects of inquiry and the limits of the case (Yin, 2009). However, while the objects of inquiry are participatory democracy and social empowerment in two social

settings, this is not a simple demarcation of an area of study. As both are critical case studies, the relationship between the bounded cases and wider social relations are of central importance to a dialectical analysis (Harvey, 1990). Hence, in the workplace democracy case study, the boundaries pertained to the physical premises of the co-op and individual membership or employment at Suma, while the case consists of the democratic principles, practices, and social relations that take place in the co-op. For the PB case study, the boundaries pertain to the You Choose voting events in a number of community buildings, the council officers and citizens participating, along with the everyday lifeworlds of the citizens and members of the community and voluntary groups that took part, and the principles and practice of local democracy in Tameside Council. The case consists broadly of the democratic principles, practices and social relations involved in You Choose.

Five Stages of Critical Reflexivity

Carspecken's (1996; also Verschuren, 2003, pp.131-132) five stages for conducting critical qualitative research were used to guide the empirical fieldwork and analysis. This process operationalises the theory-laden but empirically-driven approach. However, not all aspects of ethnographic research were required, such as 'thick' description (Carspecken, 1996), due to having less emphasis on micro-level interaction in this work in favour of individual experiences and broader social relations, along with the time and access constraints that were imposed on the cases (this issue is taken up further later in this chapter). With a critical realist inflection, the five stages are:

1. Observations (monological data generation)
2. Reflection on observations (reconstructive analysis)
3. Interviews (dialogical data generation)
4. Analysis of structural relations in the case (critical reflexivity on data and theory)
5. Explaining findings (assessing the findings in relation to deeper causal mechanisms and wider social relations) (adapted from Carspecken, 1996).

The stages are not to be seen as a step-by-step procedure but as a loose cyclical guideline (Carspecken, 1996). Stage one requires initial direct observations which involves the generation of monological data (data solely from the researcher's perspective) by direct and passive observation. Stage two consists of reflection on the observations and a reconstructive analysis which articulates 'those cultural themes and system factors that are not observable and are usually unarticulated by the actors themselves' (Carspecken, 1996, p.42). Dialogical data generation through interviews is the third stage, which adds the views of the research participants to the account. For Carspecken (1996, p.42) this information 'will often challenge information collected in stage one and analysed in stage two'. This process makes data collection and analysis a simultaneous process (Merriam, 1988).

The emergent themes and questions generated through movement back and forth between stages one to three allows a critical reflexive analysis of the data to develop. This is described by Stake (1995, p.133) as the 'progressive focus' of a case study, whereby the research is driven by emergent empirical themes. Stage four emerges as a result of this process, which links more explicitly the case findings and themes to the theoretical framing. For Merriam (1988, p.125), this analytic process allows the researcher 'to raise concrete relations and happenings observed in a particular setting to a higher level of abstraction'. Here a critical reflexive analysis begins the process of situating the data in relation to the broader theoretical perspective, identifying contradictions and tensions between the cases and wider social structure. Stage five develops explanations of the data by linking the emergent findings to structures in society. This is framed in critical realist terms as linking the empirical findings in the case studies to the broader theoretical analysis of deeper structural mechanisms operating in democratic societies to propose the possibilities for transformative social action.

Carspecken's guide was loosely followed in the fieldwork because the two case studies required a flexible approach (Yin, 2009). This suggests the necessity of adaptability in the field and avoidance of dogmatic adherence to specific methodological paradigms (Carspecken, 1996; Harvey, 1990; Mills,

1970); a flexibility in practical research which is supported by critical realism (Easton, 2010; Seale, 1999b). The workplace democracy case study began with direct observations of meetings (stage one) within the first few weeks, but to minimise disruption and use time productively interviews began immediately and ran alongside the observations. In both cases the observations took the form of 'not so thick' description that focused on general interactions, day-to-day practices, contextual data, and reflection on emergent themes for further inquiry. Critical reflections on the emerging data took place throughout this process (stages two and three). Attention shifted between the first three stages in the first few weeks of the case study.

From this, the themes emerging from observation and interview data within the theoretical frame were used to further develop the direction of the research (stage four). During the fieldwork the researcher was based on the premises for several days a week which allowed for integration into daily life at the co-op, and provided a fertile atmosphere to develop a critical reflexive analysis (often involving much reflective note-making while waiting to meet interviewees). This meant that analysing the relationship between the individual experiences of the co-op and wider social structures (stage four) was submerged within the process of fieldwork to the extent that upon completion of it, the structure of the case study was largely in place. This was developed by post-fieldwork analysis that integrated further themes and excised less relevant themes.

In the PB case study, monological data from the observations was generated at intervals of several weeks due to the You Choose timetable. This meant that the research shifted from stage one to stage two immediately after each observation as interviews were arranged following each event. Attention to linking stage two to stage three followed as interviews were conducted in the following weeks at disparate locations in the area. Due to the transitory nature of (annual) four-hour voting events in districts of Tameside (apart from the organisers, prospective interviewees each attended only one event) the level of researcher integration into the democratic setting (and wider local culture) and interviewee experience of participatory democracy was less

intense. Along with the stop-start nature of the fieldwork in this case, the critical reflexive process (moving between stages one to three to develop deeper analytical data in stage four) was more fragmented, and developed more in the post-fieldwork analysis. Having said this, a number of themes *did* emerge in the fieldwork which allowed for critical reflexive development of the interview schedule and field notes, but this was a slow-burning process over four months. Stage five was the most difficult to achieve, given the focus on two relatively small case studies. Tentative suggestions can only be made in Chapters 8 and 9 regarding wider social relations and the possibilities for social change. This is because of the contingent nature of the social phenomena studied and the limits of critical social science.

Direct Observations & In-depth Interviews

The research was carried out as a known investigator, which necessitated information sheets written in non-academic language that highlighted the voluntary nature of participation (Lofland et al., 2006). While the workplace democracy case study was conducted in a private setting, the PB case study largely took place in public settings, although some interviews were at participants' homes, which are private settings (Lofland et al., 2006).

For observations and interviews the role of 'student' or 'acceptable incompetent' was strategically adopted, rather than 'sociologist', 'researcher' or 'expert', to reduce the risk of intimidation (Lofland et al., 2006, p.44). This approach worked well in the workplace democracy case study, where the research participants were knowledgeable about Suma's democratic practices. However, given the relatively minor experiences of participatory democracy by citizens in the PB case study, many interview participants looked to the researcher as an expert on the subject. In this case, explaining the background to PB helped interviewees to get a better handle on the purpose of the interview and encouraged critical reflection on their experiences.

Direct observations were conducted as a known investigator. Intrusion was minimised in order for the researcher to passively observe and take notes. The main purpose of the direct observations was to build up practical knowledge of day-to-day activities and insights into the culture and practices of the two settings and to stimulate lines of inquiry for the in-depth interviews. In both cases, it was possible to make detailed notes, as the researcher's presence was announced to those present to secure informed consent (Lofland et al., 2006). The workplace democracy case study was based on six key observations of meetings (much informal observation took place while on site). The PB case study consisted of four observations of You Choose events. In both cases critical analysis in the form of initial coding took place immediately after as the researcher left the setting and further field notes were made that asked open questions to generate themes from the data (Lofland et al., 2006).

The field notes were reflexive thoughts and 'not-so-thick' description of events and included details such as how many people were present, the physical character of the setting, a general characterisation of the events that took place and emergent themes relating to the research (Lofland et al., 2006, p.108). For this research, the observations formed a contextual frame for developing the interview schedule, for reflection on the democratic settings, and dialectical analysis of the case at a holistic level. In both cases, the observations were integral to grounding the research in the relationships, organisation and practices of the democratic settings.

Interviewees were recruited in different ways. The majority were recruited by the gatekeeper in the workplace democracy case (sixteen out of twenty-one). The PB case study relied on the researcher approaching and recruiting interviewees during breaks at the events (three council officers were recruited by the gatekeeper). This required information sheets to be given to prospective interviewees that detailed what to expect and the researcher's intentions for the data (Lofland et al., 2006). The interview guide was semi-structured, including broad questions and themes and was guided by the theoretical concerns of the research (Fontana & Frey, 1998). It began with

basic questions to ease the interviewee into conversation with key questions with probes introduced later (Fielding & Thomas, 2008). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcripts were shared with all interviewees to ensure accuracy of their statements (Fielding & Thomas, 2008).

In the workplace democracy case study, all interviews took place in a meeting room which allowed for clear recording, while in the PB case study, the interviews took place in disparate locations including council offices, a pub, a coffee shop and participants' homes. This meant that clear recordings were not always possible and flexibility was needed to find suitable locations. In addition, while the workplace democracy interviews took place during the working day which encouraged critical reflexive engagement, the PB interviews were in the weeks following the event, which necessitated further introductory discussion about the process to encourage interviewees to reflect on their experiences. The interview schedule changed as emerging themes from the data developed and new themes were pursued to ensure that the research was empirically driven. Discussing emergent ideas and themes with interview participants was an important aspect of critical reflexivity in the research process, especially to fill in missing contextual data and to focus ideas (Merriam, 1988). The analytical process necessitated critical reflection based on recognising inconsistencies between 'action and words in terms of structural factors', along with description of the practices and subjective viewpoints of the research participants (Harvey, 1990, p.13).

As Stake (1995, p.72) describes, while researchers 'have certain protocols that help them draw systematically from previous knowledge and cut down on misperception... there is much art and much intuitive processing to search for meaning'. Similarly, for Merriam (1988) emergence in qualitative research is based on hunches, working hypotheses, educated guesses that direct the researcher's focus to emerging data, with repeated investigation to refine or verify hunches. This process is 'intuitive, but it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the [researcher's] orientation and knowledge', and the ideas and concepts expressed by the participants

(Merriam, 1988, p.133). This was a part of the craft of carrying out the direct observations and in-depth interviews.

Data Analysis

Analysis took place throughout the fieldwork in the form of analytical field notes. It is important for qualitative case studies that both first impressions and final compilations are as much subject to the analytical process of giving meaning to social phenomena (Stake, 1995). In both cases the research ended at a point of 'data saturation' and with the 'emergence of regularities' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.350). This refers to the researcher's sense that the data collection process had been refined enough, with a holistic understanding of the case. While more themes could certainly have been developed, at these points in both cases the researcher felt that sufficient data had been collected for the purpose of the studies.

On completion of the fieldwork, a cognitive and intensive analytical process of grouping data into categories and themes in file folders immediately followed (Merriam, 1988). This was organised by topic, rather than chronologically. Eschewing computer-aided analysis, this involved a literal cut and paste approach to dividing up printed data with scissors and placement of each quote or fragment of field notes under a relevant theme using memo cards (the search for 'patterns and regularities' in the data, Merriam, 1988, p.131). This approach allowed the researcher to physically link themes and categories by laying out the data on a table. Beyond a personal preference for reading in print, this served an analytical advantage of easily moving quotes between categories, and categories between themes, establishing links between them by making notes on the memo cards, and further emergent ideas in a notebook. This also allowed the researcher to view the entire constellation of the data at a glance, contrasting the balance within themes, overlaps, new categories, positive and negative data within themes, and highlighting categories not useful for the case study (keeping key themes in focus and pushing less important ones to the margins is integral to developing

a deeper analysis, in view of the vast amount of data generated in case studies, Stake, 1995).

This followed what Lofland et al. (2006) call initial coding and focused coding. Initial coding is where categories begin to emerge from inspection of the transcripts and field notes, where open questions are asked of the data, such as 'what does this relate to?', and tentative grouping of quotes within categories. This started during the fieldwork where emerging categories, key quotes and reflections were noted by the researcher, but also characterised the early stage of post-fieldwork analysis.

This was followed by focused coding in which the quotes and categories deemed most important to the aims of the research were grouped together under broad themes, while less relevant quotes and notes are jettisoned. Given the theory-laden nature of this research the major themes (which were file folders into which emergent data was placed) were setting-specific data (relating to aspects of the culture, functioning and everyday practices of the particular setting), participatory democracy (with initial sub-categories of liberty, equality and solidarity which were expanded and transformed by the fieldwork process), and social empowerment (with a range of emergent themes from the data). Following Merriam (1988) the major-themes represent a greater level of abstraction, and within these, categories relating to concrete description, researcher thoughts and interviewee perspectives were placed. In combination with reflective notes made by the researcher, this allowed the two case studies to be written.

Reflections on the Methodology and Methods

Two potential criticisms of the methods of this research are highlighted here; the risk of 'overidentification' or 'ideological bias' and the problem of generalisation. The risk of 'overidentification' is highlighted by Lofland et al. (2006, p.62) as a concern where the researcher becomes immersed in a setting to the extent that they identify positively and non-critically with it. A parallel to this problem for critical social science is the concern with

defending what Lather (1986) calls 'openly ideological research'. Morrow & Brown (1994, p.268) state that '[b]ecause research in a given society cannot be ideologically neutral, it is legitimate to justify rationally the definition of forms of research guided by critical-emancipatory cognitive interests'. Following the social quality theory philosophical underpinning, this research focuses normatively on the possibilities for participation in more egalitarian social relations that enhance capabilities and well-being.

This point demands attention to the researcher's personal values regarding equality and political allegiance with democratic socialism in conducting this research (Creswell, 2003). In the workplace democracy case study, the data produced was especially positive in highlighting social empowerment and participative practices, and along with the intensive nature of this research experience, there was a possible risk of developing an un-critical acceptance of the emerging themes by the researcher (Punch, 1998). Self-reflexive acknowledgement of this risk during the process helped the researcher to focus on critical engagement with the principles and practices of the co-op. This was supported by the critical reflexive approach as it encourages a questioning disposition even for positive data. Moreover, the criticism of 'openly ideological' bias is not limited to qualitative case study research, rather this refers to regulative ideas for judging the trustworthiness of the researcher and the findings, whatever the methods employed (Verschuren, 2003). Following a critical reflexive approach ensured an analysis that did not 'construct' the object of study, but was concerned with the emergent themes from a normative standpoint, as described by Carspecken (1996) and Sayer (1995) in the methodological discussion above.

Hammersley (1992) highlights a second criticism of the case study method regarding the lack of generalisation. Given the critical realist orientation of this research, regress to an interpretivist or relativist stance that generalisation of case study findings is methodologically undesirable is not sufficient. Rather, the issue of statistical generalisation is tentative and contingent on deeper structural changes within society. The focus of the research is on paradigm cases of a set of social relations and principles of

organisation that are relatively rare and at odds with currently prevailing social ideas (Harvey, 1990). In other words, the cases are necessarily tentative in highlighting the possibility of a more socially empowered society that would be characterised by participatory democratic social and economic relationships. The findings are analytically generalisable to theoretical propositions, rather than to existing populations (Yin, 2009). Broader changes are proposed in theoretical terms but these are contingent on human action for future policy and practice.

Ethics

Ethical principles have been followed in the design and conduct of this research. This section focuses on the key issues of access, informed consent, confidentiality, and trust. For both cases, during the process of negotiating access the researcher met face-to-face with the gatekeeper and a research brief explained in plain English the reasons for the research, including what it is about, what will happen, and how the data is to be used and disseminated (BSA, 2004). As a condition of access and to ensure reciprocal relations, the researcher agreed to write summaries of the research for the two case studies. In the workplace democracy case study there was an emphasis on minimising disruption to the working day by arranging interviews via email and for the gatekeeper to recruit interviewees. This was a compromise agreed to by the researcher to ensure access, but it didn't greatly affect the range of interview participants recruited. Likewise in the PB case study, conditions of access were to recruit interviewees outside of the voting process, and that the assessment panels were off limits due to the legally sensitive nature of the discussion, and also that elected members would approach the researcher if interested in an interview. The researcher attempted to negotiate access to the assessment panels but it was conceded that this was non-negotiable.

In practical terms the workplace democracy case study required democratic approval for access and for observations. But while respecting the requirement to minimise disruption, the absence of authoritarian chains of command in the co-op meant that Suma workers could arrange times for

interviews that were flexible. In the PB case study, access to all of the voting events was granted and the researcher informed the gatekeeper and participants in advance of each observation session.

To ensure informed consent, the researcher produced information sheets that detailed the purposes of the research, the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw, and measures in place to protect anonymity (BSA, 2004). In both cases, these were given to participants in advance of interviews which gave the prospective interviewee time to consider their participation (the researcher also shared further copies at the start of the interview to ensure that the participants understood the information). In addition, a consent form was provided which restated the voluntary nature of the research, clarified that the participant was happy to be recorded, that the data would be treated confidentially, and that a copy of the interview transcript would be shared with the interviewee. At only one point did an interviewee request to speak 'off the record' and for this the audio recording was stopped and no notes were made.

For the observations information sheets were available upon request (due to the nature of meetings or events with up to 150 people present). The researcher's interference was minimised at the request of the gatekeepers. At the start of each observation, the Suma meeting/PB event convenor announced the researcher's presence, institutional affiliation, and briefly the purpose of the research. While the boundaries between informed consent and deception are not always clear (Bulmer, 2001; Punch, 1998), this had the potential for some participants to not be *fully* informed about the researcher's aims. However, this did not amount to harmful deception as this was mitigated by the 'not so thick' description undertaken: no personal data was collected during the observations, and the announcement ensured that the research participants were not 'kept in ignorance of the true identity of the researcher' (Bulmer, 2001, p.55).

Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity were important factors in the research design (Bulmer, 2001). It was decided that the names of the

organisations studied would be used. In Suma's case this is because existing research on the co-op is cited in this thesis. For Tameside Council this is because as a public authority there is no compelling reason to withhold the name of the Council, and existing Council documents have been cited. The thesis does not contain any information that could damage the organisations studied, such as sensitive financial data. On the other hand, all workers at Suma, employees of the council and other participants in the research been given pseudonyms, and any identifiable data has been changed (e.g. descriptions of people, the names of community groups and any people cited or described by interviewees) to avoid possible harm or damage to existing relationships. Further, all data has been saved on a password protected computer and a memory stick, kept in a locked drawer during this research.

Trust is an important aspect of practicing ethical research to ensure reciprocity and openness (Cresswell, 1998). A full interview transcript was shared with each research participant, with an opportunity for the interviewee to remove or clarify data, or request that the researcher not use any particular data (this was requested by one interviewee). Further, as a condition of access, but also to support reciprocal relationships between the researcher and the gatekeeper, summary reports were produced for both cases to ensure that the participants got something out of the research (Clark, 2010). These have been framed as highlighting 'good practice' and constructive criticism in the two cases which could be used by the parties concerned to facilitate positive changes (Clark, 2010, p.8).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the philosophical foundations, methodology and methods that underpin the research that follows. It began by providing an account of the fieldwork, including the thought processes involved in selecting the case studies, negotiating access, conducting the research, analysing the data and writing it up. This was followed by an exploration of the philosophical foundations of this research in social quality theory and critical realism. The ontological and epistemological positions that describe

the stratified nature of reality and the social nature of knowledge claims draw attention to the limits of empirical social science. This has provided the philosophical justification for a critical social science approach that is theory-laden but empirically-driven in order to make sense of social phenomena that cannot be explained purely through observation.

The critical methodology that this presupposes uses critical reflexivity in five stages as a practical guide for qualitative research, including the movement between different research methods and analysis in a way that ensures that the data is derived from the empirical work but related to the theoretical approach. The case studies use in-depth semi-structured interviews and direct observations and are presented in Chapters 6 and 7. The following three chapters develop the theoretical component in this thesis, beginning with a critical review of the concept of power, followed by a chapter on democratic theory and institutional design, before examining in more detail the normative values that make up democratic societies.

Chapter 3

From Power to Social Empowerment

Introduction

This chapter critically reviews theories of power in working towards situating the social quality concept of social empowerment within a critical realist theory of power. The following discussion builds on the philosophical foundations of this thesis in critical realism and social quality to elucidate a concept of social empowerment suitable for analysis with reference to the democratic dialectic in empirical case studies. In moving from power to social empowerment, it is necessary to trace the development of power from elite theories of power, agent-centred behaviouralist conceptions of power, hegemonic critiques that emphasise interest-shaping, to communicative and especially realist theories that incorporate empowerment, structure, agency and change in theories of power.

A plethora of definitions of power abound, for example, Russell (1938, p.35) sees power simply as 'the production of intended effects'. Wrong (1979, p.2) posits that the concept is dispositional, that '[p]ower is the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others'. For Bottomore (1993, p.1) power is 'the ability of an individual or a social group to pursue a course of action (to make and implement decisions, and more broadly to determine the agenda for decision making) if necessary against the interests, and even against the opposition, of other individuals and groups'. In viewing power as a capacity to produce effects, Weber's (1968, p.926) voluntarist perspective also grounds an intentional agent-centred view of power where it is 'the chance of a man or a number of men to realise their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action'.

Both the utilitarian and voluntarist variants incorporate the dominant view of power in modern Western social science, which is that the concept is a causal, agent-centred and an accumulative property (Hindess, 1996). This chapter follows Barbalet (1985) in describing how these views stress intentionality, but while not incorrect, are incomplete conceptions of power. The chapter begins by considering the roots of modern power theory in the philosophy of Hobbes (1996). Modern power theories are then discussed which adopt the individualistic and mechanistic premise of Hobbes' account of power. After briefly discussing early twentieth century elite theory, central to modern theories of power is the 'faces of power' debate.

A second strand of power theory is traced by Clegg (1987, 1989; Haugaard & Clegg, 2009) from its roots in the political philosophy of Machiavelli (2004) to post-modern perspectives on power such as the post-structuralist work of Foucault (1977, 1980), built on by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and Hayward (1998). For example, Foucault (1980, p.104) views power as existing deeply within modern society to the extent that it is present in all claims to knowledge, and has become more complex and disciplinary in contrast to the sovereign power of Machiavelli's *Prince*: a new mechanism of power that 'presupposes a tightly knit grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign'. Power establishes disciplines that restrict through the production of knowledge as 'there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise, and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation, and functioning of a discourse' (Foucault, 1980, p.93). However, despite rejecting modern theories of power that derive from Hobbesian causality, Foucault's treatment of power 'tends to fall back into the negative view of power to which he is opposed, portraying it as a monolithic, unmitigated force of domination' (Nash, 2000, p.23). Given the critical realist philosophical basis for this research (Chapter 2) and how the claims made by communicative and realist theories of power underpin the concept of social empowerment (see below) post-modernist theories are not considered in detail in this thesis.

The second part of this chapter describes communicative and realist theories of power, which elucidate the weaknesses of the faces of power debate (Ball, 1988; 1992), and emphasise processes of empowerment. The positions adopted in the faces of power debate are shown to only conceive of power as 'power over' others, neglecting the positive social relational aspect of the collective 'power to' act (Göhler, 2000; 2009). They also take a tacitly conservative political position on power which fails to critically theorise both the structural and agential *sources* of power (Bates, 2010). For a critical analysis a complex terrain must be negotiated between the socio-political organisation of democratic societies as they currently exist from the normative standpoint of possible alternatives (Benton, 1981; Sayer, 1992). The relative strengths and weaknesses of different power theories are assessed in working towards a conception of social empowerment (Herrmann, 2012) which forms the basis for the discussion of democracy in Chapters 4 and 5. This provides the theory-laden basis for the conduct and analysis of the two empirical case studies of participatory democracy.

The Hobbesian Roots of Modern Power Theories

Ball (1975) argues that the metaphors of philosophers have become the scientific models employed by social scientists. A critical review of modern theories of power and empowerment must trace their philosophical origins. Much modern political and sociological analysis takes the work of the seventeenth century philosopher Hobbes as the foundations for thinking about the concept (Ball, 1975; Connolly, 1988; Clegg, 1989; Hindess, 1996). Hobbes has influenced theories of power grounded in the philosophical project of modernity (Clegg, 1989). Hobbes' (1996, p.62) concept of power draws from an instrumental and mechanistic view of the world, and is also a moral value: '[t]he power of a Man... is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good'. However, in the context of conditions of scarcity this good equates with the satisfaction of individual desires (Ball, 1988).

Power is seen as the *cause* of movement and motion towards a given end, with the effect being the observable and measurable empirical phenomena of the

'push and shove, contact and collision' of human agency (Ball, 1975, pp.213-217). Hobbes (cited in Ball, 1975, p.214) states that

Power and Cause are the same thing. Correspondent to cause and effect are POWER and ACT; nay, those and these are the same things... For whensoever any agent has all those accidents which are necessarily requisite for the production of some effect in the patient, then we can say that the agent has the *power* to produce that effect, if it be applied to a patient.

By equating power with causality as an observable relationship between agents, Hobbes' theory prescribes an analysis of social relations based on the principles of cause and effect, in which power is at the heart of all individual interaction. Hobbes (1996) constructs a model of a political community in which the sovereign power of the head of state is comprised of the individual powers of all members of the community.

Hobbes' motivation for sovereign power at the centre of the ideal political community derives in part from his preference for monarchy over democracy, but also from a desire for a civil social order (Clegg, 1989). This is based on Hobbes' (1996, p.89) assumption that the alternative to the modern civilised world is a state of nature in which

there is no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of commodities that may be imposed by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing, such things require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.

Clegg (1989, p.26) asserts that Hobbes' claim cannot be substantiated as it lacks a suitable 'anthropological referent'. However, it is from this assumption which subsequent power theory has developed. Clegg (1989) argues that Hobbes' influence on Western social and political thought is not unique, but rather that he was part of a scientific elite in the seventeenth century that advocated a mechanistic understanding of the world. This period of scientific revolution is characterised by 'certain attempts by philosophers [such as Hobbes] to come to terms with the new science and to extend its models and

methods to the study of human behaviour' (Ball, 1975, p.213). This has tacitly provided the foundations for much work on political community and power in the social sciences. All protagonists in the faces of power debate draw on a concept of power derived from Hobbes.

Elite Power and Faces of Power

The faces of power debate emerged from critiques of American elite theory in the 1950s. Firstly, pluralist theories focus on power as competing interests (Dahl, 1957, 1958, 1961; Polsby, 1960, 1963) and later revisionists view power as decision making and non-decision making (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962, 1963, 1970; Bachrach & Botwinick, 1992). Both of the first two faces of power view the concept as the realisation of individual action against the resistance of others, in which power is exercised by an agent *over* another. Lukes' (1974; 2005) hegemonic theory of three-dimensional power advances the debate by viewing power as also exercised by hegemonic groups in shaping interests. Despite Lukes' claim to a 'radical' theory, his account cannot avoid an implicit conservative value position of the restrictive sense of 'power over', and is limited by its agent-centred conception.

Elite studies placed emphasis on power structures and the role of elites in ordering society (Hunter, 1953; Mills, 1956; Pellegrin & Coates, 1956; Schulze, 1958). The American elite theory of Mills and Hunter can be distinguished from the European tradition of elite theory, particularly that of Michels (1949), Mosca (1939) and Pareto (1935), as the latter viewed elite power as a normatively good value (or inevitable) in democratic societies. In contrast to the conservatism of the European elite theorists, Mills and Hunter developed critical approaches to studying power elites in American society which took the normative position that ruling elites pose a threat to democracy. Hunter's (1953, p.1) study emphasised the deficit between the democratic ideal and the way it actually functions in the USA:

[t]here appears to be a tenuous line of communication between the governors of our society and the governed. This situation does not square with the concepts of democracy we have been taught to

revere... our democracy is in danger of losing vitality in dealing with problems that affect all in common.

Mills (1956) focused on the military-industrial-political complex and emphasised the role of social structure in the succession of different epochs of dominant groups. For Mills (1956, p.269), '[c]hanges in the American structure of power have generally come about by institutional shifts in the relative positions of the political, the economic, and the military orders'. Where the formation of power elites in the mid-nineteenth century was based on a plurality of loosely connected groups, the rise of political and corporate power in the twentieth century meant that '[t]he 'loose cliques' now head institutions of a scale and power... well beyond the era of romantic pluralism' (Mills, 1956, p.271). Mills' consideration of the power elite concentrates on the rise of Weberian bureaucratic rationality and the transformation of social structures in twentieth century capitalism. Important in Mills' understanding of the power elite is that institutions and organisations provide the resources for exerting influence, rather than the specific individuals that hold prominent roles within them. The emphasis in Mills' account is on structure rather than agency.

The ruling elite studies were challenged in the 1950s and 1960s from within the American political sciences on the grounds of employing 'un-scientific' methods (Dahl, 1957, 1958, 1961; Polsby, 1960, 1963). An emphasis on empirical observation in power studies is present in the work of Dahl (1958, p.463), who scathingly assesses the perceived lack of analytical rigour in the ruling elite model:

[t]here is a type of quasi-metaphysical theory made up of what might be called an infinite regress of explanations. The ruling elite model can be interpreted in this way. If the overt leaders of a community do not appear to constitute a ruling elite, then the theory can be saved by arguing that behind the overt leaders there is a set of covert leaders who do. If subsequent evidence shows that this covert group does not make a ruling elite, then the theory can be saved by arguing that behind the first covert group there is another, and so on.

The following sections examine and critique the first two faces of power which draws attention to the Hobbesian roots of these accounts and sets the

context for the three-dimensional power thesis. It is argued that all three positions are deficient due to their common reliance on the Hobbesian view of power, which is challenged by the communicative and realist theories of power in the final section.

Pluralism

The first 'face of power' is found in the pluralist accounts of Polsby and Dahl. Polsby (1960) explains that research, such as that of Hunter and Mills, which asks 'who runs this community?' makes a fundamental assumption that power is stratified in a given community to the extent that one minority group dominates over others. Pluralist studies of power instead ask 'does anyone at all run this community?' Pluralism prioritises the study of overt, and observable, activity (Polsby, 1960). For example, it takes at face value the presumption that a banker's primary interest in life is banking, not manipulating decision-making in the community. Polsby (1960, pp.480-481, original emphasis) claims that empirical observation of the actions of individuals means that 'it is easy to spot the banker who *really* does run community affairs when we presume he does not, because his activities will make this fact apparent'. In contrast, elite theorists are deemed to analyse only the 'power bases' or 'resources available to actors for the exercise of power' rather than actually identifying and analysing the exercise of power itself (Polsby, 1960, p.483).

Dahl (1957, p.202-3) defines power as a relation among individuals where 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'. A does not possess power, but is instead able to use power in relation to B and this can only be empirically measured by observed evidence of A securing a *response* from B. In this power relationship, A and B may be 'individuals, groups, roles, offices, governments, nation-states, or other human aggregates' (Dahl, 1957, p.203).

Dahl posits that a full explication of the power relationship between A and B must make reference to the bases of power, as elitists do, but also must refer

to the means of exerting power, the amount of power A has over B, and the scope of this power. For Dahl (1957, p.203), all of these must be observable in order for the concept to be measured:

[t]o specify the actors in a power relation - A has power over B - is not very interesting, informative, or even accurate. Although the statement that the President has (some) power over Congress is not empty, neither is it very useful. A much more complete statement would include references to (a) the source, domain, or base of the President's power over Congress; (b) the means or instruments used by the President to exert power over Congress; (c) the amount or extent of his power over Congress; and (d) the range or scope of his power over Congress.

Dahl (1957, p.204) claims that 'there is no action 'at a distance', unless there is some 'connection' between A and B, then no power relation can be said to exist'. Dahl does not make clear what he means by 'connection', only to say that an observable flow of influence, control or power must be apparent, otherwise an analysis of power can continue no further. In this conception, the most powerful actor is judged to be where A has the highest probability of securing a response from B (Dahl, 1957).

Clegg (1989) is critical of the pluralist model on two counts. Firstly, pluralists make an oversight in viewing a political community as an ordered totality, rather than itself being the product of power relations. In criticising the ruling elite model on the grounds of sloppy methodology, pluralism neglects to consider an aspect that is useful in ruling elite theory - the role of social structure in power relations. This oversight is due to the behaviouralist epistemology employed by the pluralists. Behaviouralism emphasises *only* the empirical testing of theories by observation in order to make valid explanations about social phenomena (Sanders, 2002). It is a narrow approach which neglects that which cannot be empirically observed. In critical realist terms this position commits the epistemic fallacy by taking ontology as unproblematic: the stratified nature of reality is underplayed (Bhaskar, 1989; Benton & Craib, 2001).

Clegg's (1989) second criticism is that pluralist studies only consider those active in the political community to be involved in power relations. Non-participation is deemed to be non-conflict, and following the behaviouralist epistemology, it is assumed that no power relationship is present. Gaventa (1980, p.7) states that for pluralist studies '[t]he empirical relationship of low socio-economic status to low participation gets explained away as the apathy, political inefficacy, cynicism or alienation of the impoverished'.

Dahl and Polsby claim to be making dispassionate analyses of the causes and effects of power. However, the absence of a consideration of structured social inequalities and the consequences of this for non-participation indicates a tacit conservatism. The pluralists make assumptions about the social world that reinforces a conservative political ideology that emphasises the status quo and does not acknowledge unjust power relations. This ideology, at best, eschews the issue of non-participation in decision-making, or at worst, blames the excluded for their predicament. Polsby (1963, p.131) attributes participation to 'showing interest, willingness to work, and competence', implying that apathy, shiftlessness and lack of ability account for non-participation. However, Schattschneider (1975, p.102) argues that

abstention reflects the suppression of the options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the non-participants. It is not necessarily true that people with the greatest needs participate in politics most actively - whoever decides what the game is about also decides who gets in the game.

This suggests an aspect of power concerned with decision-making and non-decision-making, which is taken up by the attempt to redeem the pluralist conception by describing a second face of power.

Two Faces of Power

Bachrach and Baratz (1962; Bachrach, 1963) draw attention to the dispute between the sociological studies of elites and the American political science studies of plural democracy. They agree with the pluralist criticisms of the ruling elite model relating to the assumed power structure, the tendency to

emphasise stable power structures over time, and the equation of power resources with actual power (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). However, as Bachrach and Baratz's 'revisionist' take on the pluralist theory of power does not extend to the level of critiquing its behavioural epistemology, the two faces of power thesis places the same emphasis on observable activity (Lukes, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important to consider the distinction made in the two faces of power thesis between decision-making and non-decision making.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962, p.948) point out that the pluralist focus on participation in decision-making does not take into account how power can be exercised 'by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively 'safe issues''. The pluralist propensity to discard 'unmeasurable elements' as not useful for power analysis has 'exposed themselves to the same fundamental criticism they have so forcefully levelled against the elitists: that their approach to and assumptions about power predetermine their findings and conclusions' (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962, p.952). With reference to Schattschneider's (1975) concept of the 'mobilisation of bias', Bachrach and Baratz (1962, p.950) argue that attention must be paid to the 'dominant values and the political myths, rituals and institutions which tend to favour the vested interests of one or more groups relative to others'.

Bachrach and Baratz attempt to reconcile an elitist study of power with the behavioural methods of the pluralists. They do not take up the critique of pluralism on the lines of its behavioural epistemology, as Clegg (1989), Gaventa (1980), and Lukes (2005) do, but instead seek to accommodate the claims of ruling elite theorists with a behavioural approach to the study of power. To do this they claim that along with decision-making, the second face of non-decision making is both an exercise of power and can be empirically observed (Bachrach & Baratz, 1963).

They advocate the initial study of the dominant values, myths and institutions of a community and the existing biases that these contain, from which the persons or groups that benefit from the existing relations can be identified. This establishes the distribution of power within a given community. For

Bachrach and Baratz (1970, p.8), 'to the extent that a person or group - consciously or unconsciously - creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power'. Like the pluralists, power is expressed as a relation where one actor has 'power over' another. However, what distinguishes this revisionist position is that power can be *observed* in both action *and* inaction. Bachrach and Baratz (1962, p.952) argue that to analyse both decision-making and non-decision making, the researcher

would examine the extent to which and the manner in which the status quo orientated persons and groups influence those community values and those political institutions... which tend to limit the scope of actual decision-making to 'safe' issues.

A non-decision making situation exists when the dominant values and existing power relations prevent grievances from becoming fully fledged issues which require decisions to be made (Bachrach & Baratz, 1963). With the knowledge of the possible restrictions inherent in the distribution of power, Bachrach and Baratz posit that researchers can *only then* go on to utilise the methods of the pluralists to analyse power.

The basis of the two faces of power thesis hinges on the claim that the mobilisation of bias and latent interests can be empirically observed as expressed *grievances* that are not sufficiently acted upon by democratic institutions. Highlighting these instances in relation to the dominant values of a community, they argue, renders non-decision making a subject for observation and analysis (Bachrach & Baratz, 1963). However, the claims of the two faces of power thesis and its pluralist predecessor have been subjected to critique by Lukes (1974; 2005).

Three-dimensional Power

The position taken by Lukes (1974, 2005) emerges out of a series of criticisms of the one-dimensional (pluralist) and two-dimensional (revisionist) accounts. It is premised on a Gramscian analysis of interest shaping that introduces the concept of hegemony into studies of power. Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony is based on the notion that a dominant group is able to project

both cultural domination through ideological shaping of civil society, and 'direct domination' through the state, in which the use of violence in order to subordinate a population is no longer necessary.

In the context of hegemonic groups, Lukes' theory is premised on the grounds that society is characterised by an unequal distribution of power and resources. From this basis, the three-dimensional power thesis claims to advance a *critical* study of power, whereby the situation in which A manipulates B's objective interests invokes a critique of A (Hay, 1997). Lukes' approach develops the faces of power debate, but it is compromised by retaining the limited Hobbesian approach that addresses 'power over' only.

Lukes (2005) does not reject out of hand the pluralist and revisionist accounts, but argues that they have not fully grasped the concept of power. His conception of three-dimensional power challenges them on methodological terms, by arguing that both accounts place too great an emphasis on methodological individualism. In focusing on the underlying problem of behaviouralism, Lukes develops three criticisms of the two faces of power thesis. The first criticism that Lukes (2005) posits is that the two faces view remains concerned only with *observable* conflict, whether overt or latent. While they seek to advance the case that non-decision making can be empirically observed, this is limited only to grievances that *are* articulated but *not* addressed in the public domain. Bachrach and Baratz undermine the basis of their own critique of pluralism by retaining a moderately behaviouralist position in their analysis.

Secondly, in criticising the methodological individualist perspective as revealing a two-dimensional concept of power, Lukes (2005) expands the scope to cases where grievances do not come to be articulated because of interest shaping. Keen not to provide an overly individualist nor an overly structuralist account, Lukes (2005, p.26) posits that power relations must be seen as

a function of collective forces and social arrangements... [o]f course, such collectivities and organisations are made up of individuals - but

the power they exert cannot be simply conceptualised in terms of individuals' decisions or behaviour.

The third criticism is closely related to the second. Lukes agrees that power may well be exercised in *A* getting *B* to do something they otherwise would not, as in the pluralist view. He also agrees that power may also be exercised in *A* not acting upon *B*'s grievances, as in the two faces of power thesis. Additionally, Lukes (2005, p.27) contends that power is exercised in the shaping of interests so that *B* is not aware of her/his actual grievances: 'the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent... conflict from arising in the first place'.

To address the absence of interest shaping through the collective action of groups, classes or institutions, and systemic organisational effects in the first two dimensions of power, three-dimensional power assesses not only the actions of individuals but also their beliefs. In this sense Lukes provides an account that follows the critical theory tradition of ideology critique by highlighting the shaping of beliefs and articulated interests through interest shaping. Lukes (2005, p.27) states that 'A may exercise power over *B* by getting him [sic] to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants'.

The three-dimensional concept of power retains the analysis of power in relation to interests (or wants) but also indicates that the action (or inaction) of individuals can be shaped insidiously by other individuals, groups, collective forces and social institutions. Lukes retains the concept of 'power over' and posits that the objective interests of *B* are manipulated, constrained or dominated by the subjective interests of *A*. Contrastingly, 'power to', or individual or collective autonomy, is absent in this top-down account of hegemonic power relations (Stewart, 2001). Three-dimensional power shifts the behaviouralist conceptions towards ideology critique. It relates to decision-making and control over the agenda, to issues and potential issues, observable and latent conflict, and crucially, to subjective and objective interests.

The Problem of 'Objective' Interests

Lukes' account is problematic because, on the one hand, it is claimed that power is 'essentially contested', that the concept will always involve debates surrounding its proper uses and characteristics (Lukes, 2005, p.30; also Gallie, 1956). However, on the other hand, Lukes (2005, p.16) claims that his conception of power provides a 'deeper' and 'more satisfactory analysis of power relations' than previous accounts. But Lukes' purported 'radical view' of power succumbs to the problem of identifying 'objective' interests, whilst remaining concerned with the analysis of power in society as it exists. The consequence of avoiding an ethical value position means that Lukes' approach is limited and retains a tacit conservatism. Following Hay (1997; 2002) this is due to the conflation of analysis and critique in the three dimensions perspective. To overcome this, interests must be addressed in relation to accounts of power that engage in both analysis and critique from a normative standpoint.

A critical theory of power must differentiate between *analytical* statements that identify power in existing social relations, and normative-evaluative *critical* statements concerning the appropriateness of the distribution and uses of power in society (Hay, 1997). For Sayer (2011) this relates to the distinction between critical evaluations of 'is' and 'ought'. Indeed, all perspectives in social science are unavoidably value-laden, normative and ethical rather than neutral, empirical or dispassionate (Hay, 2002; Sayer, 1997; 2009; 2011). For Hay (1997, p.49), 'much of the appeal of [Lukes'] argument resides in his ability to present an essentially value-laden critical conception of power as a neutral analytical category'. However, in doing so, the critical aspect of Lukes' account is weakened because the pertinent issue of identifying what constitutes 'objective' interests is ambiguously left to the realm of ethics and moral values.

Lukes (2005, p.146) claims that '[t]here can be an empirical basis for identifying real interests, which is not up to A, but to B exercising choice under conditions of relative autonomy and, in particular, independently of A's

power - e.g. through democratic participation'. This statement implies that individuals require autonomy and access to information (and the capability to use this information meaningfully) in order to make informed democratic decisions about what their real interests might be. However, Lukes does not commit himself to the concepts of autonomy or democratic participation as necessary aspects of 'objective' interests. Doing so would require Lukes to expand upon this claim in order to consider what form of power relations are required for 'conditions of relative autonomy'.

Hay (2002, pp.183-4) points out that Lukes' idealised alternative is thus implied to be 'a world free from power relations' and, therefore 'power becomes a purely pejorative concept... power cannot be exercised responsibly or legitimately'. It is here that Hindess (1996) claims that Lukes follows much second generation critical theory in adjudicating between 'false needs' that are manipulated by power as domination in a dichotomy with the 'real needs' which exist in the hitherto unrealised domain of freedom (e.g. Marcuse, 1964).

Instead, analysis and critique of existing power relations requires with it evaluation, and an ethical conception of how power relations *ought* to be. This entails an account of tensions within and between social institutions and organisations, and the actions of individuals and collectives, the role that power has in both of these, and the possibility of transforming tensions and exploitation in a positive direction. This position is rejected by Lukes (1977) who maintains that power can only be agential and never structural.

Realist theories concerning empowerment, discussed below, adopt critical standpoints for analysis and critique of power that consider structure and agency. However, the relationship between 'power to' and 'power over' is disputed. For example, some claim that the notion of 'power over' simply fails to describe the concept of power (Arendt, 1958, 1986), while others include both 'power over' and 'power to' in their theories (Göhler, 2009, Isaac, 1987a, 1987b). These more radical views take overtly egalitarian and democratic ethical positions to critically analyse power.

Benton (1981) provides a useful link between the hegemonic theory of Lukes and theories of empowerment. Benton's (1981, p.171) take on the unavoidable value-dependence of claims to 'objective' interests asserts that

[e]ven where a socialist (or libertarian, or communitarian, etc.) form of life is used as a mere standard of comparison, without commitment to its historical inevitability, the conditions of possibility for such a conception of interests include at least: (i) a coherent conception of a socialist (etc.) form of life, (ii) the demonstration that such a form of life is a real historical possibility, and (iii) a thesis as to the preferability of such a form of life over and above the prevailing one.

In light of this, it remains to consider how the issue of 'objective' interests highlighted by Lukes may be redeemed without regressing to relativism. The three dimensional perspective separates 'interests' from 'wants'. For the pluralist and revisionist accounts this distinction is unproblematic, as agents act on their actual interests. In other words, interests and wants are the same thing. For Callinicos (2004), these are based on a utilitarian theory of action which assumes that the agent's expressed interests are synonymous with the ends chosen. In the case of the first two faces of power, 'to say that doing x is in A's interest is to give A a reason for doing x' (Callinicos, 2004, p.139; also Connolly, 1983). In both pluralist and revisionist accounts power is treated as 'an overtly or covertly conflictual relation between agents coercively advancing well-understood, self-defined interests against the interests of other agents' (Digeser, 1992, p.979).

Lukes' conception of power breaks this association by positing that subjective interests (or wants) are shaped by power relations, and counter to this are the agents' 'objective' or 'real' interests. However, this claim opens up the possibility that the social theorist may be arbitrarily imposing his or her views about the 'real' interests of the agents (Callinicos, 2004). Lukes has either resurrected the false consciousness thesis by claiming to be able to ascribe objective interests or is open to the charges of moral relativism by being unable to provide a special status for values, which negates the critical status of his theory (Benton, 1981, for a response see Lukes, 2008).

Wright (1978, 1985) proposes a view of interests that moves towards the development of genuinely critical perspectives on power, which can also analyse power in terms of both social structure and human agency. For Wright (1978, p.88), 'interests' can only be those that 'become actual objectives of real struggles'. This refers to interests that are not based on individuals as rational utility-maximizing actors, but rather on collectivities and the potential inherent in them for collective action (Wright, 1978).

Two types of interests are contained within collectivities, which Wright (1978, p.89) views from the perspective of class analysis: '[i]mmediate class interests constitute interests within a given structure of social relations; fundamental interests centre on interests which call into question the structure of social relations themselves'. For example, capitalist markets frame the immediate economic interests of the working class in struggling for higher wages, protecting jobs from cuts and securing access to education. However, fundamental interests are those that challenge the structures of capitalism in which immediate interests are constituted, with the aim of transforming these structures towards an alternative form of social organisation, such as democratic socialism (see Wright, 2010). Moreover, immediate interests are not considered to be 'false interests' or examples of 'false consciousness', but rather are incomplete class interests that do not challenge structured power relations. Wright highlights the example of the struggle for better wages as an immediate interest that challenges the conditions of workers. However, 'the restriction of struggles to questions of wages... reflects an incomplete understanding of the nature of capitalist society as a whole, for it fails to grasp the possibility of transcending the entire system of capitalist exploitation through socialism' (Wright, 1978, p.90).

In these terms, the fundamental interests of the working class involve an increase in freedom and autonomy to fulfil their potential. This is because in Wright's (1985, p.249) view 'people in general have a desire for freedom. In so far as the actual capacity that individuals have to make choices and act upon them - their real freedom - is shaped systematically by the class

structure, they have objective class interests based on this real interest in freedom'. The critical standpoint of freedom (or emancipation) is considered in the conclusion to this chapter, where it is suggested that the tripartite scheme of freedom, equality and solidarity that make up the democratic dialectic more adequately develops this view of real interests in democratic societies.

Wright's approach to interests critiques existing social relations, in this case along the lines of class, from the standpoint of an alternative possible form of social life. This view can be reconciled with the three-dimensional power thesis only if one accepts that Lukes' model is 'an invitation to an ethical critique of power relations as distinct from an analytical technique for the identification of power relations' (Hay, 2002, p.183). It is from this basis that power theories that include the positive aspect of empowerment can make critical sense of existing power relations and legitimately argue for social changes.

From Power to Social Empowerment

Ball (1988; 1992) highlights three new theories of power that emerged from critiques of the faces of power debate: deconstructionist, communicative, and realist. Deconstructionist theories of power share some affinity with the realist approach (Ball, 1992), but following Foucault (1980), Hayward (1998, p.9), for example, is concerned with 'power as the network of social boundaries that delimit fields of possible action', rather than 'the productive capacity of structures and structured relations' (Bates, 2010, p.372). Given the critical realist basis for this thesis realist and communicative theories are more useful for empirical research that focuses on both 'power to' and 'power over', and social structure and human agency, rather than regressing to 'power over' in the post-structuralist form of a fourth face of disciplinary power (Digeser, 1992). The following discussion introduces the distinction between 'power to' and 'power over' in communicative (Arendt, 1986; Habermas, 1977) and realist theories of power (Isaac, 1987a; Bates, 2010). Following criticisms of both the faces of power debate and communicative

power, it is concluded that realist approaches to power are consistent with the need to incorporate 'power to' and 'power over', and both structure and agency into a critical power theory, which shifts the emphasis from analysing power located within individual actors, to assessing it as subject to structural and agential factors which highlight the transformative capability of power, with negative and positive implications. It is posited that the realist conception of power sufficiently accounts for both structure and agency, which is necessary for grounding the social quality concept of social empowerment (Herrmann, 2012).

Communicative and Realist Theories of Power

The communicative and realist theories of power make a key distinction between 'power over' and 'power to'. Göhler (2009, pp.28-29, original emphasis) states that

[e]xercising *power over* within a social relation always produces a negative result for those subjected to it, because it narrows their field of action... A's autonomy within a power relationship necessarily means correspondingly less power for B. *Power to*, on the other hand... is not directed at others, but at the individual or the group as actors themselves. The focus is not on the effects of power on others, those subjected to it, but on power as the ability to act autonomously. In this sense power is constitutive for society.

In distinguishing between 'power over' and 'power to', Pitkin (1972, p.276) asks not what power is, as the faces of power theorists do, but how the word 'power' is used. She is critical of the assumption that power can be equated with 'influence', 'authority', 'coercion' or 'interests' (Pitkin, 1972, pp.274-279).

Adopting this critical stance, the communicative conception of power emerged primarily from the philosophical thought of Arendt (1958; 1986) and Habermas (1977). This section considers how Arendt's theory of communicative power has developed the concept from the faces of power debate. Further, Göhler's (2000; 2009) reworking of Arendt's theory leads towards an account of power that incorporates both 'power over' and 'power

to'. This development is taken up by realist conceptions that emphasise social power as corresponding to the capacities for action in the context of social relations (Isaac, 1987a; 1987b).

Arendt (1958; 1986) provides a radical theory of power which equates the concept unequivocally with empowerment. For Arendt (1986) the faces of power theorists are referring to the associated concepts of force, strength, authority or violence, rather than power. Arendt (1986, pp. 63-64) sees the lack of attention to the linguistic meanings of words such as 'strength', 'force', 'authority', and 'violence' as problematic, which are particularly conflated in the behaviourist analysis of power. For example, Dahl (1957, p.202) explains that his 'simple, intuitive' concept of power can also refer to 'influence' or 'control', which are separate concepts in Arendt's view. In setting out her concept of power, Arendt differentiates between power and strength, force, authority or violence.

'Strength' refers to a 'property inherent in an object or person... which may prove itself in relation to other things or persons, but is essentially independent of them' (Arendt, 1986, p.64). The word 'force' often is related to violence or coercion in much power theory but for Arendt (1986, p.65) it indicates 'the energy released by physical or social movements'. 'Authority' is a property which is vested in persons or offices and is characterised by 'unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed' (Arendt, 1986, p.65). Lastly, 'violence' is instrumental in nature, and is often used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength (Arendt, 1986, p.65).

Instead, Arendt (1958, p.200) argues that power should instead be seen as 'power to', or the potential for collective action. It is a communicative concept of action because it refers to the capacity for people to speak and act in concert, such that power 'is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men [sic], in existence' (Arendt, 1958, p.200). In this interpretation, relations of power necessarily involve the actions of free and equal people, otherwise it is not power that is

being exercised but something else, such as strength, violence, and so on (Bell, 1988). Two conditions must be satisfied for this to be so, firstly, agents must be equipped with communicative competence, that is, the ability to communicate adequately in 'speech-acts', and secondly, that other agents must be capable of understanding and acting upon a particular 'speech-act' (Bell, 1988, pp.91-92). For Arendt (1986, p.64), this linguistic conceptualisation of power relates specifically to social interactions within groups:

[p]ower corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is 'in power' we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with (*potestas in populo*, without a people or group there is no power), disappears, 'his power' also vanishes.

Power is the potential for autonomous action, which is realised through the communicative capacities of individuals within groups or communities. It is inherently a creative property of social action as '[p]ower is actualised... where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to create new realities' (Arendt, 1958, p.200). For Arendt (1986, p.68), power refers explicitly to empowerment, and as an end in itself, it 'needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities'. In other words, power constitutes society.

Arendt's theory has been critically embraced and developed by Habermas (1977), who contrasts the communicative model of action in Arendt's conception of power with the teleological model of action in Weber's (1968) voluntarist view of power. In Weber's teleological model of action

an individual subject (or a group that can be regarded as an individual) chooses the appropriate means to realise a goal that it has set for itself... To the extent that his [sic] success depends on the behaviour of another subject, the actor must have at his disposal the means to instigate the other to the desired behaviour (Habermas, 1977, p.3).

This model assumes that people are purposive-rational actors, from whom the only motivation is the instrumental success of their own action, secured by the threat of sanctions, by persuasion or 'by a clever channelling of choices' (Habermas, 1977, pp.3-4). The teleological model of action shares affinity with agent-centred and rational actor models that influence the faces of power debate.

On the other hand, Arendt's model of action derives from communication: '[t]he fundamental phenomenon of power is not the instrumentalisation of another's will, but the formation of a common will in a communication directed to reaching agreement' (Habermas, 1977, p.4). This model of action contains a participatory democratic impulse in that it is not concerned with competing individual interests but is oriented to collective agreement reached by rational participants. Habermas (1977) identifies a pertinent weakness in Arendt's account concerning her narrow understanding of politics. This is that her account is bound to an Aristotelian understanding of politics and public life, which is no longer relevant in the context of the modern nation-state and capitalist economy. Habermas (1977, p.15) states that

a politics which is cleansed of the administrative processing of socio-economic issues; an institutionalisation of public liberty which is independent of the organisation of public wealth; a radical democracy which inhibits its liberating efficacy just at the boundaries where political oppression ceases and social repression begins - this path is unimaginable for any modern society.

But Habermas (1977) also identifies value in Arendt's communicative theory which relates to the need for legitimate uses of power. Against the Hobbesian mechanistic tradition, Habermas (1977, pp.17-18) points out that force or violence alone does not endow the actor with power, but rather that power is derived from legitimacy, which is secured through communication. In contrast to the Hobbesian understanding of 'power over',

it is not at all clear that someone should be able to *generate* legitimate power simply because he is in a position to prevent others from pursuing their interests. Legitimate power *arises* only among those who form common convictions in unconstrained communication (Habermas, 1977, p.18, original emphasis).

However, Göhler (2000; 2009) argues that it is not necessary to eradicate the distinction between ‘power over’ and ‘power to’ in favour of the latter, as the communicative conception of power does. To reconcile these two aspects of power he suggests that while they are ‘intuitively illuminating’, they are both ‘ambiguous and mutually entwined’ (Göhler, 2009, p.35). On the one hand, ‘power to’ as potential is ‘the capacity to achieve something’, and on the other hand, when ‘power to’ is actualised, it is the continuous process of ‘generating... the autonomous empowerment of an individual or a group’ (Göhler, 2009, p.34). When ‘power over’ is actualised, it refers to ‘manifest influence... related to an addressee with a relationship of wills’, and when ‘power over’ is potential, it is the self-binding of a community to a set of fundamental norms and is only questioned when the norm is violated (Göhler, 2009, p.35).

To make sense of these diverging aspects of power, Göhler proposes transitive power and intransitive power. In Göhler’s (2009, p.35) view

[p]ower referring to the outside is transitive power, i.e. power which translates the will of an actor into another actor’s will and thereby exercises influence. Power referring to the inside, i.e. power as self-reference, is intransitive power, i.e. power that is produced and preserved by itself, by society.

This means that ‘power to’ and ‘power over’ are necessarily bound up with each other in their potential and actualisation. The implications of Göhler’s distinction between transitive power and intransitive power are that, firstly, empowerment is necessarily a part of a more complex theory of power. Secondly, the study of power and empowerment within social relations requires a focus on the tension between the transitive and intransitive dimensions of power, or restrictive and enabling aspects of power. Thirdly, agents cannot be the sole locus of power, given the way in which human interaction is socially shaped (but not completely determined). This last point draws attention to both the structural and agential *sources* of power (Bates, 2010).

Freire (1993) discusses power in a way that imports normative values into the concepts of power, structure and agency. He advocates a critical pedagogy whereby those who are oppressed (directly or indirectly subject to actualised transitive power) are liberated by the knowledge and capabilities to make informed choices about matters that affect their lives by, in Göhler's terms, actualising intransitive power (or as developed below, through processes of social empowerment).

Freire (1993, p.37) views a situation of oppression as one in which 'A objectively exploits B or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person'. This (transitive) power, when actualised, creates exploitation, domination or oppression for those subjected to it. In exploiting others, oppressors deny both the humanity of the oppressed and their own humanity. From a normative position of humanisation, Freire posits that where A exploits B, A's use of power over B is a relationship in which both B and A are dehumanised. Freire (1993) takes the critical-normative standpoint that the purpose of human life is to become conscious of the incompleteness of humanity and to follow the vocation of becoming more human. This would mean for Göhler's concept of power that society should seek to minimise actualised transitive power (as oppression) and attempt to facilitate the actualisation of intransitive power (as social empowerment). This shifts power theory from naïve empiricist descriptions of the exercise of power (or agenda setting or interest shaping) to analysis and critique of the enabling and oppressive aspects of power in social relationships, viewed from the standpoint of emancipation (Bhaskar, 1989).

This is expressed in Freire's (1993) thought as a dialectic between oppression, exploitation, injustice, and violence on the one hand, and freedom, justice and humanity on the other. In pursuing this vocation, action and critical reflection are integral to developing the possibility of humanisation. The task for Freire's concept of power is not to provide a utopian vision of a world *free from* power, but rather to conceptualise a social order in which power relations exist *to enhance* freedom, justice and humanity.

Integral to Freire's (1993) assertion is the claim that the flourishing of humanity requires both the oppressed and oppressors to become conscious of injustice, deprivation and exploitation and resolve to solidarity in collectively addressing these problems:

[t]he pursuit of full humanity... cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed. No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so (Freire, 1993, p.66).

The pursuit of humanity is not determined by history but is enhanced by critical reflection and action (praxis) in changing social structures and individual consciousness. Central to this assertion is the stipulation that the oppressors cannot solely act on behalf of the oppressed as a vanguard, but rather '[t]he oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption' (Freire, 1993, p.36). This can be achieved through a critical pedagogy in two stages. In the first stage, the oppressed become conscious of their oppression and through praxis transform themselves and wider social relations. In other words, the development of self-binding collectivities (through class consciousness, social mobilisation, and so on) is transformed into empowerment. In the second stage, the pedagogy becomes a pedagogy of all of the people 'in the process of permanent liberation... through the expulsion of the myths, created and developed in the old order' (Freire, 1993, pp.36-7). The resolution of the dialectic between oppressors and oppressed has an egalitarian outcome: the disappearance of the dominant class of oppressors.

Freire (1993) pre-empts Bhaskar's transformative model of social action (Chapter 2), when he argues that human beings produce social reality through their historical interactions, which in time, turn back upon them and condition them. The task of human beings is to resist this conditioning and historically pursue the transformation of reality. In this way, subjectivity (human consciousness) and objectivity (reality) exist in a constant dialectical relationship (Freire, 1993). The aim is not to resolve this tension but to become critically aware of it, and to act on it and transform it. This requires

the relationship between social institutions and organisations, and individuals and groups to be reconceived according to power relationships that emphasise collective humanisation. This focus on empowerment can be developed further as an analytical perspective by the realist understanding of power, agency, structure and change (Bates, 2010; Isaac, 1987a, 1987b; Layder, 1994).

Isaac (1987a, p.14; also Harré & Madden, 1975, pp.82-100) criticises the behaviouralism of the faces of power debate which treats power as an empirical concept, and ignores the metaphysical aspect of 'socially structured and culturally patterned' power. Structure in realist terms relates to 'pre-existing symbols, norms, and rules... understood as the relatively enduring relations in which social agents find themselves, and through which they act to achieve their purposes as they understand them', although in everyday life 'structures are usually unacknowledged, and unintentionally reproduced' (Isaac, 1990, p.6).

Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984) provides a rival 'structuration' theory, which sees structure and agency as a duality, and in which power is located within freedom and constraint between actors. This model builds on an earlier critique of structural functionalism (Giddens, 1968). However, Giddens has been criticised for neglecting the power intrinsic to structure, by separating out structure as simply 'rules and resources' and systems, as 'reproduced and regular social practices', which underplays the contextual and relatively enduring role of structural power, and like Lukes and the behaviouralists, locates power in human agency (Layder, 1994, pp.381-383). In Giddens' model, this reduction implies a voluntarist conception of agency (Patomäki, 1991).

Instead, setting out the case for a realist conception of power, structure and agency, Layder (1994, p.385) states that

[t]he power of agents... cannot be comprehensively understood simply from the point of view of the actions of agents [as individuals or groups], and specific exercises of power. The power of agents is

structurally embodied, and conditions the actions of specific agents. It is true of course that specific agents do have power over [others], and that their concrete relationships... are characterised by imbalances of power, but it must be remembered that these imbalances are ultimately founded upon, and maintained by, structural power.

Even Lukes' (1977) treatment of structure and power limits power to that exercised by particular agents. Rather, the realist view of power is 'concerned with the ascription of powers to *social* agents, and with the explanatory reference to agents' intrinsic natures' (Isaac, 1987a, p.21, added emphasis). These intrinsic natures refer not to 'their unique characteristics as individuals, but their social identities as participants in [relatively] enduring, socially structured relationships' (Isaac, 1987a, p.21).

This shift in emphasis from power located within and used by independent individuals to relations of social power draws attention to the underlying social structures that determine, enable or constrain social interaction. For Isaac (1987a, p.22) social power refers to 'the capacities to act possessed by social agents in virtue of the enduring relations in which they participate'. This definition of power not only incorporates both 'power over' and 'power to', but allows for analysis of relations of subordination or domination and the different and contingent capacities for individuals and groups to act within those relations by virtue of their social position, or to contest and transform them. Similarly to the dialectic of humanisation proposed by Freire, Bates (2010, p.354) states that

[o]nly by understanding fully how social structures motivate, compel, constrain, and enable the behaviour of actors and how they (potentially) give rise to and connect with transformative action are we able to transcend, rather than ameliorate, existing power relations and states of affairs.

Contingency and temporality in power relations is important as this draws attention to historical change and the relatively enduring nature of social structures that are not immutable (Isaac, 1987a; 1987b). This means that while both structures and agents intrinsically possess causal powers, they do not necessarily exercise them, depending on the contingent conditions of human societies.

In the realist theory of power, both structures and agents are ontologically irreducible, but crucially, are empirically related phenomena (Archer, 1995; Bates, 2010). By making this distinction it is possible for a relational concept of power which incorporates both its restrictive-dominating and capacity-building aspects that does not reduce power to the property of rational utility maximising or voluntarist individuals on the one hand, or to the determinism of structural functionalism on the other hand. As Bates (2010, pp.369-370) highlights

[h]uman action is not a mere reflection of structural circumstances and agents do not merely fit into or bear their societal position. Rather, people will have a multitude of different relations within society, which help to define them as individuals and which result in a myriad of different, often contrasting beliefs, desires, opinions, interests, etc. Furthermore, people are also intentional agents who have their own emergent human powers, such as the ability to reflect, consider, empathise, etc... which cannot be reduced to structural factors (although they can be affected by them).

Bates (2010) cites the example of a worker who loses her job in an economic recession. For both Lukes and the behaviouralists, this is not considered to be an example of power relations as no agents have acted on the worker: her boss may have no rational choice but to terminate her employment in such an economic situation. By adopting a realist conception of these social relations, power can be identified in the structural relations of capitalist society which have the tendency to encourage particular activities and behaviour. However, as Bates (2010, p.371, original emphasis) states,

the recession should not be seen as 'structural' in the sense of actors being powerless and simply enacting and transmitting the dictates of the structure. Although recessions and economic crises are an intrinsic part of the capitalist system and thus, unavoidable in the long term, their specific timing, shape and intensity are affected by a range of historical, institutional, and agential factors.

This directs attention of social science to analysing power relations in terms of both structural and agential factors ('powerful actors that could have acted otherwise' Bates, 2010, p.371) in concrete empirical cases.

This view is supported by Westergaard and Resler (1976, p.141) who draw attention to the role of inequality and conflict, both potential and actualised, in capitalist societies:

the pattern of people's lives and their living conditions take the forms they do, not so much because somebody somewhere makes a series of decisions to that effect; but in large part because certain social mechanisms, principles, assumptions - call them what you will - are taken for granted. Typically, of course those mechanisms and assumptions favour the interests of this or that group *vis-à-vis* the rest of the population. The favoured group enjoys effective power, even when its members take no active steps to exercise power. They do not need to do so - for much of the time at least - simply because things work their way in any case.

For Barbalet (1985), without regressing to a simple structural determinism, this draws attention to structural sources of power that provide the context for action, which are available to certain groups but not to others within societies stratified by class, gender, hegemony, and so on. In other words, determinism is a matter of degree, and the form of social relationships constituted by structural power relates to the degree of autonomy available to different individuals and groups. However, following the realist theory of power, human agents also possess causal power to transform structures. This has implications for the concept of social empowerment (discussed below) and democracy (Chapters 4 and 5).

Social Empowerment

It is in this context that the social quality concept of social empowerment that underpins the analysis and critique of democracy and the two empirical case studies in this thesis can be explicated. This perspective is influenced by Marshall's (1981, p.150) view of power as 'generated by self-realisation', for whom this form of power is linked to the development of political, social, and civil rights in democratic societies. Herrmann (2012) posits that existing policy on empowerment does not invoke a meaningful critique of power relations or social structure and serves to emphasise individual responsibility or else adopts governance perspectives that subvert democracy (DCLG, 2008a; McLean & Andersson, 2009; Cabinet Office, 2011, see also Rose, 1996; 1999 on

governmentality). Rather, social empowerment can be defined as ‘the degree to which the personal capabilities and the ability of people to act are enhanced by social relations’ (Herrmann, 2012, p.202).

This alternative perspective focuses on social empowerment as a positive social process and a relationship aimed at forming collective identities and self-realisation, rather than as a liberal individualist capability (Herrmann, 2012, van der Maesen & Walker, 2012; see Chapter 5 for a discussion of liberal individualism in Sen’s capability perspective). Attention to this highlights two strands of approaches to empowerment, the first being a technical application of policies centred on the individual that leave the structural aspects of relations of (dis)empowerment uncontested (an aspect of liberalism), and a second ‘vision of increasing the power of the individual in control over his/her own life’ which necessitates attention to deeper social relational change in the processes of empowerment (Herrmann, 2012, p.206).

This dual attention to individuals and social relations is pertinent. Social empowerment is strongly related to the realist theory of power as it conceives of empowerment as a process relating to both individual and group action and social structural relations. Social empowerment is therefore central to social quality for Herrmann (2012, p.201; 2005):

as much as social quality aims in general at overcoming the methodological individualism which underlies - explicitly or implicitly - most of social science, it is in particular the centrality of empowerment as an objective component that makes it possible to grasp the dialectical relationship between the actor and structure and thus between the individual and soci(et)al.

Therefore, distinct from the utilitarian, teleological, and communicative models of action, as highlighted by the faces of power debate and Habermas above, the social quality approach draws on a dialectical model of action, with reference to realism and Freire’s concept of dialectical humanisation (Herrmann, 2012). The empirical application of the concept centres not only on how the individual can develop the knowledge to ‘cope with given structural situations’, but draws attention to the transformative possibilities

of enabling ‘the person, individually or socially to adapt to a given situation; to cope with changes of situations; and to actively influence societal developments, that is to evoke and maintain changes’ (Herrmann, 2012, pp.202-203).

This thesis assesses social empowerment in the context of participatory democracy in two case studies. The emphasis on participation, capabilities and social relations in the social quality approach underpins the central research question highlighted in the introductory chapter: to what extent, and in what ways, do participative democratic settings display evidence of social empowerment? Further, the social quality approach prescribes a series of indicators for each of the conditional factors of the model, including social empowerment (van der Maesen & Walker, 2005; Herrmann, 2005). The indicators are not simple naïve empiricist tools for measuring the quality of the social, but rather ‘are means of investigating the borders of a field in which relations are established and processes are developing’ (Herrmann, 2012, p.212). For social quality, the social empowerment indicator especially relevant to this thesis is the ‘[e]xistence of processes of consultation and direct democracy’ (van der Maesen & Walker, 2005, p.21). This indicator establishes the crucial link between participatory democracy and social quality, and suggests attention to the social institutional processes of democracy, along with the quality of democratic participation and the extent that individual self-realisation can develop within participative democratic social relationships.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically reviewed the faces of power debate, situated in terms of its historical antecedents: Hobbes’ political philosophy and early-twentieth century American elite power theory. It has been argued that the faces of power views neglect the tacit conservatism of their analysis, neglect structure and have a shared underpinning utilitarian theory of action. The second part of this chapter has reviewed communicative power and realist power. The communicative conception draws attention to the notion of

'power to' and cites Arendt's view of power as the positive ability for a group to act in concert (empowerment). Habermas sympathetically critiques Arendt's Aristotelian view of 'power to' by highlighting the communicative theory of action that underpins this view, compared with a further teleological model of action that underpins Weber's voluntarist view. While the teleological and utilitarian models of action weaken conceptions of power by conceiving of human interests as unproblematic and acted on by intentional humans, Arendt's concept of 'power to' is preferred by Habermas in developing a view of the realisation of the 'power to' act against oppression or suffering as unconstrained communication amongst equals.

However, Göhler argues that it is not necessary to cast aside the distinction between positive 'power to' and negative 'power over'. Rather, both are seen as intrinsic aspects of the transitive and intransitive dimensions of power. Adopting a more complex conception of power draws attention to empowerment, but also to the contingency of this within intransitive and transitive dimensions, restriction and enablement, and crucially the role of structural and agential sources of power and change. Freire's dialectical model of action is taken up by realist theories of power that focus on the capacities of individuals as social beings to act by virtue of the enduring social relations in which they participate. From this basis, the social quality conception of social empowerment focuses positively on the sources of power in both social structures and human agency for self-actualisation.

With this in mind, (critical) realists such as Bates (2010) and Bhaskar (1989) would argue that a critical analysis of power not only attempts to explain power relations but it should do this from the normative standpoint of promoting freedom as a form of emancipatory social science. However, the concept of freedom is problematic for both critical realism and social quality, as 'it is caught in the tension between individualist (hedonist) and voluntarist attitudes on the one hand and a complete loss of individual control and decision-making power' on the other hand (Herrmann, 2012, p.212).

Sayer (2009; 2011) addresses the concern with freedom from an emancipatory standpoint in critical social science and the dominant view of (negative) freedom maintained by libertarian perspectives (Chapter 5). This again runs the risk of reduction to an overly individualistic perspective. For Sayer, (2011, pp.225-226) freedom is fundamental but not sufficient, as

[i]n one-sidedly emphasising freedom and seeing constraint as necessarily problematic, such critiques have a libertarian, individualist and masculinist character, and fail to acknowledge that we are dependent social beings, only able to live through others, and reliant on the care of others for significant parts of our lives.

Rather than arguing for emancipation, drawing on the work of Sen and Nussbaum, Sayer (2011) proposes a critical social science that seeks to enhance capabilities (issues with the liberal individualist aspect of capabilities perspectives are discussed in Chapter 5). As a social relational alternative that adopts a realist view of power but avoids the implications of emancipation as an end-state, social empowerment focuses on how the capabilities of people to participate can be *enhanced by social relations*. This suggests an emphasis on the transformation of both enabling and constraining structures based on the terms of a normative value standpoint, such as democratic equality. For social empowerment, such an approach would seek, on egalitarian terms, a range of freedoms and constraints that would exist in socially structured and culturally patterned relationships which emphasise democratic equality, social citizenship and the capability of all to participate in society.

The following two chapters introduce the democratic dialectic, which proffers a normative standpoint for the analysis of social empowerment in democratic settings. This perspective not only emphasises freedom, but avoids the potential libertarian individualist implications of the stance of specifically *emancipatory* critical social science, and capabilities perspectives, and recognises the inherent relationship between the values of freedom, equality and solidarity for social beings in democratic societies. The following two chapters argue that for social empowerment and improved social quality, the values of the democratic dialectic must be optimised. Participatory democratic social relations are posited as conducive to this optimisation.

Chapter 4

Representative and Participatory Democracy

Introduction

Democracy is commonly seen today as a normatively good thing. This has not always been the case as the capacity of people to self-govern has long been treated with suspicion. Even as the American and French Revolutions in the eighteenth century set in motion the formation of today's modern representative democracies, Burke (1968) derided the notion of handing power to the 'swinish multitude'. Since the turn of the twentieth century democracy has come to be viewed as a normatively good value that is conducive to the well-being of societies (Sen, 1999b), and 'most regimes stake out some sort of claim to the title of 'democracy'', as even dictators adopt 'the language of democracy' (Dahl, 1989, p.2). As Dunn (1993, p.14) puts it 'all states today profess to be democracies because a democracy is what is virtuous for a state to be'. Even those who chastise 'the sudden eruption of primitive impulses, infantilisms and criminal propensities' that they characterise as a consequence of popular enfranchisement in democratic societies feel the need to defend some form of the concept (Schumpeter, 1976, p.258). More perniciously, 'democracy' has also been used in ideological terms to mean 'the West in relation to both institutions and cultural norms' (Catt, 1999, pp.4-5).

Defining democracy cannot be reduced to a scientific formula or a universally agreed concept. Indeed, struggles for democracy throughout the last two and a half thousand years have been struggles both for democracy, and for the meaning of the concept (Hidalgo, 2008). Democracy is a normative value and its meaning is fiercely contested. Moreover, theories of democracy also have implications for the power relations in society (Catt, 1999). A distinction can

be made between two broad *forms* of democracy which have historically been subject to rival conceptions that are the central concern of this chapter. These are representative democracy; ‘a system of rule embracing elected ‘officers’ who undertake to ‘represent’ the interests and/or views of citizens within the framework of ‘the rule of law’” and participatory democracy: ‘a system of decision-making about public affairs in which citizens are directly involved’ (Held, 2006, p.4). Although, Budge (2012, p.25) argues that the representative form should properly be seen in practice as ‘party democracy’, in which political parties compete by ‘offering alternative policy programmes... to the electorate’, who then vote for the programme that they prefer overall, and party discipline ensures the support of the programme by elected representatives in parliament.

This chapter begins by discussing the growth of democracy as an idea and practice from Ancient Greece to modern representative democracies. The second section critically reviews representative theories of democracy, focusing on competitive elitist, pluralist and neo-pluralist variants. Following this, the case made by theorists of participatory democracy is discussed, including reference to deliberation as part of the content of participatory democracy. The final section applies the rival theories of democracy to liberal democracy and social democracy as ideal typologies at opposite (but not opposing) ends of a continuum. The prospects for a third participatory typology (as yet, unrealised in practice) are discussed with reference to empirical experiments in empowered participatory governance (Fung & Wright, 2003). This chapter provides the theoretical basis for the discussion of the dialectical values of the liberal, social and participatory typologies of democracy in Chapter 5.

The History of Democracy

From around 461 BC, Athens was the most notable Greek city-state in which democracy was instigated. The *polis*, a ‘small self-governing, self-sustaining entity’, was an autonomous political *society* rather than as a *state* in the modern sense (Arblaster, 2002, p.16). In the *polis*, citizens had a direct say in

the decision-making process in public assemblies. All citizens within the *polis* were considered to be equal, with only a few of the higher offices requiring property qualifications (Robinson, 2004). In the *ecclesia* (public assembly), all citizens had an equal right to speak, and votes were cast by a show of hands (Harrison, 1993). Indeed, the words *demokratia* and *isonomia* (equality) were often used interchangeably, the Athenians believing that all citizens had the capacity to engage successfully in the business of self-government (James, 2005).

Athenian democracy was not independent of economic and social inequalities however. 'Citizens' were defined in a particular way and citizenship was limited to propertied men only, to the exclusion of women, slaves, and foreigners (Dahl, 1989). The role of women in the home and the appropriation of slaves were seen by the Athenians as necessary economic preconditions for allowing citizens the freedom to engage in politics (Hornblower, 1992). Despite that the majority of the population were denied citizenship this was the birth of democracy.

Sceptical of democracy, Aristotle (1984) considered the purpose of politics to be to realise the good life through the *polis*. Athenian democracy was a perversion of a form of government befitting citizenship: rule by the poor or the 'indigent', rather than rule by 'the virtuous' or 'the best', in which the selfish interests of the 'needy' are realised and not the common interest of all (Aristotle, 1984, pp.61-62). Plato (1955) identified three groups in Athenian democracy: firstly, the more energetic and charismatic who dominate - sully claims of equal participation, second, those who are concerned with making money out of the system, and the final larger group; the apathetic. For Plato (1955), Athenian democracy had the potential to lead to tyranny.

This widely accepted criticism confined democracy to the relative achievements of ancient Greece, until popular struggles for democracy were resumed from the sixteenth century onwards. In Britain this involved the Levellers, and later, the Chartists, the latter seeing 'suffrage not so much as an end in itself' but as a precursor to 'revolutionary social and economic

change' (Arblaster, 2002, p.96; Wootton, 1992). But the fear of rule by the people creating tyranny remained prevalent (Martin, 1961; Maletz, 2002). Mill (1991, p.8) saw democracy as suitable only for a sufficiently educated people: the tyranny of the uneducated majority was 'among the evils against which society requires to be on its guard'. He also dismissed direct democracy: 'since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of public business, it follows that the ideal type of government must be representative' (Mill, 1919, p.28).

The American Revolution was a momentous event for the development of modern democracy. The revolutionary leaders sought to eradicate monarchical and hereditary privilege, and establish a system of government in which the most virtuous and most talented could rule (Wood, 1992). Combining the popular appeal of democracy with rule by 'the best', representative democracy was advocated by the American constitution (Harrison, 1993, p.66). The ancient Greek 'political society' was negated in viewing the state as an entity distinct from society (Wood, 1992). For Hobson (2008), this made modern forms of democracy viable in the era of emerging nation-states and capitalist economies. It also corresponds with '[t]he emergence of an individualistic conception of society' (Bobbio, 1987, p.27).

Advancing private interests became not only politically acceptable, but was the cornerstone of American democracy. Tocqueville (1998) remarked that democracy in America prioritised work for any end as honourable. The European notion of benevolent political rule in the interests of society simply did not fit with the new American democratic system that was based on competing interests. This reformulation of democracy included 'the perception of society as a collection of disparate and even conflicting interests - such as those of rich and poor... [c]lass and inequality are accepted as permanent and ineradicable, and are embodied in an uneasy equilibrium within the political system itself' (Arblaster, 2002, p.40).

The French Revolution in 1789 was a further epoch changing event (Fontana, 1992). It was fuelled, amongst other things, by the republican philosophy of

Rousseau (1987). For Rousseau (1987), the general interest of a democratic society could not be reduced to the sum of competing interests. Instead, the general will was derived not from the votes of self-interested individuals, but from a people deciding in the general interest of society. Moreover, without common interests, society could not exist. As Rousseau (1987, p.153) put it

only the general will can direct the forces of the state according to the purpose for which it was instituted, which is the common good. For if the opposition of private interests made necessary the establishment of societies, it is the accord of these same interests that made it possible. It is what these different interests have in common that forms the social bond, and, were there no point of agreement among all these interests, no society could exist. For it is utterly on the basis of this common interest that society ought to be governed.

Associated with the watchwords of the French Revolution; liberty, equality and fraternity, came the view that '[a] democratic society was one in which the mass of the people played an active rather than a passive role, and in which the old traditions of deference and subordination had been replaced by a sense of equality among the people' (Arblaster, 2002, p.43). Though Dahl (1989, p.216) argues that despite these rival developments, democracy was in practice based on pragmatic modifications of existing institutions: 'movements to democratise the governments of national states in Europe and America did not begin with a tabula rasa'.

Where liberals and conservatives rallied against the tyranny of the majority, more subtle arguments were developed in the twentieth century that warned of the dangers posed by 'mass society' (Michels, 1949). Among theories of twentieth century representative democracy are competitive elitism (Schumpeter, 1976), pluralism (Dahl, 1956, 1961; Polsby, 1960, 1963) and neo-pluralism (Dahl, 1985; Lindblom, 1977, 1982). In these theories the democratic process is presented as a system in which the role of the masses is not to self-govern but to select from competitive and professional political parties, who then get on with the business of government. Alternative theories of participatory democracy argue against minimal participation in actually existing representative democracies, proposing that the deepening of participation in political institutions and extension of democracy further into

social and economic life is still an important issue. This concern is found in the work of participatory and deliberative theorists of democracy (Cohen & Rogers, 1983; Dryzek, 2000; Fung & Wright, 2003; Gould, 1988; Macpherson, 1977; Pateman, 1970; Wright, 2010). Fuchs (2007, p.36) argues that

[I]f antique democracy is seen as the ideal, modern democracy is indeed a pale imitation... Instead of actual self-government, there is only choice of the rulers by the ruled and more or less effective control of government by the demos. Instead of joint and deliberative opinion-building by the demos, there are at best advocacy discussions in the mass media limited to a small selection of subjects that need to be decided. Instead of an authentic popular will that substantively constitutes a common good, the decisions made in [representative] democracies are a procedural aggregation of particular group interests. In modern democracy the demos is not a collective subject but a collection of individual subjects.

On this view minimal political equality in the form of equal votes is compromised by social and economic inequality. The economic power of businesses impinges on political power in capitalist democracies, largely making the distinction between the two irrelevant (Thurow, 1996; Lindblom, 1977; 1982).

The struggle between people and their communities for participation in a collective public life on the one hand, and the privatisation of public goods, and the power of corporations and the market on the other hand, has the legitimacy of elected government and democracy itself at stake in the early twenty-first century (Wainwright, 1994, 2009). The history of democracy has been played out in the context of vast social and economic transformation. Social and economic inequalities, present in the exclusion of the majority from citizenship in Athenian democracy to struggles for suffrage, to the influence of corporate power on narrow democratic processes today signify that democracy has always been constrained by its social and economic context. The following section discusses modern representative and participatory theories of democracy, while the final section situates these theories in ideal typologies of liberal, social and participatory democracy.

Representative and Participatory Theories of Democracy

Variants of representative democratic theory can be categorised as elitist, pluralist and neo-pluralist. On the other hand, disenchantment with representative democracy is found in participatory theories. These include cosmopolitan, 'politics of presence and difference', ecological, associative, party-based direct models (Saward, 2001), along with models of discursive democracy (Dryzek, 1990), direct, social, substantive, deliberative, reflexive, strong, popular, radical, deep democracy (Pieterse, 2001), and expansive democracy (Warren, 1992). Of the new theories of 'prefix democracy', deliberative democracy is seen as the 'dominant new strand' (Saward, 2001, p.564). However, these theories all share a common thread of emphasising more participative processes, conceived in different values, institutional designs and practices.

This section focuses on theories of representative and participatory democracy with reference to social empowerment, in view of the concept's focus on the *participation* of citizens in social relations that enhance capabilities. Differences between representative and participative theories are discussed in normative theoretical terms here, and representative democracy is developed in terms of liberal and social democratic typologies relating to existing societies in the following section, with participatory democracy proposed as a possible third typology. While representative democracy is often referred to as 'liberal democracy' (Fuchs, 2007), liberal and social *variants* of representative democracy are highlighted in this chapter.

Representative Democracy

This section describes elitist, pluralist and neo-pluralist theories of representative democracy that emerged in the twentieth century. Schumpeter's (1976) competitive elitist view of democracy was part of the liberal intellectual tradition of the 1930s and 1940s (Turner, 2008). Schumpeter (1976) shared Weber's belief in the increasing rationalisation and

bureaucratisation of social production but lamented that this would signify the 'creative destruction' of capitalism and the end of the classical liberal era. From this, a despotic form of collectivist state-managed socialism would emerge. With this pessimistic projection, Schumpeter saw limited use for democracy in modern capitalist societies.

Schumpeter (1976, p.269) defined democracy as an 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'. Democracy does not provide a means to the realisation of normative values such as a common good or self-development, and neither does it represent an end in itself. Instead it is viewed as a *method* for selecting political leaders; 'democracy cannot, any more than can any other method, be an end in itself' (Schumpeter, 1976, p.242). Moreover, this methodological conception of democracy views participation as the act of choosing between two or more political parties with sufficiently different policy programs in elections. It is a narrow and limited concept of political equality that only corresponds to the equal value of each vote. Elite groups of political leaders compete for the support of the people, suggesting power held by elites over the majority in a stratified society, rather than politicians acting as representatives of the popular will of the people or even delegates empowered to act by the people. This reduces the role of citizens to that of disempowered and passive consumers, choosing between particular brands of political parties that are presented to them.

The capacity of people to participate collectively in politics was viewed with disdain by Schumpeter. He argued that an elitist system of democracy is necessary because the development of mass society has led to 'the sudden disappearance... of moral restraints and civilised modes of thinking and feeling, [and] the sudden eruption of primitive impulses, infantilisms and criminal propensities' (Schumpeter, 1976, p.257). Taking the view of humans expressed by Freudian psychoanalysis, people are unlikely to be able to think beyond issues that directly concern themselves, as they are selfish and irrational individuals in need of elite leadership (Schumpeter, 1976).

Moreover, a *singular* classical model was seen by Schumpeter (1976, p.250) as the 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realises the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will'. Despite a range of classical models of democracy rather than one model which have influenced new participatory theories (Held, 2006, see below), Schumpeter rejected the notion of a 'common good' as having totalitarian implications where people actually have very different wants and needs.

While of descriptive value for actually existing democratic societies, Held (2006, p.153) criticises Schumpeter's assumption 'that empirical evidence about the nature of contemporary democracies could straightforwardly be taken as the basis for refuting the normative ideals enshrined in classic models'. Femia (1981, p.44) highlights the political inertia of uncritically embracing existing democracy, for 'if abstractions like 'democracy' and 'liberty' are identified with existing institutions, this will present a barrier to the diffusion of alternative images of society'. Schumpeter's competitive elitist model described the prevalent model of democracy in the West in the mid-twentieth century, however, he failed to consider theories of democracy that are critiques of existing institutions which propose alternative arrangements. In the context of Schumpeter's rejection of popular participation in self-government, Held (2006, p.154) views the proposed competing technocratic elites as close to denying the possibility of human agency or even the competency of passive and selfish individuals to choose good leaders:

it is but a short step to thinking that all 'the people' need as 'governors' are engineers capable of making the right technical decisions about the ordering of human affairs... a vision which is both anti-liberal and anti-democratic... If the electorate is regarded as unable to form reasonable judgements about pressing political questions, why should it be regarded as capable of discriminating between alternative sets of leaders?

This view of democracy implies a centralisation of power in a decision-making political elite. An alternative view of democracy that accepts many of the assumptions about competing elites but provides a more dispersed view of

power in democratic societies is that of Dahl's (1956, 1961) pluralism. Dahl's conception of democracy builds on his work on power (Chapter 3), but suffers from similar criticisms about its methodological individualist basis and uncritical embrace of existing social relations.

Dahl's (1956) study of electoral politics described American representative democracy as a polyarchy, in which the historical liberal fear of the 'tyranny of the majority' is rejected, as is Schumpeter's view of a technocratic elite, in favour of a plural system of power and group competition. In a polyarchy, such as the United States

we cannot correctly describe the actual operations of democratic societies in terms of the contrasts between majorities and minorities. We can only distinguish groups of various types and sizes, all seeking in various ways to advance their goals, usually at the expense, at least in part, of others (Dahl, 1956, p.131).

Lindblom (1977, p.133) described polyarchy as a system where citizens not only elect their leaders but are able to organise into political groups in order to inform, misinform and influence elected politicians, which necessitates the following rights:

[f]reedom to form and join organisations, freedom of expression, right to vote, eligibility for public office, right of political leaders to compete for support, right of political leaders to compete for votes, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections (open, honestly conducted, one man-one vote), which decide who is to hold top authority, Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

There is inequality in the system in that 'control is unevenly distributed; neither individuals nor groups are political equals' (Dahl, 1956, p.145). However, compromise is maintained between powerful groups through a 'decentralised bargaining bureaucracy', which Dahl (1956, p.145, p.150) argued, despite its paradoxes, provides 'a high probability that any active and legitimate group will make itself heard effectively at some stage in the process of decision'. Reflecting Dahl's (1956) treatment of power as relating

only to observable conflict, the strength of American democracy was proposed to be based on a value consensus between those that are politically active.

In the 1970s and 1980s, pluralism was revised to better reflect the realities of contemporary capitalist democracies in the face of neo-Marxist criticisms of the ideological dimensions of democracy, the role of the state, and unequal power relations (Miliband, 1973; Poulantzas, 1975, 1978; also Jessop, 1977, 1990). In addition, criticisms of the inconsistencies between Dahl's (1956, 1961) theory of polyarchy and his empirical application of the concept (Hoffman, 1988) necessitated the development of a more critical perspective (Dahl, 1978, 1985, 1989; see the '1976 preface' in Dahl & Lindblom, 1992). Lindblom (1977, 1982) adopts a neo-pluralist view by retaining the concept of polyarchy but highlighting the disproportionate influence of business over the democratic political process. Three reasons are called in evidence for this inegalitarian distortion of pluralist politics; first, elected politicians have the authority to organise the support of the people, second, formal equality is underpinned by gross social and economic inequalities that negate the capacity of the majority of groups to participate, and third, organised interest groups have a distinct advantage over the unorganised members of the population (Lindblom, 1977).

Market relations in democratic societies challenge the basis of political equality, upon which polyarchy is itself dependent. Dahl's (1989, p.271) more critical view highlights this: 'even in democratic countries citizens are far from equal in their political resources and in their influence over the policies and conduct of the government of the state'. Moreover, in economic relations Dahl (1989, p.326) asks rhetorically

[w]hat consumers are free to spend depends on their income, and incomes are not likely to be, almost certainly will not be, distributed equally. But if income, wealth and economic position are also political resources, and if they are distributed unequally, how can citizens be political equals?

For Dahl (1989, p.325, added emphasis), this blindside in modern capitalist democracies stems from the absence in neoclassical economics of a

consideration of power relations, which conceives of 'exchanges and contracts *freely* entered into by rational actors', and the lack of theorisation of 'non-rational, primordial bonds and beliefs'. Lindblom (1982, p.329) explores the relationship between democratic politics and markets, and suggests that the market constrains policy-making to the extent that

the market might be characterised as a prison. For a broad category of political/economic affairs, it imprisons policy making, and imprisons our attempts to improve our institutions. It greatly cripples our attempts to improve the social world because it afflicts us with sluggish economic performance and unemployment simply because we begin to debate or undertake reform.

Business interests are more than another organised interest group, but actually are fundamental to contemporary market societies, appearing instead as 'functionaries performing functions that government officials regard as indispensable' (Lindblom, 1977, p.175). While politicians are controlled by a system of commands (by powerful groups, rather than the people as a whole), business people play their roles through inducements to act by democratically elected politicians, suggesting that business interests have enormous and un-democratic power over the political process (Lindblom, 1982).

Indeed, the very existence of polyarchies is tied up with markets, and in particular, corporate actors: '[p]olyarchies were established to win and protect certain liberties: private property, free enterprise, free contract and occupational choice' (Lindblom, 1977, p.164). For Lindblom (1982, p.332) this means that businesses have the privileged position of permitting some changes in society and resisting those that conflict with their broader interests to the extent that

no market society can achieve a fully developed democracy because the market imprisons the policy-making process... For minimal democracy, we require a market system. For fuller democracy, we require its elimination.

However, Lindblom (1982, p.333) is cautious about the prospects for fuller democracy as the market also imprisons thinking about society: '[w]e have

come to think not of human need and aspiration but of the market system as the fixed element in the light of which we think about policy’.

The implication of this is that social science has failed to envision ‘a pluralistic polyarchy free of business privilege’ (Lindblom, 1977, p.347). Likewise, Dahl’s (1989) critical perspective is limited as he also remains sceptical of concrete prospects for participatory alternatives to actually existing representative democracies. This is the case even in his proposals for democratic ownership of economic enterprises as a means to ensure political equality (Dahl, 1985). Dahl (1989, p.217), like many liberals before him, treats participatory democracy as regressing to Ancient Greek democracy, as it is ignorant of the ‘sheer magnitude’ of modern nation-states. Nevertheless, the democratic impasse which neo-pluralism has reached requires engagement with these theories in the context of contemporary forms of social organisation. As Fuchs (2007, p.35) argues

[s]ince elections do not take place very often and are concerned not so much with policy content than with the selection of representatives, political participation by citizens in modern democracies can be described as occasional and limited. But participation in elections does not exclude engagement on the part of citizens in political parties and collaboration in civil society voluntary associations. In fact, however, only tiny minorities are involved. Precisely this state of affairs together with the declining participation in elections to be observed in many countries is the source of concern for many observers... which has led to the postulate of ‘bringing citizens back in’.

Participatory Democracy

Contemporary theories of participatory democracy emerged from a critique of representative democracy in the 1960s and 1970s. They emphasise the need for more democratic and egalitarian relationships in society, based on institutional changes for increased citizen participation in political and economic decision-making (Zittel, 2007b). Pateman (1970), Zittel (2007b) and Schugurensky (2010) argue that the dominant paradigm in participatory democratic theory concerns the integrative aspect of people learning citizenship through the process of democratic participation. In addition to

education, Wolfe (1985) adds popular control as a further element of participatory democratic theory.

Pateman (1970) sees a major function of participation as educative in the widest sense and part of a virtuous circle: the psychological benefits of participating in a more open and involved democratic process would itself allow individuals to develop greater capacities for democratic participation. As Barber (1984, p.265) puts it '[t]he taste for participation is whetted by participation: democracy breeds democracy'. This is seen as enabling a greater social integration through popular acceptance and legitimation of collectively derived decisions. In Pateman's (1970, p.29) view

[i]t is only with a context of popular participatory institutions that... we find the basic assertion of the theorists of participatory democracy of the interrelationship and connection between individuals, their qualities and psychological characteristics, and types of institutions; the assertion that responsible social and political action depends largely on the sort of institutions within which the individual has, politically, to act.

This focuses the theory on the issue of the design of institutions that would enable individual self-development and participation in the development of capabilities (social empowerment). This is distinct from the pre-social basis of individuals in liberal representative democratic theory which is primarily concerned with protecting individual (negative) freedoms in a market society (Zittel, 2007b). The ontological notion of atomistic individuals is rejected as participatory democracy

is built around the central assertion that individuals cannot be considered in isolation from one another. The existence of representative institutions at national level is not sufficient for democracy; for maximum participation by all the people at that level socialisation, or 'social training', for democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed. This development takes place through the process of participation itself (Pateman, 1970, p.42).

This perspective expands the concepts of 'politics' and 'democracy' beyond the formal and narrow concerns of representative democratic political

institutions, and proposes that democratic politics can have a role in everyday life. A central focus of Pateman's participatory democratic theory is on the sphere of work. The workplace is deemed central to a wider sense of democratic participation in society as 'most individuals spend a great deal of their lifetime at work and the business of the workplace provides an education in the management of collective affairs' (Pateman, 1970, p.43). The principle of democratic workers' self-management requires 'ownership, control, and management of each firm by those that work there' (Gould, 1988, p.250).

Drawing on the UK experience of worker co-operatives and the Yugoslav democratic socialist economy of the 1960s, Pateman (1970) argues that the democratisation of working life would enable citizens to develop the skills and competencies for a participatory society. While 'partial participation' in the form of democratic participation in day-to-day decision-making (but not the overall running and long-term business strategy) is seen as a minimum requirement and a viable aim, the ideal for a fully participative democratic society is 'full participation': 'a process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions' (Pateman, 1970, pp.70-71). This is bound up with the notion of social empowerment developed in Chapter 3. Participatory democratic theory emphasises social relations, norms, institutions and practices - the structure of society, and the possibility of social organisation in such a way that is empowering. The democratic aspect of this relates to the need for all citizens to have the opportunities to become empowered through their participation in social relationships, rather than a system in which the privileged few dominate over the many.

The model proposed by Pateman (1970, p.43) is 'one where maximum input (participation) is required and where output includes not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual'. While not discounting the vast potential for 'democratising the exercise of power below the state level', Dunn (1993, p.28 n.67, n.68) sees Pateman's view of this providing the 'social training' for nation-state

level participatory democracy as 'somewhat innocent' or misguided. Nevertheless, this indicates that there is scope for deepening participatory democracy in society.

Pateman's theory suggests the self-transformative potential of democratic participation (Warren, 1992). Liberal critics of this theory, such as Berlin (2002) would argue that such a form of democracy would 'force' individuals to participate, reducing their (negative) freedom, with potentially totalitarian implications (Chapter 5). However, Zittel (2007b, p.12) cites a plurality of possible outcomes from participatory democracy:

[p]articipatory theory does not substitute political choice with self-transformation as totalitarianism does. It argues rather that expanding citizens' rights to affect policy choices has to be paralleled by a process of political socialisation and self-transformation to balance the pursuit of private interest with a sense of collective responsibility. Choice and education stand in complementary relationship rather than being substitutes for each other.

This suggests that people are not compelled to participate, but that empowered participation may have beneficial societal and individual outcomes. Moreover, participatory democracy does not simply require institutional change but also 'changes in the relations among people' based on democratic values (Gould, 1988, p.249). Proposed conceptions of these underpinning values of freedom, equality and solidarity are taken up in the following chapter, but for participatory democratic theory and self-transformation, the emphasis is on how 'participation fosters desirable personal and social qualities in democratic citizens' (Teorell, 2006, p.794).

This is distinct from liberal theories of democracy which neglect the transformative effects of democracy on the self, due to the emphasis on the individual as pre-socially constituted, or else sees self-development as part of the private sphere of individuals and a non-political concept (Warren, 1992). Warren (1992, p.8) refers to this as the self-transformation thesis, which includes three components that distinguish participatory democracy from representative democracy:

[t]he first is that increased democracy transforms individualistic and conflicting interests into common and non-conflicting ones, in the process developing capacities of citizenship that reduce factional threats to rights and pluralism. Second, because these transformations reduce conflict, they allow reduced use of power [over others] as a medium of political interaction. This would increase consensus and governability, as well as being desirable in its own right. Third, far from being a threat to the dimensions of the self protected by rights and freedoms, democracy is necessary to the values of self-development, autonomy, and self-governance - the values that rights and freedoms presumably are designed to protect.

This suggests a relationship between self-transformation in participatory democratic social relations and social empowerment. However while defensible in normative theoretical terms, this proposal 'does not meet its burden of proof' (Warren, 1992, p.8). Likewise, Teorell (2006, p.795, original emphasis) argues that participatory democratic theory is premised on the assumption (without an existing empirical societal referent) that '*if opportunities for participation in direct decision making were widespread - at the workplace, in the neighbourhood, in the local community or elsewhere - then self-development would ensue*'. This thesis contributes both theoretical and empirical bases for this claim.

Additionally, Wolfe (1985) focuses not primarily on the educative aspects (although learning may well be part of a participatory process), but rather on control of political representatives. This is based on the principle that '[a] participatory democratic leader articulates his [sic] followers' view, translates them into plans that can be effective, and helps obtain agreement on a single policy out of various alternatives' (Wolfe, 1985, p.381). This theory of participatory democracy echoes Macpherson (1977) and Shalom (2008) in advocating decentralised, but specifically participative and empowered democratic relationships in local contexts, with delegated representation built into levels above this base where direct participation is not possible. This requires 'small communities committed to achieving egalitarian and non-exploitative social relations and their combination into larger collectivities' along with support for delegated leadership conditional on their acting out the demands of the membership (Wolfe, 1985, p.386). This is an aspect of the structure of the democratic workplace in Chapter 6.

Delegated representation is necessarily a part of participatory democratic theory due to three key criticisms of direct participation; the complexity of modern society, the assumed incapacity of citizens to make good decisions, and the potential for instability in a participatory system (Bobbio, 1987; Budge, 1996, 2012). While these criticisms are often levelled at the naïve view of applying Athenian direct democracy at the societal level in modern capitalist societies, Bobbio (1987, pp.52-53) argues that

between pure representative and pure direct democracy there is not the qualitative leap which advocates of direct democracy believe... the historical forms of representative and direct democracy are so many and varied that one cannot pose the issue in terms of either/or, as if there was only one possible version of each. The problem of the transition from one to the other can only be posed in terms of a continuum, where it is difficult to say at which one point one finishes and the other begins.

While this highlights a necessary distinction between simple *direct* democracy and *participatory* democracy, which can incorporate elements of direct participation and aspects of representation, such as ‘revocable representatives’ (Bobbio, 1987, p.53), most participatory theories are more nuanced and accept the need for delegated representation. Differences between representative and participatory democracy are a matter of degree. The central concerns of participatory theories are the transformation of structures to increase opportunities for democratic participation, and a transformation in social relationships from those based on ‘power over’ to social empowerment within society.

For example, Barber (1984, pp.xiv-xv) proposes as close to full participation as practically possible: a *strong* democracy in which

all of the people govern themselves in at least some public matters at least some of the time. To legislate and to implement laws at least some of the time is to keep alive the meaning and function of citizenship in all of us all of the time; whereas to delegate the governing power, even if only to representatives who remain bound to us by the vote, is to give away not power but civic activity, not accountability but civic responsibility, not our secondary rights against government but our primary right to govern.

Barber's (1984, p.261) concept of strong democracy emphasises the participation of citizens in self-government where possible at local and national levels, but focuses on citizen involvement in 'common talk, common decision-making and political judgement'. These refer to the necessity for citizens to decide publicly on policies that affect them, to do this through discussion amongst themselves, and with concrete actions resulting from their deliberations (Barber, 1984). Amongst the institutional changes suggested by strong democracy are neighbourhood level assemblies; 'the basic building block of democratic societies... [w]ithout talk, there can be no democracy' (Barber, 1984, p.267). A system of neighbourhood assemblies proposed by Barber would begin the development of civic responsibility, along with holding elected politicians to account, later developing effective local decision-making processes. This idea is apparent in the development of participatory budgeting in public spending by local governments in many nations across the world (Baiocchi & Lerner, 2007; Sintomer et al., 2013).

Other proposals include development of the design of public spaces that encourage openness and participation, rather than individualisation and privatisation, and electronic democracy (Barber, 1984; Budge, 1996; Fuchs, 2007; Peixoto, 2010). Like Pateman, Barber (1984, p.305) also views democratic workplaces as central to participatory democracy: 'worker-owned operations on the model of the co-operative movement do more for citizenship than does the regulation of industry, however necessary such regulation should be... [They] not only serve economic egalitarianism but foster civic spirit'.

Ultimately, as Zittel (2007a, p.228) points out, transition from representative democracy towards a more participatory democracy is less likely to be successful if it attempts to directly replace representative structures, but rather, a strategy for increasing participation from within the structures of representative democracy may well 'lead to hybrid models of democracy that go beyond the dichotomy between [representative] and participatory democracy'. Before discussing some of the concrete democratic innovations aimed at deepening participatory democracy as an alternative typology to

liberal and social democracy, it is necessary to consider the content of participatory democratic practices. There is an emphasis in participatory democratic theory on increasing the *quality* of democratic processes, rather than simply the *quantity* of citizens participating in decisions (Zittel, 2007b). As highlighted above, beyond direct voter participation in referenda, this refers to a dominant perspective in new democratic theories that emphasises deliberation.

Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy is an aspect of participatory democratic theory, evidenced in Barber's desire for 'democratic talk'. Deliberation concerns the content of democratic participation and is now considered, by democratic theorists at least, to be '[t]he essence of democracy itself' (Dryzek, 2000, p.1). This strand of democratic theory draws on Habermas' (1984, 1987, 1989, 1996) view of rational public debate oriented towards consensus, though not all deliberative democrats share the emphasis on rational argument or consensus (Bohman, 1998; Dryzek, 2000; Young, 1996). For Habermas (2002, p.115) though deliberative democracy can be differentiated from participatory or direct theories:

the success of deliberative politics depends not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalisation of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication, as well as on the interplay of institutionalised deliberative processes with informally developed public opinions.

Four conditions are required by Cohen (1989) for the ideal deliberative democratic procedure, that citizens be free, capable of public reasoning in both articulation of opinions and opportunities to criticise proposals. Citizens must also be formally equal in terms of access to the deliberative arena and substantively equal in 'existing distributions of power and resources', and 'ideal deliberation aims to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus' (Cohen, 1989, pp.22-23). Though Cohen accepts that even in ideal conditions consensus may not be possible, in which case, majority rule is preferable *with* public deliberation than without it. Therefore deliberative democracy

must involve discussion on an equal and inclusive basis which operates so as to deepen participant knowledge of issues, awareness of the interests of others, and the confidence to play an active part in public affairs. Deliberative democracy looks to transform people's (possibly ill-informed) preferences and attitudes through open and inclusive discussion in which participants are accorded equal respect; in this sense, it seeks to go beyond the 'mere' design of mechanisms to register the preferences that people already have (Saward, 2001, p.564).

Deliberative democratic theory is an integral feature of the quality of democratic participation and the self-transformation thesis (Cohen, 1989; Manin, 1987; Dryzek, 2001). As Fuchs (2007, p.46) argues, increased participation also requires deliberation by participants, or else there would be 'a direct democracy of isolated individuals and not of interacting citizens'. The principle of deliberation 'downgrades' the dichotomy between direct or participatory versus representative democracy; each are viewed to be more democratic if they include deliberative components in decision-making processes (Saward, 2001). However, this thesis contends that participatory democracy is more conducive to social empowerment.

Teorell (2006, p.791) proposes 'political discussion' as a more appropriate term for deliberation which emphasises the participative orientation of the concept; '[s]ince to participate is to engage in some kind of collective endeavour, defining deliberation as discussion is more adequate as a concept of participation'. The role of participation in the three strands of democratic theory highlighted above are summarised by Teorell (2006, p.791):

participation according to the [representative] model is defined as an attempt to influence those who have a say in government. According to participatory democrats, by contrast, participation is to have a say in government oneself. The deliberative model, finally, defines participation as a way of finding out what to say.

For participatory democracy, deliberative forms of decision-making (whether oriented towards consensus, discursive, or more radical forms of agonistic democracy - Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) are integral components. The key attribute of democratic transformation is to move from elitist or (neo)pluralist

conceptions of representative democracy towards variants more conducive to increased and sustained democratic participation.

In relation to power then, this must involve a move away from elite power that subverts and limits the definition of democracy to a passive consumerist choice from competing policy packages that is disempowering for the populace, to one of more meaningful participation on terms which are socially empowering and inclusive. This discussion has suggested that, rather than contesting the notion of representation in political institutions at the national level in large complex societies, the role of participatory democracy and democratic social relations should be the expansion of participatory democracy the economic and social spheres, and as a supplement to the representative system in the local context aimed at holding representatives to account. As Bobbio (1987, p.57) puts it

the process of democratisation has not even begun to scratch the surface of the two great blocks of descending and hierarchical power in every complex society, big business and public administration. And as long as these two blocks hold out against the pressures exerted below, the democratic transformation of society cannot be said to be complete... if the advance of democracy will in future be measured in terms of the infiltration of spaces still occupied by non-democratic centres of power, these spaces are so numerous and so large, and their importance so great, that a fully realised democracy, assuming such a goal to be not only desirable but possible, is still a long way off.

Nevertheless, possible aspects of this transformation have been proposed, including institutional change through empowered participatory governance (Fung & Wright, 2003; Fung, 2004) and democratic innovations (Smith, 2005, 2009; Geisel & Newton, 2012). These are discussed in the following section, which suggests that two main typologies of actually existing representative democracy can be identified in liberal and social variants. The proposals for deepening democracy proffered above would be part of a shift from these two typologies to a third, more participatory type.

Liberal, Social and Participatory Typologies of Democratic Society

Esping-Andersen's (1990; 1999) typologies of welfare regimes can be used to situate democratic theories within typologies of democratic societies. This section suggests that existing representative democratic societies can be viewed on a continuum between the ideal types of liberal democracy and social democracy. To move towards the third typology of participatory democracy a critical assessment of the values of liberty, equality and solidarity that underpin existing democracies is required (Chapter 5).

In a study of post-industrial transformations of welfare regimes, Esping-Andersen (1999, p.8) asserts that 'democracy and the welfare state are sewn from the same fabric'. Democratic egalitarianism is fundamentally at the heart of the theory of the welfare state, which had a

promise of universal social citizenship, of a new social solidarity. The notion of a welfare state points immediately to the second, namely full democracy (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.7).

This is apparent in Marshall's (1992) earlier discussion of the development of social citizenship in the post-war years which aimed at reducing inequalities in income, extending a common culture and enhancing the universality of citizenship through schooling and work. However, in practice there have been diverging welfare regimes which have changed throughout the twentieth century, none of which have approached full democracy.

Esping-Andersen (1990, pp.26-29; 1999, pp.74-86) distinguishes three distinct regime types under which welfare states cluster; liberal, conservative and social democratic. There have been a number of criticisms of Esping-Andersen's three typologies, not least the claim that there may be a distinct fourth 'Mediterranean' or 'Southern' welfare regime (Bonoli, 1997; Ferrera, 1996). However, Katrougalos (1996) sees the Mediterranean typology as a subcategory of the conservative regime. Further, Korpi & Palme (1998) identify five welfare regimes from a 'bases of entitlement' perspective and Arts & Gelissen (2002) construct typologies of five welfare regimes from the

various approaches to welfare regime clusters. Additional criticisms have focused on the gendered nature of welfare regimes (Lewis, 1992), and Siaroff (1994) posits four regimes in criticising the gendered nature of welfare, along with a critique of ethno-centricity in the models (Walker & Wong, 2013). Esping-Andersen's (1999, p.92) reply is to acknowledge the role of families (and gender to an extent) in the structure of welfare regimes and to posit that '[t]he peculiarities of [the proposed fourth and fifth] cases are variations within a distinct overall logic, not the foundations of a wholly different logic *per se*'.

As Esping-Andersen (1999, p.73) points out, typologies are useful because they allow for 'greater analytical parsimony', contribute to understanding the underlying logic of movement in social structures, and can help with the generation and testing of hypotheses. On the other hand, the emphasis on parsimony comes at the price of nuance and typologies are unable to make sense of changes over time as they exist as static snapshots of social structures in a given moment. However, it is possible to trace general trends and movement of nations between ideal types. For example, both the UK and the USA broadly align under the liberal democratic typology in both welfare regime and democratic senses. While the USA is closest to the ideal type, the UK retains elements of both liberal and social variants, having broken with the social democratic consensus in the late 1970s, under the influence of neo-liberal ideology, in favour of the market as solution to issues of social policy (Esping-Andersen, 1999). It could be argued that this might not have been as radical a departure as commonly interpreted as 'Britain [had] failed to take the decisive steps towards a social democratic model already in the 1960s' (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.173). However, despite the contradictory history of Britain's 'mutation' (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.87), Taylor-Gooby (2011; Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011) asserts that the policy direction of recent UK Governments is moving Britain closer to the ideal liberal type.

The liberal welfare regime is seen by Esping-Andersen (1999, pp.74-77) as restrictive of social rights in its emphasis on 'an unbounded faith in market sovereignty [including] a political commitment to minimise the state, to

individualise risks, and to promote market solutions'. Among the countries that are characterised as liberal by Esping-Andersen are Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. The general trend for welfare states within these nations is to exhibit residual characteristics with a narrow definition of eligibility for welfare, a narrow definition of social risks, and an emphasis on the market: 'the residual approach cultivates dualisms: the good risks can be self-reliant in the market; the bad ones become 'welfare dependents'' (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.76).

The conservative welfare regime contains a combination of status segregation and familialism (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.81). Status segmentation is evidenced by the much more generous benefits on offer to the civil service and, to differing degrees in individual welfare states, 'corporatist status divisions... permeate social security systems' (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.82). Familialism relates to the emphasis on the family as the locus for welfare with a 'systematic disinclination to provide care services, and the more familialistic the welfare state, the less generous are family benefits' (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.83). Esping-Andersen (1999, p.83) states that the conservative regime shares some residual aspects of the liberal regime, however, 'liberal residualism means picking up bad risks left behind by market failure; conservative residualism, in contrast, is primarily a response to family failure'. This particular welfare regime characterises the welfare states of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

In contrast to the first two typologies, the social democratic welfare regime, under which the Nordic welfare states of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden cluster, define rights along the lines of social citizenship, rather than contributions or status (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p.78). Social democratic welfare regimes have historically placed more emphasis on universalism of welfare provision, comprehensive risk coverage, decent benefit levels, underpinned by egalitarian conceptions of social solidarity and a commitment to full employment. The liberal regime and the social democratic regime can be seen as polar opposites in their approach to welfare, with the conservative regime sitting in between the two. The three worlds of welfare characterise a

continuum from liberal to social democratic where, in the ideal case, primary responsibility for welfare falls on the individual market actor (liberal), the family (conservative) or the state (social democratic).

For present purposes the distinction that Esping-Andersen makes between especially the liberal and social democratic regimes is instructive for discerning typologies of democracy. Considering the opposite ends of the continuum, while liberal regimes emphasise individualism, inequality, and welfare support targeted on the poor, the social democratic typology promotes collectivism, social citizenship, and universal social security. However, liberal and social democratic regimes are not counterpoised:

[s]ocial democracy accepts, rightly or wrongly, that, for all its faults, liberal democracy works: it is the fundamental basis for democracy, even if it can be improved and reformed for the better. Capitalism is accepted - it can deliver growth and wealth. However, capitalism is not all good, it can lead to inequalities and deprivation which need to be mitigated through government intervention, a characteristic on which social democracy begins to differ, in emphasis at least, from many liberals and conservatives (Martell, 2001, p.206).

Crucially for the distinction between the representative theories of democracy that underpin the liberal and social democratic typologies and a participative alternative, Stammers (2001, pp.31-32) argues that '[s]ocial democracy is largely wedded to an elitist understanding of the potential relationship between people and political leadership and tends to assume a top-down, hierarchical model of governance', especially in Britain under the influence of the Fabian Society. Though it has historically contained a social justice aim as a socialist compromise with capital and market forces, the statist and elitist aspect of social democracy ultimately places this typology closer to Schumpeter's competitive elitist view of politics than participatory democracy.

In the context of the global development of neo-liberalism in policy and ideology since the late 1970s, Esping-Andersen (1999, p.80) reports that with declining social benefits the social democratic regime has evidenced a 'qualitative retreat from the principle of universalism: the notion of solidarity

of risks is being rewritten'. From this basis it can be asserted that the typologies of liberal democracy and social democracy, analogous to Esping-Andersen's welfare regimes, are increasingly shaped by the rise of neo-liberalism as a global hegemonic ideology and policy approach (Chapter 5). Focusing on the case of Sweden, Ryner (1999, p.48) argues that 'the prospects for Swedish social democracy are intimately tied up with neoliberal globalisation and its contradictions'. The economic, political and ideological factors involved in the processes of neo-liberal globalisation have contributed to a crisis in Swedish social democracy:

the Swedish welfare state has been increasingly hollowed out to facilitate 'self-regulating markets'. Mass unemployment has become a reality in what previously was the model of a full employment society. Moreover, successive budgets and crisis packages... have reduced social insurance entitlement levels and services (Ryner, 1999, p.39).

The changing nature of social democracy in the late twentieth century further distinguishes it from the proposed third typology of participatory democracy. Martell (2001) and Stammers (2001) argue that a distinction can be made between traditional and modernising social democracy. Traditional social democracy had Keynesian economics, the universal welfare state, trade unions and social solidarity at its ideological and policy core, whereas modernising social democracy has divested itself of these and involves a change from concerns with equality to minimum opportunities for participation the marketplace (Martell, 2001). This new variant of social democracy is concerned less with reducing the inequalities produced by capitalism through redistribution of wealth, power and resources, than using neo-liberal capitalism to 'pull the world's poor out of poverty through its assumed capacity to deliver wealth through growth' (Stammers, 2001, pp.42-43).

In its 'third way' modernising guise, to varying extents across different countries but especially in the UK, social democracy has been concerned with the reorganisation of social welfare and public spending along the lines of neo-liberalism which defines 'citizenship in terms of the right to participate in the market and equality as access to the market rather than the redistribution

of income' (Robison, 2006, pp.5-6; Jayasuriya, 2006). However, despite the claim that the increased mobility of capital has forced social democratic parties to adapt to neo-liberal globalisation in this way, Callaghan (2000, p.175) points out that

[t]o talk of the need for internationally 'competitive tax rates' and flexible labour markets and the obsolescence of 'tax-and-spend' socialism - a socialism that stood for the redistribution of income and the narrowing of inequalities - is to suggest that mobile capital will simply punish with impunity countries which deny these truths. But there is no evidence to support this conclusion.

Rather, a different approach, which formed part of the Bennite faction of the British Labour Party in the 1970s that succumbed to the eventual neo-liberal hegemony, was to embrace participatory democracy in industry under the aegis of the Alternative Economic Strategy (Callaghan, 2000). Without returning to the social and political context of 1970s social democracy and internecine politics of the British Labour Party, a third participatory variant of democratic regime draws from the participatory theories, and is proposed here as a theoretical and empirical alternative to liberal and social democracy which has greater potential for social empowerment.

Towards Participatory Democracy

In theoretical terms the shift from representative to participatory democratic theory implies a transformation of power relationships, along with the extension of democratic participation to social and economic relations. Pieterse (2001) argues that three conditions are necessary for the development of participatory democracy: local innovations in participatory democracy alongside wider democratic renewal, critical engagement with the politics of civil society and empowerment, and an inclusive approach that views cultural, economic and social reform as part of political change. Fuchs (2007, p.38) considers the possibilities of a more participatory democracy but argues that

reality imposes restrictions in modern societies that are difficult to overcome. But if participatory democracy theory wishes to do more

than uphold an ideal without consequences, it cannot entirely eschew discussion on how such participation can be motivated and institutionalised under contemporary societal conditions.

A distinction can be made between compensatory forms of social democracy that attempt to reduce the social costs of capitalism. Countervailing social democracy is based on transforming the principles of liberal capitalism in a social direction, especially at the EU level (McGowan, 2001). Democratic socialism, on the other hand, is a radical variant of countervailing social democracy which shares the aim of ‘pursuing change through existing and extended institutions of democracy’, but also ‘aims at change to a society which in the long run may not be so easily or purely identifiable as capitalism but more based on collective control and equality than the dominance of private capital and a social structure determined by market forces’ (Martell, 2001, p.206).

Democratic socialism is commensurable with the transition to participatory democracy. As Martell (2001, p.207) points out, ‘[d]emocratic socialists tend to be committed to democracy and gradualism [but] do not have an antipathy to all that is private or marketised’. As highlighted above this refers to the transformation of social relations through the process of participation in democratic decision-making in especially the workplace and the community.

Along with the educative aspects of democratic participation, Schugurensky (2010) argues that social organisation is required, and that good democratic processes do not emerge through chance. While participatory democracy

requires among other things, good access to information, equality among participants, and opportunities to deliberate in a safe space... for democratic innovations to be successful and overcome some of the potential risks associated with these initiatives (co-optation, clientelism, tokenism, parochialism, exclusion, internal inequalities, etc.), certain enabling conditions and structures need to be present (Schugurensky, 2010, p.9).

Enabling conditions include an inclusive environment that is open to a wide range of views, clear links between the deliberative process, decisions and actions, along with ‘justice-oriented public policies’, while the structures

required include institutional design for good governance (top-down transformation), but also a mobilised civil society that is concerned with grassroots democracy (bottom-up transformation) (Schugurensky, 2010, p.9).

This focus on institutional and structural transformation is apparent in Fung and Wright's (2003) concept of empowered participatory governance (EPG). EPG refers to a number of different democratic institutional designs that attempt to restructure democratic decision-making (Fung & Wright, 2003). EPG can be distinguished from more common models of public decision-making such as bureaucratic hierarchies that adopt new managerial techniques or marketisation processes that divest governments of responsibility for public sector services (Fung, 2004; Crouch, 2004). Instead, EPG adopts an approach of 'accountable autonomy' which decentralises power but centralises accountability. It focuses on

building direct avenues of communication and oversight between local officials and the citizens they serve... From above, supervisors monitor their performance and techniques and call them to account when necessary... From below, citizens and clients participate directly in determining, implementing, and reviewing the problem-solving strategies in partnership with local officials (Fung, 2004, p.14).

To enable this, three design properties of EPG are proposed (Fung & Wright, 2003). Firstly, power must be devolved to 'local action units' such as workplaces and neighbourhood councils with the autonomy for devising, designing and implementing solutions (Fung & Wright, 2003, p.20). Secondly, there must be centralised supervision and co-ordination in order to avoid atomisation of autonomous local units. The second point distinguishes EPG from traditional New Left approaches 'in which concerns for liberation lead to demands for autonomous decentralisation, [instead EPG] suggests new forms of co-ordinated decentralisation' (Fung & Wright, 2003, p.21). Third, this must involve the transformation of the state, rather than bypassing it in favour of a volunteeristic approach, as experiments in EPG

generally seek to transform the mechanisms of state power into permanently mobilised deliberative-democratic, grassroots forms. Such transformations happen as often as not in close co-operation with state

agents. These experiments are thus *less* ‘radical’ than most varieties of activist self-help in that their central activity is not ‘fighting the power’. But they are *more* radical in that they have larger reform scopes, are authorised by state or corporate bodies to make substantial decisions, and most crucially, try to change the central procedures of power rather than merely attempting occasionally to shift the vector of its exercise (Fung & Wright, 2003, p.22, original emphasis).

Underpinning these properties are three principles; that EPG processes must have a practical orientation to address concrete concerns, they must induce bottom-up citizen participation, and must draw on open and free deliberation (but not necessarily a consensus) in generating solutions (Fung & Wright, 2003). A significant weakness of EPG is that existing inequalities based on material differences, social class, knowledge, information and skills, educational and personal capacities might limit the capabilities of citizens to participate (especially working class people). Therefore, a crucial ‘enabling condition’ of EPG is that participants must have ‘a rough equality of power, for the purposes of deliberative decision-making’ due to their vastly unequal backgrounds (Fung & Wright, 2003, p.23). Such an approach attempts to develop ‘political wisdom’ in the situated daily experiences of citizens, rather than mediated political debate through the news media (Fung & Wright, 2003, p.28).

However, developing EPG institutions is fraught with difficulty as Saward (2001, p.579) notes that ‘the design of real procedures must work within specific political cultures, limited time-frames, fundamental disagreement and confusion about means and ends, and with the institutions that exist rather than wholly innovative blueprints’. This is not to mention the political context in which vested interests may resist giving up power and resources, and also resist the transformation of existing social structures and institutions in favour of popular participation.

With this in mind, Smith (2005) highlights at least fifty-seven empirical cases of innovations in democratic decision-making, which focus on institutional designs and range from electoral and consultative innovations to deliberative, co-governance, direct, and e-democracy innovations which are more participatory in design. Innovations from Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Finland,

France, India, Switzerland, the UK and USA are examples in which a range of institutional practices incorporate democratic decision-making with different extents of participation.

The report is concerned with the relationship between citizens and political authorities, and does not consider democratic participation in social movements and civil society, voluntary groups or workplace democracy. However, these aspects are also fundamental to the notion of democratic society, as disparate theorists from Pateman to Dahl have argued. Wright (2010, p.82) supports the requirement for workplace democracy:

private decisions made by the owners of capitalist firms often have massive collective consequences both for employees and for people not directly employed in the firm, and thus the exclusion of such decisions from public deliberation and control reduces democracy. A society in which there are meaningful forms of workers' democratic control within firms, as well as external democratic public controls, is a more democratic society than one which lacks these institutional arrangements.

Nevertheless, for Smith (2005, pp.16-17), the focus is on innovations that both *increase* participation (with attention to the social inclusiveness of increased participation) and *deepen* participation, defined as changes which allow 'a more direct, sustained and informed participation by citizens in political decisions'. This refers to both the *quantity* of participants and *democratic quality* of the content of participation. A distinction is made between deliberative, direct and co-governance processes, which have implications for citizen power and control over participatory democratic innovations. While deliberative innovations include deliberative polling, participatory budgeting (PB) in Porto Alegre, Brazil and other cities in South America and the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on electoral reform are among the most successful co-governance innovations (Smith, 2005, 2009; Pearce, 2010b).

Smith (2009) grounds a normative analysis of empirical cases of participatory democracy in the democratic goods of inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgement and transparency, along with the institutional goods of efficiency and transferability. Important for Smith (2009) is that the

democratic innovations realise to different extents these democratic goods, and also particular processes may combine different aspects of democratic innovations, and their associated goods. This focus on the structures and institutions that contribute to the realisation of democratic goods means that ‘it is near meaningless to make generalised statements about the legitimacy of citizen participation per se. Institutional design matters’ (Smith, 2009, p.188).

In the case of Porto Alegre’s PB (see Chapter 7) a combination of at least three types of democracy, including popular assemblies, locally elected representatives and regionally elected councillors in direct and deliberative forums help to realise a combination of democratic goods. For example, PB in Porto Alegre has proven to include the poor and marginalised groups (but not the very poorest) in decision-making with redistributive and social justice outcomes (Baiocchi, 2004; Smith, 2009). It has operated on a complex combination of top-down administrative control and bottom-up direct popular control over different aspects of the budgeting process, suggesting popular control over decision-making but administrative control (as facilitators and mobilisers of the public) over information, experience, technical advice with veto powers over decisions (Smith, 2009).

Among the factors involved in the success of PB in Porto Alegre is the institutional design of the process that combines direct democratic participation, deliberation, accountable representation, transparency, and a strong political will. This supports the claim made by Saward (2001, p.576), that ultimately, ‘a serious vision of direct democracy today must see it as operating alongside, or more clearly as part of, a larger democratic system which includes (for example) elected parliaments and political parties’. In the case of Brazil, the federal system grants ‘significant municipal autonomy and fiscal decentralisation, with extensive executive powers in the hands of the mayor, particularly in relation to the city budget’ (Smith, 2009, p.35).

As discussed by Smith (2009), in favourable circumstances a range of participatory institutional designs and democratic practices have potential to

transform the structures of representative democracy from within towards a more participatory democracy. However, the broader concern with democratic typologies draws attention to democratic values that underpin different societies. Smith (2009) highlights inclusion, control, reflection and transparency as key normative aims of his analysis of democratic innovations, but it is necessary to elucidate the deeper values concerned with social relations and power relations in democratic societies that influence the appropriateness of these goods.

Gould (1988) highlights the centrality of democratic values as liberal and social 'democratic societies fail to take seriously the principle of social co-operation as a condition for full human freedom' (Gould, 1988, p.248). Gould (1988) argues that existing representative democracies do not adequately provide the conditions for freedom, equality and social co-operation (or solidarity). The relevance of the values of liberty, equality and solidarity for democracy is discussed in Chapter 5 which asserts their dialectical relationship, and suggests the value changes needed for transforming concrete practices and institutions.

Conclusion

This chapter began by tracing the role of participation and representation in the historical development of democracy. It then considered modern theories of democracy. The representative variants (in elitist and (neo)pluralist guises) were subject to criticisms relating to their basis in disempowering 'power over' relationships and realisation in the narrow and limited liberal variant, or in the problematic compromise between labour and capital in the social model. Rather, it has been argued that for the development of social empowerment (and the improvement of social quality) a transformation is needed towards participatory democratic theory and practice.

While the neo-pluralist theory of democracy and even Schumpeter's competitive elitism have descriptive value in understanding the existing practice of liberal and social democracy in industrial and post-industrial

societies, the two typologies are underpinned by democratic values which the next chapter proposes are dialectically in contradiction. The values that underpin participatory democracy are proposed as the optimisation of the democratic dialectic. This is necessary for critical-normative analysis of the case studies of participatory democracy in action. Attention to deeper normative values is important because

[a] government may be progressive but not [the] political processes and political culture... social relations in the workplace, in educational and cultural institutions, in the family and the household and in gender relations [may be] conservative (Pieterse, 2001, p.2).

Chapters 6 and 7 investigate social empowerment in a democratic workplace and in a participatory budgeting process, drawing on the values of the democratic dialectic. An assessment of this dialectic is the purpose of Chapter 5 which focuses on liberty, equality and solidarity in the three democratic typologies that form the normative guide for the empirical research, and considers the influence of neo-liberalism on democracy since the 1970s.

Chapter 5

The Democratic Dialectic

Introduction

The democratic dialectic forms the normative guide for the empirical case studies of participatory democracy. This chapter assesses how the values of liberty, equality and solidarity constitute the democratic dialectic. The values are subject to different conceptions relating to the different typologies of democratic society described in Chapter 4. As the values are dialectically related, all three must be optimised, rather than a situation where one or two of the values dominate (Bernard, 1999). For optimisation, this chapter posits a desirable shift from liberal or social democracy to participatory democracy.

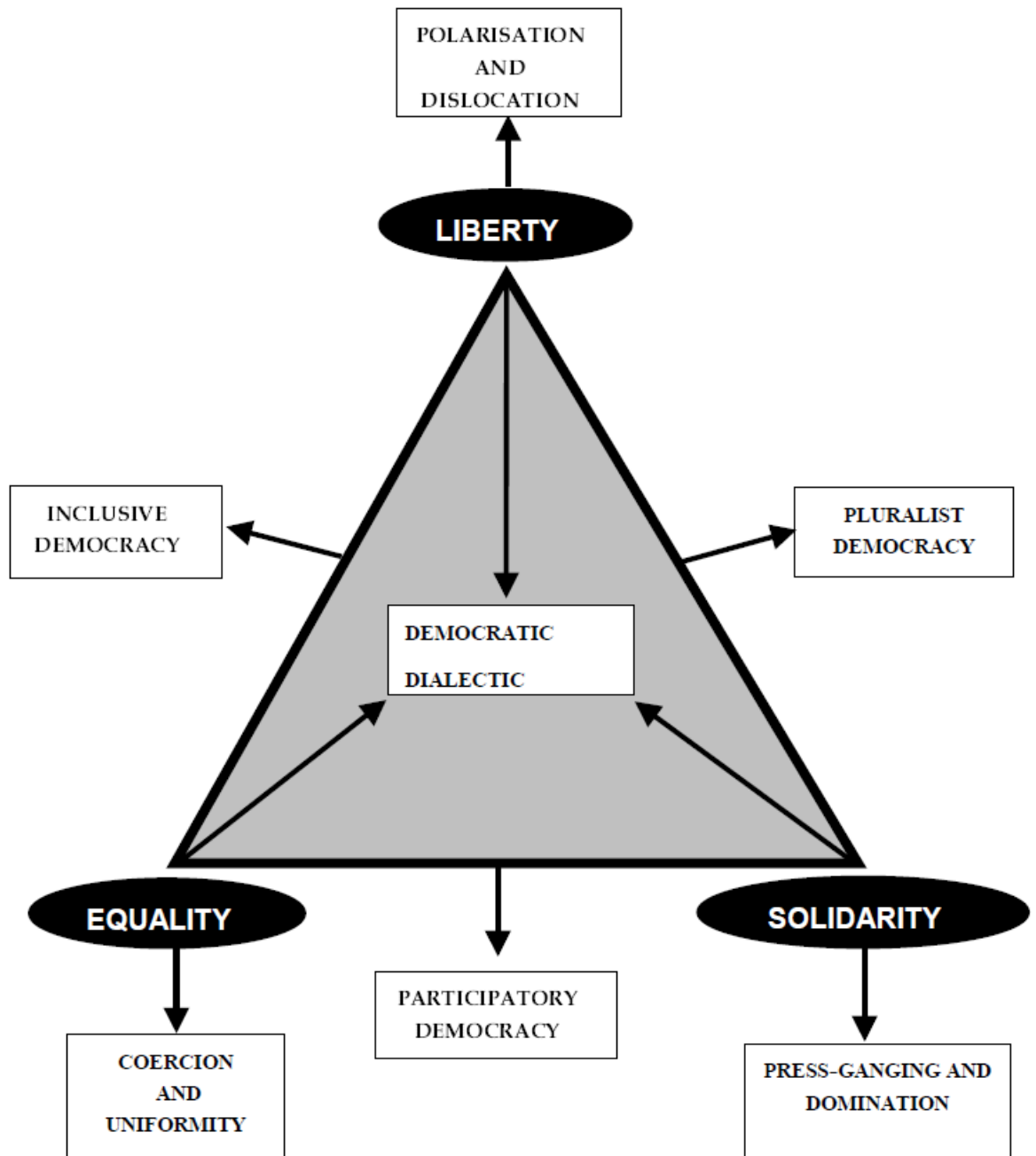
The first section describes and critically develops the democratic dialectic, before discussing the three values of liberty, equality and solidarity in depth. Freedom as self-development, relational egalitarianism and social and system integration are considered to be most appropriate to the optimisation of the dialectic values. The final section historically situates the democratic dialectic by contrasting the values with the corrosive influence of neo-liberalism in contemporary democratic societies. This provides the basis for the optimised democratic dialectical values as a normative standpoint for analysis of the case studies in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Developing the Democratic Dialectic

The democratic dialectic was originally proposed by Bernard (1999) as a conceptual tool that describes a dialectical relationship between the three normative values of liberty, equality and solidarity (Figure 5.1). The original model emerged from a critique of social cohesion and social capital as a 'trendy' 'quasi-concepts' in policy circles; 'those hybrid mental constructions that politics proposes to us more and more often in order to simultaneously

detect possible consensuses on a reading of reality, and to forge them' (Bernard, 1999, p.2). The hybrid nature comes from the scientific purchase of these concepts, and from the political usefulness of their vagueness in application to everyday life.

Figure 5.1 The Democratic Dialectic (from Bernard, 1999).



Instead, Bernard (1999) proposes the democratic dialectic to make sense of how the absence of solidarity (or either of the other values) can have negative consequences for democracy. It can analyse the democratic complexion of

different forms of social organisation, but it also includes a normative dimension by pointing towards the possibility of resolving contradictions in the dialectic to realise democratic potential. The normative aim is to optimise the three interrelated values in a 'positive equilibrium' (Phillips, 2006, p.161). This is distinct from a maximisation of each value individually, which can 'damage the fabric of democratic society' (Phillips, 2006, p.163). From a normative standpoint (which would be contested by neo-liberals, for example) Bernard (1999, p.7) argues that

true liberty is only possible for people who are relatively equal and who share certain values, at least that of liberty; true equality cannot be that of slaves, and it is based on a sense of a common destiny; and solidarity becomes meaningless if it is not freely assumed and if it does not serve to combat social exclusion. On the other hand... liberty, especially economic liberty and even more its neo-liberal form, obviously threatens equality, and it reduces solidarity to interpersonal action; the unchecked pursuit of equality can drown liberty in uniformity and prevent solidarity from taking form and demanding a commitment; some interpretations of solidarity can become the enemies of liberty and serve as a pretext for the perpetuation of inequalities.

The values exist in a dialectical relationship because all three relate to each other as a totality, but they can also be in contradiction with one another. The dialectic conflicts where societies neglect one or more of liberty, equality, or solidarity. As a 'unipolar distortion', too much emphasis on liberty, especially the 'market is all' economic liberty of neo-liberalism 'pushes inequalities towards a strong polarisation and provokes a dislocation of the most basic social consensus' (Bernard, 1999, p.8). On the other hand, the drift towards equality (especially equality of outcome) leads to 'abuse by the State' in the worst case, communist despotism and in the best case, 'a welfare state beset by bureaucratisation and inefficiency, dependent client groups and insensitive managers' (Bernard, 1999, p.9). Finally, an inward-looking solidarity 'press-gangs people at the expense of liberty' and imposes domination by the strongest, for example, in countries dominated by religious fundamentalism (Bernard, 1999, p.10).

'Fragile bipolar equilibria' are where two values are dominant. Where liberty and equality (often in tension) are dominant, Bernard proposes the model of 'inclusive democracy', which refers to a capitalist economy in combination with a form of extensive welfare state to provide social protection, for example, in Western Europe. Nordic social democracy is proposed as a 'participatory democracy' in which equality and solidarity are more prominent, although Bernard (1999, p.12) states, rather confusingly, that 'there is no question that these are free countries'. Finally, 'pluralistic democracy' relates most closely to the USA, and invokes liberty and solidarity over equality. In this model solidarity softens the hardships of the market economy, and the State promotes consensus over resolving conflicts; 'an appeal to the solidarity of civil society that denies the State's basic egalitarian mission leads to the downloading of responsibilities onto the volunteer sector' (Bernard, 1999, p.13). Like the democratic typologies, the dialectic highlights likely tensions and tendencies in different forms of democratic society but do not correspond precisely with actually existing democracies.

Bernard's (1999, p.15) conclusion is that in practice, the use of social cohesion to temper the increasing sway of neo-liberalism over democracy needs to be avoided; '[n]ot just because equality must also be taken into consideration, but also because dialectic dynamics has much more complicated requirements'. This relates to the possibility of optimising the values of the democratic dialectic, avoiding unipolar distortions or fragile bipolar equilibria, although no societies are close to achieving this. The implications of neo-liberalism for democracy are discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Phillips (2006, 2007) suggests that the model is helpful for conceptualising the 'good society', especially by including solidarity ('the essence of cohesion', Phillips, 2007, p.42) in a model of democracy. Despite the simple intuitive value of the model, Phillips takes issue with the idea that Swedish social democracy (or 'participatory democracy') forms a fragile bipolar equilibrium between equality and solidarity over liberty. This form of society is relabelled

by Phillips (2007, p.42) as ‘democratic centralism’, as it ‘reflects the strongly solidaristic and egalitarian - but not libertarian - nature of the pre-1989 Soviet and Eastern European state-socialist nations’. However, to develop Phillips’ critique, the democratic dialectic values must themselves be contested. Exploration of this can help to illuminate the differences between the normative standpoints of the three democratic typologies developed in Chapter 4.

Reassessing Dialectical Values

Each of the typologies, and their associated values fit on a continuum from individualistic to more social relational philosophical orientations (Table 5.1). This section also relates the values to the typologies of liberal, social and participatory democracy.

Table 5.1 Democratic Dialectic Values in Three Typologies of Democracy

Typologies of democracy	Liberty	Equality	Solidarity	Philosophical orientation
Liberal democracy	Negative freedom	Libertarian rights	Social capital (by-product of self-interest)	Strong individualism
Social democracy	Positive freedom	Luck egalitarianism	Social capital (solidaristic networks)	Residual individualism
Participatory democracy	Self-development	Relational egalitarianism	Social and system integration	Social relational

The limited notion of democracy in the liberal democracy typology is based on a narrow understanding of liberty as negative freedom and, although libertarians deny the value of equality, a basic framework of equal rights is present. Insofar as liberal democracy incorporates a value of solidarity, this is as a by-product by self-interested rational actors. Seen in this light, liberal democracy prioritises a particularly narrow understanding of liberty and equality, and largely neglects solidarity. Social democracy has a commitment to welfare (especially in traditional social democracy, whereas modernising social democracy prioritises workfare, Martell, 2001; White, 2004). Liberty is the positive freedom to achieve a desired end in the context of state regulation and action. In this respect, social democracy moves beyond the liberal typology to understand the importance of social relations in a more developed conception of democracy. However, as the following discussion shows, this view contains a residual individualism, and this weakness is borne out in luck egalitarianism and social capital, which concede too much ground to the underdeveloped liberal perspective on liberty, equality and solidarity. Finally, the participatory democracy typology is commensurable with the normative aims of social quality, consisting of freedom as self-development, relational egalitarianism, and social and system integration. This is especially pertinent for how social relations can provide the conditions for empowered participation.

The following discussion critically investigates the concepts of liberty, equality and solidarity in turn. The social quality philosophical foundations of this analysis (Chapter 2) suggest that each value requires a shift from utilitarian or voluntarist individualism to a social relational understanding of humans as social beings (while avoiding over-socialisation). This suggests that the normative values of participatory democracy reflect the optimisation of the democratic dialectic.

Liberty

This section considers negative and positive conceptions of freedom and suggests that both are rooted in liberal individualism. While negative freedom

aligns with the liberal democracy typology, positive freedom corresponds with the social democracy typology. Despite MacCallum's (1967) triadic concept of freedom, to transcend the individualist focus of theories of freedom, freedom as self-development is proposed (Gould, 1988).

Negative freedom refers to an area in which an individual may act unobstructed by other individuals (Berlin, 2002). Liberalism makes a strong distinction between the private and public lives of individuals, and is concerned with the limits to which public life can intrude upon the private (Gray, 1995). This means that for liberals the role of the state is to protect the liberty of the private individual from interference by others (Miller, 2006). On the other hand, positive freedom refers to autonomy and the internal development of humans as moral actors (Green, 1997). This means that the activities of private individuals may well limit the autonomy of others, which requires public action to correct this, and that there is a moral dimension to freedom. This is in contrast to the supposedly morally ambivalent 'private space' defended by liberalism. In terms of democratic societies, this second view of freedom requires public institutions to be designed to enhance the capacity of all for individual autonomy and for rational self-direction (Green, 1997).

While acknowledging that the two appear to be 'at no great logical distance from each other - no more than negative and positive ways of saying the same thing', Berlin (2002, p.178-9) defends negative freedom. For Berlin (2002, p.170), being free means simply 'not being interfered with by others'. There must be limits to negative freedom, however, as it is not possible for humans to exist in a state of complete non-interference. Such a society would 'lead to social chaos in which... minimum needs would not be satisfied; or else the liberties of the weak would be suppressed by the strong' (Berlin, 2002, p.170). The debate for liberals is over the appropriate amount of personal freedom that should be available to individuals: 'a frontier must be drawn between the area of private life and that of public authority' (Berlin, 2002, p.171). This view of freedom equates with the liberal democracy typology and the

emphasis on reducing state intervention as much as possible to protect the private sphere (individual actors in the market).

On the other hand, Berlin (2002, p.178) suggests that the concept of positive freedom leads to a totalitarian ideology based on the freedom to 'lead one prescribed form of life'. By 'forcing people to be free', Berlin's (2002, p.169) conception of positive freedom invokes coercion; 'the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area [the individual] could otherwise act'. Some limits may be necessary in society, but this cannot be described as freedom.

The positive conception of freedom stems from Aristotlean thought: '[w]e can only be said to be fully or genuinely at liberty... if we actually engage in just those activities which are most conducive to *eudaimonia* or 'human flourishing', and may therefore be said to embody our deepest human purposes' (Skinner, 1984, p.232). This is a significantly different foundation for understanding freedom to that of the liberal view, and justifies the use of the state to correct the social injustices of the market in a social democracy.

Green (1997, p.370) sees freedom as more than 'freedom from' restraint or compulsion, but rather as a central normative aim for a community as 'its attainment is the true end of all our efforts as citizens'. To go beyond the individualist basis of negative freedom, liberty must reflect the moral worth and the mutual interdependence of people in communities:

[w]e do not mean merely freedom from restraint or compulsion. We do not mean merely freedom to do as we like irrespectively of what it is that we like. We do not mean a freedom that can be enjoyed by one man or one set of men at a cost of a loss of freedom to others. When we speak of freedom to be so highly prized, we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying and [it is] something we do or enjoy in common with others... a power which each man [sic] exercises through the help or security given him by his fellow-men, and which he in turn helps to secure for them (Green, 1997, pp.370-371).

Individual freedom in the negative sense is a precursor to a morally valuable positive freedom (Blau, 2004). As humans must live with one another, Green

locates positive freedom in mutual relationships. Green (1997, p.371) proposes this to be democratic and egalitarian, as it is immoral to recognise the attainment of freedom by 'an exceptional individual or exceptional class as an advance towards the true freedom of man [sic], if it is founded on a refusal of the same opportunity to other men'. Negative freedom is only valuable insofar as it is a means to a greater end: 'the liberation of the powers of all men [sic] equally for contributions to a common good' (Green, 1997, p.372).

The role of the state is crucial in this, both as protector of individual (negative) freedom, and enabler of social (positive) freedom:

it is the business of the state... to maintain the conditions without which a free exercise of the human faculties is impossible... the outcry against state interference is often raised by men whose real objection is not to state interference but to centralisation, to the constant aggression of the central executive upon local authorities (Green, 1997, p.374).

This indicates that the assertions of Berlin and other liberals against 'interference' fail to make an adequate distinction between state intervention in the positive sense, and the centralisation of power in an authoritarian state. Nevertheless, it is over the role of the state and the formation of the 'common good' that liberal criticisms of the positive sense of freedom are made. Skinner (1984, p.231) cites Raphael's (1976) criticism of positive freedom as typical of the liberal retort:

'when we speak of having or not having liberty or freedom in a political context, we are referring to freedom of action or social freedom, i.e., the absence of restraint or compulsion by human agency, including compulsion by the State'. To suggest, therefore, that 'compulsion by the State can make a man more free' is not merely to state a paradoxical conclusion; it is to present an 'extraordinary view' that simply consists of confusing together two polar opposites, freedom and constraint.

While Berlin (2002) sought to defend negative freedom against the abuses of liberty by the state, his individualist account also indicates that some constraints must be upheld, through compelling children to be educated or by

forbidding public executions, for example. For Berlin (2002, p.215), negative freedom is one from a number of values that may constitute a society, as the extent to which people have the liberty to live without interference

must be weighed against the claims of many other values, of which equality, or justice, or happiness, or security, or public order are perhaps the most obvious examples. For this reason, it cannot be unlimited... the liberty of the strong, whether their strength is physical or economic, must be restrained.

A plurality of values means that negative freedom may necessarily have to be reasonably curtailed in a democratic society. But the question arises of how to judge between these different values, unless some conception of the common good is present? Berlin does not make clear the commensurability of these values, nor does he examine the moral choices about which values are appropriate, for this would necessitate the positive sense of freedom described by Green (Blau, 2004).

Williams (2001, p.9) criticises negative freedom using the example of 'happy slaves'. Unlikely as it may seem, slaves that do not suffer any physical harm may not actually want to do anything that their slavery prevents them from doing. They may be content in their slavery to their master. But it would be absurd to claim that the slaves are free. Under the negative conception of freedom, they would be deemed to be free, as their desired actions are not interfered with, restrained or coerced. However, should the slaves become discontented when reformers show them what they are missing, following Berlin's logic, it could be argued that the reformers have taken away the freedom of the slaves (Williams, 2001). With this argument, Williams shows that negative freedom is inadequate as a sole conception of liberty due to its basis in liberal individualism and the absence of a normative dimension.

Indeed, negative freedom is viewed as 'primitive freedom' by Williams (2001, p.8), on the account that it is a basic precursor to a more complex and relational understanding necessary for human societies. Heyman (1992, p.86) suggests that is not adequate to say that liberty can only refer to the private freedom of the individual, as it must at the same time include the positive

political liberty of ‘the power of the community to govern itself, and that of citizens to participate in self-government’. People may require the negative freedom from external constraint, but a fuller understanding must *also* explicate the positive aspect of pursuing actions that are ‘worthwhile and sociable’ (Blau, 2004, p.551), in such a way that transcends the liberal individualist dichotomy between freedom and constraint.

MacCallum (1967) posits a triadic conception that proposes to resolve this problem. For MacCallum (1967, p.314), analysis of freedom must identify an agent (x), preventing conditions (y) such as constraints or interferences, and actions (z) or ‘conditions of character or circumstance’, and freedom can thus be described as ‘x is (is not) free from y to do (not do, become, not become) z’. In this view, liberty always involves a negative and a positive sense. However, MacCallum is ultimately still concerned with absence of external constraint at the level of the individual. It is unclear how positive freedom in this view is not simply the result of the successful exercise of negative liberty.

Instead, Gould’s (1988) conception of freedom as self-development includes both negative and positive aspects of liberty, but shares the social quality understanding of constitutive interdependency (Chapter 2) by adopting a view of humans as social individuals, rather than the isolated pre-social individuals of liberal accounts, or the residual individualism present in both positive and triadic freedom. The social ontology that underpins the competing theories of freedom is the basis for Gould’s (1988) elaboration of a democratic ontology and the view of freedom as self-development. Like social quality theory, Gould (1988, p.94) rejects the liberal individualist ontology of ‘isolated egos’ which

fails to take into account the fact that in social life, the purposes and actions of individuals develop and change in their relations with others and are affected by these interactions. Thus these individuals are not isolated, but rather become who they are through their social relations. These relations therefore are not external but ought to be characterised properly as internal relations. That is, individuals who stand to each other in these relations are essentially changed in and through them.

Gould's (1988) social ontology ensures that individuals are central, but that their activities include relational properties, which are also essential to viewing individuals as social beings. This means that distinct from triadic freedom, individuals must have both 'the absence of constraining conditions, and presence of enabling conditions' (Gould, 1988, p.109).

To be compatible with participatory democracy that extends beyond formal politics into social and economic life, freedom must consider 'the activity of self-development, requiring not only the absence of external constraint but also the availability of social and material conditions necessary for the achievement of purposes or plans' (Gould, 1988, p.32). Social conditions include 'co-operative forms of social interaction, reciprocal recognition of each one's free agency, and access to training, education, and various social institutions', while material conditions refer to the means and quality of subsistence, labour and leisure activities (Gould, 1988, p.41). This emphasis on conditions is more fully realised here because Gould (1988, p.49) views humans as social individuals in which 'their own self-development depends on... social relations and... the extent to which these others are themselves self-developing' rather than an absence of constraint (or not) to achieve an individual end or by moral compulsion (however beneficent).

Self-development is defined as 'the freedom to develop oneself through one's actions, or as a process of realising one's projects through activity in the course of which forms one's character and develops capacities' (Gould, 1988, p.40). Negative freedom is a presupposition for self-development in the form of civil liberties and political rights, but also requires the positive freedom of the open-ended development of individual capacities over time (Gould, 1988). Due to its social ontology self-development has no singular end-point (such as the one 'true freedom' prescribed by totalitarians, as described by Berlin), but instead is a process that allows the formation of 'new capacities in the elaboration and enrichment of existing ones', whereby 'individuals may be said to widen their range of actions and social interactions and intensify or improve the quality of particular modes of action or social relation' in achieving long-term goals (Gould, 1988, p.47).

While the liberal conception of freedom as negative liberty correlates with the liberal democratic typology in providing a defence of the private sphere and the market, and the positive view of freedom underpins the welfare concerns of social democracy, a fully realised concept of freedom as self-development is argued here to be commensurable with participatory democracy. Self-development overcomes individualism and recognises the relational characteristics of humans as social beings as it highlights how

social and economic domination may not entail direct or forceful coercion of one person or group by another as an exercise of external constraint but rather control over the range or direction of one person's (or group's) actions by another, by means of control over the conditions that are necessary to carry out those actions (Gould, 1988, p.42).

In recognising this, democratic participation by individuals in setting the terms of their social relations is necessary for freedom as self-development. However, a further issue relates to the relationship between freedom and equality, especially relating to the extent of equality necessary for democracy. As pointed out by Gould (and in a less-developed sense, by Green), equal access to the conditions of self-development is paramount. However, as the following discussion attests, the different typologies of democracy interpret equality (and its relative limits) in different ways.

Equality

Lockwood (1996, p.535) states that 'equality of civil and political rights is an absolutely basic requirement [which is] constitutive of capitalist democracy as such'. However, while a formal political equality is necessary for all three democratic typologies, questions of social and economic inequality remain highly contentious (Marshall, 1992). Moreover, social and economic inequalities in especially liberal democratic societies can undermine the formal principle of political and civil equality (Dahl, 1985; Nagel, 1979).

Equality is subject to different conceptions, although rarely, if ever, is absolute or *simple* equality advocated (Tawney, 1952). Simple equality is the

idea that people 'are on the whole, very similar in their natural endowments of character and intelligence' (Tawney, 1952, p.35). The equation of 'equality' with 'sameness' is usually made by right wing critics of egalitarianism (Miller, c1997). The notion of 'equality of outcome' as producing the same end result for every single person is a caricature of much more complex understandings of egalitarianism: '[e]quality is not uniformity. The idea that it entails the suppression of individual difference is nonsense' (Callinicos, 2000, p.79).

Sen (1992) argues against simple equality on the grounds that this would be an unequal distribution of the *capability* to participate in social life for some. In a system of equal incomes, a disabled person may not be able to function in the way an able-bodied person would do. Rather, incomes would have to be skewed in favour of those less able to participate equally: 'equal consideration for all may demand very unequal treatment in favour of the disadvantaged' (Sen, 1992, p.1). Egalitarian theories must negotiate differences in both the external characteristics of humans in terms of inherited wealth and environmental conditions, but also the personal characteristics such as age, sex, gender, and physical and mental abilities, in considering equality (Sen, 1992).

The capabilities approach to equality has been influential in reconceptualising equality in the context of the development of neo-liberalism as antithetical to democracy (Sen, 1999a). Sen's (1982, 1992, 1999b) view of capabilities has been critically developed as relational egalitarianism (Anderson, 1999, 2003; also Kibe, 2011; Scheffler, 2005; Wolff, 1998), and is posited here as an aspect of the participatory democracy typology. This is contrasted with the social democratic concept of equality of fortune, which incorporates a range competing positions that largely concern the distribution of goods (Arneson, 1989, Cohen, 1989; Dworkin, 1981a, 1981b; Rawls, 1999) and the liberal democratic argument for equality of libertarian rights (Hayek, 1960; Nozick, 1974), although the latter often deny the value of equality at all.

Theories of justice are crucial for examining equality. Equality of libertarian rights is based on justice as entitlement (Nozick, 1973), while equality of

fortune appeals to justice as fairness (Rawls, 1999). Relational egalitarianism is based on justice as fundamental relationships of equality between people (Anderson, 1999). In contrast to distributive theories of justice, relational egalitarianism addresses the social relationships in which goods are distributed as well as the actual distribution of goods. Therefore, like the previous discussion of liberty, moving from theories of equality in the liberal and social typologies of democracy to one that reflects the optimisation of the dialectic requiring a shift from liberal individualism to a social relational understanding of equality.

All contemporary theories of social organisation demand equality of something between humans, or equality in some space or domain, to which inequalities must be justified (Sen, 1992). Williams (1973, p.232) calls this a 'relevant reasons approach' whereby a given inequality can only be justified by appeal to a relevant reason, usually a moral principle or value. Therefore, all theories of social organisation must start from a presumed level of equality between people. However, this presumed equality may be empirically obscured by social arrangements (Williams, 1973). This is the basis for Sen's (1982, p.353) claim that contemporary debates place more emphasis on 'equality of what?' than 'why equality?', although both remain important questions.

Sen's (1992, p.12) claim that any normative theory of social organisation which 'has at all stood the test of time' requires equality in one space or another is pertinent for Nozick's (1973, 1974) libertarianism. Nozick (1974) argues for a theory of justice as entitlement to holdings. This theory resonates most closely with the liberal democracy typology. This is because Nozick (1974, p.155) opposes equality achieved through state intervention on the grounds that it would require 'patterned distributions' based on 'end-state principles' which contradict the basic historical right to ownership of property: 'historical principles of justice hold that past circumstances or actions of people can create different entitlements'. Justice as entitlement is strongly opposed to the notion of the welfare state, which is seen as an unjust interference with the free choices and actions of individuals (Nozick, 1974).

Nozick's (1974) theory of entitlement unfolds in three stages. Firstly, in the 'original acquisition of holdings' someone comes to hold an 'unheld object' (Nozick, 1974, p.150). Ownership of property is constituted by 'mixing' labour with 'unowned objects'; 'because one owns one's labour... one comes to own a previously unowned thing that becomes permeated with what one owns' (Nozick, 1974, p.174). The acquisition of unowned objects is just on the Lockean proviso that there must be 'enough and as good left in common for others' (Nozick, 1974, p.175). The second principle is that these holdings may only be transferred by voluntary exchange, the giving of gifts, or according to the conventions of a given society. This refers to the right wing ideal of a market society (but obscures the tendency towards monopoly in markets). Finally, no holdings can be legitimately made without the repeated applications of the first two principles. This means that any form of redistribution of money or goods by the state is considered to be unjust. Nozick (1974, p.169) thus considers '[t]axation of earnings from labour [to be] on a par with forced labour'.

Nozick (1974) defends the theory as being comprised of historical principles of justice, and that any attempt to change existing distributions must account for the history of appropriation and transfer of holdings. Efforts to create a more equal social distribution of basic goods, money or capabilities for example, are in conflict with the liberty of people who have historically, and justly, come to own or voluntarily transfer goods or money in the entitlement theory; '[a]ny distributional pattern with any egalitarian component is overturnable by the voluntary actions of individual persons over time' (Nozick, 1974, p.164). This means that redistribution according to some principle of egalitarian justice in a 'socialist society would have to forbid capitalist acts between consenting adults' (Nozick, 1974, p.163).

As it is concerned with the absence of interference in individual action and appropriation of property, Nozick adopts Berlin's (2002) limited concept of negative freedom. Given this, Nozick's libertarian interpretation of liberty is proposed to be in direct contradiction with equality as a constraint on individual freedom. Any form of distributive equality requires

the use of resources, and so it... involves worsening the situation of some: those from whom the holdings are taken in order to improve the situations of others. But [according to the entitlement theory of justice,] holdings to which these people are entitled may not be seized, even to provide equality of opportunity for others (Nozick, 1974, p.235).

While justice as entitlement proposes to be an anti-egalitarian theory, Sen (1992, p.22) states that this appears to be the case due to a 'category mistake'. Liberty and equality should not be *conflicting* values in a zero-sum relationship but rather '[l]iberty is among the possible fields of application of equality, and equality is among the possible patterns of distribution of liberty' (Sen, 1992, pp.22-23). Therefore, if liberty is a value that is to be argued for, a supplementary question to this is, how equal must this liberty be? Even Nozick demands equality of something: 'Nozick may not demand equality of utility or equality of holdings of primary goods, but he does demand equality of libertarian rights - no one has any more right to liberty than anyone else' (Sen, 1992, p.13).

A number of theorists have responded to the acceptance of Nozick's libertarian conception of justice, particularly in Britain and the US, by the New Right and the infusion of Nozickean ideas into social and economic policies. These theorists are concerned with equality of fortune or 'luck egalitarianism' (Anderson, 1999). The liberal philosopher Rawls (1999) is the forerunner to this tradition in advocating the equality of 'primary social goods'. Integral to the equality of fortune perspective are the subsequent developments of Rawls' approach by Dworkin (1981a; 1981b) who favours 'equality of resources', Arneson's (1989) 'equality of opportunity for welfare' and Cohen's (1989) 'equality of access to advantages'.

Scheffler (2003) argues that the luck egalitarianism debate has been at odds with the prevailing political practice of many Western democracies since the 1980s with the primacy of neo-liberalism over social welfare. While luck egalitarianism can be most closely associated with the various forms of social democracy (Esping-Andersen, 1990), it is true that modernising social democracy in practice has been less equal than the kind of egalitarianism that

is advocated by these theorists. Nonetheless, the principle is present in European social democratic conceptions of the role of the welfare state in capitalist society. As discussed in the final section of this chapter, the influence of neo-liberal ideology has significantly impacted on social democratic views of welfare.

Luck egalitarians are broadly concerned with either some form of equality of welfare or equality of resources (or both) (Anderson, 1999). In Arneson's (1989, p.82) view, welfare equates with self-interested preference satisfaction; '[t]he more an individual's preferences are satisfied, as weighted by their importance to that very individual, the higher her welfare'. This can only be achieved by individuals seeking their own advantage through rational deliberation 'with full pertinent information, in a calm mood, while thinking clearly and making no reasoning errors' (Arneson, 1989, pp.82-83).

Equality of opportunity for welfare is distinct from 'straight' equality of welfare, which can be rejected on the basis that some require higher welfare than others to be equal (Arneson, 1989). The problem of individual agency is relevant to luck egalitarianism, suggesting that the likely absence of 'full pertinent information' would lead to a de-facto equal distribution; 'we may be up to our necks in the free will problem, but that is just tough luck' (Cohen, 1989, p.934). Arneson (1989, p.86) attempts to placate this concern by stating that equality of opportunity for welfare is based on a soft determinism or indeterminism; '[w]hen persons enjoy equal opportunity for welfare... any actual inequality of welfare in the positions they reach is due to factors within the individual's control'. If subject to a hard determinism, then there can be no distinction between equal opportunity for welfare and equality of welfare.

For distributive equality, therefore, each individual must have the opportunity to satisfy their preferences, although 'it is morally fitting to hold individuals responsible for the *foreseeable* consequences of their *voluntary* choices' (Arneson, 1989, p.88, added emphasis). In suggesting the ability of individual people to foresee the consequences of choices made by free will, Arneson

includes in his theory one of the central premises of Nozick's entitlement theory, that voluntary choices can justly upset the equal distribution of welfare. This limits the role of distributive justice to provide equal opportunity; whatever unequal distributions arise out of the deliberatively rational choices of people is therefore just.

Cohen's (1989, p.907) equality of access to advantage theory differs slightly from Arneson because it is more comprehensive; "advantage" is understood to include, but to be wider than, welfare. Under equal access to advantage, the fundamental distinction for an egalitarian is between choice and luck in the shaping of people's fates'. Compensating for bad luck, rather than providing the conditions for the satisfaction of preferences, leads Cohen (1989, p.916) to place much more emphasis eliminating cases of 'involuntary disadvantage... disadvantage for which the sufferer cannot be held responsible'.

One of the central preoccupations of luck egalitarians is with the difference between 'brute luck' and 'option luck', where the aim is to compensate for the former, but not for the latter. Although the differences between the two are a matter of degree, Dworkin (1981b, p.293) states that

[o]ption luck is a matter of how deliberate and calculated gambles turn out - whether someone gains or loses through accepting an isolated risk he or she should have anticipated and might have declined. Brute luck is a matter of how risks fall out that are not in that sense deliberate gambles. If I buy a stock on the exchange that rises, then my option luck is good. If I am hit by a falling meteorite whose course could not have been predicted, then my bad luck is brute (even though I could have moved just before it struck if I had any reason to know where it would strike).

This distinction has practical implications for policy. For example, if a smoker developed lung cancer, then this would be bad option luck, but if there were 'no particular decision to which we can point as a gamble risking the disease', then this would be considered to be a case of bad brute luck (Dworkin, 1981b, p.293). In the latter instance the person would require compensation for bad brute luck, but in the former instance, the person would be responsible for their choices and must face the consequences alone. Like Arneson, this

introduces the traditional values of right-wing anti-egalitarianism, such as choice and responsibility into egalitarian theory: 'Dworkin has... performed for egalitarianism the considerable service of incorporating within it the most powerful idea in the arsenal of the anti-egalitarian right: the idea of choice and responsibility' (Cohen, 1989, p.933).

The project within egalitarian theory to develop a responsibility and choice based conception of distributive justice is in response to the dominant political criticisms of the welfare state by the New Right in Britain and the US (Scheffler, 2005). However, this move concedes too much ground towards the anti-egalitarian position. In its most raw formulation, '[l]uck egalitarians tell the victims of very bad option luck that, having chosen to run their risks, they deserve their misfortune, so society need not secure them against destitution and exploitation' (Anderson, 1999, p.301). This approach is suited to the modernising social democratic use of conditionality in the welfare state (White, 2004).

This approach does not fulfil the requirements of egalitarian theory by refusing to treat each person, even the imprudent, with equal respect and concern. Anderson (1999, p.288) is critical of equality of fortune or luck egalitarianism as having a narrow focus on 'the distribution of divisible, privately appropriated goods, such as income and resources, or privately enjoyed goods such as welfare'. For Anderson (1999, p.289), equality of fortune fails to uphold 'the principles of equal respect and concern for all' by excluding some citizens by blaming them for their predicament, exuding pity and judging some as inferior in redistributing goods from the lucky to the unfortunate, and making judgements about people's capacities to exercise responsibility for their choices which are both demeaning and intrusive. These claims are especially pertinent in light of the criticism above that libertarian theories begin from an individualist conception of liberty, a basic position to which luck egalitarians also implicitly commit themselves.

Luck egalitarianism prescribes a 'rugged individualism: let the distribution of goods be governed by capitalist markets and other voluntary agreements'

(Anderson, 1999, p.292). Rather than challenging the oppression that is manifested by social and economic inequalities, luck egalitarianism compromises democratic equality by advocating the competitive individualism of markets with a commitment to some form of minimal welfare provision to compensate for 'bad brute luck'. This would reproduce the stigmatic terms of 'deserving poor' and 'undeserving poor' whereby 'citizens lay claim to aid from the state on the condition that they accept inferior status' (Anderson, 1999, p.311).

Relational egalitarianism instead pays greater attention to both individual choices and social conditions. It invokes the theory of democratic equality (Anderson, 1999) which itself builds on Sen's (1992, 1999b) capabilities understanding of equality. In conceptualising equality, 'individual claims are not to be assessed in terms of the resources or primary goods the persons respectively hold, but by the freedoms they actually enjoy to choose the lives they have reason to value' (Sen, 1992, p.81). Freedom and equality are closely aligned in Sen's theory, as the capabilities approach concerns itself with the freedom that all people equally have to achieve well-being, or the 'functionings' ('beings and doings') that they value (Sen, 1992, p.40). For Sen (1992, p.39)

relevant functionings can vary from such elementary things as being adequately nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality, etc., to more complex achievements such as being happy, having self-respect, taking part in the life of the community and so on.

The capabilities approach is distinct from equality of fortune, which focuses on the distribution of goods, resources or welfare, and is more substantive than equality of libertarian rights. It incorporates a pluralistic and normative conception of the good life into egalitarian theory, as different functionings and capabilities may not be equally valuable to every person.

Callinicos (2000, pp.59-60) argues that the capabilities approach provides a 'positive rationale for equality', rather than the negative justification by luck egalitarians regarding avoiding disadvantage in a market society. Instead, the

capabilities approach values equality for the more positive purpose of using freedom to achieve well-being. However, Sen's capabilities approach is subject to three interrelated criticisms which necessitate the adoption of a social relational understanding of equality for the optimisation of the democratic dialectic. Dean (2009) argues that Sen's capabilities approach either ignores or sidelines the interdependent nature of human beings, the problem of liberalism and exploitative power relationships. Firstly, Sen's approach is limited by its focus on capabilities at the individual level. Dean (2009, p.267) argues that

the capability approach to equality is framed in terms of freedom, but not solidarity. It is a liberal-individualist approach... the priority is individual liberty, not social solidarity, the freedom to choose, not the need to belong.

The implication of this is that Sen's capabilities approach to equality is not adequate for optimising the democratic dialectic. While his treatment of liberty and equality highlights a way out of the zero-sum impasse of overly individualistic accounts, capabilities is also limited by its liberal individualist basis. In her list of central human capabilities, Nussbaum (2003, pp.41) includes 'affiliation', which refers to the capability to 'live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage with various forms of social interaction, to be able to imagine the situation of another'. However, Dean (2009, p.268) argues that even this development of capabilities implies disconnection as a starting point by emphasising 'a person and 'the other'... as the abstract bearers of capabilities', rather than considering a more substantive interrelationship. Sen's reluctance to provide a list of capabilities also indicates his unwillingness to engage with the contingent and relative nature of values that requires a more relational understanding of capabilities than his individualist account can provide (Dean, 2009).

This is related to the second criticism regarding the developments of the theory which point to participation in public deliberation ('public reasoning' in Sen's (2005) terms), as a key aspect of capabilities (Dean, 2009; Nussbaum, 2001). Without directly challenging existing social relations of oppression,

advocating public participation from the basis of Sen's liberal individualism may have the undesired consequence of reinforcing 'prevailing hegemonic assumptions' including 'the dominant liberal notion of what constitutes 'the public'' (Dean, 2009, p.270).

The third criticism is that the capabilities approach fails to usefully acknowledge the 'systematic impediments to human freedom that are associated with the capitalist mode of production' (Dean, 2009, pp.271-272). For the capabilities approach to provide an adequate theory of equality the liberal individualist basis for it must be replaced by a more relational understanding of equality.

Anderson's (1999, p.319) concept of relational egalitarianism is derived from the Kantian categorical imperative:

[t]he counterpart to an individual's inalienable right to the social conditions of her freedom is the unconditional obligation of others to respect her dignity or moral equality... [Moreover,] every individual has a worth or dignity that is not conditional upon anyone's desires or preferences, not even the individual's own desires.

Relational egalitarianism is expressed as a universal moral equality between people that can be seen in the negative sense of abolishing oppressive relationships such as those where people are dominated, exploited, marginalised, or demeaned by others, while in the positive sense, this view advocates a democratic society which is premised upon people standing in relations of equality (Anderson, 1999). This suggests 'equal rights to the conditions of self-development' (Gould, 1988, p.60), as distinct from rights to entitlements or to liberal egalitarian principles of distributive justice.

This view resonates with Tawney's (1952) understanding of equal consideration and respect for all persons, while the other approaches are concerned with justifying the distributions of certain goods. For Tawney (1952, p.38)

[t]he equality which [is] desirable is not equality of capacity or attainment, but of circumstances, institutions, and manner of life. The inequality which [is deplorable] is not inequality of personal gifts, but of the social and economic environment... [S]ocial institutions - property rights, and the organisation of industry, and the system of public health and education - should be planned, as far as possible, to emphasise and strengthen, not the class differences which divide, but the common humanity which unites.

Anderson (1999, p.313) argues that democracy is central to equality, in the sense of 'collective self-determination by means of open discussion among equals, in accordance with rules acceptable to all'. For the freedom to self-develop, democratic equality requires access to sufficient capabilities over an entire lifetime; democratic equality 'is not a starting-gate theory, in which people could lose their access to equal standing through bad option luck' (Anderson, 1999, p.319). This conception of democratic equality

regards two people as equal when each accepts the obligation to justify their actions and principles acceptable to the other, and in which they take mutual consultation, reciprocation, and recognition for granted... democratic egalitarians are fundamentally concerned with the relationships within which goods are distributed, not only with the distribution of goods themselves (Anderson, 1999, pp.313-314).

This broader approach to equality suggests the transformation of the social structure of public institutions, norms, and practices, rather than solely to dispute the distribution of resources within an existing system according to principles of either entitlement or fairness. This necessitates the transformation of conditions, not the amelioration of states of affairs (Bhaskar, 1989). The economy must be seen as a system of 'co-operative joint production', because '[t]hose occupying more productive roles owe much of their productivity to the fact that those occupying less productive roles have freed them from the need to spend their time on low-skill tasks' (Anderson, 1999, p.326). Democratic equality would ensure that all citizens are entitled to a 'decent set of freedoms, sufficient for functioning as an equal in society' (Anderson, 1999, p.326), which includes meaningful participation in political, social, and economic life for self-development.

In a participatory democratic society, income inequalities are not immediately problematic provided that people would no longer be able to convert economic income into status inequality through political influence, social status and denigration of the social bases of self-respect of others; '[t]he stronger the barriers against commodifying social status, political influence, and the like, the more acceptable are significant income inequalities' (Anderson, 1999, p.326). Vast inequalities of wealth, however, would not be compatible with the requirement for relationships of equal respect and moral worth. The issue of personal irresponsibility is avoided as democratic equality insures individuals against the loss of guaranteed goods; a set of capabilities that allow people to function as free and equal citizens and to avoid repression.

Having highlighted the liberal individualist weaknesses of equality of libertarian rights and equality of fortune, Anderson's (1999) relational egalitarian approach is posited here to be necessary for the optimisation of the democratic dialectic. This is realised in practice as equality of relationships, moral worth and rights to the conditions of self-development, and processes of enablement in participatory democratic social relations.

Solidarity

This section discusses contemporary theories of solidarity which align with the different typologies of democracy. Like social cohesion, social capital has in the last two decades become a buzz term for policy makers and academics (Farr, 2004; Fine, 2010). It has become a prominent concern in World Bank policies (World Bank, 1998; also Phillips, 2006; Fine, 2008). For liberal democracy, Coleman's (1988, 1990) rational actor theory of social capital describes the atomistic nature of the liberal emphasis on economic individuals with the negative freedom to compete in the market, equality of libertarian rights, and a limited formal political equality. For social democracy, Putnam's (1993, 1995, 2000) view of bridging and bonding social capital complements the emphasis on compromising between capitalist markets and a commitment to a welfare state through positive freedom and equality of fortune.

Bourdieu's (1986; 1992) radical sociology introduces a more critical conception of social capital but is also subject to weaknesses. Finally, again in shifting from individual-centred conceptions to one that acknowledges the social relational and constitutively interdependent nature of humans, Lockwood's (1996; 1999) social and system integration view of solidarity is developed. This concept is commensurable with freedom as self-development and relational egalitarianism for the optimisation of the democratic dialectic.

Coleman's (1988) social capital integrates an economic model of rational action within a sociological account of social structure. Rational action theory assumes that individuals are motivated only by self-interest and not by the needs of others (Field, 2003). For Coleman (1988, pp.100-101), social capital is viewed as a particular kind of resource available to rational actors, which exists 'in the relations among persons'. By imputing into the rational actor model the notion of social capital, Coleman (1988, p.105) asserts that

[a]ll social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital; actors establish relations purposefully and continue them when they continue to provide benefits.

Coleman's theory contends that social capital can be facilitated by self-interested actors pursuing their ends within particular forms of social structure. In other words, humans do not purposefully set out to create social capital, but rather it is a by-product of individual self-interest within certain social conditions (Field, 2003).

As individuals engage with others to achieve instrumental ends, social capital can be used, like financial capital, human capital or physical capital, as a means towards individual success. Coleman (1988) highlights aspects of social structures which can increase social capital, such as general trustworthiness within a community, the flow of information and social norms of acceptable behaviour. Anchoring the self-interested conception of social capital are obligations and expectations in social relationships which establish and maintain trust and social norms. Coleman (1988) cites the example of the wholesale diamond market in New York, where merchants will allow

prospective buyers to take away bags of the expensive stones to examine in private. Trust exists between the seller and buyer because the wholesale diamond market in New York is a closed Jewish community. Family and religious affiliation preclude the possibility that a prospective buyer might steal the stones as the thief would be sanctioned by the loss of all family, religious and community ties. Compliance to the social norm is secured through fear of exclusion. Unlike highly individualistic economic theories of rational action, such as public choice (Buchanan & Tullock, 1965), the threat of sanctions can compel individuals to create social capital within social groups.

This view of social capital adds a sociological dimension to rational action theory, in the form of co-operative solidarity between competitive rational individuals in the form of trust, obligations and social norms. However, this is theorised from a methodological individualist basis which assumes that humans engage in social relationships and access social capital as rational utility-maximisers. Despite incorporating social structures, solidarity in Coleman's conception of social capital remains of an atomistic kind. In effect, Coleman's social capital sees solidarity as a means among others such as financial, physical or human capital, towards the end of individual success in a market society. This view of social capital is rooted in the commitment to negative freedom and equality of libertarian rights, and the market principles governing social relationships characteristic of the liberal democracy typology.

In the post-war years, solidarity in social democracy was associated with Marshall's (1992) notion of social citizenship as a further set of citizenship rights that deepened the civil rights won in the eighteenth century and the political rights fought for in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Marshall (1992) saw the development of social rights as a move towards a concept of democratic citizenship in which structures of economic and social inequality would be reduced as wide disparities in wealth and class would no longer be justifiable in a fully democratic society. This was part of a social democratic movement involving three factors:

[f]irst, the compression, at both ends, of the scale of income distribution. Second, the great extension of the area of common culture and common experience. And third, the enrichment of the universal status of citizenship, combined with the recognition and stabilisation of certain status differences chiefly through the linked systems of education and occupation (Marshall, 1992, p.44).

For Marshall (1992, p.45), in the mid-twentieth century ‘the preservation of economic inequalities has been made more difficult by the enrichment of the status of citizenship’, but he warned that ‘[c]lass distinctions may survive which have no appropriate economic function, and economic differences which do not correspond with accepted class distinctions’. However, by the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century, with the rise of neoliberal ideology in the global economy and the capitulation of the social democratic project to this political and economic doctrine (discussed in the next section), social capital has become prominent in social democratic thought. Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000) theorises social capital as a social democratic conception of solidarity.

Putnam’s (1995, pp. 664-665) theory of social capital refers to ‘features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives’. Networks, norms and trust are interrelated as in modern democracy social trust emerges from ‘norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement’ (Putnam, 1993, p.171). Enhancing the social democratic credentials of Putnam’s (1995, p.671) account is the commensurability of social capital with both capitalism and the welfare state. Contrary to Fukuyama’s (1995) claim that the ‘bigger’ the state, the lower social capital will be, Putnam (1995, p.671, original emphasis) asserts that in the US, ‘differences in social capital in free-spending states are no less trusting or engaged than citizens in frugal ones’, and drawing on comparative research of nineteen Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries; ‘indicators of social capital are, if anything, *positively* correlated with the size of the state’. Important for Putnam (1993) is that the norms of generalised reciprocity that govern social relationships can preclude the domination of self-interest over solidarity, suggesting that this concept shares some affinity with Marshall’s social

democratic view, however, social capital does not contain a normative aim of developing an active democratic citizenship in Marshall's sense.

Although the words 'community', 'collectivism' and 'solidarity' are all used to describe social capital, Putnam (2000) describes two different kinds of social capital; bridging and bonding. Bridging social capital is inclusive and relates to social relationships between different groups, communities or families while bonding social capital is exclusive and mobilises solidarity within a social group. This implicitly implies zero-sum relationships within a society; social capital can only include some by excluding others (Fine, 2010). Although bonding social capital is deemed integral for solidarity, too much of it can lead to what Putnam (2000, p.358) calls the 'dark side of social capital'; an inward looking, illiberal and intolerant sense of solidarity fermented in closed communities, which is inappropriate for an open democratic society. Balance is stressed in this account of social capital between bonding and bridging links which can enhance a pluralistic democratic society based on horizontal social networks: '[t]he performance of our democratic institutions depends in measurable ways upon social capital' (Putnam, 2000, p.349). This view proposes that solidarity is a social problem, rather than a political problem (Marshall's view) or an economic problem (Coleman's view).

Distinct from the democratic pluralism stressed by Putnam, Bourdieu (1986, 1992) interprets social capital from a critical perspective of historical class analysis. Where Coleman attempts to reconcile economics with sociology, Bourdieu (1986, p.242) points to the deficiencies of economics, stating that social scientists should study 'capital all its forms, and not solely in the one form recognised by economic theory'. Indeed, missing from both Putnam's and Coleman's accounts of social capital is a critical consideration of the relationship between social capital and the structures and institutions of democracy (proposed by either liberal or social variants) and capitalism. Bourdieu (1986) asserts that there are three different forms of capital: social capital, cultural capital, and at the root of both of them, economic capital. Economic capital can be converted into money as well as social capital, and is institutionalised in property rights. Cultural capital is institutionalised in the

form of educational qualifications and social capital is institutionalised in titles of nobility or status (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu's approach broadens class analysis from its roots in economic inequality to show how inequalities in social capital and cultural capital contribute to maintaining the class status and power of elites over the majority of the population.

Power is present, if often unacknowledged, in theories of social capital. Bourdieu (1986), for example, sees power and capital as amounting to the same thing. Putnam tacitly interprets social capital as a positive resource of 'power to' whereas Bourdieu describes social capital as wholly 'power over' in class stratified societies. While Putnam emphasises how social capital can create the power to act for disempowered groups and individuals the wider structural context of social, economic and cultural inequalities are marginal in his account. Conversely, Bourdieu criticises social capital in relation to class stratification as a resource that helps to transfer and widen social, cultural and economic inequalities across generations, but neglects human agency in challenging this.

These theorists also differ on the form that social capital takes. As Phillips (2006, p.133) highlights, Bourdieu sees it as a *social resource* owned by individuals, and Putnam sees it as a '*social glue*' that links networks of individuals. The critical interpretation put forward by Bourdieu indicates that Coleman's and Putnam's theories of social capital are insufficient treatments of solidarity. However, Bourdieu's concept of social capital is itself susceptible to the charge of functionalism, for it does not incorporate an adequate theory of social change in describing a largely static stratification between powerful elite groups over larger disempowered groups across generations. Again, the adoption of a social relational perspective, eschewing both individualism and structuralism can overcome the weaknesses in these conceptions of solidarity.

Smith and Kulynych (2002) and Fine (2001, 2010) discuss the weakness of conceptualising solidarity in the economic language of social capital. Smith and Kulynych (2002) point out that the ideals of aggressive individualism, competition with winners and losers, and pursuit of money are contradictory

to the logic of civic virtue and democratic public participation for collective ends desirable for social solidarity. The concept as described by Putnam and others brings a view of 'the social' back into recent politics and policy-making, which is dominated by free market economics (see the following section). But the concepts and language of economics are retained in doing so. Viewing solidarity as social capital therefore helps to legitimate market capitalism and obscure how it inherently weakens democracy (Smith & Kulynych, 2002). Even Bourdieu retains terms such as 'interest', 'profit' and 'investment' which root the concept in the liberal economic conception of self-interested individuals (Smith & Kulynych, 2002). As Smith and Kulynych (2002, p.150) put it:

to characterise civic engagement and the preconditions of democracy as social capital is to foster the view that community involvement and political participation are forms of economic activity, thus blurring important distinctions and, among other things, undermining the development of all-encompassing, genuine forms of democracy.

Coleman and Putnam suggest that the disadvantaged and disempowered can use social capital as countervailing power to become more independent, self-reliant and competitive in a market society. However, this approach weakens democracy and negates the dialectic by conceding too much to the market-based perspective of aggressive individualism, and a passive consumer variant of citizenship. For social democracy, Putnam's concept of social capital fundamentally reworks the notion of social citizenship in the terms of capitalism: the 'social' is assessed from capital's point of view (Farr, 2004). This legitimates capitalism as both natural and inevitable, and limits the development of democratic citizenship:

[b]y describing the political resources of ordinary citizens, the poor, and the working class as merely another form of capital as well as by applying the word capital to bowling leagues, dance troupes, church groups, and a wide range of other institutions, the term social capital makes it more difficult than it otherwise would be to conceptualise political and social life in a vocabulary other than that associated with capitalism (Smith & Kulynych, 2002, p.175).

This point leads to the central criticism of social capital in the context of the democratic dialectic, which is that theories of solidarity as social capital undermine the need for greater participatory democracy (Chapter 4). Rather than attempting to integrate selfish individualism into a concept of social solidarity, '[d]eliberative and participatory versions of democracy require an atmosphere and attitude where people see their political interactions as motivated by the search for the best, most just solutions to public problems' (Smith & Kulynych, 2002, pp.167-168). A theory of solidarity suitable for the democratic dialectic must enhance democracy, well-being and social empowerment by acknowledging the relationship between micro-level of social relationships and the macro-level context of social structures and institutions of citizenship.

Lockwood's (1996; 1999) social and system integration perspective provides an account of solidarity that develops this point further. While social capital conceptualises the social sphere (or civil society) as separate from the economic sphere, social and system integration pays attention to the interrelationships between the social, political and economic:

the primary reference point for the analysis of social integration has to be the complex unity of democratic, market and welfare state relations whose claim to legitimacy is based on their embodiment of the rights of political, civil and social citizenship (Lockwood, 1996, p.532).

Lockwood (1999) makes a distinction between social integration (individual relationships) and system integration (relations between the institutions of a society) which range from integration to dissolution. System integration is comprised of civic integration, which refers to the macro-level institutional order of 'the civil, political and social rights of citizenship', and is threatened by civic dissolution (Lockwood, 1999, p.64). Secondly, social integration involves social cohesion, which refers to micro and meso-level 'kinship and other primary networks... voluntary associations and mutual aid', which in turn, are threatened by a break up of these networks in processes of social dissolution (Lockwood, 1999, pp.64-65). Beck et al. (2001) point to the need to look beyond the local community for social cohesion with the development of global communication networks, but add that this global scope must not

neglect the vital importance of face-to-face relationships in a locality - and associated inequalities. While Lockwood has accounted for the notion of social capital in the micro-level of social cohesion, social integration is much more comprehensive, incorporating macro and meso level social relations, along with attention to social structure (system integration) in a model of social solidarity. This suggests an attention to solidarity in social relations.

Lockwood (1996, p.535) describes how democratic societies (liberal and social typologies) have attempted to balance the different aspects of social and system integration:

[s]ince equality of civil and political rights is an absolute basic requirement, constitutive of capitalist democracy as such, the endemic contradiction between citizenship and capital has so far been managed by the fine-tuning of social rights: that is by seeking a balance between the system-integrative need for 'efficiency', and the social-integrative need to provide 'acceptable' or 'tolerable' levels of social welfare.

As a critical development of the model, Beck et al. (2001, pp.343-348) consider both the conflicts between integration and dissolution, but also the relationships between human agents and social structures. This puts Marshall's (1992) concern with the concept of democratic citizenship firmly back into a theory of solidarity. Beck et al. (2001, p.346) posit that '[c]itizenship refers to the possibility of participation in economic, political, social and cultural systems and institutions'. From the perspective of social quality, social integration requires the creation of open and participatory democratic structures that highlight the inherent interrelationship between different systems and sub-systems of society: 'nobody is only educated, nobody participates only in monetary actions, nobody leads a specific political, scientific, familial or religious life' (Beck et al., 2001, pp.347-348). The conditions for a participatory democratic society requires this form of integration in combination with equality of respect and moral worth of all citizens, who have equal rights to the conditions of their self-development (freedom). This considers the social relational nature of democratic citizens and suggests that organising social and economic life on participatory democratic principles may empower people and improve social quality.

This section has discussed the values of liberty, equality and solidarity in the democratic dialectic and has highlighted how different interpretations of these values correspond with different typologies of democracy. The variations in these values, and the contingencies of democratic societies, suggest the necessity of change in order to optimise the democratic dialectic. This transition from the values that underpin liberal democracy and social democracy would require the adoption of freedom as self-development, relational egalitarianism, and social and system integration in everyday social relationships and in the social and institutional arrangements of society that underpin them. With their focus on democratic participation, these values form the normative guide to the study of social empowerment in the case studies. The possibilities for transformation in everyday life are compounded however, by the existence of a neo-liberal hegemonic ideology that threatens all forms of democracy.

Neo-liberalism against the Democratic Dialectic

To relate the normative guide of the democratic dialectic to the everyday context of British democratic society in the empirical case studies, it is necessary to acknowledge the pervasive influence of neo-liberalism and the corrosive effect that it has. This discussion builds on the criticisms of neo-liberalism and globalisation in relation to democratic politics highlighted by Hay (2007) in Chapter 1. For Hoffman (1988, p.197), influenced by the political project of the New Right, 'the values of liberalism are now being championed in more or less explicit opposition to the values of democracy'. This suggests a reduction in possibilities for the improvement of social quality and social empowerment with the adoption of more participatory democratic social relations and institutions (as the optimisation of the democratic dialectic). This section examines neo-liberalism as a hegemonic political project that has extended its reach to global institutions. This discussion suggests that the development of participatory democracy ought to be situated within a counter hegemonic alternative to neo-liberalism, proposed in this thesis to be social quality (Beck et al., 1998; 2001; van der Maesen & Walker, 2012).

Social quality is relevant because neo-liberalism prioritises economic relationships over social relationships (Walker, 2005). The outcome of this is a contradiction in the democratic dialectic between social and economic forces that remain a part of the same totality (Bernard, 1999). This suggests that the presence of negative liberty in neo-liberalism is destructive of equality and solidarity. Alternatively, social quality argues that 'social protection is an indispensable precondition of economic performance' (Walker & Deacon, 2003, p.12). Contrary to neo-liberalism, social quality is premised instead on 'a rationale for growth and a vision of society in which social goals dictate the direction of economic policies' (Walker & Deacon, 2003, p.14). Given this aim, the relative compatibility of social quality in policy terms with either liberal democracy or social democracy in the context of neo-liberalism is a further issue that is discussed in the conclusion to this thesis. This present work is focused on assessing participatory democracy and social empowerment in social and economic settings.

The historical circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s have subsumed the possibility of more participatory democracy under the neo-liberal concept of consumer-citizenship and market-led processes of economic globalisation. It is necessary to situate the argument for the democratic dialectic values described above within the historical development of neo-liberalism as a hegemonic ideology by examining the concept in theory and practice, and its global rise.

Neo-liberalism and Hegemony

The dominant ideology thesis is associated with Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony. Hegemony is usually obtained by consent secured by 'intellectual and moral leadership', rather than conflict, and refers to 'an order in which a common social-moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant, informing with its spirit all modes of thought and behaviour' (Femia, 1981, p.24). Gamble (1994) asserts that studying hegemony involves attention to political and economic relations as well as ideology. Levitas (1986a, p.17) argues that a dominant ideology becomes dominant 'because it

is propagated and supported by the institutions of civil society and the state' in policy and practice, and incorporating the majority of the population is not always necessary given that often the purpose of a dominant ideology is to 'prevent the formation of coherent counter-ideologies'. Ideology is interrelated with the concrete everyday practices of social life and normative values underpinning a society:

[i]deologies become rooted in communities by their capacity to order daily practice. Ruling groups consequently have a head start over the rest of us, not only because they control (though they may) the institutions of civil society but their control of the state exerts a (sometimes coercive) control over the range of practices available (Levitas, 1986a, p.18).

Neo-liberalism is hegemonic because the development of the market state in the last forty years has required 'broad legitimacy across society and at least some measure of support and engagement from popular social forces' (Robison, 2006, p.5). Cerny (2008) argues that while the development of neo-liberalism was driven by the Right in the 1970s and 1980s, now with few exceptions most state actors of both Left and Right are neo-liberal.

In a globalising world, with multilevel actors and institutions, Cerny (2008) posits that there at least two variants of neo-liberalism have developed. In addition to the rise of 'regulatory' neo-liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s, a 'social' variant emerged in the 1990s. Modernising social democracy adapted the welfare state to the demands of globalising neo-liberalism in the US, Europe and elsewhere (though there has been moderately successful resistance to this by left-wing governments in South America, see Harris, 2007; Goldfrank & Schrank, 2009). Following the financial crisis of 2008, a second wave of neo-liberalism is beginning in earnest, especially in Britain, where austerity policies have been imposed (often drawing on the rhetoric of localism and empowerment) with the aim of further making the market the dominant feature in society (Birch & Mykhnenko, 2010; Corbett & Walker, 2012, 2013; Crouch, 2011; Fine, 2010; Jessop, 2010; Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011). Fine (2010, p.164) describes this change:

whilst the first phase involved state promotion of interests through the market, especially liberalising financial markets, the second phase is faced with both ameliorating the consequences of this shock therapy and of continuing to intervene to allow it to be sustained. The emphasis, in principle, is upon how to make markets socially acceptable.

The next sections discuss the development of neo-liberalism from its theoretical origins, to its empirical application, and global development.

Neo-liberal Theory

Neo-liberalism originated as ideas emanating from liberal economists and philosophers from North America and Western Europe in the mid-twentieth century (Turner, 2008). Neo-liberalism refers to ‘a revival of a set of ideas dating to eighteenth and nineteenth century England, re-tooled to fit the institutions and politics of the late post-war environment and updated with the concepts and technologies of an increasingly competitive and mathematical economics profession’ (Mudge, 2008, pp.714-715). Forming the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947, the neo-liberals developed and disseminated their ideas in the hope of ‘persuading intellectuals, and hence the masses and their political leaders’ to reject collectivism in favour of a re-emergence of classical liberal individualist society and a deregulated capitalist market order (Turner, 2008, p.71).

Hout (2006, p.217) describes this as a ‘politically inspired project to limit the influence of the state over economic transactions’. Neo-liberalism is ‘a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade’ (Harvey, 2005, p.2). The state must be strong, or even dictatorial, but manifestly not interventionist, in order to ‘create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices’ (Harvey, 2005, p.2; MacEwan, 2005).

In theorising neo-liberalism, Friedman champions the market, while Hayek warns of the totalitarian dangers of state intervention. As Levitas (1986b, p.82) puts it

Friedman's main objection to intervention is that it limits economic growth; Hayek fears that any such intervention, including attempts to redistribute wealth through progressive income tax, will not lead just to less growth, but to increasing public expenditure, politicisation and totalitarianism.

Hayek's (cited in Turner, 2008, p.70) desire for the dissemination of neo-liberal ideas necessitated a drawn out ideological contest with the social democratic consensus, requiring 'an alteration in the character of the people'. Hayek (1960; 2007) sought to reclaim individual freedom from collectivist, and potentially, totalitarian ideologies in Western democracies. This line of argument has obvious references to Berlin and Nozick above.

Hayek (2007) reasserted classical economics by taking the rational economic individual as the root of his analysis. He argued that the move towards state intervention in the economy in preparation for a post-war settlement was dangerous because

it fails to comprehend that the coordination of multifarious individual efforts in a complex society must take account of facts that no individual can completely survey. And it fails to see that, unless this complex society is to be destroyed, the only alternative to submission to the impersonal and seemingly irrational forces of the market is submission to an equally uncontrollable and therefore arbitrary power of other men... This is not only the path to totalitarianism but the path to the destruction of our civilisation and a certain way to block progress (Hayek, 2007, p.212).

For Hayek (1960), liberty is the central moral value from which his defence of the neo-liberal market order proceeds. Like Berlin's view, liberty is limited to its negative sense only as the 'state of liberty' refers to 'that condition of men in which coercion of some by others is reduced as much as possible in society' (Hayek, 1960, p.11). But unlike Berlin, the exalting of negative liberty is not tempered by the requirement for other values in society beyond a procedural notion of justice. To this end, political liberty is also dismissed

by Hayek (1960, p.14) as distinct from individual (economic) liberty, and often found to be in contradiction of it: 'we have seen millions voting themselves into complete dependence on a tyrant... to choose one's government is not necessarily to secure freedom'.

Given this, Hayek (1960, p.32) is deeply distrustful of democracy, seeking to extract his ideal of liberty as economic freedom from its democratic interrelationship with equality and solidarity: it is 'better for all that some should be free than none and also that many enjoy full freedom than that all should have restricted freedom'. This narrow and economistic zero-sum conception of freedom is subject to the same individualist limitations of Berlin's view, which neglects to consider humans as social beings with needs and interdependent with other humans in society.

Where Hayek begins from criticisms of the totalitarian dangers of centralised government, Friedman (1962) starts from a position of advocating the market order as the best form of society, with the problem of government as a secondary (but necessary) issue. The benefits of unfettered market capitalism, for Friedman (1962; Friedman & Friedman, 1980) include the claims that it protects individual freedom, that it has produced less inequality than previous economic systems, and that it counters discrimination in the labour market. Moreover, Friedman (1962, p.170) asserts that market capitalism benefits 'the masses' more generally: '[t]he chief characteristic of progress and development over the past century is that it has freed the masses from back breaking toil and has made available to them the products and services that were formerly the monopoly of the upper classes'.

The principle of voluntary agreements and exchange, and an absence of coercion are at the heart of this defence of capitalism: 'no society... has ever achieved prosperity and freedom unless voluntary exchange has been its dominant principle of organisation' (Friedman & Friedman, 1980, p.29). For Friedman (1962) there can be no coercion in a market system, so long as monopolies are avoided. Unequal power relationships are unproblematic as Friedman (1962, pp.14-15) sees the relationship between capital and labour as

mutually beneficial and voluntary: ‘the employee is protected from coercion by the employer because of other employers for whom he can work... the market does this impersonally and without centralised authority’.

The ideas promulgated by neo-liberals such as Hayek and Friedman were largely ignored until the crisis of the post-war social democratic consensus in the 1970s (Caldwell, 2007). However, this provided the political and economic circumstances for neo-liberalism to be adopted by the New Right in Britain and the USA, which set in motion the development of neo-liberalism into a global hegemonic project.

Neo-liberalism in Practice

The late 1970s and 1980s saw an incorporation of neo-liberalism with populist neo-conservatism in the ideology and politics of the New Right, especially under Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the USA (Bosanquet, 1983). This constituted the first wave of neo-liberalism as both political ideology and policy. But this shift goes beyond party affiliation as the drift towards neoliberal policies in Britain began under Thatcher’s predecessor, the Labour Government of Callaghan, with the adoption of monetarist policies as a condition of receiving IMF loans in the midst of the OPEC oil crisis (Hall & Jacques, 1983b; Gilbert, 2004). However, it is with the policy and ideology of the Thatcher Governments from 1979 that the New Right incorporated and established neo-liberal hegemony.

Belsey (1986) argues that the neo-liberal and neo-conservative strands of New Right social and political theory have been subject to much tension and contradiction. The New Right infusion of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism differs in their respective emphasis on the individual/the nation, freedom of choice/hierarchy and subordination, market society/disciplined society, laissez-faire/social authoritarianism, minimal government/strong government (Belsey, 1986). However, neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism both sought to regress to nineteenth century forms of liberalism and conservatism, an era ‘prior to contamination by the ‘socialist’ ideals of the welfare state’ (Levitas,

1986a, p.4), embodied by classical capitalist market economics and ‘Victorian values’.

The combination of contradictory and distinct strands constituted the rise of the New Right; while neo-liberalism emphasises freedom for the economic individual, neo-conservatism has a distinctly authoritarian character in the preference for hierarchy and nationalism (Levitas, 1986a). This has continued in the present second-wave of neo-liberalism in which conservative communitarianism, the rhetoric of empowerment and the apparently radical rediscovery of ‘the social’ masks neo-liberal entrenchment (Corbett & Walker, 2013). Losses of political power by the social democratic and socialist left since the late 1970s have substantially limited the possibilities for the adoption of a new labour-capital compromise or genuine alternatives.

Hall and Jacques (1983a, pp.10-11) see neo-liberalism’s dominance as coalescing in ‘authoritarian populism’, whereby the Thatcherist preference for unfettered markets and a strong state consists of a project to ‘reverse the whole post-war drift of British society, to roll back the historic gains of the labour movement and other progressive forces, and to force-march the society, vigorously into the past’. The culmination of this is the adoption of the ‘belief that the best policy is to allow markets to operate with as few impediments as possible’ coupled with the authoritarian view that ‘for the free market to reach its full potential the state has to be active in creating and sustaining the institutions which make that possible’ (Gamble, 2006, pp.21-22). This dual aim has been largely achieved through defining justice in procedural terms (Nozick’s entitlement view), concerned only with the rule of law rather than social and economic justice, and promoting negative liberty which sees individuals, irrespective of their personal circumstances, as free within the market order. For the New Right, in a market society both rich bankers and homeless people, for example, are ‘free’ due to the primitive concept of negative liberty invoked (Belsey, 1986). In Hayek’s (1960, p.18) justification of inequality he defends negative liberty (over equality and solidarity) with the assertion that ‘the penniless vagabond who lives

precariously by constant improvisation is indeed freer than [for example] the conscripted soldier with all his security and relative comfort’.

The contradictory nature of this claim is clear as neo-liberalism limits individual and collective freedom (in terms of self-development) to the primitive freedom to ‘participate’ in the capitalist market order, for which the neo-conservatism of the New Right has ‘no objection to an increase in state power to enforce their ‘freedom’’ (Belsey, 1986, p.192). Thus,

[t]he neo-liberals, with their proclamation of freedom, suppress any conception that for many people a decent life means a constant struggle against the ‘impersonal’ decisions of the market. However, the unemployed, single parents, the disabled, the elderly, ethnic minorities, women, are unlikely to be impressed by the news that their disadvantaged positions are sure signs of their freedom, and by the insistence that any attempt to organise collective assistance for them will rob them of their liberty (Belsey, 1986, p.193).

This is described by Walker (1990) as the strategy of inequality. It has the consequence that neo-liberalism is parasitic on the values of liberal democracy, and is vehemently opposed to social democracy (even more so participatory democracy as this proposes structural transformations in the existing distribution of power). The strategy of inequality has a chief target of the residualisation (even destruction) of the welfare state ‘because it represents the embodiment of the extended state created and legitimised by social democracy’ (Walker, 1990, p.29). Walker (1990, p.33) describes five practical strands of the neo-liberal strategy of inequality; cutting social expenditure, using the state to subsidise the privatisation and marketisation of previously public institutions and services (including the welfare state), opposing universalism in favour of targeted residual social security, reducing taxation, encouraging private and voluntary forms of welfare, and centralising power in the strong state while decentralising responsibility ‘thereby neutralising any potential power of welfare state users to increase the share of public expenditure devoted to them’. This suggests that neo-liberalism is inherently anti-democratic and promotes social and economic inequality under the guise of consumer choice.

Neo-liberalism in the Global Context

Duménil and Lévy (2004; 2005) see globalising economic neo-liberalism as the resurgence of class domination by restoring the income and wealth of the upper fractions of the ruling classes at the expense of the population as a whole. This was highlighted in the UK by Dorling (2011) in Chapter 1. The consequences of this include vast increases in social and economic inequality both within the rich democratic societies in the Global North, and between the North and 'developing' countries in the Global South (Duménil & Lévy, 2005, p.17). Hall & Jacques (1983a, p.13) view this class project as furthering the cause of 'disorganising the labour movement and progressive forces... shifting the terms of political debate... reorganising the political terrain and in changing the balance of political forces in favour of capital and the right'. Through a critique of the state and sustained attacks on the labour movement, the New Right were able to break significantly and decisively with the era of state monopoly capitalism and preclude the development of democratic socialist alternatives (Levitas, 1986a).

In the 1990s and into the early twenty-first century, social democratic parties, notably in Britain and Germany, acquiesced to the hegemony of neo-liberalism under the guise of the 'third way' (Giddens, 1998; Callinicos, 2001; Martell, 2001). Although, Martell (2001, p.212) notes that 'these are third ways in the plural, there being different Third Ways rather than just one, varying by national background amongst other factors'. This has involved to different extents a change from the central role of the welfare state in providing socio-economic security that underpinned the post-war social democratic consensus to less secure forms of workfare or 'flexicurity' (Jessop, 2002, p.156).

Jessop (2010) argues that there are four variants of neo-liberalisation processes. The first form is 'neo-liberal system transformation', which relates specifically to states emerging out of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and 'involved a *tabula rasa* approach in which 'creative destruction' of state socialist institutions was expected to lead somehow to the spontaneous emergence of a fully functioning liberal market economy and

society and a more gradual development of liberal democracy' (Jessop, 2010, p.172). The second form is 'neo-liberal regime shifts' in liberal democratic nations, which has involved 'a shift from the accumulation regimes and modes of regulation associated with post-war compromises between capital and labour in Atlantic Fordism to regimes and modes of regulation that systematically privilege capital over labour' (Jessop, 2010, p.172). This form relates especially to Britain, the USA, Australia and Canada, amongst others, which are to differing extents closer to the liberal democratic typology than the social democratic one.

The third form of neo-liberalisation refers to countries that are closer to the social democratic end of the continuum, such as the Nordic social democracies and Rhenish capitalist nations (France, Germany, cf. Albert, 1993), and involves potentially reversible adaptations through 'neo-liberal policy adjustments'. This variant is less susceptible to the deeper regime shifts characteristic of liberal democracies, which instead 'comprise modest changes deemed necessary to maintain alternative economic and social models in the face of internationalisation and a global shift in the balance of forces' (Jessop, 2010, p.174).

The rise of neo-liberalism as an entrenched global hegemonic ideology provides a further level of resistance to genuinely social democratic or socialist counter-hegemonic projects. This was further aided by the transatlantic consensus. With the development of global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation, which were concerned with freeing up financial transactions from state control, neo-liberalism began to establish itself as a global hegemonic ideology through a specific form of finance capital-led economic globalisation in the 1980s (Gamble, 2006). This has involved a fourth form of neo-liberalisation process highlighted by Jessop (2010, p.173): 'neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes', which were imposed in a top-down fashion on countries in the Global South emerging 'from external imposition by the leading capitalist power and/or transnational economic institutions and organisations'.

The transatlantic consensus, pursued through economic shock therapy (Klein, 2007), top-down 'structural adjustment', regime shifts (and to a lesser extent policy adjustments) operationalises the strategy of inequality at the global level, as it is based on

systemic reforms such as labour-market deregulation, privatisation, marketisation, the switch from universal social security provision to selective or means-tested benefits, the switch from universal services to a combination of self-help and user charges, and the heavy emphasis on activation (Walker, 2005, pp.38-39).

The transatlantic consensus 'assumes that rising inequality is the inevitable result of technological change or the liberalisation of international trade and increased competition, or a combination of the two' (Walker & Deacon, 2003, p.4). The implications of this are that the nation is often portrayed as powerless in the face of global markets and is opposed to redistribution of wealth on the grounds of 'competitiveness' as highlighted in Chapter 1. As Walker and Deacon (2003, p.5) point out '[s]tripped to its bare bones this is the case for minimum state intervention and a residual welfare state. Globalisation is seen as the engine of turbo-capitalism, which commodifies human beings and, indeed, every aspect of culture'.

In contradiction to democratic social relations then, neo-liberalism proposes to create the conditions for the maximisation of an economic understanding of negative liberty in the form of 'the economic freedom of the market order, rather than the political freedom of the democratic order' (Turner, 2008, p.66). Neo-liberalism is therefore destructive of democracy, as highlighted above by Bernard's (1999) explication of the democratic dialectic; the centrality of negative (market) liberty creates polarisation and dislocation in society, and eradicates the democratic values of equality and solidarity (however interpreted).

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been twofold: to highlight the competing values of democracy: liberty, equality and solidarity and to argue towards

conceptions of these appropriate to the optimisation of the democratic dialectic. Secondly, to examine the ideology and policy context that influences both national governments to international institutions, and which restrict democracy and the full realisation of its normative values.

The democratic dialectic is a normative guide which is used to assess the two case studies of participatory democracy that follow. The theory-laden but empirically-driven approach to this research means that the qualitative case studies were carried out with reference to the theoretical proposition that a genuine participatory democracy is likely to have a tendency towards promoting freedom as self-development, relational egalitarianism and social and system integration in the ideal case (although real world cases are unlikely to fully appropriate this). The extent to which the two case studies display evidence of this, and also whether participatory democratic settings are conducive to social empowerment, is evidenced in Chapters 6 and 7 and analysed in Chapter 8.

The last section in this chapter has also situated the democratic dialectic within the hegemonic dominance of neo-liberalism in ideology and policy-making. This discussion has shown that despite the existence of two actually existing typologies of liberal and social democracy, both are subject to the distortion of dialectical values caused by neo-liberalism, which prioritises a narrow economic concept of negative liberty and equality of libertarian rights over all others, to the denigration of democracy itself. The discussion has explored how neo-liberalism has become a global hegemonic ideology which is destructive of the values of the democratic dialectic. This indicates a deep contradiction in the existing liberal and social models of democracy and reduces the prospects for the development of a participative optimisation of the dialectic in this context. The following empirical case studies in the next two chapters highlight the possibilities contained within participatory democracy in the workplace and the local community, while the wider issue of neo-liberalism is revisited in Chapter 9.

Chapter 6

Case Study: Suma Wholefoods

Introduction

This case study addresses participatory democracy and social empowerment in a workplace. It begins with a brief overview of the history of the co-operative movement and examines the distinction between worker co-operatives and economic democracy. Following this, a discussion of the historical development of the democratic workplace draws on existing research on this particular case study (Macfarlane, 1987; Cornforth, 1995; Jones, 1998). Next, demographic data relating to the current workforce and organisational structure of the co-op are explored. This provides the context for explaining the co-operative's participatory democracy in the key themes of self-management, consensus-based decision-making, active participation and democratic legitimacy. The case study argues that this democratic structure provides the conditions for social empowerment. The research is based on two months in the field, during which the researcher observed six meetings (along with informal observation on a daily basis), and interviewed twenty-one workers (see Chapter 2). The findings suggest a strong egalitarian culture is central to workplace democracy, and provides evidence of social empowerment which posits multiple dimensions of the concept that relate to the extent of participation in the co-op's democratic structures. Chapter 8 analyses these findings in more detail in relation to the democratic dialectic and the social quality theory.

The History of Worker Co-operatives

A worker co-op can be defined as 'an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise' (in Gaudsen et al., c.2008, p.13). Estrin and Pérotin (1987, p.153)

cite the Rochdale Pioneers as key innovators in the development of the British co-operative movement in the early nineteenth century which aimed for 'a system of cooperation emerging from contemporary local working class needs rather than middle class philanthropy'. The co-operative movement is based on the principles of autonomy, empowerment and democratic control over working lives in the principle of collective labour hiring capital, and avoiding the disempowerment and exploitation inherent in the situation of capital hiring labour (Estrin, 1989).

The nineteenth century co-operative movement aimed to change the individualist nature of industrial capitalism towards a more co-operative and collective order, but it was also based in part on a romantic regression to an idealised pre-capitalist period of rural villages and medieval guilds (Mellor et al., 1988). By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was a 'minor strand of the broader labour movement, whose efforts were largely directed towards furthering workers' interests via public ownership of the means of production' (Estrin & Pérotin, 1987, p.155). With this the wider vision of creating a 'co-operative commonwealth' was lost in the practicalities of production and consumption, with many co-operatives formed out of need for subsistence by the working class, rather than as a vision of a new world (Mellor et al., 1988).

Guild socialism was a notable early-twentieth century endorsement of the co-operative tradition (Cole, 1944). While guild socialists argued for workers' control of workplaces, they also desired state ownership of industry so that 'people as consumers would be protected by government and as producers by their own self-management' (Mellor et al., 1988, p.27). Despite success in the construction industry in the early 1920s, the systemic changes envisioned by the guild socialist movement never transpired (Mellor et al., 1988).

It is with the later development of British 'alternative co-operatives' in the 1970s that the subject of this case study, Suma Wholefoods, emerged. During their growth in the 1970s and 1980s alternative co-operatives rejected hierarchical working practices and placed a greater emphasis on social needs over profit. The number of co-ops in Britain rose from 17 in 1970 to 1,400 in

1985, with the numbers of those working in co-operatives rising from 1,600 to around 10,000 (Estrin & Pérotin, 1987). However, this accounted for a miniscule proportion of the 20 million strong workforce in the UK in the mid-1980s, and setting up co-operatives was often a counter to the dramatic rise in unemployment, with many 'job creation co-ops' set up by groups of unemployed people (Estrin & Pérotin, 1987, p.157, p.164). Further, the majority of co-operatives in this period were set up from scratch, rather than by rescuing businesses from bankruptcy and workers from redundancy, or by converting successful capitalist firms into co-operatives (Estrin & Pérotin, 1987).

The co-operative sector in the UK today consists of around 400 independent co-ops, and around 2,000 workers (Gaudsen et al., c.2008). This reduction in the relative size of the sector could be explained by tensions between the social and political aims of co-ops and globalising neo-liberalism. The current *Worker Co-operative Code of Governance* states that

[w]e all want our worker co-operatives to succeed, both as businesses and as democratic co-operatives. Yet we often seem to be forced to choose between these ideals. The co-operative dream is submerged by business needs, or arguments about co-operative principles get in the way of managing the business (Gaudsen et al., c.2008, p.3).

Estrin and Pérotin (1987, p.169) argue that this is an issue for co-operatives, particularly in relation to democratic decision-making, as on the one hand, 'finance and managerial problems go together in explaining commercial non-viability', and on the other hand, 'weakening internal democracy frequently presages degeneration to the capitalist form'. When a co-op is founded by conversion from a private organisation, such as the John Lewis Partnership, a key problem can be establishing genuine democratic control, and co-ops founded on egalitarian principles can find the reverse problem of integrating democratic ideals with professional managerial skills to engage with the capitalist market economy (Estrin & Pérotin, 1987). The latter is the experience of Suma Wholefoods as it has sought to avoid degeneration to the capitalist form. This case study explores how Suma has successfully engaged with this issue.

To achieve a balance between business success in a capitalist society and genuine democracy, Gaudsen et al. (c.2008) describe seven principles. Firstly, membership of a co-op is voluntary but must include rights and responsibilities which should be clear to members. Training should be included for workers to become members of the co-op following a probationary period and the majority of workers must be members and the majority of members must be workers. Secondly, the co-op must be democratically controlled through active participation in its governance with delegated authority accountable to all members. This principle suggests the concept of 'accountable autonomy' described in Chapter 4. Thirdly, capital in the business must be democratically controlled and profits used to build up collectively owned financial reserves, to pay members, and other uses as agreed by the co-op. Fourthly, any financial arrangements with external parties must acknowledge the co-op's status as an autonomous and independent enterprise to avoid dependency on other suppliers, funders or customers. Fifthly, education and training must be provided for members, with an emphasis on current and future needs. This encourages multi-skilling and flexibility in many aspects of the business. Sixthly, networks of co-operatives need to be established that strengthen the co-operative movement by working together at national, regional and international levels. This aims to develop member-to-member links, co-op to co-op trading, and to secure long-term business development. Finally, the seventh principle emphasises the community orientated nature of a co-operative: it must engage in ethical and sustainable initiatives, limit its environmental impact, and promote co-operative principles in the wider community.

Worker Co-operatives and Economic Democracy

Rather than compromising with private capital through union bargaining and corporate taxation there is a 'longstanding socialist tradition which argues that fundamental changes in society must be intimately bound up with changes in the way that work is organised' (Estrin, 1989, p.165). In a democratically controlled workplace, extremely high executive salaries and

perks that contribute to vast inequalities in income are unlikely if subject to 'open scrutiny and democratic vote by other employees' (Estrin, 1989, p.171).

Mellor et al. (1988) point out that the history of the co-operative movement is subject to dualities and contradictions, not least between the accommodation of co-operatives with capitalism and the aim to secure its transcendence. Jossa (2005) highlights how co-operatives are seen as an intermediate form of organisation for the dialectical transition from capitalism to socialism, or whether, as argued by Webb and Webb (1921; Potter, 1987), they sustain capitalism by allowing workers to become 'their own capitalists'. This is reflected in the potential inward-collectivist problem (similar to the 'dark side of social capital' described in Chapter 5) that 'there is nothing to stop [individual co-operatives] acting selfishly with respect to the broader society. An economy of this sort is workers' capitalism, not socialism, with capitalists replaced by selfish worker-owners' (Estrin, 1989, p.185).

Jossa (2005) posits that co-operatives *are* compatible with a socialist order as long as they abolish the possibility of hiring wage labour (all workers must be members of the co-operative). Further, 'producer co-operatives... are not only non-capitalistic firms, but socialist firms proper, since compared with their capitalistic counterparts they effectively reverse the capital-labour relationship' (Jossa, 2005, p.15). This suggests the possibility of a system of co-operatives as providing the economic conditions for a dialectical transformation of the existing order through the development of economic democracy (Schweickart, 2002; Restakis, 2010). As part of the change in values necessary to contest the current order and to pursue more democratic and participatory alternatives (Macpherson, 1977), the collective ownership structure of co-operatives may well be sites for social empowerment.

Jossa (2005, p.5) argues that 'one main advantage of producer co-operatives (from the perspective of a critic of capitalism) is to realise economic democracy as an essential component of political democracy'. Following the discussion in Chapters 4 and 5, deepening democracy in social and economic life are possible aspects of the societal development of participatory

democracy, an increase in social quality, and the retrenchment of neo-liberalism. This study examines Suma's participatory democracy and how this creates social empowerment. The following sections critically describe Suma's history, its current structure, its democracy and aspects of social empowerment identified in the case study.

The History of Suma

In 1977, Suma, an organic, vegetarian and fairtrade food wholesaler, was formed in Leeds, West Yorkshire. The co-op was a focal point of the Federation of Northern Wholefood Co-operatives, and initially supplied many wholefood co-ops in the North (Cockerton et al., 1980), before expansion established a global customer base. Suma has grown in membership from seven founders to around sixty in the early 2000s, to over 120 members in 2012. Suma is socially owned, and conforms to Industrial Common Ownership Movement rules, whereby the business is not formally owned by the workers, and therefore cannot be subject to takeover by other businesses. Instead, each worker retains a £1 share in the business which has no re-sale value, so that no member can make a claim to Suma's assets. This ensures that while every member has a right to use the assets, none of the membership can make personal financial gain from the business itself (Jones, 1998).

The network of suppliers and customers in which Suma is integrated, the emphasis on good working conditions and the burgeoning market for wholefoods are likely to have contributed to the longevity of the organisation. Not only is the co-op's aim to secure good working conditions for its members, but it also has the political aim of proving itself financially successful amongst other 'regular' businesses in order to promote co-operativism in the marketplace (Jones, 1998). The tension between co-operative principles and financial success, highlighted in the previous discussion, underpins many aspects of this case study. Despite that the co-op does not need to generate vast profits to appease shareholders (simply breaking even will ensure that the workers get paid and customer orders are fulfilled), it has continued to grow profitably. Between 2002 and 2011, turnover increased from £14.3

million to £27.8 million per year, while the wage bill grew from £1.7 million to £4.3 million per year. However, net profit averaged at £245,008 per year throughout this period, with a low of £5,653 in 2003 and a high of £397,791 in 2011 (data from email communication).

Change is central to the continued success of Suma. The desire by members to renew the way in which the co-op works shows awareness that new and innovative ways of working and managing must be found for it to continue to grow, and to avoid degeneration to the capitalist form (Cornforth, 1995). The degeneration thesis states that worker co-operatives will eventually be forced to adopt the principles and organisational forms of regular capitalist businesses in order to survive in the marketplace: specifically, a managerial elite comes to dominate, undermining the democratic process (Cornforth, 1995). An awareness of both the danger of elites coming to dominate over democracy and the adaptation of the democratic system in response to expanding membership and business success has helped Suma to avoid degeneration, and to regenerate its democratic system when the need has arisen. The adoption of capitalist management techniques, subjected to democratic control and imbued with a collectivist (rather than hierarchical) ethos, have contributed to this success (Macfarlane, 1987).

Three key phases of change are identifiable as Suma has grown in membership; direct democracy in the 1970s and early 1980s, delegated representation incorporated with participatory democracy in the 1980s and 1990s, first with the 'hub and sector' model, followed by the current flat management structure. This required a self-reflexive engagement with the structure of the organisation by the membership and the building of consensus for change. This makes change a complex, slow, and especially democratic process.

Jones (1998, p.206) describes the changing structure of Suma as an 'emergent strategy', whereby the historical context impacts upon its future development. The early structure of Suma adopted the co-operative principles of informal participation in decision-making, personal development and a

diverse and open culture that ‘respected a wide range of opinions and types of people’ (despite that most of the initial members also lived in the same housing co-op) (Jones, 1998, p.208). In the early period decision-making was informal and on a daily basis between the original seven members. However, as the organisation grew in membership, a formal weekly General Meeting (GM) was set up, whereby members would debate and make direct decisions for the business (Cockerton et al., 1980; Jones, 1998).

By the 1980s a number of problems were arising with direct democracy at Suma. Guy, a member, argued that in the early years of Suma, the principles espoused by the membership were not realised in practice:

[Suma] wasn’t equal... there was an inner clique of members, then there was an outer periphery of members who didn’t have a lot of say in what went on, and then there were a group of casual workers who basically just survived, and there were no rules really... it was all personalities, and that’s the way a lot of worker co-ops operate... when you don’t have agreed authority processes in an organisation the bullies take over.

By the mid-1980s, GM decision-making, which involved disputes between members that held-up the process, saw a decline in participation for the then forty-strong membership (Jones, 1998). The relative structurelessness of the co-op outside of the GM meant that equality and the freedom to participate was compromised (Freeman, 1972). Suma was unable to react to competition in the wholefoods market and the business began to decline. Macfarlane (1987, p.61) sees this as an individualistic ‘expert power’ culture which was subsequently transformed into a more co-operative and collectivist ethos.

To save the business in the 1980s, a ‘unitarist strategy’ was adopted, which incorporated some aspects of a ‘top-down’ model of democracy within the participatory culture, whereby delegated specialist groups were formed and participation was no longer always direct for every member (Jones, 1998, p.213). The ‘hub and sector’ model attempted to avoid conventional management hierarchies by having the various sectors of the business meet daily, which then fed into the hub committee of delegates that agreed decisions based on the reports from the sector meetings (Jones, 1998). The

information would circulate ‘from sector to the hub, to all sectors and then back to the hub for confirmation and ratification’, allowing members to input their views at various stages of the process, which changed ‘direct participation’ into more indirect ‘worker involvement’ in decision-making (Jones, 1998, pp. 215-216).

This new system attempted to formalise the pluralist principles of accountability and decentralised power in Suma’s emergent democracy. However, the hub and sector model only lasted a few years due to dissatisfaction as the members found that the checks and balances in the system delayed decision-making, and despite efforts to the contrary, ‘power cliques’ were developing surrounding the people that attended meetings within certain sectors; ‘primarily [in] the sales, marketing, buying and personnel departments’ (Jones, 1998, pp.218-219). This ‘old boys’ network’ was deemed to be undemocratic and counter to Suma’s aims (Jones, 1998, p.233).

In 1994, the hub and sector model was jettisoned in favour of the current flat management structure (Jones, 1998). The flat management structure requires the election of a Management Committee (MC) that is charged with day-to-day decision-making. The flat management structure is described in detail in the following section. A concern with avoiding centralised power remains, as the MC is a system of delegated authority. It is granted the power to implement the democratically agreed business plan. If the MC is perceived to not be acting in the interests of the co-op, then the membership can recall the delegates. Along with opening up forums for debate and minutes from meetings freely available to all workers, this has contributed to improving transparency and accountability in Suma (Jones, 1998). This suggests that the extent of representation and participation in Suma is a matter of degree. It is also a structure that is in flux due to the reflexivity of democratic control.

The current structure has been in place for eighteen years, but further changes may be occurring as the co-op adopts more networked governance structures and increases the use of information and communication

technologies (ICTs). Before discussing democracy and social empowerment (and some of the problems with both of these at Suma), it is necessary to describe the current structure, including flat management, Quarterly General Meetings, equal wages, multi-skilling and job rotation. Along with the diversity of membership, the structure of Suma is integral to the functioning of participatory democracy and social empowerment.

The Workers and the Current Structure

People have come from diverse occupations, including teaching, banking, corporate business, self-employment and law, to take on relatively lower paid work at Suma. For Susan, a member, open-mindedness and a commitment to collective working principles draws people from other spheres of work. 'Buying-in' to these principles, including equal pay, equal rights to participate and shared responsibilities, are integral to the functioning of the co-op. Suma currently has 153 workers (105 male and 48 female), of which there are 122 members (80 male and 42 female), 11 non-members, 12 short term seasonal workers, and 8 trial members. 104 workers are full time, and 49 are part time (Table 6.1). There is a gender ratio of approximately 70/30 in favour of male workers (including non-members). There have been conscious efforts to create a more equal gender balance within the organisation. This is to avoid a male-dominated warehouse and an office staffed by females, and to promote a more equal balance between the two areas by recruiting more female workers.

The desire for more female workers is seen as a part of a need to avoid 'them and us' relationships between different departments, and especially between office workers and warehouse workers. This promotes an egalitarian and co-operative workplace culture. Equal wages, multi-skilling, job rotation, and democratic participation are other factors to this end (discussed below).

Table 6.1 Composition of Suma's Workforce

Total workers	Members	Trial members	Non-members	Short term seasonal workers	Work contracts
153	122	8	11	12	104 full time
105 male	80 male				49 part time
48 female	42 female				

Source: from email correspondence

Short term seasonal workers provide relief cover during the summer months when many members take holidays. Eleven non-members (often referred to as contracted workers) have opted out of being members of the co-op. They retain all the benefits of membership but are unable to vote, stand for election or have any responsibility for finance. Some interviewees stress that non-members have been encouraged to become full members of the co-op, but there is a grudging acceptance of the non-members. For example, Brian is a non-member that has worked in the warehouse and as a driver for fourteen years. He hasn't desired membership due to the responsibilities that it entails and his preference for physical work.

The workforce has recently seen a significant expansion. Membership has risen from 59 in 2003 to 122 in 2012. Table 6.2 shows that the majority of workers have joined in the last ten years (60 per cent, or 93 new workers). There are 22 workers that have been at Suma for over 20 years, some since the formation of the co-op in 1977.

Table 6.2 Length of Service

Length of service (years)	Number of workers	% of workforce
Less than 5	36	23
Between 5 and 10	57	37
Between 10 and 20	39	25
Over 20	22	14

Source: from email correspondence

Table 6.3 shows the ages of Suma’s workforce. The greatest number of workers are between the ages of 35 and 55 (100 workers, or 65% of the total workforce), and 34 (22%) are under the age of 35.

Table 6.3 Age of Workers

Age	Number of workers	% of workforce
18 to 25	8	5
25 to 35	26	17
35 to 45	51	33
45 to 55	49	32
55 and over	20	13

Source: from email correspondence

Suma’s governance structure includes decision-making spread between the quarterly general meetings (QGMs), which are open to all members and non-members (only members may vote), an elected management committee (MC), appointed Function Area Co-ordinators (FACs) for the different areas (export, sales, marketing, warehouse, delivery), officers (personnel, finance), and the workers themselves (Cannell, 2009). The next section describes the management functions along with equal wages and job mobility to elaborate on the structure of Suma. This section will also highlight the impact of divisions of labour and class distinctions, before discussing participatory democracy and social empowerment.

Flat-management Structure

The membership directly elects six representatives to serve two year terms on the Management Committee (MC). The MC is charged with week-to-week decision making, largely through the four hour MC meeting. The MC meeting includes discussion with members from different departments and an open forum for members to raise issues and discuss on-going projects. Members of the MC have the option to stand for re-election and there are provisions in place so that at least a third of the MC is female. Tina, a current MC member, described the MC as directing the democratically agreed decisions from QGMs,

while the FAC teams and officers to carry out the work. This means that members of the MC 'have got a lot of responsibility, [but not] authority'. This limits the MC's power over the co-op to overseeing the democratically agreed business plan. Further, should the MC contravene the business plan, the membership can recall MC members. This suggests a combination of direct democracy, deliberative democracy and delegated representation in Suma's participatory democratic structure, which is accountable to the membership.

Function Area Co-ordinators (FACs) are charged with co-ordinating work in various departments, and are less democratically accountable, owing to the needs of the business. FAC roles are advertised internally, and FACs are appointed following an interview process with a personnel officer and an MC member. A two hour FAC meeting takes place weekly in which issues within the various departments are discussed, and then forwarded to the MC for action. While the FACs have responsibility for the smooth running of different departments at Suma, they do not have managerial authority to instruct workers to do certain tasks (in line with co-operative and egalitarian principles of shared ownership and self-management). Guy highlighted this point:

the way to survive in [the FAC] job is to make yourself vulnerable, to admit your mistakes and your doubts and your lack of confidence, and to say 'help'... but if they try and behave like an ordinary manager, then their team members will just think, 'well I don't have to try anymore, they can deal with all the shit', and then eventually they burn out... But that's scary for people, the idea of letting go, to actually be stronger.

Research in the 1980s highlighted the risk of a 'recognised elite' coming to dominate (Macfarlane, 1987, p.78). When the MC was created, accountability and transparency in the form of freely available minutes from meetings, open forums and QGMs were seen as correctives to this (Jones, 1998). In addition, the egalitarian and co-operative culture of Suma encourages the view of jobs as 'functions', rather than as status roles. This has helped avoid capitalistic degeneration to hierarchical structures or domination by power elites. Malcolm explained how this distinction is maintained in his interaction with Gary, a FAC:

Gary would say to me, 'Malcolm, I want you to do so and so' because that is his role at that point... it's not Gary as a person; it's the role he fulfils at that point in time. So at that point in time he was being distribution FAC and he was talking to a driver and saying 'I would like you to go and do this', a perfectly legitimate request, and yet the next day, because I am also the Operator's Licence holder... I might sit down with Gary and review him and say 'Gary, I want you to do this, that and the other', in my role now not as driver, but as license holder.

While FACs are appointed to co-ordinate without the requirement for democratic legitimacy, the MC has directly elected and recallable representatives. However, the powers of FACs are limited by virtue of all members being equal owners of Suma and the egalitarian culture which promotes status 'roles' as 'functions'. Thus, in distinction to authority of status or hierarchical rank, co-operative and egalitarian strategies must be used by FACs to organise and ensure the successful operation of the different departments in the business.

Quarterly General Meetings (QGMs) and Forums

QGMs are open for all co-op members and non-members to attend, though only members may vote. They take place every three months, and approximately ninety workers attended the QGM observed for this case study. The QGM involves presentations of sales figures and other information, and votes for various proposals which are put forward by individual members. This is the formal democratic body of Suma which involves direct participation in decision-making by the collective, although much decision-making also takes place within the MC and in day-to-day work.

There are lunch time forums that run in the week leading up to the QGM for members to raise issues for the agenda. Richard viewed forums as an opportunity for less confident members to air their views: 'a lot of people, including myself, don't feel quite comfortable talking openly in front of the majority of the co-op, so the half hour sessions that we have in the week leading up to it is much better'.

At the QGM observed for this case study there was a sense of formality in the voting process. This suggests that the role of the lunch time forums and general discussion of the issues in the weeks leading up to the QGM are integral to consensus-based democratic decision-making. However, not all members see this system as ideal. Tina described her frustration with the QGM voting:

[o]n the night, I don't think you're best informed to make the right decision... so although for a least a week there will be stuff in the public arena; you're expected to read it... and be fully informed. I try and make sure that I am... [But] I don't believe everybody has time or the ability to get the extra information.

Paul argued that by opening up lunch time forums to the whole co-op a greater reflexivity and input from a wider range of people is encouraged. Lunch time forums are 'a way of getting people to stand back from their ordinary day jobs, and just think I wonder if there is a better way of doing sales orders. Not the sort of the thing that you typically think about' in day-to-day work. While QGMs offer the space for formal collective decision-making, lunch time forums provide the deliberative and reflexive content of participatory democracy.

Equal Pay Structure and Job Mobility

Every worker receives an equal net wage, relative to hours worked per week. As part time workers pay less tax they receive a lower *gross* hourly wage than full time workers, so that the *net* hourly wage is equal for every worker. This principle applies across all job functions in the co-op, from warehouse goods picker to a member of the MC. This is not common to other co-ops, where differential or incremental pay are often used. Job mobility in the practices of multi-skilling and job rotation are integral to legitimate the principle of equal wages as they allow members to share a broadly equal range and balance of jobs, although in practice the division of labour can sometimes be problematic, as discussed at the end of this section.

Currently, the equal wage structure includes gross wages of £26,000 per annum for a five day week, a profit related Christmas bonus, free cooked lunches, enhanced sick pay (three months on full pay), staff shopping at trade price, the option to take leave of up to six months, and a health plan. This central principle establishes the formal equality of the workers within the organisation, and it is clear from the interviews that equal pay is popular at Suma and a source of pride. Paul stated that

I detest the idea of an unequal wage structure. [Equal wages is] massively radical. It massively changes the way you respect other people's work and the jobs that they do and the importance of every part of an operation for it to be successful. I don't care that I get paid the same as other people. I'm honoured to be paid the same as other people.

Christine echoed this view by arguing that the job functions themselves are supported by equal respect and moral worth. Important for this is the value of every

link in the chain... an elected officer role is only one link in the chain and, granted they are holding an important position and I think they should be respected for the responsibility and the position they are undertaking, but... the link that puts the pallets on the truck, and gets out of bed at one o'clock in the morning to go drive the truck is an equal link in the chain.

The legitimisation of equal pay as just is related to job rotation and multi-skilling. Job rotation is where members change the jobs that they do within Suma over time, while multi-skilling refers to opportunities for doing different work tasks within a given week. For example, one interviewee, over the course of three decades at Suma has rotated jobs, including periods spent as a delivery driver, buyer, designer, marketer and personnel officer, and another interviewee presently multi-tasks weekly between picking stock in the warehouse, cooking, working in the export office and driving a delivery lorry. Often jobs are advertised internally, stating a demand for 'two days' work for at least two years' for example, which allows the Suma worker a degree of freedom to shape and change the weekly range of job roles that they undertake. As Thomas put it

[equal pay] works purely and simply because of the job rotation. [The wage] is probably below the industry standard for management rates of pay, but well above for manual rates of pay. But it only works because we are allowed to work both, and swap around... you can balance that out, you're not taking responsibility and giving yourself a headache five days a week, you can go into the warehouse and take out your frustrations on manual work.

Paul viewed multi-skilling and job rotation as instilling a greater awareness on the part of the workers for the business as a whole:

you work throughout the business, and we all have, to varying degrees, a thorough understanding of the entire operation and of each other's work roles, and we are therefore able to resolve problems collectively in a way that you couldn't if you just had somebody working in customer care and that's all they did.

However, increasing specialisation of some jobs, such as those in the export department for example, mean that time spent doing other tasks can compromise the need to swiftly arrange business deals. Catherine argued that multi-skilling can be a weakness in practice: 'I don't see the point of putting somebody who is a superb buyer behind the wheel of a truck, or a superb driver into the buying office... I'm not 100% sure multi-skilling permanently works; you have to get the best people for the job'.

Efficiency and inefficiency are discussed in the next section. Furthermore, there is a perception amongst some members that office work is more desirable, or of higher (informal) status. However, legislating that all members (exempting those with health issues) perform a set minimum amount of manual work has never been seriously considered. This is due to the democratic right that all members have to *not* be coerced into work that they do not want to do. Instead, multi-skilling in this way is formally an *aspiration* for members, though most interviewees stress that a large majority of members do multi-skill by taking a share of both manual and desk-based work.

Malcolm emphasised how long-term aspects of job rotation and multi-skilling fit with the idea of equal pay. He cited how if people struggle to do a

particular job in a conventional or 'straight' business, they often have little choice but to leave and seek alternative employment:

whereas at Suma, you can go back to, metaphorically speaking, the floor; picking or driving a truck. You get same rate of pay... and in fact, people who have tried and failed at one job might well, three or four years later, come back renewed, refreshed, in a different space, and actually contribute much more than they would have done previously. So we've often seen that up and down, sideways [movement] of contribution. [Rather than] comparing people with people at any one snap shot in time and saying 'these people are contributing more than those people, why don't we get rid of those people, pay them less?'... I see [the equal pay structure] from the point of view of the individual going through their career path. Now I can think of times when I've been underpaid for what I do, [and] I can think of days when I've come in here and I've been paid to do [very little].

Equal pay is at the heart of Suma's egalitarian culture. Job mobility provides an in-work system of welfare support and job security, as workers have flexibility and variety in their work which they can actively change to suit their life circumstances. Welfare, security and flexibility are discussed below as dimensions of social empowerment.

Class and the Division of Labour

In the early years, Suma was perceived to be middle class, owing to the backgrounds and degree level of education of the vast majority of members. However, with moves from Leeds to Halifax, and then Elland, the composition of the workforce began to change. This change increased the diversity of class backgrounds at Suma. Jake saw the democratic socialist principles that underpin Suma as more appealing to people of 'lower middle class' and 'working class' backgrounds. He indicated that the diversity, flexibility and mobility of the workers can transcend existing class boundaries; 'we've got plenty of well-educated, articulate people driving trucks, and we have got people who, maybe before they came to Suma had never used a computer, but are now working in sales or working in accounts'. Mobility within Suma is facilitated by the emphasis on learning new skills, taking responsibility and self-management. Charles emphasised how Suma provides the opportunity to learn new skills, though there are some limitations to this:

I never did any manual jobs before getting here so all that was a process of learning... you can [learn] financial skills... management skills. I never did managing at these levels, [but] some jobs might be more difficult than others to learn.

Despite job mobility, there are some perceptions of divisions between ‘office workers’ and ‘warehouse workers’. Karen described how those who work in the warehouse most of the time can feel less involved with the management of the co-op; ‘the people that are just out there in the freezing cold [doing manual work], at this time of year, day in and day out... they can’t log on [to a computer]... I think they don’t feel part of the business’.

Paul supported this by indicating that empowerment is relative to different areas of the business:

we’re not necessarily good at empowering people who have non-desk jobs... to have the time to mull over the stuff that is coming up at general meetings, or to be part of that, and I think some parts of our business are much more participative than others. So typically the warehousing operation is the least participative part. Although you are collaborating together as a team to get a job done all the time, you’re not necessarily thinking about whether this is the best way of doing this job or not.

These points highlight the importance of multi-skilling for ensuring that the equal wage structure is perceived to be a fair system, and for the workers to feel broadly equally a part of the democratic ownership of the business. Indeed, Neil posited that there *is* a ‘them and us’ culture, but that it is not a huge problem: ‘there are some people who will *only* work in the warehouse, there are some people who *only* work in the office, but the vast majority of us do both or have done both in the recent past and have enough knowledge of the other sections of the business to have more empathy with each other’.

This section has described the workforce and the structure of Suma, how equal wages, job mobility (multi-skilling and job rotation) are integral to the organisation, and how these principles and practices to some degree reduce divisions of labour and class. The following section explores democracy in more detail. It focuses on the themes of self-management, consensus-based

decision-making, active participation and legitimacy, and highlights some of the problems associated with participatory democracy in Suma.

Participatory Democracy

There is a crucial difference at Suma between the *co-operative* structure and the *democratic* structure. Co-ops can be collectively owned by members but hierarchical in organisation and not democratically run. In Suma, 'co-operative' refers to the fact that it is collectively owned by its members. 'Democracy' means that each member has, in principle, the equal opportunity to participate in the formal decision-making processes. The two often overlap in this case as *equal* ownership translates into an *equal* right to participate. Though, David pointed out that there are legal responsibilities that come with co-operative ownership, which aren't codified for workplace democracy. While this case study focuses on the democratic structure, it is also important to refer to the co-operative structure.

Participation is only possible because of the democratic ownership of Suma by its members and a strong commitment to equality. Indeed, in previous research on Suma, Macfarlane (1987, pp.75-76) points out that

[t]he ability to control the way they do their tasks, and the relationships with the people they work with... are essentially by-products of democratic control of the business: arising from the belief in the equality of each person and the congregation of people who want to work in a non-hierarchical way.

This section discusses key aspects of the participatory democratic structure: self-management, consensus-based decision-making, active participation and legitimacy. However, informal hierarchies, habituation to democracy and inefficiency are issues for Suma.

Self-management

The Suma members' job description includes the following seven 'tasks':

1. To make active contributions to collective management functions and processes including; General Meetings, Management Committee and discussion groups, working groups, departmental meetings, etc.
2. To seek and undertake training and personal development in order to be a more effective member and collective manager.
3. To seek and accept responsibility within the co-operative.
4. To promote worker self-management (and co-operative principles).
5. To communicate openly and honestly with other members.
6. To heed, read and listen to communications from other members.
7. To work collectively for the good of the collective, not for self-interest.

The first four points stress active participation, self-development, responsibility and self-management. The members' job description highlights how coercion is resisted in the organisation, as workers must collectively and autonomously manage the business through the flat management structure and self-management. Jake explained this point further as 'part of your membership duty is to take managerial responsibility, because we are the managers as well as the workers... if all you did was pick you would not be fulfilling your membership job description... it's all part of the ethos'.

Thomas argued that a very small number of people ('one or two here at the moment') abuse the non-coercive self-management principle to opt out of taking any responsibility for multi-skilling. This could be a consequence of the absence of legal compulsion to participate democratically or to multi-skill equally. Richard saw a weakness in Suma's non-coercive egalitarian culture whereby members are unable to exercise authority over others; '[n]obody is going to pull them up and say 'you've had 10 tea breaks today', well actually, I have done that with one or two people and it doesn't go down very well'. Nonetheless, self-management is core to Suma's democracy, as Thomas stated that

you have to take responsibility for what's going on... we all have to chip in... if there is a picking crisis, everybody mucks in. People come down from the warehouse to help because... our business is supplying items of food to our customers... and there's no option of going home without that happening.

Consensus-based Decision-making

Along with self-managerial responsibility, decision-making is based on building consensus. This reflects points five, six and seven in the members' job description above: workers must communicate openly and honestly, be actively involved in deliberations and must work together for collective interests.

Formal decision-making takes place by the process of one member, one vote in QGMs. However, there is a need for communication and deliberation on a day-to-day basis to build consensus for proposals submitted to QGM-based decision-making, and to self-manage during the working week, as the general meeting is viewed as too big for serious discussion and reflection by members.

Stewart described how building this consensus within the group might typically take place:

you need to develop backing for [an idea or proposal] by basically canvassing the membership, getting people behind it... there still might be people who are vocally against it which can cause problems... [the more that] people are behind an idea the more likely it is to succeed because obviously everyone needs to be involved to get it to work.

Richard described how the opportunity to trade with a company in Israel posed an ethical dilemma, owing to political support for the plight of Palestinians amongst some members of Suma. Richard needed consensus before trading with the company. He sent out an 'all work email', explaining what the deal would bring to Suma and to gauge the levels of support for the venture. He stated that

I've got to make a decision tomorrow... 98% are saying yes at the moment. [So] I'll just go with what the majority say; it's the democratic way to go I suppose. But, I will speak to those individuals that have said 'no'... I didn't want to... just take the customer on board and do it, and then upset those people.

This shows how consensus decision-making can take place on a day-to-day basis amongst members, but also, it highlights how individuals can be

empowered to act with democratic legitimacy. However, those unable to access email would not have been able to indicate their preference. This suggests a possible digital divide between those with access to ICTs in Suma and those without. Despite this, building consensus can be empowering, as Richard put it:

everybody is involved in that decision process... which makes me feel more secure that what I am proposing is actually what we should be doing as a business. So it builds your confidence really.

David viewed democratic decision-making as producing 'higher quality' decisions by virtue of consensus, and Christine added that, in her experience, majority decisions tend to be 'right'. However, not all attempts to change Suma are able to gather a consensus, and the co-op also contains conservatism in the sense of resisting change and maintaining the status quo. But it is a conservative aspect of an egalitarian culture, in contrast to political conservatism. This is especially pertinent in relation to welfare issues, and perhaps to the detriment of being even more competitive in the neo-liberal economy and generating larger profits. Malcolm stated that in-work welfare is an important aspect of consensus-based decisions: 'you'll often find that huge decisions get nodded through with very little democracy, but that only happens in finance, it hardly happens at all with people issues'.

The principle of consensus-based decision-making at Suma reduces power hierarchies and empowers the membership to effect change. But the commitment to in-work welfare indicates a proviso: change can only come if it is deemed beneficial to the welfare of the collective. This indicates that both the conservative and radical ideals of the co-operative movement are present at Suma.

Active Participation & Legitimacy

Democratic participation is at the heart of Suma, which requires an active majority to ensure legitimacy. Though Paul stated that, compared with smaller co-ops where total participation is necessary; 'a big organisation like

Suma is able to actually take some passengers; it is possible to have a workers co-op of 120 people and for some of the people to not to be very engaged with it and it can still work'. As long as there is majority participation and opportunities for all members to participate, then legitimacy is less likely to be compromised. Jason described how the right to participate is important for him: 'I've got the right to air my views without fear or favour... we've all got access to the FAC group, we've all got access to the MC group and we've all got free access to each other via email, and if you make a valid point, it will get discussed'.

Legitimacy is conferred and respected, even by those that disagree with the decision, due to the democratic and egalitarian culture. Susan stated that 'sometimes [a decision] might not work for you but it works for the majority and at the end of the day it's what we at Suma agree to'. However, despite the link between participation and democratic legitimacy, not all members actively participate. Jake argued that the *opportunity* for all members to participate is equal in principle, but not necessarily in practice:

it would be false to say all members are actively engaged in all decision making processes... but there's no reason why they couldn't be... we don't need all of us to be involved in everything, but as long as everyone has got that opportunity... some people aren't that bothered, they just want a job really, they just want job security and a reasonable wage, and reasonable working conditions, they're not that bothered about getting involved with the management, but they could do, there is nothing stopping them.

Differences between those that are more active within the co-op's democracy and those that are perceived to contribute less is discussed further below in relation to informal hierarchies. Moreover, degrees of active participation differentiate between dimensions of social empowerment (discussed in the following section).

Stewart elaborated on how different perceptions may neglect the contributions that people actually make to the co-op:

people who are active in the business, I think they don't understand [why] people don't want to be involved... they see them as a bit lazy... [although] people contribute in different ways... people who work five days in the warehouse and don't contribute to management might be doing ten or twelve hour shifts in the warehouse to make sure the boxes get out the door. There's different kinds of commitment.

This reflects the point made by Christine above about the equal value of each 'link' in the organisation. Further, levels of participation by individual members can change over time as Malcolm's statement above alludes to this regarding job mobility in the long-term. This section has described how self-management, consensus-based decision-making, participation and legitimacy are central aspects of Suma's participatory democracy. The following discussion highlights three problems for the democratic structure.

Informal Hierarchies, Habituation and Inefficiency

Despite formal wage equality, decentralised power, and the egalitarian culture, there are hierarchies within the co-op. They are not seen as problematic by all at Suma, though they have the potential to weaken the democratic system should certain hierarchies come to dominate. MC and FAC job functions have the potential to be powerful positions in the absence of effective democratic safeguards. However, Tina argued that, unlike 'straight' businesses with formalised hierarchies, MC members do not have sufficient power over others to enforce their preferences.

For some the notion of hierarchies goes against the egalitarian culture and structure: certain groups are said to be sometimes able to influence decisions more than others by virtue of their standing within the group, levels of expertise, or strength of personality. These hierarchies are viewed by many as 'natural' and actually complementary to the democratic system, due to a crucial distinction between multiple hierarchies based on skills and knowledge that recognise the talents of individuals, and those based on power (Macfarlane, 1987).

For Malcolm, while there are hierarchies of personality, length of service, main job functions, ability and knowledge, they are not static or formalised:

there are no glass ceilings, so you can move from one hierarchy to another... two people can be talking to each other, and in one situation one of them is supervising the other, and yet the next day in different roles [because of multi-skilling], the person who was the person being told what to do, is now telling the other person what to do.

Perceptions of some jobs being more desirable, or of some members being able to articulate their views in charismatic or forceful ways in the democratic arena, are problems caused by informal hierarchies. Indeed, for Paula 'because of their knowledge, their positions, their experience within the company... some people have a larger sway than others'. However, Jake stressed that it is the *perception* of this by individuals, rather than a fundamental problem with participatory democracy:

there's always that perception that some jobs are more high profile or more valued... [but] because we've got job rotation, nobody's ever stuck doing the same thing five days a week unless they really want to be... there's also perceptions [where some people say that] 'so and so always gets their own way because they are much better at standing up and convincing a group of people to go with them'... and really a lot of the time it's people's own perceptions that are holding them back.

The culture of equality, participatory democratic system, and critical awareness of the need to avoid formal hierarchies, appears to be an effective bulwark against informal hierarchical relationships turning into power hierarchies that impede upon and weaken the participatory democratic process.

However, over time democracy can come to be taken for granted. This has the potential to disempower members of the co-operative if active participation declines. George illustrated how people can come to view Suma's democracy as the norm rather than the exception: 'I think very quickly you just come to accept it as being normal. You forget really that other places don't work like that'. As a consequence, Paula highlighted how habituation can mean that people do not make the most of participation: 'we

often take our vote and our chance to just stand up and say 'I don't agree with that', or 'I think this is a good idea'... for granted and... we don't use our vote well enough for things like the business plan'. More reflexive discussion and awareness of the importance of Suma's democratic practices may strengthen the enthusiasm for participation.

There are three perceptions of inefficiency: the slowness of democratic decision-making, the inability to take advantage of flexible labour in the neo-liberal marketplace, and the strains of job mobility on specialisation. However, the purpose of the co-op is not solely to generate profit, but to ensure good working conditions for its members and use profits to this end. Nevertheless, Anthony argued that 'it can take an awful lot of time to implement something... [But] You just have to accept, because everyone is equal, and it's joint decision making, that's just the way it's going to be'.

Suma employs some short term contracted workers, but ethical concerns about ownership and equality mean that the co-op is unable to make extensive use of flexible labour markets. George pointed out that it

would be a logical financial decision to outsource the warehouse, outsource the driving, outsource all the admin jobs... they're logical from a perspective of just pure business, but not necessarily from [the perspective of] a worker co-op where the people doing those jobs own the business.

Similarly, for Richard, the desire to make profit can be at odds with egalitarian principles. For example, multi-skilling can be seen as hampering the possibilities for making business deals:

we need people in the roles that can manage that part of the business. Rather than just having them flitting around [multi-skilling]... because [for example,] customers overseas are asking for stuff and phoning up and [we say] 'oh no, he's in the warehouse today'.

There are some who would rather that Suma makes more profit, allowing the workers to pay themselves more and purchase better equipment, but, there are also people that are less interested in increasing wages, and focus on

ethical business principles and welfare issues in the workplace. However, Joe saw these two aspects as balanced by democracy:

we fight hard in the market place... I'm probably on the far right of that balance, I'm always saying 'no, more money, more money', and 'let's grow over X competitor or whatever', whatever it takes to get more money, but then that is balanced by people who say 'no, these are our principles', and I don't mind that, I think it comes out about right... the end result is stability... democracy leads to stability.

The welfare costs of competitiveness are therefore held in check by an effective and democratic system of workers' control. Suma is at odds with a vast majority of British business to the extent that this apparent weakness is also a strength of the organisation. By having welfare in work, it creates empowered and productive workers. This section has discussed the democratic principles of self-management, consensus-based decision-making, participation and democratic legitimacy in order to explain how Suma's democracy and egalitarian culture is sustained through day-to-day work practices. Despite the problems of informal hierarchies, habituation and inefficiency highlighted by some interviewees, Suma's democracy appears to be robust in limiting the effect that these threats have on the business and the workers. The following section addresses the extent and in what ways this case study evidences social empowerment.

Social Empowerment

The democratic structure in Suma decentralises power in the membership and avoids the centralisation of power in an elite. This decreases the capacity for individuals to exert *power over* others and suggests that democratic social relations enhance social empowerment: the ability of individuals to fulfil their capabilities. Some interviewees stated that empowerment is facilitated by the structure of the organisation, but it is up to the individual to use Suma's democracy to become empowered. Table 6.4 shows nine dimensions of social empowerment in Suma. They range from the solidaristic bases of security, stability and collective identity, to the passive dimensions of autonomy, welfare, and flexibility, to active dimensions of self-development, ownership

and control. Each set of dimensions is equated with greater participation in democracy and greater empowerment. The passive/active distinction is broadly made on the basis of membership, but active empowerment is more likely to be realised by those members that participate in Suma’s democracy. Passive empowerment is broadly available to all. This section addresses each of the dimensions in turn.

Table 6.4: Dimensions of Social Empowerment at Suma

Solidaristic bases of social empowerment	Security	Stability	Collective identity	<i>Available to all workers</i>
Passive dimensions of social empowerment	Autonomy	Welfare	Flexibility	<i>Available to all workers, but especially to members</i>
Active dimensions of social empowerment	Self-development	Ownership	Control	<i>Available to members that actively participate in Suma’s democratic structure</i>

The Solidaristic Bases of Social Empowerment

Security, stability and collective identity form the solidaristic bases of social empowerment. On the one hand, these values integrate individuals into the group, and on the other hand, they are fundamental supports for empowerment. These dimensions are especially open to all Suma workers. They promote social cohesion in the group (social integration), and also encourage members to ‘buy-in’ to the democratic and egalitarian culture and practices (system integration).

Security

Collective ownership, access to Suma's financial information, and the absence of the threat of the sack (except in cases of gross misconduct) suggest a high degree of job security. Security may be less extensive for non-members, as they do not have democratic control. Nevertheless, Brian, a non-member, described why job security is important to him:

[t]he biggest thing for me has been knowing what's going on. I've actually been made redundant four times in my career. Three of those four times I didn't even see it coming, no idea that it was going to happen, it was just basically a letter on my desk and that was it... so from that perspective Suma is a lot better because it's so open, the whole process, the whole democracy is very open; you can read minutes of meetings, go to meetings, I don't have a vote 'cause I'm not a member, but I can still participate and put my point of view forward.

This is empowering because it allows members to have more control over their own working lives, to be more informed about the health of the business, and take ownership of their work without threat of dismissal. Multi-skilling and rotating job functions can improve job security. Alice stated that members can move to different job functions, so 'you're not out of a job, you're not on the street if a particular job role doesn't work out, or a particular role just comes to an end'.

As a non-coercive organisation, a negative aspect of this high degree of job security is that Suma has weak processes for removing poorly performing workers. Malcolm highlighted how if a FAC was underperforming and struggling to adequately fulfil the job function, he or she would be left to do the job until the pressure builds to stop. This has the potential to be demoralising, disruptive and inefficient. But nevertheless, in such a situation, the member would still be empowered with the security and knowledge that they can move to a less demanding role within the co-op, rather than be forced to leave.

Stability

Like security, stability is a basic source of empowerment in the co-op. Jason cited instability in his previous workplace as a reason for joining Suma. He previously worked at a local brewery:

that got taken over by a bigger brewery, [and then] got taken over by Fosters from Australia, then got taken over by somebody else. You got to the point where you felt that your life was not really in your own control, decisions were made remotely; it might be from London, it might be from Sydney, it might be from anywhere. And however good a performance you might be putting in... ultimately you were just a figure on an accountant's book... however hard you worked that's all it was about really. [It was] managed by accountants [in the interests of] short term shareholder value... [Whereas Suma is] one company, on one site; so every decision is made here... you're actually involved... it's not somebody making a decision; '10% redundant there, and 10% redundant here'.

Guy indicated that stability is a basis for social empowerment as 'this job is going to be here as long as you want it, whereas most of the people working on this [industrial] estate can't even look more than two years ahead, they've no idea what's going to happen to those businesses'. At the heart of this stability is the democratic and co-operative ownership of the business which precludes hostile takeovers, and consensus-based decision-making also means that Suma is less likely to make risky business decisions. Thomas stated that 'because it's so slow, everybody gets input into that decision... [one or two] people cannot make the decision to go out and buy something like another firm, and merge with someone else, without everybody having their say'.

As mentioned by Joe above, democracy acts as an empowering check against instability. Again, both members and non-members can be empowered by stability. As a non-member, Brian described how having a stable and secure job at Suma has enabled him to cope with other events in his life in the past:

I was quite happy just driving and order picking and switching off at the end of the day and going home. I had gone through a divorce, I split up from my ex-wife a few months before I started at Suma. I was self-employed at that time and I fell apart, and I needed some kind of

structured/organised work to do, and I ended up in Suma, and it kind of saved me in a way did Suma 'cause I had no friends, I had nothing.

Collective Identity

Along with security and stability, the third basis for social empowerment is the strong sense of pride that Suma workers have which creates a collective identity and integrates the individual within the group. This is linked to democracy. For Richard, democratic participation confers 'a passion... to take Suma forward, and a pride in Suma as well'. Christine asserted that democracy allows a plurality of views to be expressed about how Suma can be improved, which binds people together in a common aim; 'ultimately, everyone is proud of Suma and wants Suma to continue going forward'.

For Malcolm, legitimacy derived from the democratic process also helps to create a sense of collective identity, as taking part in decision-making allows members to

identify with the group; 'because I took part in that decision, I identify with it'. Unless of course you disagree... [but] let's say there is a majority decision, most people would think 'well, I at least participated in that decision and therefore I endorse it, and therefore I will seek not to block it in whatever way I might interact with that the results of that decision'.

While the first three dimensions of social empowerment form the solidaristic base, the following set of dimensions are open, to varying degrees, to all workers.

Passive Dimensions of Social Empowerment

The passive dimensions of social empowerment are autonomy, welfare and flexibility. These are derived from the people-centred work practices that Suma's democracy upholds and are conferred through membership or employment by the co-op. The active dimensions that follow this section of self-development, ownership and democratic control are open to members that are actively engaged within the democratic structure of the co-op. Not

all of the dimensions of social empowerment are taken up by all workers however, due to factors intrinsic to Suma, such as informal hierarchies, habituation and inefficiency, and extrinsic factors such as class background, education levels, ability, communicative skills, and commitment.

Autonomy

The democratic structure at Suma creates opportunities for members and, to a lesser degree, non-members, to act autonomously in their work. This can be through direct participation in management functions, and in day-to-day self-management of work tasks. Guy posited that

co-operation is about being autonomous... it doesn't mean you've got to be the same as [other people], or that everybody has to agree before you can do anything, it just means that you can be a human being, so long as you recognise you're a *social* human being (added emphasis).

Autonomy necessitates the recognition that the interests of the individual are embedded within the group. Stewart emphasised autonomy when he stated that 'I can be involved as much or a little as I want to be. If I want to take a step back from something, I don't need to get involved. There's enough people here to take on responsibility... it's called a collective because everyone puts a bit in'. Likewise, Jake saw empowerment in the membership simply having the autonomy to participate in decision-making if they wish to do so, whether or not they act on this opportunity:

knowing that their voice would be heard stops people from needing to raise it. It's like something you've got in a locker that maybe you don't want to squander, you think 'if I really needed to stand up in front of the membership and say something, they would listen to me', and just that knowledge in itself can be enough.

Outside of the formal democracy, Suma workers arguably have a high degree of autonomy in relation to hierarchical workplaces. Malcolm described how autonomous decision-making can take place on a day-to-day basis:

I was discussing with Jeanie about how we should go about training people to use VDUs, often ideas come at that level; 'here's a problem...

how do we do something about it?'... it may not need to go to a GM, it may not even need to go to MC, or even FAC level. It might just be said, 'let's just do that, and then we can formalise it in this way'... that sort of thing goes on all the time.

As well as decision-making, Suma members have autonomy in their day-to-day jobs. Susan highlighted how she feels empowered by having autonomy in her work:

in certain situations I can take charge and be directive with others... I don't feel as though anyone is going to say 'who made you boss?'... when the others come to you for advice as well, that's empowering. It makes you feel like 'actually I *do* know something after all'... when you have been here a while and worked through different departments you forget how much knowledge you carry, so it makes you feel good about yourself.

However, Jason suggested that while there is autonomy, the co-op doesn't have sufficient systems in place to monitor the productivity of the workers:

the job is very much mine to do as much as I want [and] to a certain degree, do it my own way, within the constraints of what needs to be done. Perhaps frustration comes in because I'm equally at liberty to do as little as I want.

Jason's statement indicates that the democratic right to be autonomous, and not coerced, can sometimes be a negative aspect of Suma. In addition to the absence of sufficient regulation of autonomous workers, Alice pointed out how extrinsic factors might influence the degree of autonomy that is exercised by Suma members:

you have to be pro-active in seeking out responsibility and then the organisation will meet you the other way... what doesn't always work is if you have individuals who might be very capable but aren't particularly confident, or maybe haven't got 'nice middle class' communication skills, or experience of working in that sort of co-operative environment.

The point that the capability of individuals to learn new skills autonomously may vary between members is critical. This shows that, on the one hand, the structure of Suma creates formally equal conditions for social empowerment,

and on the other hand, differing capabilities to participate autonomously contribute to unequal levels of empowerment within the co-op.

Welfare

The strong emphasis on welfare, secured by democratic ownership, is evidenced by the benefits that membership confers, empowered working conditions, and the ability to proactively control and shape working life through job mobility. Malcolm pointed out that

we don't intend to [make much net profit], we have no shareholders, we don't need to take our gross profit [and] squeeze our overheads and produce a large net profit, much of which then goes to shareholders external to Suma, that doesn't happen. What we do is we try to use the money we have... to enhance our working conditions, so we buy the best trucks we can, we buy top quality gear [and] by and large we don't stint on equipment or things for people.

Welfare can also be understood as the ability to create conditions favourable to the individual in everyday working life. As George pointed out

[t]he jobs I do are ones that I've chosen to do and the hours that I do work for me... getting holiday approved here is a lot easier than in other businesses... the personnel side of the business work very hard to try and fit with peoples' requests really... It's a difficult balance... people go out of their way really to try and ensure that people's working weeks are what they want them to be, whilst keeping a business running as well... overall it works pretty well.

For Tina, the emphasis on welfare is expressed by the key role that the Personnel Department plays in Suma, whereby 'Personnel... has a role in supporting the individual... [if] you can match the needs of Suma to the needs of the individual, then you're not coercing, you're actually understanding that person's needs'. Furthermore, David highlighted how in-work welfare allows a greater security in moving from job to job, and also the recognition that sometimes people have difficult times in their life that affect their capacity to work productively:

I recently stepped down from a higher profile job than I currently have now at Suma, and I'm totally unaffected in terms of my remuneration, in terms of my job security. [Also, due to personal issues] I had a lot of time off, and I was helped immensely by the personnel team... it's enabled me to leave a particular role and still receive the same benefits, and still receive the same care... it's probably a more sustainable way for individuals to maintain a lengthy working life.

There is also worker control over wages, having democratically agreed a 5% annual increase, and other benefits such as increased holidays and fully paid sick leave. Despite the high wage costs, the lack of pressure to make profit for external shareholders means that Suma is less subject to instability in volatile market conditions. However, should the co-op's turnover significantly decrease, reducing the wage would be subject to a democratic vote, and a test of the solidarity within the group.

Flexibility

Empowered flexibility (in contrast to flexible labour markets where workers are often significantly disempowered, Standing, 2009) means that people can apply for different jobs within Suma, and they are able to change job functions without penalty. Multi-skilling and job rotation are empowering factors here. Susan pointed out that 'not only is it good for your health, getting some exercise as well as a balance of a sitting down job, it's good for your mental well-being as well to be able to do different things'.

For Susan, the flexible nature of multi-skilling also means that if people aren't feeling well enough for a manual shift, for example, then jobs can be switched around and, consequently, workers are likely to still come in to work; 'I think flexibility is key here, otherwise you get an awful lot of people bringing sick notes and things like that'. In addition, the opportunity to rotate jobs over time has benefits for in-work welfare. Christine pointed to her experience in the finance department:

I wanted a change... [I spent] most of the year working in the warehouse, I did a lot of driving, and I recharged effectively, and then I went back into finance and I had a certain level of mental energy... I like having the two together... I find that I do quite a lot of my finance

thinking when I'm out driving, and I come back with ideas... that were just beyond me when I was sat looking at that particular computer screen.

Empowering Suma members with the flexibility to set their own life/work balance is also derived from democratic control. Jason pointed out that 'people are able to manage their working weeks according to their lifestyle at that particular time'. However, the success of empowered flexibility in work also requires members to commit to job mobility. Aside from those that are unable to multi-skill for health reasons, a tension between specialisation and multi-skilling was highlighted by Charles:

we have people that don't want to move from their positions, which sometimes can be a negative thing for the co-op, when you see [some don't] share responsibilities, [or don't] share manual jobs, for example... [but instead] just want to be in an office position... we try to avoid that but we still have cases like that.

As described above, the structure of the democratic workplace means that members cannot be coerced into doing particular jobs. Nonetheless, Suma provides autonomy, welfare and flexibility for the individual, which are dimensions of social empowerment.

Active Dimensions of Social Empowerment

The active dimensions apply only to those members who have 'bought-in' to Suma's culture and actively participate in the democracy. Self-development, ownership, and control reflect the link between participatory democracy and social empowerment. These dimensions are considered to be at a higher level due to the need for stronger commitment to the principles of the co-op in order to achieve them; active membership and fulfilment of the requirements of the members' job description.

Self-development

Suma members are empowered with the ability to self-develop through learning new skills and taking on a range of responsibilities. Susan explained

how learning can be both formal through training and informal through shared knowledge: 'I came here with hardly any IT skills but it didn't stop me from going for jobs advertised that involved IT because I knew I would get the training... you can get guidance whenever you need it'.

Opportunities for self-development go beyond formal job skills. As English is not Charles' first language he was supported by the co-op to have paid leave for English lessons, as a requirement of membership. The opportunity to self-develop through taking on managerial responsibility is crucially open to all actively participating members. Paula stated that 'I've learned so much here that I'd never have learned anywhere else... I got on the management committee when I was 23... no one else would have given me that responsibility at such a young age'.

For Guy, opportunities for training, self-development, and the requirements of membership for multi-skilling, encourage people to gain experience of both office-based work and manual work, even if this proves difficult in some cases, and not everyone takes advantage of these opportunities. Thomas viewed some people as lacking the initiative to seek out opportunities for self-development by themselves, and Brian saw his lack of ICT skills as a major stumbling block to taking membership and a more active role. This is a skills deficit that leaves some manual workers feeling isolated from the co-op. While self-development offers many opportunities for members that are equipped with confidence, ICT skills and individual initiative, it is important to acknowledge that some do not necessarily have recourse to the skills to make the most of social empowerment, or may not want to develop greater competencies for a variety of job roles.

Ownership and Control

The final two dimensions of social empowerment can be considered together. Equality of ownership for members is secured through democracy. The flat management structure requires the delegation of authority to the MC members and FACs, but decentralised power means that this does not

compromise the ownership and participation that all members have in the business.

While the MC performs the management function, they are enacting and guiding policies that have been democratically consented to, rather than dictated by management. Consequently, all members of Suma are in principle empowered with the ability to act as equal owners of the business with formally equal statuses. This highlights how the absence of power hierarchies is necessary for empowering the collective. Alice stated that

I feel empowered because I have the power to bring about change and to challenge what is going on if I don't like it. No one can actually tell me what to do without my consent... there is no one here that is in a position to order me to do something or who's in a position to try and to treat me without respect because their status is equal to mine.

Jason explained why ownership is important; 'what empowers me... is [the fact that we own] our own business... and to know [that] we are all working together, and that we've got all equal opportunities and equal responsibilities'. Likewise, the ability to participate, which stems from ownership, was seen by Jake as an integral aspect of empowerment. He pointed out that the structure of Suma creates the possibility for social empowerment, although not all members take advantage of this opportunity:

I've had a direct impact on my own work environment, I've changed the way things are done... I feel I've improved things... I've brought proposals to QGMs, so I personally do feel extremely empowered by this work environment. Unfortunately, I know that that isn't shared by everyone here... for instance I have no problems standing up and speaking in front of a large group of people, but I know that a lot of people find that really difficult... in theory, yes, anybody can stand up and make their point, but some people really struggle to do that.

Control is distinct from ownership because co-ops can be collectively run but not democratically controlled. Both democratic control over the business and individual control over day-to-day work can be empowering in Suma. Democratic control is apparent in Alice's statement about responsibilities and opportunities to vote:

everyone has got a dual role as a member; as a member you are responsible for being part of the management of the company, so whatever you might be doing in your day to day work, once every three months you're in a position to vote, or not vote, for proposals and in a position to put proposals [forward].

On the other hand, Stewart argued that control can also be exerted by members of Suma in their day-to-day working life:

You've got control of what you do, democracy is not just about being able to vote... if you go into Personnel and say 'can I have a day off tomorrow?' they will be more lenient to that because you own the business, you've got a responsibility to be responsible for the business as well as your own personal needs.

Given that members can be empowered by flexible jobs and a greater autonomy in shaping the working week, there are also some limitations to control over certain job functions, as Tina pointed out: 'you might not have control over the way you do your job because the systems limit you... but you can have control over the jobs which you do to a certain extent'. This relates to some of the practical requirements of manual job functions or telephone-based work.

However, as with many of the dimensions of social empowerment, the structure of Suma provides the opportunity for individuals to take control over their working lives, but it is also up to the individual to have the skills and confidence to actively take advantage of the possibilities for empowerment. Jake enunciated this point; 'I think the structures are there for people to have control of their working lives, but it's not going to be handed to you, you've got to stick your head above the parapet, you've got to be willing to take a bit of flack sometimes, to push your ideas forward and potentially have them turned down'. Suma's democratic structure confers empowerment in the form of self-development, ownership and control for those members that are actively participating.

Conclusion

This case study has highlighted how Suma's democratic structure and egalitarian culture provide the circumstances by which members of the organisation are able to realise dimensions of social empowerment. The findings are analysed further in Chapter 8. Four points from the above discussion may be restated. Firstly, Suma's history has involved a transition from an organisation that espoused equality and co-operation, but at various points found itself subject to 'power cliques' which meant that these principles were less likely to be achieved in practice. This case study has shown that the latest incarnation of Suma's democratic structure has generally managed to avoid obvious problems of elite power and static hierarchies. Reflexive attention to this by critically engaged members has been integral to revitalising the co-op. Given that Suma is not absolutely equal in this regard - some interviewees complained that certain individuals were able to argue their cases more forcefully to achieve their ends, this is largely an issue of communicative competence within Suma's public sphere, and is to an extent mitigated by a democratic system which crucially rests on majority consensus. In addition, some participate and are empowered much more than others in the current structure. Factors intrinsic and extrinsic to Suma are identified as aspects of this below.

Secondly, and relatedly, the current structure of Suma is an effective system of decentralised power. It limits *power over* relationships from developing between individuals or between groups and increases social empowerment within the whole group, at the very least for some. Again, while this may be a matter of degree, it is the case that no single member or clique of members can come to dominate over the group due to the structure of the co-op. This is a marked difference compared to Suma's early years.

Thirdly, the relational egalitarian culture of Suma partly enforces the decentralised power structure, and is repeatedly emphasised in this case study. While equal pay is a formal principle that establishes equality between workers (and, along with democratic ownership, legitimises decentralised

power) there are other aspects that reinforce the culture of equality. These include viewing jobs as ‘functions’ rather than formal status roles, that members must ‘buy-in’ to, and enact, democratic and co-operative work practices, the reflexive awareness of the danger that formal hierarchies pose for Suma’s democracy (the degeneration thesis), established rules that maintain the principle of democratic consensus-based decision-making, and the emphasis on job mobility as an aspect of sharing workloads amongst the group.

Fourthly, the concern with participatory democracy and social empowerment in this case study can be explained as a two-sided process. In terms of structure, the power relationships described above underpin democracy in such a way that social empowerment exists within the group and confers the *power to act* within the terms of democratic legitimacy amongst equals. In terms of agency, while the individual is supported and enabled by the structure, initiative, capability, and confidence are necessary capabilities to develop the individual’s own sense of empowerment. Jake’s take on the structural and individual aspects of this succinctly encapsulates social empowerment:

It’s definitely a two part process; the environment has to exist, for people [to become] empowered or it is very difficult, but also empowerment has to come from within by its very nature... you can be shown the door, but ultimately you have to choose to walk through it really. I think no-one else can do that for you... some people don’t want that because it’s too scary, they want to be led really... but then you are never going to say that those people are going to become properly empowered, because they don’t want to, no matter what kind of environment you provide for them; if they don’t have it within them to want to walk through that door then they are not going to.

Aside from those that freely eschew empowerment, this draws attention to the intrinsic factors of informal hierarchies, habituation to democracy, and conflicts with the perceived need for greater efficiency from within the co-op that may impede social empowerment. It also highlights extrinsic factors such as class background, ability, confidence, education, knowledge, personality, and commitment which are derived from the individual within the wider social structure of British society. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Suma member

remains part of a broadly liberal democratic society that is based on very different values to those found in Suma. This means that, along with individual choice, the inequities of British society can, to an extent, limit the possibilities for social empowerment in Suma. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate this case study with the acknowledgement that Suma does not exist as an oasis in the desert of neo-liberalism, but is in a dialectical relationship with the wider social and economic structure. This is especially pertinent in view of the co-op's work practices which could be deemed to be antagonistic to dominant modes of production, with transformative potential, should they be adopted in more workplaces.

Chapter 7

Case Study: You Choose

Introduction

This case study addresses the extent of social empowerment in a participatory democratic local government grants-making process. The case study focuses on a participatory budgeting process that takes place at the intersection of civil society (voluntary and community organisations) and local politics (local government). Participatory budgeting (PB) is a form of decision-making which allows ‘the participation of non-elected citizens in the conception and/or allocation of public finances’ (Sintomer et al., 2008, p.168). Often this is through democratic deliberation and voting on a given issue, but not all PBs are democratic; the simple core of PB is ‘citizens deciding public spending’ (Lerner, 2011, p.32). This chapter begins with a discussion of the history of participatory budgeting, including its origins in Brazil, adoption by the World Bank and implementation in the UK. Next the UK PB case study is explained with reference to the local context, including a public cynical about politics, and describes the PB process (including some demographic data). Participatory democracy in the PB process is then discussed and the themes of transparency, trust, participation, voting, critical engagement, equality/inequality, and inclusion/exclusion. Lastly, the potential for social empowerment in this democratic setting is explored.

This case study is based on four months in the field, with observations of four PB events, and interviews with 23 people, including 15 members of community groups (1 non-member of a group), 3 Councillors, and 4 Council Officers. The findings suggest that there are limits to participatory democracy in this case, stemming from little civil society mobilisation for democratic participation, lack of political will and an absence of citizen control and ownership over the process. As a consequence, there are incipient dimensions of social empowerment, including voting, critical engagement, strengthening

civil society groups, awareness, self-development, networking and community participation. Some of these are intrinsic to the institutional design and others are unanticipated empowering aspects, but all lack the necessary citizen ownership and control to be considered socially empowering.

The History of Participatory Budgeting

Sintomer et al. (2008) describe two models of PB (amongst other, more consultative variants) that are of relevance to this case study: the original Porto Alegre model (often seen as the ideal type of PB) and the ‘community funds at local and city level’ model (described below). Sintomer et al. (2008, p.175) view these as the two variants most conducive to empowerment as ‘the citizenry... directly (or through highly controlled delegates) assumes decision-making power’. Wider levels of social mobilisation and the centrality of the working class to the process are viewed as additional caveats for empowerment otherwise there is a risk of a more consultative model (Sintomer et al., 2008).

Beyond citizen involvement in budgeting, the original Porto Alegre model also aims to revitalise citizenship, improve scrutiny of local government, and improve service provision (Goldfrank, 2007). This section discusses the Porto Alegre model, and describes how PB has spread across the globe, setting the context for the case study of a ‘community funds at the local and city level’ PB process in Northern England.

From Porto Alegre to the World Bank

PB originates in the late 1980s in Porto Alegre, Brazil. It was instigated by the left wing Workers’ Party, which was formed in 1980 out of a coalition of grassroots activists, labour unions, left wing militants and intellectuals in opposition to the military dictatorship (Abers, 1998). The grassroots origins of the Workers’ Party are an important aspect of the growth and success of the participatory budget, until the Party fell from power in 2004. Following their 1989 election, the Workers’ Party pledged to create ‘participatory councils’

to allow ordinary citizens to be involved in genuinely democratic decision-making (Abers, 1998). After a few years of struggle in the transition from military dictatorship to democracy it grew to involve over 17,000 people per year in budget assemblies (Baierle, 2010).

The participatory budget is a yearlong process that incorporates deliberation and participatory democracy along with community-based representative democracy, and has involved up to 20% of Porto Alegre's total budget (Baierle, 2005; Pateman, 2012). It operates on three levels: assemblies in 16 districts of the city are open for all citizens to debate and vote on budget priorities and elect citizen-representatives to the participatory budget council, along with thematic assemblies that address different areas such as education, transportation or health policy which are also open to all (Pateman, 2012). The second level is Regional Budget Forums where citizens may observe, but it is the elected delegates that discuss the investment priorities put forward by the neighbourhood assemblies and agree on priorities. The third level, the Council of the Participatory Budget decides on the distribution of investment across the city, and once accepted by the mayor, discusses the rules that will govern the following year's budget. The third level is also open for citizens to observe, but the elected delegates participate in it.

While community-based representative democracy forms much of the decision-making, the participatory budget is truly bottom-up and socially empowering. Priorities are established by grassroots participants which are enacted by elected delegates from the local areas who are recallable by the public (Baiocchi, 2005; Baierle, 2010). To improve budget literacy and to gain a greater understanding of collective decision-making processes, training is provided for citizens to develop the necessary skills and competencies (Latendresse, 2005).

Three basic principles underpin the participatory budget; grassroots democracy, social justice and citizen control (Sintomer et al., 2008). The initial grassroots assemblies include as many local citizens as possible, with

'one person, one vote' decision-making. The allocation of funds is based on social justice: district level distribution of funds must 'ensure that districts with deficient infrastructure receive more funds than areas with a high quality of life', which promotes equality and redistribution (Sintomer et al., 2008, p.167). Citizen control supports grassroots democracy by ensuring that delegated representatives can effectively 'co-plan' the budget with the political administration (Sintomer et al., 2008, p.167).

The aim for relationships of equality between people (otherwise vastly unequal in social and economic terms) did allow the poor, working class, and women, to use the participatory budget more effectively, and it enabled around one fifth of the city's 1.3 million population to participate at least once (Baierle, 2010). Baierle (2010, p.54) describes this process:

[t]he singularity of the [participatory budget] lay in the opening of a space for direct participation with deliberative power, that is, on the principle of the 'individual as a subject of citizenship'... the decision had been made that societal demands should emerge through participants themselves rather than [collective bargaining]... that is, [by] direct participation.

A central benefit of the participatory budget has been the inclusion of the 'unorganised' members of the population in decision-making (Baiocchi, 2004). As Abers (1998, p.530) puts it 'the processes of civic organising... have been particularly intense for social groups that have been historically disempowered in Brazil: poor and working-class people living in an urban periphery grossly lacking in basic services and infrastructure'. This has increased investment in public resources in poorer areas, especially in the main priorities of housing, paving, sanitation and education (Baierle, 2005). Although the very poorest, living a largely transient existence in favelas remain excluded (Smith, 2009). Tangible changes to local communities also built support for the participatory budget - and the governing Workers' Party - amongst the working class. The middle class broadly supported the participatory budget in this period due to the openness and accountability of the process in rejecting long-running problems in local Brazilian politics: clientelism, corruption, and misuse of government funds. The process also

significantly increased participation in neighbourhood associations from citizens outside of the Workers' Party, improving the strength of civil society in the city (Abers, 1998).

Abers (1998, p.528) highlights how sustained participation in the participatory budget over time contributed to citizens questioning and challenging their views:

people not only began to feel solidarity for others but also began to see their interests more broadly. Many of the people who began to participate for the sake of their street were, a year or two later, champions of 'districtwide' issues, defending projects that would promote the economic revitalisation of the southern part of the city or protect ecological reserves in the rural area of the municipality.

This had particular salience where '[p]articipants from better-off areas began to recognise that some neighbourhoods had far greater needs and began to give preference to them' (Abers, 1998, p.528). This redistributive effect allowed the participatory budget to improve basic services such as water, public transport, waste collection, schooling, and housing for the poorest areas (Baierle, 2010).

However, in 2004, a neo-liberal administration was elected and changed the emphasis towards capitalist development by highlighting the 'exclusion' of private companies, foundations, universities, churches and state agencies from the participatory budget, rather than continue the social justice aims of empowering the poor (Chavez, 2008; Baierle, 2010). For Baierle (2010) the current status of the participatory budget, where the aim of the local administration is to regenerate the city for profit, rather than for the priorities of citizens means that '[a] dual-society is on the horizon: the super-rich connected people and the slow mass of poor people. In this scenario, [the participatory budget] becomes a welfare sub-sphere'. This indicates that even the participatory budget was not immune to capture by anti-democratic neo-liberal impulses (Chapter 5).

Part of the change in the participatory budget in Porto Alegre was driven by the adoption and adaptation of it across the world, especially under the auspices of the World Bank (Shah, 2007). Hundreds of cities across every continent now have some form of PB (Goldfrank, 2012; Sintomer et al., 2013). The World Bank contains some advocates of the democratising potential of PB, but this view is a minority within the organisation (Goldfrank, 2012). Instead, the dominant trend within the Bank is to use the language of 'participation' and 'empowerment' to further a hegemonic neo-liberal marketisation agenda (Cammack, 2004). The World Bank interpretation of PB has been criticised as a 'trimmed-down' variant (or 'PB-lite', Chavez, 2008), which has helped to shift blame for problems away from international organisations and onto national governments, particularly in Africa (Lerner, 2011). Echoing the consultative emphasis of some PB models, Pateman (2012, p.14) describes the World Bank as using PB to describe 'a variety of measures in developing countries to allow for citizens or NGOs to send signals to government, to provide feedback, to be consulted or to monitor government performance'. These uses of PB reduce its democratising and empowering potential.

Baierle (2010, pp.51-52) is critical of the World Bank uses of PB as a 'tool for good governance' which allows governments to improve transparency and accountability while retaining a neo-liberal orientation, and asserts the value of PB as 'a proposed social contract built from the bottom up, aiming to invert the priorities of the municipal budget through direct citizen participation (above all from the poor and working class) and based on the criteria of social justice'. Pateman (2012) echoes this view by warning of the dangers of PB being used to legitimate neo-liberal capitalism, rather than 'democratising democracy'. These views highlight a crucial debate over whether PB can be used as a 'radical innovation' to redistribute power, or as a 'technical fix' to shore up existing power relationships (Blakey, 2007).

PB in the UK

There have been over 200 PB events in the UK (Lerner, 2011), and while some of these have involved housing associations, children's trusts, schools, highways, and youth services, the majority have been for small amounts of money as part of local government grants-making for community and voluntary organisations (Hall, 2010), though not all have been democratic (Hall & Röcke, 2013). This fits the 'community funds at the local and city level' model highlighted by Sintomer et al. (2008). This model usually involves small discretionary funds for community groups, often relatively independent of the municipal budget, which are allocated by vote by citizens and members of community groups, although business interests are usually excluded from the process (Sintomer et al., 2008). While concerning small amounts of money, this model does contain some potential for the redistribution of funds through direct citizen participation and decision-making power. The political aspect of citizen control over municipal budgets is much less present, suggesting that the principles of grassroots democracy, social justice and citizen control may be less likely to develop from this model (Sintomer et al., 2008).

This has prompted criticisms that PB in the UK is tokenistic whereby relatively minor amounts of public spending are opened up to citizens without allowing scope for the transformative possibilities (Lerner, 2011). The Porto Alegre model was developed in a vastly different political culture and socio-economic circumstances and the desire and demand for participation could well be more likely to take root in the context of a denial of democratic rights and significant levels of absolute poverty. Although, the current disillusionment with British politics (Hay, 2007) could also provide the conditions for civil society demands for participatory democracy, for example, in the Occupy, UK Uncut, and other progressive social movements.

PB in Porto Alegre was driven by grassroots movements, trade unions and the left-wing Workers' Party at a municipal city-level, with the context of the relative autonomy of local government in the Brazilian political system

(Smith, 2009). On the other hand, in the UK, PB has been driven by campaigning NGOs such as PB Unit and by National Government level strategy proposals under the previous New Labour administration (DCLG, 2008b). This top-down emphasis on training courses and consultancy in support of PB processes as ‘tools’ for good governance suggests that the uses of PB in the UK tend more towards the World Bank variant than the ideal Porto Alegre model. Blakey (2007, p.12) doubts the social justice aims of this approach as ‘[t]he general culture of participation in the UK facilitates this ‘technological’ means-to-an-end, non-political presentation of PB... the new participatory space is increasingly a depoliticised space, which ‘privatises’ overtly political voices’.

This case study accepts that the uses of PB in the UK entail the broader risks of a PB-lite that does not effectively empower citizens, but in practice shifts responsibility - but not power - away from the state and onto individuals and communities as part of the second wave of neo-liberal welfare state retrenchment, especially under the ‘big society’ agenda (Corbett & Walker, 2012, 2013; Kisby, 2010). This makes for a very different context to that of Porto Alegre in the late 1980s. As Sintomer et al. (2008, p.176) point out

[p]articipatory budgeting can be a powerful process for achieving more democracy, social justice and transparent administration... [i]ts ‘success’ partly depends on the political and financial autonomy of local governments but it cannot, in the long run, be imposed *only* in a top-down manner, without any ‘countervailing power’ [in civil society].

As described by Smith (2009) in Chapter 4, the success of the participatory budget in Porto Alegre derived from both grassroots democracy and centralised co-ordination, or as Fung and Wright (2003) posit, through ‘accountable autonomy’. Thus, this case study of a participatory grants-making process describes a qualitatively different experience of local democracy that has some genuinely participatory aspects and possibilities for social empowerment. It is suggested that this PB process could be significantly deepened and developed in order to facilitate greater social empowerment.

'You Choose'

This section describes how You Choose has developed, how it is funded, what happens in the voting events, the way in which citizens are involved in You Choose, and the changing relationships between local government and citizens.

About Tameside

Tameside is a metropolitan borough in the North West of England. It has a population of around 215,000 and historically, industry was based on manufacturing, especially textiles and engineering, food industries and computer products, while the service industries are now the largest employment sector in the borough (CCCP, 2009). Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council has been controlled by the Labour Party since 1968. In the local elections of May 2012, a total of 52 Labour Councillors were elected and five Conservative Councillors. One of Tameside Council's functions is to provide a local strategic partnership which involves

[a] diverse set of partners from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to agree key aims, objectives and priorities for... community-wide economic, social and environmental issues... [and] includes a number of local organisations such as the council, police, health service, Tameside College and Greater Manchester Probation Trust, community organisation and key private sector stakeholders to improve the quality of life in [the] borough (TSP, no date).

The sustainable community strategy is 'driven by the vision of reducing inequalities across the borough and improving quality of life by delivering agreed aims and priorities' (TSP, 2009b, p.8). This is part of the guiding framework for making You Choose accountable, as applicants must show that they are meeting at least one of these priorities (Table 7.1 below). The voting process requires citizens to judge the extent to which they think the groups will contribute to their stated priority.

Disillusionment and British Politics

It is necessary to acknowledge that You Choose exists in the British context of disillusionment with politics, as discussed in Chapter 1. This was apparent at the local level as a number of interviewees expressed disillusionment about the 'politics of the borough', especially given the long running control of Tameside Council by the Labour Party with little effective opposition.

Cynicism about local and national politics was apparent in many comments made by citizens in this research. Susan, a youth club organiser, was cynical even in the case of You Choose, when discussing a town twinning project that was put forward for the public vote: 'I felt that was one Councillors might find particularly attractive 'cause I think there's a lot of scope for Councillors to have nice trips and days out!' Other participants guardedly saw You Choose as an antidote to a cynical political culture. Harry, a member of a religious group, cited the problem of 'disconnect and the sense of inertia and lethargy in the system and... 'we've always done it like this, we know best' paternalistic attitudes' of local government in general. He pointed out that there is a perception held by some that Tameside Council doesn't genuinely act on the views of the public. Even in the case of public consultations, there is a sense of decisions already made: 'the problem is that actually that *disempowers*, it feeds into this cynical view of 'they'll do what they like anyway''.

Attempts at creating more citizen engagement and empowerment have been a long running concern of local government in the UK, with mixed-levels of success (Wilson & Game, 2011). The TSP's (2009a, p.7) Engagement Strategy, *Empowering Tameside*, emphasises 'communities, Councillors and partners' working together to 'improve well-being, guided by local priorities and a shared sense of what matters'. This document posits that in 2009, 38% of residents responding to an opinion survey agreed that they can influence local decisions, especially through surveys, voting in local elections, and contacting the council directly (TSP, 2009a). Since 2009, Tameside Council has developed

You Choose as a form of participatory grants-making that is more democratic than previous attempts at citizen engagement.

The Development of You Choose

You Choose funds local voluntary and community groups which provide sports clubs, youth centres, residents' associations, allotments associations, pre-school clubs and other community-based projects. You Choose is run by Tameside Council officers in partnership with Tameside 3rd Sector Coalition (T3SC), a council for voluntary service that supports and advises community, voluntary and faith sector groups in the area. While Tameside Council co-ordinate the application process, T3SC offer support and advice to applicants, and both organisations run the events.

The process originated in a 2010 PB pilot called Up2U which was run by the local police and funded by the Home Office (PB Unit, 2009). With the endorsement of the Leader of the Council, You Choose was implemented across the borough the next year with one event in each of the eight District Assemblies in Tameside; Ashton-under-Lyne, Denton & Audenshaw, Droylsden, Dukinfield, Hyde, Longdendale & Hattersley, Mossley, and Stalybridge. This ensures that local community and voluntary groups in each District Assembly are able to access their own pot of money. You Choose funds are for not-for-profit activities, rather than private companies.

You Choose replaced several small grants funds and discretionary funds that Councillors could personally allocate, such as the Community Chest, which allocated money via a closed-panel system. This new process aimed to 'create a single point of access for groups trying to secure funding, cutting down the number of available avenues and associated administrative burdens [and] in the current climate of shrinking public sector resources... an improved and co-ordinated and strategic approach to ensure best value and keep track of public money' (Tameside Council, 2011). The pooling of community funding money into one stream has also coincided with a significant reduction in the funding available from Tameside Council, which is likely to be under further

strain as the cuts to local government continue under the national governing coalition (Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011). For example, total You Choose funding in 2011 of £500,000 replaced the £1m allocated to Community Chest and other smaller budgets in 2010 (in 2012 this was reduced further to £440,000). Groups were given a maximum of £2,000-£2,500 to apply for in 2012, compared with £5,000 through Community Chest in 2010. Even retaining a commitment to You Choose is difficult, as a Councillor stated:

for a council to be losing hundred and ten million pound and yet still be giving money to these community groups - the view we have is if we didn't they would collapse, and... we would be picking up the bill somewhere else, we do everything we can to make sure the work continues which is going to be difficult [in view of future cuts].

It could also be argued that You Choose could create a more positive public perception of Councillors and Tameside Council, who are themselves acting under the constraints of reduced funding streams from national government. Positive reactions, especially from those active in the community, could also deflect criticism of reduced community group funds. A Councillor highlighted this theme when reflecting on the You Choose vote:

they're not saying '[the Councillors] didn't give us any You Choose money'... what they are saying is 'no, we didn't get any money; the panel, the room, didn't give us any money', and the ones that are getting the money think that we've done it!

The proposal for You Choose received an initial scepticism on the part of some Councillors regarding whether a PB process can be flexible enough with limited money, whether the money is spread as widely as possible, and concerns that some smaller groups may not have enough resources or capabilities to take part. It is suggested that a large majority of the Councillors have been convinced of the merits of You Choose through experiencing it, as a member of T3SC highlighted 'at least a minority that have been very *upset* about [You Choose]. We did win over quite a lot of those people, including real turnarounds from people who were utterly opposed at first'.

'You Recycle, You Choose'

You Choose is funded by the savings made by Tameside Council's recycling programme. The funds come from the reduction in landfill tax paid by Tameside Council, and this creates a tangible link between the actions of citizens in recycling household waste, and money granted for local projects. This is the result of a political decision by Tameside Council not to count the reduction in landfill tax paid as a saving, but to commit the difference to You Choose: in the words of a Councillor; 'without the recycling money, You Choose doesn't exist'.

The link between citizen action in recycling and participation in You Choose is part of Tameside Council's advertising campaign, based around the slogan 'you recycle, you choose'. The sense of ownership of the money through having participated in recycling was emphasised by Lynsey, a residents' group member: 'it's *our* money... If we have earned the money then we should be able to say where it's going'.

This sense of direct involvement suggests that, for example, a tangible link between paying council tax and participation in decisions over the services provided as a result could be part of a wider project of democratic participation and citizen ownership of public services. However, the anti-social solidarity aspect of liberal individualism must also be considered. Harry suggested that You Choose participants "get it", but... if you went and knocked on a dozen doors most people wouldn't have a clue what it was... some would argue 'I would rather have the money off my council tax bill, thank you, rather than giving it to these community groups'.

Assessment Panels

Following the call for applications a panel consisting of mainly Councillors, and some members of the public, meet to assess the suitability of the proposals based on local knowledge and technical criteria. A number of proposals will typically be turned down at this stage. For example, the

Ashton-under-Lyne event had 35 presentations from an original application list of 55 groups/projects.

This is described by one Councillor as a necessary non-public and technical aspect of You Choose:

I don't know how we could make it more open; it really would get very bureaucratic... the panel are not shortlisting people because they don't like them... we didn't shortlist somebody because they had £500,000 in the bank!... so it all has to be filtered... basically [the public have] got to trust that we are going to be fair and honest.

A Council Officer explains the purpose of the assessment panel: 'we are not trying to take some of the responsibility away from the community, we want the community to be the one to decide which groups, but we're making sure that the ones that they vote on... fit the criteria'. However, this is viewed differently by a number of You Choose participants, again reflecting cynical views of local government, and also stemming from a lack of publicly available information about the purpose of the assessment panel. Sally, a member of an environmental group, made this point:

It's a bit cloak and dagger when you look at it from the outside. Maybe if they said 'well it's because of checking out the legalities' people would think 'that's great, they are actually doing some homework on these people before they even get to this stage', but... it comes across as 'you put your application in and we'll think whether its worthy or not to get on the list'.

The Events

You Choose votes run on Saturdays in a community centre in each District Assembly. They usually last 3-4 hours and involve two presenting and voting sessions in which completed voting forms are collected after every five presentations, and after a short break the successful applicants are announced. Each group has three minutes to present their project and explain how they will use the money to the participants. Following each presentation voters must rank the extent to which the group's project answers four

questions on a five-point Likert scale and give a total mark to the group before moving onto the next presentation. The four questions are:

1. *Do you think this proposal will benefit the [District Assembly] area or the people living there?*
2. *Will this proposal help to achieve the Tameside Priority detailed in the box on the left? (Different for each group)*
3. *Do you think that the group can deliver on their proposal?*
4. *Do you think this proposal is a good use of public money?*

Table 7.1 shows how the six Tameside sustainable community strategy priorities are presented in the voting packs. This framework is intended to link You Choose to the TSP's aims to improve quality of life in the borough (discussed above).

Table 7.1 Tameside's Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities

Theme	Tameside Priorities
Supportive Tameside	Support communities to work together
	Help people to live independently
Prosperous Tameside	Improve the economy of the area
	Help residents gain new skills or find employment
Learning Tameside	Help children and young people to do well at school
	Help children and young families to have a better life
Attractive Tameside	Improve the way the borough looks
	Promote environmental projects
Safe Tameside	Reduce burglary, vehicle crime and robbery, and the harm caused by drugs and alcohol
	Reduce violent crime
	Improve residents' feelings of safety
	Reduce offending
Healthy Tameside	Support residents to be healthy and live healthier lives

If the vote is taken seriously by participants (all interviewees indicated that they did), this process requires some critical reflection on the part of the voters in making decisions about the value of each project for their local community, rather than just picking their favourite groups. Crucially, participants must attend for the duration of the vote and must also vote for every group, meaning they are required to consider the merits and demerits of each presentation. These aspects of the vote are discussed further in the following section on participatory democracy.

In 2012, 189 groups received funding, while 985 residents attended, with 810 voting. For this case study the four events listed in Table 7.2 were observed (two larger District Assemblies and two smaller District Assemblies). Table 7.2 shows that between two and four groups were unsuccessful in each event and the most common groups that were funded were sports groups (23 across the four events), music groups (8), scouts/cubs (7), and residents' associations (7). The maximum funds available of £2,000 and £2,500 were determined by Tameside Council according to size of the District Assembly and relative deprivation in the area.

Table 7.2 You Choose Events Observed

	You Choose event			
	Ashton-under-Lyne	Denton & Audenshaw	Dukinfield	Stalybridge
Total funds/money per application	£70,000/ £2,500	£70,000/ £2,500	£30,000/ £2,000	£30,000/ £2,000
No. of groups presented/ funded	33/29	32/29	18/16	25/23
Community and voluntary groups funded	Community 1 Credit Union 1 Environmental 1 Gardens 3 Health & fitness 4 Music 2 Parks 3 Religious 1 Residents 3 Scouts 2 Social 2 Sports 5 Youth 1	Allotments 1 Carnival 1 Community 3 Debt advice 1 Food bank 1 Music 2 Newspaper 1 Parks 1 Pre-school/school 3 Residents 1 Scouts 2 Sports 8 Twinning 1 Walking 1 Youth 2	Allotments 1 Community 1 Health 2 Music 1 Parks 1 Pre-school 1 Religious 2 Residents 2 Sports 4 Twinning 1	Business Forum 1 Carnival 1 Music 3 Recycling 1 Religious 4 Residents 1 School 1 Scouts/cubs 3 Sports 6 Veterans 1 Walking 1
Est. number of attendees (not all voted)	150	140	90	100

Table 7.3 shows the age ranges of participants at the events observed who responded to a T3SC feedback survey. This shows that the most common age range among respondents was 40 - 64 for all events apart from Dukinfield, which had a larger 65+ cohort.

Table 7.3 Age Ranges of Participants Responding to T3SC Feedback Survey

Age ranges	You Choose event			
	Ashton-under-Lyne	Denton & Audenshaw	Dukinfield	Stalybridge
13 - 19	10 (9.5%)	6 (5%)	0	4 (7.4%)
20 - 39	7 (6.7%)	25 (22.1%)	3 (6.2%)	6 (11.1%)
40 - 64	45 (42.9%)	49 (43.4%)	19 (39.6%)	24 (44.4%)
65 <	43 (40.9%)	33 (29.2%)	26 (54.2%)	20 (37%)

Table 7.4 shows the gender distribution of the four events. While Stalybridge shows an even split, the majority of participants at Dukinfield, and Denton & Audenshaw were female, while the reverse was the case at Ashton-under-Lyne.

Table 7.4 Gender of Participants Responding to T3SC Feedback Survey

Gender	You Choose event			
	Ashton-under-Lyne	Denton & Audenshaw	Dukinfield	Stalybridge
Female	41 (41.4%)	66 (60%)	29 (60.4%)	28 (50.9%)
Male	58 (58.6%)	44 (40%)	19 (39.6%)	27 (49.1%)

The vast majority of participants identified as White British, with only Ashton-under-Lyne having a significant BME population attending, where 46% of the participants were Asian or Asian British.

Monitoring

Each group must use the funds within twelve months for the purpose that they applied. This is monitored by the council, and indications are that this is largely successful. There was one case of money being returned that wasn't spent and only three out of over 150 funded groups in 2011 are under investigation for using the money inappropriately. However, beyond ensuring that the groups spend money on what they say they will there are no indications that Tameside Council has any guiding framework in place to

measure the outcomes of You Choose funding for quality of life in the local area. This is especially pertinent given the council's commitment to improving quality of life in the community strategy (TSP, 2009b). A Councillor highlighted this point: '[i]f we're addressing things like healthy eating [by funding healthy eating groups in You Choose], the impact on that is not going to be known by us, we won't be able to find out what the impact of it is'. This suggests that social quality indicators could be used to measure outcomes.

Citizen Involvement in You Choose

You Choose participants must provide their postcode to vote in the event appropriate to their address. To ensure that well-resourced and large groups aren't able to dominate the voting process, only five members of each group are allowed to attend and vote, along with the group's presenter. Questions have been raised by citizens about the ability to police this and the effect of large groups on the vote, or whether the issue needs to be policed at all provided that all group members are *also* local residents. Analysis of voting patterns by T3SC suggests that there is no evidence of larger groups attempting to rig the vote. This is also supported by the requirement that participants vote seriously for all groups (where one or two projects are given full marks and all the others low marks the voting form is invalidated by council officers).

For the groups that participated, getting money was their primary aim, as Tom, a member of a youth centre, put it; '[i]t was more about getting the money, that's what everybody was more interested in'. Of the sixteen people interviewed for this research, only one of them was participating as a voter with no vested interest in a group. It is unlikely that many of the participants didn't have a vested interest in a group. A Council Officer was sceptical about the participatory democratic aspirations of You Choose and raised the point of the very small number of citizens taking part without a vested interest in a group ('probably... less than a dozen') out of district populations in the tens of thousands. It was suggested that Councillors, elected by the wider population, have a more legitimate democratic mandate to make decisions.

As the voting process requires participants to consider the merits of the other groups, rather than just voting for their preferred group, vested interests are largely negated. There is also the possibility of reaching more ‘ordinary’ citizens in future as many that participated said they would do so again, even if they weren’t supporting a particular group.

Relationships between Councillors and Citizens in You Choose

The role of the Councillors has changed from having the discretion to provide funds to one of using their local expertise in managing the selection of groups for You Choose, and appearing at the votes in a ‘public leadership’ role at the front of the hall. Along with its more limited size and scope, this differentiates You Choose from the Porto Alegre model, as power is not decentralised and citizens cannot shape the event at the grassroots level. However, responsibility for decision-making and some empowerment is transferred to citizens by virtue of the public vote. One Councillor stated that, prior to You Choose

there was an ‘us and them’ type thing, and [the public] didn’t even see you when you were doing the Community Chest... whereas here with You Choose its open and everyone can see who is there, they all know who you are, they can approach you if they want... you’re not sat in some little office discussing who is going to get the money.

Another Councillor asserted that this change requires significant use of the Councillors’ local knowledge: ‘Councillor[s] will have more knowledge than anybody about those groups about the needs in that area’. This suggests that Councillors retain a leadership role by virtue of their expertise and position as elected representatives. Harry was encouraged by the more open relationships between Councillors and citizens that are forged by You Choose:

it’s quite good for the community to see the Councillors listening to what the community are doing... and for Councillors to hear that and have a face to face in a sense with a group, and maybe just to note there’s that group doing that over there, I think that’s all good information for them that they wouldn’t get otherwise.

The appeal of opening up decision-making to citizen involvement is also an example of how the public can gain a greater understanding of the ‘finite pots of money’ available to Tameside Council, although some citizens were critical about whether the money is arbitrarily allocated to You Choose. This statement from one Councillor highlighted the difficulties of managing reduced funding streams and public perceptions as a democratic representative:

the more authority you have [in the local context] the less likely you are to be able to achieve what you want to be able to achieve because you’re restricted. Community itself is not restricted; they might have a moan, they might have a separate issue - the closing of a library... that decision is made by one tier of government because the other tier of government has refused its money... we tend to be more pragmatic as Councillors... the cake is only so big; do I put the money into adult care, childcare, education or do I put it into planting a few flowers?

Without a renewal of trust in elected politicians in general and a deeper level of public engagement and scrutiny of local decision-making through more extensive PB, these problems are likely to continue. In addition, the public arena of You Choose leads some to question even more the role of Councillors, as Clive put it:

there were four or five Councillors actually at that event, out of a possible twelve... This is the most important thing that will happen in Denton, as far as the people are concerned, for twelve months. If the Councillors are not there... what message does that bring to the people that were there?

While You Choose has gone beyond other pilots in the UK to develop a coherent program of participatory grants-making, it has developed as a narrow and slimmed-down version of PB similar to that espoused by the World Bank. You Choose may be suitable for Tameside Council’s aim to fund local groups, but for the purpose of this case study, it shows important, but limited, aspects of participatory democracy and social empowerment. As Clive suggested: ‘getting onto the serious business of how you actually do budgeting at the Tameside-wide level... it’s a million miles away from that’. Although some saw You Choose as taking power away from Councillors, the agency and autonomy of Councillors in their previously more discretionary role is

restricted by the need to form a panel to assess local groups. Whether the power to decide is effectively translated into a meaningful democratic process involving citizens is perhaps overstated, as only two or three groups lose out in the You Choose vote. This means that the list of groups funded is broadly that decided by Councillors and the assessment panel.

Questions could be raised over whether it is worth the considerable time and effort to organise You Choose events for relatively small amounts of money beyond being a positive public event for the council, or even an attempt to engage with the 'big society' agenda, by shifting responsibility for funding onto the public. However, as the following discussion attests, participants generally viewed You Choose in positive terms, which could create more engaged and critical attitudes to politics as it does allow the public some opportunity to participate in decision-making.

Participatory Democracy

This section discusses how You Choose is perceived to be more transparent than previous grants-making, and based on trust between participants. It then discusses the democratic vote and critical engagement in decision-making that this encourages, before highlighting equality and inequality, inclusion and exclusion. Lastly, the limits of You Choose and the circumstances in which a more participatory democratic culture may emerge are discussed.

Transparency and Trust

You Choose was considered a positive experience by the vast majority of interviewees. Some concerns were raised over the extent to which it is genuinely democratic, especially regarding Council control of the application process. Although, almost all agreed that You Choose is good for local democracy, especially in terms of transparency and trust. Nigel highlighted how this compares with his previous experience of District Assemblies:

it's... even more democratic than the District Assembly because I do have *some* reservations about democracy on that - it tends to be rather

cut and dried, it's not really a true public vote; when [there is] a vote there, it's voted by the Councillors, but whereas this was *significantly* different than *anything* I have been to; to have a purely public vote.

Rebecca argued that having a public vote avoids 'closed door' decision-making. Although he accepts that discretionary funding in the past also served good causes, Harry posits that with You Choose; 'you have criteria you are being measured against, you have the public involved in voting, it's actually *all* out there in the open... [this] gives some authenticity to what you're doing... and if [your presentation] doesn't stand up to that scrutiny then fair enough'. This theme was picked up by one Councillor, who argued that a democratic public vote has the effect of being more transparent and reliant on a wider range of local knowledge beyond that of the Councillors: 'if the Councillors themselves choose you're always going to leave out someone you weren't aware of, and it causes a little bit of consternation [for] groups that have been overlooked'.

Rebecca saw an additional benefit as You Choose money 'gets into services directly, there's no messing about, it doesn't get diluted, it doesn't get rationed off, part of it isn't for administration... it goes to where it's going to go'. Despite this, Clive questioned whether more citizen involvement in setting the terms of the vote would further increase transparency: 'there was an amount of money, now I don't know how that amount was determined... that's not transparent... and how each of the various districts got this particular amount of money, and I think some involvement could've been got from the community to see how this money is actually distributed'.

Susan argued that trust in citizens to consider the public good is also important; 'I had a lot of faith in the credibility and integrity of those people; that they would actually choose what they thought would be valuable to the community... I do like the feeling that it's almost the village taking the decisions and not the government'. Transparency and trust have been identified as aspects of democracy in You Choose. The next section considers how citizens participate in the PB process.

Participation, Voting and Critical Engagement

You Choose is formally open and equal for anyone from the local area to attend and participate in the vote. Public participation in democratic scrutiny of groups was important to David, a member of the public that attended just to vote, as groups ‘want the money for damn good reasons... the more they can get across to us the reasons the better, so I still believe that one vote, one person is the right way of going’. Likewise, Susan saw You Choose as a more participatory process that can bring out the best in people, stating that the usual way in which local government does decision-making is ‘almost like saying ‘you’re not qualified to make these decisions’, once you say ‘yes, you are, and we want to know’, I do think people rise to it’. Although, Sally questioned the necessity of public participation in a democratic vote on the grounds of desert, stating that ‘if you’ve got a good viable organisation that’s genuinely working for the community then it should get the funding regardless of whether they can turn six people out [at You Choose] and keep them there for half a day’.

Acknowledging the limitations of citizen power expressed in the previous section, participation in You Choose is a qualitatively different kind of democratic experience to liberal representative politics. This creates opportunities for citizens to reflectively and critically engage with local groups, especially through the voting process. All of the interviewees in this case study reported that they approached the vote critically and reflectively. Josie, a member of a community news group posited that she ‘did feel responsible... all of [the groups] were worthy, but I felt like others were more worthwhile so yeah, you do feel responsible’. The use of local knowledge was important for Tom: ‘if you’re sat there and you see something that would be absolutely no good for this area at all, you get to then decide and say ‘well no it’s not good, it’s not for this area, whereas that, I agree with that, that would be ideal here’.

The majority of interviewees cited whether the money was going to the local area and whether it was for activities that could involve the wider public,

rather than a small 'niche' group, as key factors in allocating their vote. This reflects two of the voting form questions that asked whether the project will benefit the local area and whether it is a good use of public money. As David pointed out 'my first priority was it had to be in Dukinfield, my second priority; it had to help the wider community rather than just a little circle of people... I tried to be objective and think 'let me listen to the ones I don't know about and see if they can convince me''. Similarly, for Nigel it 'was about benefit to the community... I was thinking in terms of how many people are going to be affected'.

A strong sense of local identity was apparent, especially at the Dukinfield event, which also had a generally older audience (Table 7.3 above). Lynsey emphasised local knowledge; 'we found we were talking about this estate. The residents of Dukinfield know about Central estate, and I knew about the other clubs that were bidding for money'. The perceived *publicness* of projects also influenced Karen in making her voting choices:

I was interested the medical practice that wanted the garden... it happens to be the medical practice that I go to and I thought 'that's interesting because I have never seen that door open and I don't see how the public could come in unless they *belong* to the practice', so I was a little bit cynical really... I gave it a three.

Regarding this group, Lynsey stated that the garden 'wasn't for the *wider* people of Dukinfield... it wasn't going to benefit me or my neighbours at all'. This suggests that a strong sense of local identity, local knowledge and perceptions of public use guided voting choices. However, this could also lead to parochial attitudes, as one Council Officer pointed out, at the Dukinfield event two groups 'played it wrong because they didn't say 'we are in Dukinfield!'... it seemed to be not coincidental that those are the two that didn't get voted for'.

For Josie, a further consideration was the interests of future generations; '[the] tots group and lots of children's activities... [I] voted quite high on them things... being pregnant and thinking of the future and wanting all of these things to remain in the community; that probably did influence my vote...

'cause I'm thinking it will be great if my child when it grows up, it's got this and it's got that... I wouldn't have thought about that a year ago so that has swayed my decision'.

This form of reflective voting also allowed Rebecca to engage critically and question her pre-conceptions, in the case of a church group that provided a debt service:

I have an understanding about churches being a bit judgemental... [but] then it got me thinking well hold on a minute that's my judgement. If that community has links to people that are in poverty then surely, any hand of help, any way of getting help is a good thing, so I changed my opinion; had to challenge myself really, and my own judgements.

Despite this evidence of critical engagement, Clive questioned whether there is sufficient knowledge about Tameside Council's strategic aims for the community;

if you didn't know what the community strategy was it was... that's where it became a little bit difficult... I'm not sure if the summary was actually *good* enough really, accurate enough, with regard to the community strategy... 'cause actually... how many people are particularly interested in the community strategy?, because no one is involved in it.

Clive's statement indicates that increased citizen participation in the TSP might deepen the democratic nature of the You Choose experience. Whether enough citizens would desire such a role is an important issue, but should they be able to participate in designing the local community strategy as equal partners with the council, then the corresponding level of citizen power and control over the You Choose process could increase. This point, along with the transitory nature of participating once a year at You Choose, mean that this case study has less possibilities for social empowerment in relation to the Porto Alegre model, and also less than the case study of Suma in Chapter 6, where the structure of non-hierarchical and democratic ownership and control translate more directly into day-to-day experience.

Equality and Inequality, Inclusion and Exclusion

In You Choose equality can be assessed in three ways: formal equality in the vote, the extent of equality of access to the event, and whether there is equality between those who participate. Beyond the formal equality of participating in the vote issues of inclusion and exclusion feature in relation to the size of groups that and the extent to which they can access networks of information and support for putting together bids, applying and presenting. The relationships between citizens, and between citizens and Councillors, can be assessed by the extent to which there is relational equality in the democratic setting.

You Choose has a formal democratic equality in one person, one vote, and that everyone in the local area can attend. A member of T3SC highlighted the central role of equality in the voting process: 'it is about equality in that it is a public event anyone can take part. That's not how it works in a vast majority of other decision-making about local issues, so there is an absolute foundational commitment to equality'. Tom supported this view, pointing out that at You Choose 'everybody is entitled to their own vote... regardless of their walk of life'. Anita, a member of a religious group, saw the requirement that every group must receive a vote as important: 'everybody [that participated had] the power to vote on each other's [projects]... it is equal, it's across the board, and we were told you have to vote on each one, so you couldn't pick and choose who to vote for'.

On the one hand, the openness of the application process and formal equality of citizens to vote means that anyone can take part, but on the other hand, there are socio-economic barriers to participation. The capabilities of groups to put together bids and of individuals to present their aims to the public are issues of unequal access that could be exclusionary. Councillors and Council Officers were concerned with access. A Council Officer highlighted how 'people who are socially excluded anyway will be excluded from this process,

people who are really struggling or the poor, or the elderly lonely' in favour of the more articulate and organised. As one Councillor put it:

I don't think there's equal access to all groups, equality... should be fundamental to You Choose... the easy to reach people will *always* be there, it's the harder to reach people that won't always know, that won't have the opportunity, [for example,] they're too small to have a constitution.

As a great deal of information about You Choose is online, further concerns were raised for people that don't have internet access, meaning that the Councillors, along with T3SC, must inform groups in their local area and help them to become equipped with the knowledge and organisation to take part. Another Councillor: 'St Peters Ward [is] a deprived area so there are a lot of people that might not have access to a computer. It's better to speak to them word of mouth'. Despite these attempts, and the work of T3SC, a Council Officer highlights the struggle to get more groups to apply to You Choose as unlike in the past, 'there simply aren't as many grassroots community engaging workers who are out there to help the blokes in the pub who run the brass band [and] show them the process'.

This had led one Councillor to be very concerned as to whether over time larger groups will come to dominate You Choose: 'you've got to have that access to other groups or in my view it just becomes an income stream to select groups of community activists'. Accepting that well known groups still apply, another Councillor was more optimistic: 'groups are turning up that we didn't know about... I *am* seeing more groups who are on the fringe who don't have form fillers... we've used T3SC to get them the bank account, and to get them a constitution, and I understand that a small community group [might] want the money but they haven't got the expertise to do that, and it's our job to help them through that'. Some groups that get through the application process find the requirement of a public presentation to be daunting, as David stated regarding presenters; 'some of them are quite savvy and are good, and then you get the other people who have probably never spoken in front of an audience before, and found it difficult to get their case across'.

The issue over access relates to wider issues about equality, solidarity and inclusion which go beyond You Choose's remit of funding community groups. However, given that there are attempts to mitigate for this through increasing awareness and offering support through T3SC, barriers to democratic participation could in the future be reduced for those that want to take part, especially if You Choose grows each year, and PB processes become a bigger part of the local political culture. Though there are no indications that this is happening.

Equality was also emphasised by Lynsey, regarding the relationship between participants and the Councillors, stating that her experience of You Choose was:

so nice because you're talking to your peers, it didn't feel like you were begging for humble pie from the governors, it was from our friends and neighbours... I go to the District Assemblies and it's definitely 'them and us'... but [at You Choose], they are equals; one of the Councillors lives up the road and you speak to them on a daily basis - he's no better than me, but in that scenario it felt as if... there was no differential.

Susan supported this by describing a sense of equality between the participants because 'we probably could recognise that we were part of a similar process'. This is linked to the requirement for equal consideration of the groups in the application process, which helped to ferment a more solidaristic experience for Rebecca: 'I can't speak for the people that judged the applications, I'm assuming fairly... we were equal in that sense... that also means that everybody is in the same boat and then you're no longer competing against each other, you are kind of together on it... you could support one another'.

This point was clear in the four observations of You Choose events for this case study: there was a general good natured and enthusiastic spirit at the events, and at the end, a sense of having had a positive shared experience amongst the vast majority of participants. However, while both Susan and Rebecca saw relationships of equality between citizens taking part, they were also critical of the leadership role of the Councillors in the event, and their

positioning at the front of the hall, facing the public. Susan stated that 'I felt like [the Councillors] were the court, you know the royal court... not at the end 'cause they looked more friendly, maybe they were a bit tense because it was decisions... the royal table at the front kind of thing... [it was] like we were the peasants {laughs}'.

Similarly, Rebecca posited that

the Councillors were sat behind a desk, which... to me signified authority, they were dressed in suits, they were dressed like Councillors apart from [one of them], who didn't sit behind the table, he stood at the back and was in his jeans and what have you... they have come to the event, which is great, but do they actually agree with it?, are they as enthusiastic as the people taking part?

This situation prompted David to suggest that You Choose should avoid making such distinctions: 'they need to get it as far away from the Council as they possibly can... what really [the Councillors] should do is come and sit in the audience'.

Participatory Democratic Culture

Most interviewees expressed a desire for more citizen participation in democratic decision-making. However, many tempered this with doubts about whether citizens have the ability to make more complex and technical decisions. Susan stated that this form of participatory democracy is something she'd like to see develop as part of 'people's culture' in the local area. Lynsey agreed: 'it's starting off small with this You Choose in your local area, but why not borough-wide and then city-wide eventually?'

Clive argued that the lack of an effective opposition means that local politics is failing to be open and innovative. He cited more citizen participation in public debate as a possible antidote to this:

we need to know what the issues are, and I think people need to be involved in it... who decided the size of the pot?, who decided who got what?, who decided the rules for it?, how it should get funded?... the

politics of the borough, because the opposition parties are so few, you just don't actually hear from them at all really, so you never get an open debate... I think participatory budgeting goes hand in hand with something like that.

Rebecca also picked up on this theme:

there does need to be a shift in how decisions are made... the only way to do that is to include the community, the people who are in receipt of services do need to have a voice in how those services are shaped, otherwise what happens is you end up shaping services to meet somebody's understanding sat in an office. I think if you have the community part of the decision-making and part of the spending of money, then the services will have a better chance of meeting the needs of the community in the way in which they *want* them to be met... people are unhappy about politicians and local government... and maybe that is a reflection of what is happening at the moment at a wider [national] level but...let's do something, let's change things, let's not sit back thinking it's somebody else's job... let's shape things together to make it how we want it to be; a much more worthwhile meaningful existence than sitting and moaning about life really!

However, without a deeper culture of democratic participation, the current inception of You Choose is limited. In addition to issues of exclusion, time constraints for citizens, and parochialism highlighted above, the lack of technical knowledge and the money incentive are also seen as problems. Karen is supportive of You Choose but is also concerned about making sure people have enough information and knowledge to make effective decisions: 'you can end up with an unwise situation where people are putting votes to things that they actually really don't understand'. Similarly, Anita was sceptical about PB being used for mainstream council budgets; 'that's what you pay your Councillors for, that's what you pay the council workers for; that's their decision... You'd never get an agreement [between the public]!'

A Councillor was sceptical about the opportunities for developing You Choose to reach the wider public and prospects for a more participatory democratic culture: '[each You Choose has around] 150 people out of... 9,000 [in the Councillor's ward]. 150 might think we're the best thing since sliced bread, but 8,850 don't even know we've done it, and they're not even bothered we've done it'. Clive questioned whether using monetary incentives to

support local groups is appropriate for citizens to reflectively vote on funding with the public good in mind:

the interest many of the people; it's not in this participative democracy; it's getting their money for their particular project... everyone went for the maximum [amount of money]... I don't think that this is necessarily a good thing, that hey presto exactly the amount of money they need for the project is the amount on offer and if it is £500 less they would've gone for that, £500 more they would've gone for that. So I think in terms of the economics of it it's not a very good system.

This suggests that a development of You Choose to be a more flexible and involved deliberative process might allow participants to question the content of bids more, and have more agency in allocating different amounts to different groups.

This section has discussed issues relating to You Choose's participatory democracy, highlighting transparency, trust, critical reflection and active participation in the vote, using local knowledge and developing social relationships between citizens based on equality and solidarity as positive aspects associated with the PB process. However, on the other hand, issues to do with exclusion, wider inequalities, council control over the process, concerns about the technical knowledge required, monetary incentives, and parochialism are limitations of You Choose. This suggests that changes in public perceptions, more openness of information, and equipping citizens with technical knowledge, along with changes in political culture, council structures and practices, would be required should Tameside Council and the public seek to develop deeper citizen participation in local democracy through a more extensive PB.

Social Empowerment

There are also opportunities for empowerment within this form of participatory democracy, despite the issues described above. This section discusses three dimensions of empowerment that are intrinsic to the institutional design of You Choose: voting, critical engagement and

strengthening local groups. Then it discusses four dimensions that are unintentional by-products that are ancillary to You Choose: self-development, awareness, networking and community participation. While the former have been purposefully included in the design of You Choose by the Council, the latter have emerged from the participatory democratic setting as a ‘spin off’ from the Council’s intentions. Table 7.5 highlights these seven dimensions. They are *incipient* because they indicate potential for social empowerment, rather than a full realisation of the concept. Deepening participatory democracy is necessary to encourage some of the qualities that characterise social empowerment, such as autonomy, control and ownership (see Chapters 3 and 6).

Table 7.5: Incipient Dimensions of Social Empowerment in You Choose

Intrinsic empowerment	Voting		Critical engagement		Strengthening local groups
Ancillary empowerment	Self-development (confidence and assertiveness)	Awareness of local community	Networking		Community participation

Given that only two annual You Choose cycles have taken place, these findings are tentative indications of the extent to which You Choose has potential for social empowerment. If the process continues to develop over a number of years, further longitudinal studies of the impact that You Choose has for the community could enhance these findings.

Intrinsic Empowerment

The previous section highlighted how those that took the vote seriously were critically and reflectively engaged in local democracy. The opportunity to participate in the vote was viewed as empowering and significantly different to Lynsey’s experience of recent politics:

over the last twenty or thirty years of my adult life I have always felt a little bit patronised by politicians: ‘let the little people have their say but we’ll ignore them’... but in *this* I *really* felt as if I was listened to, and I obviously was listened to, and so were the other people there, because we voted, *our* votes were counted and we were told the results there and then. That is *so empowering*, I felt *great*, they’ve listened to me, they’ve heard me, and they’re doing it!

This sense of empowered participation also encourages citizens to be critical about the process and local government, and may lead to a desire for more participation (as Barber suggested in Chapter 4 that experiencing democratic participation creates an appetite for more democracy).

Critical engagement was important for Gavin, a member of a community news group, who reflected Barber’s perspective: ‘once you... start letting *people* decide... people want more... it’s like when you give people a bit of education, they start asking questions and they don’t accept what was going on before, and they start challenging’. This view is also reflected by a member of T3SC:

right from the start, people ask really good questions, and once they take part they ask even better questions about ‘how is that being decided?’, and ‘who is making that decision?’, ‘is that the best way?’ and ‘could we do this more?’... for there to be *real* democracy, for there to be real participation, we need people’s skills and understandings to be increased.

This suggests that in the right circumstances You Choose has the potential to develop into a more empowering process of participatory democracy, reflecting the educative aspects of democratic participation highlighted by Pateman and Schugurensky in Chapter 4. In a discussion on whether power is effectively decentralised in You Choose, a Councillor stated that ‘[e]mpowering community groups to me is not decentralising [power], but at least its giving them a *bigger* say in what is happening in their community than they would have voting once every year for a Councillor or an MP’. Again, Gavin: ‘people *do* feel empowered there, but... *feeling* empowered doesn’t mean you are’. The limits are described by Sally as an absence of citizen control over the process:

you had a chance to go along and vote for what you like, but [the council] had already sorted out who was going to be allowed to be in that selection, so it wasn't a *totally* free decision. I might have wanted to vote for one of those people that didn't make it through the selection panel if I'd known about them.

In the application process where groups are required to develop a formal structure, which in time may strengthen groups in the local area, making them more stable and secure. A Council Officer described this:

part of the process [is that] groups have to be constituted, they have to have a bank account and... one of the criticisms of PB [is] getting small groups to be constituted, but actually... groups were constituting themselves, getting organised, getting bank accounts in order to apply for this money, and so it gave them some kind of formal footing, and it gave them some legitimacy, and it gave them a structure.

This is reflected in Dorothy's endorsement of the groups that have gone through the assessment process and presented. This ensured that 'it's a proper organised group that need the money and are going to spend it in the right way'. However, as discussed in the section on participatory democracy, a negative aspect of the requirement that groups be formally structured is that smaller and more socially excluded groups that aren't on the Tameside Council and T3SC radars could be excluded from You Choose. These aspects of empowerment are embedded within the institutional design of You Choose. This suggests the potential of You Choose for developing empowering structures that facilitate greater meaningful citizen involvement and social empowerment.

Ancillary Empowerment

The organisation of the event and democratic relations involved create ancillary possibilities for the development of social empowerment, including self-development, awareness, networking and increased community participation. Presenting to the community in a democratic setting can contribute to self-development through improving citizens' capabilities for communicating their aims confidently, and with assertiveness. As Lysney highlighted in the democracy section, the sense of presenting amongst equals

in the community is likely to increase feelings of empowerment. Josie described how it felt to present to the community; 'it's not my comfort area, but I've purposely done it 'cause I thought right, experience something new, push myself out there'. For Harry, taking part as a group can improve people's confidence through 'actually *feeling* an endorsement from the community... the community are glad we are doing this and so let's do *more* of it'.

Tom described the effect that presenting to the community and winning funding had on his co-presenter in terms of her self-confidence:

the young person that I [presented] with... she is in foster care, she has had a bit of a tough time and she really didn't want to do it [but] she did it... that was only three weeks ago, the event, and you can see there's a little bit more confidence, little bit of a swagger in her walk, and that little cocksureness of her... as if to say, 'yeah if I can stand there in front of all them and do that, I can do anything'.

Susan agreed that taking part in You Choose and feeling equal to others can empower people in vulnerable circumstances, through self-validation and being valued by others:

until you actually experience [it], you don't really understand what people's needs [are] or how it feels to put that back in the hands of the people. Not only would you be better able to meet their needs, I also think it's this reflective process whereby to get a vulnerable or disadvantaged person to be able to say 'I need this', and identify what they need is really empowering... and know that actually by saying it is going to make a difference. I think just by valuing them enough, or recognising them enough, to be able to say 'tell us what you need' is massive... because I think a lot of the things when people are vulnerable, or really disadvantaged, I think they lack confidence and self-esteem... that's very validating to be able to say 'yeah, this is me, and I actually, this would help me'.

This could encourage individuals to become more assertive and engaged in their communities. A council officer explained why this would be desirable: 'anything which makes Tameside people think that they can have a voice, and they can have good aspirations [is good]'.

Participating in You Choose empowers people with greater knowledge and awareness of the activities taking part in the local area. This can also encourage groups as part of greater efforts to improve the local area, building solidarity in the local community. Echoing comments made by others, Nigel described his surprise at the range of local groups: ‘even though I have been on the District Assembly, I did *not* realise just *how* much was going on in my own town. That was remarkable’.

Susan stated that participating in You Choose ‘raise[s] awareness in the community about projects, but also it encourages other people to reflect on the value of what is going on... it might inspire people to get involved’. Mary developed an increased awareness of groups that are vital for vulnerable citizens in the area:

there were groups there I didn’t even know existed and I didn’t realise how poor some of these areas were, so like the food bank, which you just don’t imagine. I don’t know if I walk around with my eyes shut, but I don’t expect that to be happening in this day and age, that people *do* desperately need food.

A Councillor also emphasised how this critical awareness can translate into a greater understanding of the needs of the community:

the knock-on benefits of You Choose are phenomenal really. Not only is it benefitting the community, its improving their basic understanding of what community is all about... it helps them to identify needs in their own area.

For Tom, this increased awareness could translate into a greater sense of social solidarity and shared identity between people:

although you have an idea of what a group is about you will *never* understand or know about that group till you... go and spend some time at an event like this where they’ll have a placard up with all the information... it’s about building that community spirit, togetherness... a sense of well-being... a sense of ‘I’m part of that’.

Karen also pointed out that building a sense of solidarity on the day had to be carefully managed due to the competitive nature of the process; ‘T3SC were...

encouraging people not to see other groups as the enemy but to actually see them as people who are proactive in this community’.

Along with awareness, the democratic setting and the sense of equality amongst citizens creates the conditions in which groups may become more assertive and collaborate by networking. Anita argued that networking is a feature of community organisation irrespective of the participatory democratic setting, and stated that ‘if you put the people that were there together in any room it would happen’. However, a Council Officer disagrees, highlighting the more interactive nature of You Choose ‘I don’t think it necessarily would [happen at any event] because if you just put them into a room they wouldn’t stand up and do presentations to each other’.

Clive expanded on this theme by pointing out that ‘after the presentation... people came up and wanted to get involved... they said ‘I didn’t know, can I join or can I get involved?’’. A Councillor also stated that ‘[o]ne of the people from the mums and tots... came to me and said ‘I’ve had a booking for the room!’ ‘cause she plugged it at [You Choose]’. The sense that individuals can approach groups is likely to be enhanced by being a part of a participatory democratic event, especially in view of relational equality and opportunities for more assertiveness.

In addition, while various associations for allotment groups or residents’ groups exist, You Choose allows groups in different areas of voluntary and community activity to network and integrate. Susan highlighted this:

I’ve got ideas from [other groups] for [my music group] which we could probably work with them, so I think you can get more working across projects... you can share resources, whether its human or material of whatever... [Meeting different groups at You Choose has] given me ideas for an entrepreneurial employability skills project so that we can go beyond the music project.

The final ancillary dimension is the potential to increase community participation. Josie describes how participating in You Choose gave her the opportunity to get involved with other groups:

I felt a bit of a buzz about it... I did feel empowered; it then inspired me... they had a leaflet there, a newsletter... I then found some courses... it spurred me on to then thinking 'I could do chair skills', which I attended, and also there are other things going on, so it empowered me to actually go on and maybe look into other areas.

Similarly, Karen saw the possibilities for more groups to organise from participating in You Choose: '[Participants] can see what's possible and it may well be that they think 'right, well next year actually I'll come because I'd like to see this happen... I could form a residents association''.

A T3SC member described how being a part of You Choose and engaging with other groups as equals in the process can translate into wider social solidarity by encouraging individuals and groups to allow others the chance to participate:

some groups said to us 'oh yeah well we were successful at You Choose last year, but because we knew that other groups weren't, we don't want to apply this year we want to let other people have a chance to get money'. Now, you would never have that happen in a normal grants process because you *never* are exposed to the losers, as well as the winners, so the fact that people are being quite *selfless*, even though a lot of those groups will need the money just as much... that shows quite a lot to me that we have actually impacted people quite deeply.

This section has described how participants are empowered through the institutional design of You Choose. This includes the democratic vote, the critical engagement that this encourages, and strengthening of local voluntary and community groups. In addition, unintended effects of the democratic process are the potential for self-development, especially in terms of confidence and assertiveness, an increased awareness of local activities, networking (suggesting an increase in social integration), and an increase in community participation. The potential for social empowerment is enhanced by the crucial role that relational egalitarianism and social solidarity plays in the democratic setting. However, these findings must be tempered by the transitory and limited nature of You Choose participation - stemming from a lack of citizen control over the process as a whole and the relatively slimmed down variant of PB used. This point is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

Conclusion

This case study has analysed the participatory democratic nature of a 'community grants at the local level' PB process. In its most successful period, the original Porto Alegre model was shown to advance the aims of social justice, grassroots democracy, and citizen control. Although You Choose is taking place in very different societal conditions, it is suggested that this much narrower process of participatory democracy promotes equality and solidarity in social relationships, can be inclusive, encourages critical engagement and community participation, and creates a positive view of local democracy. Some of the negative aspects are exclusion of already socially excluded groups, the impact of wider inequalities, and parochialism. This is happening in the context of growing societal disillusionment and anger at political, media, and economic elites in the UK (Hay, 2007). The use of You Choose in this context begs the question raised by Blakey (2007) of whether PB in the UK is a technical fix for an increasingly discredited political system, or whether it is a genuinely new and radical innovation which could transform politics and empower communities.

Key to answering this is the concept of social empowerment. As social empowerment from a social quality perspective (Chapter 3) is concerned how social relations can enhance personal capabilities and abilities, the second focus of this case study has been on participation in the social relations of You Choose, and the relationships that the democratic setting facilitates. It has been suggested that there is evidence of incipient social empowerment in the aspects of voting, critical engagement, strengthening groups, self-development, awareness, networking, and increased community participation. Although voting, critical engagement and strengthening groups are directly related to the democratic process, and the other dimensions are unintentional ancillary factors which You Choose encourages, and this emerges through the development of relational egalitarianism and solidarity between citizens participating.

These dimensions contain much potential for social empowerment should You Choose continue and grow to include more citizens or more decision-making areas of local government. However, empowerment is limited by an absence of democratic citizen control over the process. This is apparent in many of the critical statements made by participants questioning the organisation of the event, selection process, establishment of community strategy priorities, and amount of funds allocated to different District Assemblies. In addition, participation is transitory given that the vote takes place once a year for citizens in the eight District Assemblies. This suggests that the regular interaction of citizens and council needed for a stronger culture of democratic participation is far from being realised. Along with this is the question of whether there is sufficient desire amongst the local population, and within Tameside Council, to change local politics in this way.

On the other hand, the source of funding and advertising of You Choose based on 'you recycle, you choose' suggests that a tangible link between citizens' actions in recycling efforts across the borough creates a burgeoning sense of ownership over You Choose funds, and a right to have a say over how they are spent. This indicates that while You Choose may be to an extent a technical fix, especially given the reduced funds for voluntary and community activity supplied by national government, and its increased transparency compared with local questions over the closed-door nature of previous community funding, it also contains much potential. This is especially so in terms of creating more social empowerment and active participation in local decision-making by improving self-confidence and assertiveness, creating greater awareness of local community activity, possibly more community participation, networking and social integration between groups, formally strengthening groups, and a desire for more participation amongst many interviewees. However, without demands and activism from organised civil society actors similar to those found in Porto Alegre in the 1980s, further deepening of participatory democracy and social empowerment in future would depend on the politics and power of Tameside Council, and the enthusiasm of third sector partners, such as T3SC, to instigate this kind of transformation.

Chapter 8

Optimising the Democratic Dialectic: Social Empowerment in the Workplace and Local Community

Introduction

The discussion of participatory democracy and dialectical values that underpin it in Chapters 4 and 5 has described how the expansion of participation in social and economic contexts could optimise the democratic dialectic. The case studies presented in Chapters 6 and 7 of workplace democracy and local community democracy have investigated this in an economic context and in a civil society-local government context. Both case studies have focused on describing the nature of the participatory democratic settings and the experiences that interviewees have had in these settings with attention to the relationships between democratic structures, democratic practices, human actions, and social empowerment.

This chapter brings together the discussion so far. It links the theoretical exploration of social empowerment, participatory democracy and the democratic dialectic to the empirical findings. The implications of this for the wider democratic complexion of the UK are considered in the concluding chapter. This chapter firstly restates the key findings of the two participatory democratic settings and relates them to the values of liberty, equality and solidarity as part of the democratic dialectic (Chapter 5). Secondly, it discusses evidence of social empowerment in the two democratic settings. Thirdly, differences and similarities between the two cases are briefly compared. Fourthly, by returning to the discussion in Chapter 2 on the philosophical foundations of the thesis, the critical realism and social quality perspectives that underpin the cases are discussed in relation to the findings.

The Democratic Dialectic in Suma and You Choose

Chapter 5 posits that liberal and social democratic societies fail to realise their democratic potential. Analysed in terms of the democratic dialectic values of liberty, equality and solidarity, a third participatory typology is proposed for the optimisation of these values. From the social quality perspective, these values are not properties belonging to individuals but emerge out of social relations. This section addresses each value in turn and discusses the extent to which the two case studies evidence the participatory democratic values of freedom as self-development, equality as relational egalitarianism and solidarity as system and social integration. The evidence for this is displayed in Table 8.1 below, while criticisms of the two settings are also discussed.

Freedom

For the optimisation of the democratic dialectic freedom is redefined from negative liberty (liberal democracy) or positive liberty (social democracy) to a view of freedom as self-development, which includes both negative and positive senses, but recognises the social relational aspect of the concept. Avoiding the strong pre-social liberal individualism of negative liberty (Berlin, 2002) and residual individualism of positive liberty (Green, 1997) by conceptualising humans as social individuals, freedom is viewed by Gould (1988) as self-development.

In terms of structure, this necessitates a presence of enabling conditions (positive liberty) as well as an absence of constraining conditions (negative liberty), and in terms of agency, this requires the freedom to self-develop by actions and processes of improving capacities and abilities through social relationships (Gould, 1988). This conception recognises the limits of viewing emancipation as the end of progressive social change, which has libertarian implications (Sayer, 2011). Instead, freedom within the democratic dialectic recognises the inherent interdependence and reliance on others in social relationships for realising the self in democratic society (or constitutive

interdependency in social quality terms, discussed below). As argued in Chapter 5, participatory democracy, and its associated values of equality and solidarity, is posited as a locus for enabling this conception of freedom.

Table 8.1 Democratic Dialectic Values in the Two Case Studies

Dialectical values of the participatory democracy typology	Suma	You Choose
Self-development (freedom)	Job mobility (multi-skilling and job rotation), opportunities to learn new skills and take on responsibilities (self-management), links to social empowerment dimensions of autonomy, flexibility, self-development and ownership.	Increased community involvement, opportunities to develop capacities, assertiveness, confidence and knowledge. Links to empowerment values of critical engagement, self-development, awareness and increased community participation.
Relational egalitarianism (equality)	Equal wages, equal votes, equal status of job roles, reflexivity about threat of hierarchies (formal and informal), links to all social empowerment dimensions. Egalitarian culture fundamental to Suma.	Formal equality of presentations and voting process, some relational egalitarianism between participants, but inequalities of access and capabilities. Links to empowerment values of voting, self-development, networking and community participation.
System and social integration (solidarity)	Democratic structure (system) and democratic relationships (social), shared ownership and control, links to social empowerment dimensions of security, stability and collective identity (solidaristic bases of social empowerment).	Strengthening groups and inclusion in democratic structure (system), increasing networks and community participation, collective identity (social). Links to empowerment values of critical engagement, wider awareness, strengthening groups, networking, and increasing community participation.

In Suma freedom is apparent in how the structure of the organisation provides the positive conditions for job mobility through the practices of multi-skilling and job rotation, and opportunities for learning new skills. The Suma case study describes instances where individuals have experienced a wide range of

jobs from manual to office-based over their working lives, increasing holistic awareness of the business and a general acceptance of the principles of multi-skilling and job rotation by members as a necessary aspect of a democratic workplace, despite some concerns over efficiency (the desire for specialisation and market principles).

This is linked to agential opportunities secured by the democratic right to undertake (also effectively the right to choose not to undertake) a wide range of activities in the workplace, described in Suma as self-management. In principle, no single Suma member has the authority to instruct another to carry out another task as all are equal owners of the business. Even in the situation where a Function Area Co-ordinator (FAC) asks a member to carry out a task, this is based on a co-operative understanding of the need to work together and that the role of FAC is to co-ordinate the work, rather than a demarcation of status. Guy (p.172) pointed out that those who 'act like a boss' will struggle to be successful in Suma, and for those taking on co-ordinating roles, actually letting go of authoritative power in favour of collaborative working can make the organisation stronger.

This view of self-management therefore does not prescribe an atomistic understanding of individuals. Indeed, the Suma members' job description (which has been subject to democratic agreement) describes a number of relationships that comprise the activity of self-management, including communication, acknowledging, respecting and considering the views of others and a strong sense of work as a collective endeavour, alongside individual actions such as undergoing training, accepting responsibility and participating in the democratic process. As self-development, this encourages the improvement of capabilities in the democratic workplace. For participatory democracy in Suma negative liberty and positive liberty are enhanced by freedom in the social relational sense.

In You Choose, opportunities for freedom as self-development are limited by the transitory participation that people have in the once yearly votes, Council control over it, and the relatively procedural nature of the process. The

design of the democratic innovation involves citizens directly in the vote, but the process is carefully managed by the Council and there are no opportunities for citizens to reflexively challenge and change aspects of You Choose. Some interviewees were critically engaged and questioned the source of funding, allocation mechanism, scope of PB and the local area priorities that You Choose was established to address. This indicates a desire by some for more involvement in the design and administration of You Choose which could increase self-development. Other participants were sceptical though, and doubt the capacities of 'ordinary' people to draw on the technical knowledge required, preferring elected representatives and Council Officers to have control over You Choose and other areas of local decision-making. This suggests scepticism of the educative function of participatory democracy described in Chapter 4 (though this could also stem from unfamiliarity with learning through participation, the limited model of PB used, the wider combination of liberal democratic and social democratic values, and especially, the pervasive influence of neo-liberal thinking in Britain (Chapter 5)).

An absence of citizen control over the process suggests significant constraining conditions in You Choose, but there are also enabling conditions for self-development, suggesting that some aspects of the relational concept of freedom are present. Participants discovered more opportunities for community involvement and development of capabilities by attending You Choose. For example, in the case study Josie (p.241) described how participating in the vote encouraged her to take some courses and attend other groups, enhancing her well-being.

The democratic process has the potential to increase relational freedom by increasing feelings of assertiveness, confidence and a sense of validation from presenting amongst equals and securing the votes of others in the community. Tom (p.238) noticed that the young woman that he presented with had become more assertive and confident following participation and success in You Choose, despite her prior reluctance to take part. Based on the accounts of interviewees, this sense of self-development as enabling individuals to

expand capacities (Gould, 1988) is tentative but may arise from You Choose, especially in relation to those from disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds.

Equality

Relational egalitarianism (Anderson, 1999) is described in Chapter 5 as conducive to the optimisation of the democratic dialectic. Unlike the 'starting-gate' luck egalitarianism prescribed by social democracy or the residual equality of libertarian entitlement rights in liberal democracy, relational egalitarianism draws on Tawney's (1952, p.38) classic view of a universal equality of 'circumstances, institutions and manner of life'. Where libertarian views such as that of Nozick (1973, 1974) require, at minimum, equality of rights (but not means) to acquire private property with at best, a residual welfare state (liberal democracy) and luck egalitarianism advocates a stronger form of welfare state that mitigates 'bad brute luck' in capitalist societies but not bad choices made by responsible individuals (Dworkin, 1981a, 1981b), relational egalitarianism is concerned with the social relationships in which goods are distributed in society (as well as the actual distribution of goods) (Anderson, 1999).

This links relational egalitarianism to democracy and freedom as self-development as it requires that every person stands in a relationship of equal respect and moral worth and the abolition of oppressive relationships (Anderson, 1999). This suggests attention to social structure and the transformation of institutions, norms and practices towards egalitarianism and participation rather than rival conceptions of the extent of equal distribution of goods sufficient for representative democracy. A key aspect of relational egalitarianism is that it reduces the chances of 'commodifying social status, political influence, and the like' (Anderson, 1999, p.326). By standing in relationships of equality, individuals and groups would not be able to convert superior income and wealth into inequalities of status or political power, but would have the freedom for self-development.

Equality is fundamental for Suma and the case study describes an egalitarian culture that has underpinned the structural transformation of the organisation since 1977, the commitment to democracy in the workplace, and to a large extent, the day-to-day practices and experiences of members. However, this is tempered by the impact of informal hierarchies and class relationships determined to an extent by wider British society and culture, which suggests the need for participatory democratic values to take hold at the societal level (Chapter 9). Within Suma, a reflexive attention to minimising status inequalities suggests the presence of relational egalitarianism as equal respect and moral worth.

The reconfiguration of the participatory structure has been a means of avoiding degeneration to the capitalist form (Cornforth, 1995). Suma was founded on the principle of democratic equality but has had to undergo three major organisational changes in order to address concerns about an elite or 'old boys network' coming to dominate the co-op (Jones, 1998, p.223), especially with the expansion of membership from seven founders to over 120 in 2012. This involved changes from direct democracy to participatory democracy with delegated representation in two models, firstly, the 'hub and sector' model and secondly, the current flat management structure. For Macfarlane (1987), these changes have encouraged a more co-operative and collectivist ethos. Through structural changes then, an egalitarian culture has been entrenched in Suma.

The egalitarian culture is underpinned by formal equality of wages. The acceptance and legitimacy of equal wages is supported by the opportunity for job mobility. This indicates an interdependency between freedom as self-development and relational egalitarianism in Suma. Interviewees generally shared a commitment to equal wages, with an acceptance that at some stages of their working lives and in certain roles they are effectively underpaid, and at other times overpaid. At different times in the members' lives they can choose to take on responsibility or take a step back and 'go back to the [warehouse] floor' without financial penalty, rather than be forced to quit the co-op (Malcolm, p.177). This not only highlights the flexibility of a democratic

egalitarian organisation but also shows how stability and security contribute to solidarity at Suma (discussed below). Key is the respect for each member as an equal 'link in the chain' (Christine, p.175) or respect for the different types of work that contribute to the collective (Paul, p.175), which justify equal wages. This suggests equal respect and moral worth is supported by Suma's equal wage structure.

There is a basic democratic principle of equal votes in Suma. Though the case study describes a sense of formality of the voting process at QGMs, much debate takes place in lunch time forums and in informal decision-making on a daily basis. Examples are used in the case study of Suma members building consensus on a decision in day-to-day interaction with others. On the one hand, this can give democratic legitimacy as each member has an opportunity to influence decisions that affect them and 'higher quality' decisions result from majority support (David, p.182). However, on the other hand, this process suggests the capacity for charismatic or articulate members of the co-op to take the lead in decision-making. This is reflected in the view that Suma creates the conditions for people to become empowered, but individual characteristics and the individual's background also enable certain people to make better use of the structures of the co-op than others. This isn't necessarily a problem as highlighted by Walker and Walker (2011) in Chapter 1 the difference between equality of conditions and equality of abilities suggests that only the former must be defended.

Both equal wages and equal votes ground the egalitarian culture in the democratic structure of Suma, but the practice of job roles being seen as 'functions' rather than 'status roles' also indicates relational egalitarianism. This is elaborated by Malcolm (p.173), who described how in one role he may ask another member to complete a task for him, but in the same week, the other member might, in the role of FAC, ask Malcolm to carry out a task. Taken together, formal equality in the structure provides the conditions for relational egalitarianism in the form of the absence of hierarchies and status roles. Although there are informal hierarchies, threats to the democratic

setting are reduced due to the principles of consensus-based decision-making, democratic votes and delegated representation (described in Chapter 6).

You Choose displays formal equality in the processes of presenting (three minutes per group) and voting (one person, one vote). The event is also open to anyone who lives in the postcode area to attend and vote, indicating the inclusiveness of You Choose. This was reflected on by Tom (p.229), who considered everyone present entitled to an equal vote 'regardless of their walk of life'. This is seen in the case study as 'foundational' to the event, along with the requirement that citizens allocate a vote (involving a reflective process of answering questions related to the project) to every group that presents. Though it may be offset by the affiliation of a vast majority of participants with at least one group taking part, this voting process deepens the sense of formal voting equality by asking people to reflectively consider the merits and demerits of each group equally, rather than only voting for their preferred groups and ignoring others. Almost all of the participants interviewed in the case study said that they approached this task seriously and considered all groups equally (beyond their affiliated group).

Access is a further issue for formal equality in You Choose and the case study indicates a mixed picture here. On the one hand, there is a basic equality that any voluntary or community group with finances below £50,000 in the local area can apply for You Choose funds, provided that they meet certain legality criteria. But on the other hand, wider socio-economic barriers restrict this access: groups already socially excluded are likely to be excluded from You Choose. Groups that don't feel that they have the capabilities to write bids, present and bring supporters are likely to be excluded, along with the possibility of digital exclusion as much You Choose information is online.

Building on the formal equality of the event for those that do apply (and are shortlisted by the assessment panel) relational egalitarianism between participants is described in the case study. This was located by Lynsey (p.231) in the sense that groups were presenting and voting amongst equals: 'peers, friends and neighbours'. This was also traced to the shared process, sense of

togetherness and by not seeing other groups as competitors but 'in the same boat' (Rebecca, p.231), which also indicates social integration (discussed below).

A criticism was raised about the role of the Councillors. Interviewees were more positive about individual Councillors who they viewed as being amongst the people (by dressing less formally and sitting with the voters) rather than 'leaders' of the process at the front of the hall. The case study suggests that formal and relational equality are both integral to empowerment. Structural changes to the process and greater relational egalitarianism in Council-public relationships could deepen citizen participation and control, increasing the possibilities for social empowerment. Though, such changes are likely to occur as part of broader social and political changes that encourage stronger political will and social mobilisation.

Solidarity

The third constitutive value of the democratic dialectic is solidarity. Liberal democracy includes solidarity insofar as it is a by-product of individual rational utility-maximisation: people seeking competitive advantage. This is seen by Coleman (1988, 1990) as the existence of trust, obligations and social norms that facilitate social capital. Such a view is bound up with freedom as negative liberty, equality as libertarian rights and solidarity insofar as it is a means towards individual success in a market society (under the influence of neo-liberalism this becomes anti-solidarity). This is contrasted with the social democratic variant of solidarity in the late twentieth century as social capital (Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000). This view sees social capital as social glue that creates networks between groups and bonds within groups, and such a civil society positively supports the social democratic ideal of capitalism buttressed by a strong welfare state (Putnam, 1995). However, it is argued in Chapter 5 that the adoption of the language and concepts of neo-liberal capitalism and the residual individualism of social capital weakens the democratic value of solidarity.

In contrast to these is the social and system integration perspective on solidarity which develops the concept of social citizenship (Lockwood, 1996, 1999; Marshall, 1992). This perspective distinguishes between social integration as individual relationships that range between social cohesion and social dissolution and system integration as institutional relations within a society on a continuum between civic integration and civic dissolution. Beck et al. (2001) add to this the relational and temporal aspect of structure and agency in realist terms (Chapter 2) which indicates that to move along the continuum towards both social cohesion and civic integration in democratic societies, participation by humans in economic, political, social and cultural life is necessary. This also develops Marshall's (1981; 1992) view of social rights as part of the process of self-realisation. Such a view grounds the optimisation of the democratic dialectic by emphasising system integration and social relationships between members of a society in participatory democratic institutions and structures that encourage self-development within relationships of equal respect and moral worth.

For Suma, social and system integration are apparent in the social relationships between members and in the democratic structure. As described above equal wages and votes encourage an egalitarian culture with an emphasis on democratic participation. In addition, collective and democratic member ownership and control over work practices, norms and rules of the organisation enhance in-work welfare and contribute to stability, security and collective identity, described in the case study as the solidaristic bases of social empowerment. This indicates the link between participatory democracy and social empowerment and is discussed below.

These factors are posited to be conducive to solidarity as social and system integration. However, relating to social integration, some members (and non-members) are less included in day-to-day decision-making at Suma, especially those who work primarily in manual areas of the business. Nevertheless, the interviewees responded that the majority of members do multi-skill and rotate jobs and are likely to have opportunities to participate, enhancing social cohesion within Suma. This serves to emphasise the point that

egalitarian principles and practices, coupled with the freedom to self-develop can encourage more 'empathy' for other members (Neil, p.179), which in turn can increase solidarity.

Participation in system and social integration that produces civic integration and social cohesion can be assessed in You Choose. As discussed above, within the democratic setting the emphasis on formal equality in the structure of the event is to some extent integrative for the groups that participate. To be selected for the event groups must be formally constituted and have a bank account. Along with the validation that successful groups get from the democratic vote (Harry, p.238) this technical requirement has the potential to strengthen groups and embed them within wider civil society in the local area. In addition to this, the requirement that all participants vote for each group (an aspect of equality) increases awareness of the work of the groups in the area. These system integration factors provide the conditions for social integration.

There is potential for social integration as participating in the vote increases opportunities for citizens to engage in more community participation and the sense of 'togetherness' (Rebecca, p.231), 'community spirit' (Tom, p.239), and shared experience of the process (Susan, p.231) encourage networking between groups. The case study describes potential projects that were facilitated by participation in You Choose, such as a music group putting on a concert for the local scout groups (Susan, p.240). This indicates the potential for a greater collective identity both within You Choose (as equal participants) and outside it (as members of civil society). However, a caveat to this is the risk of parochialism in voting decisions (for example, groups from the Audenshaw area lost out at the vote held in the Denton area of the Denton and Audenshaw district). Also, the exclusion of some smaller, less constituted and confident groups and competition (in the context of increasingly scarce local government funds) may have negative effects on the generation of solidarity through system and social integration in You Choose.

Assessment of Dialectic Values

Having considered the extent to which the three participatory democratic values are present in the two cases it can be stated that Suma displays very strongly the conditions for the optimisation of the democratic dialectic. Relational egalitarianism is the central core to Suma's participatory democracy. The culture of equality, as evidenced both formally in institutional design and also in the values and practices of Suma members in rejecting status roles and reflexively transforming the structures of the organisation over time to reduce the influence of power hierarchies and cliques, underpins the other values of the democratic dialectic. This is tempered by the exclusion of some members and non-members from Suma, often on the basis of informal hierarchies, class backgrounds and personal preferences for more remote manual work. This is considered in the case study to be largely the result of factors extrinsic to Suma's democracy. This could be negated if participatory democratic values were present more widely in especially the economy, politics and, moreover, society.

In the case of You Choose the picture is less clear. Both formal and relational equality are aspects of its participatory democracy, and solidarity is present both in the event (collective identity and togetherness) and in the wider Tameside community (increased opportunities for community participation). Although, whether there actually is a significant increase in wider community involvement as a result of You Choose is beyond the remit of this case study. The accounts provided by interviewees in this case study suggest that positive effects from You Choose are greater awareness and participation. Freedom as self-development is also present but less realised than in Suma, mainly due to the lack of citizen control of You Choose. The democratic dialectic in You Choose is less optimised due to this and is skewed more towards solidarity and equality than freedom as self-development.

Social Empowerment in Suma and You Choose

Social empowerment is discussed in Chapter 3 as a development of the realist theory of power (Isaac 1987a, 1987b; Bates, 2010). Unlike individualist theories of power, such as those in the 'faces of power' debate (Dahl, 1957; Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Lukes, 2005), realist power sees social power as relating to the social identities of individuals as participants in non-determined (Barbalet, 1985), and socially structured and culturally patterned relationships (Isaac, 1987a). From the social quality perspective, social empowerment focuses this conception of power on positive social change: 'the degree to which the personal capabilities and the ability of people to act are enhanced by social relations' (Herrmann, 2012, p.202).

From the analysis so far in this chapter it is apparent that the optimisation of the democratic dialectic values in Suma's participatory democratic structures provides the conditions to realise multiple dimensions of social empowerment. These include security, stability and collective identity as solidaristic bases of social empowerment that support individual engagement in the democratic process. Passive dimensions of social empowerment; autonomy, welfare and flexibility, are possible for all workers (and especially members) as they require relatively little engagement with Suma's participatory democracy. Active dimensions of social empowerment are available for members that actively participate. These are self-development, ownership and control. Though social empowerment is formally present, individuals may be limited by their preferences, informal hierarchies, class backgrounds and habituation to workplace democracy.

The case study of Suma indicates the presence of social empowerment as bound up with the participatory democratic structure, and this can also be understood in terms of the realist concern with structure and agency. The changes to the participatory democratic structure over time has reduced the capacity for individuals to have 'power over' others, although at times cliques have come to dominate the co-op. Reflexive attention to this has enabled the members to transform the structures of Suma towards a more egalitarian and

solidaristic system that broadly provides the conditions for freedom as self-development. However, a tension exists between the enabling conditions of social empowerment and the capability (even desire) of individuals to make use of them.

While the solidaristic bases of social empowerment provide the conditions to integrate individuals within the group through a sense of security, stability and collective identity, this also provides the conditions for individuals to become empowered. While non-members may be less secure, job security is provided in the form of democratic ownership and relatedly, no threat of the sack (except for gross misconduct) and the openness of financial information (which limits the chances of sudden redundancies or staff cutbacks). There is a strong sense of pride in Suma which also allows individuals to identify with democratically derived decisions. In terms of stability, individuals in Suma cannot force through changes without democratic consent. Therefore, democracy acts as a check against instability and risk-taking behaviour, and indicates that system integration is related to the democratic structure. This solidarity also provides the conditions for social empowerment.

The passive (or primary) dimensions of social empowerment are autonomy, welfare and flexibility. Membership of Suma is conditional for primary social empowerment (although non-members may have some flexibility and welfare in work). Autonomy is social relational due to the emphasis on the embeddedness of individuals within the group. This autonomy emerges from direct participation in the democratic structure, suggesting that control is integral to social empowerment, but also from day-to-day autonomy in most work (less likely in manual work), which relates to self-management. Although the case study states that this is enabled by the democratic right to autonomous working practices, individuals have different capabilities to achieve autonomy. Extrinsic factors were cited by Alice (p.193) such as confidence, previous co-operative experience and 'nice middle class' communication skills. This suggests that the democratic setting creates formal conditions for autonomy but an unequal experience of this is had by Suma members.

Welfare in work is also secured by democratic control by the membership. The benefits of membership allow individuals to control and shape their everyday working lives in practical terms. The Personnel Department plays a crucial role in co-ordinating this on a daily basis. Overall democratic control negates the need to generate profit for external share-holders but also means that Suma can maintain a high wage bill, decent pay rises and holiday entitlements. This also links to security for Suma members: whatever job function they undertake the wage remains the same, though remuneration in terms of job satisfaction and skill development may vary.

Flexibility is supported by multi-skilling and job rotation. As many members rotate through the job functions, this allows a greater flexibility with regards to illness and life circumstances that might restrict the capabilities of individuals to fulfil a particular job at a given point in time. This is a further primary dimension of social empowerment that is conferred by overall democratic control and the emphasis on self-development in the co-op. These three dimensions are available to individuals by virtue of their membership as democratic equals in Suma and again highlight the tension between the socially empowering structure and individual capabilities to achieve these aspects of social empowerment.

For Suma members that actively participate in decision-making, active (or secondary) dimensions are self-development, ownership and control. Although primary dimensions derive from democratic worker ownership and control, these dimensions are accessible only to those members that have 'bought in' to the egalitarian and participatory culture. Self-development can be considered to be an aspect of social empowerment (as well as participatory democracy) because of the emphasis on enhancing capabilities. Suma supports members to learn new skills (through multi-skilling), to learn ICT skills (a requirement of membership), for non-English speakers to learn the language, and for actively participating members to take on managerial responsibilities (both autonomous self-management and delegated management functions). That said Thomas (p.197) viewed a lack of enthusiasm on the part of some

members to develop these aspects. This could be due to unwillingness to engage with Suma's democracy or the problem of becoming habituated to workplace democracy over a number of years in the co-op and subsequently taking participation for granted. This also suggests a difference between the more passive form of social empowerment and these more active dimensions.

As reflected in the above discussion, the final two dimensions of ownership and control are integral to social empowerment. Co-ops can be democratically owned but not democratically controlled, and this distinction is necessary to highlight both democratic ownership and democratic control in Suma. The structure of Suma's democracy, in which the membership are equally empowered with decision-making power, while responsibility is delegated to representatives in MC and FAC functions (accountable autonomy), ensures that democratic control is conducive to effective empowerment. Moreover, democratic ownership and control reflect relational egalitarianism as Alice (p.199) stated in the case study: 'I have the power to bring about change' and no one is 'in a position to order me to do something or... to treat me without respect because their status is equal to mine'.

Central to the dimensions of social empowerment described above is the tension between empowering democratic structures in the co-op and the capabilities and desire for individuals to take advantage of these opportunities. While the case study indicates that some do not due to personal and extrinsic factors, the emphasis on developing skills and gaining a wide range of knowledge by self-development and the underpinning relational egalitarian culture encourage members of Suma to develop their capabilities and abilities to act in the context of participatory democratic social relations. As discussed in Chapter 5, the emphasis of relational egalitarianism is not on 'simple' equality of outcome or a poorly conceptualised equality as 'sameness', but on equality of conditions and manner of life. Suma broadly achieves this in a way that is socially empowering.

You Choose has less evidence of social empowerment due to the absence of citizen ownership and control over the process. This can be reflected in both

the top-down institutional design and from the absence of bottom-up demands from within civil society (Wright, 2010). Attention to the two aspects of institutional design and societal demands (Chapter 4) is necessary because of the interrelationship between genuine participation in democratic relationships, and the focus of social empowerment on how participatory democratic social relations enhance personal capabilities and abilities to act. Nevertheless, the case study describes voting, critical engagement, strengthening groups, some self-development, awareness, networking and community participation as values of empowerment in You Choose. These are posited as *incipient* dimensions of social empowerment because they are limited but have potential. With the development of a more participative variant of PB (closer to the Porto Alegre model than the World Bank model - Chapter 7) these values could become more *socially* empowering.

There have only been two annual cycles of this relatively small PB process. This suggests that not only deepening the participatory democratic aspects of citizen control, ownership and autonomy would be necessary for social empowerment, but also, increasing citizen awareness and involvement in the process and the expansion of You Choose to consider other areas of local government over time (although there are no indications that the Council are considering this).

The You Choose vote is viewed by some interviewees as a starting point for citizen involvement, which could be developed further. But, for critical engagement to be truly empowering ownership and control could also be necessary, as Sally (p.237) pointed out 'you had a chance to go along and vote... but [the Council] had already sorted out who was going to be allowed to be in that selection'. For others, the democratic vote itself is likely to increase critical engagement in the local area. Echoing the educative function of participatory democracy, Gavin (p.236) argued that people may start asking more questions about local government and the local area and desire more of a say. However, this is tempered by a T3SC member (p.236) who stated in the case study that 'for there to be real participation, we need people's skills and understandings to be increased'. The strengthening of voluntary and

community groups in civil society through the application process was a further dimension, although this could be exclusionary for already socially excluded or very small groups, lacking in network connections, confidence or resources.

Ancillary aspects of empowerment include the value of self-development. This is linked to presenting a project amongst equals in You Choose. The case study argues that this can improve capabilities for formulating and confidently asserting aims and demands by group members. This was evidenced in the statements by Tom and Susan (p.238) which highlighted the positive effect that this had on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who were successful in receiving You Choose funds for their groups. In addition, endorsement of groups by the community through the public vote can empower individuals and groups to continue to be (or become more) engaged in their local communities (Harry, p.238). This was supported by a Council Officer (p.239) who viewed anything that encourages people to have a voice and participate in their local community as a positive for the area.

Increasing awareness of groups by participants can also empower people to take part and strengthen civil society. As stated by Nigel (p.239) in the case study: 'I did *not* realise just how much was going on in my own town'. This has to be a tentative claim given the limits to this case study.

An additional aspect of empowerment is networking. It is suggested in the case study that groups could forge stronger links outside of You Choose for mutual benefit. This could increase social integration in the local area, though it is ultimately the money incentive that draws groups to the PB vote, rather than a desire for more solidarity. These factors combined, as discussed in the democratic dialectic section above, could induce greater community participation, with the associated empowerment that this brings for the local community.

From this discussion of empowerment in You Choose the potential for the more extensive and participatory concept of social empowerment is

tentatively apparent in the structures of the process and experiences of those interviewed for the case study. This would require a significant political decision by Tameside Council to open up to greater citizen ownership, control and autonomy of the PB process (along with a possible expansion of it) and local civil society demands for such involvement, which are presently unforthcoming. While the case study suggests that greater community participation is an outcome of You Choose, there is little evidence of wider social mobilisation in support of participatory budgeting. This is likely to be due to little experience and knowledge of this form of democracy, although those that did take part did express a desire for more participation. Articulating these demands requires much wider and deeper social mobilisation.

Moreover, the source of You Choose funds from the household recycling scheme, along with the advertising slogan '*you* recycle, *you* choose' may create a tangible link between the daily actions of people in recycling household waste and the resulting public money. Development of this aspect of You Choose could increase demands for citizen ownership of the process. As Lynsey (p.215) stated: 'it's *our* money... we should be able to say where it is going'. Underpinning this relatively limited empowerment at present is relational egalitarianism (between citizens, but not between the Council and citizens) and aspects of system and social integration in You Choose. This serves to highlight the link between the democratic dialectic values in the participatory democracy typology and the possibilities that they contain for social empowerment.

Comparing the Case Studies

Although the primary aim of this research is not comparative, but rather to highlight two different examples of participatory democracy in action, some similarities and differences between the cases invite reflection. The approach to this research is similar to that of Pearce (2010a, p.329; 2010b) in that by studying two examples of participatory democracy, the central aim has not

been to compare the cases but to highlight ‘the way in which participation unfolded according to different variables at play in the experiments’.

However, a brief comparison of similarities and differences is especially pertinent given the emphasis on the extension of democracy to the social and economic spheres in participatory democratic theory, and the possibility of participatory democracy at the societal level proposed in Chapter 4. In comparing Suma and You Choose the different societal spheres that these democratic settings exist within can be considered, along with the extent to which participatory democratic values are embedded, their geographical locations and historical contexts, and similarities and differences in their institutional design.

The two cases take place within different societal spheres. Suma relates to the economic sphere and democracy takes place within primarily economic relationships between Suma members. On the other hand, You Choose takes place at the intersection between civil society and local government, which can be considered to consist of social and political relationships between citizens, and between citizens and elected representatives in local government. Pateman (1970) sees workplace democracy as an essential training-ground for developing participatory democracy at the wider level, which allows people to develop their competencies for this form of social relationship through day-to-day experiences. This raises the question of whether members of Suma would also have a desire to take part in participatory budgeting within their local communities, further deepening and extending their experience of participatory democracy.

The less intensive experience of participation in You Choose, and the assertion of several interviewees that this form of participatory democracy has limits, suggests that You Choose has not as yet imbued a thirst for further democratisation of social and economic life. However, the interrelation between workplace democracy and participatory budgeting within a wider participatory model lacks an empirical referent and can only be hinted from theoretical assertions. Chapters 4 and 5 have indicated that the successful

development of more participatory democracy in economic, social and political relationships would necessitate wider structural and value changes in Britain.

Related to the different societal spheres is the extent of the embeddedness of participatory democratic values in everyday life in the cases. As already indicated Suma has a strongly egalitarian culture and is close to optimising the democratic dialectic values, while You Choose indicates some aspects of social integration, relational egalitarianism and self-development, but the full realisation of these is limited by the institutional design of the process, Council control and the absence of civil society mobilisation for participatory democracy. The experience of this form of democracy for You Choose participants in one afternoon-long event, many for the first time in their lives, was miniscule, and only one citizen interviewed mentioned participatory budgeting. This can be compared with the daily immersion of Suma members in the practices of a democratic workplace over years (and for some, decades).

This is likely to have a huge impact on the democratic knowledge and skills of the interviewees, along with influencing their perceptions of the value and viability of participatory democracy. Indeed, the account of the fieldwork in Chapter 2 highlighted how as a consequence of this, different approaches were required by the researcher in the two case studies. While in Suma the participants displayed expert knowledge of workplace democracy, which led the researcher to adopt the role of 'acceptable incompetent', in You Choose many of the participants had little experience of participatory democracy and looked to the researcher as 'expert'.

Both cases are located in Northern England, which has a history of a particular variant of northern socialism that is highly collectivist and often (small 'c') conservative, extending back to the origins of British co-operativism in Rochdale, Lancashire (Birchall, 1997; Salveson, 2012). This suggests that Suma, based in West Yorkshire, and originally founded by members of a housing co-operative in nearby Hebden Bridge, is rooted in this local history,

which could predispose the organisation to co-operative socialist practices. You Choose on the other hand derives from a democratic process initiated in the Global South and transferred to the Global North as part of a technical fix aimed at increasing transparency, rather than a radical innovation (Blakey, 2007, Chapter 7). It has been implemented, like other PB processes in the UK, under the influence of neo-liberal managerial politics, despite being a process initiated by a local left-wing political party in a northern metropolitan borough, the heartlands of English labourism.

The institutional designs of the two cases also differ. You Choose is a direct democracy in the form of the vote with an internally deliberative element involved in the reflexive voting process. While Suma has a similar direct democratic aspect in the Quarterly General Meetings, as described in the case study much decision-making takes place within day-to-day work, and exhibits different aspects of democratic institutional design. The use of delegated representatives (management committee) and the principle of self-management operationalise the approach of 'accountable autonomy' described by Fung (2004) in Chapter 4. Power is effectively decentralised by providing the conditions for Suma members to exercise autonomy in their working lives, while accountability is centralised in the challenging task of co-ordinating collectively derived decisions relating to long-term strategy in the management committee. Given the very different societal spheres it is perhaps unsurprising that the institutional design of the two case studies are different. Nevertheless, these cases show that 'accountable autonomy' can be evidenced in the democratic workplace. The achievement of this in local community democracy in Britain would necessitate two factors: top-down institutional change which requires political will and the restructuring of local government funding mechanisms, and bottom-up grassroots demands for participation which require civil society movements to unite behind a vision of a participatory democratic society. The democratic dialectic and social quality could provide normative bases for the development of these two processes.

The Findings and Social Quality

Returning the ontological and epistemological foundations of this thesis in social quality theory, the case studies and this analysis suggest that participatory democracy is fundamental to the development of social quality in practice. Social empowerment is viewed by Herrmann (2005) as central to the concept of social quality, despite being presented as one among the other conditional factors of socio-economic security, social cohesion and social inclusion in the theory. Therefore, in terms of social empowerment at least, Suma would appear from the above analysis to have a greater social quality than You Choose.

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 it is indicated that participatory democratic theory and practice is strongly related to the social quality theory. This is because of the emphasis on participation conducive to capabilities and well-being in social quality and the presence of the self-transformation thesis and learning through participation as part of participatory democratic theory. In operationalising the notion of participation in social relations that enhance capabilities (social empowerment), the democratic dialectic in Chapter 5 proposes the three values of self-development, relational egalitarianism and social and system integration as fundamental to a concept of democracy that is commensurable with social quality theory. This can be developed by relating the findings to the six assumptions of social quality theory which underpin this research (Chapter 2).

The first assumption is the social nature of human beings (Beck et al., 2012). The social relational implications of this for participatory democracy guide the research. This is distinct from the liberal individualist view of self-realisation as a pre-social or pre-political process (which grounds the liberal democracy and social democracy typologies). Acknowledgement of this has enabled the analysis to consider humans as social beings and highlights interdependent social relationships in the settings.

Constitutive interdependency is a fundamental aspect of social quality and is present in the case studies. This is the second assumption of social quality; that self-realisation for an individual is enabled through interaction with collective identities, especially in the interplay between opportunities (societal processes and biographical processes) and interactions (systems and communities) (Beck et al., 2012). This emphasises contingency, theorises the social as a product of human relationships, and distinguishes social quality from sociological accounts that are either too individualistic or overly structural. In the research the participatory democratic settings are linked to the social quality concern with the configuration of human relationships in organisations, institutions and companies. This attention to the institutional context of a workplace and a local community in relation to social empowerment and the experiences of interview participants has enabled the operationalisation of social quality theory in this empirical research. The third assumption is related to constitutive interdependency as it emphasises the historical context of action (and inaction).

In Suma, constitutive interdependency is apparent in the solidaristic bases of social empowerment (stability, security and collective identity) which provide the conditions for the other dimensions of social empowerment. The *interactions* of Suma members with this participative democratic setting provide *opportunities* for the development of capabilities through learning new skills, experiencing responsibilities, having autonomy, ownership and control over their working lives and collectively, over the business, decent working conditions and in-work welfare, and is underpinned by a strong collective identity as both a workplace (commitment to Suma, commitment to equality and trust in colleagues) and as a democracy (identifying with collectively derived decisions). Moreover, the sustained participation of Suma members in their daily working life over a number of years helps to deepen the participatory and egalitarian culture and facilitate the socially empowering processes of constitutive interdependency.

In You Choose the relationship between interactions and opportunities of constitutive interdependency is less clear and more tentative. This could be

due to the less socially empowering institutional design of the PB process, but it can also be simply from the smaller degree of citizen involvement in this democratic setting. The presenters and voters may identify as participants in a democratic decision-making process in their local community, which creates opportunities for more assertiveness and increased community participation. This could indicate a socially empowering outcome of self-realisation in the democratic setting. Further research would be necessary to investigate this. The temporary engagement in You Choose (one afternoon), the recent development of it and limited citizen control over the process are likely to seriously impair the possibilities for citizens to develop collective identities as participants in You Choose.

The fourth assumption of social quality theory relates to varying points of departure for analysis. For the conditional factor of social empowerment, human capacity is defined as a constitutional factor and human dignity as a normative factor in social quality theory (Beck et al., 2012). These have been reinterpreted to apply to specifically democratic social settings. Therefore in assessing the conditional factor of social empowerment, participatory democracy is the constitutional factor and the normative guide underpinning the research is the democratic dialectic.

As described in Chapter 2, the normative guide forms an ethical consideration for analysis of social empowerment in the cases. This is the fifth assumption of social quality theory. This research could also assess social empowerment in liberal democratic, social democratic or non-democratic settings but the theoretical argument developed in Chapter 5 suggests that these would not realise social quality to the extent that participatory democratic settings do. However, this theoretical assertion could be developed in future comparative research. The sixth assumption proposes that analysis of the constitutive interdependency of the two cases could produce new points of departure for policy options which are theoretically and historically grounded (Beck et al., 2012). There are implications for policy and practitioners of participatory democracy from this research related to workplace democracy and participatory budgeting. These are considered in the concluding chapter.

The associated critical realist theory of transformative action also has relevance, as social and system integration in the democratic dialectic provide the conditions for social transformation. This can be explained in terms of the critical realist understanding of structure and agency (Chapter 2). There is evidence for transformative action to different extents in the two cases - system (structural) changes towards integration on participatory democratic terms provide the conditions for social (agential) integration in social relationships. This has been shown to be more successful in Suma than You Choose.

Reflexive action by the workers in Suma, endowed with democratic autonomy, ownership and control over the co-operative to transform it, has sought to move the co-op in an egalitarian direction. This has necessitated those who have had the opportunity to dominate the decision-making structures of Suma (the 'old boys network') to intentionally (or possibly unintentionally, in the context of majoritarian democratic decisions) engage in transformative processes, effectively reducing the (unofficially) powerful positions that they had accrued in the past. In terms of Bhaskar's model of transformative action, this suggests the possibility of humans acting in concert to transform structures, and the case study findings suggest that optimised democratic dialectic values have driven this change.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed and synthesised the data collected in the two case studies. This has been linked back to the concept of social empowerment and the democratic dialectic values developed in Chapters 3 and 5. While the case studies have shown how social empowerment can be analysed in different democratic settings, they have also elucidated how the concept of social empowerment in practice can be evidenced in a range of dimensions contingent on the social settings and the form of democratic relationships involved. Ultimately, the central assertion of this research is that the participatory democratic settings can create the conditions for social

empowerment, thus enhancing social quality. As the discussion above and the two case studies show, this is realised to a greater extent in Suma than in You Choose.

The need for sustained research over a longer time-frame (provided appropriate political and economic conditions remain and/or develop) is necessary to build on these findings, although both are relatively unique cases, suggesting a dearth of empirical alternatives for further study. The consideration in the workplace democracy case study of previous research that has evidenced Suma's democratic transformation over three decades indicates that reflexive engagement with democratic structures and the development of an egalitarian culture can enhance social empowerment in a participatory setting over time. Indeed, Dahl (1985, p.98), a sceptic of the self-transformation thesis in participatory democratic theory, reflects on earlier studies of worker-ownership in the former Yugoslavia:

all the present evidence is very short-term, since it is derived from studies of workers who were already rather fully formed by their society. We cannot confidently predict what changes in character or personality might ensue, not in the short space of months or years, but over many generations.

While Suma's long history provides some evidence of this, the You Choose case study does not have anything approaching this level of engagement and historical development. Given that PB is still viewed largely in the World Bank's transparency and accountability terms in the UK, rather than the democratic citizenship and social justice aims of its original incarnation, this is unlikely to inculcate the democratic dialectic values, participatory democratic institutional design or social empowerment necessary in the foreseeable future.

Chapter 9

Conclusion: the Social Quality of Participatory Democracy

Introduction

This thesis began by discussing the current disenchantment with democratic politics evidenced by the decline in voting turnout at elections and a decline in trust in both politicians and government information. The introduction suggested that this problem stems, not just from a cynical or disillusioned discrediting of the ‘political’ or the untrustworthiness of representative democratic politics, but more significantly from a denial of the ‘social’ in contemporary democratic societies.

Social quality theory critically engages with the notion of the ‘social’ from a position that opposes the domination of (especially neo-liberal) economic concerns in theory and policy-making in contemporary democratic societies (Walker, 2005). Influenced by left wing theorists associated with critical analysis of the welfare state in the twentieth century, including Marshall, Titmuss, Tawney and Townsend, social quality theory argues that to increase the quality of the ‘social’, empowered participation in social relations that enhances the capacities, potential and well-being of all is necessary (Beck et al., 2012).

As a theme that runs throughout this thesis, the relationship between democracy and social quality draws attention to the extent and quality of democratic participation, the areas of social life appropriate for democratic relationships, along with the normative values that underpin forms of democratic social organisation and the institutions necessary. This has required a critical social science approach that focuses on power and empowerment, competing theories of democracy, and possible forms of

democratic society, which provide the grounding for the empirical case studies.

This concluding chapter firstly discusses how the research questions set out in the introductory chapter have been answered. Secondly, it summarises the main contributions of this research. This section discusses the theoretical and empirical findings and their implications for social quality and participatory democracy in theory and practice. Thirdly, the implications of this research for policy-makers and for practitioners of participatory democracy are examined. Fourthly, suggestions for future research to develop this work are considered.

The Research Questions

To address the two objects of study - participatory democracy and social empowerment - this thesis has considered the following three broad research questions:

- *How can the democratic dialectic values of liberty, equality and solidarity be optimised in a 'positive equilibrium' most appropriate for democratic society?*
- *What kind of democratic society is the optimisation of the democratic dialectic most suited to?*
- *To what extent, and in what ways, do participatory democratic settings display evidence of social empowerment?*

As social quality theory provides the philosophical foundations of this research (Chapter 2), these questions are set in terms of the political aim of improving social quality (especially social empowerment). With this proviso, the answers to the first two questions are interlinked and have been addressed in theoretical terms in Chapters 4 and 5. This has been achieved through a consideration of democratic theory, the application of this to typologies of democracy, and an exploration of the three values that make up the democratic dialectic. The 'positive equilibrium' described by Phillips (2006) is where the values of liberty, equality and solidarity are optimised, rather than

where one or two values dominate. However, in order to theoretically posit a positive equilibrium, Chapter 5 investigated a plurality of conceptions of the dialectical values. This has included a sustained discussion of the relative merits of negative freedom, positive freedom, triadic freedom and freedom as self-development, equality of libertarian rights, luck egalitarianism, capabilities, and relational egalitarianism, social capital (in rational actor and trust network variants), and social and system integration. It was argued that self-development, relational egalitarianism, and social and system integration optimise the democratic dialectic in terms commensurable with social quality theory.

The reasoning for this is also linked to the consideration of democratic typologies in Chapter 4 (which also addresses the second research question above). Representative and participatory theories of democracy have been related to typologies of liberal, social and participatory democratic societies. The typologies follow Esping-Andersen (1990) in providing ideal types that enhance 'analytical parsimony' but do not confirm precisely with existing nation-states. The liberal and social typologies do have broad empirical and historical referents, and can be characterised as opposite ends of a continuum, with the Anglo-American countries closer to the liberal typology and the Nordic countries closer to the social typology.

The third participatory typology in Chapter 4 was hinted at with some propositions based on existing theoretical and empirical research. This was achieved by considering the participatory theories, empowered participatory governance and democratic innovations. The link between Chapters 4 and 5 is that the optimised democratic dialectic values are posited to be commensurable with a participatory democratic society. The discussion is tempered with caution, by viewing the actually existing models in terms of a continuum rather than a dichotomy, which means that the participatory model is an alternative which aims to resolve contradictions in the liberal and social typologies. Therefore in each case it is a matter of degree, and a more participatory democracy that is closer to the optimised values of the democratic dialectic is more likely to increase social quality.

In order to answer the third research question, the democratic dialectic values formed the normative guide for two case studies of participatory democratic settings, presented in Chapters 6 and 7 and analysed in Chapter 8. These have shown that the workplace democracy case study strongly displays evidence of social empowerment in a range of dimensions, which are linked to an increase in participation in the democratic structure. The participatory budgeting case study identified incipient dimensions of social empowerment. While some of these were central to the institutional design of the process, others were ancillary and have developed alongside the process. It was suggested that the deeper daily immersion in participatory democratic social relations in the workplace, and the co-op's egalitarian culture contributed to Suma realising social empowerment to a greater extent than You Choose. Moreover, social empowerment as participation in social relations that enhance capabilities can be seen in a multitude of ways relating to the multiple dimensions evidenced in the case studies. These are discussed in more detail below.

The Social Quality of Participatory Democracy

This thesis has assessed the social quality of participatory democracy in theory-laden but empirically-driven case studies of social empowerment in workplace democracy and local community democracy. It has made several key contributions to academic research, especially relating to the exploratory use of the social quality concept of social empowerment and the democratic dialectic to qualitatively analyse cases of participatory democracy in the UK for the first time. The findings indicate that the social quality theory and central concept of social empowerment have relevance for participatory democracy. The participatory democratic settings explored indicate evidence of social empowerment and suggest that when applied to concrete practice there are multiple dimensions that characterise the concept. However, the cases exhibit different dimensions of social empowerment and they do this to differing extents. The discussion of social quality and democracy also raises the issue of disciplinary divides in the social sciences, given the breadth of literature drawn on here in combining a perspective from social policy with

political theory and political science, and qualitative sociological research techniques.

The link between theory and empirical data is pertinent for understanding the role that contingent social structures play in providing the conditions for democratic participation and social empowerment. As discussed in Chapter 2, following Outhwaite (1987), the ontological implications of the research are bold; participatory democracy is likely to contribute to an improvement of social quality through social empowerment, but the empirical findings differ in the two settings and must be considered with caution. They refer to tendencies rather than causal relationships and are contingent on structural and historical context. The use of typologies of democracy that are subject to change over time also supports this point (e.g. traditional and modernising social democracy). The next section briefly restates the case study findings that have been discussed extensively in relation to the democratic dialectic values and social empowerment in Chapter 8. It then elaborates on the relationship between social quality and the case studies, and discusses the broader implications of participatory democracy, social quality and the democratic dialectic for wider society.

The Case Study Findings

The findings of the empirical component of the research suggest that in the case of workplace democracy in Suma, a viable participatory democracy and multiple dimensions of social empowerment (stability, security, collective identity, autonomy, welfare, flexibility, self-management, ownership, control) are made possible by the development of an egalitarian culture in the organisation, sustained engagement with this by individuals in day-to-day working life, along with a reflexive attention on the part of the membership to transforming the structures of the organisation to renew the egalitarian culture when needed.

The first point relates to the democratic structure of the organisation and the central role that relational egalitarianism - through status equality and a

rough equality of working conditions, and supported by equal wages and votes - plays in facilitating a view held by most interviewees that each worker in Suma is of equal value to the organisation. The second point relates to the huge role that work plays in people's daily lives, and supports Pateman's (1970) claim that workplace democracy could be an important aspect of inculcating participatory democratic values in individuals. This could have wider application. For example, some Suma members expressed interest in rumours that a local football club could become a fan-owned business. The third point highlights how, contrary to much New Left thought from the late 1960s, attention to structure is important in avoiding the tyranny of structurelessness, whereby without democratic structures and social norms, egalitarian principles can be compromised by the development of hierarchies and 'power over' relationships (Freeman, 1972). The three major transformations of Suma's organisational structure, from direct democracy to 'hub and sector' and then flat management structure variants of participatory democracy with delegated representation show how a concern with avoiding hierarchies and elite power, and developing 'accountable autonomy' has driven the evolution of the co-op as it has expanded in membership.

The Suma case study also highlights how individuals have differing capabilities to make use of the empowering structure of the organisation. It is suggested that this results from intrinsic factors of habituation to democracy and some perceptions of the need for 'economic efficiency' in place of democratic values, along with extrinsic personal and social factors, which include class background, ability, confidence, personality and commitment. This indicates a complex relationship between the individual member of Suma and social empowerment in the organisation. Returning to Tawney's (1952) concern with an equality of social, political and economic conditions that allows for inequalities between individuals in terms of intelligence and natural abilities (and the expertise which follows from this), it can be argued that Suma is much closer to realising equality in economic conditions than capitalist workplaces, but is still limited in this respect by the wider structures and culture of a liberal democratic class society that is increasingly neo-liberal

and anti-democratic in its political and economic organisation and societal values.

The case study of the You Choose participatory budgeting process indicates a more limited form of participatory democracy and some potential for social empowerment in this social setting. You Choose's participatory democracy promotes relational equality between the participants (but not between the Council and citizens, and wider social and economic inequalities limit the inclusive aspect of this) and has the potential to increase solidarity in the form of social integration in the local community outside of the voting event. However, there are fewer opportunities for self-development (freedom) and system integration, which links to the absence of citizen control over the process and the less developed aspects of social empowerment in You Choose. These are described as incipient dimensions that emerge directly from the design of the process (voting, critical engagement, strengthening civil society groups), while other dimensions are ancillary factors that have emerged to some extent unintentionally (some self-development, awareness, networking and increased community participation). These would be significantly enhanced by citizen control and ownership of the process and a more intensive involvement in local government decision-making. There is evidence of the desire for this indicated by some interviewees.

While PB processes have potential to facilitate a more participatory culture in the politics of the local area and to build community solidarity in the form of social and system integration, for Tameside this depends on both the political will of the Labour Council, and on effective civil society demands and social mobilisation for more democratic participation. While the absence of the former can be explained by the strongly centralised nature of power in the British political system (especially in local government funding, Burton, 2013), the influential values of the liberal democratic typology and dominance of neo-liberal managerial politics, and for the latter, the relative absence of democratic mobilisation in civil society in the UK generally indicates that it is unlikely to be concerned with deepening participatory democracy or issues of social justice (Taylor-Gooby, 2012).

Social Quality and the Case Studies

The two participatory democratic settings indicate the relevance of social quality, viewed here in terms of social empowerment. The multiple dimensions of social empowerment suggest that more active participation in the democratic structure increases the level of empowerment available to Suma members and the opportunities open to them for developing their capabilities and capacities. This includes job mobility within the co-op, opportunities to learn new skills, self-management, relational egalitarianism, democratic ownership and control, and democratic relationships (Table 8.1, p.246). With the limits described above, You Choose has potential for social empowerment, and this is supported by increased community involvement, opportunities for self-development, formal equality and some relational egalitarianism, inclusion in democratic decision-making, deepening community networks and participation, and strengthening a sense of collective identity (Table 8.1, p.246).

Further, this thesis follows Herrmann (2005, 2012) in positing that social empowerment is the core value of social quality, especially in terms of its understanding of structure and agency (Chapters 2 and 3). A different approach could focus on social cohesion, social inclusion/exclusion, socio-economic security or all of the conditional values together as objects of analysis. Some aspects of social cohesion, social inclusion and socio-economic security have featured implicitly in this study, for example, in terms of social and system integration leading to a more cohesive society, the issue of including smaller groups in You Choose and exclusion of manual workers from democratic and empowering processes in Suma, and the stability and security provided by the democratic workplace. This supports Phillips' (2006, pp.180-181) argument that the four conditional values of social quality are bound up as 'four facets of an indivisible whole, with these four facets merging into each other and providing overlapping and complementary insights into the holistic and indivisible entity that is social quality'. Following this line of argument and supported by the empirical evidence presented here, a larger scale qualitative project could build on this exploratory research to consider

social quality more broadly in relation to democracy at local, regional and national levels.

The findings have also developed the empirical application of social empowerment. As described above the notion of multiple dimensions of social empowerment link the concept to the specific cases. This refers to the form and content of social empowerment in practice. These indicate that while the emphasis of social empowerment is on participation in social relations for a positive end, the nature of this participation has multiple aspects, and these depend on the social setting in question and democratic values. The development of these dimensions provide a useful departure point for further empirical research on social empowerment in different areas of society or in further comparative studies of worker co-operatives or participatory budgeting in different contexts (for example, the growing use of PB in the USA, a strongly liberal democratic society, but one which also has a strong culture of Town Hall democratic participation).

Social quality theory is also enhanced by this multidisciplinary study. As social quality theory has been refined largely within the discipline of social policy since 1997, this political sociological study has built on a further dimension that has recently begun development (Therborn, 2001; Walker, 2005): the politics of social quality. This argues that the social quality theory requires engagement with democratic theory and practice to develop its central premise of the positive participation by people in social relations. This in particular strengthens social quality's political claim to be an alternative to neo-liberalism in theory, policy-making and ideology (Walker, 2005).

Moreover, the social quality theory and political sociological approach here has drawn on a view of democracy that considers not just democratic *politics*, but also the notion of democratic *society* and the power relations that it contains. Democracy is not just a question of an adequate representative system and the voting procedures that characterise it. It is not a simple method for choosing leaders, as Schumpeter argued. Rather, it relates to the societal domains in which democracy should obtain, and the values,

institutions and processes associated with it. This is a normative issue for politics, sociology and social policy and has required engagement with the classical participatory understanding of democracy that was rejected out of hand by the likes of Schumpeter and the pluralists. This suggests that political sociology (Dowse & Hughes, 1972; Bottomore, 1993; Faulks, 2000; Nash, 2000; Nash & Scott, 2004), usually at the intersection of political science, political theory, sociology and critical social policy, is an often neglected but appropriate locus for a normatively grounded and multidisciplinary critical social science concerned with social relations.

From the Case Studies to Democratic Society

The extrinsic social factors of class and education or personal factors of character and ability, for example, which limit the capability of some to become empowered in Suma and the more limited notion of social empowerment present in the managerial and narrow use of participatory democracy in You Choose are instructive for broader assertions about the democratic complexion of British society. As described in Chapter 4, the UK can be conceptualised as laying in-between the ideal types of liberal democracy and social democracy (which themselves are not static, and are subject to changing values over time). From 1945 to 1973 Britain was closer to the 'traditional' variant of the social democratic typology (Martell, 2001). Despite strong foundations of social democracy established in the formation of the welfare state and the NHS, since then it has moved closer to the ideal liberal democratic typology, making a significant and concerted break with social democracy in the welfare state retrenchment policies of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition since 2010 (Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011). Under the influence of neo-liberal theory and policy since the late 1970s (Chapter 5), an especially narrow and primitive understanding of negative liberty has been prioritised as the central normative value underpinning British democratic ideas and institutions.

Given the argument developed in this thesis, the solution to Britain's democratic disillusionment is not just a renewal of trust in the role of elected

politicians (with the implication that the problem is simply a question of trust and acceptance of the limits of politics, and not social conditions, policy or ideology), nor in a renewal of the mid-twentieth century democratic compromise between capital and labour (traditional social democracy), but is likely to necessitate the creation of new participatory democratic institutions and culture in politics, economy and society.

Towards this end, and this is the central contention of this research, this involves a critical engagement with the democratic values that underpin the notion of participation and the structure of democratic institutions. Put simply, participatory democracy should not just be a case of 'bringing citizens back in' through engagement with existing democratic structures, but also bringing in the values of liberty, equality and solidarity in a positive equilibrium appropriate for full democracy and the structural transformation of institutions that this entails. This thesis has considered the possibilities for this in the economic sphere within the workplace and in the intersection of social and political spheres at the local government level. It suggests that the adoption of workplace democracy along with opportunities for greater citizen participation in local government decision-making are likely to be necessary aspects of a strategy for deepening democracy and improving social quality.

However, the likelihood of an integrated system of democratic co-operatives and citizen involvement in government decision-making through participatory budgeting (and other appropriate democratic innovations) at regional, national and international levels - a fully democratic society - is a question for future research and practical action. This is especially the case in the context of the powerful role of capitalist business in the globalising economy and its influence over politics, the dominance of neo-liberalism in current policy-making, and vast inequalities of wealth, organisational resources and influence. Though, Restakis (2010) highlights a dual role for co-operation and competition in the economy of the Emilia Romagna region of Italy as an example of a deeper co-operative economy that meshes with small capitalist businesses. Future studies could build on the findings here to explore the relationship between Esping-Andersen's (1990; 1999) conservative welfare

regime that emphasises familialism, which characterises Italy (Chapter 4), and participatory democracy. This could potentially highlight a further variant of democratic typology. Moreover, as this research shows, movement towards participatory democracy is a matter of transformations within representative democratic structures requiring political will, participatory democratic values and social mobilisation with pluralist and open possibilities for positive social change rather than a technical blueprint to be imposed on everyday practice.

Implications for Policy and Practitioners

This research has potential for new directions in British social and economic policy and local government policy. The workplace democracy case study suggests that Suma could provide a model for the development of co-operative workplaces. Based on this analysis, this would depend on both institutional design and the value commitment of workers to those associated with the optimised democratic dialectic (especially to an egalitarian culture). The UK Government has recently developed policies encouraging the growth of co-operative ownership in the public sector and mutuals as part of the ‘big society’ agenda (Cabinet Office, 2011). By 2013, the development of 120 public service mutuals had been recorded by the Cabinet Office (2013). Although in practice, the vast majority of public sector contracts have been taken up by non-co-operative private sector companies suggesting that more support for the development of co-operatives and co-operative values is required (Civil Exchange, 2012). Moreover, while encouraging co-operative ownership, there is no evidence of policies for democratic control - integral for decentralising power, as described in Chapter 6.

The You Choose case study suggests that there is significant potential for democratic citizen involvement to increase solidarity (in the form of social cohesion especially), but this requires a deepening of democracy in local communities. British Governments have for over two decades pursued policies aimed at increasing citizen participation in civil society and local government, from Major’s Citizen’s Charter in 1991, to Blair’s preference for choice in public services, to Cameron’s ‘big society’, however, this has often invoked

consumerist and voluntarist concepts of citizenship (Burton, 2013; Corbett & Walker, 2013). Indeed, participatory budgeting in every local authority was an aspiration for the previous Labour Government (DCLG, 2008b) and the Coalition Government have included PB as part of their 'big society' proposals, although this has sometimes been perniciously proposed to allow citizens the 'empowered' choice between which public services to keep or cut (Nesta, 2010).

The democratic aspect of the co-operative studied here and the involvement of citizens in community funding suggest that absent from current concerns with increasing citizen participation is a focus on the democratic aspect of citizenship. A significant change in government policy, away from neo-liberal ideals of the consumer citizen to an active democratic conception of citizenship would be a necessary aspect of developing policies for the growth of co-operatives, mutuals, and participatory budgeting which retain economic and social justice aims. This research suggests that the combination of social quality and the democratic dialectic values could contribute to the renewal of the social democratic and socialist left that opposes rather than acquiesces to neo-liberal theory and policy, as modernising social democracy has done.

This research also has implications for practitioners of participatory democracy, for example, those working in the co-operative sector and umbrella organisations such as *Co-operatives UK*, and local government and civil society advocates of participatory budgeting such as the *PB Network* in the UK, and the *Participatory Budgeting Project* in the USA. Although practitioners may be drawn from a wide political spectrum, this research highlights some of the values and principles that these forms of participatory democracy can help to inculcate. Attention to how democratic dialectical values and the social quality theory are implicated in democratic institutional designs may help to increase the socially empowering aspect of these forms of participatory democracy. The focus on describing the historical development of the democratic structures of the two case studies also contributes some practical aspects of creating and sustaining a democratic workplace and a PB process.

Directions for Future Research

This thesis has sought to engage with normative and theoretical literature but from a position that emphasises the practical politics of democracy in everyday life, rather than an abstract and unrealisable utopian ideal. To this end, the inclusion of the two case studies of participatory democracy in action has added empirical weight to the normative claim that participatory democracy can enhance social quality, especially in terms of social empowerment. This work has adopted a critical perspective that has sought to question the value of participation and the empirical evidence of participatory democratic settings. As Pearce (2010a, pp.328-329) states, there is a need

to move beyond the polarity between romanticism and pessimism when discussing our participatory possibilities, and beyond the abstraction of 'participatory' or 'representative' democracy. Participation cannot be treated as a hallowed 'good'. It must be subjected to critical scrutiny.

It is on this basis that this theoretical and empirical research, grounded in the theory of social quality, has been conducted. While the conception of participatory citizenship proffered by the cases of workplace democracy and participatory budgeting may appear to demand a set of human capabilities and values that some would consider unrealistic in modern neo-liberal capitalist societies, this serves to highlight the importance of social structure in understanding human action. It is precisely the empirical evidence of alternative ways of structuring social institutions and human action that gives weight to the assertions of this thesis.

The implications of this are that a framing ideology and policy-making context is required that acts as a counter-hegemonic alternative to that of neo-liberalism in shaping thought about the appropriate forms of human organisation for the twenty-first century. As indicated at various points within this thesis, social quality is tentatively proposed as such an alternative that is also commensurable with participatory democracy.

This thesis has argued that a conception of participatory democracy is necessary for social empowerment and social quality. The theoretical discussion of the democratic dialectic suggests that social quality theory implies a more participative variant than that which characterises the ideal types of liberal democracy or social democracy. The extent to which the improvement of social quality as a normative value (distinct from its role as an analytical tool) at the societal level is compatible with societies that are liberal democratic or social democratic is an open question which would necessitate further international comparative study. This could also comparatively examine the prospects for deepening democratic participation in both liberal and social democratic societies, for example, are the Nordic societies more conducive to democratic participation and social quality than Anglo-American societies?

A second crucial issue for participatory democracy research (along with the practical feasibility of scaling up participation beyond the local government level or workplace), is the relationship between participatory democracy and the processes of globalisation. As the previous social democratic hegemony was, in part, broken by the globalisation of capital in the development of neo-liberalism, then the prospects for meaningful participatory democracy must be underpinned by an alternative project at the international and global level. This is an issue for research in the field of international political economy and global civil society action. On reflection, this could indicate the limits of the field of political sociology in the missing political economy dimensions, suggesting limits to the critical social science approach employed here.

Lastly, this work can be developed sociologically at the level of people's day-to-day lives and national, regional and local politics. Neo-communitarian perspectives (Davies, 2012) in politics claim to have rediscovered the value of the social in contemporary capitalist democracies. This suggests further engagement with the everyday politics and policy of neo-liberalism, a critical approach to the use of 'nudge' economics (libertarian paternalism) and analysis of variants of communitarianism in the concrete development of

socially just, egalitarian and democratic alternatives (Corbett & Walker, 2013).

This thesis is the product of a deep and longstanding personal passion for understanding the nature of social justice and democratic socialism and is the culmination of seven years of learning in the Departments of Sociological Studies and Politics at the University of Sheffield. My confidence and belief in my work has grown, from my undergraduate studies, where I developed an interest in quality of life perspectives, social and political theory and empirical sociological research, to the subjects addressed in this PhD thesis. This thesis is the result of three of my most intellectually stimulating years spent reading, thinking critically and inhabiting the messy, thrilling and enlightening world of empirical sociological research.

I am extremely proud to have been taught and supervised by some truly inspiring academics and researchers over these seven years. We live in a political society in which knowledge is increasingly commodified and education is often treated as of purely instrumental value, and the political principles of social democrats and socialists alike have for many dissolved or been crowded out by political spin, moral relativism, pernicious class domination, ignorance, and the vested interests of a cynical and moralising right-wing media that defends social and economic injustice (Cohen, 2007). This present piece represents my first steps towards building on the work of those that have taught me the value of unashamedly passionate, principled, value-laden and critical social science that is resolutely committed to creating a better society.

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