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Assessing the impacts of community participation policy and practice in Scotland and England

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Abstract

Background

Community participation has become an integral part of many areas of public policy over the last two decades. For a variety of reasons, ranging from concerns about social cohesion and unrest to perceived failings in public services, governments in the UK and elsewhere have turned to communities as both a site of intervention and a potential solution. In contemporary policy, the shift to community is exemplified by the UK Government's Big Society/Localism agenda and the Scottish Government's emphasis on Community Empowerment. Through such policies, communities have been increasingly encouraged to help themselves in various ways, to work with public agencies in reshaping services, and to become more engaged in the democratic process. These developments have led some theorists to argue that responsibilities are being shifted from the state onto communities, representing a new form of 'government through community' (Rose, 1996; Imrie and Raco, 2003).

Despite this policy development, there is surprisingly little evidence which demonstrates the outcomes of the different forms of community participation. This study attempts to address this gap in two ways. Firstly, it explores the ways in which community participation policy in Scotland and England are playing out in practice. And secondly, it assesses the outcomes of different forms of community participation taking place within these broad policy contexts.

Methodology

The study employs an innovative combination of the two main theory-based evaluation methodologies, Theories of Change (ToC) and Realist Evaluation (RE), building on ideas generated by earlier applications of each approach (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007). ToC methodology is used to analyse the national policy frameworks and the general approach of community organisations in six case studies, three in Scotland and three in England. The local evidence from the community organisations' theories of change is then used to analyse and critique the assumptions which underlie the Localism and Community Empowerment policies. Alongside this, across the six case studies, a RE approach is utilised to examine the specific mechanisms which operate to deliver outcomes from community participation processes, and to explore the contextual factors which influence their operation. Given the innovative methodological approach, the study also engages in some focused reflection on the practicality and usefulness of combining ToC and RE approaches.

Findings

The case studies provide significant evidence of the outcomes that community organisations can deliver through directly providing services or facilities, and through influencing public services. Important contextual factors in both countries include particular strengths within communities and positive relationships with at least part of the local state, although this often exists in parallel with elements of conflict.

Notably this evidence suggests that the idea of responsibilisation needs to be examined in a more nuanced fashion, incorporating issues of risk and power, as well the active agency of communities and the local state. Thus communities may

sometimes willingly take on responsibility in return for power, although this may also engender significant risk, with the balance between these three elements being significantly mediated by local government.

The evidence also highlights the impacts of austerity on community participation, with cuts to local government budgets in particular increasing the degree of risk and responsibility for communities and reducing opportunities for power. Furthermore, the case studies demonstrate the importance of inequalities within and between communities, operating through a socio-economic gradient in community capacity. This has the potential to make community participation policy regressive as more affluent communities are more able to take advantage of additional powers and local authorities have less resource to support the capacity of more disadvantaged communities.

For Localism in particular, the findings suggest that some of the 'new community rights' may provide opportunities for communities to gain power and generate positive social outcomes. However, the English case studies also highlight the substantial risks involved and the extent to which such opportunities are being undermined by austerity. The case studies suggest that cuts to local government budgets have the potential to undermine some aspects of Localism almost entirely, and that the very limited interest in inequalities means that Localism may be both 'empowering the powerful' (Hastings and Matthews, 2014) and further disempowering the powerless.

For Community Empowerment, the study demonstrates the ways in which community organisations can gain power and deliver positive social outcomes within the broad policy framework. However, whilst Community Empowerment is ostensibly less regressive, there are still significant challenges to be addressed. In particular, the case studies highlight significant constraints on the notion that communities can 'choose their own level of empowerment', and the assumption of partnership working between communities and the local state needs to take into account the evidence of very mixed relationships in practice. Most importantly, whilst austerity has had more limited impacts on local government in Scotland so far, the projected cuts in this area may leave Community Empowerment vulnerable to the dangers of regressive impact highlighted for Localism.

Methodologically, the study shows that ToC and RE can be practically applied together and that there may be significant benefits of the combination. ToC offers a productive framework for policy analysis and combining this with data derived from local ToCs provides a powerful lens through which to examine and critique the aims and assumptions of national policy. ToC models also provide a useful framework within which to identify specific causal mechanisms, using RE methodology and, again, the data from local ToC work can enable significant learning about 'what works for whom in what circumstances' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

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community participation policy, using Theories of Change approach

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Lastly, thanks to Claire for keeping me as sane as possible over the last three years and to all of the other people who have helped me get this far.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed name: Steve Rolfe

Abbreviations

CA	Contribution Analysis
CCB	Community Capacity Building
CC	Community Council
CLD	Community Learning and Development
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
CWaCC	Cheshire West and Chester Council
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GCC	Glasgow City Council
NP	Neighbourhood Planning
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PC	Parish Council
PP	Parish Plan
RE	Realist Evaluation
SNP	Scottish National Party
ToC	Theory of Change
VDS	Village Design Statement

Participant organisations (see bookmark and Chapter 6 for more detail)

CWL	Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd
DCC	Dowsett Community Council
NAGs	Neighbourhood Action Groups (in Armitshore)
HCDT	Hoyfield Community Development Trust
ODT	Ooley Development Trust
TPC	Trottside Parish Council

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the thesis

1.1 Introduction to the research

A concern with community is nothing new in public policy, stretching back to at least the 18th century, when British colonial administrations began to apply 'community development' techniques to maintain social control (Popple, 1995: 7-8; Somerville, 2011: 36). However, recent decades have witnessed a particular burgeoning of interest in community participation at different levels of government. Whilst there are significant variations in what is meant by 'community participation' in different policies, not to mention inconsistent terminology and varied understandings of 'community', there is enough commonality to define a trend towards community participation. Thus, for the purposes of this study, a broad conception of community participation is employed, including processes whereby communities attempt to influence public services, or are deliberately engaged by services in consultation or discussion, as well as forms of community action whereby communities deliver services, run facilities or otherwise attempt to help themselves.

In the UK, the early shoots of community participation policy emerged in the late 1960s with specific initiatives such as the Community Development Projects and the Urban Programme, alongside the introduction of community engagement in particular public services, such as planning and social work (Boaden et al, 1981). In the late 1980s and early 1990s there were similar developments in the field of urban regeneration (e.g. City Challenge and Single Regeneration Budget in England, New Life for Urban Scotland in Scotland), before the 1997 election of New Labour created a step change, broadening community participation policy across a much wider range of public services (Rogers and Robinson, 2004: 10). During the 13 years of New Labour Government from 1997 to 2010, the emphasis on community participation developed from the early interest in active citizenship (Blunkett, 2003), to a wider focus on community cohesion and community empowerment (DCLG, 2006; 2008a), and culminated in the legislative 'duty to involve' for public agencies (UK, 2007; 2009). This was paralleled in Scotland after

devolution in 1999[1], with the Scottish Executive's focus on community engagement (Communities Scotland, 2005), particularly in the process of 'Community Planning'[2] (Scottish Executive, 2004b).

Whilst the branding has changed, the focus on community participation has continued with the current UK Government[3] through David Cameron's 'Big Society', and the accompanying Localism Act 2011 (Cabinet Office, 2010; DCLG, 2010; UK, 2011). Although the Big Society remains amorphous, having been re-launched at least four times (Defty, 2013: 3), the UK Government's approach incorporates a number of policies designed to give power, opportunity and responsibility to people and communities (DCLG, 2010; DCLG, 2013). Thus communities in England are being given rights to undertake Neighbourhood Planning, to instigate new house building, to bid for assets being sold by the public sector, and to challenge and take over public services. Meanwhile, since the Scottish National Party's election in 2007, the Scottish Government have developed their 'Community Empowerment' agenda. After an initial emphasis on guidance and training (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009), the opportunity of majority government in the SNP's second term of office has enabled the introduction of legislation, giving communities rights to request participation with public agencies, and increased rights to buy or control assets (Scotland, 2015).

At a European level the turn towards community emerged slightly later, but in the last two decades the European Union has started to emphasise the importance of community participation in a range of policies, from environmental matters (European Union, 1998) to local development (European Union, 2011). Similar trends can also be seen at a global level, particularly in the field of 'development', where the United Nations and agencies such as the World Bank now highlight the importance of 'participatory decision-making' (World Bank, 1994; United Nations, 2008; United Nations, 2016).

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[1] The Scottish Parliament was (re)established in 1999, with a range of powers devolved from the UK Government. Devolved matters include education, health, local government, law and order, and housing. Other policy areas, including benefits and social security, employment, defence and foreign policy were reserved to the UK Government.

[2] Community Planning is a statutory process in Scotland which aims to ensure coordination between public service agencies at a local authority level. Community Planning Partnerships are expected to jointly plan services to achieve shared outcomes, and to engage with communities.

[3] The UK Government was a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition from 2010 to 2015 and then a Conservative-majority government from May 2015. The continuity of Localism as a policy across these two administrations is discussed further in Chapter 3.

This ubiquitous emphasis on community participation is not without its critics however, since some have argued that the growth in community-focused policy represents a move towards 'government through community' in advanced liberal economies, shifting responsibilities from national governments onto local communities (Rose, 1996; Raco and Imrie, 2000; Flint, 2004; Hancock et al, 2012). Thus the suggestion is that governmental interest in community participation primarily aims to offload responsibilities and, particularly in the post-2008 context of austerity politics, to reduce costs by encouraging communities to do what the state might previously have done. Moreover, others have argued that community participation can become a form of tyranny (Cooke and Kothari, 2001), over-riding existing systems for democratic control and serving the interests of the powerful. Hence there are significant issues regarding who benefits from community participation, not just in terms of the divide between state and citizens, but also relating to different communities and groups within communities. Such perspectives reinforce the fundamental concern that 'community' is stapled onto a wide range of policies for multifarious, if not nefarious, ideological purposes (Plant, 1974; Barnes et al, 2003b: 380), supported by the ambiguity of terms such as 'participation' (Gaventa, 2006) and 'empowerment' (Barr, 1995).

Moreover, despite the cross-party and cross-border political commitment, evidence for the impacts of community participation is somewhat patchy. During the New Labour years in particular, significant work was undertaken to research and review the outcomes of community participation (or, as it was variously termed in New Labour policy, active citizenship, community engagement, or civil renewal). Whilst the findings tend to suggest that community participation produces positive social outcomes (e.g. Burton et al, 2004; Rogers and Robinson, 2004) and that the benefits generally outweigh the costs (ODPM, 2005), there is a general consensus that the evidence is rather mixed and limited in both scope and robustness. In particular, there is a significant concern that the evidence of impact tends to focus on the more easily measurable intrinsic benefits for participating individuals, such as increased skills and confidence, rather than the outcomes for communities (Brannan et al, 2006). Moreover, there are significant examples of critical evidence, such as Andrews et al's (2008) study which suggests that increased

opportunities for community involvement are negatively correlated with service performance.

From a policy perspective, it is possible to argue that this mixed evidential picture is a minor issue for community participation policy, since the substantive impacts are secondary to the basic democratic right of people to participate in decisions that affect them. As Burton et al suggest, this 'procedural' justification for community participation sees:

> "involvement as a fundamental civil right whose benefits derive from the application of due process in reaching public decisions. Civil rights of this type do not require empirical justification." (Burton et al, 2006: 296)

Moreover, as Tunstall (2001: 2499) suggests, this procedural justification for community participation is often combined with a view amongst its advocates that "its good effects are obvious".

However, even if the overall commitment to community participation can be justified without strong foundations in evidence, this still leaves open the question of which forms of community participation are most effective or appropriate. In this respect the existing literature is also somewhat sketchy, frequently boiling down to the obvious conclusion that community participation approaches need to suit the particular circumstances in which they will be employed (cf. Creasy et al, 2008; Laird et al, 2000). From a practice perspective this seems of little value and indeed, as Steele and Seargeant (1999) argue, this leaves open the possibility that community participation practice will be shaped more by fashion than evidence of effectiveness.

The starting point for this study, therefore, is an awareness of the political relevance of community participation in the UK and elsewhere, combined with an understanding of the limitations in the existing evidence regarding what works in terms of both process and outcomes. As Brannan et al suggest:

"There are few studies that examine the micro-level interactions between involvement and outcomes. What is needed is on-the-ground research that tells both academics and policy-makers what to do and not to do—what works and what does not—in a way that builds knowledge about this new policy area." (Brannan et al, 2006: 1001)

Hence the basic aim of the research is to examine the impacts of community participation in practice and the ways in which different forms of community participation may generate these outcomes, to make some progress towards filling the evidence gaps.

However, merely examining community participation practice on the ground would fail to engage with the broader concerns outlined above – i.e. that the very notion of community participation may be problematic. Thus, in order to grapple with the suggestion that community participation may involve a shift of responsibility from state to communities, the study also aims to explore how national policy agendas play out in practice. In this respect, Scottish devolution provides a useful entry point for the research, since it provides two distinct policy agendas, in the form of Localism in England and Community Empowerment in Scotland, operating within contexts which are otherwise relatively similar. Hence, by examining community participation in Scotland and England, the study aims to draw some conclusions about the impacts of community participation policy as well as practice on the ground.

As a starting point, therefore, the broad research questions which the research is designed to address are as follows:
- What are the impacts of community participation policy in Scotland and England?
- What outcomes does community participation achieve for communities in practice?

Such an investigation of the outcomes of community participation policy and practice is far from simple, however. In a general sense, social policy interventions are complex undertakings (Weiss, 1998), made more so because of the absence

of boundaries between one policy and the next, or between one community and the next (Pawson, 2006). Moreover, community participation is arguably more complex than most forms of social policy, firstly because it is strongly shaped by its participants and, secondly, because of ambiguity in its ultimate goals. This follows on from the notion that there is both a substantive justification for community participation, in the sense that it can generate positive outcomes, and a procedural one, in that it fulfils a basic democratic right. Thus, talking about the New Labour policy of 'civil renewal', Brannan et al suggest that:

> "Civil renewal is treated as both a solution to problems (a means) and as a policy objective (an end in itself) which creates tremendous problems in evaluation. It is often unclear what the objectives of civil renewal policies are and therefore difficult to measure their impact, leading to a focus on process indicators based on assumed benefits." (Brannan et al, 2006: 1005)

Indeed, the complexity of the causal processes in community participation and the challenges of establishing a robust approach to evaluating such complexity are frequently cited as a reason for the limited evidence of impact (Burton et al, 2004; Burton et al, 2006; Rogers and Robinson, 2004). Therefore, in order to manage the dual challenge of exploring the impacts of both policy and practice, and to deal with the complexity of community participation, it is evident that this study requires a carefully developed methodological basis.

Before proceeding to explain how the thesis sets out to respond to these challenges, it is important to provide some personal context, to complete the rationale for undertaking the research and locate my role within it.

1.2 Personal background and origins of the project

Although it has inevitably evolved somewhat over the period of the research, this study originated from my professional background and specific concerns about the lack of evidence for practice. Before re-entering academia, I worked in local government for nearly 15 years, initially as a community development worker

supporting a variety of community groups to organise themselves and to influence service providers, before moving on to a community engagement role, facilitating the participation of community organisations in decision-making and monitoring around regeneration funding. Finally, I spent three years in a policy role, during which I was responsible for developing and implementing the community participation strategy for a whole local authority.

It was in this latter role in particular, that I became concerned at the apparent lack of evidence around the impacts of community participation and the relative effectiveness of different approaches. In particular, in developing the community participation strategy, I encountered a significant challenge in persuading elected Members, senior managers and fellow officers about the value of investing time and energy in community participation in the absence of robust research evidence. Despite the substantial growth in policy outlined above, within local government community participation can feel more like a minor religious sect where the adherents trumpet its value, but others regard them as somewhat irrational and quite possibly dangerous.

As a paid-up member of this sect, I had plenty of anecdotal evidence of the benefits that community participation could deliver, both through self-help activities within communities and via improvements made to services on the basis of service users' expert knowledge. However, I was also aware of problematic examples of community participation, including fraud, internal disputes and discriminatory behaviour. And, equally importantly, I could recognise the challenges that community participation can create, particularly where activists are critical of services or even individual officers. In my experience this often led to a defensive attitude, which either blocked community participation altogether, or prioritised approaches which felt 'safe' for officers, whether they would be effective or not. Although research evidence is never a panacea, the absence of evidence undoubtedly reinforced this resistance from some colleagues.

Thus the idea for this research project emerged from my professional experience, with the intention of filling some of the evidence gaps in order to support and inform practice in the field. As indicated in the previous section, this aim was expanded somewhat to include a focus on the impacts of community participation

policy. Again, this was partly based on my professional background, since one of my last tasks in local government had been to coordinate and compile the Council's response to the first stage of consultation on the Community Empowerment Bill. Discussing the various proposals for the Bill with colleagues from across the local authority gave me a particular insight into the complexities of implementing such legislation and I was therefore keen to examine the ways in which such legal frameworks might affect practice on the ground.

My personal background is also an important element of context to understand the shape of the fieldwork for this study. Having spent many years in community work roles, I came to the research with a range of skills and experience, combined with a strong awareness of the key part that community organisations play in many different aspects of community participation and, equally importantly, enormous respect for the dedication and hard work of community activists. Hence I was inclined to engage community organisations in the research, but wanted to ensure that any involvement would be of value to them, since I recognised that the research would be an additional burden for a group of already busy people. In this sense, I am drawing on ideas from participatory and action research which suggest that research can and should produce knowledge which is directly useful to participants, as well as knowledge which will be of wider use (Hart and Bond, 1995; Reason, 2001). Moreover, having spent much of my career promoting the value of community expertise, it would have felt dissonant to say the least, to ignore the expertise of community activists when attempting to research community participation. Thus, in considering possible approaches to the research, I was keen to include a participative element to incorporate community views and also assist in making the research useful for participants.

At the same time, I was aware that my background and personal positioning might create a tendency for 'bias' within the research. Again, the perspectives of action research are important here, highlighting the idea that neutrality is impossible within research and therefore what is important is a reflective and critical self-awareness on the part of the researcher (McNiff, 1988; Humphries, 1997). Hence this introduction to my background aims to locate myself within the research, with the explicit aim of challenging my own preconceptions throughout.

1.3 Structure of the research and of the thesis

Having outlined the evidence gaps and the elements of personal background which provide the motivation and rationale for the project, two significant challenges are apparent in focusing and structuring the research. Firstly, the project has rather ambitious aims in terms of potential audiences. Beyond contributing to the academic literature, the intention is to provide useful knowledge for participant organisations, other community organisations and activists, public sector practitioners, and policy-makers at local and national levels. And secondly, the focus of the research is itself challenging, since community participation inherently involves complex, messy processes with diverse and sometimes ill-defined targets, making the assessment of outcomes and attribution of causality difficult.

The implication of these challenges, as indicated earlier, is that the project requires particular attention on the methodological approach, in order to be clear from the outset about what might actually be possible and practical within these demanding aims. Hence the structure of the research and, consequently, of the thesis is somewhat unorthodox.

The foundations for the study are laid in Chapter 2, which explores the evaluation methodology literature to identify the most effective approach to assessing impacts of community participation policy and practice. The chapter starts with a brief foray into epistemology, before outlining some key points about the nature and complexity of policies such as community participation. These points are then used to consider the purpose and politics of evaluation. In conclusion, the chapter argues that theory-based evaluation provides the best approach for the study and, in particular, that a combination of Theories of Change (ToC) and Realist Evaluation (RE) methodologies may be productive, as suggested by Blamey and Mackenzie (2007). This methodological starting point informs the whole of the project from this point forward.

In Chapters 3 and 4, the Theories of Change approach provides a framework for reviewing the literature surrounding community participation policy and to

undertake an initial analysis of contemporary policy in Scotland and England. Thus Chapter 3 sets out a brief history of community participation policy in the UK in order to examine the underlying drivers. Key ideas around the interpretation of policy are also introduced in this chapter, to feed into subsequent chapters. In Chapter 4, the drivers for community participation policy are used as the starting point to develop a generic ToC model, drawing on the notion from Imrie and Raco (2003) that community has become both an object and a subject of policy, as well as ideas from across the community participation literature. This generic model is then used in what can perhaps be considered as an early findings/analysis chapter to analyse the theories of change underpinning Localism and Community Empowerment, identifying their key assumptions (the majority of this chapter has now been published – Rolfe (2016)).

Chapter 5 brings Realist Evaluation into the fray, employing the generic ToC model from Chapter 4 to identify the spaces within which causal mechanisms may operate in community participation processes. Selecting a subset of the most interesting and important mechanisms, this chapter proceeds to examine the existing literature regarding their operation and the contextual factors that may affect them.

Having thus established a basis from an exploration of the literature and analysis of contemporary policy, Chapter 6 sets out some more specific research questions, as well as the methods used for the empirical fieldwork and the subsequent data analysis. This chapter also introduces the six participant organisations and their key characteristics, summarised on the accompanying bookmark for ease of reference.

Chapters 7 and 8, use data from the work with participant organisations to undertake further ToC analysis of the national policy assumptions, examining their plausibility and doability (Connell et al, 1995; Fulbright-Anderson et al, 1998). Chapter 7 outlines the data relating to the English case studies and explores their implications for the assumptions underpinning Localism, whilst Chapter 8 does the same for the Scottish case studies and Community Empowerment, before concluding with a broader discussion of the implications of these findings for policy and theory.

Chapter 9 returns to RE methodology again, exploring the operation of the causal mechanisms identified in Chapter 5 within the contexts of all six case studies. This analysis is used to augment the examination of Localism and Community Empowerment in the preceding two chapters, as well as indicating broader conclusions for community participation practice in general.

Having built the study on a specific and, in some ways, innovative methodological basis, Chapter 10 explores what the experience of the research has to say about the combination of ToC and RE approaches, in a general sense and within the particular context of community participation.

Finally, in Chapter 11 the findings from across the study are brought together, synthesising the diverse elements in order to delineate the contributions of the research in terms of the evidence base, community participation theory, evaluation methodology and, lastly, the implications for policy and practice.

Given this somewhat unorthodox structure, Figure 1.1 below sets out the thesis in diagrammatic form, to assist the reader in identifying the connections between chapters.

Figure 1.1 – Structure of the thesis
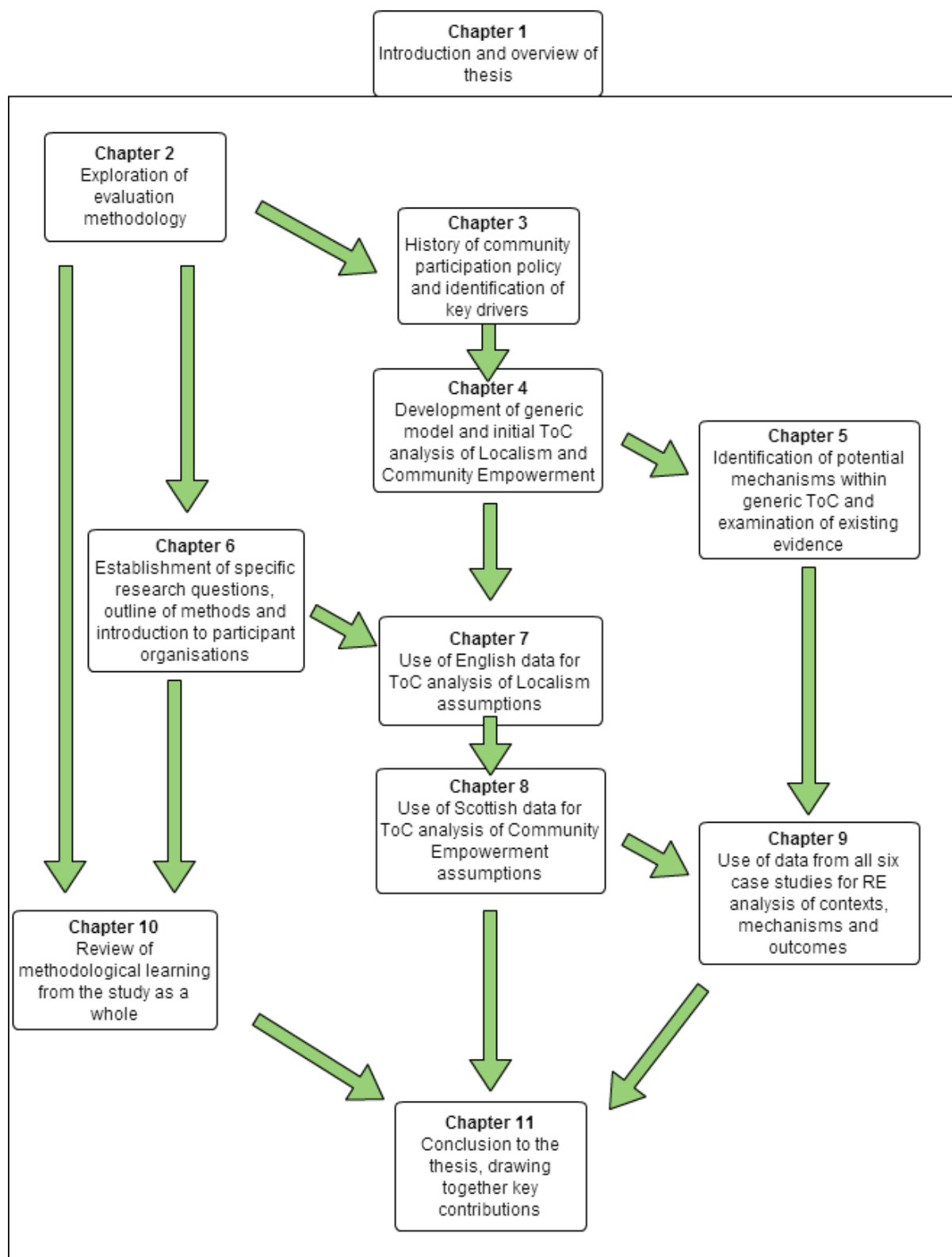
As this diagram indicates, alongside the basic linear structure of Chapters 2-11, there are three threads that run through the thesis, connecting particular chapters through methodological and data links, visualised in the vertical lines through Figure 1.1. Thus the left-hand column connects the methodological chapters 2, 6

and 10, since the exploration of evaluation methodology in Chapter 2 underpins the empirical methods set out in Chapter 6 and, more importantly, lies at the heart of the discussion of methodological findings in Chapter 10. Similarly, the Theories of Change investigation of the literature and policy in Chapters 3 and 4 provides the theoretical and analytical basis for the exploration of case study findings in Chapters 7 and 8, which also employs ToC methods. And the use of Realist Evaluation ideas to review the existing evidence in relation to particular causal mechanisms in Chapter 5 feeds through into Chapter 9, where the data from across all six case studies is employed to examine the operation of these mechanisms in different contexts.

The diagonal arrows from left to right between Chapters 2-5 indicate the ways in which the methodological foundations in Chapter 2 underpin the combination of literature review and policy analysis which makes up Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Similarly, the methods laid out in Chapter 6 are linked to the empirical findings set out in Chapters 7-9.

Finally, as the last set of arrows suggest, Chapter 11 attempts to draw together all of the findings and discussion from Chapters 7-10 (and indirectly from Chapters 3-5) to develop some unified conclusions regarding the contribution of the whole project.

Chapter 2 – Exploration of evaluation methodology

2.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study aims to address two inter-related questions. Firstly, the intention is to explore the impacts of community participation policy in Scotland and England, by examining the policies themselves and how they are being interpreted and utilised on the ground. Alongside this, the second objective is to investigate the impacts of different forms of community participation practice in a range of different contexts.

Both of these broad questions are essentially evaluative, attempting to get to grips with what works in community participation policy and practice. As Weiss (1998: 4) describes it, "Evaluation is the *systematic assessment* of the *operation* and/or the *outcomes* of a program or policy" (emphasis in original). In this study, the relevant conjunction in this quote is clearly 'and', since the intention is to examine both the outcomes and the processes that operate to produce them.

In order to lay the foundations for the study as a whole, in this chapter I deal with the debates which have beset evaluation research in recent decades, attempting to identify the most appropriate methodological starting point for the examination of community participation policy and practice. This initial spadework is necessary because evaluation is, like much of social science, a contested field. Whilst Pawson (2006: 14) suggests that, "a modest peace has broken out in the 'paradigm wars'," there is continuing and significant debate about the relative merits of different philosophical, political, and methodological starting points. In particular, there are considerable differences of opinion about evaluation's position along the epistemological spectrum between purist forms of positivism and interpretivism, often blurred into debates regarding quantitative versus qualitative methods. In addition, the last few decades have seen a burgeoning of terminology and schools of thought in evaluation approaches, with such beasts as fourth generation evaluation, utilisation-focused evaluation, theories of change evaluation, realist evaluation and contribution analysis, amongst others, all vying

for attention (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1997; Connell et al, 1995; Fulbright-Anderson et al, 1998; Kubisch et al, 2010; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Mayne, 2001; Mayne, 2011).

To navigate this contested terrain, I shall consider five key inter-related questions, to elucidate the differences and similarities, and the strengths and weaknesses of the various evaluation approaches. Despite Scriven's (1997: 477) injunction that, "in evaluation, it is a waste of time to try to solve the problems of epistemology before getting on with the job", I shall start with a brief examination of *what we can know*, since many of the important approaches in evaluation are built on different epistemologies. In order to clarify the area of study, I shall then explore *what is meant by policies or programmes*, before considering *what it is that we might want to know about them*, and *for what purposes*. Finally, I shall venture into the vexed question of *whose interests* the evaluation process serves.

In response to each question, I shall explore the general debates before attempting to provide a more specific answer regarding the evaluation of community participation policy and practice. The chapter concludes by drawing these discussions together, highlighting the key points which underpin the choice of evaluation methodologies for the study.

2.2 What can we know?

Despite a degree of truce in the battles between positivist and interpretivist camps in social science, there is still a sense in which most methodological discussion positions itself in relation to these two extremes. As Humphries (1997: 2.2) argues, strict adherence to positivism may have faded somewhat, but its, "continuing significance is apparent in its role as a norm against which other perspectives can react."

The centrality of the postivist-interpretivist debate is clearly evident in the field of evaluation. As Cook (1997: 32) points out, evaluation practice was dominated by quantitative methodologies in the 1960s, particularly in the US, but this was countered from the 1970s onwards by a reaction from researchers with a

preference for qualitative approaches. Whilst it is unhelpful to reinforce the simplistic equations of quantitative=positivist and qualitative=interpretivist, nevertheless the early quantitative approaches to evaluation were undoubtedly heavily influenced by positivist natural scientific methodology. Thus they prioritised experimental approaches, built on positivist assumptions of an empirically measurable, objective reality and the possibility of nomothetic explanations of social life. This contrasts strongly with those, such as Guba and Lincoln (1989: 44) who explicitly adopt a constructivist epistemology, according to which, "'Truth' is a matter of consensus...not of correspondence with an objective reality", and hence argue that the findings from evaluation studies are entirely context-specific and idiographic in nature.

A number of evaluation theorists and practitioners have located themselves somewhere between these two extremes, or have attempted to argue that the two camps have more in common than they might like to admit in the heat of battle. Whilst some have done so implicitly, others have made explicit attempts to move beyond the epistemological divide. Most notably, Ray Pawson (2006; 2013; and with Nick Tilley, 1997) adopts a realist philosophy, where realism, "has sought to position itself as a model of scientific explanation which avoids the traditional epistemological poles of positivism and relativism" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 55). From this realist perspective, social phenomena are not completely socially constructed, as might be the case for the more extreme constructivists, although they are not inherently simple to understand as physical objects might be. Thus for Pawson and Tilley, things such as burglars, prisons, rehabilitation programmes and their effects are all 'real', but:

> "In making such a claim, we do not suppose that the examples
> mentioned above correspond to some elemental, self-explanatory
> level of social reality which can be grasped, measured and evaluated
> in some self-evident way." (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: xiii)

Instead, the suggestion is that, whilst social reality is not amenable to the kind of nomothetic, law-seeking approaches of positivist natural science, it need not be limited to idiographic descriptions of unique circumstances, but can aim for Merton's (1968) goal of 'middle range theory' (Pawson, 2006: 18).

In this respect, Realist Evaluation (originally called 'Realistic' for good reason) follows Scriven's (1997: 479) injunction to avoid epistemological debates since, "it is better to build on what might conceivably be sand but has so far given no signs of weakness than not to build at all". Thus the crucial point is that, however much we might be concerned about the social construction of knowledge, in practice, most social scientists can get on with research about a world that they consider to be real. However, rather than relying on Scriven's suggestion of using 'common sense' to deal with any confusions, I would argue that Wittgenstein's (1958; 1969) later philosophy and Winch's (1958; 1970) application of these ideas to social science provides a more useful position from which to deal with philosophical and political disputes within evaluation research. This approach has significant parallels with Pawson's realism, although also some subtle, but important differences.

Crucially, Wittgenstein makes the central point that, "the meaning of a word is its use in language" (1958: para 43), and that meaning is therefore created through intersubjective agreement regarding language *use* within a 'form of life'. Taking this a stage further, Winch makes it clear that it negates the possibility of objective truth, since, "our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use" (Winch, 1958: 15). However, this does not leave us wallowing in interpretivist relativism, since we can sensibly talk of an objective reality, insofar as we all agree on it. Language and knowledge are purposive activities, so where we can reach intersubjective agreement *to all intents and purposes* (or at least most reasonably possible intents and purposes) then it makes sense to talk about truth and reality. Thus, in line with Pawson's realist perspective, we can generally be clear that burglars, prisons and rehabilitation programmes are real, since intersubjective agreement on such things is likely to be almost universal, even if there is contestation around the margins.

However, in the context of evaluation research, it is important to note that this objectivity has its limits. As Benton and Craib point out in their discussion of Wittgenstein and Winch's ideas:

"the meanings of many social practice are contested by the
participants themselves: there is no single set of meanings that can
count authoritatively as 'participants' understanding'." (Benton and
Craib, 2011: 186)

Hence, if we want to examine the impacts of rehabilitation programmes we need to
take into account the essentially political issues of whose perspectives are being
privileged and the purpose of undertaking such evaluative study. Thus, whilst a
Wittgensteinian starting point is close to realism in many ways, it also emphasises
the notion that knowledge (and therefore 'reality') is a purposive activity, and
therefore we need to retain a questioning, critical attitude towards the purpose of
information and the politically structured context.

Beyond these issues of what is 'real', it is also important to address the issue of
causality, since it lies at the heart of much of the evaluation debate. Again, Winch
provides a useful starting point through his argument (in which we can clearly
detect the aroma of Weberian verstehen) that meaningful behaviour is inherently
rule-governed, implying the possibility of not following a rule and therefore
precluding deterministic causal explanations of human behaviour:

"even given a specific set of initial conditions, one will still not be able
to predict any determinate outcome to a historical trend because the
continuation or breaking-off of that trend involves human decisions
which are not determined by their antecedent conditions in the
context of which the sense of calling them 'decisions' lies." (Winch,
1958: 92-3)

Thus Winch makes a strong distinction between the notion of a 'reason' for human
behaviour, and a 'cause' as applied in a natural scientific sense. This strongly
parallels the realist distinction that Pawson and Tilley (1997:32, drawing on Harré)
stress between the ideas of 'successionist' causation and 'generative' causation.
Whereas successionist causation focuses on 'constant conjunctions' and sees
causation itself as either unknowable or external to the affected object, generative
causation stresses the ways in which causes trigger the potential within objects,
which in social reality means a focus on the choices made by actors. Most

importantly, the distinction here is not just a philosophical nicety, but a political point about humans as agents, rather than subjects, a point that I shall return to below. Importantly, Winch's perspective does not preclude causative explanations, since there are clearly many instances in which we talk of causes for human behaviour, but his point is that we are really talking about causal factors that individuals will give as reasons for action. Thus we might agree that certain factors have a causal influence in a particular, socially structured, power-infused context, but these are never deterministic of human behaviour, so we can talk in probabilistic terms at best.

I am suggesting, therefore, that we can untangle the epistemological fankle[4] around evaluation research a little by judicious employment of Wittgenstein and Winch's ideas. From this perspective, we can sensibly talk about things that are real, where we have intersubjective agreement, but we need to retain an awareness of knowledge as a purposive, political process. Alongside this, it makes sense to talk about causation, but the importance of agency within social processes means that this causation is generative, focusing on the reason of agents within politically structured contexts. These foundations are particularly important in exploring the questions of what we might want to know in policy evaluation, for what purposes, and for whose interests, but first we need to seek some clarity about the nature of policies.

2.3 What do we mean by policy?

Much of the evaluation literature refers to social programmes as much as to policies, reflecting the tendency for specific programmes to be subject to evaluation more frequently than broad policy areas or ongoing public service provision. For the purposes of simplicity within this section, I shall use the terms interchangeably, although there is significant debate regarding the links between policies and programmes, as I shall discuss later in the chapter.

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[4] Fankle - a Scots word meaning 'tangle' or 'confusion'. Not to be confused with 'bourach', which is an even messier, irresolvable fankle. The reader can judge whether the right term has been employed here.

As a starting point, Chen provides a usefully straightforward definition:

> "A social intervention or programme is the purposive and organised effort to intervene in an ongoing social process for the purpose of solving a problem or providing a service." (Chen, 1990: 39)

However, as Weiss suggests, this apparently simple description belies a much more complicated reality:

> "Social programmes are complex undertakings. They are an amalgam of dreams and personalities, rooms and theories, paper clips and organisational structure. clients and activities, budgets and photocopies, and great intentions" (Weiss, 1998: 48)

Hence understanding and evaluating policies and programmes is inherently challenging because of their complexity (not to mention the difficulty of getting a handle on dreams and personalities). Rather than baulking at this hurdle, however, it is useful to examine different aspects of complexity within policy. In this respect it is useful to draw on Glouberman and Zimmerman's (2002) distinctions between simple, complicated and complex, which they illustrate with the examples of baking a cake, sending a rocket to the moon and raising a child. In simple processes, like cake-baking, following a recipe without substantial expertise will reliably produce a reasonably good result through a linear process. In complicated processes, like rocket science, much greater expertise and coordination is required, but the process is still relatively linear and experience can produce a reasonable certainty of outcome. Complicated processes are not simply a combination of multiple simple processes, but they are predictable enough to be generalizable. Finally, in complex situations, expertise can be useful, but the emergent, adaptive, non-linear nature of the process and the uniqueness of each case mean that outcomes can never be confidently predicted.

Employing these distinctions, it is useful to examine six inter-related dimensions of policies, to identify elements of simplicity, complicatedness or complexity.

Firstly, policies operate at different scales. Whilst the relation is not straightforward, policies which apply across larger areas, over longer timescales, affecting larger numbers of people and/or organisations, are clearly complicated and will often contain significant complexity. Thus, national policies such as Localism or Community Empowerment which are multi-faceted, long-term and necessitate the involvement of multiple bodies at different levels are obviously more complex than a single, local project.

The second dimension is what Kubisch et al (1998: 4) call 'vertical complexity', referring to the range of targets for change at different levels. Whilst some policies may aim for change only at the individual level (though it is difficult to find clear examples), many policy interventions, such as the 'comprehensive community initiatives' that primarily concern Kubisch et al and which are closer to the subject of this study, aim to achieve change at individual, community, organisational, and even policy levels. The possibility of interactions between outcomes targets, such that individual outcomes may affect community processes and vice versa, suggest that such initiatives need to be seen as vertically complex. Moreover, for many policies, there is an additional element of complexity in terms of outcome targets, because of a lack of consistent and clear objectives (Sabatier, 1997: 278). This is particularly true of those involving community participation, where targets are to some extent emergent, evolving over time, as well as being significantly contested and ambiguous.

Thirdly, policies vary significantly in terms of the level of process complexity. As Pawson (2006: 28) expresses it, for many policies, "Intervention chains are long and thickly populated", as well as often being non-linear. Again, community participation policies clearly contain significant complexity in this respect, since the links between policy levers such as legislation and outcomes in communities are characterised by multiple stages and potential for both feedback and unintended consequences.

The fourth dimension is the degree of organisational complexity. Whilst some policies involve interactions between just one organisation and individual members of the public, this is relatively rare. Indeed, as Asthana et al (2002: 780) point out, there is often an emphasis on partnership working in social policy, on the basis

that complex social problems require multi-faceted responses. Again, community participation policies almost universally involve multiple organisations, including a range of public agencies and community organisations. Moreover, these organisations and the relations between them may be emergent through the process, suggesting a significant degree of complexity (Funnell and Rogers, 2011).

Fifthly, it is important to consider the degree of agency involved in any policy, since greater agency increases the adaptive, non-linear nature of processes. Moreover, as highlighted in the previous section, agency is central to considerations of causality. As Lipsky (1997) identified, policies are shaped in practice by bureaucrats at the 'street-level' as well as the politicians and managers who are conventionally seen as 'policy makers'. Similarly, Sabatier (1997) points to the value of exploring how policies are developed from the bottom up, as much as from the top down. Clearly community participation policy has a particular focus on agency, since it focuses on activating and engaging communities.

Finally, the sixth dimension relates to the fact that policies are inherently open systems. As Minogue (1997: 11) argues, we cannot study individual decisions or policies in isolation, since every policy interacts with wider policies, networks and social systems. In Pawson's words, "social interventions are always *complex systems thrust amidst complex systems*" (2006:35, italics in original). Again, community participation processes are clearly complex in this respect, since communities interact with each other, with agencies, with other policies and with wider social structures.

Thus it seems clear that community participation policies are significantly complex in relation to all six dimensions outlined above. As Funnell and Rogers suggest, this creates substantial challenges for evaluation:

> "Dynamic and emergent interventions present a challenge to conventional linear processes of developing an evaluation, implementing it, and reporting the findings. Dynamic interventions change substantially over time, and their specific impacts cannot always be identified in advance." (Funnell and Rogers, 2011: 79)

However, the purpose of laying out these dimensions of complexity is not to generate despair, but rather to highlight the challenges in order to inform the choice of methodology. Thus the next step is to examine what it is that we want to know within an evaluation of community participation policy and practice and therefore which methodology might be most appropriate.

2.4 What do we want to know? (And how can we know it?)

Evaluation is about examining the impacts of social policies and in particular assessing whether they deliver what they are intended to achieve. As Weiss expresses it:

> "Evaluation research is a rational enterprise. It examines the effects
> of policies and programmes on their targets – whether individuals,
> groups, institutions, or communities – in terms of the goals they are
> meant to achieve." (Weiss, 1993: 93)

Although evidence is not always at the core of policy-making, the idea of evaluation as a tool to inform decisions has received significant support from some administrations and politicians:

> "Social science should be at the heart of policy making...we need
> social scientists to help to determine what works and why, and what
> types of policy initiatives are likely to be most effective." (Blunkett,
> 2000, quoted in Nutley and Webb, 2000: 13)

To find out whether anything works, whether it is a complex social policy or a sandwich toaster, we need to examine two things. Firstly, we need to establish whether it produces the outcomes it is intended to produce. Does the policy reduce poverty, increase employment, or whatever it is meant to achieve? Does the sandwich toaster produce toasted sandwiches?

Secondly, we need to understand what is happening in terms of causality. If poverty was reduced, was this the result of the policy we are concerned with, or would it have happened anyway? Are the toasted sandwiches a result of the actions of the sandwich toaster, or would the bread and cheese have toasted themselves without the intervention of the toaster?

Hence, evaluating the success of a policy requires an assessment of the outcomes that have been produced and the extent to which these can be attributed to the policy. Drawing heavily on natural scientific approaches, early evaluation methodology addressed this dual requirement via experimental and quasi-experimental designs (Campbell and Stanley, 1966; Cook and Campbell, 1979), on the basis that the physical and statistical controls available through such designs would provide robust internal validity and therefore be clear about the causal relationships between policies and outcomes. The ideal approach, from this perspective, is presented as the randomised control trial (RCT), the 'gold standard' trial in medical research. This approach randomly assigns subjects to 'treatment' and 'control' groups, so that the effect of the treatment can be identified as the difference between the outcomes of the two groups. As Davies et al express it:

> "Randomised intervention studies, with other appropriate methodological safeguards, can provide unbiased estimates of aggregate effects in the studied population." (Davies et al, 2000: 263)

However, a range of authors have pointed to the challenges faced in implementing rigorous experimental designs in policy evaluation, including the difficulties of preventing selection bias, attrition, interaction between treatment and control groups, and ethical and practical issues with random assignment (Davies et al, 2000; Clarke and Dawson, 1999; Weiss, 1998; Mackenzie et al, 2010). Whilst it may be possible to address some of these challenges in some instances by careful methodological design (e.g. incentive payments to reduce attrition) or statistical controls (e.g. modelling to address differential attrition rates between treatment and control groups), some challenges effectively preclude experimental approaches altogether. Kubisch et al (1998: 4) point to the significant difference between social interventions that target individuals, which potentially allow for the

random assignment of people, and those that target whole communities, which would require whole communities as controls. Aside from the challenge of finding equivalent controls, there are essential statistical limitations when the numbers of 'cases' involved are inevitably small because we are working with whole community outcomes, rather than individual outcomes. Similarly, Weiss (1998: 228-9) highlights the impossibility of evaluating such community initiatives experimentally, since the aims are often deliberately shaped by participants through the process of the initiative, rather than established by 'decision makers' at the outset. Clearly many of these issues are closely related to the issues of complexity outlined in the previous section, since the possibility of a controlled experimental evaluation design is much more challenging when goals are inherently emergent and processes are neither linear nor pre-determined.

Beyond these challenges and limitations, the experimental approach has faced much more radical critiques, driven significantly by what Cook refers to as, "the conventional wisdom from the 1970s...and repeated in the 1990s that 'nothing works'" (Cook, 1997: 38). As Pawson and Tilley (1997: 9-10) explain, this conclusion was reached most influentially by Martinson in his 1974 review of 20 years' worth of reports on the rehabilitation of offenders, which suggested that there was no evidence of universally successful programmes. The apparent failure of social policies to deliver on their promise, according to evaluation studies, led to a political backlash because such findings resonated with the rightward turn in US and UK politics, and, more importantly for this discussion, a widespread questioning of experimental, quantitative approaches to evaluation methodology. There are a number of elements to this fundamental critique of experimental approaches, and the development of alternative methodologies, but these can be usefully summarised as variants on the two themes explored above – the complexity of policies and issues to do with epistemological positioning.

Speaking from the perspective of health research, where experimental approaches are particularly dominant because randomised control trials are the standard approach to testing the effectiveness of medicines, Marchal et al argue:

> "Quasi-experimental studies are the mainstay for effectiveness
> studies, using analytical techniques like randomization, linear

regression and cluster analysis to isolate the effect of each variable
on the outcome. Such designs are excellent to assess effectiveness
of interventions, but they fail to provide valid information when
applied to complex and dynamic systems." (Marchal et al, 2012: 193)

Essentially, experimental, outcome-focused approaches to evaluation face two
fundamental, inter-related difficulties arising from the complexity of policy
interventions. Firstly, there is the 'black box problem' (Chen, 1990; Pawson and
Tilley, 1997) which refers to the way in which such approaches (at least in their
less refined forms) treat the policy intervention in the same way that a medical
experiment might treat a new medicine, as a single, invariable pill taken
consistently by all members of the treatment group. This generally makes sense
for medicines, where manufacturing processes can be controlled to ensure that
each pill has the same amount of active ingredient, and it might makes sense for
sandwich toasters too. However, as highlighted above, social policies are
quintessentially complex.

If, for example, we wanted to use an experimental approach to compare 20
schools using synthetic phonics to teach children to read, with 20 schools that are
not using this approach, we need to be clear not just whether each of the
'treatment' schools is applying the method consistently, but also whether each
teacher in each school is applying it consistently, whether the 'control' schools are
all applying an alternative method that is sufficiently different, and so on. Indeed,
Weiss (1998: 9) points to studies where evaluators discovered belatedly that the
programmes they thought they were evaluating were not even really happening.
These challenges arising from variable implementation are particularly significant
in situations where policies have particularly long and complex processes, where
there are multiple organisations involved, and where those involved have a greater
degree of control over the initiative. Thus, for example, Kubisch et al (1998) point
to the impossibility of applying experimental methods to evaluate their
'comprehensive community initiatives' where the programme is explicitly
developed over a long period, in a partnership between multiple agencies and
community members, in order to tackle a wide range of issues through complex,
multi-layered actions. Moreover, they also point to the challenges of exploring

factors (inputs, outcomes and contexts) which cannot easily be quantified, and which therefore do not lend themselves to statistical modelling techniques.

The second challenge that policy complexity creates for experimental approaches relates both to implementation complexity, and also to the openness of social systems. Experimental approaches attempt to manage the multitude of variables that may affect outcomes by practical or statistical controls, in order to isolate the specific effect of the policy being studied. However, as Weiss (1993: 100) points out, this, "conveys the message that other elements in the situation are either unimportant or that they are fixed and unchangeable" and, in particular, that we can ignore the interactions between policies and contextual factors that may be important for their operation. Pawson and Tilley express this even more vehemently with regard to the experimentalist's exclusion of factors that vary between communities:

> "*Our argument is that precisely what needs to be understood is what it is about given* communities *which will facilitate the effectiveness of a programme!* And this is what is written out." (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:52, emphasis in original)

Both of these issues relating to complexity raise difficulties for experimental approaches, and point towards a need to explore process and context, as well as outcomes. As Weiss expresses it, "Evaluators need to study what the programme actually *does*" (1998:9, emphasis in original).

Pawson and Tilley also want to add an epistemological facet to this argument in favour of studying process and context, utilising their realist distinction between successionist and generative causation. Their contention is basically that the very nature of generative causation requires context to be taken into account, since:

> "Cause describes the transformative *potential* of phenomena. One happening may well trigger another but only if it is in the right condition in the right circumstances. Unless explanation penetrates to these real underlying levels, it is deemed to be incomplete." (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:34)

This provides a useful philosophical underpinning for the notion that context cannot be 'controlled out' of explanation, but Pawson and Tilley arguably do not take this point far enough. Returning to the Winchean distinction between reasons and causes, it seems possible to suggest that a crucial dimension of any explanation of how a policy has an effect (if indeed it does have an effect) will require an understanding of the reasons underlying the actions of those involved. Hence experimental approaches not only aim to exclude elements of context which are essential to understanding generative causation, but also tend to discount the reasoning of social actors which forms a crucial part of any reasonable explanation of causality within social processes.

Thus the suggestion is that using experimental and quasi-experimental designs to evaluate complex social policies and programmes is likely to be extremely challenging in a practical sense and, perhaps more importantly, is unlikely to generate useful understanding about 'what works' because such designs factor out elements which are integral to causal explanations. All of these challenges to experimental, outcome-focused approaches to evaluation have led to the development of a range of methodologies which explore processes and contexts alongside outcomes, often incorporating more qualitative methodologies. In particular, a range of 'theory-driven' methodologies have been developed in recent decades, offering possible solutions to the problems of managing complexity and context. As Clarke and Dawson (1999: 40) point out, the hypothetico-deductive methodology of experimental approaches inherently assumes a theory which is being tested, but these newer approaches are lumped together under the 'theory-driven' banner to contrast with supposedly 'method-driven' experimental designs.

Returning to our earlier quotation from Chen about the nature of social programmes, it is worth reading the next couple of sentences to understand the basis of all theory-driven approaches:

> "A social intervention or programme is the purposive and organised effort to intervene in an ongoing social process for the purpose of solving a problem or providing a service. The questions of how to structure the organised efforts appropriately and why the organised

efforts lead to the desired outcomes imply that the programme operates under some theory. Although this theory is frequently implicit or unsystematic, it provides general guidance for the formation of the programme and explains how the programme is supposed to work." (Chen, 1990: 39)

Hence, the basic idea is that any social policy or programme is constructed and implemented on the basis of theories which suggest that doing certain things will lead to other things, amongst which should be the desired outcomes.

As with many youthful schools of thought, the theory-driven arena has become rather thickly populated with particular approaches, each sporting a different name and using somewhat different terminology. Although, as Coryn et al (2011) suggest in their review of theory-driven evaluations over 20 years, there are common principles in terms of building the evaluation around explicit theories and examining processes, outcomes and contexts, the specific approaches to identifying theories and examining their operation vary considerably. However, within this broad school of theory-driven methodologies, it is possible to identify two broad classes of approach, one of which is process oriented, examining the entire causal chain of implementation, whilst the other is mechanism focused, concentrating on the specific causal mechanisms which make things happen (Stern et al, 2012: 24-6). These two approaches are exemplified respectively by 'Theories of Change' evaluation and 'Realist Evaluation'.

The Theories of Change (ToC) approach, developed by Weiss (1998; 1972) and built on most significantly by the Aspen Institute (Connell et al, 1995; Fulbright-Anderson et al, 1998), works on the basis that evaluation of complex social programmes should have three stages – 'surfacing' a theory of change, measuring activities and outcomes, and using the information about activities and outcomes to test the theory of change (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 15). The terminology often gets a little confused, as different writers have tended to use different language, but Weiss (1998: 58-9) makes a distinction between 'implementation theory', which is basically the strategy for how the programme should practically work, and 'programme theory', which consists of the ideas about how the

programme's activities should generate change. These two combine to form the programme's 'theory of change'.

Thus, for example, a programme which aimed to improve service standards by engaging service users in redesign might have an implementation theory consisting of steps to identify users, meetings with them and changes to services made on the basis of users' views, whilst the programme theory would relate to the responses of service users on being invited to engage, the assumptions regarding the value of users' views and the responses of services to such new information. Theories of change have been presented in different forms by different authors, but generally they take the form of a diagrammatic 'logic model', in which activities lead to outputs, which lead to outcomes, often at short, intermediate and long-term timescales, with the programme theory used to explain the assumptions inherent at the various stages.

There is some debate regarding the sources used to define theories of change, with Weiss (1998: 55) emphasising the importance of the underlying beliefs of those involved in a policy, which need to be 'surfaced', whilst Mason and Barnes (2007: 161) place much greater stress on using research evidence as the basis of theories, with other sources just filling in the gaps when research is not available. Generally speaking, though, ToC approaches emphasise the importance of collaborative approaches to articulating theories, working with a range of people involved to clarify the long-term aim of the programme, and to identify the steps necessary to reach it, working back towards the interventions that are necessary (Connell and Kubisch, 1998; Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007; Anderson, 2005). Perhaps most importantly, this collaborative approach highlights the fact that ToC approaches tend to be used for formative evaluation, as will be discussed in the next section below.

Crucially, the ToC approach to evaluation provides an explicit response to the issues and challenges highlighted above, suggesting that an exploration of processes through theories can help to get to grips with causality in a more effective way than experimental approaches. As Weiss expresses it:

"If the evaluation can show the series of micro-steps that lead from
inputs to outcomes, then causal attribution *for all practical purposes*
seems to be within reach. Although such an evaluation cannot rule
out all the threats to validity we have come to know and love, it has
the advantage (if things go well) of showing what processes lead to
the outcomes observed; if some of the posited steps are not borne
out by the data, then the study can show where the expected
sequence of steps breaks down." (Weiss, 2007: 70, emphasis in
original)

Thus the contention is that that a ToC approach can potentially cope with long and
complicated chains of causality within a programme, establishing at least some
evidence of which elements work, rather than being limited to the binary
assessment of whether whole programmes work offered by experimental
approaches.

Realist Evaluation (RE), developed by Pawson and Tilley (1997), has much in
common with ToC approaches, inasmuch as it starts from a basis of developing
theories about how a policy works, which are then tested through the evaluation.
However, there are some key differences. Firstly, Realist Evaluation tends to focus
on mechanisms which explicate parts of a policy, rather than entire policies
(although the aim is to be able to explore all parts of a policy and thereby the
whole). The key for Realist Evaluation is to identify specific theories which provide
'context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configurations' to highlight "what works, for
whom, in what circumstances" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 77). In a sense, this
aspect of Realist Evaluation can be seen as a response to Gambone's point that
evaluations have to choose which aspects to study, since:

"no research design within finite time, money and human resources
can test all the possible relationships among activities, outcomes and
contexts in a community." (Gambone, 1998: 150)

Pawson and Tilley (1997: 83-6) suggest that RE approaches should work in a
cyclical fashion, whereby theories regarding possible CMO configurations,
generally derived from previous research, are tested through empirical

observation, leading to more detailed 'specification'. This specification process is described as, "learning more and more about less and less" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 198), focusing the theories further to identify specific contexts in which a mechanisms operates, or specific groups for whom it works. Thus, whereas ToC approaches are primarily concerned with examining whole programmes in a formative fashion, to collaboratively improve their operation, whilst also providing an overall assessment of impact, RE approaches tend to focus on identifying CMO configurations which may explain only one small part of a programme, though they may operate across a range of varied programmes (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007).

Secondly, Pawson and Tilley are opposed to what they see as the dangers to validity of collaborative approaches, so in contrast to Theories of Change approaches, they argue that the theories involved must be constructed and owned by the evaluator, whether information from people involved in the policy is used or not in their construction (1997:159). And finally, as indicated earlier, Realist Evaluation (as the name suggests) is built on a realist understanding of the world, which heavily emphasises the generative, rather than successionist nature of causation in social processes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 55-82). Whilst ToC approaches tend not to have a strong philosophical underpinning, RE explicitly stresses the importance of understanding causation in a generative sense, which is central to the notion of the CMO configuration.

These theory-driven approaches, as Marchal et al (2012: 195-6) suggest, have particular strengths in terms of their ability to cope with policy complexity, by virtue of including processes and contexts, and this inclusion of process can potentially improve attribution by comparison with 'black box' outcome-focused evaluations, which may make their findings more transferable. However, there are also a range of significant critiques of such approaches.

Perhaps with the greatest potential to damn the entire theory-driven enterprise, a number of writers (Scriven, 1997; Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2011) argue that theory development is an unnecessary luxury and a waste of time. Their key point is that it is simply too complicated to develop effective theories of how programmes work, and that the key thing that we need to know is whether they

work, not how they work. In a sense, this drives at the heart of the divide between those who believe that policies can be evaluated through experimental methods, and those who argue for theory-driven approaches. As outlined above, proponents of the latter argue that the complexity of programmes militates against any understanding of whether they work unless we explore the processes which enable some aspects to work in some circumstances for some people, whilst other aspects are less effective. Thus Chen (1990) counters this type of argument with a strong defence of the need to understand how programmes work in order to be able to improve them.

A more useful way to look at this dispute may be to recognise that there is often considerable dubiety on both sides about what we mean by 'theory'. On the one hand, some the 'method-driven' experimentalists seem at times to believe that their studies are not in any sense 'theory-driven' (Chen, 1990: 18), although it is reasonable to argue that the hypothetico-deductive method is inherently theory-driven, since it starts from a testable hypothesis (Clarke and Dawson, 1999: 40). On the other hand, Marchal et al (2012) point to the considerable confusion about the nature of 'mechanisms' in studies using a Realist Evaluation approach, as well as the difficulties caused by a lack of suitable social scientific theory in some instances. Similarly, Milligan et al (1998) highlight the difficulties they have experienced in evaluating complete theories of change, despite some success in exploring parts of such a theory. Hence the challenge for both method- and theory-driven evaluation may be as much about generating a theory which is detailed enough to provide a useful explanation, but not so detailed as to be unmanageable.

Alongside this, there are significant questions about the validity of causal claims from theory-based evaluations. In this respect 'Contribution Analysis' (CA), developed primarily by Mayne (2001; 2011; 2012) attempts to offer, "a more systematic way to arrive at credible causal claims, and improve often weak evaluation practice when dealing with causality" (Mayne, 2012: 271). Whilst the emphasis on causal contributions and considering counterfactuals within CA may provide a degree of focus which augments the standard ToC approach (Wimbush, 2012), simply concentrating on causality does not resolve all of the issues. There are particular difficulties where credible counterfactuals are difficult to identify or

examine (Granger, 1998), such that causal claims may struggle to step beyond the rather probabilistic language of 'likely necessary' and 'likely sufficient' proposed by Mayne (2012: 276).

Context also remains problematic for theory-driven approaches, despite their commitment to including it in evaluations. Marchal et al (2012) point to the potential blurring of contexts and mechanisms and the danger of treating context as entirely external to a policy or programme, despite the possibility that those involved will be affecting those elements which are considered as context. With respect to Theories of Change approaches, Coryn et al extend this critique into a general point that even the additional tools to deal with complexity offered by such approaches may not be enough:

> "...these types of theories or models also have been questioned regarding the degree to which they adequately represent complex realities and unpredictable, continuously changing, open and adaptive systems." (Coryn et al, 2011: 202)

Earlier in this section, I established that an experimental approach is fundamentally inappropriate for studying community participation, due to the complexity of the policy and the difficulties of establishing appropriate controls, let alone sufficient statistical degrees of freedom, when considering whole-community processes. However, the criticisms above make it plain that theory-driven evaluation approaches do not provide a simple panacea. Moreover, to the extent that theory-based approaches may be productive, there is still a key methodological question as to which flavour of theory-based evaluation is likely to be of most use in evaluating Localism and Community Empowerment. To address the limitations of theory-based approaches and inform the decision as to specific methodology for this study, it is useful to explore the purpose(s) of evaluation and whose interests it serves, which form the subject of the next two sections.

2.5 What is the purpose of evaluation?

Evaluations can serve a wide variety of purposes, not least because of the range of audiences with a potential interest in evaluation findings (Weiss, 1986). I shall explore the issues relating to different audiences in the next section below, but it is first worth examining some of the debate around the general purposes of evaluation.

Evaluations are often characterised as being either formative, providing learning for improvement within a programme, or summative, providing an overall assessment of success or failure. As Stake describes this distinction, "When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative evaluation; when the guest tastes it, that's summative evaluation." (cited in Scriven, 1991: 19). These categories of formative and summative evaluation are closely paralleled by Chelimsky's (1997: 11-14) notion of evaluation for developmental purposes, providing feedback on a policy to improve it, and evaluation for accountability, to provide evidence to decision makers about the success of a policy, in order to inform decisions.

Whilst this distinction between summative evaluation for accountability and formative evaluation for development is enormously useful in considering what the purpose of an evaluation might be and therefore how it should be designed, there is also a risk that it becomes too readily equated with a simplistic divide between policy-makers and practitioners. As Weiss suggests:

> "The assumption is that by providing 'the facts,' evaluation assists
> decision-makers to make wise choices among future courses of
> action. Careful and unbiased data on the consequences of programs
> should improve decision-making." (Weiss, 1993: 93-4)

However, as the previous sections have suggested, the idea that evaluation can provide straightforward black and white assessments of success or failure is significantly challenged by the complexities of social policy. Moreover, even for those who are less cynical about the possibility of summative assessments of policies, there is a substantial body of literature questioning the notion of a rational, linear policy-making process from summative evaluation to evidence-

based decisions. As noted earlier in relation to policy complexity, some elements of policy may be shaped from the bottom up (Sabatier, 1997; Lipsky, 1997). And there has been long-running debate about the extent to which the policy making process is rational or more incremental, gradually developing rather than making wholesale changes at clear decision points (Simon, 1947; Lindblom, 1959; Etzioni, 1967).

Thus it may make more sense to see the boundary between formative and summative evaluation as somewhat blurred, since the process of policy development relies as much on learning and adaptation within an evolving policy framework as it does on broad assessments of 'what works'. As Majone expresses it:

> "The real challenge for evaluation research and policy analysis is to develop methods of assessment that emphasise learning and adaptation rather than expressing summary judgements of pass or fail." (Majone, 1988, cited in Weiss, 1998: 20)

This is clearly reflected in Weiss' notion of the 'enlightenment' model of research utilisation, whereby studies gradually percolate into policy circles over time, rather than the 'knowledge-driven' model where research has direct and instant effects on policy (Weiss, 1986: 31). Similarly, although Cook (1997: 40) argues that talk of a 'crisis' in evaluation, caused by the realisation that policy makers do not always use findings in a linear, rational process, is over-blown, he also points to the 'educational' use of evaluation findings.

This analysis which blurs the lines between summative and formative evaluations, and between accountability and developmental purposes, chimes with theory-based evaluation approaches. Thus Connell and Kubisch (1998: 38) argue that this is exactly what a Theory of Change approach attempts to do. The suggestion is that such an approach serves a formative purpose by sharpening the planning and implementation of initiatives, focusing discussion on outcomes and theories of how they can be achieved, but also clarifies the measurement of outcomes at various stages and addresses issues of attribution, thus providing summative evaluation data. Likewise, Pawson and Tilley (1997:207) suggest that Realist

Evaluation could operate in a similar fashion, cutting across the boundary between summative and formative evaluation, as the evaluator feeds back findings on effective context-mechanism-outcome configurations to policy makers and practitioners alike. By contrast, experimental approaches which do not explore the 'black box' of policy implementation would seem to struggle to provide formative feedback, although the suggestion from Ludwig et al (2011) about the possibility of using experimental approaches to test particular mechanisms within an overall theory perhaps opens a formative door, potentially utilising experimentation within a theory-based framework.

This possibility of providing both formative and summative findings from a theory-based evaluation opens up a further question, however, relating to the previous section's discussion of the importance of context. Whilst a strictly formative evaluation may be of use within a particular programme, summative evaluation is generally of use to the extent that it can enable lessons to be transferred, facilitating the expansion of a programme into new contexts, or providing learning for other programmes. Hence it is important to consider the extent to which evaluations may provide generalisable findings, or as Chelimsky (1997: 11-14) expresses it, the generation of knowledge which goes beyond the immediate accountability and development purposes relating to the specific policy or programme.

As Pawson and Tilley (1997) themselves point out, there is a significant challenge in generalising evaluation findings, since even a very clear finding from one study that a policy appears to work, will not mean that the 'same' policy can be transferred to new locations, new points in time, or new groups of people:

> "The social world (bless it) will always conspire to throw up changes, differences, and apparent anomalies from trial to trial" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 116)

However, both Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation attempt to address this challenge, in different ways. For ToC approaches, the key factor is the strength of the overall model and the level of detail, which helps to identify how it may apply or differ in a new context. As Granger expresses it:

> "Armed with a strong theory, evaluators are better prepared to anticipate and then examine how between-site variations may shape effects." (Granger, 1998: 240)

Hence, although a particular Theory of Change may not be straightforwardly applicable in another context, a strong model should enable both policy makers and practitioners to make reasonable decisions about extending or amending a programme.

For Realist Evaluation, Pawson and Tilley emphasise the importance of 'cumulation' of findings with regard to specific context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configurations (1997:115). Rather than attempting to 'pile the bricks' of experimental studies on whole policies, the Realist Synthesis approach is to explore CMO configurations using evidence from a range of studies, to provide robust theories that can potentially be applied across different policy areas (Pawson, 2006).

Neither of these approaches to generalisation of evaluation findings are entirely unproblematic, however. As Milligan et al suggest, drawing on their experience of using ToC methodologies, there can be significant challenges in developing theories with sufficient depth:

> "Without the detailed steps that are currently missing from the theories, it will be difficult to produce the compelling evidence stakeholders need in allocating resources among promising initiatives." (Milligan et al, 1998: 83)

The issue for generalisation from Realist Evaluation may be less about a lack of detail in the theory, but rather that the notion of "learning more and more about less and less" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 198) creates theories which become so specific to narrow contexts that they are of little use, despite all of Pawson's focus on 'middle-range theory'.

One possible solution to each of these difficulties is to follow Blamey and Mackenzie's suggestion of combining them:

> "there is no obvious reason for believing that Theories of Change and Realistic Evaluation could not coexist within the one programme evaluation, with the former providing broad strategic learning about implementation theory and the latter bearing down on smaller and more promising elements of embedded programme theory." (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007: 451)

Thus the idea is that a strong theory of change, fortified by a range of CMO configurations which have been tested across various policy areas, would provide a good basis for generalising findings into new settings by highlighting what should work and what may need adjustment. This could augment the potential for ToC methodology in particular to offer formative feedback through the evaluation process and for each of the approaches to offer summative findings in relation to particular programmes. In order to assess the potential merits or difficulties of this suggestion for the purposes of studying community participation policy, however, it is necessary to address the final fundamental question, which relates to the interests being served by evaluations.

2.6 Whose interests are being served?

Crucially, the question of whose interests are being served in any particular evaluation study needs to be seen as a political issue:

> "Evaluation research should be understood as inherently political...Whilst most commentators recognise that evaluation operates within political constraints, we go further and suggest that evaluation itself is socially constructed and politically articulated." (Taylor and Balloch, 2005: 1)

Whilst in many instances evaluations are primarily intended to meet the needs of their funders, and therefore decisions around purpose and even methodology will

be largely dictated in advance, there are no such external constraints in the case of this particular study. Hence, in making decisions about the approach that this study will take, it is important to consider whose interests may be served. As Greene argues, evaluators have no choice but to adopt some form of political position:

> "social program evaluators are inevitably on somebody's side and not on somebody else's side. The sides chosen by evaluators are most importantly expressed in whose questions are addressed and, therefore, what criteria are used to make judgements about program quality." (Greene, 1997: 25)

Clearly, these questions of whose interests are being served in any particular evaluation study overlaps significantly with the previous discussion about the purposes of evaluation, since different people may have different interests in terms of formative, summative or generalisable findings. As Weiss (1998: 29) suggests, "Expectations for the evaluation generally vary with a person's position in the system", with policy-makers being more likely to have an interest in summative findings, whilst practitioners may have more concern for formative aspects of evaluation. Whilst, as suggested above, the distinctions between these different forms of evaluation may be quite blurred in practice (and indeed, there is considerable dubiety with regard to who 'makes' policy), there is nevertheless an important question with regard to whose interests are represented in the design and implementation of any evaluation study. Moreover, this goes beyond the putative policy-maker/practitioner divide to include those individuals who are most affected by any particular policy or programme:

> "Evaluation should not privilege one set of beliefs over others. It should not take seriously only the questions and concerns of study sponsors rather than those of staff and clients whose lives may be even more affected by their experiences in the program." (Weiss, 1998: 100)

Thus the question of whose interests are being served through an evaluation is intimately connected to the issue question of who should actually be involved in

the evaluation process, since the suggestion is that direct involvement in evaluation enables people to shape the questions asked and influence how the findings are used.

Although the situation in practice is inevitably more complicated, it is useful to characterise participation in evaluation along a spectrum, from one extreme at which the researcher controls the entire study, through to the other at which all aspects are developed by a wide group of stakeholders. Underpinning positions along this spectrum are different perspectives on the need for 'objectivity', versus the value of hearing the voices of those involved in a policy or programme. Thus Scriven (1997) outlines the archetypal version of the emphasis on objectivity, even advising against interviews with staff unless absolutely necessary for data collection, on the basis that any personal interaction will introduce 'bias'. At the other end of the spectrum, Balloch and Taylor argue that:

> "no evaluation of any worth can afford to neglect the views of the central actors, be they young people, residents of a neighbourhood renewal area, parents or others. These groups should take precedence over practitioners and the evaluators themselves."
> (Balloch and Taylor, 2005: 250)

Hence the suggestion is that hearing the voices of those who are the targets or recipients of a policy is essential to understand the processes involved and the reasons for their responses. Indeed, advocates of 'user-led' research take this one stage further, maintaining that there is a basic incompatibility between the objectivity and distancing that researchers such as Scriven would promote, and complete understanding of how a policy works (Beresford and Evans, 1999).

This debate between objectivity and participation also filters through into the utilisation of evaluation findings. On the one hand, there is the view that 'objective' and 'scientific' discourse may be privileged by some decision makers (Humphries, 1997), or as Patton critically expresses it:

> "while I believe that the paradigms debate has lost its acerbic edge among most evaluators, many users of evaluation – practitioners,

policy-makers, program managers and funders – remain mired in the simplistic worldview that statistical results (hard data) are more scientific and valid than qualitative case studies (soft data)." (Patton, 1997: 267)

On the other hand, a number of authors suggest that the involvement of both practitioners and affected members of the public in an evaluation may be practically important when it comes to utilisation, since they will have some commitment to seeing the research findings employed to influence future policy (Clarke and Dawson, 1999: 18; Gregory, 2000: 180; Weiss, 1998: 100), as indeed will many researchers.

These debates about who participates in an evaluation and the interests it serves have a particular resonance for this study for three reasons. Firstly, the subject of the research is community participation, so it might seem methodologically and politically incongruous, to say the least, if the research approach did not involve some degree of participation. Secondly, starting from my own political positioning and the original objectives for the project, outlined in the previous chapter, I would suggest that communities which become 'subjects' of the research are entitled to expect direct benefits from the process and therefore need a participative role within the project. Indeed, even ignoring the political considerations, it could be practically difficult to study community participation in detail without involving participants in the process, since community activists are likely to have expectations of participation in anything that relates to them (Beresford, 2005). And thirdly, since the implementation of community participation policy is inherently shaped by the actions and interactions of communities and public sector agencies on the ground, the utilisation of findings needs to operate well beyond the narrow circle of official policy-makers.

These considerations highlight the importance of clarity regarding who might potentially benefit from this study and what forms of knowledge are likely to be important to them, in order to inform the choice of methodology. As outlined in the previous chapter, the admittedly ambitious research aims are to attempt to provide useful findings about 'what works' in community participation policy and practice which may be useful for communities, local practitioners, and local and national

policy-makers, as well as contributing to evaluation and community participation scholarship. Clearly for communities and practitioners directly involved in the study there is likely to be value in formative feedback through the process as well as summative findings of impact, to the extent that these are possible within the timescale and resources of the project. Alongside this, the aim to develop more widely usable findings requires an emphasis on generalisable knowledge which may be of use to all the different audiences.

As the previous section argued, the suggestion from Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) that it may be possible and potentially fruitful to combine Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches in one study, may offer an approach with the potential to meet all of these goals. Clearly there is a risk in this approach, since no evaluation can hope to answer every question and satisfy every interested party (Weiss, 1998: 33; Gambone, 1998), but it seems like a risk worth taking in order to meet as many goals as possible and to test the methodological waters. Taking this suggestion forward, it is important to consider in a little more detail how these methodologies relate to the debates about participation and how they might serve the multiple interests targeted by this particular study.

As noted earlier, there is a significant difference between these two theory-based approaches in terms of participation, since ToC evaluators emphasise the importance of collaboration in developing theories of change (Anderson, 2005; Connell and Kubisch, 1998), whilst Pawson and Tilley argue that the theories in Realist Evaluation should primarily come from the evaluator and her expert knowledge, with policy makers, practitioners and (possibly) service users being interviewed only to confirm, falsify or refine those theories (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 159). For Gregory, this emphasis on the expert position of the evaluator places limitations on RE approaches:

> "Consequently, the knowledge produced by Realist Evaluation is
> critically restricted as a result of the methodology's failure to embrace
> the range of knowledge held by people except as represented in the
> literature and/or as interpreted by practitioners/researchers."
> (Gregory, 2000: 192)

Notably, however, Pawson and Tilley (1997: 160-2) do recognise the importance of the 'knowledgeability of the social actor' and highlight the ways in which subjects of social programmes, practitioners and policy makers may each bring particular knowledge of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, which will not be immediately available to the evaluator. And whilst Pawson and Tilley (1997: 65) emphasise the importance of getting 'beneath' the appearance of things to identify underlying mechanisms, their consequent assumption that the evaluator is best placed to do this seems to be based largely on the rather questionable assumption that evaluators bring a different level of expertise from their experience of other evaluations and knowledge of other studies. Moreover, Pawson and Tilley's objections to participative methods, based on their 'division of expertise' between subjects, practitioners and evaluators start to break down in the context of studying community participation. Whilst community members may be conceived of as subjects from one perspective, they are also practitioners in participation processes and often evaluators of their own projects as well.

Hence, it is reasonable to argue that the notion of combining ToC and RE methodology need not be undermined by these differing attitudes to participation. Rather, it seems sensible to suggest that both methodologies may be applicable with different levels of participation in different situations, and that the level and form of participation needs to be determined by the political considerations of whose interests are being served. In the instance of this particular study, it should be possible to combine a significant degree of participation with both approaches, using ToC methodology to provide formative feedback and combining it with RE methodology to develop the more summative findings.

Moreover, the combination of approaches has the potential to provide knowledge in different forms to meet the needs of different audiences. As Weiss (1998: 68) suggests, the 'stories' provided by Theories of Change approaches may provide accessible summative findings for a range of people, from policy-makers to community members, using the power of the narrative form to convey important learning. Whilst a Realist Evaluation element to the study may offer middle-range theory which can be more readily generalised to other contexts (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007).

In addition, the combination of the two methodologies may help to manage some of the challenges relating to power differentials within evaluation. A number of ToC practitioners have pointed to the challenges in practice of dealing with different and often incompatible theories, which may be articulated by individuals or groups with different levels of power in the process (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 20; Granger, 1998: 223), although Mason and Barnes suggest that the process of identifying different theories may in itself be a strength of the approach, and that a Theories of Change evaluation can and should consider different theories:

> "working with difference is an important and challenging aspect...Seeking agreement at the expense of clarifying the contributions that different approaches and understandings of complex social problems can make to developing creative solutions is unlikely to be the best way forward." (Mason and Barnes, 2007: 161)

In this respect, combining ToC methodology with RE could potentially be productive, since the examination of particular mechanisms within a broad theory of change may help to adjudicate between different perspectives.

Thus it is argued here that a combination of ToC and RE approaches may be able to offer an element of formative evaluation which is of direct benefit to the communities involved, well-developed theories of change which can play a summative role for a range of stakeholders, and Realist CMO configurations which can enhance the generalisability of the ToC findings, as well has helping to manage conflicting theories.

2.7 Conclusion from this chapter

Drawing together these discussions about evaluation methodology, I am proposing that Blamey and Mackenzie's (2007: 450-1) suggestion of combining Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches should provide a starting point which is epistemologically, politically and practically consistent with a study of community participation policy such as this. Thus the study starts from this methodological

foundation and is also designed to explore the usefulness and practicality of such a combination of approaches to evaluation.

Epistemologically, I am working from a Wittgensteinian/Winchean position of knowledge as inter-subjectively agreed and purposive, which may seem more relativist than Pawson and Tilley's realism, but is very similar in practical terms and is perfectly congruent with the notion of causation as generative, rather than successionist, since it focuses on the reasoned responses of actors. This view of knowledge and causation combines with an understanding of the complexity of social policy, particularly in the field of community participation, to preclude any possibility of an experimental approach to the research. Instead, I have suggested that theory-based evaluation methodology may offer a means to deal with complexity and an appropriate approach to understanding the adaptive, emergent processes involved when communities take action. Taking into account the different purposes for evaluation and the varied groups with a potential interest in the outcomes of this study, I have concluded that the combination of ToC and RE approaches may help to meet multiple goals for multiple audiences. Given the nature of community participation as a subject for study, I have also suggested that the research design will need to be participative to a significant degree.

This methodological starting point feeds through into the specific methods for the study, outlined in Chapter 6. It also provides a framework for the initial analysis of policy and literature in the next three chapters, which underpins the empirical research. Chapter 3 examines the history of community participation policy in Scotland and England in order to identify the underlying drivers, thereby providing a starting point for the more detailed ToC analysis in Chapter 4 of the literature and contemporary policy. Chapter 5 then utilises the generic ToC model of community participation policy developed in Chapter 4 as a framework for a Realist review of the evidence relating to particular mechanisms.

Lastly, the attempt to combine ToC and RE approaches represents a methodological innovation which is largely untested in empirical research. The only significant prior study which began with the notion of combining the two approaches is the evaluation of the Health Action Zones at the turn of the century (Barnes et al, 1999; Judge, 2000), and in practice the constraints of the evaluation

contract significantly limited the application of ToC methodology and almost entirely excluded the use of RE approaches (Benzeval, 2003). Hence, as will be outlined in more detail in Chapters 6 and 10, this methodological starting point also necessitates some examination of its usefulness.

Chapter 3 – Community participation policy and theory

3.1 Introduction

Following on from the previous chapter's discussion of evaluation methodology, this chapter attempts to lay some groundwork for an exploration of the underlying theories inherent in community participation theory and policy. Having explored the range of approaches to policy evaluation, I concluded by suggesting that a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches can help to uncover both the over-arching model of community participation policy, and the specific points at which assumptions and mechanisms can usefully be tested. The starting point for this analysis is a brief exploration of the history of community participation policy in Scotland and England, which in descriptive terms covers well-trodden ground (see for example Popple, 1995; Ledwith, 1997; Somerville, 2011; Taylor, 2003). However, in providing an overview of the key developments, I also attempt to identify the key social issues to which such policy has responded. These issues can be seen as policy drivers, since they provide the rationale for governments to turn to community participation. Moreover, they supply the basis for the first stage of ToC analysis, since the issues which drive policy help to identify its ultimate goals.

The analytical approach used to identify the drivers for community participation policy evolves somewhat through the course of this chapter. Examining the history of community participation policy from the late 18th century through to the end of the 20th, I undertake a narrative review of the existing literature, focusing on those issues which underpinned policy agendas in different time periods. For more recent policy, particularly relating to the current governments in Edinburgh and London, there is clearly far less literature available, since the policies are still emerging. Hence in the latter stages of this chapter, the analysis focuses more directly on the policy documentation, identifying the ways in which policy drivers from earlier administrations are reflected in contemporary policy and where they have been reinterpreted or augmented by new issues. For the purposes of this initial analysis, relevant literature and policy documents were read in detail and

then coded using Nvivo. An initial coding structure was established on the basis of the key themes which emerged from the first read-through, focusing primarily on policy drivers and intended outcomes, with additional themes being added as they emerged from the literature.

This analysis also formed the basis for the more detailed examination of contemporary policy in Scotland and England using a ToC approach, which is set out in the subsequent chapter. The methodological approach used for this further analysis is outlined at the end of this chapter, along with a brief examination of some key theoretical ideas relating to power and the nature of community which are essential for understanding community participation in both policy and practice.

3.2 A brief history of community participation policy

Back in the mists of time...

3.2.1 Early development – 19th and early 20th century

The origins of community participation in UK public policy can be traced back to the application of 'community development techniques' in colonial administrations from the 18th century onwards (Popple, 1995: 7-8; Somerville, 2011: 36). Whilst it should be noted that there were elements of altruistic intention behind some of this work, aiming to tackle the poverty of colonial 'subjects' through education (Taylor, 1995: 99), the central thrust was a paternalistic concern for social control:

> "'Government stands *outside and above* the field of communities, providing the framework to enable communities to reconcile their differences. So, colonial governments simultaneously invented and enforced these categories of community and claimed to stand outside inter-communal tensions. As the representatives of 'civilisation', colonial governors administered and adjudicated between the different 'native communities'." (Clarke, 2009: 82-3)

Similar concerns to work with communities to manage the worst excesses of poverty, partly to counter the threat of unrest or revolution, appeared from the end of the 19th century in Britain, manifest in a range of charitable institutions, with a limited degree of government action alongside (Ledwith, 1997: 9).

In parallel with this top-down concern to keep the masses in check, communities of various types were starting to organise themselves. On the one hand, the development of mutual aid organisations, such as cooperatives and building societies, attempted to tackle at least the symptoms of poverty directly, whilst on the other hand, the growth of unions, socialist organisations, and the suffragette/suffragist movement were more concerned with changing the social order (Popple, 1995: 11; Taylor, 1995: 99; Ledwith, 1997: 9).

In this early period, then, the key drivers behind community participation efforts can be seen as a fear of unrest, a belief that poverty can/should be addressed by tackling issues within poor communities, and demands to be heard from some excluded communities. Obviously these drivers interact, with extremes of poverty being identified as a cause of social unrest, manifested partly in working class campaigns.

Everything changes…

3.2.2 Developments in the 1960s and 1970s

Whilst there is some development of community work theory in the 1950s, relatively little changed in terms of government policy on community participation until the late 60s (Popple, 1995: 14) when two key factors led to substantial shifts. Firstly, there was a confluence of the 'rediscovery' of poverty (Somerville, 2011: 92), together with a surge in political concern about both the growth of grassroots movements and urban racial tension, highlighted in the UK by Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood' speech (Ledwith, 1997: 11). Secondly, there were growing "doubts about the ability of experts to solve problems" (Boaden et al, 1981: 31) despite, or perhaps because of the growth of monolithic, professionally controlled public services.

These factors combined to create a new level of government interest in community development and community participation, most visibly manifested in the Urban Programme and the Community Development Projects (CDP), which have been documented in detail (see for example Green, 1992; Whitting et al, 1986; Laurence and Hall, 1981; Popple, 1995; Batley and Edwards, 1974). The Urban Programme provided funding for a range of community projects in disadvantaged areas across the country, whilst the CDP consisted of intensive community development interventions in 12 areas. Crucially, in terms of drivers, the Urban Programme was focused on reducing racial tension and ameliorating deprivation, later shifting somewhat towards economic development, whilst the CDP aimed, "to assist people to use the social services more constructively and to reduce dependence on these services by stimulating community change" (Popple, 1995: 18). This was based on ideas such as Keith Joseph's 'cycle of transmitted deprivation', which suggested that the persistence of concentrated poverty must be caused by the internal culture of communities, rather than external factors (Ledwith, 1997: 11). The CDP experience is particularly informative regarding governmental intentions, since it was closed down after just a few years, following the development of radical critiques within the projects, which suggested the need to shift the focus from pathologised communities to wider structural causes for poverty (Green, 1992). As Boaden et al argue, this:

> "strongly suggests that the motives of government in promoting public participation were concerned more with questions of social control than with encouraging widespread involvement in policy-making and implementation." (1981: 32)

Whilst these two programmes represent a very public moment in the development of community participation, they should not be over-emphasised, since there was also a wider process of developing public participation in a number of other areas. Alongside the growing recognition that professionally controlled public services might not be the solution to all society's ills, Gyford points to the growth of voluntary and community sector organisations throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the gradual development of a more consumerist mentality amongst the public (1991: 37-41). This combination of concern about services and growing

public voice fed through into a number of influential reports in this period. From outside government, the Gulbenkian Report (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1968), argued that community work should be an integral part of professional practice across community-based public services. Within government a similar notion appeared in the Seebohm Report, recommending that community work should be a key approach within social work (Seebohm Committee, 1968), and the Skeffington Report (Skeffington Committee, 1969), which recommended increased participation in planning, reinforcing the first significant legislative duty regarding community participation in the previous year's Town and Country Planning Act. Slightly later, the Alexander Report in Scotland tied the idea of community development to adult education and community learning (Scottish Education Department, 1975), although community work and community participation approaches had also grown within social work, utilising the broad powers of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (Ledwith, 1997: 10). Elements of community involvement also began to appear in a range of other service areas during this time, including road planning, transport, housing and health (Boaden et al, 1981; Popple, 1995).

The 1960s and 1970s, therefore, can be characterised as a period during which public policy in a number of areas began to adopt notions of community participation and community development. In terms of the drivers for these developments, we can see a clear continuation of the fears of social unrest and theories pathologising poor communities that had underpinned 19th and early 20th century community development approaches. The height of concern about urban and racial tension in the late 1960s was particularly influential in introducing these ideas into state-funded area-based regeneration work, although Popple argues that a concern with minimising protest and reinforcing social control can also be seen across other policy areas, such as housing and planning where community workers were co-opted by the state to manage residents' demands (Popple, 1995: 21-2). Similarly, the impact of demands from communities to be heard in the policy process continues in this period, tied closely to fears of unrest through the development of new social movements. A fourth driver also appears in this period as community participation began to be seen as means to reform 'failing' public services, chiming with a political concern over professional capture of services (Boaden et al, 1981: 31), and growing voluntary and community sector demands.

Enter Thatcher, stage (new) right...

3.2.3 UK policy of the Conservative Governments 1979-1997

The period of Conservative government from 1979 is often described as a time when notions of community participation faded from view:

> "With the retreat of the state from providing public services in the 1980s and 1990s, the role of community development had a lower profile on the government's agenda" (Brodie et al, 2009: 8)

Whilst there is undoubtedly a sense in which the Thatcher years in particular can be contrasted with the burgeoning of interest in community from the late 1960s, and the later focus on neighbourhoods and communities under New Labour, the situation is more complex and the divide less stark than at first appears.

The image of the Thatcher governments as being almost anti-community is tied in with New Right hostility to pressure groups (though no doubt there are debates to be had about which pressure groups were seen as problematic), evidenced at a national level in the fight against union power, but also feeding through into views of local issues:

> "...the notion that ultimately it was the individual rather than group who was the only legitimate political and economic actor. The proper response to demands for better performance or improved responsiveness by local councils was seen to lie not in facilitating greater political participation but in introducing more market or quasi-market mechanisms into local government along with more stringent financial disciplines" (Gyford, 1991: 47)

However, this focus on market solutions and consumerism, changed the shape of community participation, rather than removing it altogether. Crucially, the combination of consumerism with the new managerialism brought into public

services from the private sector, led to a concern for responsiveness across the public sector (Gyford, 1991: 49-50). Whilst this was usually manifested in ways which were concerned with responsiveness to individual consumers, this also created some opportunities for community groups to create influence (Taylor, 1995: 105). Moreover, the drive to reduce professional monopolistic control over services led to significant legislative steps towards forms of participation in housing, education and community care (Gyford, 1991: 60-71), whilst creating opportunities for voluntary and community sector organisations to grow in size and influence through direct provision of services (Popple, 1995: 26), although not without financial and political risks (Taylor, 1995: 104). Notably, however, the Conservative governments of the 1980s clearly exhibited some resistance to collective public influence over the private sector. Thus, in the planning sector, the first Thatcher administration resolved the tension between legal participation duties and the market interests of developers, by introducing regulations in 1981, "which aimed to discourage planning authorities from doing any more than the statutory minimum in respect of public participation" (Gyford, 1991: 73).

The situation in urban regeneration in the 1980s also contains elements of continuity and change. Whilst the Thatcher government's diagnosis of 'underdevelopment' in inner city areas led to a focus on private sector development (Somerville, 2011: 93), the government also blamed failures of public sector bureaucracies, leading to a continuation of community participation in programmes such as Action for Cities and City Challenge, particularly following the urban riots of the early 1980s (Taylor, 1995: 106). In Scotland, the continuity was stronger, with the New Life for Urban Scotland programme emphasising collective participation through community organisations, somewhat differently from the more individualist approach south of the border (Scottish Executive, 1999).

Alongside this mixed policy landscape, the number of public sector community workers increased through the 1980s as local authorities decentralised services and engaged communities in response to budget cuts (Taylor, 1995: 103) and Manpower Services Commission[5] funding was used to provide employment schemes, many of which had strong community work elements (Popple, 1995: 26-

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[5] A Department of Employment quango set up to coordinate employment and training services across the UK. The Commission was made up of members from industry, trade unions, local authorities and education.

7). Alongside this, notions of community and who should participate were changing, as the development of identity politics gave minority ethnic communities and, to a lesser extent, disabled people, stronger collective voices (Brodie et al, 2009: 7).

The Major years were largely a continuation of the mixed picture under the Thatcher governments. Thus the emphasis on consumerist approaches to participation was retained, particularly through 'Charterism', which suggested that charters of consumer rights could be used as an alternative to markets where competition was not possible (Prior et al, 1997). At the same time, the 'social market' where localities had to compete for funding, led to the development of partnerships between local authorities and communities which were far from consumerist in nature (Somerville, 2011: 93), whilst in urban regeneration collective participation and partnership was emphasised in City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget, although the evaluations suggest that the level of community participation was largely tokenistic (DETR, 2000; Rhodes et al, 2005).

Thus the Conservative years from 1979 to 1997 demonstrate a significant shift in terms of the nature and interpretation of the social problems driving community participation policy. Whilst the critique of 'failing' public services is significantly strengthened in this period, the New Right analysis led to more individualised forms of participation based on market choice and consumer rights, rather than collective influence. In the regeneration field, following the riots of the early 1980s, fears of social unrest again played a part, but notably the earlier concern to 'develop' poor communities whose characteristics were blamed for their poverty, is largely replaced by the shift towards property-led regeneration which evinced a lack of concern for such communities. Perhaps reflecting Margaret Thatcher's oft-quoted statement that, "There is no such thing as society" (Keay, 1987), the Thatcher governments' approach seems to have been that poor communities are not something to be concerned about, and that poor individuals and families will either move up with the regeneration process, or move out. This approach shifted somewhat during the Major years, but the level of community participation in practice was very limited (Popple, 1995: 28). Meanwhile, demands from communities seem to have had relatively limited influence in terms of central government policy over these two decades, although the development of identity

politics and concerns about disgruntled voters in a period of cuts brought this driver into play at a local level.

Community comes to town...

3.2.4 UK policy of the New Labour Governments 1997-2010

The election of New Labour in 1997 is often seen as a significant turning point in community participation, with ideas of community, engagement, participation, and empowerment taking centre stage:

> "Governments of different political hues, at home and abroad, have
> been concerned with fostering community engagement since at least
> the mid 1980s, but never more so than now. This is particularly true
> of the New Labour government elected in 1997, which has, from the
> beginning, pledged itself to promoting active citizenship and
> community engagement at all levels and in all policy areas." (Rogers
> and Robinson, 2004: 10)

Indeed, little more than a month after taking office, Prime Minister Tony Blair stated that a key task for his government would be to, "recreate the bonds of civic society and community" (cited in Rogers and Robinson, 2004: 11), a message which was subsequently reinforced in speeches by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown (Brown, 2000), and the Home Secretary, David Blunkett (Blunkett, 2003). However, it is more useful to view community participation policy under New Labour as being a gradual process of development, being initially characterised by a relatively narrow focus on community participation in more disadvantaged communities, driven significantly by concerns around community cohesion and the deficiencies of poorer communities, whilst the interest in participation is later broadened to encompass all communities, driven more by concerns about democratic renewal and service failures.

Before coming to power, New Labour's thinking on community participation was significantly influenced by two key reports which emphasised the growth of

inequality in the preceding decade and a half, and argued that this increase in inequality was both undermining social cohesion and damaging economic growth (Commission on Social Justice, 1994; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1995). Recommended responses included a specific strategy to address the exclusion of marginalised areas, which should incorporate:

> "Local management, decentralised budgets, and resident
> involvement in decision-making in areas like schools, the police,
> social services and health care, as well as housing" (Joseph
> Rowntree Foundation, 1995)

These ideas were combined in early New Labour thinking with the influence of communitarianism (Somerville, 2011: 95), which emphasises the importance of social order, and argues that this is built by the development of shared morals in local communities, generated through community-level activity:

> "integral to the social order of all societies are at least some
> processes that mobilise some of their members' time, assets,
> energies, and loyalties to the service of one or more common
> purposes." (Etzioni, 1997: 10)

This early New Labour angle on community participation appears most obviously in urban regeneration, through the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Cabinet Office, 2001) and the New Deal for Communities, with a requirement for local agencies to work in partnership with communities in the most disadvantaged areas. Similar expectations of community involvement also appear in a range of other early policy initiatives targeted largely at disadvantaged areas, such as Sure Start, Education Action Zones, and Health Action Zones (Rogers and Robinson, 2004: 11).

Clear parallels can be drawn here with the pre-Thatcherite tendency to pathologise poor communities. Whilst New Labour's analysis may have been less judgmental than Murray's underclass arguments which resonated through the 1980s and 1990s (Murray, 1990), the communitarian analysis of declining social cohesion is still focused on a 'loss of community' in disadvantaged areas (Taylor, 2003: 9-10).

And although there was a recognition that this may have been caused by broader socio-economic forces, such as the changes to the labour market associated with deindustrialisation, urban regeneration policies located the solutions mainly within communities, since "neighbourhood deprivation is framed as a problem pertaining largely to the internal characteristics and dynamics of neighbourhood residents." (Hastings, 2003: 93)

This conjunction of communitarianism with an analysis of community decline led to a focus on the responsibilities of individual citizens and communities:

> "Such rebuilding is to revolve around the *community*, which is, according to the Labour government, the key scale of meaningful human interaction and the basis for the distribution of social obligations and responsibilities" (Imrie and Raco, 2003: 5)

Hence, whereas policy in earlier decades was often focused on addressing the failings of poor communities, this creates the somewhat paradoxical situation where communities are both the problem and the solution:

> "They are portrayed, in pathological-underclass terms, as entities that inculcate individuals with the values of immoral behaviour, disorder and (welfare-state) dependency, while simultaneously being promoted as a source of moral good, whose corrosion lies at the heart of urban problems and disorder" (ibid: 26)

Thus, according to this analysis, communities become both the object and the subject of policy, since their failings must be addressed to counter their negative effects and, if this is done successfully, these same communities will become positive agents to achieve broader policy goals.

These three ideas – that some communities have pathological problems, that communities need to take more responsibility for their own issues, and that policy should treat communities as both objects and subjects – are not entirely new, but emerge strongly in New Labour policy. Crucially, these ideas shape policy differently for different communities, with individuals and communities which are

seen as more problematic, generally poorer neighbourhoods made up of social housing tenants, being more likely to be treated as objects, required to become more 'responsible' to qualify as full citizens or positive communities (Flint, 2004; McKee, 2011).

Targeted regeneration policies were also driven partly by the notion that public services were failing disadvantaged areas, drawing on both the critique of traditional, producer controlled public services which had emerged in the 1960s, and continuing the Conservative's market-focused, consumerist remedies. This aspect of community participation policy develops into a much wider policy focus in the later years of New Labour government. During New Labour's second term, the government's review of support for community capacity building identified community participation as essential for a wide range of government policies (Home Office, 2004: 5). Based on the contention that, "There isn't a single service or development in Britain which hasn't been improved by actively involving local people" (DCLG, 2007: 2), this led to the 'duty to involve', making community participation a legal duty for virtually all local public services, across all communities, not just those which are disadvantaged (UK, 2007; UK, 2009). However, this emphasis on community influence over public services arguably starts to shift slightly in the last years of the New Labour government, as the recession started to bite, with the introduction of 'co-production' and related ideas around community empowerment and self-help (DCLG, 2008b: 21). Thus later policy starts to reframe the pathologisation of communities, suggesting that all communities can take more responsibility, rather than merely those poor neighbourhoods which are diagnosed as failing communities.

The broad drive towards community participation across all services and areas in later New Labour policy was also a response to a growing concern with 'democratic renewal', based on the idea that reducing voter turnout and falling party membership reflects a wider public disengagement from politics that undermines democracy and the state. Closely allied to the interest in communitarianism, New Labour drew on participatory theories such as Barber's (1984) notion of 'strong democracy' for a community-based answer to this malaise. Thus, policies such as the duty to involve were intended to complement representative democracy (DCLG, 2007: 4), and this was combined with the 'duty

to promote democracy' (UK, 2009), on the basis that community participation would also increase interest in traditional representative democracy (DCLG, 2006: 45; DCLG, 2008b: 19).

Community participation policy under New Labour, then, was driven initially by a concern for social cohesion and a focus on the failings of both communities and public services in disadvantaged areas, showing significant continuities with, but also some differences from earlier policies. Thus, the focus on community deficits continued the earlier pathologisation of poor communities, but the tone was somewhat different, with the influence of communitarianism turning communities into both problem and solution. Meanwhile, the concern with failing public services, which was initially focused largely on the most disadvantaged areas, later broadened out to encompass all public services in all areas. The consumerist approach of the previous Conservative governments continued, but policies such as the wide-ranging 'duty to involve' suggest a more collectivist element. This also connects to the additional democratic deficit driver which comes into play during the New Labour years, with community involvement in public services seen as part of the solution. Moreover, this perhaps indicates a smaller role for the notion of 'community demands to be heard', since the analysis suggests that democracy is in trouble because people are no longer demanding to be heard by politicians and public services. Finally, it is worth reiterating the shifting nature of the pathologisation of communities, with later New Labour policy starting to emphasise the responsibility of all communities, not just poorer, 'failing' communities as the economy crashed, taking government revenues and budgets with it.

Meanwhile, north of the border...

3.2.5 Scottish Executive policy 1999-2007

Whilst there were some notable differences between England and Scotland in terms of community participation policy dating back to the 1980s, the divergence has become gradually more marked since the advent of devolution in 1999.

During the Scottish Executive years from 1999 to 2007, perhaps unsurprisingly given that Labour was the dominant coalition partner, there are significant similarities with New Labour policy at Westminster. Thus, the early emphasis on community participation in regeneration is reflected in the Executive's Community Regeneration Statement (Scottish Executive, 2002), although there is less focus on social cohesion (perhaps because the 2001 riots were an English phenomenon), and arguable a stronger degree of pathologising communities, with less recognition of the wider structural causes of poverty than in New Labour policy of the same period (Hastings, 2003: 93).

Scottish Executive policy also shifted towards a wider notion of community participation across different services and areas, but at a somewhat earlier stage than New Labour policy in England. Thus Community Planning in Scotland included a duty to engage communities at a very broad level (Scottish Executive, 2004a; Scottish Executive, 2004b; Scotland, 2003), whilst the National Standards for Community Engagement (Communities Scotland, 2005) were rapidly rolled out beyond their initial housing context. As with New Labour, this shift is driven by a public service reform agenda that prescribes community involvement as part of the solution to problems with professionally controlled, institutionally demarcated services.

The later New Labour emphasis on democratic renewal was not strongly evident in Scottish Executive policy, whereas the creation of the National Standards for Community Engagement to help agencies, "to listen to communities and involve them in making a positive contribution to what really matters" (Communities Scotland, 2005: 2) arguably implies an openness to community demands to be heard, also reflected in the participative process used to develop them[6].

Scottish Executive community participation policy, then, is driven partly by a pathologisation of poor communities, and more broadly by concerns about service limitations and a degree of responsiveness to collective community voices. By

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[6] The National Standards were developed for the Scottish Executive in 2005 by the Scottish Community Development Centre "with extensive participation of over 500 community and agency representatives" (SCDC, 2016) They have recently been refreshed through a similar participative process.

comparison with New Labour policy at Westminster, the influence of fears of social unrest and the democratic renewal agenda is much more muted.

Executive becomes Government – re-branding or change?

3.2.6 Scottish Government policy 2007-

In contrast with Scottish Executive policy, the Scottish Government rapidly developed a concern with the democratic deficit following the Scottish National Party (SNP) victory in 2007. Thus, the Community Empowerment Action Plan makes a clear statement of belief that community participation will reinvigorate existing systems of representative democracy:

> "When local people are actively engaged in tackling issues within
> their community, and in helping to realise the community's potential,
> those people are likely to have an increased interest in and
> engagement with the affairs of local government and indeed
> Government across the board." (Scottish Government and COSLA,
> 2009: 7)

An emphasis on community participation to deal with limitations of public services is also prominent in Scottish Government policy, encompassing elements of community participation to improve services, and potentially to preclude the need for services by independent community action:

> "Encouraging communities to participate in decisions on how
> services are delivered by public service providers is an essential part
> of our plans for public service reform. However, community
> empowerment can also mean communities being able to take their
> own action and make their own decisions on how best their needs
> can be met." (Scottish Government, 2012a: 13)

This reflects some continuity with Scottish Executive policies such as Community Planning[7] and the National Standards for Community Engagement, as part of a public service reform agenda, but also a response to audible demands from communities in the small political sphere of Scotland. Moreover, there is a clear parallel with later New Labour policy, in the context of recession and budget cuts, which starts to shift the pathologisation of communities towards a broader responsibilisation of all communities, although the Community Empowerment Action Plan still has repeated references to 'community pride' and 'resilience', implying that some communities need to improve more than others (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009).

Issues of community cohesion remain relatively absent in Scottish Government policy, although they do appear in the Christie Commission report[8] on the future of public services:

> "Regardless of what brings communities together, they not only work towards the desired outcome, but the process itself increases community cohesion. Strong communities have good social networks and contacts which may not be so developed in those which are disadvantaged and deprived." (Public Services Commission, 2011: 35)

However, it is worth noting that the language of cohesion is being applied somewhat differently in Scotland. Whereas New Labour's concern was largely with cohesion between communities defined by ethnicity, following the 2001 riots, the Scottish Government uses cohesion to mean reduced inequalities in economic participation between communities (Scottish Government, 2016), which would seem to be closer to the Christie Commission's meaning and much further from concerns about social unrest.

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[7] Community Planning is a statutory process which aims to ensure coordination between public service agencies at a local authority level. Community Planning Partnerships are expected to jointly plan services to achieve shared outcomes, and to engage with communities.
[8] The Christie Commission was set up by the Scottish Government in 2010 to undertake a wide-ranging review of the future development of public services, in the context of increasing demand arising from demographic changes and persistent inequality, together with reducing budgets following the 2008 financial crisis.

The key drivers behind Scottish Government community participation policy, then, would appear to be a concern for public service reform, exacerbated particularly by the economic and budget situation; a responsibilisation of communities, broadening out the pathologisation of poor communities to some extent; a desire to be responsive to community voices; and a concern about the democratic deficit. By comparison with New Labour and earlier Westminster policy, there appears to be far less concern about social unrest, perhaps reflecting the absence of rioting in Scotland in recent years.

It's local, it's big and there is such a thing as society...

3.2.7 UK policy of the Coalition (2010-2015) and Conservative (2015-) Governments

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government elected in 2010 placed a strong emphasis on community participation through David Cameron's 'Big Society' programme, and the closely related Localism Act 2011. Underlying both was an analysis which tied together elements of the pathologisation of communities with concerns about both the democratic deficit and failings or limitations of public services:

> "Alongside the economic crisis we face the crisis of our broken society and a crisis of confidence in our political system. A common thread runs through these failures: an imbalance of responsibility and power." (Conservative Party, 2009: 1)

Interestingly, the broadening of community participation ideas which occurred under New Labour and in Scottish Government policy continues here, with an explicit statement of 'responsibilisation' (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Raco, 2003), arguing that all communities and individuals need to take more responsibility, in the context of shrinking public sector budgets. Arguably, however, Coalition policy ostensibly made less of a distinction between pathologised poorer communities and more affluent communities, suggesting that excessive government centralisation had damaged all communities:

"Under Labour, the rise of top-down central and regional government control has undermined local councils and allowed people too little say over decisions that directly affect them locally. Without real local democracy, communities are made weaker: social responsibility, civic involvement and the inclusion of vulnerable people in social life are all being inhibited." (Conservative Party, 2009: 3)

The assumption, therefore, would appear to be that if local communities are given more responsibility and power they will be revitalised and thus, "solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want" (Cabinet Office, 2010: 1), and in the process rebuild democracy by gaining greater power over a revitalised local government. However, there are clear tensions here, since the Localism Act's general power of competence, intended to strengthen local government and thereby local democracy, is accompanied by the repeal of the duty to promote democracy and the duty to involve (UK, 2011; DCLG, 2011a).

More importantly, there have been significant questions regarding the authenticity of the Big Society and Localism rhetoric of community empowerment. Thus, the Communities and Local Government Committee raised questions about the extent to which an already busy community sector might be able or willing to take on extra responsibility, particularly in relation to running services (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2011: 77). Chanan and Miller take this further, arguing that the new 'Community Right to Challenge', which enables community organisations to challenge and take over public services, risks undermining community organisations' independence and destroying their value for communities:

"The cost-benefit of state support for community groups is not that they take over public services but that they take pressure off them by spreading wellbeing in their own ways." (Chanan and Miller, 2011: 4)

Whilst there were some minor shifts in emphasis over the period of the Coalition government, such as the reduced visibility of the Big Society concept, the Localism agenda essentially remained unchanged and has continued with the Conservative

government since May 2015. Indeed, the Conservative manifesto for the 2015 election even resurrected the language of the Big Society alongside Localism (Conservative Party, 2015: 45, 53).

UK Government policy in community participation since 2010, therefore, echoes many of the drivers which have fuelled previous Westminster policies and those north of the border, particularly around the democratic deficit, failings of public services, and problems with communities, and although the social cohesion agenda which was so central to New Labour policy appears to have faded from view, the Big Society became a key part of the discussion about the causes for and responses to the riots of 2011. Arguably, however, the Big Society/Localism agenda also exhibits some significant differences by comparison with earlier and Scottish policy. The analysis underpinning the Coalition/Conservative version of responsibilisation critiques excessive state centralisation, but in doing so it also implicitly pathologises all communities, arguing that they need to take more responsibility and overcome their dependence on the state. This is something of a shift from earlier policies which tended to pathologise only the poorest communities. Alongside this, the Big Society and Localism pronouncements make little suggestion that these policies are a response to demands from communities, rich or poor.

3.3 Key drivers

Having briefly outlined the history of community participation policy from Westminster and Holyrood, it is possible to identify five key drivers for community participation policies. These are the social issues that have led various governments to prescribe community participation of some form as a remedy, illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 – The Driving Wheel of Community Participation Policy

As the above analysis shows, the relative importance of these drivers varies over time and place, with some of them only appearing relatively recently (e.g. democratic deficit) and others fading in and out of view, depending on the particular political and historical context (e.g. fear of unrest). Moreover, the nature of these drivers is interpreted differently by different governments, leading in turn to different responses. Table 3.1 below summarises these variations:

Table 3.1 – Summary of key drivers and responses to them at different periods

		Drivers				
		Fear of unrest	**Pathologised communities**	**Demands to be heard from communities**	**Failures of public services**	**Democratic deficit**
Period/Government	**19th and early 20th century**	Colonial community development, settlements in UK, etc.	Colonial community development, settlements in UK, etc.	Responses from communities themselves - mutual aid, social movements		
	1960s and 1970s	Urban Programme	Urban Programme, CDP	Growth of voluntary and community sector, new social movements	Reforms to planning law, and community participation in other service areas.	
	1979-97 – Conservative governments	Inner city regeneration		Local government responses only	Market solutions, individual consumer rights	
	1997-2010 – New Labour governments	Neighbourhood renewal, community cohesion	Neighbourhood renewal, communitarianism and start of responsibilisation		Community participation as part of public service reform (duty to involve, etc.), start of responsibilisation	Duty to involve, duty to promote democracy
	1999-2007 – Scottish Executive		Community regeneration	National Standards for Community Engagement	Community engagement as part of public service reform – Community Planning, etc.	

Period/Government		Drivers				
		Fear of unrest	**Pathologised communities**	**Demands to be heard from communities**	**Failures of public services**	**Democratic deficit**
	2007- Scottish Goverment		Community regeneration, broadening into responsibilisation of all communities	Community empowerment agenda	Community empowerment as part of public service reform, growth of responsibilisation	Community empowerment leading to participatory democracy, complementing representative democracy
	2010- Coalition and Conservative governments	Big Society response to 2011 riots	Pathologisation of all communities – 'broken society' needing 'Big Society'		Public service reform based on localism as a response to failures of centralisation, growth of responsibilisation in context of service cuts	Shifting power (and responsibility) to local government and communities

Crucially, these drivers are inter-related, reinforcing each other in different ways at different times. For example, failures of public services may be seen as a cause of discontent and unrest in some communities, so participation to influence and improve services may be seen as a response to both issues (Wilson, 1996). Similarly, concerns about limitations of public services are also linked to the democratic deficit:

> "There are…practical arguments in favour of activism, given the complexity of our governance systems and the prospect that participation could lead to more effectve learning and better decisions...The argument is that a properly organised democracy increases our capacity to address fundamental social problems."
> (Lowndes et al, 2006: 282)

This example, however, also illustrates the extent to which the drivers are given different emphasis in different policies. Whilst improving democratic accountability is clearly seen as part of the solution to public service limitations under New Labour and across Scottish community participation policy, the same is not true of the Thatcher and Major administrations, which emphasised market-based solutions to the same problem.

Furthermore, as indicated above, the analysis of each problem varies over time, in turn leading to different forms of community participation policy. For example, whilst the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s tended to pathologise communities on the basis that they were excessively dependent on the state, utilising Murray's underclass arguments, New Labour policy tempered such ideas with an analysis of excess individualism and insecurity generated by changes in the labour market (Taylor, 2003: 9). Thus, whilst the former was more concerned to roll back the state and drive consumerist solutions, the latter looked to communitarian ideals of shared norms being reinforced by shared local activity. Notably the Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010 have revitalised the earlier rhetoric of communities becoming dependent on an over-centralised state, again using this as justification for rolling back the state, although the responses in terms of community participation are less overtly consumerist, as will be explored in more detail below.

3.4 Interpreting policy

These points about the ways in which different governments have characterised the underlying social problems and prescribed varying forms of community participation as solutions highlight an important challenge in interpreting policy. The previous chapter introduced the debates regarding the extent to whcih the policy process can be characterised as a top-down, rational, linear process, or as multi-directional, incremental, non-linear and irrational (Sabatier, 1997; Lipsky, 1997; Simon, 1947; Lindblom, 1959; Etzioni, 1967). Interwoven with these debates is a recognition that policy is inherently political, which affects not just the rationality of the policy-making process, but also the transparency of policy pronouncements (Gordon et al, 1997; Gregory, 1997; Nutley and Webb, 2000). Thus, as Minogue suggests, "The greatest problem for most policy analysts is their inability to cope with politics" (Minogue, 1997: 12).

Crucially, the political aspect of policy-making creates the possibility that the presentation of policies may have a rhetorical or ideological purpose, attempting to shape the boundaries of discussion and understanding as well as setting out particular issues and responses (Stone, 1988; Russell et al, 2008). For example, the emphasis on community participation to influence public services is generally presented as a positive route for service users to gain a voice, but can also be critiqued as a disguised form of social control, reducing dissent through co-option of critical voices (Croft and Beresford, 1996: 188; Boaden et al, 1981: 171).

Hence, whilst the foregoing account of the history of community participation policy attempts to elucidate some of the underlying motivations, a more penetrating analysis is necessary to examine the public and hidden agendas of contemporary policy in more depth. This study attempts to provide such an analysis by employing Theories of Change methodology initially to examine the policy documentation relating to the Localism and Community Empowerment agendas, before digging further beneath the rhetorical veneer with empirical data from the fieldwork. In order to inform this analysis and expose some of the ideological dimensions of community participation policy, it is useful to have some

understanding of power, since "ideology marks the point at which language is bent out of communicative shape by the power interests which impinge upon it" (Eagleton, 2007: 129).

There are three sets of ideas which are particularly helpful here. Firstly, Lukes' (1974) seminal analysis of three dimensions of power is useful to consider the different ways in which power is exercised. For Lukes, the first dimension of power operates when A overtly and directly tries to force B to do what A wants, the second dimension relates to the ways in which powerful groups or individuals shape the agenda, preventing some concerns from even being discussed, whilst the third dimension identifies the ways in which the very boundaries of knowledge are shaped, so that some ideas become inconceivable, even if they might be in the interests of less powerful groups. In relation to community participation, the second and third dimensions are particularly important. For example, the focus on local solutions, rather than structural change, within the design of the CDP could be seen as an example of Lukes' second dimension of power, since the agenda had been shaped by central government and when the Projects attempted to move beyond this agenda the whole programme was curtailed. Likewise, the language of consumerism which predominated during the Conservative Governments from 1979 to 1997 can be understood as a manifestation of the third dimension of power, since it excludes any discussion of collective responses to issues.

Secondly, Luke's ideas are further developed in the context of participation, by Gaventa (2006), who usefully renames the three forms of power as visible, hidden and invisible power and adds places and spaces of participation to create a 'power cube'. Thus, participation can operate at a local, national or global levels, and in spaces which are 'closed', where elites make decisions without reference to anyone else, 'invited', where people are involved, but the boundaries are set by elites, or 'claimed' spaces, which are created by people from the 'bottom up' through collective action. These ideas of spaces for participation are particularly important for this study, since community participation policy is focused on creating spaces, although these may be closed or invited to different degrees, whilst the practice of community participation is often as much about communities claiming their own spaces for action.

Lastly, thinking about the operation of power in practice, Gilchrist and Taylor (2011: 56) highlight the distinction between zero-sum conceptions of power, in which power can only be gained by being taken from someone else, and positive-sum conceptions, in which power can be mutually enhanced between two or more parties, without either losing out. Again, this is important in order to understand community participation, since policy may operate on the basis of taking power from government (national or local) in order to empower communities, or on the assumption that power can be productively shared. Similarly, communities may start from the principle that they need to take power from or share it with local agencies.

Alongside these notions of ideology and power, it is important to recognise that the notion of community itself can have an ideological aspect. As Somerville suggests, "the concept of community does need to be taken seriously, but its meaning is complex, multi-dimensional and essentially contested" (Somerville, 2011: 1). In particular, the normative value of community as a concept is often created by contrasting it with the impersonality of both mass society and the state (Taylor, 2003: 36), giving it a warm, positive connotation that makes it politically useful across different areas of public policy. This rose-tinted view of community is often intertwined with ideas around the 'loss' of community, which are particularly informed by Tonnies' (1955) distinction between *Gemeinschaft*, which refers to a nostalgic view of traditional, close-knit rural communities, and *Gesellschaft*, which denotes ideas of fragmented, contractual relationships in modern, largely urban societies. Thus the suggestion is that industrialisation and urbanisation (and potentially later shifts, such as de-industrialisation and the IT revolution) have undermined supportive, strong communities and replaced them with atomised, individualised society.

At the same time, however, thinkers from a more liberal tradition (e.g. Dahrendorf, 1968) tend to view the shift away from tightly-knit communities towards the more individualised existence of modern urban life as a process of liberation or emancipation (Plant, 1974: 30-34). And whilst increased urbanisation and mobility may have undermined traditional geographic communities to some extent, the growth of identity politics in recent decades has led to the development of strong,

active communities of interest, lobbying for rights of oppressed groups (Popple, 1995: 20-1).

Analysing community participation policy therefore requires an understanding not just of the rhetorical and ideological angles to policy in general, but also the more specific normative aspects of the concept of community. Whilst the positive connotations of community have enabled it to become somewhat 'fetishised' by policy-makers, attached to a wide range of initiatives in order to improve their image (Dillon and Fanning, 2011: 131), it also has more complex connections to nostalgia and oppression. Moreover, there is clearly a sense in which the forms of communities of both locality and interest are changing and changeable as networks of relationships and as spaces for action (Somerville, 2011: 1-3).

The ToC approach employed here offers a framework for policy analysis which can help to manage these issues of ideology and power to some extent. In this chapter I have presented the social issues which different governments have identified as drivers for community participation policy, based on an analysis of the existing literature and, for more recent administrations, the policy documentation. In the next chapter I progress to the next stage of ToC analysis, attempting to identify the causal pathways which are assumed to connect policy interventions to those outcomes which address the salient social issues. On the basis of the Nvivo coding outlined at the start of this chapter, the first part of Chapter 4 establishes a range of interim outcomes of community participation identified in the literature and builds these into a generic ToC model. In the later parts of the Chapter, I then use this model as a framework to re-analyse the core documents of community participation policy for Scotland and England. Since the standard ToC approach of 'backwards mapping' (Anderson, 2005: 21) was not possible because of limited access to policy-makers, an interpolative approach of 'mapping from both ends' was employed, using the generic ToC model as a heuristic to highlight the causal assumptions employed within the policy documentation.

Hence, alongside the policy drivers and associated long-term outcomes identified through the coding process outlined at the start of this chapter, the proposed policy inputs, in the form of legislation, guidance or funding, were established from the key documents. Building from these two ends of the change process, the

generic ToC model established in the first part of Chapter 4 was used to analyse the ostensible interim outcomes within the policy documentation and thereby to postulate causal pathways and assumptions. This stage of the analysis was inevitably less formally structured than the earlier coding process, relying on a greater degree of subjective judgement, since causal assumptions are rarely set out explicitly in the policy documentation. Thus, although the ToC framework provides a degree of rigour and replicability to the approach, the analysis has to make assumptions about assumptions, which could be challenged by alternative readings of the policy documents. However, this element of subjectivity within the policy analysis can be justified on the basis of three inter-connected reasons.

Firstly, as indicated in the previous chapter, the notion of clear, top-down, linear policy development has been regularly contested, with a significant body of evidence highlighting the level of ambiguity and changeability within policy agendas (Zahariadis, 2014, Gordon et al., 1997, Jenkins, 1997). This is particularly true in the context of this study, where the particular policies concerned were still being developed through the course of the research (e.g. the Community Empowerment Act in Scotland was going through consultative and parliamentary processes for virtually the entire research period) and where the policy area is broad and often rather loosely defined within the documentation.

Secondly, as argued above, the ideological nature of the language used within policy documentation means that any analysis needs to penetrate the veneer to some extent in order to understand the assumptions at play. Whilst the ToC approach explicitly aims to 'surface' assumptions, doing this through documentation inevitably requires a degree of subjective interpretation of the language used. As Mckee (2009) argues, this analysis of documentation is important, but is primarily useful as a starting point for empirical analysis of policy implementation and power dynamics in practice, which is undertaken in the later stages of this study.

Lastly, as Majone (1989) suggests, the implication of the previous two points is that the very notion of an entirely objective policy analysis is a chimera:

"The policy analyst is a producer of policy arguments, more similar to a lawyer – a specialist in legal arguments – than to an engineer or a scientist. His basic skills are not algorithmical but argumentative: the ability to probe assumptions critically, to produce and evaluate evidence, to keep many threads in hand…He recognises that to say anything of importance in public policy requires value judgements" (Majone, 1989: 21-22)

Hence, whilst the findings from the ToC policy analysis set out in this and the following chapter may be challengeable on the grounds that the approach involves an element of subjectivity and there are limitations to the degree of rigour, the suggestion is that the judgements involved are not merely inevitable, but necessary. Moreover, the primary purpose of the policy analysis in these chapters is to lay the foundations for the later empirical work, which provides a much more rigorous evidential base from which to critique both policy and theory relating to community participation.

3.5 Conclusion to this chapter

In this chapter I have provided a brief outline of the history of community participation policy in the UK, identifying the issues which have motivated particular approaches at different points. This analysis suggests that there are five key drivers for community participation policy, illustrated in Figure 3.1, although the particular interpretations of these issues and the forms of community participation prescribed as solutions vary between different governments, as summarised in Table 3.1. These underlying drivers provide the starting point for the Theories of Change analysis of community participation policy in Chapter 4, which follows, which uses them to identify the long-term goals of such policy.

Alongside this historical analysis, I have also briefly outlined some key ideas relating to ideology, power and the conception of community which are important in analysing community participation policy and practice. In particular, these ideas are essential for the subsequent stage of ToC analysis in Chapters 7 and 8, in which the empirically-derived models of local theories of change are utilised to

further disentangle the underlying, often implicit assumptions of national community participation policy in Scotland and England.

Chapter 4 – Exploration of the literature and examination of contemporary community participation policy, using Theories of Change approach

The majority of this chapter has been published as Rolfe, S. (2016) Divergence in Community Participation Policy: Analysing Localism and Community Empowerment Using a Theory of Change Approach, Local Government Studies 42 (1), 97-118.

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I utilise Theory of Change (ToC) evaluation methodology to develop a theoretical model for understanding community participation policy, drawing on the existing literature and the historical analysis of policy drivers set out in the previous chapter. I then employ this model to examine contemporary community participation policy in Scotland and England, identifying some of the key similarities and differences. As part of this analysis, I highlight the central assumptions which underpin each policy agenda, providing a framework for the fieldwork and further analysis of the empirical findings presented in Chapters 7 and 8 below.

As indicated in the previous chapter, I argue that ToC methodology offers a framework for detailed examination of public and hidden agendas within policy, although using the approach for policy analysis extends it beyond its usual application in programme evaluation. Since the methodology has not been used in this way before, I have started from the standard ToC approach as explicated most thoroughly by the Aspen Institute (Connell et al, 1995; Fulbright-Anderson et al, 1998; Kubisch et al, 2002; Kubisch et al, 2010), with minor adaptations as necessary. Reflections on the value of using ToC methodology in this way are explored further in Chapter 10, which examines the methodological findings from the study.

4.2 Setting out a generic theory of change for community participation policy

As outlined in Chapter 2 above, a ToC approach to evaluation is defined as, "a systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts of the initiative" (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 16). Importantly, the standard approach to developing a ToC model starts from the intended outcomes of a programme or initiative, working backwards from these ultimate aims to identify the necessary interim outcomes, and the activities and inputs required to achieve them (Anderson, 2005). Thus the starting point for Theories of Change approaches provides an element of formative evaluation, helping to elucidate and agree the goals of the initiative in order to assist with planning, as well as establishing the framework for summative evaluation of the project.

In this context the crucial characteristic of an outcome is that it is distinct from an activity – it is what happens as a result of a programme, rather than the things that a programme actually does. Notably, for the purposes of this study, this is consistent with the concept of outcomes utilised in Realist Evaluation, where the key distinction is between the outcomes that programmes produce in particular contexts and the mechanisms by which they operate (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 65-69).

More importantly, in the policy context, the notion of public services being targeted at outcomes has become a common theme in recent years. This is particularly true in Scotland, where the Scottish Government has established a specific purpose for government, underpinned by a range of national targets and outcomes (Scottish Government, 2011b), and requires public services at a local level to develop local outcomes which must be aligned to the national outcomes. The distinction between outcomes and activities is explicitly set out in the guidance for public bodies:

> "An outcomes-based approach encourages us all to focus on the difference that we make and not just the inputs or processes over which we have control. Success for the Government and its Public Bodies is about *impact* and it is right that we should be judged by

tangible improvements in the things that matter to the people of

Scotland." (Scottish Government, 2008: 4, emphasis in original)

Whilst the situation in England is less clear since the UK Government removed the duty to create Local Area Agreements and to report on national outcome indicators[9], the emphasis on impact and outcomes is retained, as evidenced in the continuing production of a plethora of 'outcomes frameworks' in education, health, social welfare and other policy areas. Moreover, the emphasis on outcomes continues to some extent within the Localism agenda, with the expectation that local government will publish input (i.e. financial) and outcome data to enhance accountability (DCLG, 2010: 10), although later developments in the UK Government's transparency agenda focus somewhat more heavily on the financial aspects (DCLG, 2015).

Hence starting from a focus on outcomes makes sense not merely in terms of ToC methodology, but also in relation to the language of government on both sides of the border in the 21st century.

In order to develop a generic ToC model for community participation policy, it is therefore necessary to start by attempting to establish the intended outcomes of such policy in a general sense. As the previous chapter suggests, the history of community participation policy can be seen as a sequence of attempts to address five inter-connected social problems and issues – fear of social unrest, pathologised and 'lost' community, failures of public services, the democratic deficit, and demands from communities to be heard. Whilst each government has identified and prioritised slightly different combinations of these problems, the basic contention from the previous chapter is that there is a consistent thread through some 200 years of policy making, employing community participation as a response to these social issues.

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[9] All upper-tier local authorities in England were required to produce a Local Area Agreement (LAA) from 2007, bringing together statutory, community, voluntary and private sector partners (the Local Strategic Partnership) to agree a vision and targets for the area, and to report annually on progress to central government. LAAs are very similar to Community Plans and the later Single Outcome Agreements (now Local Outcome Improvement Plans) in Scotland. LAAs were abolished in 2010 by the Coalition Government.

Two significant challenges have to be addressed in translating these underlying drivers for community participation policy into the language of outcomes. Firstly, there is a risk of confusion between outcomes which are about the nature and activities of communities themselves, and outcomes which relate to wider social issues. This confusion arises because of the apparent contradiction whereby communities are painted as both problem and solution (Hancock et al, 2012). For example, the 'loss' of community cohesion is a key driver for community participation policy, whilst community voices are simultaneously viewed as the solution to failures of public services. As Imrie and Raco argue, policies which emphasise the involvement and development of communities effectively treat communities as both object and subject:

> "Communities are...an object and instrument of policy, as a key part
> of technocratic policy design and, at the same time, the alleged
> subject of programmes of empowerment and self-actualisation"
> (Imrie and Raco, 2003: 26)

Thus policies are intended to act on communities, to strengthen and improve them, and also to develop the potential of those communities to take actions which will have broader impacts. In the language of outcomes, the changes sought within communities can be seen as both long-term outcomes in themselves (since they are of value in and of themselves), and also interim outcomes, stepping stones towards broader societal outcomes such as reductions in crime levels, increased educational attainment, or improvements in health and wellbeing.

Secondly, as explained above, the problems which drive community participation policies are inherently inter-connected, forming a vicious spiral (Putnam, 2000: 138-9). All five issues – social unrest, failing services, pathologised communities, democratic deficit, and demands to be heard – are potentially mutually reinforcing, to varying degrees and in various ways. Similarly, the positive aspects of communities which might counteract the vicious spirals of problems are intimately inter-related. For example, it is intuitively plausible that communities with better networks may be able to build stronger community organisations, which may enhance the confidence of individuals involved, enabling them to create stronger networks, and so on. Hence the linear nature of the logic models frequently

applied in a Theories of Change approach to evaluation is somewhat difficult to use in this context, as it is unclear where inputs, outputs, interim outcomes, and longer-term outcomes begin and end. It is more useful, therefore, to think in terms of circular rather than linear processes. In other words, drawing on Putnam's terminology again (Putnam, 2000: 138-9) at the core of a general theory of change for community participation policy, we can identify virtuous circles of strong, active communities, intended as a counterpoint to the vicious spiral of social problems.

Combining these inter-related outcomes into a ToC which captures the complexity of community participation requires careful consideration of the literature, to examine what each outcome means in practice and, importantly, how they relate to each other. Building on Imrie and Raco's (2003) conceptualisation, it is possible to categorise the outcomes into three groups – those which relate to communities as objects of policy, those which relate to communities as subjects of policy, and those relating to wider social outcomes. Thus communities as objects must be strengthened to address the concerns around their failings or disappearance and to reduce the risk of unrest, whilst communities as subjects need to be activated to influence and improve public services, engage with democracy and provide an outlet for community voices. In turn, strong, active communities are presented as a panacea for a range of broader social issues which are enmeshed in the five key drivers, including all of the social problems that public services have not resolved, such as poverty, crime and poor health.

In other words, community participation policy can be seen as focused on three core policy goals – stronger communities, activated communities, and wider social outcomes which strong, active communities can affect. In order to develop a generic ToC model for community participation policy, it is necessary to examine the first two of these in particular, to examine how they are constituted and how they relate to each other and to the wider social outcomes.

4.3 Communities as objects of policy

The literature regarding community strength identifies three key elements, which can be loosely defined as resources, organisational capacity, and 'community wiring' (Somerville, 2011: 10-11; Taylor, 2003: 17).

Firstly, then, strong communities tend to have resources in terms of finance, physical assets and human resources in the form of skilled, knowledgeable, confident members (Somerville, 2011: 11; Forrest and Kearns, 1999: 10). Unsurprisingly, there is strong evidence regarding the correlation between levels of resource and the socio-economic status of communities (Beetham et al, 2008; Dorling and Pritchard, 2010; Butler and Hamnett, 2007).

Secondly, in order to collectively utilise such resources, strong communities need organisational capacity in the form of effective community organisations (Kearns, 2003). As Somerville (2011) argues, the combination of resources and organisational capacity forms the basis for community power, which enables communities to effect change when they can combine these two aspects with a clear purpose.

And thirdly, strong communities tend to display a positive blend of 'community wiring' – the connectednesss, inclusiveness and cohesion often connected with social capital and closely related to the concerns about 'loss of community' outlined in the previous chapter. This aspect of community strength is less straightforward than the other two, since the elements of community wiring inter-relate in complicated ways. For example, the nostalgic yearning for the close-knit communities of Tonnies' (1955) *Gemeinschaft*, is not unproblematic, since strongly bonded communities may be insular and exclusive (Taylor, 2003: 56; Maloney et al, 2000: 832), and there is ample evidence that 'weak ties' across communities are as important for a variety of social outcomes as 'strong ties' within communities (Granovetter, 1973). Furthermore, Forrest and Kearns (1999) amongst others point to evidence which suggests that socio-economically disadvantaged communities, which are usually the core target of concerns about 'loss of community' often have very strong internal ties.

Crucially, these characteristics of strong communities are inter-related. Not only do strong communities have resources, organisational capacity and good community wiring, but some strengths can reinforce others in a 'spiralling up' process (Emery and Flora, 2006). For example, community members' skills can build effective organisations and inclusive networks, whilst strong networks can build organisations and draw in a range of skills. In a generic model of community participation policy, therefore, the different aspects of community strength can be presented as a 'virtuous circle' (Putnam, 2000: 138-9), or perhaps more usefully, a 'virtuous helix'[10], since different elements can be used to generate growth in each other. Though it should be remembered that spiralling up is not guaranteed, since feedback may be negative as well as positive (Taylor, 2003).

4.4 Communities as subjects of policy

The forms of community action identified in the literature can also be loosely grouped into three categories. Firstly, communities can improve service quality through influence, either by 'voice', where service users' experience augments or challenges service providers' knowledge (Needham, 2002; Gyford, 1991) or through 'choice', evident in the shift towards individual consumer choice in health and social care amongst other areas (Brodie et al, 2009; Jordan, 2005). In practice there is often considerable overlap between voice and choice, since individuals may exercise choice, alongside individual or collective use of voice to influence services (Simmons et al, 2012).

Secondly, there are activities characterised as community self-help, ranging from the informal assistance of neighbours to formal service provision by community organisations. This connects with ideas of strong communities, since communities with more resources, organisational capacity and connections will have fewer needs, and be more able to address members' needs through mutual support (Brodie et al, 2009; Taylor, 2003).

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[10] The term 'helix' is explicitly used to illustrate the idea that community strengths and activities can 'spiral up'. Thus one element of community strength may facilitate growth in another aspect, moving the community to a new position of strength from which the next development can start. This is distinct from the notion of a 'circular' process, which also involves mutual reinforcement, but implies a static system overall.

Lastly, there is the notion that community participation may address the democratic deficit and re-engage people with democracy, either through strengthening engagement in representative democracy (Saward, 2009), enhancing legitimacy of decisions and systems (Barnes et al, 2003b), or through participative democracy, complementing representative systems (Verba et al, 1995).

These three forms of community activity are clearly inter-related. For example, communities exercising voice to improve services may engage with the political process, whilst communities helping themselves may be concerned with how their activity relates to public services and political agendas. Moreover, the notion of 'co-production'[11] opens the possibility of services being jointly designed and delivered by agencies and communities (New Economics Foundation, 2008). Hence, the different forms of community activity form a second 'virtuous helix', although the mutual reinforcement within it is less straightforward, since communities' activities are partly tactical choices influenced by political opportunities (Simmons et al, 2012; Maloney et al, 2000).

From this exploration of the outcomes of community participation policy, a generic theory of change can be constructed (Figure 4.1). At its heart are the two 'virtuous helices' of community strength and community activity (presented here as circles for graphical simplicity). The suggestion is that governments react to community-related problems by attempting to generate positive growth in these two helices, with the longer term aim of impacting upon a range of wider outcomes.

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[11] Co-production is a somewhat slippery concept, but it is generally used to refer to approaches to public services which build on the assets of both the service provider and the service user to improve the service and produce stronger outcomes (New Economics Foundation, 2008; Scottish Co-Production Network, 2016; Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2016)

Figure 4.1 – Generic theory of change for community participation policy

The twin helices of community strengths and activity are shown with inter-connections, since they are clearly related in the literature and in policy. To say that community strengths are important in enabling the different forms of community action is almost tautologous, but nevertheless it is important to note the evidence which supports this point. In particular, there is strong evidence regarding the extent to which well-resourced, organised communities are more able to influence services (Beetham et al, 2008; Hastings et al, 2014), whilst communitarian thinkers, amongst others, emphasise the value of community cohesion and organisation for self-help (Etzioni, 1997; Dillon and Fanning, 2011).

In the other direction, there is significant evidence that different forms of community participation activity, from basic consultation to governance, democratic engagement and self-help, can help to build community strength. This includes evidence relating to the development of social capital or community wiring (Skidmore et al, 2006), increased confidence and skills (Burton et al, 2004) and the development of stronger community organisations (Brackertz and Meredyth, 2009).

This interaction between community strengths and community activity is also reflected in elements of contemporary community participation policy. Thus, some policies aim to enhance the community strengths to facilitate action, such as the Scottish Government's Community Capacity Building (CCB) (Scottish Government, 2007), and the UK Government's Community Organiser programme (Locality, 2014a). Conversely, the Scottish Government highlight evidence that 'community empowerment' activities develop skills and confidence (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 7), whilst the UK Government's localism rests on the belief that, 'communities are strongest when everyone has a free and fair say in the decisions that affect them' (Conservative Party, 2009: 2).

The model suggests, therefore, that just as community strengths and activity can be usefully conceptualised as virtuous helices (whilst remembering that there may be gaps or negative interactions in practice), the two helices are potentially mutually reinforcing. Hence it is graphically and intellectually more succinct to envisage the core of the model as a double helix, as show in Figure 4.2 below. The key message of this double helix is one of interaction and non-linearity,

although with an overall direction of travel. Thus the model highlights the importance of feedback loops between elements of community strength and forms of community activity, which can lead to stronger, more active communities, creating impacts on wider social outcomes.

Figure 4.2 – The double helix of community participation

Community strength

Resources Organisational capacity Community wiring

Policy inputs

Improving services Community self-help Democratic engagement

Community activity

Wider social outcomes
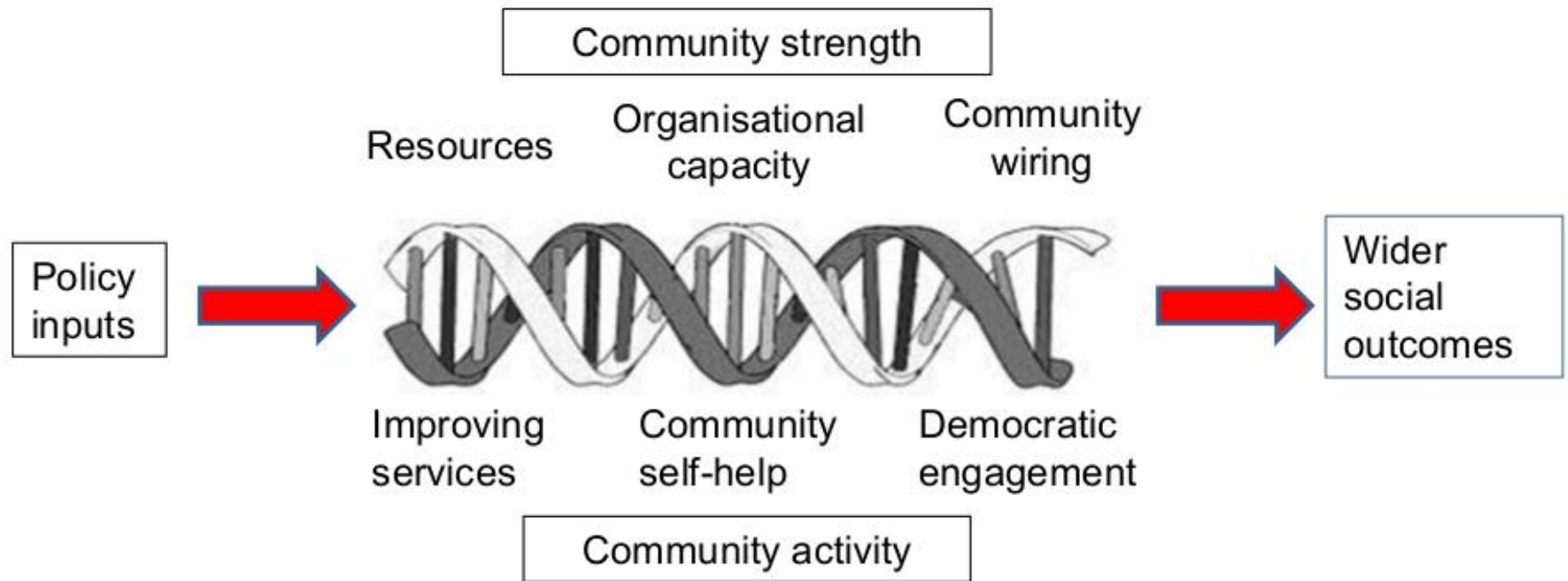
This model specifically addresses the concern that linear theories of change gloss over the complexity of many processes (Barnes et al, 2003a; Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005), particularly those which involve community change. Linear models have an attractive simplicity and have the advantage of suggesting clear causality, making goals seem achievable and credit easily attributable. However, as argued in Chapter 2, communities are self-organising open systems, constructed by active agents who respond to and learn from changes as they happen (Barnes et al, 2003a: 276), so modelling how policies attempt to influence community participation requires a complex, interactive model.

Having established the double helix of community participation as a generic theory of change for community participation policy, the remainder of this chapter continues to use ToC methodology by applying the theory in a detailed analysis of current UK Government and Scottish Government policy. As a foundation for this analysis, the next section outlines the main elements of Localism and Community Empowerment, together with a list of the key documents. This introduces the specific interventions of each agenda, building on the analysis of the policy goals set out in the previous chapter.

4.5 Localism and Community Empowerment – an overview

Prior to the 2010 UK election, the Conservative Party developed a critique of state centralisation which they blamed for the 'crisis of our broken society' (Conservative Party, 2009: 2). This entered UK Government policy as the Big Society/Localism agenda, implemented through the Localism Act 2011 and associated programmes[12]. Notably there are considerable continuities between elements of this agenda and that of the previous New Labour administration, such as directly elected mayors, local petitions and support for 'neighbourhood councils', though also significant disjunctions, such as the repeal of the public sector 'duty to involve' communities, as indicated in the previous chapter. As also highlighted earlier, the

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[12] The Localism Act has been supported by a number of programmes which provide a degree of funding or direct assistance to communities and/or local authorities in order to deliver aspects of the legislation on the ground. These are largely contracted out to Locality (support for Neighbourhood Planning, Our Place, Community Asset Transfer and Ownership, Community-Led Housing) and the Community Development Foundation (Community First and Neighbourhood Matched Fund).

shift from coalition to majority-Conservative government after the 2015 election has not significantly shifted Localism policy.

There are three main themes within the Big Society/Localism agenda. Firstly, a number of 'community rights' were introduced, including: the Community Right to Challenge, enabling communities to challenge and take over public services; the Community Right to Bid, enabling communities to bid for local assets; Neighbourhood Planning, enabling communities to control planning for their own area; the Community Right to Build, enabling communities to lead and benefit from local house building; and Free Schools, enabling parents, teachers, charities or businesses to establish new schools. These rights are supported by programmes including the Community Organiser initiative, which trains and supports individuals, 'to listen to concerns of people in their area, build relationships and networks and help people take community action on the local issues that matter to them' (Locality, 2014a). Secondly, there are measures to reduce bureaucracy and devolve power to local government, including the removal of regional strategies, simplification of service commissioning requirements, and support to establish new Town and Parish Councils. Thirdly, measures aiming to 'strengthen accountability' of public sector organisations, including an increase in directly elected mayors, the creation of elected Police and Crime Commissioners, increased data transparency, and referendums on 'excessive' Council Tax increases and other issues. The key documents of this policy agenda and how they are referenced in this thesis, are listed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 – Key documents of the Big Society/Localism agenda

Reference	Title
Conservative Party (2009)	Control Shift Green Paper
Cabinet Office (2010)	Building the Big Society
Department for Communities and Local Government (2010)	Decentralisation and the Localism Bill – an essential guide
UK (2011)	Localism Act 2011
Department for Communities and Local Government (2011b)	A plain English guide to the Localism Act
Department for Communities and Local Government (2013)	You've got the power – a quick and simple guide to community rights

(NB – Additional information on the implementation of a number of elements in the Big Society/Localism agenda is drawn from the voluntary sector organisations contracted to deliver them – Locality for the new community rights and the

Community Organiser programme, and the Community Development Foundation for the Community First funding programme)

The Scottish Government's Community Empowerment agenda has evolved from guidance and support when the Scottish National Party (SNP) was a minority government (2007-2011), to legislation during its second term as a majority government, though with a continual focus on changing public sector culture towards a more participative ethos. The legislative approach has enabled the introduction of new powers, giving communities rights to participate in service improvement, and extended rights relating to control and ownership of land and assets. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 also introduces new duties on public sector agencies to proactively participate in Community Planning, including community engagement, and to provide sufficient developmental support to communities through Community Learning and Development (CLD). The key documents are listed in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 – Key documents of the Community Empowerment agenda

Reference	Title
Scottish Government and COSLA (2009)	Community empowerment action plan
Scottish Government (2011a)	Achieving a sustainable future: Regeneration strategy
Scottish Government (2011b)	National Performance Framework
Scottish Government (2011c)	Renewing Scotland's public services: Priorities for reform in response to the Christie Commission
Scottish Government (2012a)	Consultation on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill
Scottish Government (2012d)	Strategic guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development
Scottish Government (2013)	Consultation on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill
Scotland (2013)	The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013
Scottish Government (2014b)	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill – as introduced to parliament
Scottish Government (2014c)	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill: Policy Memorandum
Scotland (2015b)	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

By considering the two policy agendas in detail, the next section attempts to develop theories of change for each of them, thereby identifying their underlying assumptions exploring where they diverge.

4.6 Deconstructing the double helix in current policy

Using the double helix model as a framework, a ToC approach can be applied to Scottish and UK Government policy to delineate their implicit theories of change, starting from policy aims/outcomes, before moving on to explore inputs and logical assumptions.

Applying ToC methodology to policy represents something of a departure from the approach commonly utilised in the evaluation of specific programmes or initiatives. As noted earlier, the standard ToC approach is to start by collaboratively identifying outcomes for the programme, before working backwards through interim outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs to develop the full logic model (Anderson, 2005; Connell and Kubisch, 1998). In order to apply the methodology to policy, I have amended it in two key ways. Firstly, since limited access to policy-makers within the bounds of this study precludes a collaborative approach, the identification of outcomes and subsequent delineation of the logic model is undertaken on the basis of the policy documentation laid out above.

Secondly, and more importantly, this lack of access to the thought processes of policy-makers creates a particular challenge in determining the causal pathways between policy interventions and intended outcomes. Whilst the broad, long-term outcomes of policy are generally stated in policy documentation or related speeches, as discussed in the previous chapter, and the inputs and activities of policy (e.g. changes to the law, funding streams, etc.) are mostly delineated, the intermediate steps are generally less explicit. For example, whilst the introduction of transparency requirements for local state agencies (DCLG, 2015) as part of Localism is clearly intended to improve accountability and therefore improve services, the ways in which public information might be used to achieve this goal are not set out in the regulations. Moreover, whereas one aim of working backwards through a ToC model is to decide on appropriate inputs and activities

to produce the required outcomes, in this exercise the policy inputs and activities are already set. Hence the approach I am taking here is to start from an analysis of espoused policy outcomes, and then to use the generic double helix model as a heuristic to explore the links between these outcomes and the stated inputs and activities for each policy. Whilst this approach departs from the standard ToC approach, it fits well with the double helix model, since the aim is to examine the intended outcomes in terms of community strengths and activities (and the interactions between them) as much as the wider social outcomes which may form the ultimate policy aims. Furthermore, it avoids simplistic assumptions of linearity, which are a common pitfall of ToC models, as mentioned above.

4.6.1 Identifying the policy outcomes

In order to identify the intended outcomes of each policy agenda, it is useful to explore the ways in which the policy drivers set out in the previous chapter are linked to the rhetoric of community participation. By examining these links, it is possible to elucidate the policy intentions with regard to community strength and activity, which can then be considered in more detail by use of the double helix model.

In terms of the driving wheel of community participation policy, the previous chapter highlighted the key similarities and differences between Localism and Community Empowerment. For the UK Government and Conservative Governments, the 'broken society' rhetoric ties together concerns about failing public services, a sense of lost community, and the democratic deficit. The Conservative Party's analysis prior to the 2010 election in particular argued that state centralisation under New Labour had undermined local communities by excluding them from power and exempting them from responsibility. And this separation of communities from local democracy was presented as a key factor in democratic disengagement and top-down, unresponsive public services (Conservative Party, 2009; DCLG, 2010).

Hence, for the analysis underlying Localism, communities are both part of the problem and the proposed solution, being seen as problematically weak whilst

also being expected to take action in order to fix democracy and public services (Hancock et al, 2012). This tension was also illustrated by Prime Minister David Cameron's response to the 2011 riots in a number of cities in England, blaming the 'broken society' and community failings for rioters' behaviour, whilst simultaneously calling for communities to provide solutions (Cameron, 2011). Thus, although fear of unrest was not initially cited as a reason for the Big Society agenda, it has been readily recruited to the cause.

Much of the Scottish Government rhetoric around Community Empowerment is ostensibly similar to the Big Society, with the notion that, 'communities doing things for themselves can sometimes be the best way of delivering change' (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 6). There is a clear concern about the democratic deficit, and since the Christie Commission's review of the future of Scottish public services, an increased emphasis on the link between Community Empowerment and improving public services (Scottish Government, 2014c). The most obvious differences in policy drivers between the two agendas are firstly, the lack of Scottish Government concern about social unrest despite an emphasis on social cohesion, perhaps reflecting the absence of rioting in Scotland in recent decades, and secondly, the direct influence of communities on Scottish Government policy (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009; Scottish Government, 2013), contrasted with limited participation in the development of UK Government policy. Thus, whilst both governments have turned to community participation as a counterpoint to perceived weaknesses in communities, democracy and public services, the UK Government has also presented community as a response to social unrest, whilst the Scottish Government is responding to more clearly articulated demands to be heard from community organisations.

It is also important to recognise that, whilst some of the policy drivers are similar, there are significant differences in their interpretation. In terms of 'lost' community and failing public services, the Big Society rhetoric manages the paradox of communities being both problem and solution by blaming excessive state intervention for creating 'welfare dependency' in certain communities, whilst also placing the responsibility for tackling poverty and inequality onto families and communities (Conservative Party, 2008; cf. Hancock et al, 2012). Thus some

sections of poor communities are particularly problematised, whilst other communities are implicitly idealised for not being dependent upon the state. By contrast, the Scottish Government present an analysis of all communities facing difficulties, with some being particularly 'vulnerable', rather than at fault (Scottish Government, 2011a), together with an approach to public service reform built on partnership between central government, local government and communities (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009; Scottish Government, 2011c). Alongside this, UK Government policy aims to expand representative democracy to address the democratic deficit (UK, 2011), whilst the Scottish Government's approach is focused on revitalising democracy by the addition of participatory elements (Scotland, 2015).

These broad policy intentions provide a starting point for the ToC analysis of each policy agenda. The double helix model highlights the fact that there are three sets of outcomes for community participation policy – the interim outcomes relating to community strengths and community activity, and the long-term outcomes in terms of wider social goals. Crucially, both Localism and Community Empowerment are presented as cross-cutting agendas for government, rather than being restricted to particular areas of public service. Hence, in relation to long-term outcomes, it is neither possible nor necessary to specify the wider social goals which are intended or expected to arise from the particular policies. Rather, the central assumption on both sides of the border is that strong, active communities play important roles in relation to outcomes in education, health, crime and a host of other public policy areas. By examining the specific policies within Localism and Community Empowerment, it is possible to elucidate exactly how communities are to be strengthened and activated. This analysis can therefore develop ToC models which further clarify the forms of community strengthening and activation intended as interim outcomes and also reveal the assumptions underlying each agenda.

4.6.2 Exploring pathways between policy inputs and intended outcomes

Utilising the double helix model, it is possible to identify the specific policies within Localism and Community Empowerment which relate to the different elements of

community strength and community activity. In ToC terminology, the specific policy levers can be seen as inputs to the process. These are set out in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 – Policy inputs and their relation to the double helix model

Double helix element	Scottish Government policy inputs	UK Government policy inputs
Strong communities		
Resources – human	• Community Learning and Development (CLD) • Community engagement training for officers	• Community Organisers
Resources – physical	• Support for asset ownership	• Community Right to Bid
Resources – financial	• Direct funding • Support for asset ownership to create funding streams	• Funding (Giving White Paper)
Organisational capacity	• CLD • Community engagement training • Support to Community Councils	• Community Organisers • Support for staff mutuals in the public sector
Community wiring	• CLD • Principles within National Standards for Community Engagement • Community engagement training	• None
Active communities		
Influencing services	• Statutory requirements to engage/consult • Monitoring and evaluation (esp Best Value 2 regime) • Community engagement training • Participatory budgeting pilots	• Community Right to Challenge • Data publication • Community budgeting
Community self-help	• Support for asset ownership	• Community Right to Challenge • Free Schools • Neighbourhood Planning
Democratic engagement	• Community engagement training for Councillors • Support to Community Councils	• Referenda • Directly elected mayors, Policy and Crime Commissioners

Exploring how these inputs relate to the elements of community strength and community activity throws light on policy assumptions, thus enabling the development of ToC models for each policy agenda.

Community Strengths – Resources

In terms of human resources, both governments have programmes to build skills and confidence within communities. On the surface, the UK government's Community Organiser programme appears similar to the Scottish Government's emphasis on the Community Capacity Building (CCB) element of CLD. However, whilst CLD is coordinated through local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships (Scottish Government, 2007; 2012d; Scotland, 2013), the Community Organiser programme is delivered through voluntary sector organisations, separating it from public sector community development services. Moreover, there is a significant disparity in scale. Whilst the UK Government has provided temporary funding for 500 Community Organisers, intended to encourage a larger number of unpaid voluntary Organisers (Locality, 2014a), the Scottish figures for 2010 show nearly 4000 paid CLD staff, of whom at least 400 are focused exclusively on CCB, for the much smaller population of Scotland[13] (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011).

In terms of physical resources, both governments promote community asset ownership, although for somewhat different reasons. The Scottish Government view asset ownership as a means for community organisations to gain financial sustainability, confidence and influence (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009), whereas the UK Government's 'Community Right to Bid' is presented as a means for communities to, 'save local assets threatened with closure' (DCLG, 2010), so the focus is on protecting the asset for its social value, rather than the broader benefits that communities may derive from owning assets. Moreover, the Scottish Government arguably gives more power to communities by opening the possibility of compelling private sector owners to sell land that is neglected and abandoned, or where its current use is proving harmful to community wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2015b).

On both sides of the border there is governmental concern around finance for community participation, but significant differences in detail. Whilst the Scottish Government lists a range of funding streams in the Community Empowerment

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[13] The population of England was just over 53 million at the 2011 Census, almost exactly 10 times that of Scotland, which was just under 5.3 million.

Action Plan mostly related to skills development or asset ownership, totalling £180m of funding over three years, the UK Government require significant match funding, echoing the idea of responsibility being shifted onto communities. Thus the £30m Neighbourhood Match Fund must be matched by funds or contribution in kind, whilst the larger Endowment Match Challenge is initially focused on raising donations of £100m, to make the fund self-sustaining, shifting responsibility entirely away from government (Community Development Foundation, 2012). Whilst it could be argued that this match funding requirement is an incentive for community action, the evidence regarding lower levels of charitable giving in more disadvantaged communities (Mohan, 2011) raises questions about its impact in terms of equality.

Community Strengths – Organisational capacity

In Scotland, the Government's approach to developing communities' organisational capacity is largely through CLD, including an emphasis on the CCB element of this service (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009), leading to a 50% increase in dedicated public sector CCB staff between 2008 and 2010 (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011). The more recent picture suggests that public sector budget cuts may have partially reversed this increase in terms of local government staffing, although there is also evidence of an increase in third sector CLD capacity (Education Scotland, 2015).

By contrast, the Community Organiser programme is less targeted at organisational capacity, being focused on networks and leaders rather than organisations (Re:generate, 2009). Moreover, the support for 'co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises' (Cabinet Office, 2010), and the Community Right to Challenge, which gives 'communities' a right of challenge to run public services (DCLG, 2010) are both focused mainly on supporting public sector staff to take over their own service in a mutual organisation, rather than on community or service user organisations (HM Government, 2011). Indeed, the fact that this broad list of organisations are lumped together under 'community' raises questions about whether such policies have anything to do with communities. Whilst, as we have seen, the notion of community is eternally disputed (Somerville, 2011; Plant, 1974), the inclusion of staff mutuals and large voluntary sector organisations stretches the definition well beyond common usage.

Community Strengths – Community wiring

The UK Government's policies are relatively silent on 'community wiring' – the issues of connections, cohesion and inclusiveness. Whilst the Community Organiser programme aims to support disadvantaged communities to build networks, it is relatively small and does not emphasise inclusion issues within or between communities. By contrast, the definition of community empowerment in Scottish Government policy is tied to building connections and social capital (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009), and explicit links are made between community empowerment and wider policies to tackle inequality (Scottish Government, 2012a). Perhaps more interestingly, the shift of responsibility onto communities gains a new form:

> "We must be aware and help overcome the barriers and difficulties that some people face in getting involved in their communities. This means that community groups must look very closely at how inclusive and welcoming they are being" (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 9)

Hence community organisations are being expected to tackle inclusion, alongside public sector bodies.

Community Activities – Influencing services

In terms of influence, the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment agenda is largely focused on 'voice' mechanisms, emphasising the importance of communities having a role in shaping public services (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009; Scottish Government, 2012a), and the equal importance of public services becoming more responsive to service users (Scottish Government, 2011c), reflecting a perspective that community empowerment is a two-way process (Adamson and Bromiley, 2013). This is arguably a continuation of previous Community Planning requirements, but legislative reinforcement through the new 'Right to Participate' (Scottish Government, 2014b) reflects concerns that community participation has often been overshadowed by inter-agency partnership duties (Sinclair, 2008).

This contrasts strongly with the UK Government's approach. Whilst there are elements of voice, such as piloting 'community budgets' and referenda for 'excessive' Council Tax increases, there is a stronger emphasis on choice through 'diversifying the supply of public services' (DCLG, 2010: 8-9). Indeed, whilst the Open Public Services White Paper does refer to making public services accountable to users, the key message is that, 'wherever possible we will increase choice' (HM Government, 2011: 8; cf. also Corbett and Walker, 2013). Moreover, the Community Right to Challenge is arguably more concerned with opening public services to the market than empowering communities, since any challenge would lead to an open tendering process.

Community Activity – Community self-help

Alongside community voice, the Scottish Government is explicit about the importance of communities helping themselves, suggesting that this may be more effective than public services in some instances:

> "This is about all of us recognising that communities doing things for themselves can sometimes be the best way of delivering change."
> (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 6)

Moreover, the idea of communities taking responsibility for meeting some of their own needs is connected to the SNP's nationalist agenda:

> "Our approach to governing Scotland is underpinned by the belief that the people of this country can, and should, take increased responsibility for the issues that affect our nation." (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 2)

Similarly, the UK Government aims to 'empower communities to do things their way', through options such as the Community Right to Bid, Community Right to Challenge, and Free Schools (DCLG, 2010: 7-9). However, the UK Government's approach arguably shifts more responsibility onto communities, since communities are offered the power to take over assets and services, but without the option to influence services through voice.

Furthermore, whereas the Scottish Government is clear that communities, 'must decide the level of empowerment they want and how to get there themselves' (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 10), the level of responsibilisation implied within UK Government policy has been questioned by the Communities and Local Government Committee:

> "To roll back the state on an assumption that civic activism will fill the vacuum would be a leap of considerable optimism...there are limits to the responsibilities that communities can be expected to take on... The Government must acknowledge that the 'Big Society' already exists to some extent, and therefore must be realistic about how much further it can grow." (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2011: 77)

Community Activity – Democratic engagement

The Scottish Government views enhancing democracy as integral to community empowerment, arguing that local participation complements representative democratic systems and increases engagement with those systems (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009). Again, there are links to the SNP's nationalist agenda, since increasing participation at community level has strong parallels with increasing control at national (i.e. Scottish) level.

The UK Government approaches democratic renewal through an emphasis on market choice and communities taking on responsibility for services, tied to the notion that, 'the most accessible form of government is self-government' (DCLG, 2010: 11). Thus, the individual consumer operating in the democracy of the market place is promoted as an ideal. Alongside this are electoral reforms, including more elected mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners, and powers to instigate local referenda. As Lowndes and Pratchett (2012: 28-9) have argued, such individualised, aggregative approaches preclude the educative element of deliberative approaches. Indeed, there is a clear affinity between the market-based elements of localism and these individualised, consumerist forms of democracy.

4.6.3 Setting out Theories of Change for Localism and Community Empowerment

Having explored how the two policy regimes relate to each element of the generic ToC model, it is possible to redraw the double helix as manifest within the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment agenda (Figure 4.3), and the UK Government's Big Society and Localism approach (Figures 4.4).

Figure 4.3 – The Community Empowerment theory of change
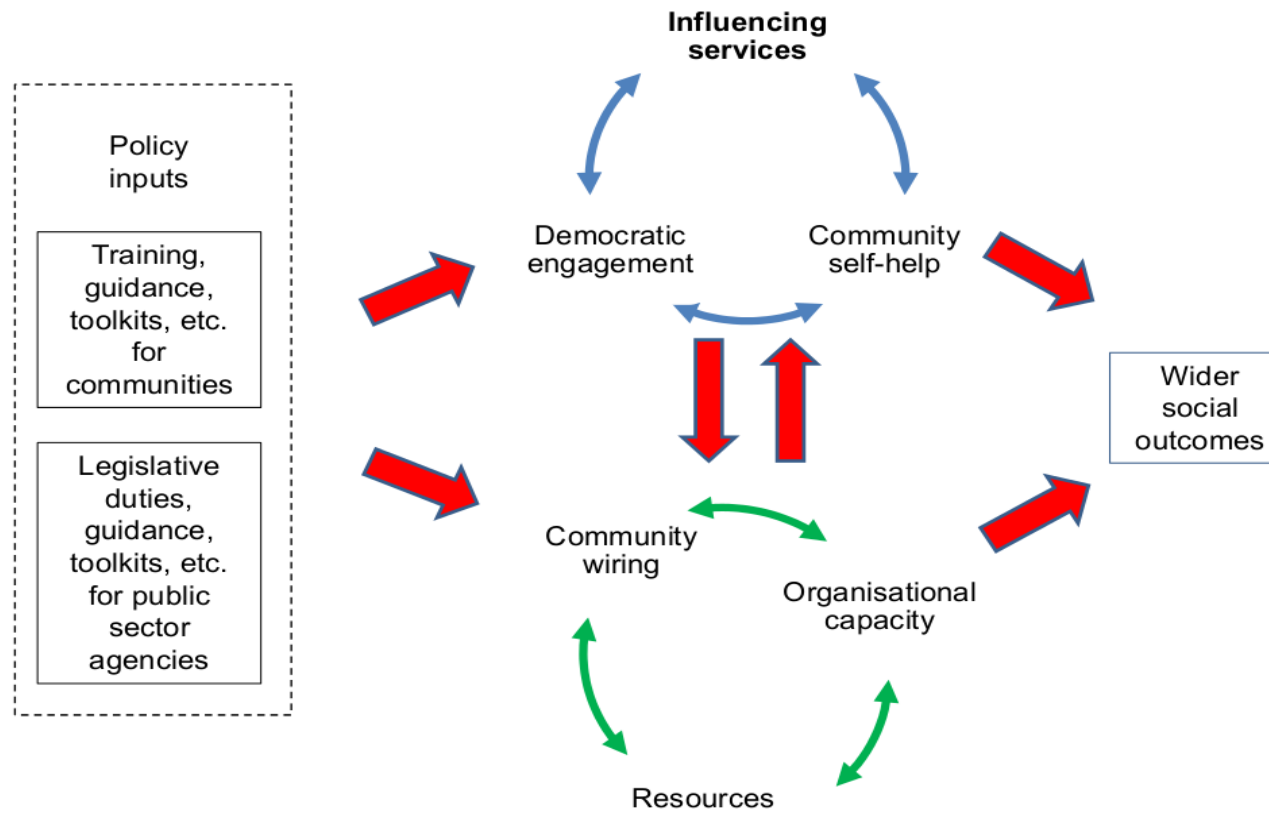
In Scottish Government policy, the double helix remains intact, with policies targeted at developing community strengths and all three elements of community activity. Moreover, explicit links are drawn between the elements within each helix, and between the two helices. For example, the central role for CLD relates to all three elements of the community strength helix, and connects them by linking collective empowerment, individual skills and community wiring (Scottish Government, 2014d). Similarly, the language around Community Empowerment connects voice mechanisms for influencing services, community self-help and democratic engagement (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009; Scottish Government, 2014c). Moreover, the link between community activity and community strength is explicitly and repeatedly drawn, suggesting that communities engaging in influencing services or self-help will result in greater levels of skills, confidence and cohesion (Scottish Government, 2014c). Thus, the Community Empowerment agenda is underpinned by a theory of change similar to the generic double helix model.

The only significant alteration from the generic model is a somewhat greater emphasis on influencing services through voice mechanisms within the community activity helix (indicated in bold), than on community self-help and democratic engagement. Crucially, this is based on a positive sum view of power, assuming that communities and the state can both be stronger if they work together, whereas the UK Government, being generally more critical of public services and state intervention, appear to take a zero sum perspective (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012), assuming that communities can only gain power at the expense of the state. Clearly there are questions which will need to be answered as the Community Empowerment agenda is implemented about the realism of such a positive sum view of power in practice (Hickson, 2013). The analysis in Chapter 8 below takes some steps towards answering such questions.

Figure 4.4 – The Localism/Big Society theory of change
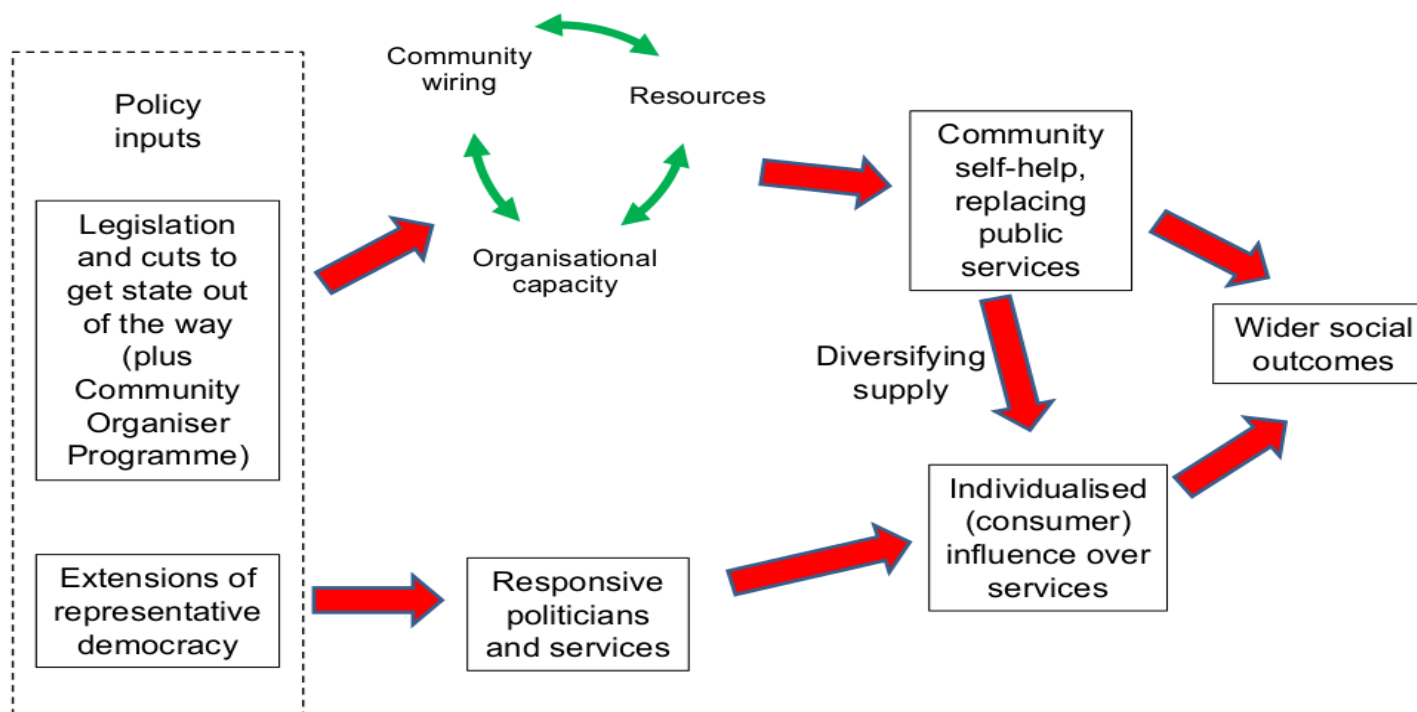
Unlike the Scottish Government's approach, the assumptions underpinning the UK Government's Big Society/Localism agenda explode the basic double helix model to create a markedly distinct theory of change. Whilst there is some interest in community strength, given the 'broken society' diagnosis, UK Government policies are more concerned with getting the state out of the way. Thus, the limited nature of the Community Organiser programme, emphasis on match funding, and minimal attention paid to organisational capacity or community wiring reveal a UK Government belief that communities will strengthen themselves in the absence of state interference:

> "The best contribution that central government can make is to devolve power, money and knowledge to those best placed to find the best solutions to local needs" (DCLG, 2010: 2)

This raises significant questions of the UK Government's view of communities, since this is clearly more likely to benefit communities which already have significant resources, rather than those communities which are presented as the worst elements of the 'broken society' (Hancock et al, 2012: 348). Indeed, evidence suggests that more affluent areas have more neighbourhood-level organisations, volunteering and charitable giving, and organisations with less dependence on state funds (Clifford et al, 2013; Mohan, 2011). Moreover, as noted earlier, some of the 'communities' that the UK Government aims to support are not really communities at all, but a range of bodies including mutuals and social enterprises, many of them closer to private sector companies than to community organisations.

Furthermore, inasmuch as UK Government policy expects communities to strengthen themselves, the aim is largely to enable communities to take responsibility for helping themselves, including taking over services no longer delivered by the state, and developing markets in services by diversifying supply, completely dismantling the community activity helix. Community self-help remains a key element of the ToC, but largely in place of public services, rather than the Scottish Government's conception of self-help augmenting and working alongside public services. Meanwhile, both democratic engagement and influencing services are replaced by largely individualised, consumerist mechanisms, which arguably

have little relation to community participation, and far more connection to a neo-liberal agenda of marketisation and commodification.

4.6.4 Drawing out the underlying assumptions

Having thus outlined the core theories of change of Localism and Community Empowerment, and identified the points at which they diverge from the generic model, the final stage of the ToC analysis is to draw out the underlying assumptions. In a standard ToC approach to evaluating a specific programme, the tests of 'plausibility, doability and testability' are applied to the model in order to assess whether it can be practically implemented and evaluated (Connell and Kubisch, 1998). Each of these tests is centrally concerned with examining the assumptions which underlie the posited model. Thus 'plausibility' examines whether the causal logic of the model is reasonable, such that the proposed inputs and activities will lead to the expected outputs and various stages of outcomes. The 'doability' test attempts to assess whether the assumptions regarding practical implementation are reasonable, particularly exploring the availability of relevant resources at the different points of the ToC. And 'testability' examines whether the key outputs and outcomes are measurable, in order that the model can be tested.

In applying ToC methodology to policy, as I have done here, identifying the underlying assumptions of each model serves two purposes. Firstly, the assumptions help to explore the extent of policy divergence between the two agendas. And secondly, these policy assumptions form the basis for the ToC analysis of the empirical evidence, developed in Chapters 7 and 8 below. At this relatively general level of policy analysis, it would be possible to suggest a wide range of assumptions which underpin each model. However, for both policy and empirical analysis, it is more useful to focus on the areas of divergence, particularly where these assumptions have implications for the practice of community organisations on the ground, since these form the basis of the study's fieldwork.

The analysis set out above, utilising the double helix model to compare the two policy agendas, highlights three core areas in which Localism and Community Empowerment make important and divergent assumptions.

Firstly, both policy agendas make key assumptions about power. For the UK Government, the critique of state centralisation creates a drive towards decentralisation in 'a determined programme to ensure that that power is given away to the lowest level' (DCLG, 2010: 2). Thus Localism's core assumption about power is that it needs to be devolved from the state and, in particular, from central government. The Scottish Government also emphasises the importance of communities gaining more power. However, in contrast to Localism, there is a repeated emphasis that communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment and that the approach to empowerment will vary between communities (Scottish Government, 2014c; Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009).

Secondly, there are important assumptions within Localism and Community Empowerment about the role of the state and how it relates to communities. Again, the UK Government's critique of state centralisation is critical for Localism, leading to the assumption that communities are stronger when the state gets out of the way and allows them the space to act independently (DCLG, 2010; DCLG, 2011b). By contrast, the Scottish Government's approach emphasises the importance of partnership between communities and the local state, particularly through Community Planning (Scottish Government, 2011c; Scotland, 2015).

Lastly, the two policy agendas make differing assumptions regarding the capacity of communities to participate. With the exception of the relatively small Community Organiser programme, the UK Government's approach to Localism provides very little support for communities to build their capacity. Again, this is linked to the central critique of state centralisation, resting on the belief that the removal of state interference and the dependency which it generates will enable the release of latent community capacity (DCLG, 2010; Conservative Party, 2009). The Scottish Government also emphasise the inherent strengths of communities, connecting this to the rhetoric of latent capacity in Scotland as a whole, which would be released by independence (Scottish Government, 2014c). However, this sits

alongside a clear statement that some communities are in a much weaker position than others in terms of capacity and will therefore require significant support in order to take advantage of opportunities for empowerment:

> "Often the very things that create disadvantage – poverty, lack of educational opportunity, poor health, and poor transport links – also create barriers to bringing about the empowerment that is one of the key ingredients for bringing about real change. Many of our communities, particularly those facing high levels of disadvantage in both urban and rural areas, will need support to help them build the skills, confidence, networks and resources they require on the journey towards becoming more empowered." (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 11)

Moreover, this is connected to the suggestion that the process of community participation and empowerment is critical in building community capacity (Scottish Government, 2014c; Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009). Hence, for the Scottish Government, the assumption is that communities have some degree of latent capacity, but that building community capacity is both a prerequisite and an integral part of community empowerment, particularly for more disadvantaged communities.

These core assumptions of Localism and Community Empowerment are summarised in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 – Core assumptions underpinning theories of change for Localism and Community Empowerment

Focus of assumption	Localism assumptions	Community Empowerment assumptions
Power	Power needs to be devolved from the state	Communities can choose their own level of empowerment
Role of the state	Communities are stronger without the state getting in the way	Community participation (mostly) works best when communities work in partnership with the local state
Community capacity	Most communities have latent capacity which will be released when the state gets out of the way	Communities have some capacity, but building this capacity is prerequisite for and an integral part of community participation, particularly for disadvantaged communities

Whilst there are clearly considerable similarities between Localism and Community Empowerment as broad, cross-cutting policy agendas, this analysis of the theories of change and underlying policy assumptions indicates significant areas of divergence between Scottish and UK Government community participation policy. As such, it contributes another example to the growing body of literature which suggests that the Scottish and UK Governments are heading in somewhat different directions (Andrews and Martin, 2010; Keating, 2005; Scott and Wright, 2012; Smith et al, 2009). In particular, the emphasis on partnership with the state, rather than removing the state from the equation reflects the common finding across these studies that there is a greater commitment in Scotland to public services in general and to collaborative approaches at the local level. However, this scrutiny of policy documentation provides only part of the picture, since it relates to espoused policy intentions, rather than implementation. The empirical research in this study attempts to take the analysis further, examining the ways in which these national theories of change play out in practice and to what extent they are supported or contradicted by local theories of change.

4.7 Conclusion to this chapter

In this chapter I applied Theories of Change methodology to the literature and to contemporary community participation policy in order to establish the first half of the theoretical framework for the empirical research of this study. By using a ToC

lens I identified the key outcomes of community participation as emphasised in the literature and compiled these into the non-linear double helix model, in which different elements of community strength and community activity interact to (potentially) generate wider social outcomes. This model was later used to structure some of the work with community organisations, as outlined in Chapter 6 below.

Employing the double helix model as a heuristic to analyse and compare current community participation policy in Scotland and England facilitated the development of theories of change models for Community Empowerment and Localism. By utilising ToC approaches to examine the policy documentation, I was able to highlight the core assumptions underpinning each policy agenda. This analysis demonstrates the key points of difference between the two governments, adding to the existing debate regarding policy divergence between the two nations, particularly in relation to the role of the state. The analysis also provides the framework for the ToC analysis of empirical evidence, comparing local and national theories of change, in Chapters 7 and 8 below.

In the next chapter I use the double helix model again, as a starting point for a Realist Evaluation examination of the mechanisms which may be hypothesised to operate within community participation processes. I then review the existing evidence for some of the key mechanisms, to provide a more detailed foundation for the empirical work and a further framework for the Realist Evaluation analysis in Chapter 9 below.

Chapter 5 – Identifying mechanisms within the double helix and examining the evidence relating to their operation

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I developed the double helix model, which illustrates the inter-connected roles of different elements of community strength and community activity in producing wider social outcomes from community participation. Using this ideal type theory of change, I then explored the specific shape of the double helix under Localism and Community Empowerment, identifying the key assumptions for each policy agenda.

In this chapter, I use the double helix model again, but extend the methodological approach from focusing solely on Theories of Change (ToC) to incorporate Realist Evaluation (RE). As mentioned in Chapter 1, Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) suggest that ToC and RE methodologies could potentially be combined, with the former being more suited to focusing on the practical steps of implementing a social programme, whilst the latter may be more useful in examining the "hypothesized causal links between mechanisms released by an intervention and their anticipated outcomes" (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007: 445). In the context of community participation, this distinction between implementation and programme theory becomes less clear cut, since the implementation of participative approaches relies heavily on complex and contingent causality within the programme. Unlike the examples of social programmes used by Pawson and Tilley, community participation policy is not merely concerned with delivering an 'intervention' which will hopefully trigger changes in behaviour, but rather in developing collective actions which will have wider effects.

Bearing these uncertainties about the distinction between implementation and programme theory in mind, in this chapter I look more closely at the specific mechanisms which may operate within the broad model. Having used ToC ideas to develop the double helix as a generic model of community participation policy, I

use it as a starting point to identify the mechanisms that may be important in community participation processes. I then examine the evidence relating to a selection of these mechanisms, laying the groundwork for the empirical analysis in Chapter 9.

5.2 Identifying mechanisms within the double helix

At the heart of Realist Evaluation (RE) is the idea of identifying 'context-mechanism-outcome' (CMO) configurations, to identify "what works, for whom, in what circumstances" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 77). However, as Marchal et al (2012) have argued, there are significant challenges in defining mechanisms and contexts, and in drawing the lines between them. Thus we need to shine a little light on these ideas before examining the specific case of mechanisms in community participation.

Whilst they engage in much circumlocution around the concepts, for Pawson and Tilley (1997: 65-69) the essence of a mechanism in RE is that it provides a causal theory which explains how combinations of choice and capacity lead to observed social regularities. As outlined in Chapter 1, this rests on a 'generative' rather than 'successionist' view of causation, emphasising the ways in which social programs can trigger choices, which may be constrained by structural factors, but which are nevertheless choices. The operation of these choice-based mechanisms is 'conditioned' by the context, which "refers to the spatial and institutional locations of social situations together, crucially, with the norms, values and interrelationships found in them" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 216).

In general, whilst Pawson (2006: 29-30) admits the possibility of feedback loops within causal processes, the conception of CMO configurations in Realist Evaluation tends towards linear description. In the context of criminal justice examples, such as those used by Pawson and Tilley, this may be largely appropriate, since the focus is on 'interventions' which aim to change the behaviour of offenders, with little consideration for feedback from offenders into the program. In the context of community participation, by contrast, the essence of much policy and practice is reflexive, as the double helix model illustrates. Hence,

in attempting to identify mechanisms within community participation, it is necessary to examine the multiple spaces within which they may operate and consider different directions of causality.

In order to do this, I would suggest that it is useful to consider five 'mechanism spaces', within each of which a variety of mechanisms may operate, as illustrated in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1 – 'Mechanism spaces' within the double helix model

Each of these spaces represents a point of interaction within the overall ToC where one element may trigger a mechanism which has impacts on another element. Thus, within Mechanism Space 1 there may be a variety of mechanisms which are triggered by policy inputs, leading to changes in community strengths or activities. This might include things such as direct investment in building skills and organisational capacity, through interventions like Community Learning and Development or the Community Organiser Programme, or alterations to the legislative framework which attempt to support community influence over services, as with the Community Empowerment Act's Right to Participate or the Localism Act's Right to Challenge.

Within Mechanism Space 2 mechanisms may operate whereby different forms of community activity facilitate the development of other forms of activity. For example, engagement with politicians through service influence activities may strengthen belief in the importance of democratic systems and thereby increase voting and other forms of democratic engagement.

Similarly, within Mechanism Space 3, there is likely to be a range of mechanisms by which different aspects of community strength can positively impact on each other, in line with the notion of 'virtuous circles' discussed in Chapter 4 above (Putnam, 2000; Emery and Flora, 2006). For example, well organised communities may be able to draw on a range of skills, or communities with access to physical assets such as community centres may be able to use them to build connections by providing space for people to come together.

In Mechanism Space 4, there may be mechanisms through which community strengths facilitate community activities or community activities alter community strengths in various ways. Thus, for example, human resources in the form of skilled and experienced activists are likely to be important in triggering self-help activities.

Finally, within Mechanism Space 5, mechanisms may operate whereby community strengths and activities may generate a range of wider social outcomes. For example, community wiring developed through community participation may

improve mental wellbeing, or self-help activities may generate improvements in health or educational outcomes.

However, it is important to remember that, whilst community participation policy may be intended to generate positive growth in community strength and activity, there may be mechanisms within these spaces which have the opposite effect. Hence, for example, within Mechanism Space 2, the process of attempting to influence services could, in some circumstances, lead to increased cynicism about elected politicians and therefore reduced democratic engagement.

Table 5.1 below sets out the types of mechanisms within each space and provides some illustrative examples of specific mechanisms which may operate in particular contexts. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but is intended to give a flavour of the range of different mechanisms which could come into play at different points in community participation processes, some of which will result in 'positive' outcomes and some of which will produce less welcome impacts.

Table 5.1 – Overview of selected potential mechanisms within the double helix model

	Mechanism Space	Types of mechanism	Examples
1	Policy inputs	Policy interventions which trigger changes in community strengths and/or community activity	Community development initiatives such as Community Organisers and CLD – generating increased skills and organisational capacity
			Statutory rights to influence services such as Right to Participate and Right to Challenge, encouraging communities to try to exert influence
2	Within the Community Activity helix	Experience of one type of activity (self-help, service influence or democratic engagement) facilitating engagement in another type of activity, or further involvement in the same type of activity	Effective service delivery organisations become seen as useful partners by agencies and are invited to help design public services
			Negative experiences of local politics through service influence activities increases cynicism and reduces democratic engagement
3	Within the Community Strength helix	Use of community strengths (resources, organisational capacity, community wiring) to build further community strength	Skilled activists using experience from elsewhere to build strong community organisations
			Well connected communities using networks to draw in a range of funding
4	Between the two helices	Community strengths facilitating community activities or community activities leading to changes in community strengths	Financial resources enabling more effective service influence through employing skilled advocacy professionals
			Disputes over control of self-help activities and facilities leading to reductions in community cohesion
5	Between the double helix and wider social outcomes	Community strengths generating direct impacts on individuals or for society and/or community activities creating outcomes directly or indirectly	User expertise employed in re-design of services, enabling needs to be met more effectively
			Community self-help delivering services or facilities which would not otherwise be provided, augmenting public services

These indicative examples illustrate the wide range of mechanisms which could potentially operate within community participation processes. Even examining the existing evidence for the different possibilities within all five mechanism spaces would be a substantial undertaking, let alone attempting to develop new empirical evidence relating to each mechanism. Since such a broad research agenda is clearly beyond the reach of this study, this chapter and the empirical work that follows will focus on Mechanism Space 5, for two key reasons.

Firstly, in the previous chapter, I used Theories of Change methodology to explore the assumptions underpinning Localism and Community Empowerment, forming the basis for further empirical examination of their practical implementation. As outlined at the outset of this analysis, using a ToC approach to examine policy in this way involves starting from both ends to explore the black box in the middle, attempting to identify the logical pathways which are assumed to exist between policy inputs and the intended outcomes espoused in policy documentation and political rhetoric. Hence, whilst this ToC analysis stretches across the entire process of community participation, the starting point inevitably concentrates the focus on those elements of the logic model which can be most clearly defined, namely the policy inputs and their immediate impacts. The core assumptions identified at the close of the previous chapter therefore have most relevance to the internal processes of community participation, rather than any wider social outcomes. Thus, by focusing the RE analysis on Mechanism Space 5, I am avoiding confusing between the two modes of analysis and also attempting to provide some useful evidence across the entire double helix model.

Secondly, as indicated in Chapter 1, a significant part of the rationale for embarking on this project was a concern with the lack of evidence regarding wider outcomes of community participation. Whilst national policy and local practice assume that community participation is inherently a good thing, numerous authors have lamented the limited evidence base of impacts beyond the immediate benefits to core activists (Brannan et al, 2006; Burton et al, 2004; Skidmore et al, 2006). Hence this study commenced with the specific intention to provide more evidence regarding possible wider outcomes from community participation.

Crucially, following on from this latter point, the aim of examining Mechanism Space 5 is to attempt to identify mechanisms related to community participation which may produce outcomes above and beyond those that would be realised otherwise. As Davies et al (2000) argue, this aim of identifying the additional impacts of a particular policy or programme is the 'overriding goal' of all evaluation.

The next section of this chapter therefore attempts to identify the range of possible mechanisms within this space and, drawing on the existing literature, explores the evidence for their effects. Inevitably there are some challenges in such an endeavour, since the literature often points to correlations between community activity and community strengths on the one hand and wider social outcomes on the other, without necessarily trying or being able to provide a causal explanation for the connection. However, this examination of possible mechanisms is intended largely to provide a theoretical basis for the Realist Evaluation process of using the empirical data from this study to examine and refine the causal theories which these hypothesised mechanisms represent. Hence it is reasonable at this stage to identify possible mechanisms without worrying excessively about the solidity of their foundations, since the fieldwork will aim to test these foundations.

5.3 Mechanisms delivering additional social outcomes

The double helix model highlights the extent to which communities have become both objects and subjects of policy, with interventions being targeted at strengthening and activating them (Rose, 1996; Imrie and Raco, 2003). The thinking, or at least the political rhetoric behind this suggests that both of these aspects can be important in delivering wider benefits for individual community members and for society as a whole, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 above. Thus, for example, policies such as the Urban Programme in the 1970s, Action for Cities in the 1980s and Neighbourhood Renewal in the 1990s and 2000s were intended to strengthen communities in order to improve cohesion and reduce unrest. And in contemporary policy, the UK Government argues that activating communities to take control of local services can tackle 'fundamental social problems' which have not been addressed by centralisation (DCLG, 2010: 4),

whilst the Scottish Government explicitly highlights the potential outcomes from community self-help activities:

> "Communities can often achieve significant improvements by doing things for themselves, because they know what will work for them. They become more confident and resilient; there are often opportunities for people to gain new skills and for increased employment as well as improved access to services and support. These in turn can lead to improvements in a wide range of areas such as crime, health, and reducing inequalities." (Scottish Government, 2014c: 2)

In order to identify possible mechanisms which might help to explain how community strengths and community activity can deliver wider social outcomes such as these, a brief review of the literature was conducted. The aim of the review was to identify possible mechanisms from theory and empirical evidence, in order to provide a basis for the fieldwork and subsequent analysis. Whilst this necessarily included some consideration of the evidence, the intention was to establish a theoretical framework, rather than to comprehensively assess the existing empirical support for particular mechanisms. Indeed, a full systematic review of this nature would not have been possible, given time and resource constraints. Hence searches were specifically targeted in order to narrow the range of literature identified, focusing heavily on previous reviews of the field. The search criteria used, together with the process of assessing and reviewing items is provided in Appendix A.

For each of the elements of community activity and community strength from the double helix model, a number of possible 'mechanisms of additionality' are identified from the literature. Whilst it would also be possible to delineate 'mechanisms of subtraction' whereby community participation generates negative impacts, these are more usefully conceived of as problems with the mechanisms of additionality. Hence for each identified mechanism potential issues are highlighted, providing a useful basis for the examination of contexts in the empirical analysis of Chapter 9 below.

5.3.1 Community activity mechanisms

Influencing services

Numerous studies indicate that community participation can make changes to public services, with a handful of broad evidence reviews being carried out during the New Labour years, when the focus was largely on community engagement (ODPM, 2005; Rogers and Robinson, 2004; Burton et al, 2004; Birch, 2002). Whilst there is perhaps inevitably limited evidence of the longer term impacts on service users of these changes, the common assumption is that changes triggered by community participation will improve targeting and effectiveness and hence improve ultimate outcomes.

In terms of mechanisms, the key process is neatly summarised by Rogers and Robinson (2004) as 'information flows':

> "the process by which communities work with public bodies,
> providing them with information about the way things work, and
> views as to how they might work better." (Rogers and Robinson,
> 2004: 7)

Thus the knowledge of service users about their own needs and the limitations of the existing service, together with community members' knowledge about other local needs and issues can help to target services more effectively (Burton et al, 2004) and to produce innovation in service design and delivery (ODPM, 2005). Moreover, this type of impact on services from community participation is not confined to the UK, being reflected, for example, in the impacts of community-based organisations working to influence housing and poverty reduction initiatives (Rich et al, 2001) and community-based environmental protection (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004) in the US.

Closely related to the importance of community knowledge for improving services are issues of service accessibility. Aside from straightforward service changes to improve access, which are part of the first mechanism, there is evidence that community participation can alter accessibility by changing community perceptions

of a service (Findlay, 2010). Thus community members who are engaged in working with a service are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and connection to that service, which can potentially expand to a wider sense of community acceptance of the service.

Reinforcing this last point, there is also some evidence to suggest that community involvement in services may have a positive impact on the motivations of staff providing the service (ODPM, 2005). The suggestion is that working directly with community members gives staff greater job satisfaction and appreciation of the value of their work, by comparison with working for a public sector bureaucracy.

Interestingly, alongside these 'voice' mechanisms of service influence, there appears to be little evidence in the literature of 'choice' mechanisms operating at a community level, despite the emphasis on such mechanisms within Localism, as outlined in the previous chapter. Whilst this is perhaps unsurprising, given that most 'choice' mechanisms for service influence will operate at the level of the individual consumer, rather than through processes that might be characterised as community participation, such market-based mechanisms cannot be ignored. Indeed, given the UK Government's expectation of patient involvement in NHS commissioning (NHS England, 2013), for example, there would seem to be a gap in the literature as regards the impact of such participation in marketised public services.

In terms of issues which may undermine or counteract the additionality produced by these mechanisms, Irvin and Stansbury (2004: 58) point out that, "Many discussions of the value of public participation leave out a large barrier – cost." Such costs of community participation may act as a barrier to the operation of service influence mechanisms, since the short-term costs for an agency may outweigh the rather intangible long-term benefits, many of which may accrue elsewhere (Birch, 2002; ODPM, 2005). Moreover, there is always a potential argument, particularly in a context of austerity, that money spent engaging communities in service design would be more effectively spent on delivering those services (Lowndes et al, 2001a: 212).

With specific reference to the notion that community knowledge can improve the targeting and effectiveness of services, a number of studies highlight questions about, "the assumption that a coherent and uncontested community 'voice' is possible" (Callaghan and Wistow, 2008: 172). Aside from the challenge of generating clear community views through participative processes, this also raises the concern that some voices may be heard above others, so any subsequent changes made to services may privilege the interests of only a proportion of service users (Birch, 2002; Martin and Boaz, 2000; Hastings and Matthews, 2014). In particular, there is evidence to suggest that the capture of participative processes by elite groups is a substantial problem in development projects in the global South, especially in more unequal communities (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). As Skidmore et al (2006) suggest, there may be a range of ways in which such unequal influence takes place, including deliberate exclusion by agencies or other participants and self-exclusion by some groups, and there is a particular risk that more advantaged groups are more likely to be heard. In this respect, there is a clear link to Cooke and Kothari's (2001) thesis that participation can become a form of tyranny, potentially over-riding existing democratic decision-making processes and reinforcing the interests of the already powerful.

Table 5.2 below summarises these postulated mechanisms linking service influence to wider social outcomes, as well as the potential issues which may undermine their operation.

Table 5.2 – Service influence mechanisms of additionality

Mechanism	Description
'We know what people want, so you can do it better'	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge
'People feel more comfortable in their own space'	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which are used more because seen as belonging to and accessible for the community
'We want to choose the best service'	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs and are of better quality because of competition
'We'll work harder for people we know and like'	Service providers are better motivated to provide quality services when they have direct contact with service users and see that they are improving people's lives
Issues affecting operation of these mechanisms	
• Cost/efficiency of participation v service delivery • Dominant voices reinforcing inequalities	

Community self-help

There is a less coherent evidence base regarding the outcome impacts of community self-help activities, mostly restricted to case studies. This is perhaps unsurprising, reflecting the singular nature of each community group or project and also the sense that much self-help activity operates at a very local level, below the radar. Nevertheless, there is a range of evidence indicating positive environmental, health and social impacts from such diverse activities as community-run shops and pubs (Plunkett Foundation, 2014a; 2014b), arts projects (Newman et al, 2003), community asset ownership (Bailey, 2012), time banks and peer support groups (Rogers and Robinson, 2004), community-owned housing (Rosenberg, 2012) and sexual health projects (Altman et al, 2015). Beneath this broad picture of impact, it is possible to identify three core mechanisms which may be operating in different circumstances.

Firstly, at a simplistic level, there is significant evidence that many of the services and facilities provided by community self-help activities would not otherwise exist. Thus, for example, community shops generally operate in rural areas where they are, "almost always the only form of retail provision in the community in which they are based" (Plunkett Foundation, 2014b: 14) because the private sector does not see the location as profitable and the state is not in the business of providing retail services. Clearly there is some complexity here, however, since the 'additionality' of such self-help activities depends on an acceptance that there is no alternative. Whereas community shops may often seem unproblematically additional, the same cannot be said for instances where communities take over services such as libraries when government austerity leads to local retrenchment (Locality, 2013). In practice, whilst some things, such as peer support, could not reasonably be provided by the state or private sector, many community self-help activities operate in something of a grey area, where it is not entirely clear whether the service or facility would otherwise exist.

Secondly, paralleling the first service influence mechanism discussed above, there is evidence that community self-help activities can provide services or facilities which are better targeted at community needs because of local knowledge. As Moore and McKee (2013) highlight in relation to community asset ownership:

> "the importance of a community asset base in allowing place-based
> organisations the scope to develop local projects they deem
> important and to *tailor solutions to identified local needs* in a way that
> private and public sectors cannot" (Moore and McKee, 2013: 528,
> emphasis added)

Hence, beyond the basic ability of community organisations to deliver services
which might not otherwise exist, there is an important point about the nature of
such services, since a community-run service may appear similar to public or
private sector provision, but be much better targeted at local need. Thus there is
evidence that community arts projects create impacts partly because of the ability
of local artists to provide activities and artworks that seem relevant to community
members (Newman et al, 2003), as well as the effectiveness of community
enterprise in responding to the specific local context (Bailey, 2012). At a broader
level, the community network organisation, Locality (2014c), argues that the public
sector belief in economies of scale and standardisation results in services which
inevitably fail to meet needs because they cannot be shaped by local knowledge in
the way that community-run services can.

Thirdly, again paralleling one of the service influence mechanisms, the evidence
suggests that community organisations can provide services or facilities which are
seen as more acceptable and accessible by community members because they
are run by local people. Thus, for example, young people who are disengaged
from the formal school system may be drawn back into education by community
groups acting as 'brokers' (Rogers and Robinson, 2004), whilst sensitive issues
such as condom use can be addressed through advice delivered by community
organisations, where formal health agencies have failed (Altman et al, 2015).

Alongside these mechanisms identified by the literature, it is also important to note
the notion underpinning the Community Right to Challenge within Localism. This
right is presented as a means for, "local communities…to get more involved in the
delivery of public services and shape them in a way that will meet local
preferences" (DCLG, 2010: 9), which sounds very much like the second
mechanism above. However, the Right to Challenge process makes it apparent

that the envisaged mechanism for service improvement is more closely tied to market choice through, "diversifying the supply of public services" (DCLG, 2010: 9) and opening a competitive tendering process. Hence, although there seems to be little evidence of it operating in practice, it seems appropriate to include a market-based mechanism.

In terms of issues that may affect the operation of these community self-help mechanisms, the evidence again highlights differences between communities. As with the concern about dominant voices in relation to service influence, the evidence showing higher numbers of neighbourhood-level organisations in more affluent areas, as well as higher levels of volunteering and charitable giving (Clifford et al, 2013; Mohan, 2011) suggests that these mechanisms may operate in ways which could reinforce existing inequalities. Moreover, this evidence indicates that austerity may exacerbate such differences, since the community organisations in more affluent areas exhibit lower levels of dependence on state funding sources.

Issues of cost and efficiency also arise where community-run services are commissioned by the public sector. However, the evidence is mixed, suggesting that there may be additional up-front costs of commissioning multiple local services, but that the innovation delivered by community-run services provides longer-term savings (ODPM, 2005). Finance may also become an issue in terms of the imperatives that it places on community self-help organisations to focus on income, rather than necessarily prioritising community needs (Moore and McKee, 2013).

Finally, echoing the discussion of responsibilisation in the previous chapter, some evidence suggests that these self-help mechanisms may be undermined by the fact that community members do not necessarily want to take on such responsibility. As (McKee, 2011) suggests in her study of tenant participation in Glasgow:

> "what people want is fundamentally better services, not
> empowerment per se…Whilst tenants did not reject the idea of local
> control and tenant participation outright, they wanted to engage on

their own terms, and largely saw it as a means to improve service delivery and the quality of housing provision in their area." (McKee, 2011: 14)

Table 5.3 below summarises these postulated mechanisms linking community self-help to wider social outcomes, as well as the potential issues which may undermine their operation.

Table 5.3 – Community self-help mechanisms of additionality

Mechanism	Description
'It wouldn't happen otherwise'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services that would not otherwise be delivered
'We know what people want, so we can do it better'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge, etc.
'People feel more comfortable with people like them'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services which are used more because seen as belonging to and accessible for the community
'We want more choice in the services we receive'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services which increase choice through 'diversified supply'
Issues affecting operation of these mechanisms	
- Unequal capacity between communities reinforcing inequalities - Cost/efficiency of multiple community-run services v. large contracts - Focus on income distracting from addressing community needs - Unwillingness of some communities to take on additional responsibility	

Democratic engagement

Clearly some elements of democratic engagement will affect social outcomes through the same mechanisms as service influence, since representative democratic systems are one route to such influence. Setting these aside, the evidence for distinct mechanisms relating to the impacts of democratic engagement seems somewhat circular, suggesting that the key outcome is a reinvigoration of democracy itself (Simmons et al, 2007; Burns et al, 1994). Such mechanisms should not be ignored, however, given the repeated policy emphasis on community participation as a means of addressing the 'democratic deficit' (Conservative Party, 2009; DCLG, 2010; Arnott and Ozga, 2010; Scottish Government, 2014c; Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009).

Although the evidence regarding democratic engagement through community participation is somewhat thin, there are indications of two possible mechanisms. Firstly, there is the suggestion that, by engaging people directly with local democracy, community participation processes, "can restore faith in the institutions of local governance" (Rogers and Robinson, 2004: 49) and reduce the level of cynicism about government (Berman, 1997). And secondly, there is some evidence that the involvement of a wider range of people in governance improves the level of debate and scrutiny of services (Simmons, 2004). Although this latter mechanism clearly has strong links to the notion of improving services by drawing on community knowledge, it adds a further dimension of improved scrutiny by virtue of involving a more diverse group of people in the scrutiny process.

Each of these possible mechanisms comes with a significant proviso, however, in terms of restoring faith in democracy and politicians, there is evidence of the opposite effect, where people engaging in local democracy are disappointed by the responses of politicians (Lowndes et al, 2001b), potentially increasing cynicism. Interestingly, there is also evidence that this mechanism may also be affected by the degree of cynicism which local Councillors have towards the electorate and the interest groups engaging with local democracy (Copus, 2003). In relation to improving debate and scrutiny of services, the same issues regarding cost and efficiency arise here, as with the service influence mechanisms (Lowndes et al, 2001a). Moreover, the issues of dominant voices undermining representativeness also reappear, with the risk being that the improved scrutiny is biased towards particular interests (Lowndes et al, 2001b).

Table 5.4 below summarises these postulated mechanisms linking democratic engagement to wider social outcomes, as well as the potential issues which may undermine their operation.

Table 5.4 – Democratic engagement mechanisms of additionality

Mechanism	Description
'Getting involved with local democracy makes people less cynical'	People's engagement with local democracy, whether through participative democratic mechanisms or through contact with elected representatives increases their understanding of and respect for government and politicians, at least at a local level.
'A wider range of voices improves scrutiny'	Engaging a more diverse group of people in democratic oversight of services improves the level of debate and scrutiny.
Issues affecting operation of these mechanisms	
• Engagement with local democracy may increase cynicism if the response is disappointing • Cost/efficiency of involving more people in scrutiny • Dominant voices reinforcing inequalities	

5.3.2 Community strength mechanisms

The mechanisms linking community strengths and wider social outcomes are somewhat more restricted than those for community activities because some of the elements of community strength are important primarily in facilitating activities, rather than delivering impacts directly. In particular, organisational capacity, which is vital for community activity, delivers little in the way of wider social outcomes in itself. This section therefore focuses on community resources and community wiring.

Community resources

Whilst the impacts of financial and physical assets held by communities are largely realised through mechanisms to do with community activity, particularly community self-help (Aiken et al, 2011), there are direct connections between human resources in terms of the personal development that community members undergo through participation processes and wider social outcomes. The evidence suggests, unsurprisingly, that the additional skills, confidence and experience gained through community participation enables individuals to improve their educational attainment and employment prospects (ODPM, 2005; Rogers and Robinson, 2004). Again, the key concern associated with this mechanism is the extent to which it further advantages those individuals and communities which are already advantaged. Thus, for example, there is evidence that disadvantaged and

excluded groups are more likely to favour 'passive' forms of engagement (Martin and Boaz, 2000), which are less likely to deliver learning and personal development than more 'active' approaches.

Table 5.5 below summarises these postulated mechanisms linking community resources to wider social outcomes, as well as the potential issues which may undermine their operation.

Table 5.5 – Community resources mechanisms of additionality

Mechanism	Description
'Participation helps people learn useful things that can be used elsewhere'	The skills, confidence and experience gained through community participation processes enables people to improve their educational attainment and employment prospects.
Issues affecting operation of these mechanisms	
• Unequal capacity between communities and individuals reinforcing inequalities	

Community wiring

In addition to the employment impacts of additional skills, there is substantial evidence to support the idea that the development of networks through community participation improves employment outcomes for those involved by connecting them to job opportunities (Rogers and Robinson, 2004; Granovetter, 1973; Aguilera, 2002).

Alongside this, there is a range of evidence relating to the impacts of social capital, although there is some dubiety about the mechanisms involved and the ways in which different types of social capital may trigger different mechanisms. Thus the evidence points to clear correlations between strong community networks and better mental and physical health (Baum et al, 2000; Veenstra, 2000; Case et al, 1992; Berkman and Glass, 2000). Whilst the causality between social connectedness and health is not entirely clear, it appears to be a combination of two mechanisms. Firstly, the intrinsic value of family and friendship networks seems to generate better mental wellbeing in people (Lelkes, 2010) and, secondly, the emotional and practical support available through such networks can help to improve people's management of stress and health conditions (Kawachi and Berkman, 2001).

Further mechanisms relating to community wiring are suggested by evidence in the fields of education and crime. In terms of education, Coleman, one of the key originators of the ideas of social capital, demonstrated that supportive social networks improve educational outcomes (Coleman, 1988). The central mechanism here is the ways in which shared norms within a closely connected, cohesive community can reduce the likelihood of individuals dropping out of education because of the stigma attached. And in relation to crime, there is evidence that stronger social networks are preventative of crime and social disorder (van Steden et al, 2011). Rogers and Robinson (2004) suggest that this may operate through two mechanisms – 'guardianship' whereby neighbours look out for each other and the community, and 'socialisation' whereby communities encourage the internalisation of positive, sociable norms.

In terms of the issues which may undermine or counteract the additionality produced by these mechanisms, there are two key areas to consider. Firstly, inequality again raises its ugly head, since there is evidence that community participation may enable those who are already 'rich' in terms of social connections to get even richer, particularly in terms of 'linking social capital' which connects communities to more powerful individuals and organisations (Skidmore et al, 2006). Similarly, Kearns (2003) points to the ways in which existing networks of advantage can be used as 'old boy networks' to maintain privilege and exclude other social groups.

Secondly, as noted in the previous chapter, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the ideal combination of the different elements of community wiring. Indeed, it seems reasonable to argue that different combinations will be more productive or more problematic in different spheres. Thus tightly bonded communities may generate significant positives in terms of health outcomes, for example, but can also be exclusive and insular, limiting the employment benefits from wider networks and potentially even creating 'public bads' through the reinforcement of anti-social norms (Forrest and Kearns, 1999).

Table 5.6 below summarises these postulated mechanisms linking community wiring to wider social outcomes, as well as the potential issues which may undermine their operation.

Table 5.6 – Community wiring mechanisms of additionality

Mechanism	Description
'Networks help people move on in work'	Social connections provide information about and access to employment opportunities which enable people to get into work and progress to better jobs.
'Relationships help people feel better'	Social connections and friendships are inherently good for human beings, improving their mental wellbeing.
'Supportive relationships help people deal with life'	Support from social networks helps people manage stresses and health conditions.
'Communities can help keep people in school'	Shared norms of educational attainment within connected communities can help to keep people engaged with education by reinforcing the stigma of dropping out.
'Communities can act as guardians'	In well connected communities, neighbours are more likely to look out for each other and thereby prevent crime.
'Communities can reinforce good behaviour'	In well connected communities, people may be socialised to accept positive norms and thereby not to engage in criminal or anti-social behaviour.
Issues affecting operation of these mechanisms	
• Inequalities in terms of existing networks and skills may help the rich get richer in terms of connections	
• Forms of community wiring which are positive in one context may be unproductive or even negative in another	

5.4 Placing the mechanisms in context(s)

Drawing all of the above together, Table 5.7 below provides a summary of all the mechanisms identified from the literature by which different forms of community activity and different elements of community strength generate wider social outcomes.

Table 5.7 – Summary of mechanisms in space 5:
Linking community activity and community strengths to wider social outcomes

Mechanisms				Description
Mechanisms linking community activity to wider outcomes	Service influence	1a	'We know what people want, so you can do it better'	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge
		1b	'People feel more comfortable in their own space'	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which are used more because seen as belonging to and accessible for the community
		1c	'We want to choose the best service'	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs and are of better quality because of competition
		1d	'We'll work harder for people we know and like'	Service providers are better motivated to provide quality services when they have direct contact with service users and see that they are improving people's lives
	Community self-help	2a	'It wouldn't happen otherwise'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services that would not otherwise be delivered
		2b	'We know what people want, so we can do it better'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge, etc.
		2c	'People feel more comfortable with people like them'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services which are used more because seen as belonging to and accessible for the community
		2d	'We want more choice in the services we receive'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services which increase choice through 'diversified supply'
	Democratic engagement	3a	'Getting involved with local democracy makes people less cynical'	People's engagement with local democracy, whether through participative democratic mechanisms or through contact with elected representatives increases their understanding of and respect for government and politicians, at least at a local level.
		3b	'A wider range of voices improves scrutiny'	Engaging a more diverse group of people in democratic oversight of services improves the level of debate and scrutiny.

	Mechanisms			Description
Mechanisms linking community strengths to wider outcomes	**Community resources**	4a	'Participation helps people learn useful things that can be used elsewhere'	The skills, confidence and experience gained through community participation processes enables people to improve their educational attainment and employment prospects.
	Community wiring	5a	'Networks help people move on in work'	Social connections provide information about and access to employment opportunities which enable people to get into work and progress to better jobs.
		5b	'Relationships help people feel better'	Social connections and friendships are inherently good for human beings, improving their mental wellbeing.
		5c	'Supportive relationships help people deal with life'	Support from social networks helps people manage stresses and health conditions.
		5d	'Communities can help keep people do well at school'	Shared norms of educational attainment within connected communities can help to keep people engaged with education by reinforcing the stigma of dropping out.
		5e	'Communities can act as guardians'	In well connected communities, neighbours are more likely to look out for each other and thereby prevent crime.
		5f	'Communities can reinforce good behaviour'	In well connected communities, people may be socialised to accept positive norms and thereby not to engage in criminal or anti-social behaviour.

As Pawson and Tilley (1997: 66) suggest, such mechanisms are, "hypothesised processes [which] attempt to mirror how programs actually work". Importantly, however, mechanisms of this form are only part of the picture, since Realist Evaluation methodology emphasises the need to situate causal processes within contexts. As outlined above, the full explanatory power of RE analyses comes through context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configurations, which state, "what it is about a program which works for whom in what circumstances" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 217). Thus, in order to complete the groundwork for the fieldwork and subsequent analysis, it is necessary to consider the nature of the contexts within which these postulated mechanisms might operate.

Even the most cursory reflection will identify a wide range of contextual factors which may be important for the operation of mechanisms within community participation, including the nature of the community, national and local policy, characteristics of community organisations, relationships with local bodies, and so on. As noted earlier, the issue of specifying the context within which particular mechanisms may be operating is further complicated by the difficulty of separating contexts from mechanisms (Marchal et al, 2012). For example, the relationship between a community organisation and a service providing agency might be an important contextual factor in the operation of mechanism 1a, enabling community knowledge to improve the quality of a service. However, such a relationship may also be part of mechanism 1d, where the motivation of workers is affected by their connection to service users, as well as being an outcome of a range of other mechanisms. This is a particular issue in processes such as community participation which, as the double helix model suggests, are suffused with feedback loops and which are inherently complex, since the systems involved are adaptive and self-organising (Glouberman and Zimmerman, 2002; Funnell and Rogers, 2011). Thus, within the double helix, each element may be context, mechanism and outcome, depending on which particular process is under scrutiny.

Whilst there is no way of removing this complexity, Brante's (2001) realist notion of a 'level ontology' may be of some use in navigating the maze. This suggests that sociological explanation can occur at international, inter-institutional, institutional,

inter-individual and individual levels, with explorations of the level 'above' providing the context and of the level 'below' providing more detail of the processes involved. This parallels Pawson and Tilley's suggestion about combining agency and structure:

> "We find the same combination of *agency* and *structure* employed generally across sociological explanation and we thus suppose that the evaluation of social programs will deploy identical explanatory forms, reaching 'down' to the layers of individual *reasoning* (what is the desirability of the ideas promoted by a program?) and 'up' to the collective *resources* on offer (does the program provide the means for subjects to change their minds?)." (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 66)

Whilst this leads Pawson and Tilley to focus primarily on individualised explanations for social phenomena, concentrating on the reasoning of individuals within a social context, understanding community participation requires a conception of mechanisms that can operate at different levels. For example, whilst it might be possible to explain the actions of a community organisation by examining mechanisms operating at the level of each individual person involved, this may be no more helpful than trying to explain the behaviour of each individual by examining mechanisms at the level of each of their cells. Thus the separation of mechanism and context is based on a choice regarding the most useful level of explanation. It may always be possible to provide a range of alternative explanations operating at different levels, all of which offer some causal validity, but not all of which are equally useful in understanding the processes at work.

Furthermore, Brante's notion of a level ontology also enables the development of a more sophisticated conception of agency and structure, which is key to realist explanation, although doing so requires something of a departure from his five-level schema. Following on from the recognition that explanation can be provided at different levels, it seems logical to conceive of agency as extending beyond the behaviour of individuals, since organisations may act in ways which cannot be satisfactorily explained by discussion of the reasoning of their individual members. This idea is particularly important in attempting to comprehend processes such as

community participation, where causal explanations may focus on the behaviour and interactions of individuals, community organisations and other agencies.

Since Brante's five levels are derived largely from a categorisation of grand theory within sociology, they need some adjustment to be more applicable to analysis of community participation, focusing more on local organisations and communities, rather than international relations. Thus the important levels of explanation for community participation are redefined in this thesis as national, regional, community, community organisation and individual. Using these five levels, Table 5.8 below sets out some indicative factors which may be important in identifying the relevant elements of context for the mechanisms which operate within community participation processes. Mirroring Pawson and Tilley's notion of looking 'up' to structure and 'down' to agency, Brante suggests that causal explanations involve the consideration of mechanisms within a level and looking to levels 'above' to provide the context and to levels 'below' to understand the dynamics of processes. Notably, although the five levels are presented in a hierarchical fashion, this does not mean that contextual factors operate only on the level immediately above, or that details of causation can only be understood by exploring the level immediately below. Rather, it highlights the need to look at any or all of the levels 'above' for contextual factors and to explore explanations at different levels 'below', as well as the possibility of explanatory factors within a particular level. The table therefore highlights factors which exist within a level and also the relationships which may exist between levels.

Table 5.8 – Potential contextual factors for community participation mechanisms

Level	Characteristics	Relationships
National	National policy – particularly community participation policy (Localism, Community Empowerment), but also other policy which may impact – e.g. austerity	Within national government Down to local government, etc.
	National economic situation, etc.	
Regional	Local policy – e.g. local authority community participation policy Area characteristics – e.g. economy, history of community participation	Up to national factors Within and between local agencies Down to communities, community organisations and individuals
Community	Community characteristics – e.g. economy, demography, diversity	Up to local agencies and national factors Within the community – i.e. community wiring Down to community organisations and individuals
Community organisation	Community organisation characteristics – e.g. leadership, resources, etc.	Up to national factors, local agencies and the wider community Within and between community organisations Down to individual community members
Individual	Characteristics of individual community members – e.g. skills, time, etc.	Up to community organisations, wider community, etc. Between individual community members

Although this table is by no means exhaustive, it provides a useful heuristic in considering the possible contextual factors which may be relevant in the operation of the mechanisms set out earlier and in deciding on the appropriate explanatory level for the Realist Evaluation element of this study. It also enables a better

understanding of the issues which the existing evidence suggests may affect the operation of the mechanisms of additionality, as laid out alongside the mechanisms in Tables 5.2-5.6 above. Whilst the literature does not, for the most part, describe these as contextual factors in the RE sense, Table 5.8 enables us to reinterpret these issues as contexts which will potentially shape the operation of each mechanism. Thus, for example, the impact of inequalities within and between communities, which arises in relation to all the mechanisms, is clearly closely related to the characteristics of communities and individuals. Similarly, the issues of cost and efficiency, which also arise in relation to multiple mechanisms, can be seen as being partly about local policy and partly about the national context in terms of budgetary restrictions on local government.

5.5 Conclusion to this chapter

In this chapter, I have started to combine Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation methodology. Using the double helix model developed with ToC methodology in Chapter 4, I have identified the 'Mechanism Spaces' within community participation processes, indicating the wide range of Realist causal mechanisms which may operate within the model as a whole. The potential value of this aspect of the combined methodology is discussed in Chapter 10, alongside reflections on the empirical application of ToC and RE in the fieldwork.

Narrowing the focus to examine the impacts of community participation processes on wider social outcomes, I have attempted to set out the range of postulated mechanisms which might explain how community participation can generate additionality. I have also provided some discussion of the evidence regarding the operation of these mechanisms and the factors which may undermine or counteract their effects. These postulated mechanisms and the possible barriers to their operation provide a useful basis, alongside the ToC models developed in Chapter 4, for the empirical work of this study.

Finally, in order to facilitate the use of these mechanisms as a tool for Realist Evaluation analysis of the empirical data (in Chapter 9 below), I have explored the range of factors which may be relevant as contexts for their operation and

provided a theoretical framework for understanding the 'levels' of different contextual factors.

Building on the methodological and evidential basis set out in Chapters 2-5, the next chapter proceeds to outline the specific methods employed in the empirical research.

Chapter 6 – Methodology and intro to case study areas

6.1 Introduction

Over the preceding four chapters, I have attempted to set out the foundations for this study. In Chapter 2, I explored the methodological issues involved in evaluating community participation, concluding that a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches could offer a productive way forward. In Chapters 3-5, I employed both these methodologies to examine historic and contemporary community participation policy, as well as the existing theoretical and empirical literature, in order to focus the fieldwork. The methodological frame provided by the combination of ToC and RE approaches is also employed in the analysis of the empirical findings in Chapters 7-9, whilst Chapter 10 reflects on its value for policy, practice and research.

In this chapter I start by drawing together the ideas from the earlier chapters, in order to delineate some specific research questions. I then outline the approach taken to identifying the participant organisations and introduce them. Finally, I describe the particular methods employed in the study and outline the approach taken to analysing the empirical data.

6.2 Clarifying the research questions

In the introductory chapter, I explained the origins of this research project and highlighted my interest in adding some robust findings to the evidence base around what works in community participation. Pulling this apart somewhat, to separate the effects of policy and practice, I suggested a pair of general questions as a starting point:

- What are the impacts of community participation policy in Scotland and England?

- What outcomes does community participation achieve for communities in practice?

Three sets of considerations are important in converting these broad questions into more specific research questions.

Firstly, having examined the evaluation methodology literature in Chapter 2, it is apparent that these general questions need some refinement in order to make them sufficiently focused and 'researchable' (Bryman, 2008: 74). Most importantly, the discussion of theory-based approaches and the decision to use a combination of ToC and RE methodology requires the broad focus on the impacts of policy and practice to be reconceptualised in order to fit within the parameters of possibility which these approaches suggest. In particular, the complexity of community participation policy highlighted in Chapter 2 emphasises the impossibility of capturing all of the impacts and outcomes of either policy or practice and therefore the need to develop specific questions within this much broader research agenda, whilst leaving space for a fluid exploration of the complexity involved (Mason, 2002: 20). Furthermore, the exploratory nature of the methodological combination suggests that additional research questions are necessary to examine the value of this approach.

Secondly, alongside this requirement to narrow the focus of the research questions, it is important to consider how the revised questions will address the objectives of the research (Green, 2008: 53), taking into account the original aims of the project discussed in Chapter 1. Thus refining the questions involves a consideration of their potential for developing useful knowledge for policy, practice and theory.

Lastly, it is important to note that Chapters 3-5 have already done some substantial analytical work. In particular, the ToC analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 has started to examine the impacts of contemporary community participation policy by elucidating the underlying assumptions of Localism and Community Empowerment and highlighting the importance of theoretical concepts around responsibility, risk and power. Meanwhile, the RE review in Chapter 5 has narrowed the focus from all the possible mechanisms at play within community participation processes, to

concentrate on possible mechanisms of additionality in relation to wider social outcomes.

Bringing all of these points together, the original broad questions can be replaced with the following specific research questions:

1. What does a Theories of Change analysis tell us about the policy intentions underlying the Big Society/Localism and Community Empowerment agendas?

2. What can the evidence from local theories of change employed by community organisations in practice tell us about the theories of change underpinning national policy?

3. What are the implications of different national and local theories of change for communities in terms of responsibility, risk and power?

4. Which mechanisms operate most effectively in different contexts to produce outcomes which are additional to those which could be achieved without community participation?

5. How useful is a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches to evaluation for policy and practice in the field of community participation?

6. How useful is a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches, for the development of evaluation methodology?

Question 1 provides a retrospective justification for the ToC policy analysis carried out in Chapters 3 and 4. Whilst this analysis has value in itself, in terms of the study as a whole it is largely a preliminary to Questions 2 and 3, which focus the ToC analytical lens on the impacts of community participation policy. Meanwhile, Question 4 takes the postulated mechanisms from Chapter 5 as the basis for the empirical RE analysis, focused on the outcomes of community participation practice. Lastly, Questions 5 and 6 address the value of the methodological

innovation of combining ToC and RE approaches, in terms of both the specific evaluation of community participation and the more general development of evaluation methodology. Whilst Questions 1-4 are simply refinements of the original broad questions, these last two Research Questions have emerged from the study itself. The relations between the Research Questions and the chapters in which they are primarily addressed are summarised in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 – Summary of links between Research Questions and Chapters

Research Question	Relevant Chapters
What does a Theories of Change analysis tell us about the policy intentions underlying the Big Society/Localism and Community Empowerment agendas?	Chapters 3 and 4
What can the evidence from local theories of change employed by community organisations in practice tell us about the theories of change underpinning national policy?	Chapters 7 and 8 (underpinned by analysis in Chapters 3 and 4)
What are the implications of different national and local theories of change for communities in terms of responsibility, risk and power?	
Which mechanisms operate most effectively in different contexts to produce outcomes which are additional to those which could be achieved without community participation?	Chapter 9 (underpinned by review of evidence in Chapter 5)
How useful is a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches to evaluation for policy and practice in the field of community participation?	Chapter 10
How useful is a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches, for the development of evaluation methodology?	

6.3 Identifying sites and participant organisations

Hidden within Research Question 2 is a decision to focus the fieldwork on community organisations. This decision was based on three key reasons. Firstly, given the complexity of community participation outlined in Chapter 2, community organisations provide a focal point which may illuminate a range of different forms of participation, helping the project to avoid becoming excessively diffuse. Moreover, the core role of community organisations is evident across various aspects of community participation policy on both sides of the border, including the Right to Challenge, Neighbourhood Planning and Our Place in England (UK, 2011;

Locality, 2014b; 2015d; 2015b), and the definition of Community Empowerment, as well as the focus on Community Anchor Organisations, in Scotland (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009; Scottish Government, 2014c).

Secondly, community organisations provide a useful starting point in terms of ToC methodology, since such organisations are likely to have some conception of how they are attempting to effect change, even if it is not always a coherent, agreed, logical model based on substantial bodies of evidence. Thus they offer an important counterpoint to the national policy ToCs developed in Chapter 4. Moreover, using a ToC approach with community organisations offers the potential of improving their planning and operation (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 17), hopefully providing immediate benefits from the research to compensate for their time commitment.

Lastly, from the realist perspective of generative causation, community organisations can be seen as key to most elements of community participation policy, since it is community organisations which structure and deliver the work that creates change. As outlined in Chapter 5, Pawson and Tilley's (1997: 66) focus on individual explanations seems inadequate as an explanatory approach for community participation, whereas drawing on Brante's (2010) notion of 'level ontology', suggests the possibility that causality can be usefully explored at the level of organisations. Thus community organisations provide a useful focus for the RE analysis of community participation, as well as a starting point for the ToC approach.

Whilst it would also be possible to explore the ToCs of local authorities regarding community participation, this is likely to be far more complicated across such large organisations which may employ different approaches and encompass very different perspectives (Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005). However, this does not preclude some exploration of local authority perspectives from the research, but suggests that such exploration may be more useful in elucidating the interactions between national and community-level ToCs, as well as providing context for community-level mechanisms in the RE analysis. Thus, whilst the primary fieldwork was focused on community organisations, it was also decided to

undertake some secondary work with local authorities in the community organisations' area of operation.

Having thus established that community organisations can provide a productive focal point for the research, the next step in setting up the fieldwork was to identify appropriate sites and participation organisations. Clearly, to enable comparison of the different policy contexts, the research needed to include organisations in both England and Scotland. In order to limit the contextual variation somewhat and also for practical reasons of access to local authority participants, it was decided to focus on one Council area in each country. Within each local authority area, the aim was to recruit three community organisations willing to participate in the study, on the basis of five criteria (summarised in Table 6.2 below), drawn from the Research Questions and the broader purpose of the research project.

Firstly, in order to address Research Questions 2 and 3, using the local ToCs to examine those underlying national policy, it was important to identify organisations engaged in different forms of participation. In particular, drawing on the double helix ToC analysis in Chapter 4, it was clear that a combination of organisations involved in self-help and service influence activities would be useful to explore how the core Localism and Community Empowerment assumptions play out in practice.

Secondly, given that the Localism Act was already in place before the fieldwork started, it was important to try to identify organisations in England utilising one or more of the new 'community rights'.

Thirdly, building on the analysis of responsibilisation in Chapter 4 and the consistent importance of inequalities in relation to the various mechanisms of additionality identified in Chapter 5, it would clearly be useful to involve organisations from different types of community, particularly as regards socio-economic status. Including different communities in this way would help to explore the different ToCs and operation of RE mechanisms in different contexts, addressing Questions 2-4.

Fourth, participant organisations obviously needed to be willing to participate in the research, taking into account the time and effort that participation might involve. In order to facilitate this decision, explicit information about the likely time commitment was provided to all potential participants and efforts were made throughout to keep this to a minimum.

Finally, since the ToC process would involve exploring the plans and operation of each organisation and attempting to monitor their impact, it was necessary to identify organisations for whom this might be a useful piece of work. Thus, in negotiating participation with community organisations, it was important to establish whether they were at a developmental stage when a process of reflection, planning and evaluation might be helpful. Clearly these last two criteria interact, since the potential organisational learning from the ToC approach and the possibility of generating outcome data which could be of use for funding and other purposes might offset the time commitment in some ways.

These considerations about willingness to participate and potential benefits to the organisation also applied to the selection of local authorities, although it was more important initially to identify community organisations, since a lack of local authority involvement would not completely undermine the research. Thus in negotiating participation with authorities and individual officers, they were encouraged to weigh up the time commitment against potential benefits in terms of the opportunity to reflect on the authority's approach to community participation.

Drawing these points together, Table 6.2 below represents the criteria used in identifying local authority areas and community organisations to participate in the research.

Table 6.2 – Case study selection criteria

Criteria	Community organisations	Local authority area
Type of participation	A range of organisations utilising different approaches to community participation – particularly community self-help and voice/choice.	N/A – all local authority areas have a range of community organisations
Specific policy application	In England, at least one organisation utilising one of the 'new community rights'	In England, a local authority with a reasonable level of engagement with the Localism agenda
Type of area	Organisations from a range of communities, with differing levels of socio-economic disadvantage	Areas with a mix of more and less disadvantaged communities
Commitment	Willingness to participate, given understanding of time and effort involved	Willingness to participate, given understanding of time and effort involved
Developmental stage	Openness to reflection on strategy and practice – organisation at an appropriate developmental stage	Openness to reflection on community participation strategy and practice

In order to meet these criteria as far as possible and also to identify participant organisations within one area, the approach taken was inevitably iterative rather than random, in line with most case study research (Gilbert, 2008: 36). In an attempt to limit the role of local authorities as gatekeepers, the initial stage of identifying participant community organisations was undertaken by asking network organisations (Scottish Community Alliance, Development Trusts Association Scotland, Locality and Community Matters) to advertise the research to their members.

In Scotland this led to a number of tentative contacts from community organisations and, whilst some withdrew their interest following discussion of the likely time commitment, one organisation in Glasgow were keen to participate following a face-to-face discussion about the research. This was followed up by further advertising of the research through the local Council for Voluntary Service, leading to the identification of a second organisation, who also agreed to participate after discussion. Having thus established the participation of two community organisations in Glasgow, their characteristics were compared with the

selection criteria in Table 6.2, to identify gaps. Given that these two organisations were from a disadvantaged area and a community in the middle of the socio-economic range, and that they are both focused on self-help/service delivery activities, a specific focus was placed on identifying and directly approaching organisations in more affluent areas involved in influencing services. This led to two expressions of interest from relevant organisations, one of which agreed to participate following discussion.

In England the process was more challenging because the national network organisations were unwilling to distribute information about the research and attempts to directly contact organisations which had publicly advertised their use of the 'new community rights' were unsuccessful. Hence local authorities which were explicitly engaging with the Localism agenda were identified and, through personal contacts, potential participation was negotiated with Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaCC). Through discussion with this authority a number of possible community organisations to participate in the research were identified and approached. Initial discussions led to agreement with two community organisations, which was followed by the same process of comparison with the selection criteria as in the Scottish site, leading to the identification of a third organisation.

A brief outline of the two local authority areas, the six case study areas and their communities is provided below. The local authority areas are not anonymised, since this was not felt to be necessary for ethical or confidentiality reasons and, moreover, it would be almost impossible to provide any contextual information about either authority without revealing its identity. However, the community organisations and their respective communities have been anonymised, as have any individual community members or local authority personnel mentioned in the thesis.

6.4 Case studies in England

6.4.1 Case study area – Cheshire West and Chester

Cheshire West and Chester is a unitary council area in the northwest of England, which was formed in 2009 from a merger of three former district councils and part of the former Cheshire County Council. It contains four significant urban areas, ranging in population from 30,000 to 80,000, as well as a considerable rural area with a large number of villages.

Whilst the authority as a whole sits around the 40th percentile in terms of extent of deprivation, the authority is significantly more deprived in terms of the income and employment domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation and there are a number of pockets of concentrated deprivation (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2013a). Parts of the Council area have experienced particular declines in manufacturing employment in recent decades, as reflected in the concentrations of multiple deprivation. There are still significant areas of industry within the Council area, as well as considerable commuting both into and out of the area, with strong connections to other parts of the northwest of England, such as Merseyside and Greater Manchester.

During the period of the fieldwork, the Council had a Conservative administration, which expressed a strong commitment to the Localism agenda (the Council now has a Labour administration, but this change did not occur until after the fieldwork was completed).

6.4.2 Introduction to Trottside and Trottside Parish Council

Trottside Parish Council (TPC) covers a rural area, encompassing three villages, the largest of which is Trottside. The Parish Council area has a total population of around 2000. The area is relatively affluent, lying entirely within the 50% least deprived areas of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Open Data Communities, 2014), and with a significantly higher average income and lower than average unemployment rate than either the rest of CWaCC or England as a whole

(Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2015). The area became an attractive place to live in the 19th century, due to its rural location and strong transport links via canal and rail, as evidenced in the number of large Victorian properties in the main village of Trottside. The latter half of the 20th century saw some significant housing development around Trottside and the area is under significant development pressure in the present day. As well as agriculture, there are a significant number of other businesses within the Parish, utilising refurbished farm buildings as well as newly built offices.

Parish Councils are the lowest tier of government in England, with limited tax-raising powers. They have the power to provide certain types of facilities, such as village halls and allotments and are a statutory consultee in relation to planning and a small number of other matters. As with Community Councils in Scotland, Parish Councils have a role in representing the views of their community to higher levels of government, including the right to be consulted on all planning applications within their area (National Association of Local Councils, 2010). Importantly, Parish Councils are automatically considered 'qualifying bodies' in relation to Neighbourhood Planning, enabling them to engage in the process of Neighbourhood Planning without having to establish their credentials as a relevant community organisation (Locality, 2015d).

TPC is a fairly typical rural Parish Council, being engaged in a small amount of local service delivery, including managing the local parks and litter collection, as well as having a strong focus on development planning issues within the area.

6.4.3 Introduction to Hoyfield and Hoyfield Community Development Trust

Hoyfield is an area of nearly 10,000 people within a larger urban centre. It is more densely populated and ethnically diverse than most neighbourhoods in Cheshire West (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2015). Hoyfield is a mixed area in terms of deprivation, with part of the area being within the 30% least deprived and part being in the 30% most deprived of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Open Data Communities, 2014). The average household income is marginally higher than the CWaCC and national averages, whilst the unemployment level is

marginally lower than for CWaCC as a whole and significantly lower than the national rate (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2015). The area has a strong sense of community identity, having clearly defined boundaries and a vibrant central shopping street, despite the relative proximity of the city centre.

Hoyfield Community Development Trust is a local community organisation which has a primary purpose of running the community centre in Hoyfield. Although the organisation only became a Community Development Trust in 2012, it has been in existence for around three decades and has been operating the centre for most of that time. The centre is a former school, which is owned by a local church and leased by the local authority, being sub-let to HCDT. The centre is utilised by a range of community groups and some small businesses, offering a wide range of activities, such as dance classes, yoga, a choir, a film club and children's activities. Two spaces within the centre are used on a more permanent basis by a nursery and the local volunteer-run library. Most of the people using the centre come from the local area, but some activities also draw in people from outside the area, helped by good transport links and car parking space.

The HCDT board is made up of a number of local people, many of whom are active users of the centre, and includes both the local Councillors.

6.4.4 Introduction to Armitshore and the Neighbourhood Action Groups

As noted earlier, the Cheshire West and Chester Council area as a whole is neither particularly affluent, nor particularly deprived. However, there are significant differences within the Council area and Armitshore undoubtedly has the highest concentration of deprivation, with five of the eight 'hot spots of deprivation' identified by the local authority, and five of the nine Council wards containing at least one local super output area falling within the 10% most deprived on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2013a). The average household income is around a third lower than the CWaCC or national averages, whilst the unemployment rate is nearly three times higher than for CWaCC as a whole and significantly higher than the national rate (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2015).

In terms of community participation, Armitshore is one of the two 'unparished' areas within the local authority, so it has no formal representative structure for communities. The Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) were established by the local authority shortly after the establishment of Cheshire West and Chester Council in 2009, in an attempt to generate greater community participation and to fill the gap caused by the lack of Parish or Town Councils. The NAGs arose from an unsuccessful bid to join the pilot 'Our Place!' programme, which is described as:

> "a programme designed to enable people in communities to have more control over, and input into how money is spent in their neighbourhoods, and the design and delivery of services in their neighbourhood." (DCLG, 2014a).

Although Cheshire West was not able to join the national Our Place pilot, the decision was taken to continue developing the NAGs as part of the Council's broader Localities approach.

Eight NAGs operate across Armitshore, each covering a neighbourhood defined in discussion with the local community. Although two of the NAGs have now become constituted community organisations, operating with a degree of independence from the local authority, most of the NAGs are entirely organised by the Localities team of the Council. The original intention of the Localities Team had been to support all the NAGs to become independent community organisations, but only two had been interested in heading down this route. Each NAG meets approximately every 6 weeks, with the meetings being called and chaired by a Locality Officer from the local authority. Local elected Members are also often in attendance, along with other relevant local service providers, such as the Police and the local Housing Association. The meetings offer an opportunity for two-way communication between the public sector agencies and the local community, enabling information to be provided on new service developments, recent crime issues, etc. and giving residents a space to raise any local concerns with the Council or other agencies. The Locality Officer acts as a conduit for these community concerns, clarifying issues, raising them with the relevant officers after

the meeting, and reporting back at subsequent meetings. Attendance at the meetings is entirely open to the public, although there is some degree of regularity in attendance, since those who have attended a meeting are mailed with information about meetings.

The NAGs in Armitshore are, in a sense, the odd one out in this research project, since they were established and are run by the Council's Localities Team, rather than being independent community organisations like the other cases. However, this distinction should not be drawn too starkly, since other participant organisations have been similarly seeded by the local authority. For example, the second of the Glasgow case study organisations, outlined below, was set up by the local authority, although it has become an independent community organisation.

6.5 Case studies in Scotland

6.5.1 Case study area – Glasgow

Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland, with a population of around 580,000 within the local authority boundary. Glasgow City Council, as with all Scottish local authorities, has been a unitary authority since local government reorganisation in 1996, having responsibility for all local government functions.

The city experienced substantial industrial decline during the second half of the twentieth century, as shipyards, steelworks and other heavy industries which had previously dominated the local economy moved overseas. Although the service sector has grown considerably in the last couple of decades, the city still has a significant level of poverty relative to the rest of Scotland and the UK, with nearly half of its population living in the most disadvantaged 20% of areas in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2012c). Glasgow also has some particularly stark inequalities in terms of income, wealth, health and other key statistics, as illustrated vividly by McCartney's (2011) use of the Glasgow underground map to highlight the drop in male life expectancy of nearly 14 years in just a few miles going from west to east across the city.

During the period of the fieldwork, the Council had a Labour administration (this has not changed after the fieldwork, unlike the situation in Cheshire West). Although the Council tends not to use the same policy language employed by the SNP Scottish Government, discussed in Chapter 4, it has nevertheless made a significant commitment to community empowerment, becoming a 'Cooperative Council' in 2013 (Glasgow City Council, 2013).

6.5.2 Introduction to Dowsett, and the Community Council

Dowsett Community Council (DCC) covers one of the more affluent areas of Glasgow. The area is characterised by private sector, tenemental housing, the majority of which is owner-occupied, although there is a significant percentage of privately rented property, much of it occupied by students at the nearby university. In terms of deprivation, virtually the entire Community Council area is within the 20% least deprived areas in the SIMD, with just small areas in the 20-40% least deprived quintile (Scottish Government, 2012c). The Community Council is one of the largest in Glasgow, covering a population of approximately 14,000 (Scottish Government, 2015d).

Community Councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. Established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, their primary purpose is to 'bridge the gap between local authorities and communities, and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent' (Scottish Government, 2014a). Thus they are expected to ascertain the views of their community and express these views to the local Council and other relevant bodies. They have a statutory right to be consulted on all planning and licensing applications within their area and are often consulted by local government and other public agencies on a range of other matters. Many Community Councils also engage in a range of other activities beyond consultations. Unlike Parish Councils in England, Community Councils have no tax-raising powers.

DCC, which has a membership of 20 people drawn from across the Community Council area, focuses largely on two areas of work. Firstly, in partnership with

another local community association, the Community Council examines all planning applications, with a particular concern for any spoliation of the area's heritage architecture. Secondly, DCC puts considerable energy into addressing local issues of concern, most of which relate to service standards, particularly in terms of street cleansing, refuse collection and the like.

6.5.3 Introduction to Ooley and the Development Trust

Ooley Development Trust (ODT) operates in a neighbourhood which is primarily characterised as being in transition. The area of Ooley was historically an area of local authority housing, with a relatively high level of socio-economic disadvantage. However, following the gradual deterioration of the housing in the area, plans were developed in the 1990s to regenerate the entire area. This involved the complete demolition of all the existing housing and, following a deal between the local authority and a private housing developer, the construction of a new neighbourhood comprised of a mix of social and private sector housing.

The original tenants were offered the opportunity to remain in the area after a period of temporary accommodation elsewhere whilst new housing was built. The current mix of housing tenure is approximately 50-50, with around 200 social housing properties and a similar number of private properties. The long-term aim is for around 1100 private properties to be built in the area, alongside the 200 social housing properties.

Hence the area is characterised by transition in a number of different ways. Firstly, the physical appearance of the area is completely changed and continues to change as new properties are built. Secondly, the 'community' of Ooley is progressively growing in size as new properties are built, with the majority of new people coming into the area from other neighbourhoods. Thirdly, the socio-economic mix of the area is changing as the proportion of private sector housing increases, with a particularly stark change from the previous make-up of Ooley as an area entirely comprised of relatively poor quality social housing.

This transition process has implications in terms of the accurate characterisation of the area, since it is not possible to rely on the usual sources of statistical data regarding socio-economic status. Whilst the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) indicates that Ooley is in the most deprived 5% of areas in 2012 (Scottish Government, 2012c), this cannot be relied upon as an up-to-date measure of deprivation for the area. Many of the underlying indicators for the SIMD are based on data which was at least a year or more old at the point when the 2012 Index was compiled, so the ongoing change in the population of Ooley, with most of the new houses only built in the last few years, is not captured accurately. Moreover, as the social housing was the first to be built in the new Ooley, it seems likely that the area will be progressively becoming less deprived in statistical terms as the private sector housing is completed and occupied. This socio-economic shift is made somewhat more complex and unpredictable, however, by the mix of housing being built. Whilst all the new housing being constructed is for private sector sale and the houses have a clause in their contracts preventing buy-to-let purchases, the same is not true of flats, many of which are quickly entering the private sector rental market.

Hence for the purposes of this study, Ooley is assumed to be neither a very disadvantaged, nor a particularly affluent area, although clearly it has interesting characteristics because of the combination of social and private sector housing in the area, and the merging of previous and new residents.

ODT were originally established following a public meeting set up by the local authority, with significant early support from Council officers. The Council's intention was that a Development Trust could take on a church building (which is one of only two pre-development buildings in the area) as a community centre, replacing the existing temporary hut. The board of ODT consists of a mix of long-standing residents of the area and new residents coming into the private sector housing.

6.5.4 Introduction to Cavendish and Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd

Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd Ltd describes itself as 'a community anchor organisation and community access mental health service whose focus is on the needs of local people and communities' (Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd, 2014a). In constitutional terms, CWL has recently made the shift from an unincorporated organisation to a company limited by guarantee, in order to provide a greater level of security for its volunteer board members. The board is drawn largely from people who have used the service, augmented by activists from other local community organisations. It employs two full-time staff, pays a small number of others on a sessional basis and also utilises a range of volunteers, providing a range of therapies to enable people to manage mental distress, ranging from anxiety, stress and low mood generated by the challenges of life in poverty, through to diagnosed mental health conditions. In addition, the organisation takes a community development approach to tackling some of the underlying problems which create challenges for people in the area, organising a range of events and activities with other local organisations.

Technically CWL provides services for anyone living in a large area, covering a third of the city, since the funding is provided on this basis. However, the organisation is based in the Cavendish area, which is an area of concentrated deprivation, being almost entirely within the 15% most deprived areas in the SIMD, with the vast majority of the area being in the 5% most deprived (Scottish Government, 2012c). Whilst there is one other area of concentrated deprivation in the north-west of the city, this is some distance away, and the areas adjacent to Cavendish are significantly less deprived. Not surprisingly, therefore, the majority of CWL's service users come from Cavendish and the majority of the community development work is also focused on this area.

The area of Cavendish has undergone significant change in the last few decades, with the population reducing by more than half since its peak in the 1960s. As with most working class areas of Glasgow, Cavendish was heavily affected by processes of deindustrialisation from the late 1970s onwards, resulting in high unemployment and all of the problems associated with poverty.

Table 6.3 below provides a summary of the key characteristics of each participant organisation and the communities within which they operate. This table is also replicated on the accompanying bookmark, to assist the reader by providing an aide memoire for the subsequent chapters.

Table 6.3 – Summary of key characteristics of participant organisations and their communities

	Organisation	Type of organisation	Individuals involved in organisation (those in brackets not directly involved in research)	Main focus of organisation's work	Socio-economic status of community
Cheshire West	Trottside Parish Council	Parish Council	Parish Councillors x10 (not all involved in research) Steering Group members and other community members x7	Influencing services – planning	Affluent
	Hoyfield Community Development Trust	Development Trust	Staff – Centre Manager, (Admin Worker, Maintenance Officer) Committee members x6	Community self-help – facilities and services	Middling/mixed
	Armitshore Neighbourhood Action Groups	Engagement meetings organised by local authority – 2 of 8 have become constituted organisations	Community members – varied numbers at meetings Localities Officers from CWaCC	Influencing services – crime and grime	Disadvantaged
Glasgow	Dowsett Community Council	Community Council	Community Councillors x15	Influencing services – planning, crime and grime	Affluent
	Ooley Development Trust	Development Trust	Committee members x7	Community self-help – facilities and activities	Middling /mixed
	Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd	Non-profit company limited by guarantee	Staff – Manager, (2x Admin, 5x Therapists) Volunteers, including board members, and service users	Community self-help – wellbeing	Disadvantaged

6.6 Ethics

Before finalising the agreement to be involved in the research with any of the participant organisations, ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of Glasgow's College of Social Science Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects. The approval form from the Ethics Committee is provided in Appendix B.

Application for an amendment was made subsequently, as it became apparent that the research would involve observations, as well as the focus groups and interviews which had been included in the original application. The approval form for this amendment is also provided in Appendix C.

For the most part this study presented relatively few ethical challenges, since the participants were all community activists, or local authority staff or Councillors, all of whom are likely to be eminently capable of taking a critical and informed view of the research before giving consent to participate. Moreover, since the research focuses on community organisations, it is largely dealing with activities and information which are in the public domain, so there are few concerns about sensitive data. Indeed, although all community organisations and activists have been anonymised, to avoid any potential issues, a number of participants expressed the view that such anonymity would be unnecessary, given the public nature of their work.

However, two significant ethical risks were identified at the outset. Firstly, for community organisations and local authorities, there was a potential risk that involvement in the research process might generate unwelcome learning about lack of impact or limitations in approach to community participation. This was explicitly addressed in the initial negotiations with all participant organisations, although the general confidence of organisations in their own work seemed to outweigh such concerns in every case. In practice, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 9 below, the participant organisations proved to be skilled at finding positive messages in the data, even where the evidence of impact was relatively limited, perhaps reflecting the positive attitude necessary for community activism.

Secondly, there was a particular risk for local authority officers and Councillors, since the level of confidentiality was inevitably more limited. For example, in order to explain the role of particular officers in relation to participant organisations, enough information would be provided that anyone within the authority may be able to identify the individual, or at least narrow it down to a very small number of people. This risk was explicitly highlighted in discussions with each individual prior to their participation, but none of them felt that this would be a significant issue, since the subject of the interviews was relatively uncontroversial. Whilst there may have been some instances in which interviewees chose their words carefully, which potentially has a minor impact on the research, clarity regarding the potential risks clearly outweighs such considerations.

A research diary and supervision discussions were also used throughout the research to aid reflection on ethical issues.

6.7 The research process

Following on from the Research Questions set out above, the fieldwork was designed in three phases, roughly equating with the standard Theories of Change approach (Connell and Kubisch, 1998). Thus, the aim was to start by 'surfacing and articulating' the ToC with each participant organisation, followed by a second phase of data gathering, measuring the activities and outcomes, before a final stage of examining and reflecting upon the data with each organisation to explore the 'case for impact'. Given the inclusion of RE methodology alongside the ToC approach, consideration was given in the first two stages in particular to ensuring that the data collected would also be useful for RE analysis, based on the hypothesised mechanisms from Chapter 5. The final stage of examining and reflecting upon the data also aimed to explore some of this RE analysis with each organisation, and to reflect on the methodological learning, in order to address Research Questions 5 and 6.

To further assist in answering the last two research questions, I employed a reflexive attitude throughout the research process, aiming to address question 5 from a researcher's perspective, and provide insights to contribute to question 6.

Such an approach of 'first-person enquiry' (Reason, 2001) aims to develop deeper learning from the research process, by attempting to take into account the researcher's own positioning and unconscious biases. Moreover, such reflexivity is common to most participative approaches to research, to enable flexibility in the research to adapt to the interests of participants, and to retain an awareness of power dynamics at all times in order to address them where necessary (Silver, 2008). As part of this reflexive approach, detailed fieldnotes were kept throughout the research, providing an aid to reflection and an additional data source, particularly in relation to the methodological research questions.

Each of the phases is set out in more detail below, outlining the specific methods used and the rationale behind each phase. Some of the planned steps were subject to considerable change in practice for two reasons. Firstly, given the element of participation within the research approach, the participant organisations played a significant role in designing the process, particularly in relation to the second phase of data collection. And secondly, the planned process inevitably had to adjust to cope with the particular circumstances of each participant organisation and the varied external pressures they inevitably encountered during the period of the fieldwork. These variations to the original research design are incorporated into the description of the research process below.

6.7.1 Phase 1 – Identification and analysis of theories of change

Although Theories of Change practice is still a developing field, the generally accepted starting point is to 'surface' the theory of change collaboratively with relevant stakeholders by initially identifying the 'vision' or long-term outcome and then setting out the pathway to be taken to reach this goal (Anderson, 2005; Connell and Kubisch, 1998). With each community organisation, the aim was to undertake these first steps through one or two participative workshops. Preparation for this included examination of any relevant documentation from the organisation (e.g. annual reports), to enable the workshop(s) to be appropriately structured and focused. Although the workshop(s) were tailored to each organisation to some degree, the basic structure was designed with three elements:

- Identification of the aims of the organisation – combining both the specific targets of the organisation and its vision for the community as a whole
- Examination of past achievements of the organisation – exploring the pathways by which these achievements had been delivered
- Surfacing and exploration of theories of change for future targets, drawing together the long-term vision and the ideas about pathways to change relating to previous achievements.

Thus the intention was to use a process of visioning ultimate aims, combined with reflection on past activities and achievements, to delineate theories of change for future activity which could be tested through Phases 2 and 3 of the research.

Whilst the development of local ToC models and the examination of their implementation was intended to address Research Questions 2 and 3 in particular, it was important in this first phase of the research to focus on each organisation's approach and avoid skewing these local models to fit the prior analysis of national policy assumptions from Chapter 4. Hence, although I had already done the analysis around responsibilisation and the specific national policy assumptions, I attempted to facilitate the articulation of local ToCs without introducing such ideas into the discussions or the models.

The discursive process of Phase 1 was also intended to examine the assumptions underlying the emergent theories of change, utilising the key questions of plausibility, doability and testability (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 19; Anderson, 2005: 25), and to start to identify appropriate indicators for outcomes within each model, which would be measured in Phase 2. This element of Theories of Change methodology serves a dual purpose. Firstly, by checking that the model is logically plausible, that the stages and goals involved are achievable, and that the different elements can be realistically measured, the aim is to ensure that it will serve a useful evaluative purpose. As Weiss (2007: 70) argues, if the model makes sense and the evaluation data shows both that outcomes have been achieved and the micro-steps between inputs and outcomes have occurred, then we can plausibly argue that we have shown causal attribution 'for all practical purposes'. And secondly, the process of questioning the assumptions within a theory of change is

in itself a useful developmental tool for organisations, facilitating reflection on practice. From the perspective of the research project, the process of identifying indicators was particularly important not merely to enable the testing of the individual ToCs, but also to provide data that might assist with the RE analysis of the hypothesised mechanisms from Chapter 5. Again, it was important not to skew the choices of indicators away from those that would be of most benefit for the participant organisations, but discussion around the measurable indicators did allow for the inclusion of some additional items which would provide useful data relating to the mechanisms.

The issue of who was involved in the workshop(s) was a matter for negotiation with each organisation, but in general the management committee of each organisation was key, with staff participating alongside if felt appropriate. Follow-up interviews with key individuals who were not involved in the workshop(s) were conducted where necessary, to explore their perspectives on the identified theories of change. One of the challenges of facilitating the articulation of theories of change is managing situations where there are multiple theories operating within an organisation or initiative (Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005: 153-4). The key at this stage of the process is not necessarily to seek absolute consensus, but to ensure that different pathways to change can be tested, in order to adjudicate between them to some degree (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 29-31). In practice, however, this proved to be a very minor issue within the research, perhaps reflecting the extent to which the participant organisations, as voluntary bodies, had already had to deal with differences of approach in order to work effectively together. More significant issues were encountered with variable boundaries as to who should be involved in these Phase 1 workshops, with some organisations being represented by only a small sub-group of their membership, whilst one organisation involved a wide range of people beyond the committee. The Armitshore case study also raised a particular challenge at this stage, since the fluid membership and limited organisation of the Neighbourhood Action Groups made it impossible to undertake workshops with the NAGs themselves. Hence the research for Phases 1 and 2 was primarily conducted through a workshop with the Localities Team and observations of NAG meetings. These issues are explored further in Chapter 10, which addresses the methodological research questions.

Alongside the workshops with community organisations in this first phase of the research, a number of interviews were undertaken with relevant individuals from the local authorities to explore the local ToCs from the perspective of the authority. As noted earlier, it would not be feasible within this project to examine the community participation ToCs of the authorities themselves, as these would likely be diverse and more complicated to surface than those of the community organisations. Hence these interviews explored the authority's understanding of the role of each organisation, with the aim of enhancing the analysis of interactions between local and national ToCs, addressing Research Questions 2 and 3. In particular, they aimed to address some of the national policy assumptions identified in Chapter 4 regarding the power dynamics within community participation processes and the role of the state, exploring the different ways in which community participation might be employed by agencies to hold on to or share power (Croft and Beresford, 1996: 192).

Table 6.4 below provides a summary of the workshops, interviews and observations relating to each participant organisation. These were primarily focused on the Phase 1 process of elucidating the local ToC, as outlined above, although in some instances elements of Phase 2 data collection were also included, particularly in the local authority interviews. The full detail of data sources for all three phases of the research is provided in Appendix D.

Table 6.4 – Summary of Phase 1 workshops and interviews

Case study area	Participant organisation workshops and interviews	Local authority interviews
Trottside	2 workshops (3 PC members, 7 community members) 3 informal interviews (2 PC members)	3 interviews (2 officers, 1 Councillor)
Hoyfield	1 workshop (3 board members) 4 informal interviews (Centre Manager)	1 interview (officer)
Armitshore	3 observations (NAG meetings)	1 workshop (7 Localities Team members) 3 informal discussions after meetings (2 Localities Team members)
Dowsett	2 workshops (12-15 CC members) 2 informal interviews (CC Chair) 12 observations (CC meetings)	1 interview (officer)

Table 6.4 continued

Case study area	Participant organisation workshops and interviews	Local authority interviews
Ooley	2 workshops (4-6 board members) 2 informal interviews (2 board members) 1 observation (ODT AGM)	1 interview (officer) 1 observation (Development Steering Group meeting)
Cavendish	1 workshop (3 board members, 7 volunteers/service users) 2 informal interviews (CWL manager) 3 observations (2x large events run by CWL, 1 board meeting) 1 discussion (4 staff members)	1 interview (officer)

6.7.2 Phase 2 – data collection

The second phase of the research focused on collecting relevant data, in order to analyse the workings of the ToCs and their underlying mechanisms identified in the first phase workshops, as well as exploring patterns in relation to the wider social outcomes. This involved a broad mix of methods and data, adopting the 'wholehearted pluralism' in choice of method advocated by Pawson and Tilley (1997: 85) for Realist Evaluation, which is also common to Theories of Change approaches. Thus, for some organisations this phase involved a relatively limited process of additional workshop discussions or informal interviews (e.g. TPC), whilst for others it was necessary to develop specific surveys or client evaluation tools to gather data from individuals outside the participant organisation (e.g. CWL, HCDT, ODT), and for some the data was collected largely through observations and documentary evidence (e.g. ArmitshoreNAGs, DCC). The full range of evidence sources from all three phases of the research is provided in Appendix D.

The decisions about exactly which data to focus on were made in discussion with the participant organisations, to ensure that the relevant indicators would be measurable, and would meet the needs of both the organisation and the research, in terms of ToC and RE analysis. Part of the measurability assessment involved negotiation around who would actually undertake the data collection and analysis, since it was important to avoid overburdening the participant organisations, but

also to ensure that any indicators which would be of long-term use beyond the timescale of the fieldwork would be practically measurable by the organisations themselves. As noted earlier, part of the aim of the project, and of ToC approaches in general, is to provide useful learning for the participants, in order to improve monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as planning and implementation.

6.7.3 Phase 3 – reflection on impacts and processes

The third and final phase of the research focused on the collaborative analysis of the data captured in Phase 2, primarily examining what the data said about the ToC developed in Phase 1, but also exploring the underlying mechanisms to some extent and reflecting on the research process itself. Hence this phase aimed to serve two key purposes.

Firstly, connecting the Phase 2 data to the ToCs aimed to develop greater internal understanding for the organisation of the reasons for success or failure in terms of outcomes. Hence this phase was intended to provide a learning opportunity for the organisation, to reflect on what the data says about the approaches taken and consider implications for future activity, the process which Reason (2001) refers to as 'second-person inquiry' in action research. As Graham and Harris (2005: 107) express it, "Participatory evaluation can be used to build skills and knowledge...[and] can also be used to ensure evaluations address locally relevant questions".

Secondly, this phase aimed to begin the analysis which would help to address Research Questions 2-6. Thus, at this stage, some of the ideas regarding national policy, ideas of responsibilisation, and the hypothesised mechanisms of additionality from Chapters 4 and 5 were explicitly introduced into discussions, in order to feed into the final analysis for the research project.

6.8 The analysis process

In order to provide a clear explanation of the analysis process, it is easiest to conceive of it as four separate tasks. In practice, as will be apparent from the outline of the research process, the divides between data collection and data analysis and between different elements of analysis are not always clear within this project. As Swanborn (2010: 114) suggests, this process whereby, "data collection and data analysis are not sharply separated in time, but go hand in hand in a permanently changing order" is not unusual in case study-based research.

6.8.1 Task 1 – ToC analysis within each case study

Within each case study, analysis of the Phase 2 data was undertaken collaboratively with the participant organisation, in order to assess the evidence of impact. This was done using a standard ToC approach (Connell and Kubisch, 1998), which involves examining the input, activity and output data (i.e. did the project do what it was supposed to?), assessing whether the outcome data met the predetermined thresholds (i.e. did the expected impacts happen?) and considering whether any other factors might have accounted for the changes seen (i.e. did the project cause the outcomes, or did something else?). The majority of this analysis took place through the Phase 3 discussions, although there is also a sense in which formative analysis and feedback occurred in a cyclical fashion throughout all three phases, in line with most participative action research approaches (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 184-7).

Whilst this analysis might appear relatively straightforward in theory, there are substantial issues with the level of specificity which it is possible to establish for a ToC, in terms of both indicators and causal pathways (Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005), as well as more basic challenges of measurement for short-term and long-term outcomes (Gambone, 1998). Moreover, the difficulties of establishing counterfactuals to account for other contextual factors and the risk of psychological bias towards assuming success make the attribution of causality through such analysis problematic (Granger, 1998).

However, such difficulties can be re-examined to some extent in the context of this particular study, since the internal ToC analysis with each participant organisation needs to serve two purposes, both of which are somewhat immune to the challenges experienced by other ToC practitioners. On the one hand, the entire ToC approach is intended as a process of 'social learning and capacity building' (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 38) for the participant organisations, enabling them to develop monitoring and evaluation skills and systems. And on the other hand, learning about 'what works' within an organisation can usefully occur without the level of generalisability and certainty that may be necessary for findings to be used more broadly. As Somekh argues, what counts as 'actionable knowledge' is not straightforward in practice:

> "There is much to be gained by adopting a dual approach:
> generating contextualised knowledge on the basis of careful,
> systematic inquiry and evaluating this through action oriented
> towards improvement; while at the same time maintaining a critical
> scepticism and openness to different interpretations that iteratively
> challenge the action research 'findings' in terms of both the
> appropriateness of the action and any claims to improvement."
> Somekh (2006: 27)

This notion of a dual approach is particularly important for this study, since the level of rigour necessary to meet the needs of community organisations may be less demanding than that required for an academic or policy audience. Such a distinction highlights an additional reason why the challenges of ToC analysis mentioned above are of less concern for this study, since the comparison of local and national ToCs is not dependent on either the success of the participant organisations in achieving their goals or on the evaluable specificity of the models, which leads neatly on to the second analysis task.

6.8.2 Task 2 – Comparison of local and national ToCs

A complete ToC evaluation of national community participation policy would involve two elements which are not feasible within this study. Firstly, the standard

ToC approach, involving a collaborative process of surfacing and articulating the model(s) with key stakeholders, is precluded by the impossibility of gaining such a commitment from national policy-makers, as noted earlier. Thus the models developed in Chapter 4 may have significant analytical value, but are inevitably not specified to the level of detail which would be necessary for a full ToC assessment. Secondly, even if the models were sufficiently detailed, the examination of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes would not be feasible within the timescale of this project, given the nascent state of the policy framework on both sides of the border.

However, the empirical evidence from the case studies does facilitate the earlier stage of standard ToC which is to examine the 'plausibility, doability and testability' of the models (Connell and Kubisch, 1998; Anderson, 2005). Whilst the issues of specification make it impossible to assess testability, the case study evidence provides a valuable opportunity to explore whether the national policy ToCs make sense and can be delivered in practice, thus examining plausibility and doability. In particular, this stage of the analysis aimed to scrutinise the extent to which the underlying assumptions of national policy, set out in Chapter 4, were shown to be plausible or doable through the local ToCs and their implementation.

In order to use the local evidence in this way, a path needed to be negotiated between internal analysis of each case and comparison between cases. As Yin (2003; 2013) amongst others suggests, one potentially fruitful approach is to begin with analysis within each case, using the learning from this initial stage to inform both the further exploration of these cases and the cross-case comparative analysis. This was particularly useful here, since Phase 3 of the participative ToC process inherently involved within-case analysis, for the purpose of assessing the local ToC as well as beginning the analysis of national policy ToCs. In this respect, it was important to be aware that the local ToC diagrams represent the outcome of an analytical process with the participant organisations. Thus, deconstructing them in order to find individual snippets of data to examine national policy risked undermining their narrative form and therefore the learning encapsulated within the models (Flyvbjerg, 2013).

The process of exploring the case study evidence to assess the plausibility and doability of the national policy assumptions was therefore structured into four stages. Firstly, the local ToCs for each case and the assumptions underlying them were examined to identify what they said about power, the role of the state and community capacity-building. This was undertaken through the Phase 3 discussions as far as possible. Secondly, building on the points of interaction between local ToCs and national policy assumptions identified in the first stage, a more detailed examination of all of the data within each case study was conducted, using a simple coding framework based on the relevant national policy assumptions, with a secondary level of coding to identify evidence which suggested support for plausibility or doability and that which raised questions for these assumptions. At this stage, the local authority interview transcripts were also use to provide a means of triangulating the evidence generated with the organisations (Simons, 2009). Thirdly, the within-case evidence from the first two stages was brought together, enabling an additional level of comparative analysis. Thus the findings relating to the national policy assumptions were compared across the case studies, to identify similarities and differences and thereby facilitate a more sophisticated understanding of the plausibility and doability of these assumptions in different contexts. Finally, these cross-case points were utilised to inform a further reading of the evidence within each case, to check whether the original within-case analysis needed any revision in the light of findings from the other cases. At this stage, the analysis included a thought experiment exploration of how the findings from the two compound case studies of Scotland and England related to each other, by examining how the findings from the case studies in each nation related to the policy assumptions from the other. Where possible, these thought experiments were also discussed with participant organisations.

6.8.3 Task 3 – RE analysis of CMO configurations

The Realist Evaluation analysis was structured around the hypothesised mechanisms of additionality identified in Chapter 5. Importantly, this study is using RE methodology in an exploratory fashion, for the process of what Pawson and Tilley (1997: 87) call 'theory formation and development', for two reasons. Firstly,

the limited evidence of outcomes from community participation means that the postulated mechanisms are somewhat tentative at this stage. And secondly, the necessary breadth of data to draw convincing conclusions about context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configurations is not available from six case studies. This is not to say, however, that the process is of limited value, since the aim is to start to build stronger theories which can be more rigorously tested elsewhere, addressing the limitations in the theoretical and evidential basis for community participation.

As a starting point, therefore, I examined the possible operations of the mechanisms of additionality set out in Table 5.7 in relation to each case. This analysis drew most heavily on Phase 2 of the research, during which a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence was collected to explore the range of outcomes generated in each situation. In relation to each mechanism, the examination of each case attempted to identify whether the mechanism might be operating and whether there was any evidence of outcomes which may have been generated thereby. Again, given the focus on theory formation and development, the emphasis at this stage was on identifying any relevant evidence, rather than being concerned with the strength of that evidence.

Having examined the possible operation of each mechanism in each case, the evidence was tabulated to begin the process of identifying 'regularities', where the same mechanism is producing similar outcomes in similar contexts (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 71-2). Since it would not be possible to examine the regularities relating to all 17 of the hypothesised mechanisms from Chapter 5 and, in any case, there was not sufficient evidence to consider for all of them, a selection of mechanisms for further analysis was made at this stage. This selection was based on the level of evidence for the regularity, requiring significant evidence from at least two cases, and an assessment of which mechanisms might be theoretically most interesting, following on from the previous ToC analysis.

For each of these selected mechanisms, the possible regularity was then examined by a close reading of the data within each case to identify relevant contextual factors, informed by the analysis of contexts in Chapter 5 and the detailed knowledge of each case generated through the research process. For

each case a descriptive analysis of the contextual factors affecting the mechanism's operation was produced and the findings tabulated, which enabled a cross-case comparison of similarities and differences in context. From this analysis of contexts, postulated CMO configurations were developed, attempting to identify "what works, for whom, in what circumstances" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 77).

Finally, the postulated CMO configurations were examined further, drawing on the findings from the earlier ToC analysis to identify implications for policy, and highlighting potential issues with the evidence from the case studies in order to delineate areas for further research.

6.8.4 Task 4 – Methodological analysis

The final analytical task was to examine the evidence relating to the methodological approach in order to address Research Questions 5 and 6. This essentially consisted of two main elements. Firstly, the discussions with participant organisations in Phase 3 of the research were used to reflect collaboratively on the experience of using the combined ToC and RE methodologies, to consider how useful this combination had been in practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these discussions were of more value in assessing the usefulness of ToC methodology for each organisation, as the RE approach had impinged in a relatively limited fashion for the majority of the research process. Nevertheless, it was possible at this stage to introduce some tentative findings from the RE analysis to explore their potential value for practice.

As noted earlier, a reflexive approach was taken throughout the research, partly in order to provide evidence for the methodological research questions. Hence the second element of this analysis involved a close reading of the fieldnotes and associated reflections recorded throughout the research process in order to identify evidence for the benefits and challenges of combining the two methodologies. Given the relatively small amount of data, no formal coding system was used for this analysis, but key points from the original Blamey and Mackenzie

(2007) article which had suggested the possibility of combining ToC and RE approaches were used to inform the reading process.

6.9 Conclusion to this chapter

In this chapter I have established the specific research questions to be addressed by the study as a whole, building on the analysis of literature and policy in Chapters 2-5. I have set out the criteria and process used to identify and recruit participant organisations for the fieldwork and provided an outline of each organisation and area. Finally, I have described the process used for the empirical work and analysis of the findings.

The next four chapters provide the results of this analysis. Chapters 7 and 8 set out the ToC findings for the English and Scottish case studies respectively, with the final section of Chapter 8 drawing these together. Chapter 9 provides the RE analysis of mechanisms operating within the broader ToCs, whilst Chapter 10 presents the methodological findings. The results of all of these analytical elements are brought together in the final chapter, which provides a concluding discussion to the study.

Chapter 7 – Theories of Change analysis of Chester case studies

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I set out the findings from the Cheshire case studies and use Theories of Change methodology to analyse their implications in relation to the assumptions underpinning Localism, as the national policy framework. Thus this chapter starts to address Research Question 2, building on ToC analysis of national policy set out in Chapter 4.

2. What can the evidence from local theories of change employed by community organisations in practice tell us about the theories of change underpinning national policy?

The chapter provides an introduction to the community participation activity which forms the focus of the research in each case, adding to the outlines of the case study areas and community organisations provided in Chapter 6. A summary version of the original theory of change developed in collaboration with each community organisation is set out (more detailed versions are provided in Appendix E), together with a short synopsis of the key events occurring through the course of the research.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the data relating to the theory of change from each case study is utilised to apply the standard ToC assessments of 'plausibility' and 'doability' to the national policy assumptions. In Chapter 4, I set out the three main assumptions which shape the core narratives underpinning Localism and are also reflected in the specific policies that implement the agenda. These three central ideas arise from the notion of a 'broken society' caused by an excessively centralised, interventionist state. Firstly, the suggestion is that too much power lies with this over-centralised (and connecting to the politics of austerity, over-funded) state. Hence, to enable communities to flourish and take on responsibility for their own affairs, power needs to be devolved, from central to local government and

from all levels of government to communities. Secondly, the corollary of the first assumption is that all communities are stronger without the state getting in the way, so Localism must principally remove the state from local matters. Lastly, the assumption is that most communities have latent capacity which will automatically be released when the state gets out of the way, with just a few disadvantaged communities needing direct assistance to build capacity, through the Community Organisers Programme.

Utilising the empirical evidence from each case study, I attempt to assess the plausibility and doability of these core Localism assumptions in a cumulative fashion. The three case studies are complementary, in two key respects. Firstly, the neighbourhoods involved are significantly different in terms of socio-economic status, so they can be used to explore how national policy plays out in such different contexts. And secondly, the core activities of the three participant community organisations relate to three distinct elements of Localism (Neighbourhood Planning, Community Asset Transfer, Our Place), thereby enabling some degree of overview of the policy agenda as a whole. In order to build a cumulative picture, the evidence from the second and third cases is specifically related to that from the first case, highlighting similarities and differences.

The subsequent chapter undertakes the same process for the Scottish case studies, before drawing together the key findings across the two nations to attempt to answer Research Question 3, regarding the implications of different theories of change at national and local level in terms of responsibility, risk and power.

The evidence for both chapters is drawn from a range of sources, including workshops with the participant organisations, additional discussions with community activists and interviews with local authority officers and Councillors. The full list of sources is provided in Appendix D, with a numbering system for ease of cross-referencing. As outlined in the previous chapter, the research was undertaken in three phases, firstly collaboratively developing the theories of change, secondly gathering data to evaluate progress and finally reflecting with the participant organisations on the evidence. The analysis in these two chapters focuses primarily on comparing the local ToCs with those for the national policy

agendas and hence draws heavily on the Phase 1 evidence, whilst the evidence from the later phases is used in Chapters 9 and 10. However, some evidence from the later phases is also utilised here, in order to examine the implementation of the local ToCs alongside the national logic models.

7.2 Case Study 1 – Trottside Parish Council

Type of organisation	Individuals involved in organisation (those in brackets not directly involved in research)	Main focus of organisation's work	Socio-economic status of community
Parish Council	Parish Councillors x10 (not all involved in research) Steering Group members and other community members x7	Influencing services – Neighbourhood Planning	Affluent

(NB – this information is replicated on the accompanying bookmark for ease of reference whilst reading this and subsequent chapters)

7.2.1 Trottside Neighbourhood Plan

The research in Trottside focused on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Trottside Parish Council (TPC) were chosen by DCLG in 2011 as one of 208 Neighbourhood Planning 'front runners', along with three other areas in the Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaCC) area. As such, they were amongst the first to start work on their Neighbourhood Plan following the passing of the Localism Act 2011 and related regulations (UK, 2011; 2012). Having previously developed a Parish Plan and Village Design Statement, the Parish Council were in a good position to progress their Neighbourhood Plan and significant development pressure added a sense of urgency.

In order to develop their Neighbourhood Plan, TPC undertook a four-stage process of consultation and engagement with the local community, involving a range of workshops, two major surveys and innovative approaches to engage with particular groups, such as a rave to engage young people. The decision to utilise this relatively sophisticated engagement process was driven partly by the previous

experience of developing a Parish Plan and Village Design Statement, which had demonstrated the value of consultation. Perhaps more importantly, it was also driven by key Parish Council members, who believed in the value of inclusive, participative processes to ensure community support for the final outcome – "You have to be prepared to listen…because everybody has a view that they think's important, even if it's completely bonkers" (Parish Council Chair, TPC 1).

A largely retrospective theory of change (ToC) for the Neighbourhood Planning process was developed through a workshop convened as part of the research and further discussions with TPC activists. This was augmented during phase two of the research by evidence from a workshop with other community members and interviews with key CWaCC officers. Although such a retrospective ToC clearly has less value in terms of improving the process, unlike the more common prospective application of ToC approaches, it provides a strong narrative lens through which to explore the interactions between national policy and local practice. A summary version of the ToC is set out in Figure 7.1 below (the full ToC logic model is provided in Appendix E). Importantly, whilst Figure 7.1 simplifies the model into a relatively linear structure, the intertwined arrows between inputs and activities specifically highlight the extent of deliberate process learning, as TPC utilised early engagement stages not merely to inform the Neighbourhood Plan, but also to enhance the skills of those involved and draw more people into the process.

Figure 7.1 – Summary version of Trottside Neighbourhood Plan theory of change

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Intended short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes

Skills, experience and info from previous processes (Parish Plan, Village Design Statement)

Additional skills from across the community

Support and finance from DCLG and CWaCC

Time and commitment from PC members and other key activists

Four iterative stages of consultation and engagement with wider community

Development of Neighbourhood Plan on the basis of views from consultation process

Trottside Neighbourhood Plan

Plan is used by PC and local authority to shape decisions on development

Development meets local needs and desires

In particular:
New house-building is phased to ensure village grows sustainably

New house-building includes appropriate housing for existing residents (e.g. smaller units)

New housing fits with the look and character of the village

As with all Local Plans, the Neighbourhood Plan was subject to independent examination, to ensure that it met legal requirements, before being approved at referendum in 2013 with a 96% majority on a 52% turnout. The final Plan (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2014) contained six policies, summarised as follows:

1. To enable managed housing growth, proposals for new housing in Trottside up to 30 homes will be allowed over the period of the Plan. Additionally, housing proposals should take housing need for the area into account and provide affordable housing, as specified in the Local Plan.

2. Development will be supported where it fits with the local character of the village, accords with the Village Design Statement and has good environmental performance.

3. Conversion of existing buildings and small-scale new build development will be supported where it provides employment opportunities.

4. Proposals for development will be required to identify their likely impact on local infrastructure, services and facilities and to demonstrate how any such impacts will be addressed.

5. Development proposals should aim to minimise the increase in traffic they may create and make provision for high-speed broadband.

6. Development will not be supported within designated 'local green spaces' except under very special circumstances.

Crucially, although the Plan was overwhelmingly approved by the community in the referendum, it has been repeatedly challenged by a number of developers with plans for substantial housing developments around the village. In particular, the developers have been concerned at the constraint placed on the scale and pace of new house building by Policy 1. Whilst the Plan allows for a greater number of new houses than required by the Local Plan, this policy was included due to significant local concern about the implications for services, infrastructure and community cohesion of rapid expansion within a relatively small village. Table 7.1 below sets out the key challenges to the Plan.

Table 7.1 – Challenges to Trottside Neighbourhood Plan by Developers

Stage of process	Developer action	Outcome
During Neighbourhood Plan development process	Major planning applications for new house-building submitted x 4	Applications refused by CWaCC as not being consistent with emergent Neighbourhood Plan
During Neighbourhood Plan development process	Decisions on major planning applications appealed to Secretary of State	Secretary of State still to decide on 3 applications (1 withdrawn)
Examination	Challenges to specific policies (especially Policy 1) and Plan as a whole by 4 developers	Some minor amendments made to the final Plan, but Examiner passed Plan
Immediately prior to referendum	Legal attempt to block referendum	Thrown out by court, but developers allowed leave to challenge Plan after referendum
Immediately after referendum	Judicial review of Plan by 2 developers, on basis that appropriate process had not been followed	Rejected by Judge at Manchester High Court

Following the dismissal of the High Court judicial review, the Plan was 'made' by the local authority in June 2014, thereby becoming part of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan. However, three of the original planning applications are still at the appeal stage, awaiting a final decision from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

7.2.2 Interaction with national policy theories of change

Localism Assumption 1 – Power needs to be devolved from the state

In line with the broad thrust of the Localism agenda, Neighbourhood Planning is presented as taking power away from state control and handing it to communities (DCLG, 2010). Despite the continuing challenges from developers, it is possible to identify significant outcomes arising from the Neighbourhood Plan process which suggest that the devolution of power to TPC has generated benefits for the local community. Most obviously, the Plan itself has been successfully produced and, despite the repeated challenges, thus far it has prevented approval of any large-scale housing development. Whilst it is impossible to be certain that this outcome

could not have been achieved without a Neighbourhood Plan, the evidence of substantial developments occurring in nearby villages despite local opposition (Informal discussion with TPC members, TPC 6) suggests that TPC have acquired power and used it successfully through this process.

However, the evidence from Trottside also raises three related questions about the assumption that power in local development planning primarily lies with local government, and that it can be passed to communities in a way which, "enables local communities to shape the future of the places where they live and work" (DCLG, 2013: 6).

Firstly, there is significant dubiety as to whether state power over local planning lies mostly with local government. In particular, Neighbourhood Planning needs to be located within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the broader context of UK Government policies to, "boost significantly the supply of housing" (DCLG, 2012; DCLG, 2014b). Within Neighbourhood Planning, this is manifested in rules preventing communities from setting limits on new housing below those set by the Local Plan. Alongside this, communities are given powers to facilitate faster development through Neighbourhood Development Orders or to lead development through the Community Right to Build, and incentives to approve developments through local retention of a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Those most involved in developing the Trottside Neighbourhood Plan always accepted the level of house-building required by the draft Local Plan, on the basis that, "you don't want a closed community" (Parish Council member, TPC 1) and new houses are necessary for a community to develop. However, there remains an open question as to whether broader community views might have pushed for a lower number of new houses without the requirement to meet the Local Plan figure. Moreover, none of the Neighbourhood Plans being developed within the Council area contain a housing target higher than that required by the Local Plan and 5-year Housing Land Supply, suggesting that the Local Plan figures are seen as a maximum (Interview with Council Planning Manager, CWaCC 2). Hence, the Trottside evidence questions the doability of the assumption that power can and

should be devolved from local government to communities, since a significant element of power in planning lies with central government.

Secondly, there are questions to be asked regarding the locus of power within planning at a local level. Whereas Neighbourhood Planning policy is concerned to devolve power from the state to communities, the Trottside experience suggests that the financial and legal clout of large-scale house-building companies dwarfs the influence of either local authorities or communities. Although the developers' High Court challenge to Trottside's Neighbourhood Plan was defeated, activists described a sense of being 'bullied' by the developers and their legal team during the examination and subsequent court case (Workshop discussions, TPC 1 & TPC 4). As one activist described the experience:

> "This is a game for the lawyers at the end of the day. They interpret every single word, every single syllable, in a way that meets their clients needs... You got the impression that these barristers felt that planning law belonged to the developers – that it was their game and anyone else who got involved were just little kids." (Community member, involved in Neighbourhood Planning steering group, TPC 4)

Moreover, despite the failure of the legal challenge, community members are now concerned that the developers are trying to stretch the Plan to breaking point through a series of applications, splitting their original plans into blocks of 30 houses, undermining the intention of phasing housing growth over the years.

Whilst there is some evidence that the developers are "extremely uneasy" about engaging with Neighbourhood Planning and talking to communities rather than planning professionals at local authority level (Interview with Council Planning Manager, CWaCC 2), such uncertainty pales into the background when developers employ a confrontational approach as in Trottside.

The relatively powerful position of the developers is also reflected in the application of the Neighbourhood Plan policies. Community members drew a clear distinction between spatial planning officers in the Council, who had been heavily

involved in supporting Neighbourhood Planning and were seen as keen to engage with cutting edge policy, and case officers dealing with specific planning applications seen as largely opposed to the Neighbourhood Plan (Workshop with community members, TPC 4). Whilst this may have been partly because the addition of Neighbourhood Plans complicates the development control role, the key factor was seen as being the legal clout of the large developers – "The Planning Department is terrified of being sued by the developers" (Community member, Workshop TPC 4).

The power of private sector players therefore raises a further question of doability regarding the assumption that power should be devolved from the state to communities, since local government cannot devolve power which it does not possess.

The third question about this assumption relates to the extent to which power can be devolved within a technically complex system with a language all of its own. In Trottside, despite the depth of professional expertise and prior planning experience, under advice from the Council the steering group employed a consultant during the final stages to convert the Plan into "planning speak" (Workshop with community members, TPC 4). For many of those involved, this raised serious questions about whether Neighbourhood Planning could deliver full local control, since they lost ownership of the wording:

> "It rather destroys the point of local planning, if documents have to
> be written at this level of sophistication in order to survive challenges
> at judicial review." (Community member, Workshop TPC 4)

This is clearly related to the second point, regarding the Council's concern for legal defensibility. Hence the plausibility of the devolution assumption is questioned, since communities may be unable to use the power which Neighbourhood Planning nominally gives them, thanks to the complexity of the planning system.

In terms of plausibility and doability, then, Assumption 1 faces serious questions regarding the locus of power in local planning and the extent to which Neighbourhood Planning is able to devolve this power to communities. Whilst TPC

have clearly gained some power over local development, their influence is limited by the power held by central government and private sector developers, within a system which requires significant knowledge and skills to manage the complex, legalistic language.

Localism Assumption 2 – Communities are stronger without the state getting in the way.

As the evidence from Trottside suggests, the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan and, in particular, ensuring compatibility with the Local Plan, requires a considerable degree of partnership working between the community organisation and the local authority. Hence there are questions surrounding this assumption with regard to how well communities could deliver Neighbourhood Planning without this close partnership.

This is acknowledged to some degree in the legislation through the duty placed on local authorities to support organisations developing Neighbourhood Plans and related Neighbourhood Development Orders (UK, 1990, as amended by the Localism Act 2011). Moreover, as a national frontrunner and the furthest advanced of the Neighbourhood Planning areas within Cheshire West, Trottside received significant hands-on support from the local authority. Aside from the information provision and technical support envisaged in Neighbourhood Planning guidance (Locality, 2015c; Locality, 2015d), CWaCC provided substantial officer support, attending every Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting.

However, evidence from CWaCC Spatial Planning Officers indicates that this level of support will not be available for communities undertaking Neighbourhood Planning in future. Instead, support is being limited to generic online guidance, with much less officer time, driven partly by larger numbers of communities engaging in Neighbourhood Planning, but mainly by budget cuts leading to a 50% reduction in the team (Interviews with Council Planning Officer and Council Planning Manager, CWaCC 1 & 2). Officers expressed particular concerns about the potential impact of lower support levels on more disadvantaged communities without Trottside's advantages of significant local expertise.

Furthermore, whilst DCLG proposals for support in 2015-18 make provision for additional financial support for disadvantaged communities, the mixed Trottside experience of employing consultants suggests that this will only partly address the capacity gap between different communities. In particular, some Trottside community members raised concerns that consultants were a "security blanket for the local authority", providing some professional oversight to limit community control, rather than meeting the needs of the steering group (Workshop discussion with community members, TPC 4).

In terms of doability, therefore, the evidence from Trottside suggests that the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan is doable, but that this happened in partnership with the local authority, rather than in the absence of the state. Moreover, the suggestion is that such support from the local authority may be even more necessary for less advantaged communities and that cuts to local authority budgets may be undermining this option, although further study of more diverse communities undertaking Neighbourhood Planning as Council support reduces would be necessary to assess this.

Localism Assumption 3 - Most communities have latent capacity which will automatically be released when the state gets out of the way, and there is no need to worry about where this capacity comes from or how it can be further developed.

As highlighted earlier, the Localism/Big Society agenda rests on the assumption that centralisation of power in the UK state has stifled the ability of communities to solve their own problems, and therefore that reducing centralisation and bureaucracy will release pre-existing community capacity to tackle social ills and improve society (DCLG, 2010). As a result, specific Localism policies tend to place little emphasis on the ways in which community participation can build community strengths, with the sole exception of the relatively small Community Organiser Programme. Thus Neighbourhood Planning policy focuses entirely on the aim of controlling physical development, ignoring wider outcomes that could arise from the process of Plan development (UK, 2011; UK, 2012).

The Trottside theory of change provides some support for Assumption 3, but also raises some significant questions. At a very basic level, the evidence set out above demonstrates the extent of latent community capacity in Trottside which was released by the Neighbourhood Planning process, with a range of individuals offering their time and professional expertise. However, the evidence from Council officers in particular, points to the much lower levels of this form of capacity in other communities. Moreover, even within Trottside, despite the intensive engagement process and the 52% referendum turnout, one local activist emphasised that, "We mustn't kid ourselves that everyone has been equally involved", with socio-economically disadvantaged sections of the community being much less engaged throughout (Workshop discussion with community members, TPC 4).

The experience of Trottside also highlights the extent to which participation processes such as Neighbourhood Planning can build community capacity as a by-product and, more importantly, are often dependent on deliberate processes of capacity building. At a basic level this is shown by the extent to which the Trottside ToC is suffused with feedback loops as the core group and wider community gain new insights, skills and confidence through the process. Evidence from activists at the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan process highlights the extent to which this iterative learning approach was deliberate, being built on the experience of earlier participative processes used for the Village Design Statement and Parish Plan (Workshops with TPC members and community members, TPC 1 & 4). As the TPC Chair explained, a carefully structured, deliberative process of discussion and learning was key to enable all those involved to move beyond their personal perspectives and shift the debate beyond NIMBY-ism:

> "If you have a room full of people sitting in rows you don't get that [useful] information. So by splitting people up into small groups, by splitting the friendship groups and then going through those questions you get some astonishing feedback. You begin to get to the underlying problems. If we don't build something we will decline and our services won't be maintained. So they want to keep those services, they want to improve those services, but they don't want to do anything about it. You can't have it that way round. And then they

begin to see that, so they become the problem solvers, so that takes
the conflict away." (TPC Chair, TPC 3)

Furthermore, the capacity which enabled the Parish Council to set out on the
Neighbourhood Plan journey was itself partly generated through these earlier
stages of participative planning, including such activities as a skills audit carried
out during the Parish Plan process (Interview with Planning officer, CWaCC 1;
Workshop with community members, TPC 4).

Perhaps most interestingly, when discussing impacts, activists and members of
the wider community not only pointed to the potential impact of the Plan itself on
local development, but also highlighted the process benefits in terms of social
cohesion, networks and 'community spirit':

"I don't think there's any doubt, although it's difficult to prove, that
there is much greater social cohesion. People know everybody – you
can walk down the street and there's always somebody that you've
seen at a Neighbourhood Plan meeting or whatever… It's brought
the community closer together in many ways..." (Community member
involved in Steering Group, Workshop TPC 4)

And the evidence suggests that these wider benefits are feeding through into the
crucial process of implementing and monitoring the Plan, so this capacity building
element may be essential for the success of the Plan over time, in terms of its use
to shape the development of the village (Workshops with TPC members and
community members, TPC 1 & 4).

Finally, however, the evidence from Trottside suggests that there can be
significant interactions between this assumption and the questions relating to
Assumption 1 above. Whilst the Neighbourhood Planning experience has brought
out strengths within the community, there are concerns that the potential failure of
the Plan to deliver a constraint on the speed and scale of house-building, will have
negative impacts on the community's ability to self-organise. Activists involved cite
evidence of growing cynicism as the Plan has been challenged at each stage and
a sense that, if the pending planning appeals are granted by the Secretary of

State, "for this village, we might as well pack our bags and go home" (Community member, Workshop TPC 4).

In terms of doability, then, the evidence from Trottside suggests that Neighbourhood Planning policy could be weakened by its lack of attention to the importance of capacity building, both prior to and during the process of Plan development, particularly for communities without the prior experience or inherent advantages of Trottside. Moreover, there is a wider issue of doability in relation to Localism as a whole, in that the disregard of community development processes significantly limits both the ambition and the potential of the policy to generate wider impacts. And the issues associated with the limited devolution of power, outlined in Assumption 1 above, may also reduce the plausibility of this final assumption, since organisational capacity and commitment can be eroded as fast as they are built.

Drawing together this assessment, the Trottside experience clearly raises important questions for the assumptions underlying the Neighbourhood Planning Theory of Change. Firstly, whilst there is evidence to support the value of devolving power from local government to communities, it also appears to rest on implausible assumptions about the location and nature of power within the planning system. Secondly, the assumption that communities can exercise power and take responsibility most effectively when the state gets out of the way does not reflect reality in even a significantly advantaged community such as Trottside. And lastly, whilst Trottside does provide some support for the idea that communities have latent capacity, there are substantial questions to be asked about the universality of this assumption across different communities, and lessons to be learned about the value of developmental processes within community participation.

7.3 Case Study 2 – Hoyfield Community Development Trust

Type of organisation	Individuals involved in organisation (those in brackets not directly involved in research)	Main focus of organisation's work	Socio-economic status of community
Development Trust	Staff – Centre Manager, (Admin Worker, Maintenance Officer) Committee members x6	Community self-help – facilities and services	Middling/mixed

7.3.1 Cumulative evidence – building on Trottside

This second case study augments the picture developed from the Trottside evidence in a number of ways, reinforcing some of the questions above, whilst adding different dimensions to others.

Firstly, whereas Trottside questions the notion that power can be devolved from local government to communities because of implausible assumptions about the location and nature of power within the planning system, these doubts are only partly true in the case of Community Asset Transfer. Although the process is far from straightforward and there are significant issues about the boundary between assets and liabilities, the Hoyfield Community Development Trust (HCDT) situation illustrates the possibility of asset transfer genuinely devolving power alongside responsibility.

Secondly, in line with the Trottside experience, the assumption that communities can exercise power and take responsibility most effectively when the state gets out of the way does not reflect reality and this is clearly recognised by the local authority in HCDT's case. Whilst the long-term picture for Hoyfield Community Centre may be one of complete independence from the Council, this is an aspiration to be realised through partnership between the local authority and the community.

And lastly, whilst HCDT provides some support for the idea that communities have latent capacity, the evidence in this case is much thinner than for Trottside. Rather, this reinforces the questions raised by Trottside, that there are substantial questions to be asked about the universality of this assumption across different communities, and lessons to be learned about the value of developmental processes within community participation.

7.3.2 The vision for Hoyfield Community Centre

The research in Hoyfield focused on the development of the Community Centre by HCDT over the last three years and their vision for the future. Until 2011, Hoyfield Community Centre received annual grant funding from CWaCC which covered the lease and some running costs, leaving just a small amount to be covered by letting fees. With the imposition of significant cuts to local authority budgets following the 2010 general election, CWaCC took the decision to reduce HCDT's grant to zero over a four-year period. At around the same time, the church which owns the Centre substantially increased the rent for the building. Hence HCDT found itself in a perfect financial storm, with increasing costs and decreasing grant income.

The Council's decision to reduce grant funding was mitigated, however, by the inclusion of Hoyfield in a 'test bed' scheme, intended to try out a number of localist approaches in different communities. This entailed a significant commitment of staff time (around half a day per week from a relatively senior officer responsible for partner relationships with the Council) and a strong emphasis on the involvement of local elected Members, as community leaders. The latter point was particularly important for HCDT, since both local Members were committee members who saw substantial value in saving the centre from closure. As well as significant amounts of time, these Members provided short-term funding from their small grants budgets to employ a Centre Manager to revitalise the centre and bring in additional income.

After an initial period of financial fire-fighting, focused on increasing income and lets, HCDT turned their attention to a longer-term vision for the Centre. A simplified version of the ToC for the development of Hoyfield Community Centre into a

financially sustainable, busier community hub is set out in Figure 7.2 below (the full ToC logic model is provided in Appendix E). This was developed initially through the phase one research workshop with HCDT committee members, and was augmented through the interview with the local authority contact officer and discussions with the Centre Manager. As with the Trottside ToC, it is worth noting the non-linear nature of the process. Whilst this is indicated here by intertwined arrows between inputs and activities, the full ToC for Hoyfield contains other feedback loops, such as that between increased revenue feeding back into funding for further refurbishment work.

Unlike that for Trottside, this theory of change model was largely prospective, since most of the development work on the Centre had yet to take place when it was developed. More detailed evidence on outcome impacts and the exploration of causality are laid out in Chapter 9 below. However, it is important to note at this stage that the early stages of refurbishment and attempts to increase both footfall and income were a success from the perspective of HCDT, leading to medium-term financial sustainability despite the loss of grant funding from the local authority.

Figure 7.2 – Summary version of theory of change for the Vision for Hoyfield Community Centre

Inputs

Activities

Outputs

Intended short-term outcomes

Long-term outcomes

Inputs
Skills and knowledge of Board

Skills, experience and networks of Centre Manager

Support (officer time and in-kind) from CWaCC, but less funding

Grant funding

Increased letting income

Activities
Staged refurbishment and redevelopment of Centre

Increased advertising to bring in more users

Outputs
Improved physical structure and appearance of Centre

More attractive and functional spaces within the Centre

More users

Intended short-term outcomes
Financial stability for HCDT

More activities available for community of Hoyfield

More diverse group of users in the Centre

Long-term outcomes
Health and wellbeing improvements for a range of community members (e.g. older people less isolated, etc.)

Improved educational outcomes for local children and adults

Increased employment level in Hoyfield

Increased pride in Hoyfield as an area

Improved local

7.3.3 Interaction with national policy theories of change

Unlike Trottside, the HCDT plan is not directly connected to a specific Localism policy, although there are clear links to Community Asset Transfer (CAT), which enables public bodies to transfer management or ownership of assets such as buildings and land to community organisations at below market cost, so that they can be utilised for public benefit (Locality, 2015e). The policy does not apply exactly, since HCDT are not attempting to take full ownership of the Community Centre and it is leased, rather than owned, by the local authority, but there are clear parallels between CAT and the process by which HCDT are taking more control of the Centre. Perhaps more importantly, it is a clear example of the kind of development Localism is keen to promote, whereby communities take more responsibility for their own services. The 'test bed' approach taken by the local authority in Hoyfield was an explicit attempt to apply such Localist ideas, in the context of reducing Council budgets (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2013b). In terms of underlying policy assumptions, then, it makes sense to utilise the evidence from Hoyfield to examine the three broad assumptions underlying the Localism ToC, as with Trottside above.

Localism Assumption 1 – Power needs to be devolved from the state.

It is clear that responsibility is being devolved from the local authority to HCDT, but there are more complex questions about whether this entails a devolution of power. Crucially, in terms of devolving power around physical assets, there is a distinction to be made between buildings which are genuinely assets, in the sense that they are financially self-sustaining, and those that are liabilities, making losses. A building which is truly an asset can generate a range of benefits for the organisation and the wider community, whereas a liability merely increases risks for all those directly involved (Aiken et al, 2011).

In HCDT's case, there was an implicit recognition from the outset that the Community Centre had become a liability in recent years, dependent on Council grant funding and physically deteriorating (Interview with Council officer, CWaCC 4). Crucially, however, the local authority and HCDT took the view that the Centre

could easily become an asset given investment of time and finance from the
Council and the community:

> "at that point the Council was basically grant-aiding the centre the
> whole of the rental amount. That wasn't sustainable. [Whereas] there
> was felt to be the potential within the building to generate more of a
> sustainable business." (Council officer, CWaCC 4)

The outcomes achieved thus far suggest that this view may have been correct,
since HCDT has managed to significantly increase the number of people using the
Centre, creating enough income to make the organisation financially sustainable in
the medium term. Hence it seems plausible to suggest that the local authority has
managed to devolve some degree of power as well as responsibility to HCDT.

However, it is also clear from HCDT's inclusion in the test bed programme and the
level of support provided by the local authority, that the process was never
envisaged to be a simple matter of handing over the keys. Rather, the local
authority and HCDT recognised the risk of taking on a liability and worked together
to make the necessary improvements for it to become an asset.

In terms of plausibility, then, the HCDT experience suggests that there is
considerable merit in the assumption that the state can devolve power by
transferring assets to communities. Hence, even though it is not a straightforward
process, it seems apparent from the HCDT evidence that the dubiety over the
locus of power in Neighbourhood Planning is less relevant in CAT. Where public
sector bodies control or own property, they are able to devolve power by
transferring control of these assets. However, in terms of doability, there are
significant questions about the meaning of power in this context, reflecting the
issues from Trottside. Whilst local authorities may be able to transfer property, this
may entail a transfer of responsibility and risk rather than power if the property is
more of a financial liability than an asset. And lastly, paralleling the experience in
Trottside, the HCDT case study illustrates the role of community capacity in the
doability of power devolution. Alongside the improvements to the building itself,
HCDT as an organisation needed to be strengthened through the recruitment of

the Centre Manager and development of the Board, in order to manage the Centre effectively.

Localism Assumption 2 – Communities are stronger without the state getting in the way.

As with Trottside, the HCDT situation highlights the extent to which this core assumption within Localism does not reflect practice on the ground. Whilst the Council are removing grant funding to HCDT, the substantial involvement of both Members and officers and additional capital investment in the Centre as part of the initial refurbishment, suggest that the reality of Localism is not a simple case of the state stepping back and communities taking over. Moreover, the nature of the organisation highlights the blurred boundaries between communities and the local state, with local Councillors being on the committee.

Indeed, HCDT's situation highlights the nebulosity which pervades much of Localism policy in terms of the role of local authorities. On the one hand, Localism emphasises the importance of 'lifting the burden of bureaucracy' and getting the state out of the way of community action, whilst at the same time emphasising the role of 'liberating government' in acting to empower communities (DCLG, 2010). And notably the 'communities' which are referred to in Localism policy and rhetoric encompass local authorities as well as neighbourhoods. As the Communities and Local Government Committee pointed out, this creates a tension:

> "Devolution of power both to local government and to local
> communities are not always compatible aims, and the latter appears
> to be the Government's priority. The infusion of the Government's
> pronouncements on localism with 'Big Society' rhetoric implies a
> diminished, not greater, role for local authorities, and there are
> differences across government in the level of trust departments
> appear willing to place in councils. Lacking is any coherent vision for
> the future role of local authorities ." (Communities and Local
> Government Committee, 2011: 4).

Thus, although the UK Government talks about devolving power as part of the Localism project to move away from the centralised state, it is often unclear whether the intended recipients of this power shift are local government or local communities. Moreover, the simultaneous imposition of substantial cuts to local government budgets, with inevitable consequences for financial support for community organisations, raises further questions about devolution of power. In practice, however, the experience of HCDT suggests that the financial restrictions can actually work to build partnerships between local government and communities, rather than shifting the state out of the way.

Hence, in terms of plausibility, the assumption that communities will be stronger if the state simply steps back and hands over assets is significantly questioned by the HCDT experience, paralleling Trottside. Beyond the basic steps of assessing viability envisaged in the CAT policy, CWaCC have engaged in a much more intensive, proactive approach to strengthen HCDT as an organisation and improve the Community Centre as an asset. Intuitively, this raises further questions about the plausibility of this assumption in circumstances where relations between local authority and community are less cordial, since such situations could see Councils either blocking asset transfer or passing on liabilities as their budgets reduce (Aiken et al, 2011), which is of particular concern where communities have fewer capacities at the outset. Again, this strongly parallels the concern raised by the Trottside experience about the viability of Neighbourhood Planning in less advantaged communities.

> **Localism Assumption 3** - Most communities have latent capacity which will automatically be released when the state gets out of the way, and there is no need to worry about where this capacity comes from or how it can be further developed.

The HCDT experience illuminates three aspects of this assumption. Firstly, there was a clear recognition when the decision to cut grant funding was made, that HCDT was not in a strong position to take on greater responsibility and revitalise the Centre (Workshop with HCDT Board, HCDT 1, Interview with Council officer, CWaCC 4). Hence, the significant investment of professional support and short-term funding was made to increase Board and staff capacity. As with Trottside, the

existing capacity of the community, which relates strongly to socio-economic status, is important. In HCDT's case, the organisation has recruited one vital new volunteer with financial management skills as their Treasurer, but even this individual is not a local resident and they have been unable to attract individuals with anything like the range of skills available to TPC. Whilst there are other factors at play here, the issue of inequalities between communities in terms of human resources cannot be discounted.

Secondly, as with Neighbourhood Planning, the CAT policy focuses on the physical asset itself, rather than any wider outcomes from the process of taking over and managing it:

> "The ultimate aim of Community Asset Transfer is community empowerment – that is, to ensure that land and buildings are retained or transformed then operated for public benefit through community asset ownership and management." (Locality, 2015e: 2)

Closely resembling the Trottside case, HCDT's experience highlights the importance of focusing on the learning and capacity building that happens through the process of asset management, rather than simply the asset itself. Indeed, the developments within HCDT are now being used by CWaCC as an "inspirational model" for other local organisations responsible for community centres (Interview with Council officer, CWaCC 4).

Lastly, the assumption that latent capacity within communities will fill gaps as the state gets out of the way ignores the complexities of organisational development. Whilst Hoyfield is not the most disadvantaged neighbourhood, the presence of a struggling community organisation can have implications for the potential of latent capacity in the wider community coming into play. On the one hand, HCDT's existence prevents a new organisation picking up the reins of the Centre and, on the other hand, individuals with greater levels of skill, experience and time may be reluctant to join a struggling organisation. Thus, whilst there may be latent capacity in many communities, the process of releasing it and building the capacities of individuals for effective collective action can be complex.

In terms of plausibility, then, the HCDT experience suggests that there are significant lacunae in the assumption that most communities have latent capacity waiting to be released. In relation to assets, such capacity can only deliver benefits when in the form of an effective community organisation and such organisations take time to build, especially where the wider community has few resources to offer. The particular issues of building capacity prior to and during the devolution of power strongly reinforce the questions raised from the Trottside case, since HCDT have required significantly greater assistance in terms of their organisational capacity than TPC. The evidence from HCDT also adds an important point in terms of doability, which is the impact of 'path dependence'[14], where the previous history of community organisations and participation may be central in shaping current opportunities and activities.

7.4 Case Study 3 – Armitshore Neighbourhood Action Groups

Type of organisation	Individuals involved in organisation (those in brackets not directly involved in research)	Main focus of organisation's work	Socio-economic status of community
Engagement meetings organised by local authority – 2 of 8 have become constituted organisations	Community members – varied numbers at meetings Localities Officers from CWaCC	Influencing services – crime and grime	Disadvantaged

7.4.1 Cumulative evidence – building on Trottside and Hoyfield

The evidence from Armitshore further elaborates the conclusions drawn above from the Trottside and Hoyfield cases in a number of ways.

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[14] Path dependence has a number of different definitions, but the key aspects here are the ways in which previous events or experiences have substantial, often unanticipated consequences, and the notion that particular courses of action can be very difficult to reverse (cf. Pierson, 2000). In this instance, the existence of HCDT effectively prevents the development of a new organisation, whilst its fragile state may put off potential committee members with much needed time and skills.

In terms of the idea that power can and should be devolved from local government to communities, the Armitshore experience is closer to that in Trottside, since the context of substantial budget cuts means that there is far less power to devolve. In this sense, the evidence suggests that the Our Place programme is closer to Neighbourhood Planning, resting on somewhat implausible assumptions about the location of power in the system. The Armitshore case reinforces questions about the extent to which more disadvantaged communities are able to acquire and utilise power, and also highlights issues of risk and difficulties in judging the risk that comes with additional power.

Secondly, paralleling both Trottside and Hoyfield, the assumption that communities can exercise power and take responsibility most effectively when the state gets out of the way does not reflect reality and this is clearly recognised by the local authority in Armitshore.

Lastly, the experience of the Armitshore Neighbourhood Action Groups supports the concerns from both Hoyfield and Trottside, that more disadvantaged communities may have far less in the way of latent capacity. Moreover, the evidence from this case study emphasises the particular challenges of building community strengths in disadvantaged communities under stress, especially where previous experience of participation sets up an extra barrier.

7.4.2 The Neighbourhood Action Group process

The introduction to Armitshore in Chapter 6 also outlined the development of the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs), which were established by CWaCC in eight neighbourhoods to bring community members together in order to collectively identify and address local issues. The research in Armitshore examined the NAG approach as a whole, rather than one particular project. A general ToC which tries to encapsulate the NAG approach was developed through discussion with the Localities Team and augmented by observations of some of the NAGs. A simplified version of this is set out in Figure 7.3 below (see Appendix E for the full logic model).

As with the theories of change for Trottside and Hoyfield, it is worth noting the non-linear nature of the process. Similarly to the Hoyfield ToC, this is indicated here by the intertwined arrows between inputs and activities, although the full ToC for the Armitshore NAGs contains other feedback loops, such as that between an increased sense of influence and the time that community members are prepared to commit towards making improvements in the area.

This ToC was partly retrospective and partly prospective, since the NAGs had been established three years before the research began, but the Localities Team were attempting to plan how they might develop in future. Hence some impacts, such as the installation of neighbourhood signage and the development of a skate park, had already been achieved, whilst other issues were still being addressed in each neighbourhood. Moreover, whilst the NAGs had become more established, the process of developing independent community organisations, either for the NAGs themselves or as spin-off groups, was still at a relatively early stage.

Figure 7.3 – Summary version of theory of change for Armitshore Neighbourhood Action Groups

Inputs

Activities

Outputs

Intended short-term outcomes

Long-term outcomes

Localities Team experience and skills in community engagement

Existing CWaCC knowledge of local communities and local issues

Views of local residents on priority issues

Skills and time of local residents

Regular NAG meetings

Surveys of local needs

Liaison between Localities Team and other Council services

Improvements to particular services and facilities

New projects

Additional external funding

Improved perceptions of Council services

Increased sense of influence in the community and confidence to raise issues

Improved appearance of neighbourhoods

Increased pride and sense of ownership in community

Wider impacts of particular projects (e.g. reduced anti-social behaviour from youth projects)

New community organisations and increased capacity for community self-help

Increased skills in community – influence and collective organisation

7.4.3 Interaction with national policy theories of change

Although the NAGs are not formally part of the Our Place programme, the approach taken by CWaCC in Armitshore was clearly based on the Our Place model (as noted in Chapter 6, the NAGs were established following an unsuccessful bid to join the Our Place programme). It therefore makes sense to examine the core Localism assumptions regarding community participation as they are manifest in this policy in particular. In general the same three assumptions about devolving power from the state, communities being stronger without the state, and that they have latent capacity, all apply to the Our Place programme, although there are some nuances in how they are applied which are explored below, using the evidence from Armitshore. There are also a number of other assumptions underpinning the Our Place ToC, such as the idea that joining up local services makes them more effective and efficient, but these are not examined here, as the focus is on community participation. As with Trottside and Hoyfield, the aim here is to assess the plausibility and doability of the assumptions, and therefore of the entire Localism ToC.

Localism Assumption 1 – Power needs to be devolved from the state.

As with much of the Localism agenda, this assumption has a dual aspect within the Our Place programme, inasmuch as the aim is to devolve power to local public services, some of which is devolved further to communities themselves (DCLG, 2014a: 8). The development of the Locality model within Armitshore seems to demonstrate a willingness from public sector agencies to decentralise some decision-making to the local level and the NAGs have clearly offered a route for some community influence over these services. Hence there is evidence from the NAGs that the approach has devolved some power to communities, enabling them to make a number of minor changes to services (Minutes of NAG meetings, ANAG 6).

However, the much stronger message that emerges from Armitshore is that this devolution of power to the local level is undermined by the simultaneous imposition of public sector cuts:

"Nine out of ten things being raised at a meeting are because of the impact those cuts have had in the community. Whether it's because the bins aren't being emptied, because the grass isn't being cut or it's not good enough... There's a whole host of things that are now landing on our table." (Locality Officer, Workshop ANAG 2)

Thus the devolution of decision-making actually provides very little power to either local services or local communities when the majority of time is spent fire-fighting, managing the fallout from cuts rather than making improvements.

Alongside this, communities in Armitshore are clearly resistant to taking on more responsibility through the NAGs, based on an assessment by community members that such additional responsibility would yield risks rather than power. For example, when the NAGs were offered the opportunity to control a small local budget of £2000 each, only two of the eight NAGs were prepared to move towards becoming constituted. As the Localities Manager expressed it, "People want to take part and want to engage, but don't want to take responsibility…they don't want the responsibility for money" (Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 2). Observations of NAG meetings suggest that this reluctance may also relate to a lack of confidence and skill amongst community members, many of whom clearly have little experience of meeting procedures or organisational management (Observations of NAG meetings, ANAG 1, 3 & 4).

Whilst concerns about the risk of managing money led NAG members to resist becoming constituted organisations, a further example from one of the NAGs raises a concern about the difficulties for communities in judging the balance between power, risk and responsibility. In this neighbourhood there are lanes running along the backs of the properties, which have become problematic in terms of litter and fly-tipping. In order to tackle these issues, the local authority has proposed gating the lanes, enabling residents to keep them locked. Ostensibly, this development offers residents greater power over their environment, but less obviously it involves increased responsibility, since gated lanes become private, so cleaning is not a Council responsibility. Crucially, the Council officers promoting the scheme were emphasising the increased power, whilst failing to mention the

shift of responsibility (Discussion with Locality Officer, ANAG 3). Hence community members may be unable to make sensible decisions about the possibility of devolved power, when they do not have full information about related responsibilities and risks.

In terms of the ToC assessment, then, the evidence from the Armitshore NAGs raises considerable questions about the doability of devolving power in a context of significant public sector budget cuts, since the power to achieve particular outcomes through influencing services fades away as those services shrink. In this respect, there are strong parallels with the questions raised about the locus of power in the Trottside case. Moreover, the processes of devolving power are clearly complex in practice. So in terms of plausibility, it may not be possible to devolve power without also passing on responsibility and risk, which in some circumstances may lead to resistance, as communities try to avoid a poisoned chalice. However, it is also important to note the potential for manipulation, where communities are offered power without information about the consequent risks. Again there are strong connections to Trottside, where activists felt that they were exposed to risks through the Neighbourhood Planning process which they had not anticipated, but differences in communities' capacity to manage such risks is also clear, with the Armitshore communities being far less well resourced.

> **Localism Assumption 2** – Communities are stronger without the state getting in the way.

To an extent, the Our Place programme displays a slightly different version of this assumption, since the approach is more about community influence and targeting services more effectively through joined-up working, than about communities taking independent action (DCLG, 2014a). In this sense, the Armitshore experience reflects the national assumption that communities can work with decentralised services to improve them.

Beyond this, however, the Our Place model highlights the value of volunteering and mentoring programmes to enhance community resilience and enable communities to meet their own needs (DCLG, 2014a). The evidence from

Armitshore suggests that some communities feel that basic services are the state's responsibility and that they lack the community resources to fill gaps left by a smaller state. Indeed, the Armitshore NAGs show scant evidence of developing community self-help activity, despite attempts by the Localities Team to encourage it. For example, one NAG has tried to establish regular 'litter picks' to improve the local environment, but these have attracted very few volunteers and are still entirely reliant on the Locality Officer to organise and personally deliver much of the litter picking (Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 2; Observation of NAG meeting, ANAG 4).

In terms of doability, the Armitshore NAGs suggest that it may be significantly challenging to create self-help systems such as volunteering and mentoring schemes in disadvantaged communities. Moreover, paralleling the experience from Hoyfield, the NAGs highlight the lengths to which local government may go to support communities in improving their area, working in partnership rather than unilaterally withdrawing. Hence the assumption that communities are stronger without the state getting in the way has limited plausibility in disadvanted areas such as Armitshore.

Localism Assumption 3 - Most communities have latent capacity which will automatically be released when the state gets out of the way, and there is no need to worry about where this capacity comes from or how it can be further developed.

The Armitshore experience strongly highlights the questions raised in both Trottside and Hoyfield about the extent to which more disadvantaged communities have latent capacity. The evidence cited above suggests a degree of capacity to raise concerns about service cuts, but even this capacity is limited, relying on the Council to organise the space and translate complaints into a form which will effectively influence services. For example, the classic issues of crime and grime were repeatedly raised during observed NAG meetings, often relating to reduced levels of service, but these issues were only addressed once the Locality Officer had converted the chaotic individual anecdotes into a coherent issue (Observations of NAG meetings, ANAG 1, 3, 4; Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 2). Indeed, the ToC produced with the Localities Team strongly emphasises

the scale and difficulty of the work necessary to enhance the skills, confidence and organisational capacity of local communities. Though it is worth noting that community resistance to proposals for new housing appear to be building community capacity outside the NAG system (Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 2).

Some of the evidence also suggests that such communities under socio-economic stress may particularly struggle with the inclusiveness and cohesion, running the risk of imploding into conflict if the state withdraws, rather than releasing latent capacity. The clearest example of this relates to a proposal for a new mosque/Islamic cultural centre in one area, which led to heated debate during NAG meetings and a concern amongst the Localities Team about possible infiltration by far right activists (Observation of NAG meeting, ANAG 3; Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 2).

The issues of path dependence which arose in the Hoyfield case study also feature in Armitshore. For the Localities Team, the experience of the previous District Council prior to the creation of CWaCC in 2009 provides a key explanatory factor for the lack of community capacity and activity in the area. The District Council had been dominated by one party for decades and, according to the Localities Team, was renowned for a paternalistic-provider attitude to communities, largely ignoring community voices and thereby undermining community participation (Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 2). Whilst socio-economic disadvantage was also cited as a reason for the low level of community organisation, the team emphasised the impact of years of unresponsive local government in undermining any sense of purpose or efficacy for local community action.

The evidence from Armitshore therefore strongly questions the plausibility of the assumption that communities have latent capacity and emphasises the challenges in generating community strengths in disadvantaged communities, reinforcing the findings from Hoyfield and Trottside. In terms of doability, the Armitshore experience also underlines the tentative finding from Hoyfield regarding the importance of path dependence, highlighting the extent to which the level and

availability of community capacity is always partly dependent on previous experience of participation.

7.5 Conclusion to this chapter

This chapter has outlined the findings from the Cheshire case studies in relation to Research Question 2, examining what the empirical evidence of local theories of change can tell us about the plausibility and doability of the assumptions underpinning the Localism agenda. The following chapter undertakes the same process for the Glasgow case studies and the Community Empowerment agenda, before bringing the findings from the two chapters together in order to compare the two sets of policies and provide some broader conclusions regarding community participation in general.

Chapter 8 – Theories of Change analysis of Glasgow case studies and conclusions from both sets of findings

8.1 Introduction

Following on from Chapter 7, in this chapter I set out the findings from the Glasgow case studies and use Theories of Change methodology to analyse their implications in relation to the assumptions underpinning Community Empowerment. Thus this chapter provides further evidence in relation to Research Question 2, before drawing the findings from both chapters together in order to fully address Research Questions 2 and 3 across the two nations.

2. What can the evidence from local theories of change employed by community organisations in practice tell us about the theories of change underpinning national policy?

3. What are the implications of different national and local theories of change for communities in terms of responsibility, risk and power?

The chapter follows the same format as the previous one, providing an introduction to the research focus for each case study and a summary of the local ToC, before using the empirical data to examine the plausibility and doability of the assumptions underlying the national Community Empowerment agenda, identified in Chapter 4.

The core narratives underpinning the Community Empowerment agenda contain three key assumptions, which are reflected in the Community Empowerment Act 2015. Firstly, in terms of power, there are repeated statements throughout the policy documents that communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment. Secondly, in contrast to the Localism assumption that communities are strongest when the state gets out of the way, Community Empowerment assumes that community participation generally works most effectively when communities work in partnership with the local state. Lastly, there is a consistent

recognition that, whilst communities have some capacity and it is important to focus on assets rather than deficits, it is also necessary to prioritise building community capacity as both a prerequisite and an integral part of community participation, particularly for more disadvantaged communities.

In this chapter, I attempt to assess the plausibility and doability of these core Community Empowerment assumptions in a cumulative fashion. As with the English neighbourhoods, the three case studies are complementary, in two key respects. Firstly, the neighbourhoods involved are significantly different in terms of socio-economic status, so they can be used to explore how national policy plays out in such different contexts. And secondly, the core activities of the three participant community organisations relate to different forms of community participation (self-help, influence over services, and combinations of the two), thereby enabling some degree of overview of the policy agenda as a whole.

8.2 Case Study 1 – Dowsett Community Council

Type of organisation	Individuals involved in organisation (those in brackets not directly involved in research)	Main focus of organisation's work	Socio-economic status of community
Community Council	Community Councillors x15	Influencing services – planning, crime and grime	Affluent

8.2.1 The Community Council's activities and theories of change

DCC's activities are primarily focused on maintaining the local area in terms of appearance, heritage, amenity, cleanliness and safety, with the majority of their work consisting of two approaches. Firstly, as a statutory body with rights to be consulted on planning and licensing applications, the Community Council examines all such applications and submits formal objections to any that they are concerned about. In this respect, they work very closely with another community organisation which attempts to maintain the heritage architecture of the local Conservation Area, much of which lies within the DCC boundary. Secondly, the Community Council engages in constant communication with the local authority,

police and other local agencies, to address concerns about service standards or other issues.

Summary versions of the theories of change for these two key areas of work are set out in Figures 8.1 and 8.2 below (full versions of the ToC logic models are provided in Appendix E). These ToCs were developed with the Community Council through two workshops, augmented by further discussion with the Chair and observations of Community Council meetings over the subsequent year. Notably, whilst there are some differences between these two models, the long-term outcomes are identical and there are substantial similarities in the activities undertaken by DCC, as well as the inputs needed to deliver them.

Figure 8.1 – Summary version of theory of change for DCC planning work
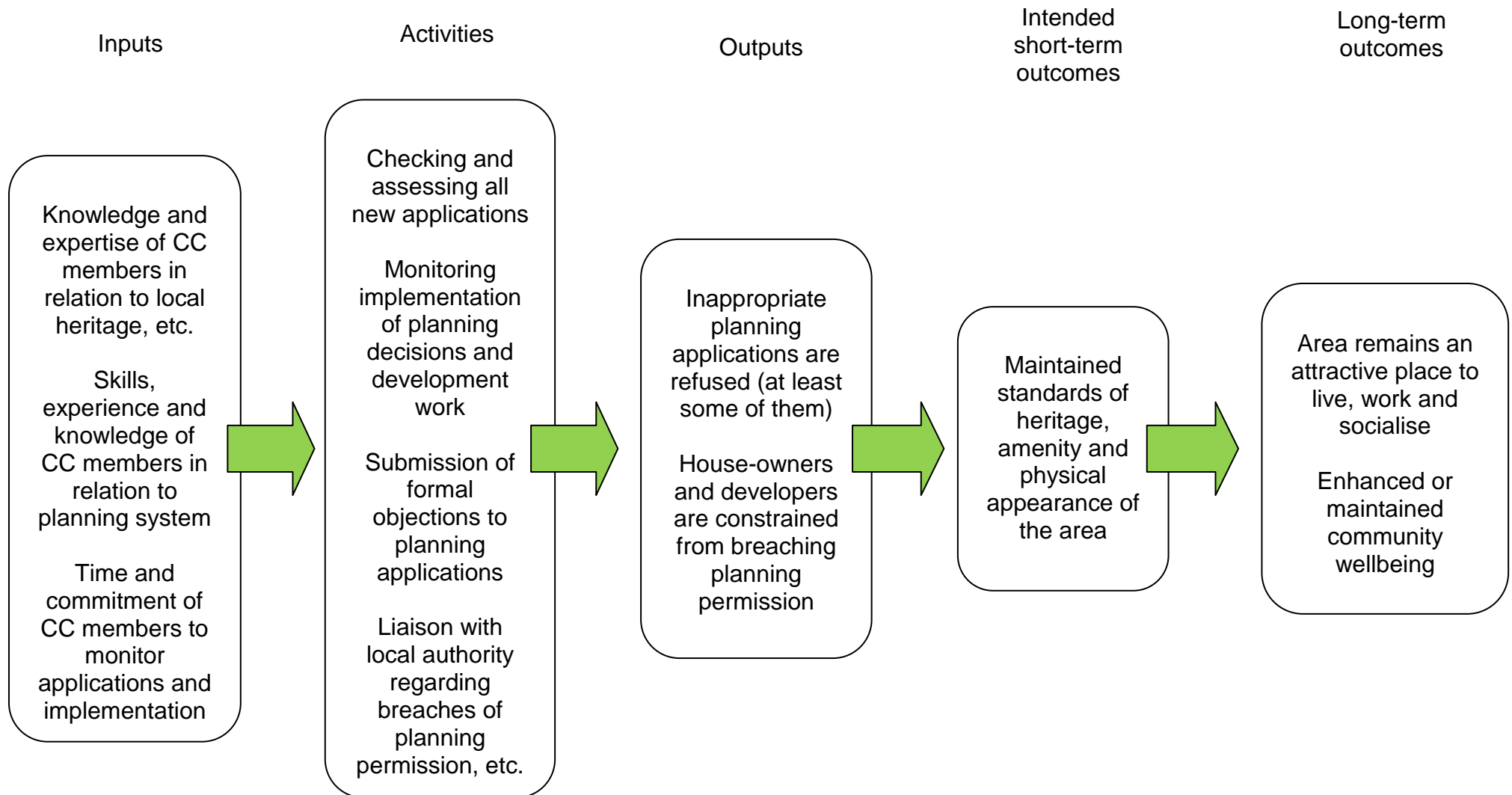
Figure 8.2 – Summary version of theory of change for DCC service influence work

Inputs Activities Outputs Intended short-term outcomes Long-term outcomes

| Knowledge of local issues

Skills and experience of CC members in relation to influencing services | → | Regular communication with officers of service providing agencies

Lobbying agencies via local Councillors | → | Service responses to issues | → | Maintained standards of appearance and amenity of the area

Improved service standards | → | Area remains an attractive place to live, work and socialise

Enhanced or maintained community wellbeing |

8.2.2 Interaction with national policy theories of change

Community Empowerment Assumption 1 – Communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment

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The two main areas of DCC's work provide different evidence in relation to this core assumption. In relation to influencing services, two interesting examples arise from the classic local issues of 'crime and grime'. Concerns about litter are raised at nearly every DCC meeting and the Community Council is in constant communication with the relevant Council department about these issues, directly and via local elected Members. Throughout these discussions, it is clear that Community Council members almost unanimously see litter clearing as a local authority responsibility and that it would be inappropriate for community members to support this work through their own efforts, despite Council attempts to engage communities in litter picks and related activities. Indeed, in one instance where two Community Council members did report that they had resorted to clearing litter from their street, they were overtly criticised by other members (Observation of DCC meeting, DCC 4). Hence, in relation to 'grime' issues, the Community Council has explicitly chosen a community influence route, rather than engaging in partnership service provision with the local authority.

Similarly, in relation to crime issues, the Community Council has chosen its preferred form of participation. Having always engaged with the police in relation to local crimes, DCC was recently approached by the police about a burglary prevention and detection system involving identifiable marking of property. The Community Council decided to engage proactively with this project, running public meetings to promote it and acting as a sales agent for the marking equipment (Observations of DCC meetings, DCC 4; Minutes of DCC meetings, DCC 10). In this instance, therefore, DCC chose to enter a service delivery partnership with the police, perhaps reflecting their more positive attitudes towards the police as an agency to work alongside.

These examples suggest that DCC provide significant support for the notion that communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment, since they

have been able to select different levels of participation in relation to different services.

In relation to planning and licensing issues, DCC have also chosen specific levels of involvement, taking a strongly proactive role in assessing planning applications and also in monitoring developments once planning permission has been granted. Similarly, with regard to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), the Community Council not only monitors new applications rigorously, including visiting the closes involved and speaking to neighbours, but has also engaged in higher level lobbying of MSPs, pushing for stronger regulation of HMOs (Observations of DCC meetings, DCC 4; Minutes of DCC meetings, DCC 10).

However, DCC's approach to planning and licensing also illustrates a significant limitation in the assumption that communities can choose their own level of empowerment. In contrast with Trottside's situation, DCC do not have the option to undertake their own local planning, since there is no equivalent of Neighbourhood Planning in Community Empowerment policy. Moreover, whilst there are examples from elsewhere in Scotland of local authorities working in partnership with communities to develop locality plans, Glasgow City Council's approach to participation in spatial planning has been restricted to formal consultation processes around the city-wide Plan. Hence the legislative framework, together with the attitude and approach of the local authority, place limits on the choices that DCC might have in relation to planning.

Interestingly, though, DCC members expressed very mixed views about whether additional legal powers for Community Councils would be of benefit. To explore these issues, DCC were asked in the research process to explore the theoretical possibility of being given Parish Council-like powers in terms of Neighbourhood Planning and/or the ability to take on some local services, with related taxation powers. There was some support for these ideas, on the basis that Neighbourhood Planning might improve the level of communication between DCC and the wider community, and that decentralised services might better meet local needs. However, the strong majority view was that these additional powers would involve too much additional responsibility and create a risk of conflict within the Community Council or wider community (Workshops with DCC members, DCC 6

& 7). Thus Community Council members generally prefer their current approach, primarily focused on influencing rather than delivering services, leaving responsibility and risk with the local authority.

This theoretical discussion about additional powers also highlights a further question about whether DCC's choices would necessarily be supported by the wider community. DCC's communication with the wider community is entirely restricted to members' personal contacts, despite the local authority's attempts to encourage Community Councils to engage more widely:

> "there's some very good ones that are outward facing and have got excellent websites and are using Facebook and Twitter and they're trying to interact with their local community...It's not that we doubt what [other Community Councils are] saying, but we want to try to facilitate that the views they express are as genuinely representative of the wider community as we can... sometimes it's those that shout loudest on hobby horse type issues." (Interview with Principal Officer, GCC 1)

Moreover, although Community Councils are in theory democratically elected bodies, in practice elections are rarely contested and DCC themselves fill all vacancies between elections through personal contacts (Observations of DCC meetings, DCC 4). Hence, whilst there is no evidence to suggest that other community members might necessarily choose different forms or levels of empowerment, there are significant questions about who is able to make such choices on behalf of a community.

In terms of plausibility, then, the evidence from DCC provides significant support for the notion that some communities can choose their own level of empowerment, given their selective approaches and their explicit decisions to avoid particular forms of power because of the consequent responsibility. However, there are questions regarding who makes such choices within communities and, in terms of doability, whether the legislative and institutional environment restricts the choices on offer.

> **Community Empowerment Assumption 2** – Community participation (mostly) works most effectively when communities work in partnership with the local state

DCC's relationship with the local state can only be described as mixed. They have very positive relationships with some local Councillors, working with them to address local issues, particularly in relation to local authority services. This is particularly evident during DCC meetings, where one or more local Members are usually present, providing updates on previous issues and taking note of new concerns from CC members (Observations of DCC meetings, DCC 4). Moreover, they have good working relationships with some Council officers, particularly in the Planning department, and also positive working relationships with the local police divisions, the latter being evident again through Community Police Officer involvement in meetings.

By contrast, however, other sections of the Council and some individual officers are regularly criticised and even ridiculed in Community Council meetings, particularly where service failures are perceived to be persistent (Observations of DCC meetings, DCC 4). Indeed, most Community Council members seem to hold a negative view of the local authority, epitomised by the Chair's comment that the Council is characterised by "corruption cloaked in incompetence" (DCC Chair, DCC 2).

In terms of plausibility, then, the evidence from DCC regarding Assumption 2 suggests that relations between communities and the local state need to be understood in a nuanced fashion. Whilst the Community Council have positive relationships with some parts of the local state, they simultaneously hold very critical views of other elements. Thus they can be working in partnership very effectively with one department, whilst engaging in antagonistic or even conflictual behaviour towards another. Moreover, the complexity of the local state allows for partnership and conflict with different parts of the local authority about the same issue, evidenced when they work with local elected Members to pressurise service-providing departments.

Community Empowerment Assumption 3 – Communities have some capacity, but building this capacity is a prerequisite and an integral part of community empowerment, particularly for more disadvantaged communities

Paralleling Trottside Parish Council, DCC are able to draw on a wealth of professional skill and experience within their membership. Aside from individuals with legal and financial backgrounds, most Community Councillors are highly educated and therefore comfortable dealing with relatively complex matters such as planning and licensing law (Observations of DCC meetings, DCC 4; Training needs assessment, DCC 12). Moreover, evidence from observations and detailed recording of DCC's impact on particular issues over more than a year highlights the range of influence tactics used by the Community Council to improve local service provision (Impact recording log, DCC 13). For example, in response to a Council consultation on Health and Social Care Integration, the Community Council elected to submit a lengthy and highly critical report prepared by one member with relevant academic knowledge of organisational integration, by-passing the restricted options available through the online questionnaire.

Alongside this recognition of pre-existing capacity within DCC, however, the evidence points to a lack of concern to access the training opportunities available for Community Councillors, or to develop wider community capacity. Although the Community Council maintains contact through its members with a number of smaller neighbourhood organisations, little attempt is made to support or communicate proactively with these organisations. Moreover, when vacancies arise on the Community Council, DCC co-opts individuals bringing skills and commitment, rather than attempting to engage more widely and develop new activists (Observations of DCC meetings, DCC 4). Similarly, the DCC ToCs contain very few feedback loops relating to skills development and capacity building, unlike those for all of the other organisations in this study (ToC, DCC 9). This disregard for wider capacity building or communication seems to be based on the view that the local community already has the necessary skills and will contact the Community Council if needed, epitomised by the Chair's view that "we don't need to do a newsletter, because people find us when they need us" (Informal discussions with Chair, DCC 2 & 5). However, there is a clear divide drawn between long-term residents and the more 'problematic', transient student

population who "don't care what their close looks like or what their neighbours think" (DCC member, DCC 4), whose views are therefore not seen as important.

In terms of plausibility, then, the evidence from DCC undoubtedly supports the notion that some communities have significant pre-existing capacity, in terms of professional skills and organisational capabilities. However, this case study also raises questions about the doability of building wider community capacity when key organisations are somewhat insular.

Drawing together this assessment, the DCC evidence provides some support for each of the Community Empowerment assumptions, but also raises important questions. Firstly, whilst DCC have clearly been able to choose their own level of empowerment in a number of instances, there are questions regarding the legislative and institutional restrictions on such choice, as well as issues about who makes such choices within communities. Secondly, whilst DCC demonstrate the value of working in partnership with the local state, they also illustrate the complexity of such relationships and of the local state itself, with partnership and conflict often co-existing. And thirdly, DCC provide strong support for the notion that some communities have pre-existing capacity, but the evidence of their approach and impact also highlights barriers to building capacity where strong organisations dominate the scene.

8.3 Case Study 2 – Ooley Development Trust

Type of organisation	Individuals involved in organisation (those in brackets not directly involved in research)	Main focus of organisation's work	Socio-economic status of community
Development Trust	Committee members x7	Community self-help – facilities and activities	Middling /mixed

8.3.1 Cumulative evidence – building on Dowsett Community Council

The evidence from Ooley Development Trust further elaborates the conclusions drawn above from the DCC case in a number of ways, reinforcing some questions, whilst adding different dimensions to others.

Firstly, in terms of the notion that communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment, the Ooley case largely reinforces that of DCC, providing further evidence that community organisations are capable of making clear choices about their approach. In a similar fashion to that from DCC, the ODT evidence also highlights the extent to which these choices are shaped by the available political and institutional opportunities. Moreover, as with DCC, this case study emphasises the complexity of who is making choices about empowerment, suggesting that such choices can lead to internal conflict within communities in some circumstances.

Secondly, the evidence from ODT also parallels that from DCC in terms of the assumption that partnership working with the local state is important for effective community participation, but also reinforces the earlier finding that these relationships are rarely simple. Moreover, this case study indicates that positive relationships between community organisations and the local state can be difficult to create, particularly when there are competing pressures on officers' time and the focus of elected Members.

Lastly, the evidence from Ooley contrasts somewhat with that from DCC in terms of community capacity. Whilst ODT started from a basis of existing capacity in a handful of key individuals, the have had to invest considerable time and effort in attempting to build community strengths, since the population of the neighbourhood is constantly growing and changing. This is clearly very different from DCC's situation in a relatively settled community, although notably the level of support for capacity building from the local authority appears very similar across these two communities.

8.3.2 ODT's projects and theory of change

Shortly after ODT's establishment, it became clear that the original plan to redevelop the church building as a community centre was not viable, due to lack of available finance in the recession. ODT therefore decided to retain the community centre idea as a long-term ambition, whilst working on other shorter-term projects

in the area. These have included environmental projects, such as the installation of bird and bat boxes in the adjacent park and planting a community orchard; a range of community events aimed at developing connections and cohesion within the community, and facilitating two-way communication between ODT and the wider community; a regular community newsletter; and the development of a substantial play area with equipment for children of different ages. Alongside all of these projects, ODT have played a significant role in attempting to represent community views in the development process for the area.

The research in Ooley focused primarily on the play park project, as an exemplar of their work, although it also encompassed elements of ODT's wider work, partly because the various activities overlap considerably. For example, community events were used to consult about play equipment prior to the development of the play area, the newsletter has been key to communication throughout, and negotiation with the local authority and developer was important in enabling the play equipment installation. Figure 8.3 below sets out a summary version of the theory of change underpinning the play area project (a full version of the ToC logic model is provided in Appendix E). As with the ToCs for all three Cheshire case studies, this summary model is presented in a linear fashion for simplicity, but the intertwined arrows between inputs and activities indicate the degree of reflexivity within the full ToC. Thus, for example, ODT deliberately utilised the early stages of consultation and feasibility study to build their own skills, and to support deeper involvement of the wider community.

Figure 8.3 – Summary version of theory of change for Ooley Play Park Project

Inputs | Activities | Outputs | Intended short-term outcomes | Long-term outcomes

Knowledge, skills and experience about funding, community engagement, etc.

Information from community about local needs

Funding from Big Lottery

Training to enhance skills (e.g. project management)

Community events to identify priorities and decide on play park design

Funding applications

Management of installation process

Play park installed

Increased opportunities for play

Increased community connections (kids and parents meeting at play area)

Improved mental wellbeing for kids and parents

Improved child development through play

More connected and cohesive community

More engagement with ODT to support future projects

8.3.3 Interaction with national policy theories of change

> **Community Empowerment Assumption 1** – Communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment

Whilst ostensibly it may seem that ODT exercised a simple choice in deciding to undertake the play park project, the situation in practice was less straightforward. Although Ooley had no play facility until ODT's project, the Development Agreement between City Council and developer required the provision of play facilities towards the end of the redevelopment. Hence the choice for ODT was not whether a play park would be a good thing, but whether it was worth investing time and effort to try to deliver a play park earlier and of better quality. From ODT's perspective, there was a strong argument for undertaking the project, on the basis of the turmoil and disruption caused by the redevelopment process:

> "The community deserves such a thing – the community has been through quite a lot, both the previous community and the one that's emerging. The investment of that money is a drop in the ocean compared to the benefits they'll get from it." (ODT committee member, ODT 2)

Moreover, the Development Agreement budget for the facility was significantly lower than the grant obtained by ODT, and the timescale for completion of the Ooley building programme has extended substantially since the crash of 2007/8. Therefore ODT's intervention produced a play park of a higher standard, shaped by the local community, and installed several years earlier than would otherwise have been the case, delivering what the Council's Project Manager called "a super degree of additionality" (Interview with Council officer, GCC 2).

In this respect, then, ODT's choice of level of empowerment was relatively limited. Whilst it would have been possible to lobby for earlier, better quality installation by the developer, conversations between ODT, the developer and the local authority had made it clear that such an approach would be fruitless, given the financial pressures on developer and Council caused by the housing market issues and

government austerity policies (Informal discussion with ODT Board members, ODT 4).

As with DCC, there are additional questions to be asked about who makes decisions about the approach to issues such as the play park, and therefore about the level of empowerment. Although ODT themselves had worked hard to ensure that their committee included a mix of long-term and newer residents, observations of public meetings highlighted the the lack of broader community unity. Whilst the play park project and the long-term community centre plan were based on consultative events run by ODT, this did not prevent criticism from some community members and, in particular, conflict with a pre-existing community organisation (Observations of ODT AGM and Development Steering Group, ODT 3 & 5).

In terms of plausibility, then, the evidence from Ooley provides some significant support for the notion that community organisations are capable of making clear choices about their approach, but also highlights the extent to which these choices are shaped by the opportunities available. Moreover, as with DCC, this case study emphasises the complexity of who makes choices about empowerment and suggests that such choices can lead to internal conflict within communities in some circumstances.

> **Community Empowerment Assumption 2** – Community participation (mostly) works most effectively when communities work in partnership with the local state

The sense in which decisions were shaped by the available political opportunities is also connected to ODT's relationship with the local authority. A key influence route for any community organisation within Glasgow is the Local Area Partnership (LAP), which brings together local Councillors, partner agencies (Police, Health, etc.) and community reprentatives, to deal with decentralised service issues and allocate a local grant fund. ODT attempted to join their LAP, but were refused a place because they were not a Community Council, even though there was no Ooley Community Council (Informal discussion with ODT Board members, ODT

6). Thus ODT's approach has been shaped by the extent to which different parts of the local state are prepared to engage with them.

Although ODT are somewhat critical of the Council Project Manager's commitment to community participation by comparison with the previous postholder, their constructive relationship with him has enabled them to play an active role in the Development Steering Group. Thus they have had some influence over aspects of the development, such as ensuring that new houses meet the design guidelines, and also to negotiate an agreement for the local authority to take on the maintenance responsibility for the play equipment once installed. (Interview with Council officer, GCC 2).

However, as with DCC, relationships between ODT and the Council are not uniform, with difficulties arising from varied relationships with different local Councillors (Informal discussions with ODT Board members, ODT 6 & 8). Importantly, this relates to the issue of potential conflict within the community, since one elected Member has very strong connections with the pre-existing community organisation and is therefore unwilling to support ODT as a 'competing' body.

Hence, in terms of plausibility, the evidence from ODT provides some support for the importance of partnership working between community organisations and the local state, but also reinforces the finding from DCC that these relationships are rarely simple. Moreover, in terms of doability, this case study indicates that positive relationships between community organisations and the local state may at times be extremely difficult to generate and maintain, particularly when there are competing pressures on officers' time and competing political demands on the focus of elected Members.

Community Empowerment Assumption 3 – Communities have some capacity, but building this capacity is a prerequisite and an integral part of community empowerment, particularly for more disadvantaged communities

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The evidence from ODT with regard to this assumption provides some interesting contrasts with the previous case study. Paralleling DCC, there is some clear

evidence of pre-existing capacity within Ooley, in the sense that a number of relatively skilled and experienced individuals came together to create ODT. In particular, two key activists who became office bearers in the organisation brought skills in management, organisational development, community engagement and fund-raising that were essential for projects such as the play park (Workshop with ODT Board, ODT 1).

Unlike DCC, however, ODT recognised the importance of extending the committee members' skills in order to take on complex projects, seeking out training in social research and project management (Workshop ODT 2). Perhaps more importantly, ODT's approach is based on a recognition that the wider community is far more varied in terms of skills and confidence than more affluent areas, and that Ooley' growing population needs to develop the internal connections and cohesion characteristic of strong communities. Hence, they have attempted to provide training opportunities for community members, and to utilise their consultation events to build connections across community (Workshop with ODT Board, ODT 2; ODT newsletters, ODT 11).

ODT's experience also raises interesting questions with regard to the role of the local authority in supporting communities to build capacity, with the Project Manager only interacting with residents if, "they've got something to complain about" (Interview with Council officer, GCC 2). This level of support largely parallels DCC's experience, who receive basic grant funding and access to training courses as a Community Council, but little in the way of regular community development support.

In terms of plausibility, then, the evidence from Ooley provides significant support for this assumption, since ODT have been able to start from a basis of existing capacity in a handful of key individuals, but have invested considerable time and effort in attempting to build community strengths in the area. In particular, the Ooley case study emphasises the importance of building community connections in areas which are experiencing substantial transitions. The question of doability is harder to address within the timescale of this study, since it remains to be seen whether ODT's efforts will help to generate a strong community, but their

experience clearly highlights questions of the local state's role in building community capacity.

8.4 Case Study 3 – Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd

Type of organisation	Individuals involved in organisation (those in brackets not directly involved in research)	Main focus of organisation's work	Socio-economic status of community
Non-profit company limited by guarantee	Staff – Manager, (2x Admin, 5x Therapists) Volunteers and service users	Community self-help – wellbeing	Disadvantaged

8.4.1 Cumulative evidence – building on Dowsett Community Council and Ooley Development Trust

The evidence from Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd further elaborates the conclusions drawn above from the DCC and ODT cases in a number of ways.

Firstly, the evidence of CWL's work extends the perspective from DCC and ODT, suggesting that a community organisation which focuses on capacity building and co-production can enable a wide range of community members to choose their own level of empowerment, providing them with skills, confidence and opportunities to participate. However, the evidence relating to CWL as an organisation raises broader questions about the extent to which whole communities can choose their level of empowerment. For some disadvantaged communities, universal services may fail to meet local needs and limitations in skills and confidence may preclude the possibility of influencing such services to create a more tailored response. Hence CWL exemplifies a situation where the community feels forced to take the ostensibly more challenging route of providing its own service to meet local need. Although the context is different in many ways, there are clear parallels here with ODT's decision to opt for self-help rather than influence, since both organisations have based their decision partly on an analysis of the limited gains available through influencing the local state in their situation.

Secondly, reinforcing the findings from both of the other Glasgow case studies, the evidence from CWL suggests that partnership with at least part of the local state is invaluable for CWL's operations, but that it is perfectly possible for this to co-exist with a much more critical or conflictual relationship with other parts.

And lastly, the evidence from CWL supports the notion that building capacity is a key part of community empowerment, although in a somewhat different fashion from the other two case studies. Whereas the evidence from DCC and ODT emphasised the value of being able to build on pre-existing activist capacity, CWL are effectively starting from a foundation of staff capacity, because of the significantly lower level of skills, confidence and experience in the local community. Thus the case study strongly underlines the notion that building community capacity is a prerequisite as well as an integral part of community empowerment, and emphasises the substantial challenges of building such capacity in disadvantaged, stressed communities.

8.4.2 CWL's services and theory of change

Summarising CWL's services in a coherent fashion is far from an easy task, since two key factors require significant flexibility in the service. Firstly, the CWL's ethos includes a strong emphasis on co-production and user involvement:

> "everyone involved with CWL has the opportunity to become
> involved in shaping the service ranging from participation in strategic
> planning days, to working to find solutions to issues people present
> with, to co delivering workshops." (Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd, 2015)

CWL's services are therefore in a state of permanent revolution, as service users, volunteers and staff constantly adapt them to meet needs. Secondly, as with many community organisations, CWL are constantly seeking new sources of funding in order to secure their existence and continued service provision. Hence CWL's services need to remain flexible, in order to balance the demands of funders with the needs of community members.

Despite this complexity, it is possible to establish a general description of CWL's services. Essentially the organisation provides a range of individual therapies and interventions, such as solution-focused therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction and neuro-linguistic programming, to assist people in mental distress to develop coping strategies and improve their mental wellbeing. Alongside this, CWL undertakes a range of community development activities, such as running major community events with partner organisations, in order to improve connections and develop greater community capacity in Cavendish. All of this activity is underpinned by an understanding that many of the challenges faced by individuals and the community are created by wider social factors such as poverty and unemployment. Figure 8.4 below sets out a summary version of the theory of change which underpins CWL's work (the full version of the ToC is provided in Appendix E). This ToC was developed through a workshop with Board members, service users and volunteers, augmented through subsequent discussions with CWL's manager and staff, and observations of the organisation's work.

As with the ToCs for the English case studies, Figure 8.1 is presented in a largely linear fashion for simplicity, with just a single reverse arrow to indicate a degree of reflexivity. In reality, CWL's approach is essentially circular, paralleling the double helix model outlined in Chapter 4 above. Thus the model rests on a central assumption that at least some individuals who have been assisted by CWL will utilise their new-found skills and confidence to work with the organisation as volunteers, shaping and helping to deliver ongoing services for other people.

Figure 8.4 – Summary version of CWL theory of change

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Intended short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Skills and experience of staff, volunteers, service users and students	Individual therapies	Improved mental wellbeing and skills for coping	Improved individual coping	Reduced poverty
Values and 'method' of organisation	Emergency interventions	Increased community capacity and connections	Increased employment	Reduced problematic behaviours – crime, drug misuse, etc.
Links to other organisations	Information provision		Improved family dynamics and parenting	Improved child development
	Community events and activities		Increased community activity	Stronger, more supportive community
	Training			

8.4.3 Interaction with national policy theories of change

> **Community Empowerment Assumption 1** – Communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment

As outlined in Chapter 4, the essence of this repeated assertion in Community Empowerment policy is that communities should be able to decide whether they want to deliver services for themselves, work with agencies to jointly shape and deliver services, or influence services from the outside, without directly engaging in delivery. Given the nature of CWL, it is important to consider the extent to which CWL as an organisation (and Cavendish as a community) can exercise choice in this sense, and also the extent to which individual community members can decide their own level of empowerment within CWL.

As an organisation, the evidence suggests that the key individuals involved in CWL believe they have very limited choice in terms of the decision to directly provide mental wellbeing services for Cavendish. In theory at least, there is no need to provide such a community-led service, because the Health Board funds a larger voluntary organisation to provide an ostensibly similar service for the whole of Glasgow. However, from CWL's perspective, such a city-wide service which is neither locally based, nor locally run falls short of their offering in three important ways. Firstly, CWL staff and service users emphasise the importance of the open door and welcoming atmosphere of the service, contrasted with more formal and time-pressured clinical settings where, "You feel like you're being squeezed into someone's busy schedule and you'd better make use of it and get out. Here it's much slower…" (CWL service user, Workshop CWL 1).

Secondly, this welcoming approach is underpinned by CWL's policy of never operating a waiting list, providing all new service users with an appointment within a fortnight, or faster in emergency situations. And lastly, the welcoming atmosphere of CWL's services is created by the involvement of service users, who not only design the spaces within CWL's premises, but also provide a friendly welcome as volunteers. This perspective on CWL's services is also supported by

the evidence from the local authority, who provide a significant proportion of funding for the organisation:

> "And it's like, this is somewhere where people can relax – they may not want to go to NHS, but they'll go to a local place, they'll go to CWL, because they feel that there's people that can speak to them and know them... So I think the benefits are just enormous…"
> (Partnership Development Officer, Interview GCC 3)

Strongly paralleling ODT's experience, CWL find themselves choosing to deliver services rather than lobby for improved Health Board provision because budget restrictions would make such an influence approach unproductive (Informal discussion with CWL Manager, CWL 4). Moreover, the challenges of a lobbying approach are reinforced by the limited skills and organisational capacity in the community. For example, CWL's Board is largely directed by the organisation's manager, since none of the members have significant experience of governance, let alone the technicalities of organisational legal status as CWL made the transition to a limited company (Observations of CWL Board meetings, CWL 8). Whilst the organisation has an ethos of being community-led and services are strongly shaped by service users, gaps in the knowledge or skills of Board members are filled by the skills and experience of staff, although CWL's own community development approach is constantly attempting to raise skills and confidence in community members. Given that funding for staff is highly unlikely to be available for an organisation focused on service influence, this is a situation where providing services is organisationally easier than influence approaches.

Aside from organisational choices, CWL's ToC is predicated on the notion that individual service users can be empowered by involvement in designing services and potentially progressing to volunteering, helping to deliver services to others. This approach pervades the organisation and is communicated to service users from their first contact:

> "it's more about, 'you can do this too – you can help other people'. Which means people have confidence in themselves beyond just

receiving help…it helps people to feel more comfortable" (Service user, Workshop CWL 1)

Crucially, this process of service users being enabled to influence services or get involved in service provision is entirely voluntary and is supported by a process of individual capacity building (Informal discussion with CWL Manager, CWL 4; Observation of co-production workshop, CWL 10). Hence for service users, it seems that CWL's approach supports Assumption 1, enabling individuals to choose their form of involvement and level of empowerment. The only exception to this relates to some CWL Board members who feel that they need to take on more responsibility than they would like, in order to ensure CWL's continued existence, reflecting the limited choices for CWL as an organisation. For example, it was apparent from Board meetings that some members felt significantly out of their depth in dealing with legal and financial matters, but were prepared to sit on the Board and be directed by the Manager in order to fulfil the necessary requirements for funding (Observations of CWL Board meetings, CWL 8).

In terms of doability, then, the evidence from CWL suggests that a community organisation which focuses on capacity building and co-production can enable a wide range of community members to choose their own level of empowerment, providing them with skills, confidence and opportunities to participate. However, the evidence relating to CWL's position as an organisation raises broader questions about the extent to which whole communities can choose their own level of empowerment. For some disadvantaged communities, universal services may fail to meet local needs and limitations in skills and confidence may preclude the possibility of influencing such services to create a more tailored response. Hence CWL exemplifies a situation where the community feels forced to take the ostensibly more challenging route of providing its own service to meet local need.

Community Empowerment Assumption 2 – Community participation (mostly) works most effectively when communities work in partnership with the local state

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The evidence from CWL suggests a very strong working relationship with the local authority, in terms of key officers and local Councillors (Interview with Council

officer, GCC 3). Given that Glasgow City Council provide a substantial proportion of CWL's core funding, and that this funding has been largely maintained, despite cuts across the Council's external funding in recent years, there is strong evidence that CWL's activities would either cease or reduce significantly without this partnership.

However, CWL's relationship to the local state is not entirely straightforward, since the organisation has a much more problematic relationship with the local Health Board. Having previously been funded by Health, CWL took the decision to 'take a stand' when the procurement process necessitated a change to a more formal clinical service, opting to seek other sources of funding rather than jettison their informal, community-led approach (Informal discussion with CWL Manager, CWL 4). Whilst the organisation has continued to maintain positive working relationships with local health professionals (GP and other Health service referrals made up 53% of new service users in 2014-15, Client data, CWL 18), the relationship with the Health Board has remained problematic.

In terms of plausibility, then, the evidence from CWL suggests that a positive relationship between the local state and community organisations is important, but reinforces the findings from DCC and ODT that it is also possible for such a partnership to co-exist with conflictual relationships with other parts of the local state.

> **Community Empowerment Assumption 3** – Communities have some capacity, but building this capacity is a prerequisite and an integral part of community empowerment, particularly for more disadvantaged communities

As the above discussions indicate, CWL operates on principles which very closely mirror this national policy assumption. On the one hand, the organisation assumes that individuals coming to CWL for help have the potential to manage their own difficulties, given the right coping strategies. And on the other hand, all of CWL's work aims to enhance this capacity, mainly to enable people to experience better wellbeing, but also to facilitate involvement in CWL or other community activities,

as reflected in the organisation's formal objectives (Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd, 2014b) and evidence in the views of volunteers and service users:

> "As a volunteer here, I feel far more valued than in any job I've ever had" (CWL volunteer, Co-production workshop, CWL 10)

This emphasis on individual and community development also reflects CWL's understanding of the additional challenges that many residents of Cavendish face, in terms of poverty and social exclusion. However, as noted above, these disadvantages act as barriers to organisational capacity, leading to a significant reliance on the capacity of the staff, rather than the skills and experience of local community members.

Hence, in terms of plausibility, the evidence from CWL provides significant support for this assumption, although in a somewhat different fashion from the other two case studies. Whereas the evidence from DCC and ODT emphasised the value of being able to build on pre-existing capacity in terms of key activists, CWL are effectively starting from a foundation of staff capacity, because of the significantly lower level of skills, confidence and experience in the local community. Thus this case study strongly underlines the notion that building community capacity is a prerequisite as well as an integral part of community empowerment, and emphasises the substantial challenges of building such capacity in disadvantaged, stressed communities.

8.5 Addressing the research questions

In this chapter and the previous one, I have presented in detail the evidence relating to local theories of change and their implementation across the six case studies. By comparing this evidence from community participation on the ground with national policy assumptions, I have attempted to examine the plausibility and doability of the theories of change underlying Localism and Community Empowerment. In this section I draw the evidence together from across the two

compound case studies of Scottish and English experience, in order to directly address Research Questions 2 and 3.

Firstly, I provide a brief reminder of the basis for the key assumptions within Localism and Community Empowerment, relating to power, the role of the state and community capacity, as set out in Chapter 4. I then summarise the findings from the two chapters, showing what the evidence from the case studies says about the plausibility and doability of the assumptions on the ground. Thus the combined evidence provides a comprehensive response to Research Question 2, showing what the local ToCs tell us about the ToCs underpinning national policy.

Secondly, building on the summary of evidence from all six case studies, I conclude the chapter by discussing the implications of these findings in terms of responsibility, risk and power, thus answering Research Question 3.

8.5.1 Policy assumptions – summary of evidence

As discussed in Chapter 4, Localism and Community Empowerment share a core objective in terms of shifting power to communities. For the UK Government, this is based on a critique of state centralisation under New Labour and therefore the key assumption is that power needs to devolved from the centre to localities (Cabinet Office, 2010; DCLG, 2010; DCLG, 2011b). Whilst there is some ambiguity within the Localism agenda regarding how much power should be devolved to local government and how much to local communities (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2011: 4), it is clear that many of the specific policies, particularly in relation to the 'new community rights' are based on the principle that power should be devolved from the state to communities. The critique of state centralisation and the dependency it supposedly creates also feeds through into the key policy assumptions regarding the role of the state and community capacity. From this perspective, devolving power to communities requires the state to withdraw and allow communities the space to act independently (DCLG, 2010; DCLG, 2011b). And, since the main cause of communities' weakness is diagnosed as excessive state interference, the belief is

that latent capacity will be released and built within communities if the dead hand of bureaucracy is removed (DCLG, 2010; Conservative Party, 2009).

For the Scottish Government, the idea of empowering communities is driven more by a logic of subsidiarity that is consonant with the rhetoric of independence. Hence, just as the nationalist agenda argues that the people of Scotland should be able to control their own destiny, the Community Empowerment agenda suggests that communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment (Scottish Government, 2014c; Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009). Alongside this, the Scottish Government take a much more positive view of the role of the state, perhaps reflecting the wider divergence in attitudes and policy approaches to public services (Keating, 2005). Hence community participation is seen as operating through partnerships between communities and the state. Lastly, in terms of community capacity, the Scottish Government is substantially more cognisant of the barriers that disadvantaged communities face in participating and also emphasises the benefits that can accrue to all communities through various forms of collective activity (Scottish Government, 2014c: 2). Thus the Community Empowerment agenda highlights the importance of supporting this capacity building as both a prerequisite for and an integral part of the empowerment process.

Localism Assumption 1 – Power needs to be devolved from the state

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As discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, there is some support for the plausibility and doability of this assumption in practice. In particular, the evidence from Trottside demonstrates the potential for communities to gain at least some degree of control over local development. The ability of TPC to create specific local policies regarding the scale and pace of development would not have been available without an element of power being transferred from the local authority to the community through Neighbourhood Planning. Moreover, the experience from Hoyfield indicates the degree of innovation that can be engendered in a community organisation by an imposed top-down shift of power and responsibility. Whereas HCDT had been drifting along in a relatively dormant state within the comfort blanket of secure grant funding, the requirement to bring in new income in

order to save the Community Centre has given the organisation a new lease of life.

However, alongside this evidence of support for the idea that power needs to be devolved from the state, the case studies also illustrate a number of significant difficulties with this assumption in practice, as summarised in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 – Questions and qualifications for Localism Assumption 1

Issue	Evidence
Locus of power	Trottside – Challenges to Neighbourhood Plan suggest significant level of power in local planning is held by developers. Plus central government restrictions re housing.
	Armitshore – Communities invited to raise issues of concern, but local authority has limited power to respond due to budget cuts
Meaning of power	Hoyfield – Asset transfer only offers transfer of power if property is an asset rather than a liability. Intensive effort required by HCDT and CWaCC to convert Community Centre into an asset from previous loss-making situation
	Trottside – Necessity to use consultant to translate community-produced Neighbourhood Plan into 'planning speak', highlighting difficulty for communities in exercising power in complex systems where technical expertise is required
Inequalities between communities	Armitshore – Reluctance of most NAGs to take on control of local grant budget demonstrates lack of capacity to manage power

Localism Assumption 2 – Communities are stronger without the state getting in the way

In contrast to the first assumption, there is little evidence from the case studies to support this second assumption. Whilst the Hoyfield experience does demonstrate the level of innovation that can arise following the removal of secure state funding, the intensive involvement of officers and Councillors highlights the importance of local authority support in this case. The key issues raised in relation to this assumption by the empirical evidence are summarised in Table 8.2 below.

Table 8.2 – Questions and qualifications for Localism Assumption 2

Issue	Evidence
Local authority does not withdraw in practice	Trottside – Intensive officer support throughout Neighbourhood Planning process (although evidence that this may not be available in future due to cuts)
	Hoyfield – Intensive officer and Councillor involvement to enable organisation to cope with cuts to funding.
	Armitshore – Continuous intensive officer support to NAGs
Inequalities between communities	Armitshore – Continued local authority support despite NAG members deciding not to become independent organisations – recognition that disadvantaged communities face particular barriers
	Hoyfield – Support specifically targeted at engaging disadvantaged sections of community, recognising that drive for income may exclude those less able to pay for services

Localism Assumption 3 – Most communities have latent capacity which will automatically be released when the state gets out of the way, and there is no need to worry about where this capacity comes from or how it can be further developed.

There is clear evidence from the case studies to suggest that some communities have latent capacity which can be released when the opportunity arises, as in the case of Trottside, where a significant number of individuals with useful skills were drawn into the Neighbourhood Planning process. However, there are notable questions that arise from the evidence, as summarised in Table 8.3 below.

Table 8.3 – Questions and qualifications for Localism Assumption 3

Issue	Evidence
Inequalities between communities	Armitshore – Limited organisational skills and confidence in NAGs, reflected in reluctance to become constituted bodies and somewhat chaotic meetings. Importance of building capacity recognised by local authority.
	Hoyfield – Considerably more skill available than in Armitshore, but still difficulties with drawing in Board members with time, skill and experience. Reliance on local Councillors to provide some of this. Importance of building capacity recognised by local authority.
Community participation processes as key opportunities for capacity building	Trottside – Approach to Neighbourhood Planning focused on building capacity along the way, not just producing final Plan.
	Hoyfield – Emphasis on engaging wider community in running centre, not just operating it as a service.
Importance of history and path dependence	Armitshore – Challenge of building capacity and motivation given history of unresponsive, paternalistic district authority.
	Trottside – Risk of damage to community through possible failure of Neighbourhood Plan to control development.

> **Community Empowerment Assumption 1** – Communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment

As discussed in more detail earlier in this chapter, there is some support for this assumption across all three of the Glasgow case studies. Most obviously, DCC make a clear choice to focus on service influence in relation to grime issues, whilst opting for shared service delivery in relation to crime prevention. Similarly, both ODT and CWL have opted for direct deliver of services or facilities, rather than lobbying public agencies for improved delivery in their area, but the experience of all three organisations highlights significant issues for this assumption, which are summarised in Table 8.4 below.

Table 8.4 – Questions and qualifications for Community Empowerment Assumption 1

Issue	Evidence
Constraints of legislative and institutional context	Dowsett – Inability to control local planning as would be possible in England with Neighbourhood Planning (though note reluctance to take on such responsibility)
	Ooley – Local political context excludes them from some influence routes and lack of public and private sector funding precludes timeous provision of high quality facilities.
Who makes decisions regarding level of empowerment	Dowsett – Limited emphasis on communication with community raises questions about whether choices are representative of wider views.
	Ooley – Conflict within community between organisations undermines clarity of 'community choice'.
Inequalities between communities	Cavendish – Lack of capacity arising from wider disadvantage in community limits options in terms of community activity.

Community Empowerment Assumption 2 - Community participation (mostly) works most effectively when communities work in partnership with the local state

All three of the Glasgow case studies demonstrate the value of communities working in partnership with the local state, since all three organisations can point to impacts achieved through positive relations with the Council. However, the evidence also questions this assumption in important ways, summarised in Table 8.5 below.

Table 8.5 – Questions and qualifications for Community Empowerment Assumption 2

Issue	Evidence
Co-existence of positive and conflictual relations between community organisations and local state	Cavendish – Positive and supportive relationship with local authority and some health practitioners, alongside mutually critical and distrustful relationship with Health Board.
	Dowsett – Positive relationship with some Councillors and some officers, alongside extremely critical views of much of Council and confrontational approach to improving particular services.
	Ooley – Reasonably positive relationship with Project Manager and some Councillors, alongside problematic relationship with other Councillors and critical view of Council as a whole.
Resistance to partnership from the local state	Ooley – Unwillingness from some sections of Council to work with organisation and inflexibility in terms of involvement policy.

> **Community Empowerment Assumption 3** - Communities have some capacity, but building this capacity is a prerequisite and an integral part of community empowerment, particularly for more disadvantaged communities

There is strong support for this assumption across the Glasgow case studies, with DCC epitomising the idea of pre-existing community capacity, whilst ODT and CWL are both heavily focused on building capacity in more challenging circumstances. However, the evidence also introduces four further issues about how capacity can be built in practice, summarised in Table 8.6 below.

Table 8.6 – Questions and qualifications for Community Empowerment Assumption 3

Issue	Evidence
Inequalities between communities	Cavendish – Significant challenges in building capacity in disadvantaged communities, including low levels of education and professional experience, together with additional life stresses. Paid staff as an approach to overcome such difficulties, but this raises additional funding questions.
	Ooley – Challenges in building community strengths in communities in transition, even where the level of disadvantage is not particularly significant.
Dominant organisations as a barrier to building capacity	Dowsett – Established organisation with little interest in building wider community strengths acting as a barrier to community participation approaches from the local authority.
Limited support from the state	All three areas – Very little evidence of direct capacity building support available to organisations, perhaps reflecting budgetary constraints on local authority and/or wider issues about role of CLD.

8.5.2 Drawing the evidence together – addressing Research Question 2

Drawing this evidence together across all three of the core assumptions for each policy agenda, it is clear that the case studies in both countries demonstrate significant impacts of community participation operating in the context of Localism and Community Empowerment. The devolution of power facilitated by Localism's

'new community rights' has enabled community organisations to create outcomes such as the degree of control over local development in Trottside and the revitalised community centre in Hoyfield. Whilst the Scottish case studies examine organisations working within the context of the broad Community Empowerment agenda before the new legislative rights created by the 2015 Act were implemented, the participant organisations nevertheless demonstrate the possibility of generating specific outcomes through their work. Thus CWL have delivered improvements in wellbeing for clients, ODT have provided the new Ooley play park, and DCC can point to numerous specific victories from their tireless lobbying on planning and service issues. Moreover, across both countries, communities themselves have benefited in terms of increases in the community strengths and community activities identified in the double helix model. Thus community members have gained skills and confidence, facilities have benefited from new capital investment, networks have been enhanced and organisational capacity has increased in some areas.

However, the evidence also highlights some significant questions about the implementation of both Localism and Community Empowerment, and about the plausibility and doability of their underlying policy assumptions.

Community capacity

In particular, there are clearly substantial issues regarding the different levels of capacity in different communities. Whereas TPC have been able to take advantage of the opportunity presented by Neighbourhood Planning, despite the substantial challenges that they have faced, the communities in Armitshore lack the community strengths to be able to organise effectively and thereby make the most of the NAGs as an influence opportunity. Similarly, DCC are able to draw on a broad base of capacity within the area, whereas CWL struggle to identify Board members and to build their capacity. Hence the evidence from both sides of the border suggests that the Localism assumption of latent community capacity runs the risk of exacerbating inequalities, as more disadvantaged communities are less able to take advantage of opportunities. Whilst the Community Empowerment agenda is much more cognisant of this issue than Localism, the case studies strongly emphasise the challenges in addressing inequalities of community capacity. These challenges relate not just to socio-economic disadvantage, but

also areas in transition, such as Ooley, neighbourhoods where dominant community organisations show little interest in encouraging wider participation, such as Dowsett, and areas where previous experience of unresponsive local government breeds apathy, such as Armitshore.

Role of the state

The Localism assumption that communities are stronger when the state gets out of the way is undermined in practice by the evidence from Cheshire that Councils do not readily absent themselves from their constituent communities and that supportive relationships can be key to effective community participation. However, the evidence of reducing local government capacity resulting from budget cuts raises further concerns about the potential for Localism to exacerbate inequality, as reduced support for communities such as the halving of the Localities and Spatial Planning teams may have greater impacts on those disadvantaged communities with few resources of their own. Thus, whilst local authorities may aim to support community participation proactively in the short-term, there are significant open questions about the implications of this support being withdrawn in the long-term.

Alongside this, the Community Empowerment assumption that participation works best when communities work in partnership with the local state is complicated by the consistent evidence from almost all the case studies that relationships tend to be a simultaneous mix of partnership and conflict. This raises challenges for local government in managing such complex relationships, but also adds an extra dimension to the question of how the state can best support disadvantaged communities to participate. Moreover, there is some evidence of resistance to community participation from parts of local government, which raises similar questions for central government as to how it can encourage a participative culture.

Power

Lastly, for Localism there are clearly questions about the extent to which the vaunted devolution of power is either possible or meaningful in some situations and where the balance lies between power, risk and responsibility. Whilst new rights such as Neighbourhood Planning and Community Asset Transfer

undoubtedly alter the power structure in some ways, it is not always clear that communities are the main beneficiaries, as evidenced by the degree of power held by developers in planning and the risk of property liabilities being transferred from the state to communities. Again, the impact of local authority cuts is important in shaping power transfer, as are questions of inequality in terms of which communities are best able to obtain and manage power.

Equally, there are significant questions for the Scottish Government assumption that communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment. Whilst all three case study organisations demonstrate a significant degree of agency in determining their role, there is also strong evidence of constraints on choice, in terms of the external institutional and legislative context, and the internal capacity of each community, with socio-economic disadvantage being a key factor. Moreover, there are clearly issues regarding who makes such choices within communities.

Interestingly, this suggests that there may be lessons to be read across the two policy agendas in relation to power. From a UK government point of view, the top-down devolution of power and responsibility to counter state centralisation may encounter barriers if it fails to take into account the choices of community organisations. Whilst from a Scottish Government perspective, the emphasis on communities being able to choose their own level of empowerment needs to be contextualised, including a clear understanding that such choices are significantly shaped by opportunities created or restricted through policy and funding from the centre.

8.5.3 Discussion – addressing Research Question 3

Taking the combined evidence from Glasgow and Cheshire one stage further, these findings offer a contribution to the broader knowledge base and theoretical understandings of community participation. Examining the ToC findings from across all six case studies in the light of the literature explored in Chapters 3 and 4, provides an analysis to address Research Question 3 regarding the implications

of national and local theories of change for communities in terms of responsibility, risk and power.

As discussed in Chapter 4, both governments make connections between the rhetoric of shifting power to communities and issues of responsibility, albeit for somewhat different reasons. Whilst the UK Government emphasises the importance of "decentralising responsibility and power" (Conservative Party, 2009: 1) to counter what they saw as the excessive centralisation of the previous New Labour government, the Scottish Government ties the ideas of communities taking responsibility to the nationalist agenda of Scotland taking responsibility for its own future (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2009: 2). Regardless of the underlying rationale, this explicit link between community participation and responsibility creates a strong argument that both Localism and Community Empowerment are contemporary forms of what Rose (1996: 332) terms 'government through community' – the notion that governments are shifting responsibilities from the state onto communities. However, the evidence from this study suggests, firstly, that there are variations in the degree and form of responsibilisation generated by the two policy agendas and, secondly, that the practical implementation of such policies raises questions about the responsibilisation thesis itself.

In order to get to grips with the ways in which power and responsibility are being divided up in practice, Gaventa's (2006) tripartite categorisation of 'spaces for participation', introduced in Chapter 3 above, provides a useful lens. 'Closed' spaces are those where decisions are made without significant participation, 'invited' spaces exist where people are involved, but the boundaries are set by the elite/state and 'claimed' spaces are created from the bottom up by community mobilisation. Utilising this framework, both Localism and Community Empowerment can be understood as attempts to create a range of 'invited' spaces for participation, although the underlying policy assumptions suggest that the two governments are approaching the process of shifting power to communities in subtly different ways. In particular, the Scottish Government emphasis on communities being able to choose their own level of empowerment arguably opens the possibility of 'claimed' spaces and, moreover, the level of community involvement (albeit invited) in the development of the Community Empowerment Act reinforces this perspective.

In practice, however, the evidence from this study suggests that the spaces for participation created by Localism and Community Empowerment are less clear than the initial policy analysis might suggest.

Most obviously, there is significant evidence from a number of the case studies that the impact of cuts to local authority budgets are shaping the spaces for participation and thereby shifting the balance of power and responsibility. For example, the space that CWL have claimed by establishing their own wellbeing service is increasingly under pressure as grant funding from the Council reduces and, moreover, the decisions about funding are taken in closed spaces within Westminster, Holyrood and Glasgow City Chambers. Hence the power to deliver services which CWL has built up over time is increasingly being outweighed by the responsibility involved in seeking alternative funding and the risk of closure. Similarly, HCDT were faced with a sudden change to their participation space as the decision to cut their funding forced them to take full responsibility for the Centre's finances and created an imminent risk of closure. Whilst they have thus far managed the situation and kept the Centre open, the shift of responsibility arising from local government cuts is clear.

The evidence from this study suggests, therefore, that there is some commonality of experience on both sides of the border in the form of community responsibilisation resulting from cuts to funding and public services. As Hoggett (1997: 10) argued in relation to an earlier era of government, 'community' in this context of austerity can become, "a metaphor for the absence or withdrawal of services by the state".

Crucially, the evidence also suggests that these processes can result in a transfer of risk as well as power and responsibility. In the cases of both HCDT and CWL, the additional responsibility also involved significant risk, not merely in terms of the potential closure of services or facilities, but also the personal risk of increased stress to those involved. Thus HCDT Board members find themselves dealing with significant anxiety around the precarious financial position of the organisation following the cuts to grant funding, whilst CWL Board members are similarly stressed by the challenges of securing sufficient funding to maintain services.

Moreover, in both cases the level of personal pressure is increased by the knowledge that they are responsible not merely for the service and its recipients, but also for the wellbeing and employment status of their staff.

Indeed, as the ODT situation illustrates, even where organisations claim spaces by taking on projects such as the play park, there are risks of reputational damage and stress through internal community conflict. More strikingly, TPC's experience of the legal action following their Neighbourhood Planning process exposed activists to quite extreme levels of stress and anxiety. Despite the fact that the responsibility for defending the Neighbourhood Plan in court lay with the local authority, TPC members still had to cope with legal letters and piles of documentation landing on their doorsteps. Both of these cases therefore highlight the possibility of unanticipated risks and, indeed, the difficulty for community organisations of judging the potential risks involved when opting to enter an invited or claimed space.

Interestingly, whereas organisations such as TPC and ODT have found themselves facing unanticipated risk, communities in Armitshore opted not to take on additional responsibility or power, precisely because they could anticipate the personal risks that might arise from managing money in particular. By opting not to participate in the more 'responsibilised' fashion proposed by the local authority, these communities raise questions for the Foucauldian notion of governmentality on which much of the responsibilisation thesis is built (Raco and Imrie, 2000; Rose, 1996). Rather than internalising the rhetoric of Localism and the Big Society to become self-governing citizens, the resistance of the Armitshore communities points to a more active role for community members, able to make some judgements about the degree of responsibility they are willing to adopt. Interestingly, this not only seems to fit more closely with the Scottish Government's notion of communities being able to choose their own level of empowerment, but also parallels the experience of previous attempts at top-down devolution of responsibility in the housing field in Scotland (McKee and Cooper, 2008; McKee, 2008).

Indeed, the evidence from across all of the case studies suggests that the role of community agency is key, in terms of the implementation and impact of community

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participation policy and also in relation to empirical manifestation of responsibilisation. As noted in relation to Assumption 1 of the Community Empowerment agenda, there is evidence that all three participant organisations in Scotland exercise at least some degree of choice in terms of their approach. Similarly, although the rhetoric of Localism implies a more compulsory, top-down shift of power from state to communities, there is significant evidence that all three of the English organisations are making clear decisions about whether to take on additional power and responsibility. The key questions, then, may be not only to do with the extent of the responsibility shift from state to community, but the extent to which different communities are willing and able to accept responsibility in return for power, and whether communities are able to predict the outcomes of participation in terms of the balance between power, responsibility and risk.

However, just as the Glasgow case studies illustrate the constraints on community choice relating to the external and internal context, similar issues arise to place boundaries around the degree of agency available for the Cheshire organisations. Most obviously, the cuts to grant funding for HCDT effectively create a binary choice between accepting the greater level of responsibility for managing the Community Centre and closing the facility completely.

More interestingly, the evidence from Trottside demonstrates how the nature and location of power can, in some circumstances, alter the participation space and thereby shape the options for community agency in unpredictable ways. When TPC entered the process of Neighbourhood Planning, they did so on the basis of a tactical judgement that the extra responsibility of producing their own Plan was worth accepting in return for the additional power that the Plan should give them over local development. From the outset they were aware that Neighbourhood Planning constitutes an invited space, since the boundaries of participation are set by central government through the NPPF and the specific requirement to meet house-building targets (DCLG, 2012). However, as laid out above, their experience illustrated the extent to which significant areas of power over local development are exercised by private sector developers through the legal system. Hence what had appeared as an invited participation space seemed to become increasingly closed, as the legal challenges took decision-making power away from the community. Moreover, there is a strong argument that the Trottside legal

case was an attempt by the developers to utilise 'hidden power' (Gaventa, 2006; Lukes, 1974) in order to shape the agenda for future Neighbourhood Planning in other areas. At this extreme, then, the hidden power within the planning system has the potential to significantly shift the balance between power, risk and responsibility for communities, reducing their level of power whilst increasing the level of personal risk, as outlined above.

Furthermore, there is some evidence from other communities within Cheshire West that the Secretary of State and the Planning Inspectorate are explicitly citing limited progress in producing a Neighbourhood Plan as partial grounds for approving planning applications. Thus the invitation to participate in Neighbourhood Planning potentially carries an additional hidden responsibility, requiring communities to work to externally imposed timetables if they are to gain any power at all.

Despite all of the unanticipated risks, activists in Trottside have demonstrated their ability to cope, justifying the confidence in their community's capacity that encouraged them to engage in Neighbourhood Planning. By contrast, the decision by the majority of the Armitshore NAGs not to become constituted organisations is an instance of community agency which is clearly shaped by concerns amongst members that they might not have the skills or organisational capacity to manage the extra responsibility. Indeed, whilst many of the participant organisations face elements of unanticipated responsibility or risk, the level of confidence in choosing to take on greater power and responsibility appears to exhibit a clear socio-economic gradient, with more advantaged communities being generally more willing and able to enter a range of participation spaces.

This notion of a socio-economic gradient in terms of communities' confidence in taking on the responsibility and potential risks that come with opportunities for power is clearly connected to the evidence relating to Assumption 3 for each policy agenda. The evidence from both Cheshire and Glasgow highlights the considerable differential in relation to the human resources available to communities, with organisations such as TPC and DCC able to draw on a wide range of skilled individuals, whilst organisations such as CWL, struggle to identify and develop the necessary skills amongst community members to maintain their

operation. Such a differential in terms of community resources is perhaps no surprise, given different levels of education across the areas – most of Trottside and Dowsett lie within the 20% least deprived areas in terms of education level, whilst most of Armitshore and Cavendish lie within the 20% most deprived in terms of education (Open Data Communities, 2014; Scottish Government, 2015d). Moreover, the challenges of limited organisational capacity evident in Armitshore fits with evidence from elsewhere indicating higher levels of volunteering and charitable giving, as well as higher numbers of neighbourhood-level organisations in more affluent areas (Clifford et al, 2013; Mohan, 2011). Similarly, the finding from Ooley that the limited community cohesion associated with such a rapidly changing neighbourhood creates barriers to participation clearly fits with similar findings from elsewhere relating to social capital in particular (McCulloch et al, 2013).

Hence, the evidence highlights the additional challenges faced by socio-economically disadvantaged communities in terms of all three aspects of community strength. Whereas much of the earlier critiques of community participation policy from a responsibilisation perspective focused on the ways in which area-based regeneration initiatives were requiring disadvantaged communities to take on more responsibility (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Raco, 2003), the shift towards community participation as a cross-cutting governmental agenda on both sides of the border places the issues of limited community strength in a new light. Whilst there may still be situations under Localism and Community Empowerment where disadvantaged communities may find themselves forced to adopt responsibilities with which they are not entirely comfortable (e.g. CWL), there is an additional concern that existing structural inequalities could be exacerbated as more affluent communities are better able to acquire power and manage the consequent responsibilities and risks than more disadvantaged communities.

In addition to the impacts of structural inequalities, austerity and imbalances of power within particular policy areas, the evidence from this study also highlights the important and complex role of the local state in shaping spaces for community participation and the opportunities for community agency within them.

As outlined above, the evidence from this study indicates that relationships between the local state and communities are complex. Even in situations where austerity is rapidly shrinking the resources available from the local authority, such as the HCDT and CWL cases, there is continued interaction and support for community participation. Whilst it is clear that the broader context of cuts to local authority budgets is significantly reducing the ability of Councils to support community participation financially (Hastings et al, 2015b), the case studies highlight the impact of local politics, in the sense that Councillors are inevitably wary of being seen to abandon popular local organisations and projects.

However, across all of the case studies, with the possible exception of HCDT, relations between communities and the local state are far from straightforwardly positive, being characterised by a mix of partnership and conflict. This picture of complex interactions between the local state and communities raises interesting questions about the role of the state in supporting community participation. Setting aside the issue of direct support for community capacity building (i.e. CLD in Scotland and the Community Organiser Programme in England), as this study provides little evidence to evaluate such approaches, the key issues relate to the ways in which the policies, culture and practice of state agencies can build or undermine community strengths and facilitate or hinder community action, as illustrated in the double helix model.

Following on from the discussion above regarding the socio-economic gradient in community capacity, the evidence from CWL and the Armitshore NAGs not only highlights the additional challenges in supporting community participation in more disadvantaged communities, but also questions whether public agencies are best placed to provide direct support in communities where there is significant mistrust of public agencies. In Armitshore, the communities have reacted against the plans for additional responsibility laid out by the local authority, whilst in Cavendish the approach taken by CWL is significantly shaped by an understanding that many local people will not approach statutory agencies for support.

On the flipside of the evidence regarding community resistance to additional responsibility, there are also instances in which parts of the local state are themselves resistant to devolution of power, as shown by the intransigence

encountered by ODT. As Taylor (2003: 128) suggests, such resistance to devolution of power may be underpinned by a "culture of risk aversion within the state", which may have regressive consequences, as only the more articulate, assertive communities are able to overcome it.

Hence there are questions regarding the role of national policy in attempting to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the local state towards communities. And these questions are made even more complex by the evidence which suggests that, although all of the participant organisations in this study benefit from some degree of support from the local authority, in many cases (e.g. DCC, ODT, Armitshore NAGs) a critical attitude to state services is a key motivator for participation. So, whilst Localism assumes that the state should get out of the way and Community Empowerment is based on principles of partnership working, the reality seems to be that community organisations often benefit from the tension between partnership and conflict. As Gilchrist (2000) argues, this element of complexity and chaos in relationships is an integral part of self-organised community action and is therefore necessary for effective participation, for all that it may feel awkward for local authority officers and Members.

8.6 Concluding summary

To sum up this discussion, then, the six case studies in this study highlight a number of points which significantly amend and augment the responsibilisation thesis. Whilst the notion of 'government through community' is undoubtedly a useful critical lens through which to examine Localism and Community Empowerment, the empirical evidence indicates that the reality is more complex than this basic thesis might suggest in a number of ways.

Across both countries, the evidence suggests that any shift of responsibility from the state to communities also needs to be examined in terms of the power and risk dynamics at play. Perhaps not surprisingly, whilst both the UK and Scottish Governments emphasise the importance of giving power to communities and are quite explicit about the links between power and responsibility, neither Government uses the language of risk in their policy rhetoric. However, in order to

understand the implications for communities and, in particular, for community organisations activists, it is essential to explore how any participation process shapes the balance between power, risk and responsibility.

As well as introducing risk into the equation, the case studies suggest that the governmentality aspect of the responsibilisation thesis, which argues that communities internalise government rhetoric of responsibility to become self-governing, denies the level of critical agency demonstrated by community organisations and activists. Whilst there are undoubtedly instances in which responsibility is being pushed out from the state onto communities, not least as a consequence of austerity, there is considerable evidence that community organisations are able to resist such responsibilisation at times, as well as instances in which additional responsibility is readily accepted as a corollary of increased power for a community.

However, evidence from across the six communities highlights a range of contextual factors which are important in facilitating or constraining the level of community agency at play, as well as shaping the balance between power, risk and responsibility. Firstly, whilst the decisions of activists and communities about whether to engage in particular forms of activity are primarily driven by local issues affecting the community, national policy can be a crucial factor in determining local priorities. In particular, there is significant evidence that austerity and its impacts on local government budgets are having substantial effects on the activities of some community organisations, as they seek to defend services or facilities under threat, or try to manage the implications of reduced staffing and finance on basic services such as street cleaning. Indeed, it is possible to argue that some elements of Localism or Community Empowerment shift responsibility and risk onto communities only to the extent that the wider context of austerity is shrinking state provision in particular neighbourhoods. Whilst the new legislative rights for communities in each country create additional or extended spaces for participation, it is the local context, itself partly shaped by national policy and wider structural factors, which drives communities to accept or decline invitations to participate, or to take independent action.

Secondly, alongside the impacts of austerity, the actions and attitudes of the local state play a crucial role in shaping participation spaces, thereby affecting community agency and the balance between power, risk and responsibility in each situation. The evidence from the case studies emphasises the complexity of relationships between local government and communities, almost invariably consisting of an awkward mixture of supportive and conflictual relationships. Although some support from the local authority is important for community action in all of the case studies, the evidence suggests that, on the one hand, a critical relationship with Council services can be a significant motivating factor, whilst on the other hand, a history of unresponsive public agencies can demotivate and demoralise. Hence, the processes whereby national policy regarding community participation or austerity can act to reallocate power, risk and responsibility are substantially mediated by the local state in ways which can only be fully understood at the local level.

Lastly, there is consistent evidence from this study regarding the central role of socio-economic disadvantage in restricting the options for community agency, and in shifting the balance away from power and towards risk and responsibility. Whilst six case studies is far from a large quantitative sample, the evidence relating to community capacity demonstrates a clear socio-economic gradient, which in turn limits the ability of more disadvantaged communities to obtain power, manage risk and responsibility and build community strengths. Moreover, there is a clear interaction with the impacts of austerity, since disadvantaged communities are inevitably more dependent on state services and therefore more at risk when those services are cut. In this respect, the evidence extends the critique of the responsibilisation thesis, which has been focused largely on the role of disadvantaged communities in specific regeneration initiatives. With the extension of community participation policy on both sides of the border to become a cross-cutting agenda which applies to all communities, the evidence of unequal capacity highlights the danger that it could exacerbate inequalities between communities by disproportionately empowering the already advantaged.

The evidence from this study suggests, therefore, that the notion of 'government through community' needs a nuanced interpretation in practice. Whilst austerity appears to be shifting responsibility onto communities, particularly when it is

combined with socio-economic disadvantage, the outcomes and processes involved cannot be understood fully without exploring the role of the local state and, perhaps most importantly, examining the level of community agency involved. Moreover, any consideration of responsibilisation in relation to communities also needs to consider the balance between responsibility, risk and power.

Finally, these conclusions also relate to the policy divergence identified in Chapter 4 and examined in empirical detail in this chapter and the previous one. Whilst the role of the local state and the impact of community agency militates against a simplistic comparison of the two policy agendas, it is nevertheless possible to make some broad points about the interaction between the key policy assumptions and the augmented ideas of government through community developed above. On the surface, the Scottish Government's emphasis on communities being able to choose their own level of empowerment would seem to suggest that the Community Empowerment agenda could avoid accusations of responsibilisation. However, the evidence from across both countries demonstrates the ways in which community agency and choice is constrained by external and internal factors, not least of which is a witches' brew of austerity and inequality. Thus, whilst there is evidence across all the case studies of community organisations delivering positive outcomes, the UK Government policy of austerity would appear to be shifting the balance between power, responsibility and risk in an unfavourable direction for communities in both England and Scotland. Moreover, whilst there is little evidence from this study regarding the effectiveness or otherwise of the Scottish Government's focus on supporting disadvantaged communities, it seems relatively clear that the UK Government's very limited concern for inequalities of community capacity suggests that Localism could have regressive consequences.

Having examined the interactions between national and local theories of change in this chapter and the previous one, the next chapter turns to the second half of the methodological partnership, focusing on Realist Evaluation. Looking across all of the case studies, Chapter 9 uses RE methodology to examine the detailed evidence of causality within the broad ToCs, in order to develop generalisable findings of what works in community participation.

Chapter 9 – Realist Evaluation analysis of all case studies

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reintroduce the second half of the methodological partnership which underpins this study, using a Realist Evaluation approach to analyse the findings from the case studies from a different perspective. Over the last two chapters, I have utilised Theories of Change methodology to examine the interactions between national policy and local practice, exploring the assumptions which underlie national policy and identifying issues relating to the distribution of responsibility, risk and power. This chapter turns to RE methodology in order to focus on causality in more depth, analysing the mechanisms which may be operative in different contexts to produce additionality. Hence the aim is to begin to identify evidence of causality which can offer generalisable lessons about 'what works' in community participation.

In order to undertake this RE analysis, this chapter builds on the hypothesised mechanisms drawn from the literature in Chapter 5. By examining the findings from all six case studies in relation to these postulated mechanisms, the chapter aims to address Research Question 4:

4. Which mechanisms operate most effectively in different contexts to produce outcome impacts which are additional to those which could be achieved without community participation?

As explained in more detail in Chapter 6, this study is using RE methodology in an exploratory fashion, for the process of what Pawson and Tilley (1997: 87) call 'theory formation and development'. Thus, starting from Chapter 5's hypothesised mechanisms, this chapter uses the empirical data to explore the contexts in which they operate in order to identify context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configurations which will provide stronger theory as to "what works, for whom, in what circumstances" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 77). The analysis draws on a range of data from across all three phases of the research, although with a

particular emphasis on the outcome data collected in Phase 2 and examined collaboratively in Phase 3. As will be evident through the course of this chapter, the quality and robustness of the evidence is significantly varied across the case studies. The issues relating to the challenges of collecting, managing and analysing such varied data, as well as questions relating to its quality, are addressed in Chapter 10, which examines the methodological findings of the study.

9.2 Identifying possible 'regularities'

As a starting point for the analysis, I examined the possible operations of the mechanisms of additionality set out in Chapter 5 in relation to each case, drawing on the range of qualitative and quantitative evidence of outcomes generated in each situation, collected in Phase 2 of the research. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this analysis suggests that the evidence for the operation of mechanisms of additionality is strongest in relation to service influence and community self-help, particularly in terms of mechanisms 1a (whereby services are improved through community knowledge) and 2a (whereby communities deliver services or facilities which otherwise would not exist). For each of these mechanisms, there is strong evidence in the sense that the operation of the mechanism is demonstrated across at least three of the case studies and, moreover, the evidence is based on primary data rather than secondary report. Table 9.1 below sets out a very brief summary of the evidence relating to these key mechanisms. A fuller version of this table, summarising the evidence relating to all 17 postulated mechanisms of additionality is provided in Appendix F.

For most of the other mechanisms, the evidence is much more limited, being based on no more than one or two case studies and often relying on anecdotal reports of impact. This more limited evidence does not indicate that these other mechanisms are invalid, but is rather a reflection of the choice of case studies and the methodological decision to work with community organisations. Thus, for example, mechanism 5c, whereby the support networks built through community participation provide health and wellbeing benefits to individual community

members, could be operating in any or all of the case study areas, but the study was not designed to collect evidence of such diffuse impacts.

As noted in Chapter 6, it was clear at this stage of the analysis that it would be not be possible to examine all 17 postulated mechanisms of additionality, both because of limitations in the evidence and for reasons of practicality. Hence it was necessary to concentrate the analysis on a selection of mechanisms. The selection was made on the basis of the strength of evidence and also on the pertinence of the mechanisms, building on the theoretical and policy issues highlighted in the previous chapter. Fortunately, the evidence is strongest for mechanisms 1a and 2a, which are also of particular value in terms of the debates regarding responsibilisation, cutting to the core of questions as to whether communities can influence public services or find themselves required to take on responsibility for delivery.

Table 9.1 – Summary of evidence for selected additionality mechanisms operating in each case

Mechanisms		Description	Trottside Parish Council	Hoyfield Community Development Trust	Armitshore NAGs	Dowsett Community Council	Ooley Development Trust	Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd
			Organisation					
1a	'We know what people want, so you can do it better'	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge	Delayed and possibly prevented large-scale developments		Some evidence of minor changes to services (largely swamped by impact of cuts)	Various examples of minor service changes and influence to planning decisions	Some limited examples of influence through regeneration process, though not a high priority for ODT	
2a	'It wouldn't happen otherwise'	Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services that would not otherwise be delivered		Community centre service delivered			Play park delivered earlier and to a higher standard than otherwise	Mental wellbeing service delivered

From a Realist Evaluation perspective, the evidence in Table 9.1 above indicates 'regularities', which suggest that particular mechanisms may be operating to produce similar outcomes in different cases. However, further exploration of the contexts is required in order to establish whether these apparent regularities are in fact causal patterns. Thus the commonalities in Table 9.1 provides a starting point for the next stage of RE analysis, which uses the empirical data from each case to examine the contextual factors which are relevant in terms of the operation of the mechanisms and thereby to produce CMO configurations which refine the basic, hypothesised mechanism pathways.

As discussed in the latter part of Chapter 5, the identification of relevant contextual factors is not a simple matter, partly because the dividing line between contexts and mechanisms is never clear and partly because contextual factors are likely to be both numerous and interactive. However, the notion of a level ontology, derived from Brante (2001) and outlined in Table 5.8 provides some assistance, directing the focus towards 'higher' levels to provide the context. Given that mechanisms 1a and 2a both place the community organisation at the centre, as the active agent in the process, this suggests that the important contextual factors are likely to relate particularly to the community, regional and national levels, as well as the relationships between these levels and the community organisation.

The next section therefore attempts to identify and explore the relevant contextual factors in relation to the operation of mechanisms 1a and 2a, alongside a more detailed consideration of the regularities themselves. For each mechanism I present the evidence regarding the operation of the mechanism and the outcome impacts, before moving on to explore the important contextual factors. Having developed more refined CMO configurations for each mechanism, I build on the analysis by discussing the possible implications for policy and the areas for further research, which would further refine the postulated theories. For reasons that will become clear through the discussion, I have presented the evidence relating to mechanism 2a before that for mechanism 1a.

9.3 Examining the regularities: Mechanism 2a – 'It wouldn't happen otherwise'

Description of mechanism: Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services that would not otherwise be delivered.

9.3.1 Example 1 – HCDT

Outcome: Community centre service delivered.

Evidence

The evidence for this MO configuration in Hoyfield lies not merely in the continued existence and operation of the Community Centre, but more importantly in the substantial improvements in the Trust's financial situation. From a situation at the beginning of 2012 where the Trust was rapidly approaching financial liquidation, with decreasing income and increasing costs, by 2014-15 the Centre had become financially sustainable for at least the medium term, covering all of its costs including the Centre Manager's salary (Workshop discussion with Board, HCDT 1; Centre Manager discussion, HCDT 3). Moreover, although HCDT are still in the process of developing usage figures, the baseline data suggests that only 34% of users would be able to undertake similar activities elsewhere were the Centre to close, providing evidence of additionality (Survey data, HCDT 9).

As with much of the evidence discussed in this chapter, the importance of this evidence relies significantly on comparison with hypothetical counterfactuals. Thus, in this instance, the assumption is that CWaCC's decision to cut funding was not dependent on HCDT stepping into the breach and therefore, without the actions taken by HCDT's Board, the Centre would have run out of funds and been forced to close. Similarly, the survey evidence from Centre users relies on their knowledge of other options in a situation where they have not been forced to seek alternatives, therefore providing a somewhat qualified indication of additionality. These issues with the evidence are themselves a reflection of the complexity of evaluating community participation, which are explored further in Chapter 10.

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Contextual factors

Crucially, the improvement in the Trust's finances occurred whilst local authority grant funding was reducing from a level which covered the full lease costs of the Centre to zero over the 4-year period 2012-16. This tight financial situation, caused by government austerity policies, was central to the operation of this mechanism in HCDT's work. Without the reduction in funding, it would be reasonable to argue that this mechanism would not have come into play, since the Centre could have continued operating as it had done previously with minimal community involvement. At the same time, the availability of other sources of grant funding, has been important in enabling HCDT to renovate and improve the Centre in order to increase lettings and thereby move towards a more sustainable financial situation (Workshop discussion with Board, HCDT 1; Discussions with Centre Manager, HCDT 3 & 5).

In addition to the financial situation, the evidence demonstrates that the operation of this mechanism relied heavily on a supportive relationship with the local authority, underpinned by the Council's perspective that enabling communities to do more could save money:

> "And there is an aspect where, if you get more done in the community, then you need to be less reliant on the Council."
> (Interview with Council Leader, CWaCC 3)

Thus the local authority provided short-term financial assistance through the local Members' small grants budget, in-kind support with refurbishment, plus time and effort from Councillors and officers (Workshop with Board, HCDT 1; Interview with Partnership Manager, CWaCC 4).

The last contextual factor which emerges strongly from the HCDT situation in relation to this mechanism is the role of particular individuals. Whilst the development of an operational and sustainable community centre is undoubtedly a collective project, reliant on the capacity of HCDT as an organisation, much of the evidence points to the crucial role played by the Centre Manager, with her local contacts and innovative mindset, combined with the financial management skills of the Treasurer (Workshop with Board, HCDT 1). As CWACC's Partnership

Manager expressed it, "It's lucky that we got [the Centre Manager] full stop…it's really quite inspirational what she's done" (Council officer interview, CWaCC 4).

9.3.2 Example 2 – ODT

Outcome: Play park installed.

Evidence

The existence of the Ooley play park clearly demonstrates this outcome, together with the emerging data regarding high levels of usage by the local community (Funding report, ODT 10). More importantly, it is important to understand the alternative scenario without ODT's activity:

> "[The developer] would have provided it through the Development Agreement, but it would have been later on and probably not to the same high specification... So that was a super degree of additionality that ODT brought to the table." (Council officer interview, GCC 2)

Hence there is significant evidence that this mechanism was in operation. In particular, the housing market impacts of the 2007-8 crash has delayed the completion date for Ooley from 2015 to potentially as late as 2030. Thus ODT's involvement has provided the play park as much as 10-15 years earlier than would otherwise be the case, providing a facility for an entire generation of children.

Contextual factors

The financial situation is clearly important as a contextual factor for ODT, although in slightly different ways from that experienced by HCDT. Whilst there is no direct financial threat, there is a clear sense in which the delays caused by the housing market crash are a key motivator for ODT's work to fund and install the play park (Workshop discussion with Board, ODT 2). Moreover, wider restrictions on public funding encouraged ODT to seek external funding for the play park, in order to retain a larger proportion of the Development Agreement funds for their longer-term community centre project (Workshop discussion with Board, ODT 1). On the

flipside, however, the availability of Lottery funding and ODT board members' skills in grant applications have clearly been vital.

Relations with other organisations are again important for ODT, although not entirely straightforward. Whilst relations with the housing developer have been positive, enabling ODT to install the play park whilst house-building was ongoing in the surrounding area (Observation of steering group meeting, ODT 5; Discussion with ODT Board members, ODT 6), relations with the local authority have been more mixed. Although the Council were instrumental in the establishment of ODT early in the housing development process and initially very supportive of their work, the general feeling within ODT is that the officer responsible for the Ooley Development Agreement is rather dismissive of community participation, leaving them to work in isolation and, in some senses, to "do the Council's job" (Workshop discussions with Board, ODT 1 & 2).

Finally, the involvement of key individuals also appears to form a vital part of the context in ODT's case. Whilst the ODT board has a reasonable number of active members, it is evident that the vast majority of the work is undertaken by two key individuals, who bring both a commitment to community development and a range of personal and professional skills (Workshop discussion with Board, ODT 2; Observations, ODT 3 & 5).

9.3.3 Example 3 – CWL

Outcome: Therapeutic service delivered.

Evidence
The operation of this mechanism in the case of CWL is somewhat less certain, inasmuch as the service is core-funded by the local authority, so it would be reasonable to argue that the local authority could either deliver the service directly, or contract another organisation to deliver the same service. However, the key question here is whether another organisation could deliver the 'same' service, since there is significant evidence that the community-led nature of the service has particular benefits. In particular, the value of the informal, welcoming atmosphere

within CWL's facility is cited as a crucial factor by clients (Workshop discussion, CWL 1), CWL's manager (Written response, CWL 2) and the local authority:

> " And it's like, this is somewhere where people can relax – they may not want to go to NHS, but they'll go to a local place, they'll go to CWL, because they feel that there's people that can speak to them and know them. And it's localised, it's not got this clinical thing... So I think the benefits are just enormous." (Council officer interview, GCC 3)

Moreover, CWL's data demonstrates significant positive impacts on service users' wellbeing on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, which measures self-reported wellbeing on a scale from 14 to 70. Although the monitoring system is still in its infancy, the initial data shows an average increase of 22.2 points, from 30.6 to 52.8 (Client data, CWL 17), which is marginally above the Scottish average of 50.3 for men and 49.7 for women (Scottish Public Health Observatory, 2015).

Contextual factors

In terms of context, finance is again a relevant factor for the operation of this mechanism, since the availability of funding, combined with skills in acquiring it, are vital components in CWL's capacity to deliver their service. Whilst core funding from the local authority supports much of CWL's work, a wide range of other funding sources are used to enhance the service, targeting particular sections within the community. Moreover, paralleling HCDT's experience, the continually precarious financial situation for CWL, exemplified by the previous loss of Health Board funding and current proposals for a 10% cut in Council funding, drive a continual process of innovation. Notably, CWL's community-led approach means that this leads to a constant tension between meeting funders' requirements and responding to the needs identified by clients (Workshop discussion, CWL 1; Discussion with manager, CWL 4).

As with HCDT, a supportive, positive relationship with the local authority is key to CWL's service delivery, particularly in terms of continued funding. Moreover, positive working relationships with a range of local agencies and professionals, are crucial in ensuring that people are referred to CWL's service, with GPs and other

Health professionals referring 53% of new service users in 2014-15 (Client data, CWL 17).

Finally, the central role of a small number of individuals is again a crucial contextual factor. Whilst CWL's work is delivered by a staff team together with a significant number of volunteers, all of the evidence points to the absolute importance of CWL's manager in terms of commitment, skills and networks (Workshop discussion CWL 1; Interview with Partnership Development Officer, GCC 3). Indeed, CWL perhaps represents an extreme example of this factor, since the organisation's manager was instrumental in establishing CWL more than twenty years ago and has been managing the service ever since.

Examining the CMO configurations

Table 9.2 below draws together the essential contextual factors for the operation of Mechanism 2a ('It wouldn't happen otherwise') in each of the cases.

Table 9.2 – Summary of CMO configurations for Mechanism 2a

Case study	Contextual factors			Mechanism	Outcome
	Finance	Relations with other bodies	Role of key individuals		
HCDT	• Cuts leading to threat of closure, but also opportunity for community-led revitalisation. • Availability of external funding for community orgs and skills to obtain it.	• Positive relationship with LA – financial, in-kind and officer time support • Agency culture of support for and expectation of community action	• Crucial role of Centre Manager – leading change, utilising skills, local networks, etc. • Support (and challenge) role of Treasurer – using professional skills to keep finances in order.	**'It wouldn't happen otherwise'** Description of mechanism: Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services that would not otherwise be delivered, because they can have different priorities from agencies, access different funds, etc.	Community centre service delivered
ODT	• Financial situation leading to delays to developer provision of play park. • Limited funding from private or public sector for high quality facilities to meet community needs. • Availability of external funding for community orgs and skills to obtain it.	• Positive relationship with developer, facilitating installation. • Mixed relationship with Council, deteriorating from initial positive, supportive relationship to situation where ODT's role is accepted but not really supported.	• Crucial role of two key board members – leading project, utilising skills and experience, etc.		Play park installed
CWL	• Precarious financial position driving innovation, but also tension with community needs • Availability of external funding for community orgs and skills to obtain it	• Positive relationships with local authority and other local agencies/bodies	• Crucial role of service manager – leading service over a period of years, utilising skills, networks and experience, etc.		Therapeutic service delivered

Looking across these three cases it is possible to draw out some interesting parallels and differences regarding the role of these contextual factors.

- Finance

The role of finance as a contextual factor for the operation of this mechanism appears to cut both ways. On the one hand, restrictions in funding, particularly from the public sector, provide both the basis and motivation for this mechanism to come into play. If sufficient public funding were available in each case then it is conceivable that the community organisation would be displaced by formal services, whilst the lack or withdrawal of such funding clearly motivates people and organisations to meet needs and/or to retain existing provision. On the other hand, all three organisations are only able to deliver the outcomes concerned because of the availability of other sources of funding, particularly from grant-making bodies in the public and voluntary sectors.

This suggests that there is something of a goldilocks zone between complete financial meltdown and too much financial security, within which community organisations and activists are motivated to innovate and deliver services or facilities which would otherwise not exist.

- Relations with other bodies

In all three situations, relations with other bodies are an important element of the context within which the community organisation operates. There is significant commonality inasmuch as each case illustrates the value of a positive, supportive relationship with at least one key organisation at all times.

Perhaps more interestingly, all three cases provide evidence of the particular value of such positive relationships in enabling community organisations to weather the loss of other forms of support. CWL's transition from Health to local authority funding is the most obvious example here, but a similar picture can be seen in the case of ODT, where a reduction in support from the Council has been partly compensated for by a positive relationship with the private sector housing developer, providing flexible small-scale funding and practical support for physical improvements. And perhaps counter-intuitively, HCDT's situation illustrates how a key agency can both withdraw support and replace it simultaneously. Whilst the

financial cuts imposed on HCDT brought the organisation close to collapse, the substantial support in terms of short-term flexible funding, officer time and in-kind resources have enabled the organisation to weather the financial storm.

- The role of key individuals

Across all three cases, the central role played by a very small number of individuals appears to be an essential factor enabling the potential within each community to be triggered into action, delivering the outcome. Whilst each organisation involves a larger group of individuals as paid staff, committee members, or other volunteers, and draws on the time and resources of the wider community, within each organisation there are one or two key players who are key to making things happen.

Clarifying the CMO configuration

These discussions of the commonalities in contextual factors suggest that there is a relatively robust CMO configuration across these three cases, as shown in Figure 9.1 below.

Figure 9.1 – CMO configuration for Mechanism 2a

Context			Mechanism	Outcome
			'It wouldn't happen otherwise'	
'Goldilocks zone' finance – enough money, but not too secure	+ Positive, supportive relationship with at least one key agency	+ Key individual(s) with professional skills to lead organisation	+ Community organisations and communities deliver facilities and/or services that would not otherwise be delivered	= Services or facilities delivered (plausibly leading to wider social outcomes)

9.3.4 Implications and discussion

At a basic level, the evidence from these three case studies which demonstrates the operation of this mechanism is important in highlighting the fact that community organisations can sometimes deliver services or facilities that would otherwise not exist. As noted in Chapter 5, the evidence base for the outcome impacts of community self-help is somewhat thin, so the material from HCDT, ODT and CWL usefully augments the existing literature. Whilst it should not be forgotten that, as discussed in Chapter 8, there are significant questions for all three organisations in terms of their degree of choice in taking on more responsibility, the basic fact that the case studies provide evidence of outcome impacts is important in exploring the responsibilisation debate.

Perhaps more importantly, the specific CMO configuration which seems to fit all three situations provides a more detailed understanding of community self-help. Following Pawson and Tilley's (1997: 77) mantra, the configuration laid out in Figure 9.1 above provides a more detailed causal picture to explain "what works, for whom, in what circumstances". Furthermore, analysing each of the contextual factors highlights implications for policy and indicates areas for further research.

Firstly, the notion of a financial 'goldilocks zone' for community organisations could be seen as offering a justification for cutting state funding, since it is the necessity to continually seek funding which encourages innovation. However, all three cases also illustrate substantial challenges to this idea. Firstly, HCDT's experience of near financial collapse provides evidence of the fragility of organisations in such a situation, emphasising the substantial risks that the austerity cuts to local government budgets are imposing on community organisations. Secondly, ODT's case illustrates the potentially regressive nature of forcing community organisations to rely on funding which requires considerable skills and experience in grant application procedures that may not be available to more disadvantaged communities. And lastly, CWL's situation clearly demonstrates the tension between a community-led process of service development and one which is focused on the requirements and priorities of grant funding. Thus the financial goldilocks zone may be important in driving motivation and innovation within communities, but the challenges of obtaining grant funding and its inherent

insecurity may be regressive and damaging to needs-focused community self-help activities. Whilst cuts to local authority funding for community organisations have the potential to drive innovation in the ways evidenced here, there is absolutely no guarantee that this can or will happen in all circumstances. Furthermore, the danger of a regressive impact of cuts to funding is interwoven with unequal opportunities for other sources of finance. Whilst HCDT, operating in an area which is not particularly disadvantaged, were able to improve their financial situation by increasing footfall and fees, CWL would not be able to raise any such income from their disadvantaged and distressed clientele.

The implication, therefore, is that cuts to local authority finance may increase pressure towards responsibilisation, as evidenced most clearly with HCDT, reinforcing the concerns raised elsewhere (Hastings et al, 2015b; Asenova et al, 2015). However, the evidence presented here suggests a further possibility, that the insecurity of finance for community organisations may undermine such processes, leading to a situation in which needs are simply not met.

These policy questions about the balance between encouraging innovation and the risks of insecure funding also point towards a need for further research regarding the impact of local government cuts on community organisations and activities, and on the long-term effects for organisations living in the goldilocks zone.

Secondly, the importance of a supportive relationship with at least part of the local state in all three case studies reinforces the policy concerns raised in the previous two chapters. For Community Empowerment, the emphasis on partnership between communities and public agencies appears to be supported by this CMO configuration, but the necessity of at least one supportive relationship highlights the risks of resistance to community participation in some instances (Taylor, 2003: 128). For example, the growing tensions between ODT and the local authority run the risk of undermining the commitment and motivation of the key activists, which could destroy the organisation.

In relation to Localism, the importance of supportive relationships as a contextual factor for this mechanism raises two issues. On the one hand, it further questions

the emphasis on state withdrawal to release latent community capacity, and on the other hand, it further complicates the sense of uncertainty as to whether decentralisation is designed to shift power to local authorities, communities or both (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2011).

In turn, this points to the need for further investigation of the mechanisms which support positive relationships between communities and the local state, and the barriers to partnership on both sides.

Lastly, the centrality of one or two key individuals with the right skills to enable the operation of this mechanism opens up further questions about risk and inequality, with significant echoes of the review carried out by Skidmore et al (2006). Whilst their study focused on community participation in governance, rather than self-help activities, the key finding was that:

> "relatively few people were involved in governance, and the few
> people involved in one setting tended to be the same few people in
> another setting – the school governor also sat on the patients' panel
> as well as being a board member of the regeneration partnership."
> (Skidmore et al, 2006: ix)

From this they argue that the way to ensure effective community participation in governance is not to constantly try to engage everyone, but to try to ensure that the '1%' who are involved are connected to the wider community.

In relation to self-help activities such as those illustrated by these three case studies, the issues are less about information flows and accountability, but there are parallel concerns about the fragility of organisations which are dependent on such small numbers of key individuals. Just as the nature of governance structures may help or hinder the development of more accountable, representative community participants, so the interactions between self-help organisations and the local state are likely to be important in supporting or undermining the key activists. Moreover, in the same way that Skidmore et al suggest that community members participating in governance need to be connected to their wider community, so the central individuals in self-help organisations need to consider

the extent to which they can develop capacity across their organisation and wider community, as evidenced by all three case study organisations.

These issues of the potential risks where community organisations are dependent on a small number of key individuals also highlight issues of inequality in relation to the different levels of resource and resilience in different communities. Whilst the key individuals in ODT are volunteer committee members and HCDT has some crucial strengths on its board as well as its Centre Manager, CWL is almost entirely dependent on its paid staff not just to provide the service, but also to run the organisation. Paralleling the discussion in the previous chapter, this highlights the socio-economic gradient in terms of community capacity (Clifford et al, 2013; Mohan, 2011) and raises questions about the potentially regressive impacts of the combination of community participation policy and cuts to local authority budgets.

Clearly further empirical exploration of the role of key individuals in relation to community self-help would be useful, in order to explore the ways in which such individuals can be developed and maintained within a range of community settings. Moreover, there is potentially a more nuanced issue of key skills to be explored, since there is some evidence from these case studies that each organisation benefits from individuals with vital professional skills (i.e. HCDT Treasurer, ODT Chair/Sec, CWL manager), but that these are also paired with people with stronger connections to the wider community (i.e. HCDT Centre Manager, ODT other board members, CWL volunteers) and that it is the combination of these skills and connections which is essential. Again, examining this in different community settings would undoubtedly be important to understand the generative role of context for this mechanism.

9.4 Examining the regularities: Mechanism 1a – 'We know what people want, so you can do it better'

Description of mechanism: Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge.

There are four main examples of this mechanism within the case studies. Firstly, DCC and the Armitshore NAGs both attempt to influence local services to some extent and, secondly, both TPC and DCC aim to exert some control over local development. Given the differences in outcomes between planning and other services, these represent two possible MO configurations and I therefore examine them in pairs below.

9.4.1 Example 1 – DCC service improvement work

Outcome: Improvements to local services.

Evidence

DCC's work is coordinated through their monthly meetings, attended by all Community Councillors, local elected Members of Glasgow City Council and local Community Police Officers. A significant proportion of these meetings are taken up with local service issues, particularly in relation to litter, refuse collection and road maintenance. Most of the issues are addressed through local elected Members, although there are also direct contacts with Council officers, either through Council-led working groups or by individual communication. Whilst the evidence from this study is not sufficient to identify any broad changes to service provision, there are multiple examples of specific issues raised by DCC being addressed. In order to gather evidence of impact from observations, minutes and the large volume of DCC email correspondence, an 'impact recording log' was developed for the research, recording issues raised by the Community Council and tracking the outcome of their interventions (Impact recording log, DCC 12). Thus, for example, the log records a number of instances in which significant accumulations of litter have been cleared, potholes have been filled and 'missed bins' have been collected, having been highlighted by DCC members. There are also a number of instances recorded in which the lobbying efforts of the Community Council was not successful, although there is very strong evidence of the tenacity and 'vigilance' (DCC Chair, DCC 1) which DCC members, and in particular the Chair, employ in pursuing such issues to a conclusion. The balance between success and failure in relation to influencing services is considered in more detail in the 'implications and discussion' section below.

Contextual factors

In terms of the community context, DCC clearly have substantial resources of skill, confidence and professional experience to draw on, which in turn provides them with significant organisational capacity (Training needs assessment, DCC 11). Moreover, this is underpinned by the substantial time commitment of a small number of key individuals within the organisation (Discussion with Chair, DCC 5). Notably, however, the broad base of confident individuals across the community and within DCC is used by the Chair to justify an approach which places little emphasis on encouraging participation, on the grounds that people will make themselves heard if they have an issue to raise (Discussion with Chair, DCC 8).

In addition to their organisational capacity, DCC also have the advantage of status as a Community Council, which enables them to have direct contact with Councillors and officers in ways which might otherwise be unavailable. As discussed in Chapter 8, however, DCC have quite mixed relationships with different parts of the Council, working in close partnership with elected Members and some officers, whilst engaging in attritional conflict with others. On the one hand, the support of local Councillors is clearly key in delivering service improvements (Minutes of Community Council meetings, DCC9), but on the other hand, there is a sense in which the perceived mediocrity of services is a strong motivating force for the engagement of the "angry people" who make effective Community Councillors (Discussion with Chair, DCC 8).

9.4.2 Example 2 – Armitshore NAGs

Outcome: Improvements to local services.

Evidence

A substantial proportion of the Armitshore NAG meetings is taken up with local service issues, of a very similar nature to those raised by DCC. These are addressed either via the Locality Officer present at the meeting, or by the local Councillor. As with DCC, the evidence is not sufficient to identify broad service improvements and, indeed, the impact of budget cuts cited by the Localities Team

suggests that such improvements are unlikely at present (Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 1). However, there are multiple examples of specific environmental issues being addressed following Armitshore NAG meetings, including litter clearance, road repairs, hedge trimming and the like, as well as examples of issues which remained unresolved or were only partially resolved (Minutes of Armitshore NAG meetings, ANAG 5). Again, the evidence highlights the extent of tenacity required to deliver outcomes, given slow responses from services, although in the case of the Armitshore NAGs, this tenacity comes from the Locality Officers in most instances, rather than community members.

Contextual factors

In contrast with DCC, the relatively disadvantaged communities of Armitshore have far fewer resources to draw on in terms of experienced, confident activists with time and organisational skills. Thus, as outlined in Chapter 7, they are mostly unable and unwilling to take on the additional responsibility and risk of becoming independent, constituted organisations (Workshop with Localities Team, ANAG 1). Importantly, this limited community capacity is at least partly compensated for by the Locality Officers, who organise and chair NAG meetings, using a strongly participative approach. This highlights the importance of support from the local authority as a contextual factor, although the sense of discontent with inadequate services also appears to be a key motivating factor for community engagement with the NAGs, as with DCC's membership (Observations of NAG meetings, ANAG 1, 3 & 4).

Examining the CMO configurations

Table 9.3 below draws together the key contextual factors for the operation of Mechanism 1a in relation to the service influence activities of DCC and the Armitshore NAGs.

Table 9.3 – Summary of CMO configurations for Mechanism 1a relating to service influence

Case study	Contextual factors			Mechanism	Outcome
	Community strengths	Relations with local authority	Motivation		
DCC	• Significant levels of skill, confidence and experience across the CC (and wider community) • Substantial time commitment by (skilled, experienced) key individuals • Strong organisational capacity, built on above	• Support from Councillors and positive relations with some officers, alongside conflict with other officers	• Sense of irritation with failings of public services	**'We know what people want, so you can do it better'** Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge	Specific issues addressed by services
Armit-shore NAGs	• Low levels of skill, confidence and experience within NAGs (and wider community) • Weak organisational capacity • Substantial time commitment by Locality Officers, compensating for above	• Support from Councillors and positive relations with Locality Officers, alongside negative views of services	• Sense of irritation with failings of public services		Specific issues addressed by services

Comparing the role of contextual factors across these two cases highlights similarities and differences which are essential in understanding the CMO configurations for this mechanism.

- Community strengths

Clearly there are significant differences in terms of the level of community strengths available. Whereas DCC are able to draw on a wide range of skills and experience, easily recruiting competent new members whenever they have a vacancy, community members attending the Armitshore NAGs find it hard even to follow standard meeting procedures, let alone to organise their own meetings. However, the experience of the Armitshore NAGs suggests that at least some of this gap in community capacity can be filled by the local authority, with the Locality Officers providing many of the organisational skills that key activists supply for DCC. Hence there is a sense in which these two options may provide alternatives in relation to the operation of this mechanism.

Interestingly, there is a clear difference in terms of the types of skills which are important. Although knowledge and experience of managing meetings is essential in both cases, the Locality Officers draw more heavily on engagement skills in order to enable public participation in the NAGs, whereas the DCC Chair is able to rely on the confidence of members.

- Relations with the local authority

Both cases exhibit very mixed relations between community and local authority. In Armitshore, the positive relationships built up by the Locality Officers are key to the effectiveness of the NAGs, ensuring that community members feel that their issues are being heard and responded to, and therefore that attending the NAGs is worthwhile. Without such positive relationships and reputation, it seems unlikely that the Localities Team could hope to fill the capacity gap identified above. For DCC, the positive relationships with Councillors in particular are important in terms of their ability to influence services, although their combination of statutory status and strong lobbying skills enables them to generate some degree of influence even where their relationships are far less positive.

- Motivations

There is significant evidence in both cases that annoyance with service problems is a key motivating factor. Whilst DCC recruits from a ready pool of 'angry people', the more fluid membership of the Armitshore NAGs is largely made up of people wishing to raise an immediate issue. Clearly this is closely connected to both the other contextual factors, since people who are entirely content with the local authority would not engage.

Drawing these points together suggests a CMO configuration as shown in Figure 9.2 below.

Figure 9.2 – CMO configuration for Mechanism 1a relating to service influence

Context			**Mechanism**	**Outcome**
Strong community resources			**'We know what people want, so you can do it better'**	
or	Supportive relationship with at least part of local authority	Sense of irritation with failings of public services	Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge	Specific issues addressed by services
Local authority resources and participative process	+	+	+	=

9.4.3 Implications and discussion

The demonstrable outcome impacts from each of these case studies provides some additional support for the evidence base relating to community influence over services (Burton et al, 2004; ODPM, 2005; Birch, 2002; Rogers and Robinson, 2004). Whilst the evidence of service changes in both Armitshore and Dowsett is largely restricted to instances of particular issues being addressed,

rather than wider changes to service provision or policy, this is perhaps unsurprising, since previous studies have found that the benefits of community participation, "can take some time to emerge and are often difficult to quantify" (ODPM, 2005: 8). However, examining the CMO configuration in more detail suggests that the limitations in changes to services may tell a somewhat more complicated story across the two cases.

The difference between the two cases in terms of the resources that support community participation comes as no surprise, given the discussion in the previous chapter regarding the socio-economic gradient in community capacity. In terms of both national and local policy, it raises an interesting question as to whether the gaps in community capacity can be filled by local state resources in order to enable community influence over services. From the perspective of Community Empowerment, the crucial role of the Localities Team in Armitshore reinforces concerns regarding the extent of choice that different communities have in their level of empowerment. In particular, this CMO configuration suggests that the newly enacted Right to Participate (Scotland, 2015) may be regressive in its impact unless supports are in place for more disadvantaged communities to effectively use it, since more affluent communities may be able to use this new right to further their advantage by influencing service provision to their benefit. Similarly, this evidence reinforces the questions over Localism's emphasis on state withdrawal. Whilst it also highlights the potential value of the Our Place programme as an example of support for community influence over public services, with central government funding being made available to support community participation (Locality, 2014b), this needs to be located within the broader context of austerity. Thus the additional £8000 available for areas engaged on the programme is small beer when placed next to the much larger cuts to mainstream budgets, including reductions in other supports for community participation.

Perhaps more importantly, the evidence relating to the impact of cuts to local government budgets, resulting in the Localities Team being halved, raises significant questions about the sustainability of this CMO configuration in disadvantaged communities during austerity. Whilst the additional support for participation provided by the Localities Team has thus far compensated for the

lower levels of community capacity in Armitshore, enabling this mechanism to operate, the removal of this support unveils the lack of power that the NAGs have been able to acquire and manage independently. Notably, in both cases there is significant evidence of the importance of tenacity and commitment in delivering positive outcomes, since services are rarely quick to respond. This raises a question as to whether the Localities Team can ever fully replace the vigilance and tenacity that community members can deliver in more advantaged communities, since they are not directly witnessing issues on the ground.

Supportive relationships with at least part of the local state appear to play a very similar in relation to this mechanism to the one which they play with mechanism 2a. Hence the same policy issues regarding the risk of local authority resistance to participation and the impact of state withdrawal arise here, as well as the points above about local authority staff compensating for limited capacity in more disadvantaged communities.

The final contextual factor – motivation for people to engage with local services – raises significant questions for participation policy regarding the representativeness of those raising concerns about services, if some groups are irked into action more than others. A range of studies have pointed to significant issues of representativeness across different participation forums (Martin and Boaz, 2000; Stevenson, 2004; Kjaer, 2000; Callaghan and Wistow, 2008), highlighting the interplay between factors supportive of participation, such as irritation with inadequate services, and barriers to participation, such as lack of skills, inaccessible processes and impacts of poverty. The evidence from these two cases suggests that the local state may be able to tackle at least some of the barriers to participation, as outlined above, but this does not negate the concern regarding representativeness.

Perhaps more importantly, a closer look at the evidence around motivations from Dowsett and Armitshore suggests that there is a significant difference, which throws some doubt on the solidity of this CMO configuration. As highlighted in Chapter 7, community participation in the NAGs is being heavily driven by the impacts of local government cuts:

"Nine out of ten things being raised at a meeting are because of the impact those cuts have had in the community. Whether it's because the bins aren't being emptied, because the grass isn't being cut or it's not good enough... There's a whole host of things that are now landing on our table." (Locality Officer, Workshop ANAG 2)

Hence the motivations in Armitshore are significantly driven by irritation at reductions in service levels. By contrast, in Dowsett, the evidence suggests that the cuts to services which affect the area are hardly being felt (DCC Chair, DCC 8). Although this may be partly the result of more limited cuts in Scotland than in England (Hastings et al, 2015a), the evidence suggests that the more important factor is the endogenous nature of Community Councillors' motivations, with the majority being "angry people" (DCC Chair, DCC 8) who would raise concerns to defend the quality of the area, no matter how small the perceived threat.

Thus, returning to the original point regarding the limited, issue-specific impact of community influence over services in these two cases, it is possible to suggest that the reasons for such limited impact may be different and, therefore, that the CMO configuration may be less certain. The concerns raised by Armitshore residents through the NAGs can only be addressed in a piecemeal fashion, since budgetary restrictions are progressively reducing service levels, precluding any wholesale improvements, even when there are substantial new issues such as the improvised truck stop appearing in one area. Whilst there may be similar cuts to services in Glasgow, the evidence from Dowsett suggests that the level of need is significantly lower and that the loud voices of the Community Council, combined with individual residents raising complaints, have maintained service levels thus far. Hence, although the CMO configuration suggests that communities may be able to generate at least some improvements to services by sharing their knowledge of local issues with agencies, the limited nature of these service changes may reflect different levels of need and different barriers to improvement. From a policy perspective, therefore, this evidence suggests that even the additional support for participation provided by initiatives such as the Armitshore Localities Team may not be enough to counter the inequalities between communities.

In turn this points to a need for further research to examine how this postulated CMO configuration plays out in a wider range of communities, particularly examining the extent to which the local state can compensate for limited community capacity, what this means for sustainability and devolution of power in the context of austerity, and issues of representativeness in different forms of service influence.

9.4.4 Example 3 – Trottside Neighbourhood Plan

Outcome: Development that better meets the needs of the local community.

Evidence

In order to influence local development through a Neighbourhood Plan, the Plan has first to be produced by the community and 'made' by the local authority, and secondly, its policies have to be implemented effectively. For TPC, the first stage was completed in June 2014 (Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2014) and there is evidence that the Plan is having some impact on local developments. Most obviously, the large-scale planning applications submitted during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan were initially refused and their appeals have not been allowed, although the Secretary of State's final decision is still awaited at the time of writing. Whilst there is considerable discontent that developers are now submitting a series of smaller applications (Discussion with TPC members, TPC 6), this fragmenting of developments clearly achieves much of the original intention by slowing down the pace of village growth.

Contextual factors

Most obviously, Localism, and Neighbourhood Planning in particular, have provided the essential policy context for TPC's attempt to control local development. Whilst they had previously used other approaches, including producing a Parish Plan and Village Design Statement to support their responses to planning applications, Neighbourhood Planning has offered additional legal powers to Parish Councils.

Alongside this, as discussed in Chapter 7, the socio-economic situation of Trottside has been important in enabling TPC to draw on a wide range of community strengths (Workshop discussions TPC 1 & 4). Indeed, the organisational capacity of TPC itself is based on the professional skills and experience of its members, and these were augmented by other individuals involved in the Neighbourhood Planning steering group. Crucially, these community resources were drawn into the process by a combination of the perceived external threat to the village, which made planning "a frequent topic of conversation within the village" (Community member, Workshop TPC 4). Moreover, the inclusive, participative process which TPC established was designed to engage as many people as possible.

Finally, the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan has to be understood in the context of relationships with the local authority. On the one hand, support from CWaCC's Spatial Planning team and the local elected Member was important in enabling TPC to complete the Neighbourhood Plan and to ensure that it survived the subsequent legal challenge (Workshops with TPC members and other community members, TPC 1 & 4). On the other hand, however, TPC have had to work hard to ensure that the Plan is effectively implemented by the Development Control officers, "who seem to be fighting against the NP wherever possible and only take it into account as and when they felt they had to" (Community member, Workshop TPC 4).

9.4.5 Example 4 – DCC planning work

Outcome: Development that better meets the needs of the local community.

Evidence
The evidence of outcomes from DCC's planning work is more complicated to identify and interpret than that from Trottside, because their approach is less coherently defined in the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan. Moreover, the type of development in Dowsett is mostly of a much smaller scale than that which concerns TPC, since the area has little space for substantial new building. Whilst there are a number of examples of objections to minor renovations of existing

properties, the impact of these submissions is difficult to ascertain, since the majority are granted subject to conditions, as are the majority of all applications. Nevertheless, there is some limited evidence from the reports of Planning Officers within Glasgow City Council, that DCC have an influence on the nature of planning consents, by comparison with other areas which do not have such an active Community Council (Discussion with Chair, DCC 8).

Perhaps more importantly, a closer parallel to the outcome achieved by TPC is given by the application for a new supermarket in Dowsett. In much the same way that TPC view large-scale housing developments as undermining the nature of the village, DCC saw this application as a threat to the character of the area. Hence they dedicated substantial resources to attempts to stop the proposal, submitting an objection from the organisation, encouraging individual objections and enlisting the support of local Councillors. When these approaches failed to stop the application, DCC attempted to generate a street protest during the Committee site visit and attracted media attention (Impact recording log, DCC 12). Ultimately, however, none of these tactics was successful and the application was granted, so in this respect the outcome of DCC's planning work has to be described as limited control of local development.

Contextual factors

In terms of policy context, DCC have some limited legislative powers, inasmuch as they are a statutory consultee on all planning applications within their area (UK, 1973). Clearly, however, these legal powers are significantly more limited than those available to TPC, since DCC do not have the option of creating a Neighbourhood Plan and thereby setting their own local planning policies.

In terms of the nature of their community, DCC have similar advantages to TPC as far as socio-economic status is concerned. Hence they are similarly able to draw on significant resources in terms of skilled, experienced individuals with time available to focus on Community Council work, which in turn enables the development of a strong organisation (Workshops with Community Council, DCC 1 & 3). Moreover, the ability of DCC to draw on these community resources is underpinned by a perception of external threat in the form of inappropriate development, which is clearly a concern to most members (Workshop with

Community Council, DCC 1; Observations of meetings, DCC4). Unlike TPC's Neighbourhood Planning process, however, this mechanism operates in Dowsett in a context of minimal participation. The supermarket planning application provides a very rare example of DCC drawing in other residents and, even here, word-of-mouth recruitment was used to ensure that those who got involved were entirely supportive of the Community Council position. For the majority of planning applications, the Community Council makes no attempt to involve the community beyond their membership and, indeed, detailed scrutiny of proposals even within DCC is largely limited to the Chair, with other members only very occasionally raising questions (Observations of meetings, DCC4).

Finally, relationships with the local authority are also important for DCC's work on planning. As noted in Chapter 8, these are a mix of supportive relationships with some Councillors and officers, and more conflictual interactions with others. In relation to the specific example of the supermarket application, the key divide is between local Members, who supported DCC's objections, and those officers and Councillors responsible for the decision. Importantly, the latter based their decision on the policies of the Council's Local Development Plan (Impact recording log, DCC 12).

Examining the CMO configurations

Table 9.4 below draws together the key contextual factors for the operation of Mechanism 1a in relation to the planning-related activities of TPC and DCC.

Table 9.4 – Summary of CMO configurations for Mechanism 1a relating to development control

Case study	Contextual factors					Mechanism	Outcome
	Community strengths	Motivation	Relations with local authority	Legislative framework	Process		
TPC	Substantial levels of skill, experience and organisational capacity	Strong sense of external threat	Mostly supportive, but with some tensions	Strong powers through Neighbourhood Planning	Strongly participative throughout	**'We know what people want, so you can do it better'** Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge	Significant control of local development
DCC	Substantial levels of skill, experience and organisational capacity	Strong sense of external threat	Mostly supportive, but with some tensions	Limited powers through LG Act 1973	Low levels of participation		Limited control of local development

Comparing the role of contextual factors across these two cases highlights similarities and differences which are essential in understanding the CMO configurations for this mechanism.

- Community strengths

In both cases, the organisations involved have substantial internal resources in terms of skilled, experienced, confident activists and are also able to draw on further resources from the wider community when required, thanks to the level of socio-economic advantage.

- Motivation

Whilst the perceived external threat is much more concrete in the case of Trottside (literally and metaphorically), given the immediate development pressure on the village, DCC members clearly have a similar sense of threat to the quality of life in the area arising from what they see as inappropriate developments, such as the supermarket proposal.

- Relations with the local authority

Both TPC and DCC have somewhat mixed relationships with the local authority, but in each case there is a strong base of support from Planning officers and local Councillors, which facilitates their work on planning issues. The tensions which exist in each case relate to a concern that the local authority will be too beholden to powerful developers, therefore underpinning the motivational notion of external threat.

- Legislative framework

The clearest difference in terms of context for TPC and DCC is the existence of Neighbourhood Planning in England. Despite all of the provisos regarding the extent to which power is retained by central government and exercised by private sector developers, discussed in Chapter 7, this legislative framework nevertheless provides TPC with the option to introduce specific local planning policies. By comparison, DCC's right to be consulted on planning applications is clearly a weaker legal position.

- Process

The two cases also diverge significantly in relation to the level of participation in their planning work. Whereas TPC employed a strongly participative process throughout the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, because of their previous experience as much as the legal requirements, DCC engage very little with the wider community, relying on the personal contacts of their members to provide some semblance of consultation and representation.

Drawing these points together suggests a CMO configuration as shown in Figure 9.3 below.

Figure 9.3 – CMO configuration for Mechanism 1a relating to planning

	Context		**Mechanism**	**Outcome**

Broad base of community strengths + Strong sense of external threat + Supportive relationships with local authority (with some tensions) +

Strong legal powers (Neighbourhood Planning) + Participative process

or   or

Limited legal powers (LG Act 1973) + Limited participation

+ **'We know what people want, so you can do it better'**

Service organisations deliver facilities and/or services which better target needs because of community knowledge

= Significant control of local development (with provisos)

Limited control of local development

9.4.6 Implications and discussion

This final configuration presents a somewhat different aspect of the application of Realist Evaluation methodology, since it represents a 'demi-regularity' (Pawson, 2006: 22). Whereas Pawson and Tilley (1997: 71) suggest that explaining observed regularities is, "the *goal* of realist explanation", in his later work Pawson emphasises the importance of examining 'outcome patterns' rather than 'outcome regularities', opening the possibility that minor divergences as shown in Figure 9.3 above can provide an alternative explanatory heuristic.

Taking the differing outcomes from the two cases into account, Figure 9.3 nevertheless indicates support for the operation of this mechanism, again augmenting the existing evidence regarding the impact of community influence (Burton et al, 2004; ODPM, 2005; Birch, 2002; Rogers and Robinson, 2004). More importantly, it points to some important contextual factors which have potential policy implications.

The importance of community strengths in both of these cases, particularly in relation to skills, experience, knowledge and organisational capacity, suggests that planning policy needs to pay attention to the differences between communities. As outlined in the previous two chapters, the technical complexities of planning processes and the specialist jargon involved are likely to create significant barriers for more disadvantaged communities, which are likely to have fewer people with professional experience or higher educational levels. This is of particular concern in relation to Localism, given the evidence regarding the distribution of Neighbourhood Plans thus far, showing a disproportionate number of more affluent communities (Brookes et al, 2012; Geoghegan, 2013). Whilst the UK Government has taken some cognisance of this issue, offering additional technical support and grant funding to 'complex groups', although it is notable that the parameters for such groups include not just deprived communities, but also those in 'high growth areas', which would include many of the most affluent communities (Locality, 2015a). Whilst the Scottish Government have placed much less emphasis on planning issues within Community Empowerment, the issues of unequal capacity between communities are still relevant north of the border. Whilst the 'charrette' process is being promoted by the Scottish Government as a

participative approach to planning (Scottish Government, 2015e; Scottish Government, 2015a), there appears to be minimal research evidence as yet with regard to whether such processes are equally accessible for different communities.

The importance of a sense of external threat within the configuration shown in Figure 9.3 is perhaps unsurprising, given the evidence from elsewhere regarding catalysts for community action (Thake, 1995). However, it does raise a question in relation to the possibility of community participation in planning in areas where there is no immediate threat, which also relates to the issues of representativeness raised above, if some groups or communities are more likely than others to perceive threats and be motivated by them to take action.

As with the previous examples, these issues of motivation also connect to the balance between supportive and conflictual relationships with the local authority. Once again, there are clear issues for policy here in terms of managing potential resistance from local government to participation, whilst recognising that relationships do not have to be entirely comfortable.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the configuration shown in Figure 9.3 lies in the 'demi-regularity', which suggests that the differences in legal powers and participation in the process have been important in determining the different levels of control over local development generated by this mechanism. It seems plausible to suggest that these two factors are necessarily intertwined, at least in the context of Neighbourhood Planning, since a process with limited participation would be likely to fail at the referendum stage and would not therefore trigger the mechanism. However, further exploration would be useful to examine the interplay of legal powers and participation, as well as interactions with the other contextual factors, in order to refine these tentative CMO configurations. In policy terms, this divergence particularly highlights questions for the Scottish Government about the limited options for communities in the planning system, despite the attempt to 'mainstream' the charrette process. As discussed in the previous two chapters, however, the significant challenges of Neighbourhood Planning in terms of the transfer of risk and responsibility and the reluctance of some community organisations (such as DCC) to take on such burdens, emphasises the difficulties

for policy-makers in enabling influence within the complex and highly-contested planning environment.

Moreover, the differences in level of participation also highlight a question of who benefits from the operation of this mechanism, paralleling the discussion of representativeness in the previous section. Whilst there may be evidence of influence over development in both cases, in the DCC situation where there is minimal involvement of the wider community, there is no way of knowing whether the changes wrought are of benefit to all, or even a majority of the community. Hence the lack of a legal framework which mandates significant wider engagement, as is required in Neighbourhood Planning, raises additional questions for the Scottish Government in terms of the potential for sectional interests to dominate community participation in planning.

9.5 Conclusion to this chapter

In this chapter I have explored the evidence from the case studies relating to two of the mechanisms postulated from the earlier literature review (Chapter 5). Identifying the specific combinations of contextual factors that are relevant across different cases has enabled the specification of CMO configurations. As Pawson and Tilley (1997: 125) describe it, this function of program evaluation in the RE mode can be summarised by, "the rather ugly term of 'configuration focusing'." Starting from two of the rather general hypothetical mechanisms in Table 5.7, the empirical data demonstrates that these mechanisms are indeed effective, in the sense that they produce specific outcomes. Furthermore, the configurations in Figures 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 highlight the contexts within which these mechanisms appear to operate, refining the original theories.

Although these CMO configurations are far from a comprehensive picture of the ways in which community participation can produce wider outcome impacts, they do go some way to addressing Research Question 4. In particular, the analysis in this chapter illustrates the kinds of outcome impacts which can be generated through two key mechanisms and the relevance of different contextual factors for their operation.

Having got this far in the Realist Evaluation process, the next stage should ideally be two-fold, "ascending and descending the route between abstraction and specification." (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 125). Firstly, additional empirical work would be necessary to further refine and specify the CMO configurations, gradually defining in more detail the specific combinations of contexts and mechanisms which produce particular outcomes. For example, further exploration of community self-help activities might help to elucidate the boundaries of the financial goldilocks zone in Figure 9.1, whilst additional cases of community participation in planning might throw more light on the apparent divide in Figure 9.3, identifying where legal powers are important and where participative processes are crucial. Such an expansion of the empirical foundations is beyond the scope of this study, but the analysis within this chapter could provide a useful basis for work of this kind.

Secondly, in order to develop more abstract 'middle-range theory' (Merton, 1968) which may be useful across a range of situations, it is necessary to 'cumulate' evidence from a variety of studies relating to the same mechanism (Pawson, 2006). Again, such cumulation is largely beyond the reach of this study, although the evidence relating to common contextual factors offers an opportunity for an alternative approach to such cumulation, which I shall explore in the next chapter.

Finally, the examination of the CMO configurations in this chapter has highlighted a number of questions and issues for policy, many of which reinforce the findings from the ToC analysis in Chapters 7 and 8. In particular, questions relating to inequality are threaded through the analysis of all the CMO configurations, with significant evidence regarding the value of the community strengths which are more common in relatively affluent communities, enabling community influence even in situations where it is little needed. Moreover, these issues of inequality are closely tied to the impacts of austerity, with clear evidence that cuts to local authority budgets are likely to be regressive within the arena of community participation. This in turn is connected to the substantial concerns regarding processes of responsibility and risk transfer, since more disadvantaged communities have less to draw on in terms of finance or human resources when times are challenging. And lastly, all of the CMO configurations highlight the

complexities of relationships between communities and the local state, characterised as they are by a continually shifting blend of support, partnership, tension and conflict.

I shall revisit some of these issues in Chapter 11 below, which attempts to draw together the findings from the RE analysis in this chapter and those from the ToC analysis in the previous two chapters. However, before proceeding to this summation of the study as a whole, it is necessary to explore the methodological findings from the research, partly in order to provide some additional foundation for validity and reliability of the conclusions reached. The next chapter therefore wraps up the findings by addressing the methodological research questions.

Chapter 10 – Methodological reflections on the research process

10.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, I explored some of the general debates in the field of evaluation methodology, in order to identify the approach most suited to the particular aims of this study. From an epistemological perspective, I suggested that it makes sense to see knowledge as inter-subjectively agreed and purposive, whilst from an ontological standpoint I adopted the realist notion of generative, rather than successionist, causation within social processes. Combining these ideas with a discussion of the complexity of social policy, particularly in the field of community participation, I argued that an experimental approach would be fruitless and that theory-based methodologies offer more potential to understand the adaptive, emergent processes involved in community action. Taking into account the different purposes for evaluation and the varied groups with a potential interest in the outcomes of this study, I concluded that a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches might help to meet multiple goals for multiple audiences. And, given the nature of community participation as a subject for study, I also suggested that the research design will need to be participative to a significant degree.

Whilst the combination of these two theory-based evaluation methodologies has been posited elsewhere as a potentially productive possibility (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007), the only significant attempt at utilising the two approaches together was stymied by contractual constraints and the scale of the programme concerned (Barnes et al, 1999; Judge, 2000; Benzeval, 2003). Hence this study represents a significant attempt at methodological innovation, which therefore requires examination if it is to be of use elsewhere. In this chapter, I address the final two Research Questions, examining the usefulness of combining ToC and RE methodologies from the perspectives of practical evaluation and the methodological literature:

1. How useful is a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches to evaluation for policy and practice in the field of community participation?

2. How useful is a combination of Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation approaches, for the development of evaluation methodology?

The chapter starts by summarising how the two methodologies have been applied at different points of the research, before moving on to explore how the two approaches worked in practice, examining those aspects which seemed to work well and those which were more problematic. This methodological review is divided into three sections, looking firstly at the application of ToC approaches in the field, secondly at the use of ToC methodology for policy analysis and lastly at the combination of RE and ToC approaches. The evidence for this exploration is drawn from all three phases of the fieldwork, relying particularly on the fieldnotes and reflections written after each interaction with a participant organisation, and also on the Phase 3 reflective discussions with the organisations. In addition, post-fieldwork reflections on the data analysis process are drawn on, particularly in relation to the use of RE methodology and its combination with ToC approaches. Since these latter reflections only make sense in their relationship to the methodological literature, I have opted to integrate the presentation of findings with discussion of their relation to the literature throughout the chapter. Finally, I finish the chapter by drawing the sections together to specifically address the Research Questions.

10.2 How ToC and RE approaches were used in the research

As outlined in Chapter 1, ToC and RE methodologies are employed as a theoretical framework throughout the study, not just within the fieldwork. Hence it is important to briefly reiterate the different ways in which each approach has been used at different points, and how they have been combined in the project as a whole.

Firstly, Theories of Change ideas were employed as an analytical tool to examine the history of community participation policy and the literature surrounding the potential impacts of participation. Thus Chapter 3 sets out the long-term goals of policy, whilst Chapter 4 draws on the wider literature to develop the double helix model of community participation policy. This generic model was then employed to examine contemporary policy in Scotland and England in more detail, enabling the development of ToC models for Community Empowerment and Localism and the identification of the key assumptions which underlie them, described in the remainder of Chapter 4. As noted earlier, this usage of ToC methodology for policy analysis represents an extension of the usual collaborative approach with programme providers.

Secondly, in Chapter 5, the concepts of Realist Evaluation were used to identify the range of potential mechanisms which might be hypothesised to operate within the double helix model. This framework provides a structure to examine the existing evidence from the literature, focusing on the mechanisms whereby community participation processes may generate additional social outcomes.

Thirdly, as outlined in Chapter 6, ToC approaches were used in a more conventional fashion with each of the participant community organisations to develop and assess local theories of change (Anderson, 2005; Connell and Kubisch, 1998). In Phase 1 of the research collaborative workshops were organised to surface and articulate each organisation's ToC, and to identify the key indicators to be measured. Phase 2 of the fieldwork consisted of capturing data on these indicators, relating to a range of inputs, outputs and outcomes, whilst in Phase 3 discussions were held with each organisation to explore what the data said about their impact and their overall approach.

Fourthly, the key ToC tests of plausibility and doability were employed alongside the policy assumptions identified in Chapter 4, as an analytical frame to examine the empirical data from each of the case studies. Using the fieldwork data in this way enabled an assessment of the plausibility and doability of Localism and Community Empowerment, which is set out in Chapters 7 and 8.

Finally, the research returned to RE methodology, using the data from across all six case studies to develop and refine context-mechanism-outcome configurations. Thus Chapter 9 builds on the RE-based literature review in Chapter 5, offering elaborated versions of some of the postulated mechanisms, identifying "what works for whom in what circumstances" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 77).

10.3 Using ToC approaches with community organisations

The previous section provided a brief reiteration of the three phases of ToC work with each participant community organisation. At each phase, the evidence illustrates significant benefits and challenges, some of which reflect previous methodological findings, whilst others provide new insights, particularly relating to the use of ToC approaches with relatively small community organisations.

10.3.1 Phase 1 – surfacing and articulating the ToC

For many of the participant organisations, the process of developing a ToC model seemed to make sense. This was particularly true for those organisations with more experience of applying for grant funding (e.g. CWL, ODT), since funders are increasingly using the language of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes in application processes. Moreover, there is significant evidence that the basic narrative structure of ToC models fits comfortably with the 'stories' (Weiss, 1995; 1998) that people tell about what they have achieved and what they want to achieve:

> "Spent some time after workshop with TPC members trying to draw their ToC and realised that they had effectively drawn it for me by telling the story of the Neighbourhood Plan." (TPC fieldnotes, TPC 11)

Furthermore, the workshop process of 'backwards mapping' (Anderson, 2005: 21), starting from long-term outcomes and working backwards through interim outcomes and outputs to activities and inputs, did not seem to undermine this

sense of correspondence between the ToC models and the narratives which community members used to make sense of their work (Fieldnotes, HCDT 11 & ODT 13).

However, this correlation between the ToC process and narrative structure was not entirely unproblematic since ToC approaches can tend to favour linear views of the world (Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005; Rogers, 2008), glossing over potential disjunctures and neglecting the role of feedback. This was particularly notable in the case of ODT, where some Board members explicitly recognised the importance of feedback loops in the sense of organisational and individual learning from their practically-focused work, whilst other Board members found it much more challenging to think in non-linear narrative terms:

> "This may have been due to my inability to communicate [the draft ToC model] clearly enough, but I think there may also be an issue about activists not necessarily recognising the importance of the learning process – for the most part, activists get involved to improve things for their community, not to develop themselves or their organisation." (ODT fieldnotes, ODT 13)

Indeed, the challenges of articulating non-linear processes were not confined to community members, since I found it particularly difficult to find a visual format for the ToC models which could adequately capture the feedback systems between participant community organisations and the wider community (Fieldnotes, ODT 13 & TPC 11). I attempted to resolve this by drawing on the distinctions made between 'implementation theory' and 'programme theory' (Weiss, 1998; cf. also Funnell & Rogers, 2011, although the terminology is different), separating the relatively linear narrative of action from the more complex interactions with the community organisation on the one hand, and the wider community on the other. Figure 10.1 presents the ToC model for ODT as an example, whilst Appendix E provides the full ToC models for all six case studies.

Figure 10.1 – Example of ToC model (from ODT) to illustrate separation of implementation process from interactions with community and community organisation
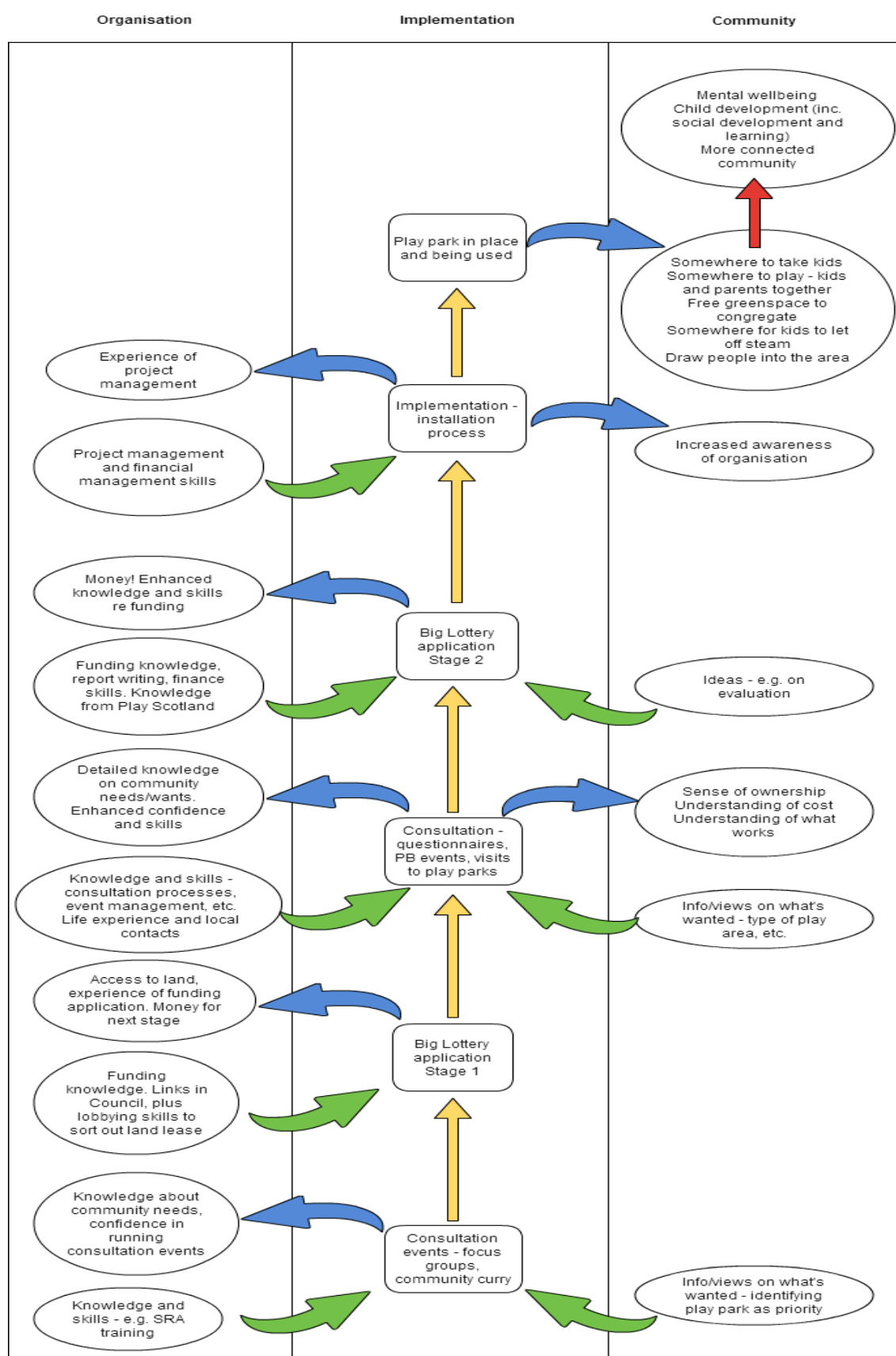
Whilst this did not entirely resolve the difficulty of articulating and understanding complex, non-linear processes, it did provide a focus on feedback loops, thereby addressing Rogers' concern:

> "Most logic models show 'one pass' through the intervention, but many interventions depend on activating a 'virtuous circle' where an initial success creates the conditions for further success. This means that evaluation needs to get early evidence of these small changes, and track changes throughout implementation." (Rogers, 2008: 38)

Indeed, this innovation did generate useful learning in some instances. In particular, by separating the 'action' elements of the ToC from the interactions with the organisation and wider community, these models were helpful in enabling participant organisations to reflect on their own learning and the role of the wider community in their work. Thus, for example, HCDT's initial narrative was unsurprisingly focused on the practical stages of securing funding and physically developing the Community Centre, with a strong emphasis on the resources which staff and Board would need to utilise and develop in order to deliver the vision for the Centre. Reflecting on the draft model after the Phase 1 workshop, the Centre Manager highlighted the lack of input from the wider community as a challenge and a risk in the long term (Discussion with Centre Manager, HCDT 3).

Whilst HCDT were not alone in valuing the opportunity that the ToC process offered for reflection on their approach, it was notable that across all six case studies there was a remarkable degree of consensus within each organisation in terms of the ToC, contrasting with the common experience of difficulty in reconciling or managing conflicting theories (Connell and Kubisch, 1998; Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005). Indeed, the ease of reaching consensus raised a concern that participant organisations were more interested in using the workshops to confirm their existing approach than critically questioning assumptions and exploring alternatives. As Granger (1998) suggests, this is a risk for ToC approaches, since we are psychologically inclined to attribute success to ourselves and failure to external factors. However, reflections on the processes of surfacing and articulating the theories suggested that there may be two different reasons behind this consensus in different organisations.

In some organisations, such as ODT and TPC, the workshop discussions suggested that the open, discursive culture of the committee had enabled differences in perspective and approach to be aired and resolved before the research began (Fieldnotes, TPC 11 & ODT 13). This was encapsulated by the view expressed strongly by the Chair of TPC that, "You have to be prepared to listen to all views" (Workshop with TPC members, TPC 1). By contrast, in other organisations consensus appeared to be achieved primarily as a result of dominant leadership over-riding or excluding dissenting views. For example, whilst two Community Councillors raised questions about communication and representativeness during the DCC Phase 1 workshops, a 'consensus' view on the ToC model was reached by the majority of members accepting the perspective propounded by the strongest voice in the room (DCC fieldnotes, DCC 14).

Such distinctions in the process of consensus-building clearly have strong parallels with Sullivan and Stewart's (2006) typology of different forms of ownership of ToCs. This suggests that there are five types of ToC ownership: 'Total', which is essentially the Aspen Institute's ideal form of a consensus of all stakeholders; 'Elite', where the ToC is largely owned by a small group of leaders responsible for implementation; 'Principal', where the ToC is imposed from above by the state or funding agency; 'Evaluator', where the ToC is developed primarily by the evaluator and thus has little chance of being implemented as other stakeholders do not have a sense of ownership; and 'Community', where the ToC is developed from below, potentially creating empowerment, but also limiting buy-in from funders and agencies.

According to this typology, the DCC situation appears to be closer to 'elite' ownership of the ToC, in the sense that the ToC is predominantly developed and owned by the small group (in this case effectively just one person) with responsibility for implementation. By contrast, ODT and TPC appear to demonstrate something closer to 'community' ownership, since their relatively inclusive organisational culture enables all members to have a voice in the process of developing the ToC.

However, there is also an argument to suggest that the typology would need to be revised or applied differently in order to fit the use of ToC approaches with small community organisations, rather than the large-scale, multi-agency initiatives categorised by Sullivan and Stewart. Whereas the divide between 'elite' and other voices can be drawn with relative clarity in large public programmes, it seems much less clear within a small community organisation. Whilst there may be concealed differences of view within DCC, there is a sense in which a leader-driven consensus is an expression of the whole organisation's perspective when the leader plays a key role in the operation of the organisation, and where members have the option to walk away if they do not agree. Furthermore, the divide between 'community' and 'total' ownership of a ToC may not be clear without an understanding of the extent to which communication and participative processes enable a community organisation to represent the views of the wider community. Thus, from this perspective, TPC might lay claim to total ownership of their ToC, given their intensive participation processes discussed in Chapter 7, whilst DCC's ToC might after all be closer to elite ownership, since the consensus within the committee is not connected to any process of communication or discussion with the wider community.

In order to apply the typology of forms of ToC ownership to community organisations, therefore, it may make sense to consider the possibility that ownership may appear different from different perspectives. For example, whilst it may be important to assess whether ToC ownership is 'total' within a community organisation, this does not automatically imply that the ownership is 'total' across the whole community. Indeed, the typology may be most useful in this field not so much in clearly categorising particular ToC evaluations, but in highlighting the issues around inclusiveness and representativeness which are central to much community participation work.

Hence the experience of various forms of consensual views perhaps highlights that ToC approaches may operate somewhat differently in small community organisations than in larger programmes or organisations. Whilst the relative ease of gaining consensus experienced in this project may be beneficial, providing a clearer model for evaluative purposes, it may also be problematic if it precludes a more critical consideration of alternatives and possible unintended consequences.

10.3.2 Phase 2 – data collection

The Phase 2 process of data collection, which was designed to examine the implementation of the ToC in practice, generated some significant benefits for a number of participant organisations, although not without further challenges. In particular, three organisations were assisted through this phase of the research to develop significant improvements to their monitoring and evaluation systems, which were explicitly tailored to meet the needs of the organisation in terms of providing useful data for funders, as well as fitting with the research. Thus HCDT were supported in developing two surveys aimed at Centre users and wider community members, in order to gather feedback on their facility and services, and to obtain information about unmet need within the area (Questionnaires, HCDT 10). Similarly, ODT's existing plan to gather feedback on their play park project from children and parents was enhanced through the ToC process such that additional data was gathered on community needs which would be of use for the long-term community facility vision (Discussion with ODT Board, ODT 4). And CWL's client feedback system was completely revamped to incorporate the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), with the intention of providing robust impact data for statutory and voluntary sector funders (Development session, CWL 11; Staff meeting CWL 14). All of these examples reinforce the basic contention of the ToC school of thought, that the process of developing the model and identifying appropriate data collection systems can enhance planning and develop both skills and systems for monitoring and evaluation within the organisation (Connell and Kubisch, 1998; Brown, 1995; Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005).

In each case, the improvements to internal monitoring and evaluation systems were instituted to address the significant gaps in data identified by the ToC process, taking advantage of the opportunity presented by an external evaluator with time to assist in developing new approaches. Thus, both ODT and HCDT were assisted to develop new survey instruments to gather feedback from users of their facilities, whilst CWL's existing user feedback survey, which provided very little useful data, was replaced with the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing

Scale (WEMWBS) (Warwick Medical School, 2016), which has been rigorously validated and has the additional advantage of being supported by NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Government. Although the potential benefits of these changes in terms of supporting access to funding were largely not visible within the time period of the research, comments from participant organisations indicate that they viewed this element of the ToC process as a substantial benefit:

> "Introducing WEMWBS has been a real challenge, changing the way we measure what we do and persuading the team that it's worth the effort. But it's already giving us data that we've never had before so we can show people what CWL does and what a difference we make" (CWL Manager, CWL 14)

However, whilst there is clear evidence that the data collection element of the ToC process helped some of the participant organisations to improve their monitoring and evaluation systems, there were significant challenges across the case studies in identifying appropriate measurable indicators and in collecting data. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in most cases there were some outcomes which could be assessed relatively easily, whilst others seemed almost impossible to measure, reflecting Kubisch et al's (1998: 8) point that in community initiatives, "good measures simply do not exist for many of the most important desired outcomes".

For example, in ODT's case, the key interim outcome of the play park project was the installation of the play park itself, which could be measured extremely simply, and similarly some of the subsequent outcomes regarding use of the play park and increased play activity were relatively easy to measure through observation and surveys of park users. However, the longer term outcomes of improved mental wellbeing and child development would not only be much more challenging to measure, but there would clearly be substantial issues of attribution, given the wide range of other factors which affect such outcomes. Hence, in this case and other (e.g. HCDT, TPC) a decision had to be made regarding the limits of feasible outcome measurement and the extent to which longer term outcomes could be reasonably assumed. Whilst it was not possible to directly measure the impacts of the new Ooley play park on the mental wellbeing or social development, from ODT's perspective it was reasonable to assume, given the established body of

research in this field (e.g. Gleave, 2010; Cole-Hamilton, 2011) and the similar assumptions of the local play strategy (Glasgow Life, 2011), that a measurable increase in play activities would generate these positive outcomes (Workshop with Board, ODT 2). Interestingly, this notion of taking some elements of a change process (tentatively) for granted has strong parallels with Pawson's (2013: 82-4) suggestion that the impossibility of fully evaluating whole programmes can and should be resolved by drawing on synthesised findings to make assumptions about some aspects.

In addition, there were significant challenges in terms of identifying 'thresholds' for indicators, which Connell and Kubisch (1998: 33) argue is necessary in order to evaluate success. Again, some outcomes clearly lend themselves to sharply defined thresholds (a play park is either there or not there), but for other measures it was far less clear what might constitute 'success'. This was true in terms of long-term outcomes, such as CWL's measure of wellbeing using WEMWBS, where service users in particular made a strong argument that any improvement at all should be considered success, whilst the organisation's Manager was clearly aware that funders might require a much higher threshold (Workshop, CWL 1; Discussion with Manager, CWL 4). Moreover, it was also an issue with interim outcomes, such as HCDT's measure of numbers of Centre users. Whilst a rough estimate was made of the required footfall to deliver financial sustainability, there was a more complicated question about how success should be measured in terms of the different demographic groups using the Centre. This was a particular concern for HCDT since the financial situation created pressure to attract users who would be most beneficial in terms of income (e.g. affluent groups from elsewhere in the city), rather than local people most in need of the facility (Workshop with Board, HCDT 1; Discussion with Centre Manager, HCDT 3).

Hence, whilst the use of ToC approaches offered clear benefits for some of the participant organisations in terms of improved monitoring systems, the experience of this study clearly reinforces the findings from elsewhere that specifying models sufficiently for a robust assessment of success and causality is, to say the least, challenging (Barnes et al, 2003a; Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007).

10.3.3 Phase 3 – reflecting on the evidence and summative assessment

These challenges in specifying the ToC models also fed through into their value as summative evaluation tools and the reflections on the usefulness of the ToC approach in Phase 3 of the fieldwork. At this stage of the research, I was particularly concerned about the limited value of the overall ToC assessments which would be available for participant organisations, given the challenges of identifying and measuring some of the outcomes and other process indicators, as well as gaps in the data for some of the more measurable indicators due to various organisational issues in some of the case studies. As a typical example:

> "Having reviewed the data from the [HCDT] surveys, it's got some
> useful bits in it, but it's still rather a small sample and we've not really
> captured the outcome impacts for Centre users. Not quite sure how
> to present this to the organisation." (HCDT fieldnotes, HCDT 11)

However, in practice, the participant organisations were far less concerned with the gaps in the data. The Phase 3 discussions highlighted two key reasons why the organisations required a different level of evidence from that which might be ideal for a summative ToC assessment of impact and causality. Firstly, the organisations seemed to share a belief in their own value and efficacy, so even limited additional data of their impact was welcome and interpreted as confirmation of this view:

> "It's good to get some numbers. People tell us we're helping them
> and we can see people feeling better when they walk out, but it's
> nice to see some numbers which say the same thing." (CWL staff
> member, CWL 14)

In this respect, the ToC approach seemed to be offering an emotional benefit in terms of reinforcing a sense of impact and 'making a difference' (Smith and Grimshaw, 2005), which was not dependent on the robustness of the data or certainty of attribution.

And secondly, there was a clear view in a number of organisations that the primary value of the additional data would be in supporting grant applications, and that funders would not require a fully specified and measured ToC. Thus, for example, ODT were unworried by gaps and delays in their outcome data, since they had prior experience of dealing with grant funders and knew that they would be able to meet monitoring requirements without the extra detail which a fully specified ToC might contain (Discussions with ODT Board members, ODT 6 & 8).

Furthermore, whilst participant organisations clearly saw value in the opportunities offered by the ToC approach for reflection on their approach and development of monitoring systems, as outlined above, they were also somewhat sceptical of a static model which might facilitate summative assessment. Several of the organisations emphasised the necessity of remaining flexible and agile in order to respond to changing circumstances on the ground, the demands of funders and changes in their own capacity, given their reliance on a small number of key individuals (as highlighted in Chapter 9). As CWL's manager expresses it, "CWL is like an onion – you peel off one layer and there's another underneath, so you can never grasp the core" (Discussion, CWL 4), reflecting Gilchrist's (2000) characterisation of communities and community organisations as operating at 'the edge of chaos' due to their self-organising, adaptive nature. As Auspos and Cabaj express it:

> "many strategies and interventions never achieve the stability required by conventional assessment practices…Asking practitioners to stick to an established strategy and evaluation design, no matter how hard-won, encourages rigidity and discourages the responsiveness and adaptability central to place-based community change." (Auspos and Cabaj, 2014: 25)

Thus, from the perspective of the participant community organisations, the ToC approach provided an 'agile heuristic' (Funnell and Rogers, 2011: 79) which was useful both in terms of organisational learning and in providing practically useful data, even if it could not provide a summative evaluation which would stand up to detailed scrutiny. Whilst this reinforces Mackenzie and Blamey's (2005) concern that ToC methodology may not be able to provide robust evidence of what works

for which groups in particular circumstances, it perhaps suggests that the, "trade-off between rigour and programmatic utility" (Connell and Kubisch, 1998: 38) may in practice lean towards the latter. Hence, although Funnell and Rogers (2011: 84) may be correct in arguing that, for complex processes such as community participation, "It is not possible to report in terms of what works because that is constantly changing", such approaches can still provide useful forms of 'truth' (Sullivan, 2011) for community organisations to use in practice. Furthermore, in terms of the research aims (as opposed to the benefits for participant organisations), it was far less important to generate robust summative assessments of each ToC, since their primary analytical value for the research was to assess the plausibility and doability of the national policy assumptions, as discussed below.

10.4 Using ToC approaches for policy analysis

As outlined at the start of this chapter, ToC approaches were used in two stages of policy analysis. Firstly, an adapted ToC methodology was employed to develop the double helix model from the existing literature and, using this generic model, to surface the basic ToCs of Localism and Community Empowerment, highlighting their underlying assumptions. And secondly, the evidence from the empirical ToC work with community organisations was utilised to assess the plausibility and doability of these national policy assumptions in practice.

In terms of the initial analysis of policy in Chapters 3 and 4, the ToC approach provided a useful framework to explore the underlying policy intentions and assumptions. On the one hand, the emphasis on starting from long-term goals provides a valuable focus for the analysis, avoiding the risk of drowning in the detail of individual policy instruments at the outset. And on the other hand, the notion of 'surfacing' theories facilitates a critical examination of policy intentions which, in theory at least, can probe beneath the rhetoric. Thus, for example, the historical analysis of policy goals for community participation highlighted the relevance of both social control and re-establishing 'lost' communities, which was useful in delving beneath the apparent contradictions within the UK Government's response to the 2011 riots. In this instance, the public statements (e.g Cameron,

2011) blamed failures of social cohesion within particular, disadvantaged communities whilst also lauding the positive response from 'other' communities in the post-riot clean-up, providing different messages for different audiences. This ToC approach therefore provides a means to engage with the political nature of policy goals and engage with the multiple goals which may even conflict within a single policy agenda (Minogue, 1997).

The development and application of the generic double helix ToC model also provided a useful framework to manage issues of complexity. As outlined in Chapter 2, community participation policy is particularly beset with complexity, operating at a range of scales, with multiple partners, along lengthy, non-linear causal pathways, with self-organisation and adaptation at its core. In a similar fashion to the ToC approach with community organisations discussed above, using the double helix model, with its emphasis on non-linearity and feedback, provided a means to examine a policy which is inherently both top-down and bottom-up (Sabatier, 1997). Hence starting the analysis of policy in this way was helpful in examining the ways in which particular elements of Localism and Community Empowerment might operate in complex ways, whilst also highlighting more linear aspects, such as the emphasis on individualised, representative systems in some parts of Localism.

However, using a ToC approach for policy analysis in this way also meets some significant difficulties and limitations. Firstly, reflecting a more extreme version of the difficulty encountered in the fieldwork with community organisations, it was clearly impossible to generate a ToC (or multiple ToCs) for national policy which would be sufficiently specified to be testable, not least because of limited access to national policy-makers. Hence the second stage of the analysis, utilising the empirical data to examine the implementation of the national ToCs, was only able to explore plausibility and doability. Arguably, though, this inclusion of plausibility as well as doability is a significant development from the majority of ToC programme evaluations, since as Sullivan (2011: 508) argues, these tend to focus on the "concrete, factual and tangible" elements of doability and testability. Thus the extension of ToC methodology into policy analysis in this way develops the approach in a potentially significant manner.

Secondly, for the most part the available policy documentation enables an analysis of policy goals and policy interventions, but provides relatively limited information on the intervening steps. Therefore using ToC approaches for policy analysis requires a departure from the standard 'backward mapping' technique (Anderson, 2005: 21), relying instead on an interpolative approach of 'mapping from both ends' which is only able to draw relatively general conclusions about the causal pathways between policy inputs and intended outcomes. The challenge here, as Milligan et al argue, is that a ToC approach may offer formative lessons for each policy or initiative, but:

> "Without the detailed steps that are currently missing from the theories, it will be difficult to produce the compelling evidence stakeholders need in allocating resources among promising initiatives." (Milligan et al, 1998: 83)

This potential vagueness may be particularly problematic where pathways are non-linear, although it seems reasonable to argue that the emphasis on the underlying causal assumptions of the ToC framework provides a useful lens, even if the resulting picture remains somewhat blurred around the edges. Moreover, by focusing on the underlying assumptions, rather than the detail of every step in the causal chains, this use of ToC methodology facilitates a structured analysis of policy without needing to assess the minutiae which are more problematic in evaluations of particular projects or programmes.

Thirdly, whilst the analysis in Chapter 4 attempts to draw out the underlying policy assumptions for the whole of Localism and Community Empowerment, there is an argument that this analysis could be more usefully undertaken in relation to each element of the two policy agendas. Whilst the overall aims of Neighbourhood Planning and Our Place may be closely related, the models set out in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 may be too general to capture the specific ToCs underlying each programme. However, this issue interacts with the previous two points, since the limited documentation available for individual policy programmes makes the specification of such models even more challenging. Moreover, as part of the analysis for Chapters 7 and 8, attempts were made to develop individual ToCs for Neighbourhood Planning, Our Place and Community Asset Transfer, but these

produced much more limited models which, most importantly, still shared the same key assumptions as the broader Localism ToC.

The second stage of the ToC analysis, in which the empirical data from the case studies was utilised to examine the plausibility and doability of the national policy assumptions, also demonstrates some benefits and challenges of the approach. In particular, because the local ToCs were developed for the purpose of evaluating each organisation's impact, they provide a wealth of rich data to examine the plausibility and doability of the national policy assumptions in practice. In this respect, the examination of processes within cases which the ToC approach facilitates provides the ideal form of evidence for elaboration or falsification of the policy assumptions (Flyvbjerg, 2013), whilst the cross-case comparison enables a detailed examination of the role of context (Yin, 2003).

Importantly, the framework provided by the ToC approach is valuable once more in terms of managing the complexity of the data. Without the ToC framework, it is easy to imagine that the vast detail of data from the case studies would have been much more challenging to interpret and utilise as a critical lens to examine policy implementation. Thus, for example, developing the ToCs in every case highlighted the mixed relationships between community organisations and the local authority, which was important in assessing the policy assumptions about the role of the state on both sides of the border.

This positive assessment of the ToC approach should not obscure the persistent challenges in comparing context-specific local ToCs with the more general national policy models. Extending the previous example, it was difficult to develop a clear picture of DCC's relationships with the local state, because of their often conflicted, tactically driven interactions with multiple different actors, making the level of partnership working quite ambiguous. However, these difficulties would arise in any attempt to examine the detail of policy implementation through case studies and, arguably, the use of ToC approaches to examine both national policy and local practice provides a unifying perspective which facilitates effective analysis. Whilst Weiss (2007: 78-9) suggests that theory-based approaches may either delve into the detail of complexity within particular programmes, or look at

the assumptions that cut across different programmes, the approach taken in this study attempts to marry these two strategies to productive effect.

10.5 Combining ToC and RE approaches

Having begun the examination of the literature, policy and the empirical data using ToC methodology, RE approaches were introduced to explore the evidence regarding particular mechanisms of additionality within the double helix in Chapter 5, and to develop some of these hypothesised mechanisms into more refined context-mechanism-outcome configurations in Chapter 9. As with the ToC elements of the study, the experience of adding RE approaches into the mix afforded some significant benefits, whilst also opening some notable cans of worms.

10.5.1 ToC models as a framework for RE

Perhaps the most obvious advantage of building the RE work on top of the ToC double helix model was that it provided a framework within which to identify and locate possible mechanisms of causality. As emphasised in Chapter 2, it is readily apparent that community participation is complex in both policy and practice, with significant non-linear elements, so without an over-arching theory such as the double helix any attempt to identify mechanisms could easily become mired in a spaghetti bowl of causal pathways. Hence, as Pawson argues, there is a need for a broader theory within which to situate the analysis of specific mechanisms:

> "in order to generate any explanatory power in programme
> evaluation one has to have theories that link…wider interpretations
> of system dynamics to mundane activities of stakeholders" (Pawson,
> 2013: 60)

In this respect, the notion of 'mechanism spaces' which I developed in Chapter 5 proved helpful in categorising the vast array of possible mechanisms, in order to focus the literature review. Clearly this does not entirely resolve the issue, since

there are still a near-infinite number of potential CMOs within the overall model, but it does provide a means to manage the selection of possibilities for further examination, which is essential in any finite evaluation process (Gambone, 1998: 150).

Arguably, community participation is particularly challenging in this regard since, unlike many other policy areas, it focuses on activating and 'doing with' communities, rather than 'doing to'. Hence the distinction between the 'implementation theory', which sets out the activities of a programme or policy, and the 'programme theory', which outlines the mechanisms by which people respond to the programme (Weiss, 1998: 57-8), is much less clear in relation to community participation because of the level of community agency. This is visibly evident in the full ToC models for each participant organisation (see Appendix E) which, as discussed above, are suffused with feedback loops, highlighting the extent to which community organisations and their wider communities are actively shaping and being shaped by each stage of the change process. Thus Blamey and Mackenzie's (2007) suggestion that ToC approaches tend to focus largely on implementation theory, whilst RE approaches are more concerned with programme theory seems less valid in the field of community participation, since the ToC models inherently encapsulate the community agency which lies at the heart of the programme theory. As a result, ToCs relating to community participation are littered with potential mechanisms, all of which would be could be studied in a broader research agenda.

In a sense, this use of ToC models to provide a framework for analysis is at the heart of Realist Evaluation. As Pawson and Manzano-Santaella argue:

> "the phrase 'theory-driven' means what it says and that designs that attempt to utilize the realist explanatory apparatus without a prior grounding in programme theory will end with explanations that are ad hoc and piecemeal." (Pawson and Manzano-Santaella, 2012: 189)

Thus the double helix ToC model provides a broad theoretical basis within which to identify more specific theories in the form of hypothesised CMOs, which can then be explored and refined using the empirical data. This is particularly important

given the complexity of the causal pathways within the 'black box' of community participation policy (Marchal et al, 2012; Pawson, 2013), which the double helix model opens to scrutiny. In Pawson and Tilley's (1997: 85) formulation of RE methodology, these refined CMOs become the theoretical basis for the next study in a cyclical process, as indicated in the suggestions for further research relating to each CMO configuration outlined in Chapter 9. However, the combination of the two methodologies also offers an additional dimension to this cyclical research process, since the findings regarding each CMO configuration can also be utilised to refine the overall model. Again, this is demonstrated in Chapter 9 through the implications for the Localism and Community Empowerment ToCs arising from each CMO configuration. Thus, for example, the refined CMO configuration for Mechanism 2a, relating to community self-help, emphasises the importance of positive relationships with at least one local public sector agency, reinforcing questions regarding the assumption of state withdrawal within the Localism ToC.

From the perspective of practical utility, the RE findings in Chapter 9 clearly need further work in order to assess their value. This study has not been able to examine the applicability of the CMO configurations for community participation practice, nor to collect additional data to analyse and refine them beyond the basic configurations laid out in Chapter 9. Whilst Marchal et al (2012) suggest that the inclusion of processes and contexts can enhance the attractiveness of RE findings for policy makers, there is as yet little evidence with regard their potential value for practitioners and activists. Hence, further work would be necessary to explore the utility of the identified CMO configurations in practice and to refine them for use in a wider range of contexts.

However, it is important to note that the experience of this study suggests that refining the CMOs through additional research may be somewhat challenging. Aside from the difficulties of measuring some outcomes, highlighted in Chapter 9, the requirement for detailed case study evidence in order to gain a reasonable understanding of the complex causality within each ToC provides rich data which may be difficult to 'cumulate'. Whilst case studies examined through a ToC lens may be particularly useful for examining the specific detail of context and causal processes (Flyvbjerg, 2013), there is also a risk that the attempt to build robust

CMO configurations across cases could result in learning 'less and less about more and more'.

Moreover, these challenges of further refinement also relate to the practical utility of the ToC/RE combination for community organisations, with particular reference to issues of equality. As indicated in Chapters 7-9, there are substantial differences in community capacity across the case study areas, which have significant effects on the ability of organisations to benefit from participation opportunities and to manage the risks and responsibilities that may accompany them. These differences in capacity are also relevant to the ability of community organisations to evaluate their own activities and to make iterative improvements in their approach over time. Thus, for example, TPC required minimal assistance to surface their ToC and had already measured many of their outcomes, whilst HCDT and CWL required significant support to develop new monitoring systems. Hence, from a perspective of generative causation, some organisations will be much better placed not merely to generate outcomes, but also to measure them and thereby utilise them as a supportive context for the next cycle of development.

10.5.2 Practicalities of combining RE and ToC

Aside from the sense in which this study has provided some evidence for the theoretical value of combining ToC and RE approaches, it has also gone some way to demonstrating the practical possibility of applying the two methodologies in empirical work, as well as highlighting some challenges. Whilst Blamey and Mackenzie (2007: 451) suggest that the two approaches could be productively combined, they emphasise the practical challenges of each methodology in terms of the time and resources required, thereby implying that the combination is likely to be even more demanding. Moreover, there is significant evidence that ToC evaluators in particular require skills in group processes, facilitation, negotiation, conflict resolution, as well as experience in working with communities (Brown, 1995: 211; Sullivan, 2011: 504), although these are perhaps less essential for RE approaches.

The experience of undertaking this study, employing both ToC and RE methodologies, suggests that these concerns about the resource demands and the need for a particular set of skills are well-founded, but far from insurmountable. As outlined in Chapter 1, I began this research project with a background in community development and engagement, and hence I came to the empirical work with a strong grounding of skills and experience in work with communities. However, my skill set is far from unique and, arguably, the importance of facilitation skills and understanding of group processes is equally required for such research methods as focus groups, which are very widely used across a range of evaluation approaches (Cronin, 2008).

The time consuming nature of articulating and specifying ToCs, and of defining and refining CMOs was undoubtedly a challenging aspect of the empirical work, particularly when combined with the geographical spread of the case study areas. As I reflected mid-way through developing one of the ToCs in Cheshire:

> "Made some progress with the model for HCDT today, but I'm a bit worried that they're still a bit vague and I'm not going to be able to come back down for at least another month or two." (HCDT fieldnotes, HCDT 11)

However, the total time required for the fieldwork was, to some extent at least, reduced because of the ToC/RE combination. Whilst a complete ToC evaluation of six different projects would undoubtedly have required significantly more time than was available, if it were to address the issues of specificity and academic rigour outlined earlier in this chapter, such a level of detail proved unnecessary. As discussed above, the participant organisations did not need such a high level of detail in their ToC models in order to make the process useful in a formative sense, or absolute causal certainty in the outcome data to make it effective in funding applications. Similarly, the analytical use of the local ToC evidence in examining the plausibility and doability of the national policy assumptions, and in providing data for the RE analysis of particular mechanisms did not require completely testable models with specified thresholds, since it was not necessary to examine every step in the causal chain. Hence, whilst the concerns about time and resources are not unfounded, it seems reasonable to argue that combining

ToC and RE approaches in the manner of this study actually reduces rather than increases the demands.

Nevertheless, the limited specificity within the ToC models and the difficulties of measuring some elements do raise questions about the strength of conclusions that can be drawn from the analyses in Chapters 7 to 9. As Weiss (1995: 88-9) argues, some outcomes are just difficult to measure, particularly changes in organisational behaviour or performance, such as those relating to service influence. Thus, whilst the installation of ODT's play park or the continued operation of HCDT's community centre are very clear outcomes in relation to Mechanism 2a, the evidence relating to multiple service issues in Dowsett and Armitshore is less clear in relation to Mechanism 1a. Hence, despite the sense in which the particular application of ToC and RE methodology in this study overcomes some of the difficulties with resource demands and inadequate data, there remains an important warning in Blamey and Mackenzie's (2007: 451) point that the requirement for "measurement at multiple levels (the individual, group, organisation and community) [makes] the processes fraught with practical and conceptual difficulty".

10.5.3 Participation in the combined methodology

As highlighted in Chapter 2, an additional concern with regard to combining ToC and RE methodologies is "the question of whose theory is being tested" (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007: 446) and, in particular, the divide between the explicitly collaborative approach of ToC and the emphasis on evaluator control and 'distance' in RE. In practice, the experience of this study suggests that this divide can be bridged in a relatively unproblematic manner, despite Pawson and Tilley's (1997) concerns about the 'relativism' of collaborative approaches and their emphasis on a 'hierarchy of expertise' with the researcher at the top. Most importantly, the criteria for selecting participants included a requirement that organisations should have an interest in evaluating their own work. Thus, as highlighted in Chapter 2, the distinctions between 'subjects', 'practitioners' and 'evaluators' become somewhat meaningless. As a result, the participatively

produced ToCs and related data provided reasonable evidence on which to base the RE analysis.

Such an approach does not preclude a critical assessment of evidence and alternative theories, but suggests that the evaluator is no better placed to apply 'judgemental rationalism' (Dickinson, 2006) than other actors within the evaluation process. As Auspos and Cabaj (2014: 30) argue, "Each actor in a complex situation has unique insights that [are needed] to fully understand the experience and effects of…interventions", so the process of evaluation needs to involve discussion and negotiation rather than external judgement by the evaluator. As an example, there was some discussion amongst Trottside activists about the possibility that the intention of the Neighbourhood Plan might be undermined by changes within the Parish Council membership, which at first seemed implausible, given the massive community support for the Plan. However, the interpretation of this change required an understanding of the dominance of the local estate in terms of land ownership, landlord influence and employment which would only be fully comprehensible to local community members/evaluators, not to an 'outsider'.

At the same time, this study does appear to provide some support for Pawson and Tilley's avoidance of collaborative approaches, not for philosophical reasons, but rather because the need for cross-case comparison and the jargon-laden language of RE makes the analysis less interesting and accessible to community activists. Whilst there was some discussion of RE mechanisms in Phase 3 discussions, this was quite limited because the primary interest of each organisation was the ToC data relating to their own impact. Limitations of time and resources within the project precluded the possibility of further work to examine the implications of the identified CMOs. The potential for bringing activists together from different organisations to examine such theories is undoubtedly an area for further research, entering the type of inquiry that Reason (2001) refers to as 'third person inquiry', enabling action-focused research across communities and organisations.

10.5.4 Complications of context

Both ToC and RE methodologies face some challenges in relation to their understanding and management of contextual factors. For ToC evaluators, difficulties arise because of the sheer range and variety of contextual factors that may affect the outcomes predicted by a model, and which therefore need to measured in order to assess their impact. As Gambone (1998: 159-161) suggests, in a community change setting this includes the history of the community concerned, the ongoing dynamics of the community and any critical events, each of which may include social, political, economic and even geographical elements (cf. also Burton et al, 2006: 307). The challenge of managing the multitude of contextual factors also applies to RE approaches, although the focus on specific mechanisms may help to narrow the range to some extent. However, as noted in Chapter 2, RE evaluators face an additional challenge in clarifying the distinction between contexts and mechanisms (Marchal et al, 2012). Indeed, as Barnes et al (2003a) argue, factors which are viewed as context may also become outcomes, in the sense that they form part of complex, open systems and are therefore:

> "subject to change as a result of actions or activities beyond the scope of the programme, but also from the intended or unintended consequences of programme implementation." (Barnes et al, 2003a: 269)

Although Pawson and Manzano-Santaella (2012) suggest that the differentiation between contexts, mechanisms and outcomes is dependent on their explanatory role within the particular CMO being explored, this seems to offer little assistance in managing the range of contextual factors or their lability within open, complex systems. Again, these complications of context may limit the robustness of the identified CMO configurations, as indicated with respect to the operation of Mechanism 1a, as set out in the previous chapter. Whilst both the Armitshore NAGs and DCC appear to have produced a relatively limited, issue-specific response to particular local service concerns, it is possible that this apparent regularity may conceal different levels of need and different constraints on service responses.

However, the approach taken to examining contextual factors within this study suggests that a combination of ToC and RE methodologies may offer two beneficial innovations. Firstly, the contextual framework built on Brante's (2010) notion of a 'level ontology' and set out in Table 5.8 provides a useful starting point in identifying relevant contextual factors from the myriad of possibilities. Crucially, using this framework to interpret the evidence from local ToCs facilitates the identification of contextual factors for particular mechanisms in the RE analysis. Thus the narrative picture provided by the ToC sets out the range of factors which seem to affect the operation of a particular mechanism, whilst Table 5.8 provides a pointer towards the 'levels' which are likely to be most important. This does not escape the need for a detailed examination of the contextual factors affecting each mechanism, as laid out in the analysis in Chapter 9, but the combination of the ToC structure and the framework of levels from Brante provides a starting point from which to explore the possibilities.

Secondly, the combination of ToC and RE approaches leads to a somewhat different characterisation of contexts than those presented as examples of RE findings. Whereas Pawson and Tilley combine multiple factors into a single 'context' which conditions the operation of the central mechanism of an entire programme, the complexity illustrated by the double helix model and the notion of mechanism spaces highlights the need to separate out different contextual factors in order to examine their effects at different points along the causal pathway. For example, Pawson and Tilley (1997: 101) present the context for a crime prevention programme as "Poor quality, hard-to-let housing; traditional housing department; lack of tenant involvement in estate management", combining elements at the level of community organisation, community and agency into a single, unified descriptor. By contrast, the CMOs identified in Chapter 9 of this study introduce the different elements of context (e.g. finance, relationships with agencies and role of key individuals) separately. The advantages of this approach are twofold. On the one hand, it enables the examination of contextual factors across different mechanisms within a single case – identifying, for example, the role that relationships with the local authority play in different aspects of DCC's work. And on the other hand, it facilitates the identification of common contextual factors operating on the same mechanism (or indeed different mechanisms) across multiple cases, such as the vital role of human resources in the form of skilled

activists across Mechanisms 1a and 2a in the different organisations. Thus, the suggestion is that the process of 'cumulation' of findings relating to particular mechanisms which Pawson lays out in his programme for realist synthesis (Pawson et al, 2005; Pawson, 2006) could be extended to examine the effects of common contextual factors.

Such an approach to examining context, involving careful identification of relevant factors and exploration of their individual effects is arguably of particular importance in the field of community participation. Relating back to the earlier points about the adaptability and flexibility of much community action, it is apparent that evaluation of community participation also needs to be responsive in its approach to context because, as Fels Smyth expresses it:

> "In community change work it is the broader context that is supposed
> to change, so community change efforts are themselves evolving
> and organic…we may not always know what it would mean for
> something to 'work' in the beginning, or our understanding of what it
> means might evolve over time because not only does our
> understanding of the situation change, the situation itself – the
> context – changes too." (Fels Smyth, 2010: 111)

Hence, whilst there is no simple solution to the complexities of context, the combination of ToC and RE methodologies provides an additional means of focusing the investigation and potentially increasing the analytical power across multiple studies.

10.6 Conclusion to this chapter – addressing the research questions

Drawing together the methodological experience of this study, the preceding discussion goes some way towards answering the last two Research Questions, attempting to identify how useful the combination of ToC and RE approaches may be for evaluation of community participation policy and practice, and for the development of evaluation methodology more broadly.

10.6.1 Research Question 5 – policy and practice

Starting with the application of ToC approaches to evaluation with community organisations, there are some substantial continuities with previous findings on the benefits and challenges of ToC methodologies in practice. In particular, the tendency to favour linear models and the difficulties of encapsulating complexity and non-linearity were evidenced here, along with the complications of identifying appropriate indicators and specifying models to a sufficiently level of detail for testability. However, there is also strong evidence of the benefits of ToC approaches for the participant organisations in terms of the opportunity to reflect on their work and to develop improved planning, monitoring and evaluation systems.

Moreover, the specific application of ToC methodology with such small, local organisations, rather than the much larger programmes where is has been commonly used in the UK, leads to a number of possible enhancements to the approach for this type of setting. Firstly, the visual innovation of presenting the community organisation and the wider community in parallel to the relatively linear 'implementation theory' (see Appendix E) provides a useful tool to capture some of the non-linear feedback/learning processes whilst maintaining a narrative thread. Secondly, the relative ease of developing consensus around the ToC within community organisations suggests that the typology of ToC ownership (Sullivan and Stewart, 2006) perhaps needs further refinement in this context, since the boundaries between elite, community and total ownership are significantly blurred. Thirdly, the challenges of measuring everything, particularly in terms of long-term outcomes, highlights the potential value of combining ToC approaches with the kind of RE synthesis of evidence around particular causal mechanisms suggested by Pawson (2006). Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the experience of working with community organisations in this study suggests that many of the challenges noted above do little to undermine its usefulness in this context. This is partly because the requirements for rigour are lower for community organisations and, crucially, funders, but also because the 'dynamic complexity' (Sridharan and

Nakaima, 2012) of community action militates against the kind of static theory which would facilitate detailed measurement and certain attribution.

These latter points also highlight the potential value of combining ToC approaches with RE methodology in evaluating community participation practice, as evidence in this study. Whilst RE methodology was not used in the field with the participant organisations, the analysis in Chapters 5 and 9 clearly demonstrates the utility of RE approaches in focusing the analysis on particular causal mechanisms within long and complex causal chains. However, whilst the usefulness of ToC methodology for evaluating community participation practice is evident in the direct benefit derived by participant organisations, there is clearly a need for further research to explore the accuracy and applicability of the identified CMO configurations, and the practicality of their further refinement, as well as the question of how communities with different levels of capacity might engage with a relatively complicated approach. Moreover, care needs to be taken in interpreting the RE findings in particular, given the concerns about evidence limitations and the difficulties of cumulating evidence across case studies outlined above.

Moving from practice to policy, the application of ToC approaches to policy analysis represents a significant innovation, which is further enhanced by elements of RE methodology. Whilst the challenges of detailed specification of models and the difficulties of encapsulating complexity apply equally to policy as they do to practice, the focus on identifying ultimate goals and surfacing underlying causal assumptions within ToC methodology, combined with the generic double helix model, undoubtedly provide a powerful lens through which to scrutinise policy intentions. Moreover, the use of ToC approaches as a framework for empirical data collection with community organisations provides powerful comparative evidence with which it is possible to assess the plausibility and doability of national policy assumptions, and to examine the role of different contexts for policy implementation. This application of ToC methodology to policy analysis also has a potential advantage for those community organisations involved in advocating for policy change, since ToC approaches have been developed to assess such work (Brown, 2010: 98-9). Hence organisations could use the same methodology to analyse the policy they are attempting to change and to evaluate their own impact, thereby avoiding the need to develop skills in different approaches.

The additional stage of using RE approaches to identify possible mechanisms within the overall ToC and to explore how these mechanisms generate (or fail to generate) outcomes in practice provides extra depth to the policy analysis. By scrutinising the ways in which particular causal mechanisms operate in different contexts, the RE analysis in Chapter 9 enhances the analysis of the national policy assumptions, particularly illustrating the implications of wider government policy, such as austerity, for the implementation of Localism and Community Empowerment.

In terms of evaluating community participation policy and practice, therefore, the evidence from the study suggests that combining ToC and RE approaches may have significant merit, even though it does not solve all of the challenging problems of evaluating complex, non-linear processes. Importantly, the experience of applying the two methodologies to evaluation of particular projects in the real world at the same time as using them to scrutinise policy emphasises the importance of clarity around the purpose of evaluation activity, as highlighted in Chapter 2. The suggestion here is that the two approaches can be utilised in slightly different ways to serve different purposes. On the one hand, ToC approaches can provide an 'agile heuristic' (Funnell and Rogers, 2011: 79) to assist community organisations to evidence the impacts of their adaptive, flexible action, which can be combined with elements of RE analysis to help in understanding:

> "how those internal processes are affected by changes in the external environment and what happens when 'human horticulture' comes up against more mechanical attempts to impose ordered development." (Barnes et al, 2003a: 281)

And on the other hand, the two methodologies can provide a valuable lens through which to examine policy intentions and to compare these aims with evidence from practice on the ground.

As Funnell and Rogers express it in relation to their notion of 'purposeful program theory', which relates to theory-based evaluation in general:

"Purposeful program theory is about developing program theories that serve useful purposes. It is not about developing perfect theories. We see program theory development as an iterative process and a process that is as much about stimulating important questions as it is about answering those questions." (Funnell and Rogers, 2011: 517)

Thus, whilst the combination of ToC and RE approaches may not provide definitive evidence of what works for community participation policy and practice, the combination can undoubtedly raise questions which are useful in a formative sense for community organisations and, potentially, in the process of developing and refining policy.

10.6.2 Research Question 6 – evaluation methodology

In terms of evaluation methodology more broadly, this study indicates that, despite a number of challenges, the combination of ToC and RE approaches has substantial potential utility in evaluating complex processes and programmes.

At a basic level, the research presented here has demonstrated the practical possibility of following Blamey and Mackenzie's (2007: 451) suggestion, highlighted in Chapter 2, that Theories of Change and Realist Evaluation can be combined within a single study to examine different aspects. Although the concerns raised by various authors about the time-consuming nature of theory-based evaluation are not unfounded, and there is clearly value in evaluators entering the fray with a broad range of skills, this study suggests that neither issue necessarily creates an insurmountable barrier to combining ToC and RE approaches. Perhaps most importantly, the emphasis on purposeful application of the methodologies, outlined above, and the united analytical power of the two approaches together can actually reduce the time which a purist of either school might suggest is necessary. Furthermore, the suggestion from this study is that the divide between ToC and RE methodologies in terms of the level of collaboration is bridgeable, particularly in the context of community participation, where the

distinctions between community members, practitioners and evaluators become somewhat meaningless.

In applying the two methodologies, this study has also taken some steps to developing new aspects of a combined approach. In order to tackle the difficulties of identifying relevant contextual factors in complex situations, the development of a framework of levels of context, drawing on Brante (2001), combined with a generic ToC model provides at least a starting point from which to explore the possibilities. Alongside this, the separation of contextual factors within RE analysis opens the door to an analysis of contextual effects across multiple cases and mechanisms, potentially expanding Pawson's programme of realist synthesis (Pawson, 2006) in a new direction, although clearly this needs further research to examine its utility.

In addition, the concept of 'mechanism spaces' within an overall ToC provides a means to categorise and distinguish hypothetical mechanisms, which can then be examined using RE approaches. This facilitates a combined 'evaluation cycle' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 85), whereby exploration and refinement of particular CMOs can be used to populate and elaborate a broader ToC, leading in turn to the identification of further mechanisms and contextual factors for detailed study.

The evidence from this research suggests, therefore, that ToC and RE methodologies can be productively and practically combined in order to generate an 'ecology of evidence' (Sridharan and Nakaima, 2012) to deal with complexity of both process and context. Whilst this breadth of evidence does not inherently solve all the difficulties of evaluating community participation or other similarly complex areas of public policy, it may perhaps help to harness 'human horticulture' to grow Weiss's (1998: 319) 'small potatoes' of incremental increases in knowledge and programme effectiveness.

Importantly, the evidence relating to the value of combining ToC and RE approaches for evaluation methodology in general again emphasises the importance of clarity around the purpose of and audiences for evaluation, as highlighted in Chapter 2. As Sullivan (2011) argues, the notion of evaluation as power/knowledge is not simple when we consider the different meanings of 'truth'

that different agents may have within particular policy arenas. In particular, this study demonstrates the different ways in which elements of ToC and RE methodologies can be used in isolation and in combination for different elements of evaluation and policy analysis, serving different purposes for different audiences. Thus further exploration of this combination of approaches, which is undoubtedly needed, should examine their application not just in other fields of public policy, but also for a variety of evaluative purposes.

Chapter 11 – Concluding summary and discussion

11.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I draw together the findings from the earlier chapters, and knot together the loose ends to generate a unified picture from the ragged lacework of policy analysis, empirical investigation and methodological reflection. I begin the chapter with a brief reprise of the key findings in relation to the impacts of community participation, examining the specific contribution that this study makes to the existing evidence base. Building on this, I then move on to delineate the contributions that the research has made to the theory surrounding community participation, with particular reference to ideas of responsibilisation, and to the theory-based evaluation literature. Finally, in the last two sections of the chapter I consider the implications of the findings for policy on both sides of the border, including issues of policy divergence between Scotland and England, and identify a few tentative lessons for community participation practice. Within each of these sections, I also attempt to identify key areas for further research.

11.2 Contributions to the evidence base regarding impacts of community participation practice

One of the key drivers for this entire research project, as outlined in Chapter 1, was to develop evidence of the impacts of community participation policy and practice, thus addressing some of the limitations of the existing evidence base. Hence this section attempts to provide an overall assessment of the contributions that this study has made to the evidence base in relation to both practice and policy. The evidence emerges largely from the RE analysis of the mechanisms of additionality in Chapter 9, although the evidence for each CMO needs to be understood in the context of the relevant local ToCs. Without wishing to minimise the value of the findings, this section clearly needs to be read with an awareness of methodological analysis in Chapter 10, which highlighted some of the challenges of measuring outcomes of complex community participation processes

and the limited generalisability of conclusions drawn from a small number of purposive case studies.

In terms of the impacts of community self-help activities, the data from three of the case studies (CWL, ODT and HCDT) provides significant evidence regarding the ways in which community organisations can deliver services or facilities which would otherwise not exist. As noted in Chapter 5, the evidence base for community self-help is somewhat fragmented and insubstantial, perhaps reflecting the fact that such activity often operates below the radar at a very local level. Hence this study provides some significant additional evidence of impact, including important detail around supportive contextual factors relating to finance, relationships with the local state and the role of key individuals.

Furthermore, the three examples provide specific evidence of the impacts of community self-help in different fields. Firstly, the evidence relating to installation of play equipment by Ooley Development Trust provides a particularly valuable addition, given the apparent absence of research addressing this particular focus of community activity. Whilst there is evidence of lower quality public open spaces in more disadvantaged communities, exacerbated by the context of local government cuts (Crawford et al, 2008; Hastings et al, 2015a) and an established connection between play and the health and development of children (Gleave, 2010; Cole-Hamilton, 2011), as well as my own professional experience of the value placed on play areas by local communities, little if any research appears to have been done in this area. Secondly, whilst the evidence of wider social benefits from Hoyfield Community Development Trust's refurbishment and revitalisation of the community centre is still emerging, the very fact of the centre's continued operation adds to the existing evidence regarding community control of assets, whilst also reinforcing the key messages about the fine line between assets and liabilities (Aiken et al, 2011; Bailey, 2012). Lastly, the evidence of significant impacts on mental wellbeing delivered by CWL's services adds to the existing evidence base regarding the outcomes of community-led health, including mental wellbeing focused projects (Community Health Exchange, 2014; Anwar-McHenry et al, 2012).

In relation to the impacts of community service influence activities, the data from the other three case studies (TPC, DCC and Armitshore NAGs) provides some significant evidence of the ways in which local knowledge, mediated through community organisations, can change and improve services. Whilst there is a relatively broad base of research regarding the impacts of community engagement during the New Labour years (Birch, 2002; Burton et al, 2004; Rogers and Robinson, 2004; ODPM, 2005), the evidence relating to these impacts in Scotland is somewhat more limited (though cf. Findlay, 2010) and, perhaps more importantly, there is as yet relatively little published work relating to the operation of this mechanism under the newer policy agendas of Localism and Community Empowerment. Hence this study provides useful additional evidence of impact, including important detail around differing contextual factors which support community influence over services.

Notably, the two CMO configurations set out in Chapter 9 provide evidence relating to two different fields of public service. In relation to planning, the findings from the relatively affluent communities of Dowsett and Trottside provide interesting examples of the phenomenon of middle-class resistance to development, which has been evidenced elsewhere (Yarwood, 2002; Sturzaker, 2010; Abram et al, 1996). However, the divergence between the two cases in terms of the level of community control over local development and the key contextual differences relating to the national policy framework and degree of participation, suggest that the impact of middle-class advantage may be significantly shaped by these factors. Thus, whilst there is evidence in both cases of the ways in which affluent communities can effectively employ collective activism and may benefit from alignment in cultural capital with local public service professionals (Matthews and Hastings, 2013), the outcomes of these routes to influence are far from uniform. In this respect, the creation of Neighbourhood Planning in England could be seen as a form of the final mechanism identified by Matthews and Hastings (2013), whereby middle class needs are 'normalised' within policy, thereby prioritising middle class interests, which in turn suggests that the absence of this policy in Scotland may be more progressive. Moreover, this points to a significant tension in UK Government planning policy, since middle class influence through Neighbourhood Planning may lead to a reduction in house-building, despite the broader aim of increasing the housing supply (Matthews et al,

2014). Clearly as Neighbourhood Planning progresses over time, there will be significant value in researching the nature of its impact on house-building and the ways in which it is used by different communities.

The evidence from DCC and the Armitshore Neighbourhood Action Groups ostensibly adds to the existing literature regarding the ways in which local community knowledge can be employed to improve the targeting of a range of neighbourhood services such as litter and refuse collection, and roads and environmental maintenance (Rogers and Robinson, 2004; ODPM, 2005; Findlay, 2010). However, as discussed in relation to this particular CMO configuration in Chapter 9, there is some dubiety regarding the apparent 'regularity' of specific issues being addressed by services. In particular, the evidence regarding the higher level of need in Armitshore and the related greater impact of local government cuts in the area, suggests that the limited, issue-specific nature of the improvements made could be due to budgetary constraints in Armitshore, whereas in Dowsett the Council may be reluctant to make major changes in an area which has much lower needs than the rest of the city. This suggests in turn that the DCC case study may provide an interesting example of the kind of managerial resistance to middle class influence identified by Hastings et al (2014). In this respect, the different evidence across planning and other services suggests that there is room for further research on differences between different service areas, examining patterns of middle class capture and managerial resistance.

11.3 Contributions to the theory surrounding community participation

The contributions to the theoretical literature arising from this study build on the evidence base outlined above. In relation to community participation, the evidence points towards a more nuanced understanding of the responsibilisation thesis put forward by governmentality theorists. Alongside this, the methodological findings augment the existing concepts and approaches of theory-based evaluation.

11.3.1 Contributions to responsibilisation theory

As highlighted in Chapters 4 and 8, the ideas of responsibilisation from governmentality theorists provide a useful lens through which to examine community participation. In particular, the notion that community has become both the object of policy, to be improved and revitalised where it is problematic or lacking, and also the subject of policy, to be activated to address social issues (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Raco and Imrie, 2000) supplied the basic concept underpinning the double helix model of community participation policy. Moreover, the idea that the political turn towards community witnessed over the last few decades represents a shift towards 'government through community' (Rose, 1996; Rose and Miller, 2010) provides an important critical perspective on community participation policy. From this angle, the focus on community is an attempt to shift responsibility away from government, forcing communities to become self-governing, taking on functions in welfare, safety, health and other areas. Thus, "the political narrative of community and individual responsibility is one that deliberately deflects attention from the causes of poverty" (Imrie and Raco, 2003: 30) and this is explicitly or implicitly connected to the idea that self-governing communities will facilitate a reduction in government expenditure.

The evidence from a number of the case studies, outlined in Chapters 7 and 8, suggests that this responsibilisation thesis has significant merit in understanding the processes of community participation in practice, with organisations such as HCDT, TPC, CWL and ODT clearly taking on responsibilities which could otherwise have been within the remit of the state. However, the detailed examination of the local ToCs also points to a number of ways in which the theory of responsibilisation can be usefully augmented by a more nuanced understanding of community participation.

Perhaps most importantly, the exploration of the actions and experiences of community organisations suggests that issues of responsibility need to be considered together with issues of risk and power. Conceptualising community participation purely as a process of responsibilisation ignores the ways in which communities may actively seek and gain power through forms of participation, and also neglects the complications of the risks which may accompany both power and

responsibility. Crucially, the evidence from across all six case studies highlights the critical agency of community organisations, making explicit decisions about which risks and responsibilities they are prepared to take on in exchange for increased power. Moreover, this level of agency opens the possibility of resistance to responsibilisation by communities (McKee, 2008; McKee and Cooper, 2008). Thus, organisations in more advantaged areas such as TPC deliberately adopt responsibility in order to gain power over local issues, whilst those in more disadvantaged areas such as the Armitshore NAGs refuse the opportunity of additional control in order to avoid the accompanying risks and responsibilities.

This notion of communities exercising agency in relation to processes which might otherwise be seen as top-down responsibilisation also relates to the analysis of drivers for community participation policy through time, outlined in Chapter 3. Whilst four of the five key drivers identified through this analysis could fit comfortably with a simplistic notion of responsibilisation, as governments aimed to push responsibility for social cohesion, failing services and the democratic deficit onto communities, the same cannot be said of the fifth policy driver. From its very earliest manifestations, community participation policy has been partly a response to demands from communities to have greater control over their own affairs and a stronger voice in relation to government (Popple, 1995; Ledwith, 1997; Taylor, 2003). Thus, whilst community participation can be viewed as a tool for governments to offload responsibility, it can also be understood from a different perspective as an opportunity for power, demanded by communities.

Hence the notion of governments shifting responsibility onto communities needs to be augmented by an understanding of the links between responsibility, risk and power, and the extent to which community organisations in particular may be able to make decisions about these three elements. Furthermore, the role of community agency needs to be examined carefully, since the detailed evidence of impact outlined in Chapter 9 points to a number of specific issues about the ways in which it is manifested through community organisations and activists. Thus the evidence from this study reinforces concerns raised by other research about the representativeness and accountability of some activists (Martin and Boaz, 2000; Stevenson, 2004; Kjaer, 2000; Callaghan and Wistow, 2008; Yarwood, 2002) and the varied motivations that can lead people to take action in their community

(Thake, 1995). Furthermore, all of the case studies provide additional evidence of ways in which community participation processes rely on a very small percentage of active individuals, emphasising the importance of considering accountability and sustainability (Skidmore et al, 2006).

In addition to the introduction of risk, power and community agency to the debates around responsibilisation, the case studies also highlight three key elements of context which can significantly constrain the choices of communities and shape the balance between responsibility, risk and power. Firstly, the local state plays a complex role in relation to communities, with different parts of the same agency simultaneously working in partnership and conflict with communities. These interactions between communities and local state agencies are significantly shaped by the path dependence effects of previous experience (Brenner and Theodore, 2002), as evidenced most strongly in Armitshore, and this in turn may be closely related to the degree of risk aversion and resistance to partnership displayed by the relevant agencies (Taylor, 2003: 128), as illustrated with ODT. Alongside these difficulties with community-state relations, the evidence from case studies such as HCDT highlights the positive role that local government can play in building community capacity (Booth, 1997).

Thus local state agencies can constrain or facilitate the agency of communities, whilst through their approach to community participation they can share or hold on to power, mitigate or increase community risk, and set the boundaries of responsibility. As Sullivan and Skelcher argue in relation to the balance between power and responsibility:

> "If statutory bodies are not prepared or required to give up power then it remains likely that 'empowerment' will result in the increase of citizen's responsibilities rather than their influence." (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 174)

Crucially, the relationships between the local state and communities are not simple and, therefore, any comprehensive analysis of processes that could be characterised as responsibilisation needs to examine the specifics of such interactions. As Newman (2014) argues with respect to the role of local

government in delivering central government policy, the reality is one of 'landscapes of antagonism' between central and local, and within local authorities themselves. These complex interactions cannot be reduced to simple relationships of domination or control. Thus Newman's description of the position of local government could also be applied to the situation of communities, even if their influence is somewhat more localised:

> "They are thus subject to dominant ideologies and governmentalities, but are themselves political and governmental actors who play crucial roles in shaping wider regional, national and global landscapes of antagonism." (Newman, 2014: 3297)

The thesis of responsibilisation through community participation therefore needs a more nuanced understanding of the inherently political (although not necessarily party political) relationships between communities and the local state. Moreover, as the TPC case study illustrates, the local and national landscapes of antagonism may be further complicated by the influence of other powerful players, such as private sector developers.

The second element which arises from this study as a key factor in constraining community agency and shaping the balance between responsibility, risk and power is that of austerity politics. Responsibilisation theorists such as Imrie and Raco (2003: 10) make a clear link between "discourses of community" and "the understanding that community capacity ought to be developed as a means of reducing government expenditure", particularly in the context of the Conservative UK governments of the 1980s. However, the financial crash of 2007/8 and subsequent recession have arguably shifted the terms of debate, leading to a near hegemonic discourse of austerity (Edsall, 2012), which has been employed to underpin a 'roll-back' of the state (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Peck, 2012). Whilst the evidence from HCDT, for example, suggests that local government budget cuts can generate motivation and innovation in community organisations, it is abundantly clear that this also evidences a process of responsibilisation. Moreover, the evidence from all three Cheshire case studies points towards a growing impact of reducing budgets as the staff and funding resources to support community participation disappear. Whilst this is less strongly evident in the

Scottish case studies because of the somewhat later institution of local government cuts north of the border, similar effects are predictable here. Such evidence clearly suggests that austerity policies will not merely shift responsibilities onto communities, but also substantially increase the risks for activists, community organisations and their wider communities, particularly those that are most disadvantaged (Hastings et al, 2015b; Asenova et al, 2015; Hastings et al, 2013). Hence, whilst austerity largely reinforces the responsibilisation thesis, the processes whereby responsibility and risk is shifted onto communities need to be examined in detail as cuts to local government in particular completely reshape the landscape within which community organisations operate.

Lastly, the evidence from this study places a spotlight on the importance of inequalities within and between communities. In particular, the stark differences in resources available to affluent and disadvantaged communities point to a distinct socio-economic gradient in community capacity. Whilst there is some existing evidence relating to this idea (Clifford et al, 2013; McCulloch et al, 2013; Mohan, 2011), there is undoubtedly space for further research into the ways in which different levels of particular resources (e.g. skills, time, forms of social capital) translate into different patterns of collective capacity for action. Importantly, the evidence from this study reinforces concerns that the differential capacity of communities to participate could exacerbate existing inequalities, as more affluent communities avail themselves of additional powers (Hastings and Matthews, 2014; Dawson, 2013). Furthermore, the combination of ToC and RE approaches highlights the ways in which inequalities can build within community participation processes. Since the outcomes from one mechanism effectively form the context for the operation of the next mechanism within the complex causal chain represented by the double helix, communities with a stronger starting point are likely to be better able to generate increased capacity through their own activities in a 'spiralling up' process (Emery and Flora, 2006).

Moreover, these issues of inequality have strong connections to the role of the local state, most obviously evidenced in Armitshore, where the local authority is attempting to fill gaps in community capacity. And this in turn highlights the risk that budget cuts will also increase inequality between communities, as more disadvantaged areas experience deeper cuts (Asenova et al, 2014; Hastings et al,

2015a). As Sullivan (2012) argues, the Big Society notion of communities taking on additional responsibilities will be hard to deliver without an active state to support it.

This study suggests, therefore, that the idea of responsibilisation, whereby governments shift responsibility onto individuals and communities, has significant merit in the context of contemporary community participation, being heavily reinforced by the impact of the deliberate roll-back of the state in the guise of austerity politics. However, the evidence also highlights the fact that processes of responsibilisation are not straightforward at the local level and need to be understood as inherently political processes in which communities and the local state play active parts, tactically negotiating the balance between responsibility, risk and power. These active roles played by communities and local state agencies also suggest that community participation provides an example of a policy instrument outside the triptych of 'carrots, sticks and sermons' proposed as a comprehensive list of governmental tools by Bemelmans-Videc et al (1998).

Moreover, the case studies emphasise the substantial effects of inequalities. Not only do disadvantaged communities find their options restricted because of their limited capacity, but these constraints have the potential to make community participation policy regressive, as more affluent communities are able to manage risk and responsibility in order to gain greater power. As Beetham et al express it:

> "Participation by citizens and communities in the UK is as unequal as is the distribution of power and resources in what is an increasingly unequal society. Rich and highly educated social groups tend to dominate associational life, or civil society, and benefit disproportionately from the influence that their organised activities can bring to bear...Social exclusion in all its manifestations inhibits the participation of poor and disadvantaged communities and individuals." (Beetham et al, 2008: 11)

However, it is also notable that the evidence from this study provides examples of relatively disadvantaged communities claiming power and of the local state intervening to assist such processes. Hence the salient part of Beetham et al's

concern may be the first half of the preceding quote, inasmuch as the barriers which limit the participation of disadvantaged communities are not insurmountable, but overcoming such difficulties may achieve little if more affluent communities dominate the available space.

11.3.2 Contributions to the methodological literature

As outlined in Chapter 10, the methodological approach taken in this study provides some useful contributions to the literature around theory-based evaluation. In particular, there are productive lessons to be drawn from the process of using ToC approaches with relatively small community organisations, from the application of ToC and RE methodology to policy analysis, and in a broader sense, from the experience of employing ToC and RE approaches in combination.

The use of ToC methodology with community organisations followed a relatively standard approach to developing ToC models, starting from long-term goals and 'backwards mapping' towards actions (Connell and Kubisch, 1998; Anderson, 2005). However, the presentation of these models involved an innovation in the form of a visual separation between the community organisation, the wider community and the implementation theory of practical stages, drawing on systems thinking (Funnell and Rogers, 2011). Perhaps more importantly, the process of developing the ToCs with each participant organisation involved a number of compromises, given the difficulties of creating a fully specified model. Drawing on the notion of realist synthesis (Pawson, 2006) to fill some gaps in the ToCs, based on related research from elsewhere, provides a means to deal with some of the necessary compromises. And, crucially, the research highlighted the value which even a relatively general ToC can provide for community organisations as an 'agile heuristic' for formative learning (Funnell and Rogers, 2011) and also for broader research when combined with models from other organisations for RE analysis.

The application of ToC methodology to policy analysis represents a significant innovation, contributing significant elements to the existing literature. Using a generic ToC model derived from the literature provides a critical lens through

which to examine the policy documentation, helping to reveal the underlying, often unspoken policy assumptions. By itself, this analytical approach might offer little more than any other close reading of the policy documents, but crucially the examination of national policy ToCs enables a direct comparison with practice on the ground via the local ToCs developed with community organisations. Thus the shared framework helps to marshal the intricate detail of case study evidence in order to assess the plausibility and doability of national policy assumptions. The experience of this study suggests that such an approach is particularly useful in addressing some of the challenges of analysing policies with multiple goals (Minogue, 1997) and which exhibit a mix of top-down and bottom-up elements (Sabatier, 1997). Whereas Weiss (2007: 78-9) argues that theory-based approaches can either deal with the complexity of particular programmes, or examine assumptions cutting across different programmes, the suggestion here is that this ToC approach to policy analysis can successfully manage both.

Most importantly, as discussed in Chapter 10, the key contribution of this study from a methodological perspective is the demonstration of the practical possibility and analytical value of combining ToC and RE approaches, suggested by Blamey and Mackenzie (2007). Whilst there was some attempt to bring the two approaches within the Health Action Zone evaluation at the turn of the century, the challenges of evaluating such a large, complex programme under difficult contractual constraints effectively prevented the use of RE methodology and caused significant difficulties in the application of ToC approaches (Barnes et al, 1999; Judge, 2000; Benzeval, 2003). Hence this study is the first to provide convincing evidence that the two approaches can be feasibly combined in a single piece of research, albeit one focused on relatively small projects within the broader policy agenda.

By employing RE analysis of particular CMO configurations within a broader ToC framework, the study suggests that the combination of approaches can enhance the depth of policy analysis and also work towards robust causal understandings of community participation processes and outcomes. Notably, the experience of this research indicates that the regularly expressed concerns about the time and skills required for theory-based evaluation (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007; Brown,

1995; Sullivan, 2011) are far from insurmountable and, moreover, that combining the two approaches can actually help to reduce the time demands somewhat.

In order to manage some of the challenges of combining ToC and RE methodologies, particularly in relation to the difficulties of identifying and distinguishing contexts and mechanisms (Gambone, 1998; Marchal et al, 2012; Barnes et al, 2003a), two significant additions were made to the methodological tools available. Thus the notion of a 'level ontology' from (Brante, 2001) was used to develop a framework of levels of context, which provides a starting point to identify the contextual factors that may be most relevant for a ToC or the operation of particular realist mechanisms. The separation of such contextual factors also opens the possibility of enhancing Pawson's programme of realist synthesis (Pawson, 2006) by potentially enabling the cumulation of evidence regarding the impact of particular contextual factors across multiple mechanisms.

Alongside this, the idea of 'mechanism spaces' within a ToC offers a means to connect the two methodologies, facilitating the identification of particular mechanisms within a broader ToC model. By connecting the two approaches in this way, it is possible to see how they can be fruitfully combined in the 'evaluation cycle' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 85) to build transferable evidence about what works in community participation (or other fields of policy). Thus the overall ToC model provides a framework with a general picture of causal pathways and intended outcomes, within which the likely operative mechanisms can be identified. Using RE to examine these mechanisms and the contexts within which they operate, using empirical data derived from ToC processes on the ground, enables refinement of the specific causal steps. This in turn can enhance the overall model and improve the attribution of impact, as well as providing evidence of CMO configurations which can potentially be cumulated across different studies. Moreover, the specific examination of community participation through the RE lens also highlights an additional addendum to Pawson's (2006) conception of realist synthesis. Whilst Pawson draws on Bemelmans-Videc et al (1998) to suggest that evidence can be cumulated on the operation of 'carrots, sticks and sermons' as the sum of available policy instruments, the evidence from this study highlights the extent to which community participation needs to be understood as a distinct

policy intervention relying on partnership and negotiation rather than simple incentives or lecturing.

Figures 11.1 and 11.2 below attempt to set out the main points of the approach taken in this study, in order to visually represent its contribution to the theory-based evaluation literature. Thus Figure 11.1 illustrates the twin-track use of ToC methodology to analyse policy and evaluate particular community projects, highlighting the points at which the generic ToC model and context framework provide useful insights, as well as the final stage in which the empirical data is used to assess the national policy assumptions. Meanwhile, Figure 11.2 provides a revised version of Pawson and Tilley's Realist Evaluation cycle, indicating how ToC and RE approaches can be brought together, as outlined above. Each of these diagrams is presented in a generic form in order to facilitate the transfer of this approach to other areas of policy and practice.

Figure 11.1 – Twin-track ToC process map
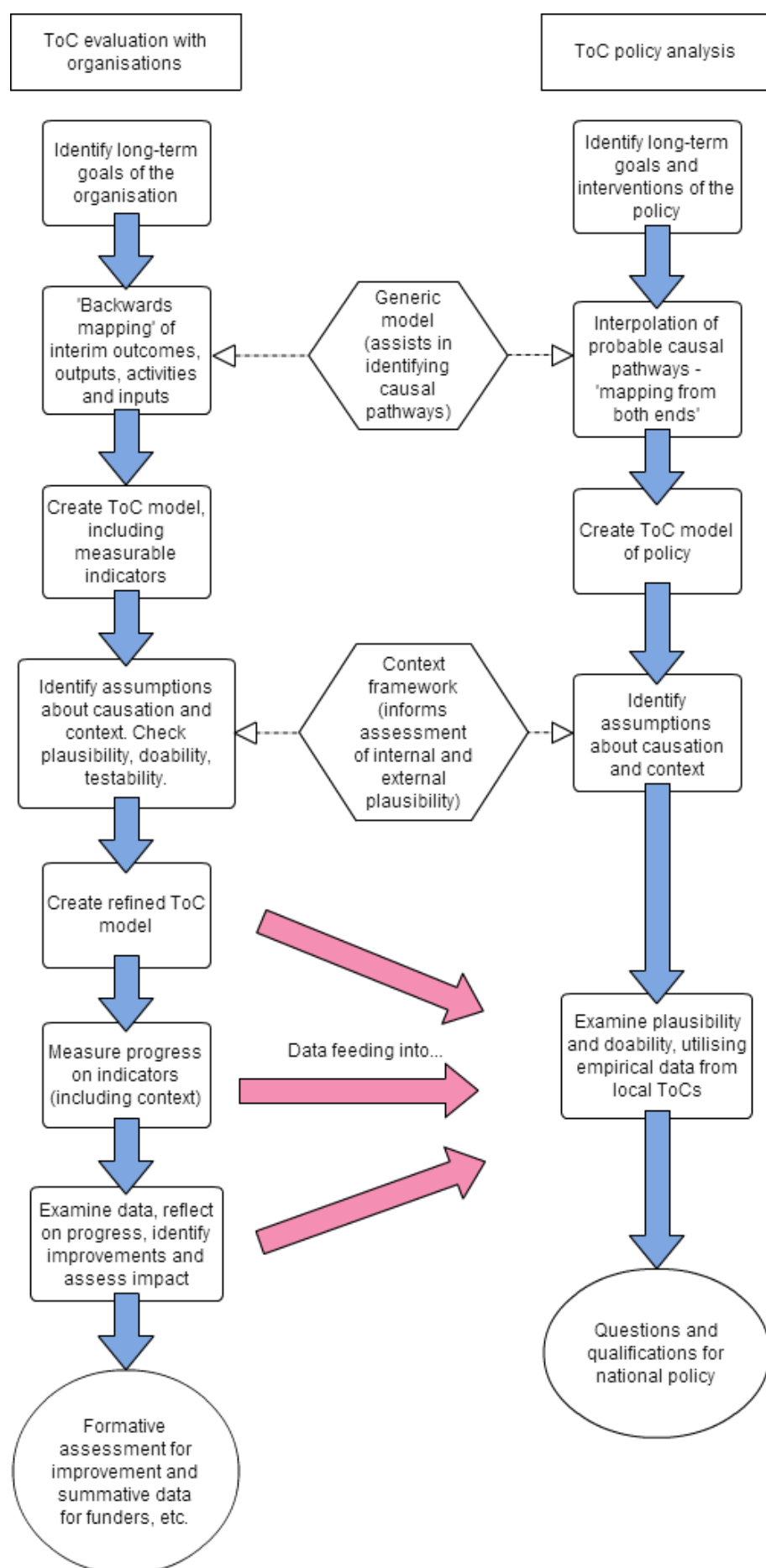
Figure 11.2 – Combined ToC/RE evaluation cycle

Further study or synthesis of particular CMOs

Contribution to assessment of policy assumptions

Theory
Generic ToC model developed from existing evidence/literature

Use of literature to identify mechanisms

Hypotheses
Possible mechanisms identified within overall model

Refinement of theory
RE analysis to refine CMOs

Observations
Examine operation of mechanisms and contexts

Evidence from empirical ToCs

Context framework

Having thus examined the contribution of this study in terms of the evidence base for impacts of community participation, the theory surrounding responsibilisation and community participation and the theory-based evaluation literature, the final section of this chapter (and the thesis) attempts to identify the implications of the research for policy and practice.

11.4 Implications for community participation policy

Drawing together the findings from Chapters 7 and 8 regarding the assumptions underlying Localism and Community Empowerment, together with the evidence of impact from Chapter 9 and the discussion of responsibilisation theory in this Chapter, it is possible to identify some questions which will be key to the implementation and impact of these policy agendas. These points also help to explore the extent of policy divergence between the Scottish and UK Governments in relation to community participation, building on the original analysis from Chapters 3 and 4.

11.4.1 Issues for Localism

The evidence from the Cheshire case studies demonstrates that some aspects of Localism may provide important opportunities for communities to gain power and generate positive social outcomes. Despite all of the complications, Neighbourhood Planning has provided TPC with a legal structure which they have been able to use effectively, at the very least delaying, if not preventing the large-scale developments which were unwanted by the community. Similarly, the ethos of Community Asset Transfer has supported HCDT's work to revitalise the Community Centre and, to some extent, the Our Place approach has underpinned the ability of the Armitshore NAGs to address a number of local issues.

However, there is also significant evidence of the additional risks that arise for communities utilising some of Localism's 'new community rights' (DCLG, 2013), due largely to the unequal balance of power, illustrated vividly by TPC's experience of Neighbourhood Planning. Indeed, there is something of an irony in

this particular finding, given that the Green Paper underpinning Localism identified "an imbalance of responsibility and power" as a common thread in the economic crisis, the 'broken society' and the loss of trust in the political system (Conservative Party, 2009: 1). Whereas this analysis targeted the state under New Labour as a centralising force which had removed power and responsibility from people and communities, the evidence from Trottside and Armitshore in particular indicates more complex power dynamics, with private sector players and central government often holding the trump cards.

In a sense, the processes illustrated in this study, which generate risks for communities alongside additional responsibility and the possibility of power, indicate an ideological tension at the heart of the Localism/Big Society project. On the one hand, Localism contains elements of the nostalgia for the lost utopia of solidaristic communities associated with one-nation Conservatism, whilst on the other hand it is also pervaded by the New Right emphasis on individualism and marketisation (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012). Thus, within individual policy elements such as Neighbourhood Planning and Community Asset Transfer there is a tension between the focus on local community ownership of assets and decisions, and exposure to the full-blooded free market. Moreover, looking across Localism as a whole, there is something of a divide between policies such as Neighbourhood Planning and Our Place, which contain an element of collective voice, and those which are more explicitly individual and consumerist, such as the extension of direct elections and referenda, or which are concerned with marketisation, such as the Community Right to Challenge with its focus on 'diversifying supply' (DCLG, 2010).

Notably, this ideological tension has implications for Localism's approach to inequalities, since neither strand of thought has much concern with reducing inequality. Rather, the emphasis on voluntarism and philanthropy within Localism (Locality, 2014a; Community Development Foundation, 2012) reflects a one-nation reliance on noblesse oblige, whilst the stress on free markets points to the belief in individualism and 'trickle-down' ideas as the New Right answer to questions of inequality (HM Government, 2011).

Most importantly, the emerging evidence from all three Cheshire case studies suggests that the tension between these two ideological currents within Localism is becoming over-ridden by the dominance of New Right/neo-liberal thinking in the UK Government's austerity programme (Levitas, 2012). Thus, despite the core critique of an overweening state, it is the actions of central government, and the Treasury in particular, which are shaping the implementation of Localism. As the evidence from this study suggests, the deep cuts to local government budgets have the potential to undermine some aspects of Localism almost entirely, as the finance and staffing necessary to facilitate initiatives such as Our Place or to support fragile community organisations to take on assets, simply disappears. Whilst the history of Armitshore points to the ways in which local government can stifle community participation, all three Cheshire case studies also reinforce the argument that a strong community sector needs a healthy and supportive local state (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012; Sullivan, 2012).

Moreover, the clear finding from this study is that the significant inequalities between communities have substantial impacts in terms of capacity to engage in community participation. Whilst the local state can support the development of community capacity or, in instances such as the Armitshore NAGs, go some way to compensating for limited capacity, the imposition of swingeing budget cuts are clearly restricting this option. Hence the risk that Localism could exacerbate inequalities by offering opportunities which only the more affluent communities would be able to use effectively, is significantly heightened by the broader context of austerity (Padley, 2013). Whilst Localism may in some senses be 'empowering the powerful' (Hastings and Matthews, 2014), its marriage to austerity and local government cuts has the potential to disempower the powerless.

11.4.2 Issues for Community Empowerment

The evidence from the Glasgow case studies provides a similar demonstration that community organisations are able to gain power and generate positive social outcomes within the broad policy context of Community Empowerment, although the direct link to national policy interventions is less clear because the fieldwork took place before the enactment of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act

2015. Both CWL and ODT illustrate ways in which local community organisations can deliver services and facilities, whilst DCC provide numerous examples of community influence over public services.

Moreover, on the surface the Community Empowerment agenda appears to be significantly less vulnerable to the criticisms of regressive impact levelled at Localism above. Rather, the SNP's mix of social democratic 'doctrine' and nationalist 'ethos' (Hassan, 2009) resonates with ideas around collective self-determination and addressing historical injustices, which provides a distinctly egalitarian tone. Thus Community Empowerment contains none of the individualised, consumerist elements of Localism, whilst the emphases on communities choosing their own level of empowerment, capacity building and partnership between communities and the state ostensibly avoid the difficulties of unequal power and inequalities which seem to pervade Localism.

However, the evidence from this study highlights some significant challenges for this progressive intent. In particular, the DCC and ODT case studies demonstrate the constraints on the 'choice' of empowerment, whilst all three cases illustrate the complexities of relationships between communities and the local state. Furthermore, there is strong evidence from across the Glasgow research of the impacts of inequality in relation to community capacity, with little evidence that the Community Empowerment agenda is significantly addressing such issues as yet.

Clearly, whilst parts of the Community Empowerment agenda have been in place for a longer period than Localism, the Community Empowerment Act (2015) itself is still in the process of being brought into force. Thus there is a possibility that the addition of a legislative framework may address some of the difficulties highlighted by this study. Indeed, it could be argued that the Right to Participate provides a bulwark against bureaucratic resistance to community influence, whilst the strengthened rights to buy land and property shift the power balance and open new options for empowerment. However, such potential impacts remain to be seen and further research would obviously be required to assess the effect of the Act.

Perhaps most importantly, the spectre of austerity also haunts Community Empowerment, potentially undermining the notion of positive partnerships between communities and the local state. The Scottish Government has thus far 'protected' local government budgets by comparison with the situation in England, imposing cuts of around 11% between 2010/11 and 2015/16, as against the 27% cut instituted over the same period by DCLG (Hastings et al, 2015a). However, this still represents a significant reduction and all the signs are that there is more to come, with the 2016/17 budget accompanying a strong restatement of the Scottish Government's commitment to community empowerment with a further 3.5% cut to Council funding (Scottish Government, 2015c). Indeed, the apparent acceptance of austerity and unwillingness of the Scottish Government to raise taxes could be seen as a part of the rather equivocal compromises between social democracy and more neo-liberal policies which seem to characterise the SNP administration (Maxwell, 2009; Lynch, 2009; Cuthbert and Cuthbert, 2009). The risk, therefore, is that cuts to local government and the consequent limitations in support for Community Empowerment, combined with the challenges of tackling the underlying inequalities which threaten its espoused progressive intent, could lead to similar problems of elite domination which seem probable under Localism.

11.4.3 Evidence of policy divergence

Drawing these two broad assessments of Localism and Community Empowerment together, it is possible to identify some additional implications in relation to the extent of policy divergence between England and Scotland in this field, adding to the existing debate (cf. Keating, 2005; Scott and Wright, 2012; Andrews and Martin, 2010; Tritter, 2011; Stewart, 2013).

As outlined in Chapter 3, the two policy agendas are underpinned by somewhat different interpretations of social issues, with Localism placing a heavier emphasis on state centralisation and pathologisation of communities, whilst Community Empowerment is at least partly a response to demands from community voices. These drivers feed through into the different assumptions set out in Chapter 4 which, as discussed above, seem to reflect a more progressive intent with a greater concern for social justice (Scott and Wright, 2012) and a more collective

ideology (Birrell, 2009). Moreover, the differences between the Community Empowerment Act and the earlier Localism Act suggest that the notion of 'policy drag', whereby devolved administrations find themselves pulled along by initiatives in England (Keating, 2005) does not seem to apply in relation to community participation. Indeed, the suggestion of including something similar to Localism's Community Right to Challenge in the was explicitly rejected in the first round of consultation on the Community Empowerment Bill (Scottish Government, 2012a; Scottish Government, 2012b).

However, it is also apparent from the evidence in this study that the jury is still out as far as divergence of outcomes is concerned. On both sides of the border it is possible that the impacts of austerity policies will obscure much of the potential difference in community participation policy. Nevertheless, there is perhaps significant evidence regarding a divergence in the policy-making process, with the lengthy consultation and debate around the Community Empowerment Act perhaps reflecting a more deliberative and inclusive approach (Keating, 2005). Whether this will translate into a greater divergence in policy intent and outcome over time is clearly a matter for further research.

11.5 Implications for practice

Finally, the evidence relating to community participation impacts, as well as the theoretical development and methodological innovation from across the study provides a handful of ideas which may be of value in practice, for both local agencies and community organisations.

As outlined in Chapter 1, a significant part of the intention behind this research was to develop evidence which would be of use for community organisations and public sector practitioners in the field. At an immediate level, this ambition was partly fulfilled through the value derived by participant organisations arising from their involvement, particularly in terms of improved monitoring and the development of useful data, as discussed in Chapter 10. In a broader sense, the findings point towards five sets of ideas which may be useful in practice.

Firstly, the evidence of community participation impacts set out in Chapters 7-9 adds to the somewhat sparse evidence base. As indicated in Chapter 1, the limitations of the published research demonstrating the value of community participation can be a significant issue within local authorities, particularly in a context of budgetary restrictions when it can be viewed as an expensive luxury.

Secondly, the successful use of ToC methodology with community organisations, combined with RE analysis to examine specific causal mechanisms, not only provides some tentative evidence of 'what works' in community participation, but also supplies a practical approach to improving evaluation in this complex field.

Thirdly, the double helix model could provide a useful heuristic for community organisations and professionals working in the field, acting as a simple reminder of the interplay between community strengths and community activity. Even without engaging in a full ToC evaluation, the use of the double helix as part of a planning process could help to support a focus on learning and development as well as action.

Fourthly, the development of responsibilisation theory to incorporate issues of risk and power provides a valuable perspective in any situation where communities are taking on new projects. In particular, it could be useful for community activists and/or local authorities to undertake a more sophisticated form of risk assessment in some cases, in order to analyse the potential dynamics between responsibility, risk and power.

Lastly, following on from the discussion above regarding the potential for community participation to exacerbate rather than alleviate inequalities, there is undoubtedly room for local authorities in particular to incorporate careful equality impact assessments into their approaches to community participation. Crucially, this could involve the politically difficult idea of resisting the dominance of powerful communities, as much as supporting the participation of more disadvantaged communities.

11.6 Concluding summary

This study provides contributions to the evidence base regarding the impacts of community participation and to theory around both community participation and evaluation methodology, all of which feeds through into implications for policy and practice.

In particular, the case studies provide significant evidence of the outcomes that community organisations can deliver through directly providing services or facilities, and through influencing public services. Notably this evidence and the contexts within which these outcomes are delivered suggest that the idea of responsibilisation needs to be examined in a more nuanced fashion, incorporating issues of risk and power, as well as the active agency of communities and the local state.

The evidence also highlights the impacts of austerity on community participation, increasing the degree of risk and responsibility for communities and reducing opportunities for power. Furthermore, the case studies demonstrate the importance of inequalities within and between communities, which has the potential to make community participation policy regressive as more affluent communities are more able to take advantage of additional powers and local authorities have less resource to support the capacity of more disadvantaged communities.

These points raise challenges for both Localism and Community Empowerment, particularly in relation to the impacts of cuts, potentially undermining these policy agendas. Moreover, both governments have questions to answer with regard to the potentially regressive impacts of expecting communities to take on additional responsibilities.

The methodological innovation of combining ToC and RE approaches offers a new approach for evaluation practitioners and, potentially, for community organisations. Furthermore, the findings regarding risk and inequalities, as well as the double helix model itself, may provide useful insights for community activists and public

sector agencies as they attempt to navigate the often choppy waters of community participation.

Appendix A – Literature search process for mechanisms of additionality

The literature search to identify evidence for the operation of mechanisms which produce wider social outcomes from community participation was conducted using the Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA) database.

Initial searches on relatively broad criteria (e.g. "community participation" AND "outcome*" or "impact*") produced several hundred results. Hence, for reasons of time and resource, the search was focused on existing reviews of the evidence, rather than primary sources. Clearly such an approach runs the risk of excluding significant evidence from individual studies which may not have been captured by existing reviews. However, as noted in Chapter 5, the main focus of this search was to identify potential mechanisms, rather than to systematically review the evidence for their operation, so taking the shortcut of focusing on reviews would not undermine the purpose of the exercise.

A first search was conducted using terms directly related to community participation. On reviewing the abstracts of articles found by this search, it was noted that the majority of the articles seemed to relate to participation initiated by agencies and there seemed to be few items relating to broader conceptions of community activity. Hence a second search was conducted using terms related to community organisations and action.

The abstracts for all items found from these two searches (108 in total) were reviewed to identify potentially relevant articles, excluding those that did not directly relate to community participation or did not consider evidence of outcomes. This review produced a list of 22 articles. The search criteria and number of articles at each stage are summarised in Table x below.

Table 12.1 – Summary of search criteria and review stages

	Search criteria	No of items found	No of relevant items
1	("community engagement" OR "community participation" OR "community empowerment") AND (outcome* OR impact*) AND (review OR synthesis)	56	13
2	("community dev*" OR "community act*" OR "community org*") AND (outcome* OR impact*) AND (review OR synthesis)	55	10 (9 distinct)

Additional items were added to this list from the researcher's previous knowledge and that of colleagues, drawing particularly on grey literature produced by and/or for governments (e.g. the ODPM review of community engagement in area-based initiatives from 2005 and the similar Scottish Government review of community engagement in regeneration from 2010).

The final list of 31 items were each read in detail, attempting to identify evidence of particular mechanisms whereby different forms of community participation can produce wider social outcomes. The reading was structured around the framework

provided by the double helix model, looking for evidence of mechanisms relating to each element of community activity and community strength.

Appendix B – Ethics approval form

University | College of
of Glasgow | Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application Outcome ☐

Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application Outcome ☒

Application Details

Application Number: 400130021

Application Type   New ☐   Resubmission ☒

Applicant's Name   Stephen Rolfe

Project Title   Assessing the impacts of community participation policy in Scotland and England

Date application reviewed *(d.m.yr)*   26/09/13

Application Outcome   Approved

Start Date of Approval   *(d.m.yr)*   26/09/13

(blank of if not approved)

End Date of Approval   *(d.m.yr)*   01/09/15

If the applicant has been given approval this means they can proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations (where application is Not Approved)

Please note the comments below and provide further information where requested. All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded. You must include a covering letter in a separate document (uploaded as the **Resubmission Document** online) to explain the changes you have made to the application.

Major

Minor

Comments *(other than specific recommendations)*

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Terri Hume, Ethics Administrator.

End of Notification.

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E-mail: Terri.Hume@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix C – Ethics addendum approval form

![University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences logo]

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application Outcome ☐

Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application Outcome ☒

Application Details

Application Number: 400130021

Application Type   New   ☐   Amendments to Approval   ☒

Applicant's Name   Stephen Rolfe

Project Title   Assessing the impacts of community participation policy in Scotland and England

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Application Outcome   Approved

Start Date of Approval of Amendments   *(d.m.yr)*   **02/05/2014**

(blank of if not approved)

End Date of Approval   *(d.m.yr)*   **01/09/2015**

If the applicant has been given approval this means they can proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations   (where application is Not Approved)

Please note the comments below and provide further information where requested. All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded. You must include a covering letter in a separate document (uploaded as the Resubmission Document online) to explain the changes you have made to the application.

Major

Minor

Comments   *(other than specific recommendations)*

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Terri Hume, Ethics Administrator.

End of Notification.

Page 1 of 1

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Appendix D – Data sources for each case study

Table 12.2 – Data sources for TPC

	Type of data source/interaction	Participants	Research usage
TPC 1	Workshop + informal discussion and tour of village	Key Parish Council members	Main Phase 1 workshop, developing ToC
CWaCC 1	Interview	Spatial Planning Officer, CWaCC	Officer was main contact/support for PC throughout NP process. Interview focused on augmenting ToC and providing some Phase 2 data.
TPC 2	Email discussion/questions	Key PC members	Various discussions around impact of court judgement and next stages in process, especially with regard to planning appeals to provide initial Phase 2 data
TPC 3	Informal interview	PC Chair	Discussion around impact of court judgement and next stages in process. Development of Phase 2 workshop
TPC 4	Workshop	Various community members – some heavily involved in NP Steering Group, others only slightly involved in process	Main Phase 2 workshop, examining various stages of ToC and outcomes with a range of community members
CWaCC 2	Interview	Strategic Manager, Spatial Planning, CWaCC	Manager of Spatial Planning team, with responsibility for NP across CWaCC. Interview focused on gathering additional Phase 2 data and some Phase 3 reflections
CWaCC 3	Interview	Leader of Council	Interview looking at CWaCC's approach to Localism in general, but Leader has particular interest in Trottside and NP. Augmenting Phase 2 and Phase 3 data from all three Cheshire cases.
TPC 5	Email discussion/questions	Key PC members	Discussions around impact of NP as it is implemented and impact of continuing delay in planning appeals decision. Part of Phase 3 reflections.

| TPC 6 | Informal discussion | Key PC members | Discussions around impact of NP as it is implemented and impact of continuing delay in planning appeals decision. Important part of Phase 3 reflection on process. |

Additional documentation used as evidence:

	Documents	**Research usage**
TPC 7	TPC Theory of Change	Developed in Phase 1, used throughout Phases 2 and 3
TPC 8	Trottside Neighbourhood Plan	Phase 2 data
TPC 9	Various documents from consultation phases of Neighbourhood Plan development process	Phase 1 and 2 data – augmenting ToC and showing some impacts through process
TPC 10	High Court judgement on judicial review of Neighbourhood Plan process	Phase 2 data
TPC 11	Trottside fieldnotes	Augmenting other data sources, particularly in relation to methodological Research Questions 5 and 6.

Table 12.3 – Data sources for HCDT

	Type of data source/interaction	Participants	Research usage
HCDT 1	Workshop	HCDT Board members	Main Phase 1 workshop, developing ToC
HCDT 2	Informal discussion + tour of centre	Centre Manager	Discussions to augment info from workshop
CWaCC 4	Interview	Partnership Manager, CWaCC	Officer who has been key support to HCDT Board
HCDT 3	Informal discussion	Centre Manager	Clarifying ToC and approach to data collection for Phase 2
HCDT 4	Informal discussion	Centre Manager	Finalising questionnaires for Phase 2 data collection and ensuring they meet needs of HCDT too
HCDT 5	Informal discussion	Centre Manager	Reviewing questionnaires following pilot phase
HCDT 6	Questionnaires + participant observation	Community members	Direct involvement in questionnaire completion at community event, which also provided an opportunity for observation
HCDT 7	Informal discussion	Centre Manager	Review of progress with questionnaires
HCDT 8	Questionnaire data	Community members (as respondents)	Initial analysis of questionnaires completed to date – sent to Centre Manager for discussion.

Additional documentation used as evidence:

	Documents	Research usage
HCDT 9	HCDT Theory of Change	Developed in Phase 1, used throughout Phases 2 and 3
HCDT 10	Completed questionnaires, providing feedback on Centre from current users and other community members	Phase 2 data
HCDT 11	Hoyfield fieldnotes	Augmenting other data sources, particularly in relation to methodological Research Questions 5 and 6.

Table 12.4 – Data sources for Armitshore NAGs

	Type of data source/interaction	Participants	Research usage
ANAG 1	Observation of NAG meeting	Community members, Locality Officer, Community Police Support Officers, Housing Association officer	Initial observation to get a sense of how the NAGs operate
ANAG 2	Workshop	Localities Team, CWaCC	Main Phase 1 workshop – undertaken with Localities Team because of difficulties of direct workshop with NAG participants
ANAG 3	Observation of NAG meeting	Community members, Locality Officers, Police Officer, Councillor	Further observation to augment ToC from workshop and provide Phase 2 data
ANAG 4	Observation of NAG meeting	Community members, Locality Officers, Police Officer, Councillor, Housing Association Officer	Further observation to augment ToC from workshop and provide Phase 2 data

Additional documentation used as evidence:

	Documents	Research usage
ANAG 5	ANAG Theory of Change	Developed in Phase 1, used throughout Phases 2 and 3
ANAG 6	Minutes of all meetings for a selection of the NAGs	Phase 2 data – assessment of focus, operation and impacts of NAGs
ANAG 7	Armitshore fieldnotes	Augmenting other data sources, particularly in relation to methodological Research Questions 5 and 6.

Table 12.5 – Data sources for DCC

	Type of data source/interaction	Participants	Research usage
DCC 1	Workshop	Community Council members	First Phase 1 workshop, developing ToC
DCC 2	Informal discussion	CC Chair	Additional discussion to add background info and augment ToC from workshop
DCC 3	Workshop	Community Council members	Second Phase 1 workshop, augmenting ToC and developing ideas around Phase 2 data collection
GCC 1	Interview	Principal Officer, GCC	Officer is the lead for Community Councils across Glasgow
DCC 4	Observations	Community Council members	Observation of multiple CC meetings as part of Phase 2 data collection
DCC 5	Informal discussion	CC Chair	Discussion of observation role and clarification of use of data for Phase 2
DCC 6	Workshop	Community Council members	Phase 3 discussion, focusing on planning issues
DCC 7	Workshop	Community Council members	Phase 3 discussion, focusing on service issues
DCC 8	Informal discussion	CC Chair	Discussion of Phase 3 data to fill in gaps

Additional documentation used as evidence:

	Documents	Research usage
DCC 9	DCC Theory of Change	Developed in Phase 1, used throughout Phases 2 and 3
DCC 10	Minutes of all meetings	Phase 2 data – assessment of focus, operation and impacts of DCC
DCC 11	Internal DCC emails	Additional Phase 2 data – evidence of impacts
DCC 12	Training needs assessment	Phase 2 data – evidence relating to capacity
DCC 13	Impact recording log	Phase 2 data – record of lobbying efforts and outcomes, drawn from minutes, emails and observations
DCC 14	Dowsett fieldnotes	Augmenting other data sources, particularly in relation to methodological Research Questions 5 and 6.

Table 12.6 – Data sources for ODT

	Type of data source/interaction	Participants	Research usage
ODT 1	Workshop	ODT Board	Main Phase 1 workshop, developing ToC
ODT 2	Workshop	ODT Board	Additional Phase 1 workshop to review ToC and develop Phase 2 data collection approach
ODT 3	Observation	ODT Board, community members	Observation of AGM to augment ToC and start to gather Phase 2 data
GCC 2	Interview	Principal Officer, GCC	Officer is now main contact for ODT and lead for the regeneration of Ooley
ODT 4	Informal discussion	Key Board members	Discussion of progress on Phase 2 data and other ODT issues
ODT 5	Observation	Development Steering Group – GCC, Developer, various community members	Additional Phase 2 data collection
ODT 6	Informal discussion	Key Board members	Discussion of difficulties with Phase 2 data collection and development of ideas for progress
ODT 7	Email discussions	Key Board members	Discussion of difficulties with Phase 2 data collection and major changes in ODT Board
ODT 8	Informal discussion	Key Board members	Discussion of Phase 2 data and update on current situation for Phase 3 analysis

Additional documentation used as evidence:

	Documents	Research usage
ODT 9	ODT Theory of Change	Developed in Phase 1, used throughout Phases 2 and 3
ODT 10	Funding applications	Phase 2 – used to develop data collection approach
ODT 11	Funding evaluation report on play park users	Phase 2 – key outcomes data
ODT 12	Newsletters and other promotional material	Phase 2 – broader picture of ODT outcomes
ODT 13	Ooley fieldnotes	Augmenting other data sources, particularly in relation to methodological Research Questions 5 and 6.

Table 12.7 – Data sources for CWL

	Type of data source/interaction	Participants	Research usage
CWL 1	Workshop	Board members and service users (not staff members)	First Phase 1 workshop, developing ToC
CWL 2	Email questions	Manager	Follow-up questions to add Manager's views to ToC
CWL 3	Observation	CWL staff, volunteers and community members	Observation of 'Family Event' to augment ToC and start to gather Phase 2 data
CWL 4	Informal discussion	Manager	Initial discussion about Phase 2 data collection, and fit with CWL's monitoring requirements
CWL 5	Training session	CWL staff	Direct training for CWL staff in use of WEMWBS, as key part of Phase 2 data collection
CWL 6	Staff meeting – discussion and observation	CWL staff	Discussion of challenges of Phase 2 data collection and refinement of approach. Additional observation of how organisation operates
CWL 7	Observation	CWL staff, volunteers and community members	Observation of 'Family Event' to augment Phase 2 data
CWL 8	Observations	CWL board members and manager	Observation of board meetings to augment Phase 2 data
CWL 9	Informal discussion	Manager and Admin worker	Further discussion about implementation of data collection approach
CWL 10	Workshop – combined research and co-production	Service users	Follow-up to Phase 1 workshop, to augment ToC and gather some Phase 2 data
CWL 11	Development and training session	Manager and Admin worker	Refinement of data management approach and training on how to use system
CWL 12	Staff meeting – discussion and observation	CWL staff	Discussion of challenges of Phase 2 data collection and refinement of approach. Additional observation of how organisation operates

GCC 3	Interview	Partnership Development Officer, GCC	Officer is key contact for CWL in terms of funding, monitoring, etc.
CWL 13	Informal discussion	Manager	Review of Phase 2 data collection
CWL 14	Staff meeting – presentation of Phase 2 data and discussion	CWL staff	Presentation of initial analysis of Phase 2 data. Discussion as part of Phase 3 and to feed into continued Phase 2 data collection.

Additional documentation used as evidence:

	Documents	**Research usage**
CWL 15	CWL Theory of Change	Developed in Phase 1, used throughout Phases 2 and 3
CWL 16	Grant applications	Additional Phase 1 and Phase 2 data
CWL 17	Monitoring returns	Additional Phase 2 data
CWL 18	Client data, especially WEMWBS	Key Phase 2 data
CWL 19	CWL fieldnotes	Augmenting other data sources, particularly in relation to methodological Research Questions 5 and 6.

Appendix E – Full Theories of Change models for each participant organisation

NB Due to the size and detail of the models, some have had to be presented across two pages. Hopefully this does not make them too difficult to read.

Figure 12.1 – Trottside Parish Council: Neighbourhood Planning theory of change

Figure 12.1 continued

Figure 12.2 – Hoyfield Community Development Trust: Community Centre development theory of change

Organisation | Implementation | Community

Community hub!

Reduced social isolation (esp. older people)
Improved health and wellbeing
Improved education
Increased employment
Increased pride in Hoole as a community
Improved environment

More people and more activities
More volunteers
More income
Commnity cafe
Busier nursery
etc. etc.

Interest in and commitment to Centre as users and volunteers. Further increased income.

Further increased awareness and interest in centre. Sense of community ownership

Skills (Board and Manager) and use of networks to deliver redevelopment

Major redevelopment of centre

Continued community input to shape redevelopment of centre. Increased income.

Money! Enhanced skills in funding, financial management, etc.

Further grant applications

Increased awareness of Centre plans and improvements via surveys

Skills and experience in grant applications. Networks - vision from Centre Manager contact

Detailed information on community needs, interests, hopes for the centre, etc. from surveys

Confidence in whole Board (reduced panic!)

Initial sustainability and extension of Centre Manager post

Increased income from existing users. Income from new users.

Figure 12.2 continued

Figure 12.3 – Armitshore Neighbourhood Action Groups: NAG development process theory of change

Figure 12.3 continued

Improved relations with CWaCC services and partner agencies. Confidence about delivering change.

Sense of being listened to. Increased confidence to raise issues. Belief in NAGs as productive groups.

Contacts and influence with CWaCC services and partner agencies. Funding.

Quick wins (e.g. neighbourhood signage)

Specific and more general desires from broad community opinion

Learning about what can and can't be delivered, and about the balance between raising and managing expectations

Early challenges (e.g. inability to meet all expectations)

Disappointment and disengagement by some groups

Specific expectations about particular goals from some groups

Information on local priorities, beginning of relationships with key community members

Establishment of RAPs/NAGs

Engagement and organisational skills/experience

Info on immediate priorities for each community

Initial understanding of nature of each community

Identification of neighbourhood/ community boundaries

Initial awareness of Localities approach and Localities Team

Engagement skills/experience, previous knowledge of local communities

Local info re identity of communities

Figure 12. 4 – Dowsett Community Council: Planning scrutiny theory of change

Organisation	Activities	Local authority	Private sector/households	Community

Sense of empowerment/efficacy,

Reinforced sense of righteous anger

and/or

Feelings of pessimism

Additional learning - enhanced skills, knowledge of local authority processes, political and legal systems, etc.

Skills, experience, knowledge, confidence, time, dedication, vigilance, leadership, organisational unity

Informal communication of cultural change

Formal responses to objections - objection accepted

Formal responses to objections - objection rejected

Statutory interventions - planning and licensing objections

Reduced number of 'inappropriate' applications due to conversations about boundaries between LA and applicants

Formal responses to objections. Plus impacts on processes and culture within Planning section

Constraints on planning and licensing applications

Enhanced or maintained community well-being

Maintained heritage, amenity and physical appearance of the area. Area remains a pleasant place to live, work and socialise.

Figure 12.5 – Dowsett Community Council: Service influence theory of change

Figure 12.6 – Ooley Development Trust: Play park development theory of change

Figure 12.7 – CWL: General service delivery theory of change

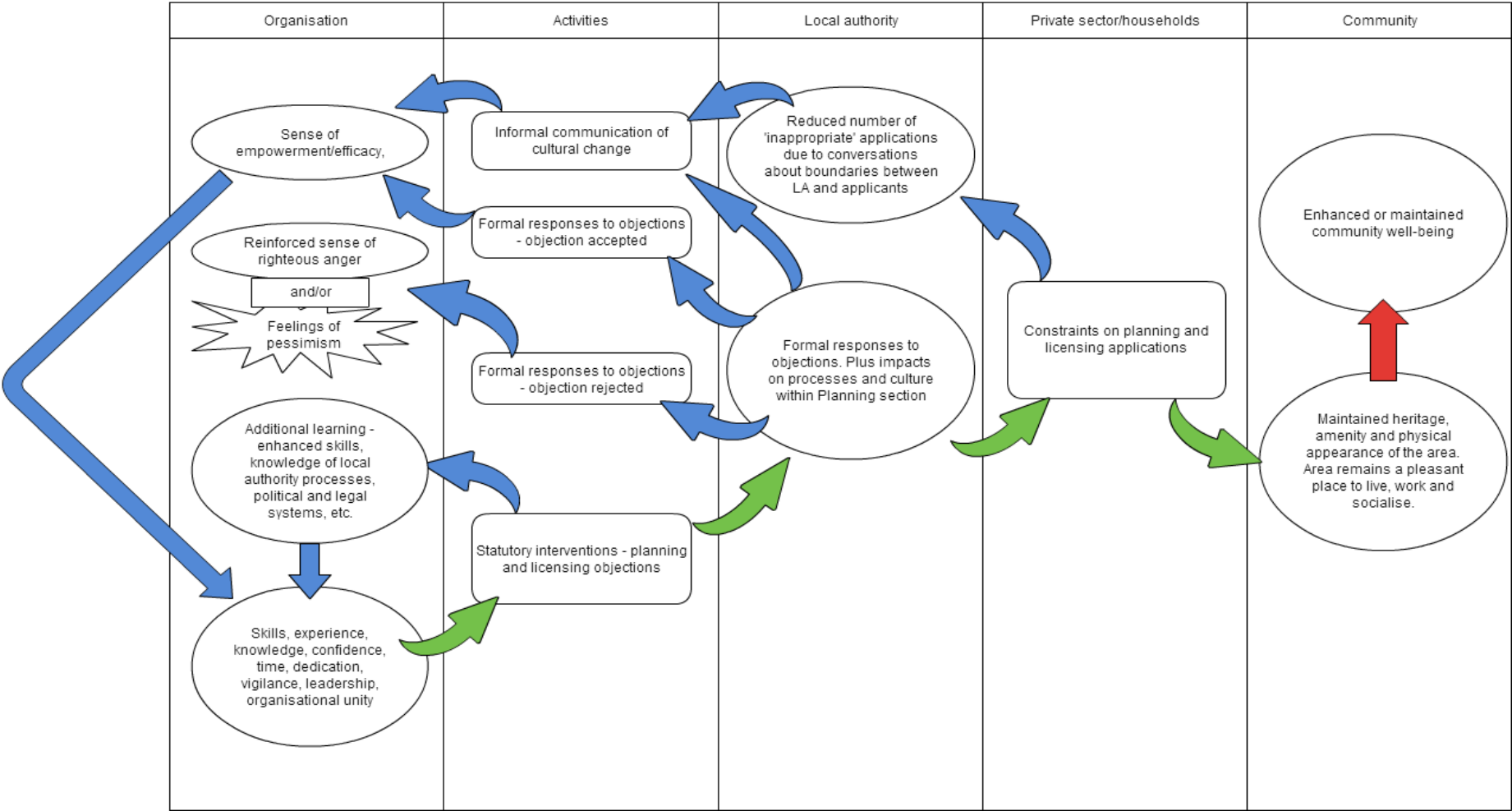| Organisation	Activities	Community

Better quality of life, including...
Increased employment
Reduced poverty
Better child development
etc., etc.

People with skills, experience and ideas:
Staff (especially Hilda)
Volunteers
Service users
Students

Individual therapies

Emergency interventions

Information, library, IT, etc.

Community events and related community development work

Training

Values, 'method', flexibility

Mental well-being:
Healing
Resilience
Confidence
Skills and tools for life
Improved relationships

Links to other organisations

Appendix F – Evidence for postulated mechanisms of additionality

Table 12.8 – Summary of initial analysis of additionality mechanisms operating in each case

Mechanisms			Organisation					
			Trottside Parish Council	**Hoyfield Community Development Trust**	**Armitshore NAGs**	**Dowsett Community Council**	**Ooley Development Trust**	**Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd**
Service influence	1a	'We know what people want, so you can do it better'	Delayed and possibly prevented large-scale developments		Some evidence of minor changes to services (largely swamped by impact of cuts)	Various examples of minor service changes and influence to planning decisions	Some limited examples of influence in regeneration process, not a high priority for ODT	
	1b	'People feel more comfortable in their own space'	Some evidence of planning seen as more accessible					
	1c	'We want to choose the best service'						
	1d	'We'll work harder for people we know and like'	Possibly evidence relating to support from officers and local Member	Possibly evidence relating to support from officer				Possibly evidence relating to support from officer

	Mechanisms		Organisation					
			Trottside Parish Council	Hoyfield Community Development Trust	Armitshore NAGs	Dowsett Community Council	Ooley Development Trust	Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd
Community self-help	2a	'It wouldn't happen otherwise'		Community centre service delivered			Play park delivered earlier and to a higher standard than otherwise	Mental wellbeing service delivered
	2b	'We know what people want, so we can do it better'		Possible evidence – better service because of local knowledge			Play park shaped by local consultation	Services designed by co-production to target needs
	2c	'People feel more comfortable with people like them'		Possible evidence – Centre starting to be seen as a community-owned resource			Possible evidence – play park being partly seen as a community resource, not a Council asset	Services seen as more accessible because co-produced and partly run by local volunteers
	2d	'We want more choice in the services we receive'						

		Organisation					
Mechanisms			**Trottside Parish Council**	**Hoyfield Community Development Trust**	**Armitshore NAGs**	**Dowsett Community Council**	**Ooley Development Trust**	**Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd**
Democratic engagement	3a	'Getting involved with local democracy makes people less cynical'	Evidence of strong engagement in referendum, but not of reduced cynicism about politicians			Evidence of strong relationships with local Members, but not clear that this has reduced cynicism more generally		
	3b	'A wider range of voices improves scrutiny'	Some evidence of improved scrutiny of plans			Limited evidence of improved scrutiny of plans		
Community resources	4a	'Participation helps people learn useful things that can be used elsewhere'	Lots of evidence of learning, but not clear whether this has had wider impacts		Limited, anecdotal evidence of employment outcomes from learning through NAGs		Lots of evidence of learning, but not clear whether this has had wider impacts	Limited, anecdotal evidence of employment outcomes from learning within CWL

Mechanisms			Organisation					
			Trottside Parish Council	Hoyfield Community Development Trust	Armitshore NAGs	Dowsett Community Council	Ooley Development Trust	Cavendish Wellbeing Ltd
Community wiring	5a	'Networks help people move on in work'			Limited, anecdotal evidence of employment outcomes from NAG networks			
	5b	'Relationships help people feel better'	Some evidence of increased networks, but not of impact				Limited evidence of increased networks and positive impact	Limited evidence of increased networks and positive impact
	5c	'Supportive relationships help people deal with life'						Limited evidence of increased social support
	5d	'Communities can help keep people do well at school'						
	5e	'Communities can act as guardians'						
	5f	'Communities can reinforce good behaviour'						

Glossary

Big Society	Part of the UK Government's policy agenda for community participation from 2010, alongside Localism. Defined in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.
Community Capacity Building	Support given to communities to facilitate the development of skills, confidence, organisational capacity, etc.
Community Empowerment	The Scottish Government's policy agenda for community participation from 2007. Defined in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.
Community Engagement	The process whereby public bodies work with communities to address issues faced by those communities.
Community Learning and Development	The professional service providing learning and development support to communities in Scotland. Consists of three strands – community capacity building, youth learning and adult learning.
Community Organiser programme	Programme providing a form of community capacity building to communities in England. Part of the Localism agenda.
Community Planning	Statutory process in Scotland which aims to ensure coordination between public service agencies at a local authority level.
Localism	Part of the UK Government's policy agenda for community participation from 2010, alongside the Big Society. Defined in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

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