Community participation

Who benefits?

Paul Skidmore, Kirsten Bound and Hannah Lownsbrough

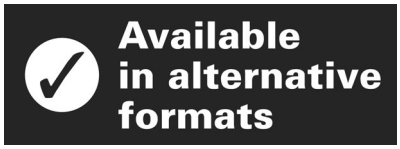
This report explores whether policies to involve people in making decisions about their own communities are effective in building strong social networks.

Government has made a significant investment in community participation on the back of evidence suggesting that it builds stronger networks between people who live in the same neighbourhood. However, this report questions the accuracy of this belief and looks at whether community dynamics and relationships can in fact make good governance hard to achieve.

Through detailed case studies in two areas, and a review of other research, the authors investigate the key factors influencing participation in governance. They argue that community participation tends to be dominated by a small group of people and suggest ways in which formal participation arrangements could more effectively engage with informal everyday social networks.

This report addresses issues of interest to people at all levels of governance, from politicians and policy makers to those campaigning on local issues.

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION



This publication can be provided in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, audiotape and on disk. Please contact: Communications Department, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP.
Tel: 01904 615905. Email: info@jrf.org.uk

Community participation

Who benefits?

Paul Skidmore, Kirsten Bound and Hannah Lownsbrough

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

The **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** has supported this project as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policy makers, practitioners and service users. The facts presented and views expressed in this report are, however, those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP
Website: www.jrf.org.uk

About the authors

Paul Skidmore was a senior researcher at Demos until December 2005, when he left to join the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as an adviser. He is now a McConnell Fellow at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

Kirsten Bound is a researcher at Demos, where she works on a wide range of international projects, including The Network Effect, which brings together Europe's future leaders in a creative, influential and distinctive network.

Hannah Lownsbrough is a researcher at Demos, focusing on marginalised communities. Her most recent report, *Change Within*, investigates the role of ethnic minority community groups. She is chair of trustees at a community youth and play centre.

First published 2006 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

ISBN-13: 978 1 85935 521 3
ISBN-10: 1 85935 521 8

A pdf version of this publication is available from the JRF website (www.jrf.org.uk).

A CIP catalogue record for this report is available from the British Library.

Cover design by Adkins Design

Prepared and printed by:
York Publishing Services Ltd
64 Hallfield Road
Layerthorpe
York YO31 7ZQ
Tel: 01904 430033; Fax: 01904 430868; Website: www.yps-publishing.co.uk

Further copies of this report, or any other JRF publication, can be obtained either from the JRF website (www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/) or from our distributor, York Publishing Services Ltd, at the above address.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This report is based on a research project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Governance and Public Services Committee, and we are very grateful to them for supporting the work. Particular thanks to Maggie Jones, Louise Woodruff and Ellen Mooney.

We would also like to thank the organisations and individuals who agreed to be interviewed as part of our case study research – in some instances, on several occasions. This report would not have been possible without their participation.

The advisory group for the project made an extremely valuable contribution to improving our work at every stage. Thanks to Stephen Woollett (South West Forum), Ed Cox (Manchester Community Pride), Chris Aldhous (Capsbourne Primary School Governing Body), Abigail Page and William Isaacs (Torridge District Council).

We benefited greatly from discussing the project and the ideas that underpinned it with others who shared an interest in the topic of community participation. Our thanks to Liz Richardson, Marilyn Taylor, Kevin Harris, Frances Truscott and Kath Maguire, Gerry Stoker and Francesca Gains, Nick Wates and Jeff Bishop.

Finally, thanks to Demos colleagues past and present for their input at crucial stages, including Tom Bentley, Sam Hinton-Smith, Neal Lawson, John Craig, Eddie Gibb, Catherine Fieschi, Elizabeth Hacker and Chris Peck.

Of course, any errors or omissions are our own.

Executive summary

Key concepts

This report uses three key concepts: governance, participation and social capital. We define them as follows.

- *Governance:* any decision-making body or structure that exists within a local authority area and has a remit to affect public service planning and delivery.
- *Participation:* formal involvement by citizens in these decision-making bodies or structures.
- *Social capital:* resources for collective action, such as contacts, friendships or the ability to ask favours of people, which citizens access through membership in particular types of social networks.

Introduction

Politicians are interested in finding new ways to involve people in making decisions about the way public services in their area are run. In the UK and in many other parts of the world, community participation in governance has moved from the margins towards the mainstream.

In Britain, new structures seek to promote community participation in the governance of services like health (e.g. Foundation Hospital boards), economic regeneration (e.g. New Deal for Communities boards) and housing (e.g. tenant management organisations).

Three reasons are put forward for doing this.

1 It leads to better and more responsive services.

2 It tackles people's disengagement from politics and the democratic process.

3 It builds social capital.

This study, by a team of researchers from Demos, tested out the last of these claims. Through a review of the academic evidence and original research in two deprived neighbourhoods, the question it sought to address was ‘Do policies to promote community participation in governance build social capital?’

Background

Policy makers are interested in social capital because of a growing body of evidence that has emerged since the early 1990s, which says that certain kinds of social networks enable citizens and communities to access resources they can use to work together to tackle problems for themselves. Examples might include using your contacts to help a friend find a job, or co-operating with your neighbours to address nuisance behaviour on an estate. These resources are seen as particularly valuable for disadvantaged communities, who do not possess the formal economic power to buy their way out of problems (for example, by moving house or purchasing additional services) in the way that more well-off communities do. Social capital is attractive to policy makers because it holds out the possibility of improving social outcomes more effectively, through means that are more legitimate and cheaper than traditional public service delivery alone.

Policies to promote community participation in governance are concerned with a particular kind of social capital. The theory is that, by being involved in the governance of services, participants build relationships with public institutions or officials, which give their community access to valuable external resources like money, support or political leverage. These relationships are sometimes described as ‘linking’ social capital.

Since its election in 1997, the Labour Government has set particular store by community participation in its public service reforms, resulting in a plethora of new structures and initiatives. Of course, community participation in governance did not begin in 1997. Nevertheless, the current Government is the first to claim explicitly that community participation in governance builds social capital. The breadth, coverage and sheer number of community participation arrangements right across the public services represent a considerable investment, not just of the Government’s political capital, but also of communities’ scarce resources, time, energy and hope. It is therefore right to assess whether these structures are proving to be a good use of those resources by living up to the promises made on their behalf.

What the literature says

Many academic studies have confirmed that the way governance works helps to create social capital. Involving people in governance is one way to do this, because it helps to build 'linking' social capital.

However, social capital is a bit like legal tender – it is valuable to some people at some times and places, and not at all valuable in others. For linking social capital to be valuable, it really needs to be combined with other kinds of social capital in the right way.

That's because there is no reason to suppose that linking social capital will be 'distributed evenly or brokered fairly'. It is more likely to be embodied in key relationships between particular individuals or organisations – for example, between the chair of a residents' association and the housing professionals in the local authority.

Access to linking social capital is shaped by a range of background factors that affect levels of participation, including socio-economic status, geographical circumstances, ethnicity, age and gender. Fewer women, for instance, tend to be involved in formal governance roles than men.

The research also shows that governance arrangements are not neutral. The way that they are designed can intensify or mitigate the impact of these factors. A very simple example is that the timing and location of meetings can affect whether those with childcare responsibilities can participate.

What our research says

Our research found that the key factor influencing levels of participation in governance was the existing pattern of linking social capital – those already well connected tend to get better connected. We found 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.

Our research also suggests that the way governance arrangements work makes this problem worse. Its origins lay at the level of the system as a whole, not in the bad practices of particular institutions. In particular, a number of forces create 'barriers to

entry' for those who are not involved in governance, and increase the likelihood that those already involved will become more so. Potential participants are often put off from participating in governance by the experience, or the perception, of being excluded by the way that community participation arrangements work. We call these forces 'network dynamics', because they arise from the way people in and around community participation structures relate to each other.

1 *Preferential attachment:* the more governance structures you are involved in, the more attractive a potential participant you become to others because of the information or influence you bring with you.

2 *The rich get richer:* having some linking social capital makes it easier for you to create more. You acquire knowledge and skills about how the system works, earn a reputation for being a 'good' participant and make contacts with people who are involved in other governance activities.

3 *Closure:* the value of linking social capital often comes from preventing others from accessing it. It suits public sector partners to work with some community representatives rather than others, and it suits those representatives to be the community voices that public sector partners privilege in decision making.

4 *Self-exclusion:* potential participants may choose to exclude themselves from governance because:
   - they decide it is not for them
   - they think their interests may be better served by shifting the 'game' into other, less formal arenas where the rules work more in their favour
   - being denied the chance to participate becomes a rallying point around which alternative forms of collective action develop.

5 *Community dependency:* by routinely taking on a disproportionate burden of governance activities, community participants create a vicious circle, which both increases the burden and dampens the enthusiasm of others for alleviating it. Non-participants expect not to participate because they assume others already will be taking part; participants expect to participate because they assume that, if they do not, others will not be willing to step in.

6 *Institutional dependency:* institutions get in the habit of recruiting existing participants who are a known quantity and can be trusted to understand and work within the constraints of a demanding culture of delivery, rather than invest scarce time and resources in attracting new blood who will take time to settle in and may not ever develop the right kind of working relationship.

The bottom line

The three most important assumptions underpinning policy are that:

1 if you create structures for community participation, you create social capital from which the community will benefit

2 the community will benefit because enough people will want to participate in these structures

3 they will want to participate because these structures will be embedded in the everyday spaces of community life and the informal social networks through which people live their lives.

Our findings suggest that these assumptions do not stack up. Community participation tends to be dominated by a small group of insiders who are disproportionately involved in a large number of governance activities.

What social capital is created by opening up governance to community involvement tends to be concentrated in the hands of this small group. The already well connected get better connected. There is no guarantee that the wider community feels the benefit of this social capital, because formal governance structures are often *not* embedded in the informal everyday spaces of community life – mothers and toddlers' groups, book clubs, faith groups – in a way that would make them easy for the average citizen to access or navigate. These institutions, so good at mobilising people to get involved in civic activities, are often not set up or supported to convey that involvement into more formal arenas.

If we want to ensure that there are stronger links between community participation in governance and social capital, then pushing harder on the existing approach is likely to be counter-productive. Simply encouraging more people to participate seems a somewhat forlorn hope given the range of forces helping to perpetuate the current division between insiders and outsiders, while creating even more structures is likely just to increase the burden on a few already over-stretched community activists.

The alternative is to try to find the points where stronger and more effective connections can be made between formal participation by a small group of insiders and the more informal, everyday social networks in which a much bigger group of citizens spend a significant part of their lives. Rather than expect everyone to participate equally in formal governance, we should try to make more people's everyday civic engagement count by designing the formal structures of governance

in a way that taps into the informal spaces of community life that they routinely inhabit. The places with which people are already familiar – the school gate, their place of worship, or their local newsagent or post office – hold the key to engaging them in governance activity. These places and the organisations that occupy them act as the everyday bridge between ordinary people and more formal governance activities.

What does this mean: The 1% Solution

We take the second view. Low levels of participation in formal structures are not going to be overcome by trying harder. Instead, we need to think again about community participation and what we're hoping it will achieve.

We start with three premises.

1 More direct participation by citizens in decision making is the *only* credible basis on which democratic renewal will take place. But all citizens do not need to be equally involved for this participation to be legitimate.

2 Elites of various kinds have always been vitally important in creating social change.

3 Elites are only undemocratic if they are disconnected from processes by which they can be influenced and held to account by the communities they purport to serve.

We need to make sure that the right connections are made in the right places between formal participation by elites in the institutions of governance and more informal participation by people in the institutions of everyday civic life – book clubs, gyms, SureStart groups, faith groups and so on.

Building from these premises, we identify five principles on which a different approach to community participation could be developed.

1 It's not getting everyone to participate in governance that matters. It's getting governance to reflect the contribution of a much wider range of types of participation.

2 Rather than try to change people's participation so it fits existing structures, we should change the structures so they fit people's participation. Instead of trying to corral the young people who attend a youth club or the mums in a playgroup into getting involved in governance, we should ask how governance can get involved with them. As one of our interviewees put it:

> People already congregate in school, church, at the bus stop … We need to work harder to find them – don't assume if they don't turn up to meetings they're not interested.

3 We need to pay much closer attention to the incentives for participation, and these are fundamentally about the devolution of power. Participants in governance will find it much easier to mobilise others and plug into their networks if the formal structures they inhabit are places where real power lies.

4 The goal of policy should not be to invent ever more structures of participation, even though this is much easier to do, but to invest in changing cultures of participation in the long term.

5 If these principles were adopted, we could begin to realise a system that, not only mobilised 1 per cent of citizens to participate actively in governance, but also was a more legitimate, effective and promising basis on which to build for the future than the one we have now. From this, our approach derives its name: *The 1% Solution.*

In other words, the message from our research is that, no matter how hard people try, existing forms of community participation in governance will only ever mobilise a small group of people. Rather than fight against this reality, the solution lies in maximising the value from the existing small group, while also looking at longer-term approaches to governance that would create a broader bedrock of support for governance activity.

From this, two clear objectives for policy and practice can be discerned: first, to mobilise 1 per cent participation; second, to embed this participation in the wider rhythms and routines of community life. What kinds of interventions might help to realise these objectives?

The seven ideas that follow are not recommendations as such; rather they are intended as illustrations of what The 1% Solution might mean in practice.

1 *Backing the best 1 per cent:* if 1 per cent formal participation is the best we can aim for, we can still do much more to ensure that it is the best 1 per cent, and that they are liberated as far as possible to actually get things done for their community. We should recruit a different kind of community elite by *backing more social entrepreneurs to act as the vehicles for local change*. One way to do this would be to replace some community participation structures with 'community-interest companies', run by a social entrepreneur and with local people given representative rights as 'shareholders' rather than as voters or residents.

2 *Disconnecting and reconnecting the 1 per cent:* while it may not be possible to counteract the effects of the network dynamics we have identified, there are almost certainly opportunities to 'disconnect' and 'reconnect' community elites and their stakeholders in new ways. More participants for governance roles should be *recruited by lottery*, with financial support to encourage those selected to take up their position. This would bring into participation people who had different social connections from the usual suspects.

3 *Trusting participation intelligently:* we need to design approaches that gradually develop trust in the community participation process as the cultures around new governance structures strengthen and become more resilient. The more power a governance structure is perceived to wield, the more attractive it is to potential participants. Rather than being given hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds in single chunks, New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnerships and other community participation structures should be given *geometric funding streams* – small pots of money that then double at regular intervals (say every six months). This would allow partnerships to grow in confidence and effectiveness, and to tolerate a more experimental approach to spending money.

4 *Empower the everyday intermediaries:* embedding pluralism at the local level, by finding new and creative ways to bind the 1 per cent into effective forms of accountability through their interactions with the local community, must be a priority if this approach is to sustain its legitimacy in the long term. Power must be distributed so that citizens are not lumbered with a 1 per cent they do not trust and cannot hold to account. This implies a key role for local community and voluntary groups – tenants' organisations, local parent–teacher associations, sports clubs, faith organisations, mother and toddler groups, and community projects. One democratic innovation that might help would be the establishment of *a local right of initiative*. This would allow citizens to set the political agenda directly by demanding a local body like a local authority or police force to take action on a particular issue of concern. Having a right of initiative ensures that citizens can put something on an institution's agenda even if their community

representatives are reluctant to do so. Community organisations would be well placed to mobilise the collection of the signatures required to trigger the right of initiative, creating a clear incentive for community representatives to engage them before that became necessary.

5 *Long-term capacity building for participation:* a key part of *The 1% Solution* is to ask which interventions, in the long term, stand the best chance of promoting participation among ever greater numbers of people. We should create a local *Community Governance Service* to recruit, train and support participants. Responsibility for delivering this service should be devolved to local community organisations. The long-term goal of such a service should be both to grow and to diversify the pool of people involved in governance, and it should work with existing participants to make this happen by creating succession plans and supporting their networking in the community at large.

6 *Making participation a national priority:* if the neighbourhoods agenda truly is a national priority, then Government should start to take seriously a view of community participation as a universal entitlement, and not one that is concerned simply with the poorest neighbourhoods. To symbolise a new universal commitment, we propose that Government introduce, as part of its neighbourhoods 'offer' in the forthcoming Local Government White Paper, a Neighbourhood Participation Entitlement – a package of funding and capacity-building support, provided by a Community Governance Service and available to every neighbourhood that wants it.

7 *Local councillors' role should be refashioned around a formal responsibility for community engagement:* we are going to need representative roles that are capable of connecting with and helping to join up those much more distributed patterns of power at the very local level. Though councillors have lost their monopoly on democratic legitimacy, a mandate acquired through the ballot box does make them first among equals in this task. The challenge for councillors is to recognise the responsibility which that implies, to acknowledge the validity of other representatives' claims and to embrace a new, clearer role as the champion of community engagement in their area.

Conclusion

The fact that relatively few people choose to participate in formal governance does not mean we should discard the ambition of community participation, but rather that

we should recast it. As the radical American community organiser Saul Alinsky once wrote, ‘the major negative in the situation has to be converted into the leading positive’.[1]

Conceptual note

Many of the terms and concepts used in this report could fill an entire book in themselves; many of them, indeed, have done so many times over. For the sake of clarity, rather than comprehensiveness, we define some of the key ideas as follows.

- *Governance:* our definition of governance was supplied by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for this project:

  > … any body or structure which exists within a local authority area and has a remit to affect public service planning and/or delivery. This definition therefore excludes charitable and private sector organisations but includes partnership bodies in which such organisations may participate.

- *Participation:* for our purposes, participation strictly refers to involvement in governance as we have defined it above, and not the much more diffuse range of informal civic and associational activities attached to the label of active citizenship (e.g. volunteering).[1]

- *Social capital:* the most elusive of all, social capital defies easy definition. It is generally taken to refer to the norms and networks that facilitate collective action. But, as Michael Woolcock explains, 'social capital makes most sense when it is understood as a relational (i.e. sociological), rather than psychological (individual) or political (institutional/national) variable'.[2] This relational aspect of social capital is the one we emphasise in this report. We also follow Woolcock in adopting the distinction, not just between *bonding* and *bridging* types of social capital (popularly referred to as 'strong vs. weak ties'[3]), but also between a third type – the *linking* social capital connecting communities to power, resources, ideas and information within formal institutions.[4]

Research process

The research for this report was conducted by the research team between July 2004 and May 2005. Researchers drew on a range of data in completing the project. First, a review of relevant literature was carried out, in order to examine the academic perspective on these issues, as well as to establish a clear picture of the national and local policy contexts.

Researchers then carried out extended case study visits to two areas within the UK, which were identified through examining demographic data and the Indices of Deprivation. We chose two areas that were broadly comparable in terms of basic demographic data and also experienced similar types and levels of social deprivation.

Our case study visits incorporated a mixture of individual qualitative research interviews and informal focus group research. Research participants were identified through a process of selecting key individuals playing particular roles within their communities, such as tenants and residents' associations, and researchers then pursued the leads suggested by the people within those organisations about other people we should talk with.

The whole process was overseen by the steering group of the project, which comprised a range of individuals with experience of local governance who met several times during the course of the project, as well as providing ad hoc guidance throughout the research and writing process.

1 Putting the public back into public policy

> It is my belief, after a century in which, to tackle social injustice, the state has had to take power to ensure social progress, that to tackle the social injustices that still remain the state will have to give power away.
> (Gordon Brown MP)[1]

> The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.
> (Sheri Arnstein)[2]

On 31 January 2005, two unusual visitors called at the home of Brenda Grixti, a community worker who has lived in the Benchill area of Wythenshawe, south of Manchester, for the last 35 years. She invited them in for a cup of tea and showed them the plans for the £2.5 million redevelopment of the nearby community centre where she worked as the co-ordinator. The plans, one of her guests told her, were 'a great example of people power'.

Her guest was due to give a speech later that day at a new £25 million leisure and cultural complex in Wythenshawe town centre, run by a local community trust of which Brenda is also a board member. In the speech, he elaborated on what he had earlier told Brenda. 'We've seen the success of a quiet revolution in places like Manchester', he said, 'which shows the success of transferring power to the people'. Taking power and responsibility from Whitehall and local public bodies, and placing more decisions directly in the hands of community-spirited active citizens, had the potential to unleash a wave of grass-roots energy to help rejuvenate neighbourhoods, revitalise public services and re-engage citizens with politics.

This report is about the particular kind of 'people power' that Brenda's guests – Prime Minister Tony Blair and Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott – saw on their visit to Wythenshawe that day: communities participating in the governance of their local services. But it is also about what they didn't see: the hidden stories about community participation that policy makers tend not, or choose not, to hear. It explores the first-hand experiences of those who have got involved in governance, as well as the experiences of those who have not, to find out who really benefits from them and why. And it uses these insights to offer a practical vision for making community participation work more effectively.

Into the mainstream

The mantra of 'delivery' has dominated the debate about public services for more than a decade in the UK. Now it seems to have run its course and a new reform agenda is emerging in its place, focused on giving local people more say over how public services in their area are run. From housing and regeneration initiatives to schools, hospitals and policing, community participation in local governance has moved from the margins of policy to the mainstream.

Not content to see the Government claim a monopoly on the issue, other political parties have affirmed their own commitment to making services more accountable and responsive to communities. What is remarkable is not what separates the perspectives of different parties and institutions but what they share in common (see Box 1). So pervasive has this ethos become in recent years, it has even acquired its own epithet – the 'new localism' – with politicians, think tanks and pamphleteers endeavouring to provide the definitive version of the story.

Box 1 Singing from the same hymn sheet

Conservatives

> Where possible, we advocate devolving power directly to the citizen … Where devolution to the individual is impractical, we propose decentralisation to towns and counties, and a proper link between taxation, representation and expenditure at local level.[3]

Liberal Democrats

> Our priority is to make local services, like health and education, work better for people. That means that local communities need to have more influence and say over the issues affecting them.[4]

Labour

> Local communities are just better at dealing with their own problems. They have the networks, the knowledge, the sense of what is actually possible, and the ability to make solutions stick.[5]

But there are good reasons to think that this is more than a temporary fad or a half-hearted attempt to find a new political narrative as voters' patience with the pace of change in public services wears thin. All over the world, countries seem to be converging on community participation in governance as a solution to the challenges of twenty-first century public administration. Innovative ideas have emerged from every corner of the globe about how to involve local people in the decisions that affect their lives, from participatory budgeting in Porto Allegre, Brazil, to deliberative planning across villages in Kerala, India, to community councils in Lille, France, to the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in British Columbia, Canada.

The question is: why? What are we hoping community participation will achieve? Three reasons are put forward.

1 It leads to *better and more responsive public services:* e.g. 'Transferring ownership and accountability from Whitehall to the local community means that NHS foundation trusts are able to tailor their services to best meet the needs of the local population.'[6]

2 It tackles people's d*isengagement from politics and the democratic process:* e.g. 'By enabling communities to help shape decisions on policies and services, we will *support civil renewal* and strengthen the legitimacy of the institutions of government.'[7]

3 It *builds social capital:* e.g. 'Community participation aims to increase the confidence and capacity of individuals and small groups to get involved in activities that improve their quality of life and build mutually supportive relationships that enhance neighbourliness and hold communities together.'[8]

Our concern in this report is with the last of these claims. The question we seek to address is:

> Do policies to promote community participation in governance build social capital?

The report is based on a review of the latest academic thinking and our own in-depth fieldwork in two of Britain's most deprived housing estates: in Ely in western Cardiff; and in the Benchill area of Wythenshawe, south of Manchester.

Why it matters

Policy makers are interested in social capital because of a growing body of evidence that has emerged since the early 1990s, which says that certain kinds of social networks enable citizens and communities to access certain resources they can use to work together to tackle problems for themselves. Examples might include using your contacts to help a friend find a job, or co-operating with your neighbours to address nuisance behaviour on an estate. These resources are seen as particularly valuable for disadvantaged communities, which do not possess the formal economic power to buy their way out of problems (for example, by moving house or purchasing additional services) in the way that better-off communities do. Social capital is attractive to policy makers because it holds out the possibility of improving social outcomes more effectively, through means that are more legitimate and cheaper than traditional public service delivery alone.[9]

Policies to promote community participation in governance are concerned with a particular kind of social capital. The theory is that, by being involved in the governance of services, participants build relationships with public institutions or officials, which give their community access to valuable external resources like money, support or political leverage. These relationships are sometimes described as 'linking' social capital.

Since its election in 1997, the Labour Government has set particular store by community participation in its public service reforms, resulting in a plethora of new structures and initiatives (see Table 1). As the Prime Minister Tony Blair put it:

> Along with choice we must also provide the public with a louder and clearer voice. This means direct user engagement whether in school governing bodies, Foundation Trust Boards, tenants' forums. In the bodies we have set up since 1997 … we have built in user engagement from the start.[10]

Of course, community participation in governance did not begin in 1997. Lay magistrates go back to the reign of Edward III in the fourteenth century. The UK's 350,000 school parent governors fulfil a role articulated in the 1870 Education Act. Nor have opportunities to participate in governance been extended only by Labour Governments. Because it suspected the motives of local authorities, the previous Conservative Government arguably put greater emphasis on direct community participation in some of its urban regeneration initiatives (like the Single Regeneration Budget)[11] than Labour Governments had in the 1970s. Nevertheless, the current Government is the first to claim explicitly that community participation in governance builds social capital.

Table 1 Opportunities for community participation in governance since the Labour Government was elected in 1997

Sector	Opportunities for community participation in governance
Education	SureStart; school governing bodies; Parent Governor Representatives on education scrutiny committees
Health	Foundation Hospitals; Primary Care Trusts; Public and Patient Involvement Forums
Housing	Arm's Length Management Organisations; Tenant Management Organisations; Home Zone Challenge
Regeneration	Local Strategic Partnerships; Community Empowerment Networks, Community Chest, Community Learning Chest (latterly merged); New Deal for Communities Boards; SRB Regeneration Boards
Local government	Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders; Civic Pioneers; Local Area Agreements
Community safety	Youth Offender Panels; Police Consultative Panels
Planning	Statements of Community Involvement; Parish Plans; Village Design Plans; Town Design Plans

The problem with community participation, as Sheri Arnstein mischievously implies in the quotation with which this chapter began, is that it is hard to be against it, but even harder to be explicit about what you actually mean by it. Without proper scrutiny of the assumptions on which policies to promote participation are based, we risk creating arrangements for involving communities in governance that cannot hope to fulfil the purposes set out for them – including the creation of social capital. The breadth, coverage and sheer number of community participation arrangements right across the public services represent a considerable investment, not just of the Government's political capital, but also of communities' scarce resources, time, energy and hope. It is therefore right to assess whether these structures are proving to be a good use of those resources by living up to the promises made on their behalf.

The argument in summary

The three most important assumptions underpinning policy are that:

1 if you create structures for community participation, you create social capital from which the community will benefit

2 the community will benefit because enough people will want to participate in these structures

3 they will want to participate because these structures will be embedded in the everyday spaces of community life and the informal social networks through which people live their lives.

Our argument in the chapters that follow is that these assumptions do not stack up.

Community participation tends to be dominated by a small group of insiders who are disproportionately involved in a large number of governance activities – the familiar 'usual suspects' problem. What's more, the few people involved in one setting tend to be the same few people in another setting – the school governor also sits on the patients' panel as well as being a board member of the regeneration partnership.

The origins of this problem lie in the way that the system of community participation works at the local level, not in the bad practices of particular institutions. In particular, a number of forces create 'barriers to entry' for those who are not involved in governance, and increase the likelihood that those already involved will become more so. Potential participants are often put off from participating in governance by the experience, or the perception, of being excluded by the way that community participation arrangements work.

As a result, what social capital is created by opening up governance to community involvement tends to be concentrated in the hands of this small group. The already well connected get better connected. There is no guarantee that the wider community feels the benefit of this social capital, because formal governance structures are often *not* embedded in the informal everyday spaces of community life – mothers and toddlers' groups, book clubs, faith groups – in a way that would make them easy for the average citizen to access or navigate. These institutions, so good at mobilising people to get involved in civic activities, are often not set up or supported to convey that involvement into more formal arenas.

If we want to ensure that there are stronger links between community participation in governance and social capital, then pushing harder on the existing approach is likely to be counter-productive. Simply encouraging more people to participate seems a somewhat forlorn hope given the range of forces helping to perpetuate the current division between insiders and outsiders, while creating even more structures is likely just to increase the burden on a few already overstretched community activists.

An alternative, and, we argue, more promising avenue, is to try to find the points where stronger and more effective connections can be made between formal participation by a small group of insiders and the more informal, everyday social networks in which a much bigger group of citizens spend a significant part of their

lives. Rather than expect everyone to participate equally in formal governance, we should try to make more people's everyday civic engagement count, by designing the formal structures of governance in a way that taps into the informal spaces of community life that they routinely inhabit. By passing information about governance through non-traditional means (such as the back of gas bills), as well as targeting people at the stages in their life when they have the most time to give to governance (such as after retirement), governance is made accountable to a much wider cross-section of people within the community.

In short, our hypothesis is that the heavy emphasis placed on creating new structures of community participation has come at the expense of a proper understanding of how their operation is conditioned by the informal cultures that surround them.

If we want to create social capital through community participation, it is not enough just to create new structures of engagement regardless of whether anyone will actually bother to use them. We need to pay attention to the relationship between community participation in the formal structures of local governance, and the broader array of community ties and perceptions that affect the benefits they actually deliver. And, once we understand this relationship, we can think about how to influence it.

Structure of the report

The next chapter delves into the academic literature to uncover the insights it has to offer into the links between participation in governance and benefits in the form of social capital for communities. Chapter 3 weaves together the stories of governance insiders and outsiders in Ely and Benchill. Chapter 4 develops an analysis of the 'network dynamics' that produce the patterns we observe in our case studies. Chapter 5 concludes by looking at the implications of this analysis for policy and practice, identifying the points of greatest leverage on the problem and making a number of recommendations for remedying it.

2 Understanding the links between participation in governance and social capital: lessons from the literature

There is a rich academic literature to help clarify our understanding of the links between community participation in governance and social capital.

Six key lessons emerge from the research.

1 Governance can influence social capital.

2 Involving people in governance can potentially build social capital, particularly what's called 'linking' social capital.

3 It's the combination of linking social capital with other kinds of social capital that really matters.

4 There is no reason to suppose that linking social capital will be 'distributed evenly or brokered fairly'.

5 Access to linking social capital is shaped by a range of background factors that affect levels of participation, including socio-economic status, geographical circumstances, ethnicity, age and gender.

6 The design of governance arrangements can mitigate or amplify these factors.

Governance can influence social capital

No one has done more to popularise social capital than Robert Putnam and, from his earliest work on the subject, he saw a connection between the properties of social capital and the effectiveness of governance. By his reckoning, more social capital equals better governance.[1] In a study of governance in Italy, he concluded that the existence of vibrant civic engagement and dense networks of associations cutting across traditional social cleavages explained why governance in the North of the country had been more successful than in the South, which lacked this civic infrastructure.[2]

But other studies have shown that the causal relationship between governance and social capital is not straightforward or one-way – the two interact.[3] The institutional design of governance in turn shapes the development of social capital.[4] For example, giving grants or signing service-level agreements with the community and voluntary sector, offering capacity-building support or promoting social inclusion policies can all shape the creation of social capital.[5] As Marilyn Taylor puts it, 'Government can create the conditions in which social capital can thrive or not, as the case may be'.[6]

Involving people in governance can potentially build social capital

One of the most important ways governance can influence social capital is through creating institutions and opportunities for public engagement and participation.[7]

The question is, what kind of social capital are we talking about? The theory is that, by involving people in the governance of services, participants build relationships with public institutions or officials that give their community access to valuable external resources like money, support or political leverage. These relationships between communities and those in formal, hierarchical positions of power are sometimes described as 'linking' social capital.[8] It is linking social capital that policies to promote community participation in governance have the best chance of influencing.

It's the combination of linking social capital with other kinds of social capital that really matters

However, linking social capital is clearly not the only kind of social capital that helps communities to work together to tackle problems. The most common distinction drawn in the research is between 'bonding' social capital, the strong ties connecting people who are broadly alike (e.g. family, close friends and neighbours), and 'bridging' social capital, the weak ties that connect geographically, socially or functionally more distant individuals or groups.[9]

These issues about different kinds of social capital are of more than academic interest. If, as we saw in the last chapter, policy is meant to build social capital, policy makers need to be clear what kind.

There are good reasons to want to build all three. For example, in terms of bridging and bonding social capital, David Miliband, the former Minister for Local Government and Communities, explained recently:

> It is common sense that even weak ties of acquaintance transmit information on job opportunities and create networks of trust and engagement. The strong ties and 'bonding capital' of family and close friends … bring emotional and financial support.[10]

But there is stronger evidence that it is the way different types of social capital *combine*, or don't combine, that has the biggest impact on outcomes for communities. This was shown by the race riots in a number of cities in northern England in 2001. The riots were attributed to a failure to build connections between two tightly knit local communities – a disaffected, young, white, working-class population and young, second-generation British Asians.[11] This powerfully illustrated the perils of having too much 'bonding' social capital within communities and insufficient 'bridging' social capital between them.

The same applies to the connection between bridging or bonding social capital and linking social capital. As we see in the case studies in the next chapter, it's perfectly possible for people to have lots of social capital in the form of more informal, everyday relationships between the neighbours on a street, the fathers in a voluntary support group or the members of a community gym, yet still not be plugged into formal participatory structures and therefore lack access to linking social capital.

The lesson for policy makers is that, to influence social capital through community participation policies, it is necessary to pay attention, not only to the distribution of linking social capital among active participants, but also to the way this linking social capital relates to other more informal sources of social capital in the community. In other words, to what extent are these formal links between participants and public institutions somehow connected into the more informal everyday relationships people develop with friends, neighbours, and members of local groups and associations? As Woolcock explains:

> A multidimensional approach allows us to argue that it is different *combinations* of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital that are responsible for the range of outcomes we observe in the literature, and to incorporate a dynamic component in which optimal combinations change over time.[12]

There is no reason to suppose that linking social capital will be 'distributed evenly or brokered fairly'

The reason why the combination of different types of social capital matters so much is that the value of social capital, to a citizen, group or whole community, depends on whether they are able to access and exploit it. In this sense, social capital is a bit like legal tender – it is valuable at some times and in some places, and not at all valuable in others.[13]

For example, when it comes to community cohesion, it is clear that bridging social capital needs to be shared among a critical mass of people before it has any real value – if 500 people of different ethnic backgrounds in an area know one another it may help to promote good race relations, but if only five do it's not likely to make much difference. By contrast, linking social capital is more likely to be embodied in key relationships between particular individuals or organisations, for example between the chair of a residents' association and the housing professionals in the local authority.[14]

Importantly, one of the things that makes social capital, and particularly linking social capital, valuable to some people is actually the very ability to exclude others from accessing it.[15] A local authority that wants to work with the community and voluntary sector, for example, might choose to build good relationships with a few key organisations by giving them access to a particular forum, or councillor or officer, or funding regime.[16] But it can only do that if it excludes other organisations from accessing the same resources. That's because, if it gives all organisations access to these resources, then their value diminishes considerably – they become one voice among many at a forum, one opinion among many for the councillor to weigh up, a recipient of one very small grant from a funding regime. The crucial point is that, like any form of capital, social capital 'is neither brokered equitably nor distributed evenly'.[17] The value of social capital is often greater where the social networks connecting participants are relatively closed; sanctions, norms and expectations are easier to enforce, and trust is greater.[18] But this also leads to divisions between these 'insiders' and 'outsider' individuals or groups who cannot benefit from the social capital that closure creates.

That means we should be wary of thinking that linking social capital will accrue to a large section of the community. The benefits the wider community derives from linking social capital depend on the patterns of bonding and bridging social capital that combine with it – in the example above, through the broader social networks and ties that the residents' association has with people in the neighbourhood.

Access to linking social capital is shaped by a range of background factors that affect levels of participation

We have argued that community participation policies have the potential to influence the formation of linking social capital, and that this form of social capital is likely to be embedded in relations between a few key individuals or organisations in the community and corresponding individuals or organisations in formal positions of power. To what extent this benefits the wider community depends on the extent to which these formal networks overlap with and are connected into the more inclusive networks built around everyday interactions in the community, such as those centred on a school or playgroup.

The next set of questions the literature can help us address concern the individuals or groups that are likely to benefit from community participation policies: who are the insiders? A huge amount has been written on this topic, and we can only scratch the surface of it here. But the literature does emphasise the importance of a number of background factors.

Gender

Women are not less involved in governance than men, but their involvement tends to be less formal. Work by Vivien Lowndes has shown that women use social capital differently from men. 'It seems', she writes, 'that women may be investing their social capital in "getting by" rather than "getting on"'. In other words, they draw on social capital as a resource in the day-to-day management of their own and their family's lives, and there may be little left to spend in the governance sphere. Lowndes also suggests that the spillover from informal community involvement to more formal types of participation is less pronounced for women than men. Moreover, the more formal the process becomes, the less likely women are to be active. Where women do cross the boundary between community activity and political action in pursuit of particular issues or causes, they are less likely to progress up the ladder into formal positions.[19] A study of gender and engagement in Manchester found that women were more involved in governance than men, but less able to exercise influence.[20]

Socio-economic status

Evidence about the impact of socio-economic status on participation is somewhat unclear. The *Home Office Citizenship Survey* reports that people in affluent areas are

more likely to engage in various forms of civic participation than those in disadvantaged areas, just as those in higher managerial and professional occupations are more likely to than those in routine occupations.[21] However, this measure includes anyone who has been engaged in some form of civic participation in the previous 12 months. Focusing on the most active – the people who have been engaged in some form of civic participation at least once a month in the previous year – the Survey finds that those living in the most deprived areas are actually *more* active than those living in the least deprived areas.[22]

Others suggest that income itself is unimportant; the key factor is that the better-off have greater resources and skills to support higher levels of participation, which can be 'mobilised' around particular issues.[23] While we might accept that it is the latter that is most crucial, others suggest that:

> Everything that disadvantages people in the first place will prevent them from developing social networks or participating in collective activities: lack of money, poor transport, lack of childcare, an unsafe or depressing environment and the daily grind of having to manage on very limited financial resources.[24]

Of course, there are some highly deprived areas with high levels of participation, and some affluent areas with lower participation.[25] There is also evidence that the level of civic engagement among disadvantaged communities is underestimated because they prefer less formal forms of participation, shying away from involvement in committee-like organisations and structure in favour of more informal activities.[26] But this reinforces the earlier point – if surveys miss this informal layer of participation, it's just as likely that formal governance is disconnected from it too.

Marginalised groups

Black and minority ethnic groups and disabled people are under-represented, *inter alia*, when it comes to voting in elections, among local councillors, in school governance, in further education college boards and among the trustees of voluntary and community organisations.[27] For many minority groups, campaigning for equal recognition is a much higher priority than engaging in governance activity itself. But these activities, despite the social links that emerge from them, tend to be perceived as lying outside the political mainstream at which they are most often directed.[28] People rarely experience one of these excluding factors in isolation. Disabled people, for instance, are more likely to be in a lower socio-economic group than their able-bodied counterparts, and are also more likely to be unemployed.[29] The gap

between participants and non-participants is often explained by several factors acting at once.

Age

The conventional wisdom is that there is a clear relationship between social capital and age. People build up stocks of social capital throughout their lifespan before letting them decline in old age, with levels of social capital across the life cycle resembling an inverted U-shape.[30] However, where participation is time-intensive and relatively inflexible, links between age and spare time are important. In one study, for example, a large proportion of retired people in one area produced higher levels of participation, while, in another area with a predominance of young commuters, resources and wealth were offset by shortage of time.[31] Young people participate less in civic and other local organisations than other age groups.[32]

Geography

Geography impacts on social capital but it is difficult to generalise between urban and rural areas. For example, rural areas are characterised by barriers of greater distances, disbursed populations, smaller settlements, extended travel times and transport difficulties. These factors can lead to a feeling of physical and social isolation, which can depress both the formation of social links and networks, and the desire and opportunity to participate in local governance.[33] In contrast, feelings of isolation could provide stimulus for the development of social capital, especially because of the potential for creating durable community ties and local governance structures in stable population groups.[34]

Identity

Participation depends on a commitment to and identification with the entity and the wider community of which it is part, neither of which can be taken for granted given modern patterns of living and working.[35] Barnes and colleagues concluded that ‘commitments’ to participate include those deriving from personal experiences of difference, exclusion or disadvantage; from awareness of being a representative of ‘a people’; from religion; and from a sense of attachment to an area or to a specific cause concerned with social justice.[36]

Patterns of social capital

The final factor, which, as we will see, proved pivotal in our own fieldwork, is existing patterns of social capital. At first glance, the evidence from the literature is mixed. For example, one study found that attitudes to other people, levels of trust in other people and level of attachment to neighbourhood did not offer convincing explanations of political participation, while others found that people were more likely to participate if they were involved in associations,[37] or if they felt 'a sense of togetherness or shared commitment'.[38]

However, this may reflect particular difficulties with measuring social capital as expressed in attitudes and values using survey research.[39] Where the focus is more explicitly on social capital as expressed in social networks and connections, the impact of social capital on participation seems more clear-cut. For example, in one study of participants in governance roles, around 80 per cent were actively recruited by people they knew.[40] Among women in particular, involvement often depends on pre-existing networks, perhaps suggesting that new governance structures might have only a limited impact on non-participants.[41] American research has pointed to the role that 'networks of mobilisation and recruitment' play in shaping political participation.[42] Personal connections among friends, family and acquaintances, 'often mediated through mutual institutional affiliations', were crucial.[43]

The design of governance arrangements can mitigate or amplify these factors

The next step in our argument is to understand the 'mediating' role that the design of governance can play in affecting these background factors that shape levels of participation; that is, in what circumstances does governance mitigate the impact of these factors and in what circumstances does it amplify it?

This role of institutions is seen to be a crucial but neglected aspect of the debate since:

> Social capital either thrives or withers in the context of the institutional framework that 'governs who plays, the rules of the game, and acceptable outcomes'.[44]

Institutions in this context include not just formal structures and rules but also informal cultures, routines and norms: 'institutions are habits not things'.[45]

This 'institutional filter' can be felt at many points in the community participation process: the 'invitation' to participate, support for participation, logistics, the design of the participatory process itself, organisational culture and outcomes.

The invitation

Barnes and her colleagues found that participation in local policy making was affected by:

> … the way in which the 'target group' for participation is defined and recruited. Often 'legitimate membership' is seen to require 'representation' which can exclude those not already involved in group activity.[46]

The UK Citizenship Survey has shown that 'being asked to participate makes it more likely people will participate'.[47] Research into young people's involvement in regeneration found that most youth-orientated regeneration projects targeted 14–19 year olds, and often viewed young people over 20 as a 'lost cause'.[48]

Support for participation

The civic infrastructure – the formal and informal mechanisms for supporting engagement between associations and local policy makers – has a significant effect.[49] It can create avenues for public participation by making it easier to access local politicians and managers. It can generate greater co-ordination and consensus among the voluntary and community sector, increasing its political effectiveness. It can develop citizens' skills in exploiting access to decision makers. And it can strengthen the effectiveness of citizens' advocacy by pooling or arbitrating between different voices in the community.[50]

Logistics

Even the most mundane and ostensibly neutral details of governance arrangements, such as practical arrangements and logistics, can influence participation. The timing, physical environment and location of meetings can exclude, for example, older people, parents of young children, or disabled people.[51] Barnes and Mercer highlight the particular significance of these obstacles for people with disabilities, who are

frequently excluded from public spaces and institutions designed before the importance of their access needs were taken into account.[52]

Process design

The design of opportunities for participation clearly influences the potential for social capital creation.[53] For example, a project exploring the perspectives of community members on participation in regeneration work revealed that the mechanisms for effective community involvement had been inadequate, with too little time for effective consultation. Many commented that there had been insufficient support and not enough training (a conclusion shared by many professionals).[54] Defining which issues are open to participation and the point in the policy cycle where participation occurs is also important.[55] Moreover, the design of the process shapes not just the rules of the game but also who plays:

> The institutional arrangements of local governance influence not just 'how much' public participation exists; they also influence the distribution of opportunities to participate among different social groups.[56]

In particular, there is a role for institutions in mitigating the impact of factors associated with disadvantage and socio-economic status, through, for example, support for outreach and community capacity building in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Organisational culture

The cultures of participatory arrangements matter. As Taylor puts it:

> Public sector cultures are so deeply engrained that power holders are often unaware of the ways in which they perpetuate existing power relations through the use of language and procedures that outsiders find impenetrable.[57]

Assumptions made by officials and citizens can privilege knowledge and communication skills suited to official, bureaucratic decision-making environments, and alienate those who lack experience in those settings.[58] Where decision makers are prepared to be open and outward looking they are more likely to encourage public participation. An inward orientation, in which the agenda is defined by officials,

the ‘rules of engagement’ are imported from less inclusive settings and the substance of participation is dominated by bureaucratic rules and procedures, may squander ‘the sense that these are locations in which social change can be achieved’.[59] A focus on first getting the structures right disaffects potential community participants eager to get things done.[60]

The outcome

Finally, the perception that participation causes some change in service provision, policy or the attitudes of decision makers is a – perhaps *the* – crucial factor in affecting levels of participation. As Barnes and colleagues put it:

> Whilst some remain engaged in spite of reporting little direct evidence of service or policy change, others become disillusioned and give up.[61]

Citizens have clear views of the criteria against which effective participation should be judged:

> (a) ‘Has anything happened?’(b) ‘Has it been worth the money?’ and (c) ‘Have they carried on talking to the public?[62]

According to Lowndes and Wilson:

> Even where institutional arrangements exist to involve citizens and associations in policy formulation, social capital can only ‘make a difference’ where decision makers actually listen to, and take into account, citizens’ preferences … [T]he biggest deterrent to participation among citizens is their perception – or experience – of a lack of council response.[63]

Summing up

This chapter has sought to marshal some evidence from the vast (and still growing) literature on participation, governance and social capital. But already it has helped to generate some important insights into our research question. The essential points are as follows.

1 Governance can influence social capital.

2 Involving people in governance can build ‘linking’ social capital.

3 It’s the combination of different types of social capital that really matters.

4 There is no reason to suppose that linking social capital will be ‘distributed evenly or brokered fairly’.

5 Access to linking social capital is shaped by a range of background factors that affect levels of participation.

6 The design of governance arrangements can mitigate or amplify these factors.

As we have seen, one of the background factors identified in the literature, though not, it would be fair to say, strongly emphasised, is the existing distribution of social capital. Like the other factors, the design of governance arrangements – the way potential participants are identified and recruited, for example – has the potential to mitigate or amplify this factor. As we embarked on our own fieldwork, this was to emerge as a defining theme.

3 Community participation in two deprived neighbourhoods

> We want people to help shape the local public services they receive and we want them to become more involved in the democratic life of their community. Through action at the neighbourhood level, people everywhere can make a significant difference to the quality of our country's public services.
> (John Prescott, MP)[1]

Ely is one half of a vast social housing estate on the south-western tip of Cardiff. Built to 'garden village' principles before the war, the area has few of the grim tower blocks traditionally associated with large-scale urban housing. In their place are tree-lined avenues, green spaces and neat rows of terraced and semi-detached houses. Nevertheless, multiple deprivation burdens the community that lives here. It is rated the sixty-third most deprived ward in Wales and one in eight of those aged over 16 who live there have never worked.

Benchill in Wythenshawe, south of Manchester, is another massive social housing estate laid out to a similar garden village design. The community here shares many similarities with Ely: predominantly white working class, relatively young, with low levels of educational attainment, high levels of worklessness and a disproportionate number of lone-parent households. If anything, residents in Benchill have had it even harder than in Ely. Decades of social and economic disadvantage left the area top of the national Indices of Deprivation in 2000.

Figure 1 Population profile in Benchill and Ely (social grade)

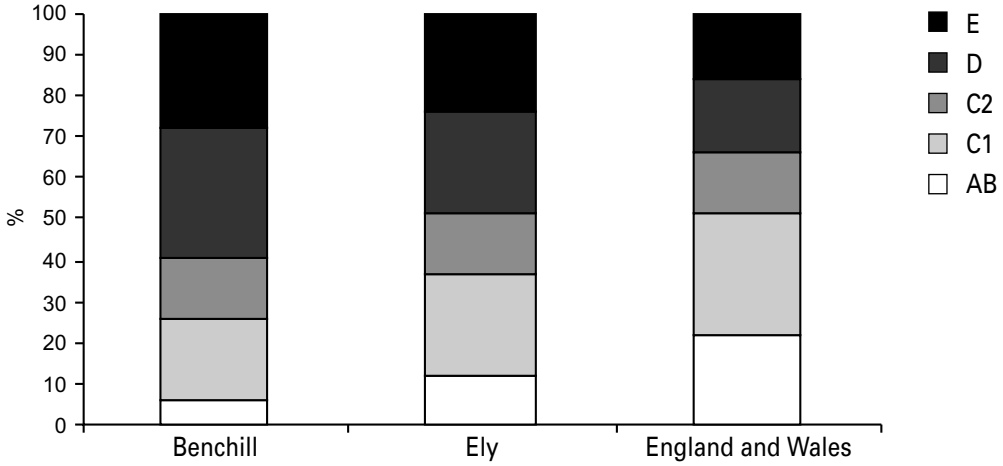


Table 2 Social and economic profile of Benchill and Ely in comparative perspective

	Benchill	Ely	England and Wales
Population	10,439	14,751	N/A
Average age	33.1	34.5	38.6
Ethnicity: non-white population (%)	5.0	5.1	8.7
Health: proportion with a limiting long-term illness (%)	25.6	23.0	18.2
Education: proportion with no qualifications (%)	51.3	47.8	29.1
Unemployment (%)	6.6	4.6	3.4
Economically inactive: unemployed, permanently sick/disabled, looking after home/family, other inactive (excluding retired) (%)	39.9	32.4	18.5
Social housing: proportion of households rented from council, housing association or registered social landlord (%)	73.0	40.3	19.2
Family structure: proportion of households that are lone parents with dependent children (%)	20.2	17.8	6.5

The scale of the challenge leaves many residents in these neighbourhoods interested only in escaping from them. Pinned to the noticeboard in the housing office on Grand Avenue in Ely is a handwritten note. It reads:

> EXCHANGE WANTED
>
> FROM: ELY, 2 BEDROOM HOUSE, LARGE BACK GARDEN, DRIVE.
> TO: 2/3 BEDROOMED HOUSE. ANYWHERE.

But others are determined to do what they can to improve the area by getting involved in schools, residents' associations, regeneration initiatives and other opportunities for participating in local governance.

Neighbourhoods like these are a good place to test the claims made about community participation. If, in John Prescott's words, 'people everywhere' really can make a difference by getting involved in how public services are run, they must be able to do so even in the face of the kinds of adversities experienced by residents in neighbourhoods like these. The broad similarities of these neighbourhoods' socio-economic and demographic profile also allow us to make meaningful comparisons across the two sites.

This chapter looks at community participation through the eyes of some of the people who have experienced it first-hand, not always positively, in Benchill and Ely. Why did they choose to participate or not participate? What led them to seek involvement in the first place? What was the experience like? What impact has it had on them and their community?

The insiders

Some common themes emerge from the accounts of those actively involved in governance in Benchill and Ely.

- *The insiders as an elite:* the same small group of people were involved in a disproportionately large number of governance structures.
- *One thing leads to another:* membership of one body led to joining another body.
- *It's who you know that counts:* participants' involvement in governance was mediated through the people they met.
- *Participation begins close to home:* the first step into governance was often with the institution nearest to people's hearts.
- *An end to illusions:* an ambivalence towards governance, and frustrations at the difficulty of engaging others, were offset by a belief in having their say.

The insiders as an elite

The first and most striking thing about community participation in Benchill and Ely is that only a small group of people were involved in governance, and it was the same small group that seemed to be involved in a disproportionately large number of governance structures – the same people wore several hats.

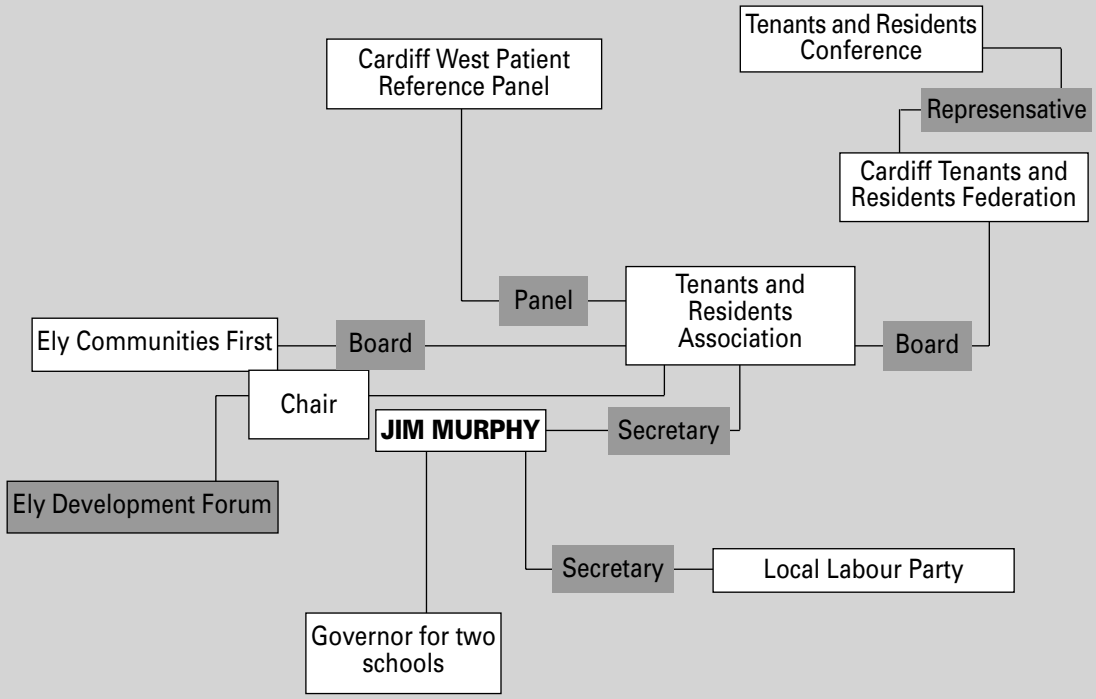
Perhaps the easiest way to represent this is graphically. Figures 2 and 3 in the boxes below show the governance activities and institutional affiliations of two of the participants we met, Jim and Brenda.

The breadth and depth of these two people's involvement in governance was unusual when compared to the average resident of their neighbourhood. But, among the pool of people who were involved in governance, it was fairly typical. Participants referred to 'seeing the same faces' at different meetings and in different settings. When asked to estimate how many such 'faces' there were in total, participants in both neighbourhoods suggested a figure of around 50–60 people.

Box 2 Jim's story

Jim Murphy is a former trade union and Labour Party activist, and not much happens in the governance of Ely that he doesn't know about. He is secretary of the Tenants and Residents Association for his part of the estate. Through this, he is on the board of the Cardiff Tenants and Residents Federation and is a representative at the Tenants and Residents Conference. Jim is also interested in health and education issues, and sits on the Cardiff West Patient Reference Panel and on the board of governors of two local schools. A long-standing member and Chair for the last four years of the Ely Development Forum, he was elected as a representative on the Ely Communities First Local Partnership Group, part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Communities First neighbourhood renewal programme.

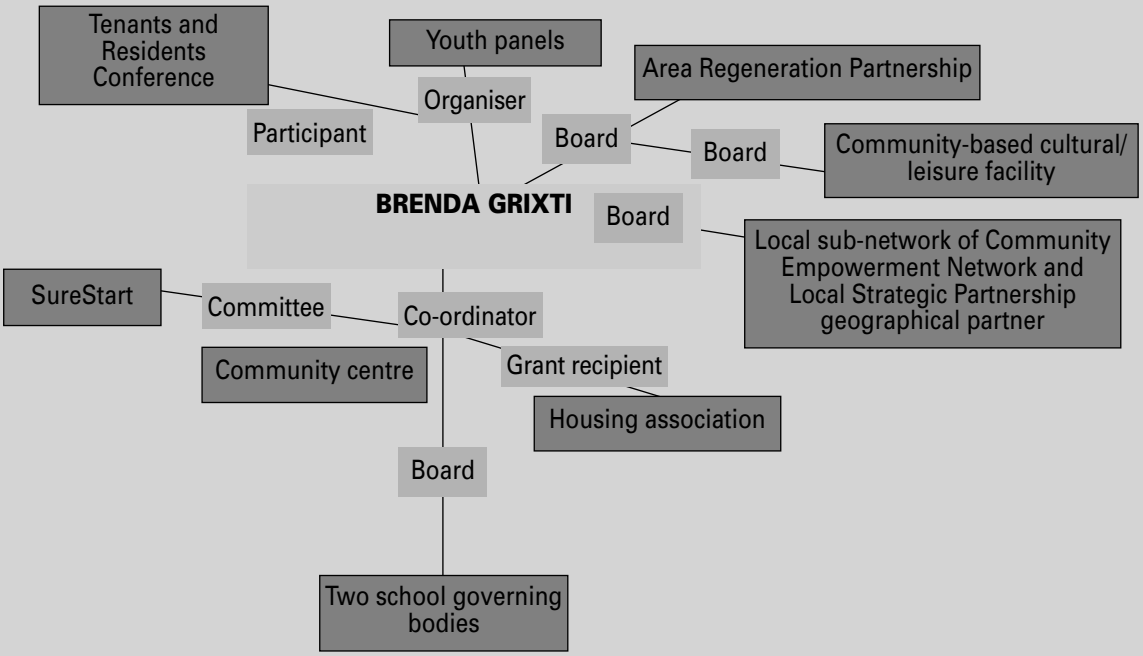
Figure 2 Jim's governance activities and institutional affiliations



Box 3 Brenda's story

Brenda Grixti has lived in Benchill for 35 years and, in 2004, won an award for Best Contribution to the Community in Manchester City Council's annual Community Awards. With the range of things she is involved in, it is not hard to see why. She is employed as Co-ordinator for Benchill Community Centre, which she was instrumental in setting up. She sat on the board of the Wythenshawe Single Regeneration Budget partnership. Through the Centre, she has been involved in SureStart and invited to become a governor of two local schools. She remains an active board member for Wythenshawe Voices, the Community Empowerment Network's geographical partner for the area. She organises residentials and consultative panels for young people to feed into the Tenants and Residents Conference. She also attends meetings of the local Patient Advice and Liaison Service and monthly sessions of the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Brenda has also been appointed as one of the community representatives on the board of the Wythenshawe Forum, a £20-million, community-based cultural and leisure facility.

Figure 3 Brenda's governance activities and institutional affiliations



One thing leads to another

The second common theme to emerge from many of the insiders was that their heavy involvement in governance had tended to spring from the connections between different opportunities for participation – getting involved in one had led to getting involved in another.

This was true of both the breadth and depth of their involvement. For example, Mike Jones' participation in educational governance began with volunteering at his local school. That led to him being invited to become a school governor. Participating in events with other school governors in the area then led to him being nominated as a Parent Governor Representative on Cardiff City Council's Education Scrutiny Committee.

Sixteen-year-old Chloe was born and brought up in Ely. She belongs to the Cardiff Young People's Panel and through that, was asked to represent Ely on Funky Dragon, the national Welsh youth forum. She was also asked to co-chair a youth consultation panel for Cardiff Council on education issues, and recently helped to organise the annual Cardiff-wide Youth Congress. Chloe now often finds herself courted by organisations wanting to consult and engage with young people. Before he would let our research team meet her, her youth worker was careful to find out exactly why we wanted to speak to her, and it's easy to see why he should be protective – Chloe is a girl in demand.

It's who you know that counts

Third, the main reason why different governance opportunities were so interconnected, and that involvement in one led to involvement in another, was the overlapping social networks between the people involved. There was a good deal of cross-recruitment, with participants in one governance arrangement persuaded to join another by people they met who happened to participate in both.

Youth worker John Hallett's participation in governance began when he was inspired to join LETRA, his local tenants and residents' association, by the example of a visionary member he had met. Through youth work at the Dusty Forge community centre he came into contact with the Ely Development Forum, which held its meetings there. Through the Forum he learnt about the opportunity to participate on the Communities First Partnership.

Mike Jones was persuaded to join the editorial board of a local community newspaper through someone he had met as a school governor. On the board he met some of the most prominent community activists in the area, and soon found himself drawn into attending meetings of the Ely Development Forum.

Through his involvement with the Cardiff West Patient Reference Panel, Ken White from Ely was asked to join both the All Wales Patient Panel and the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH) Stakeholder Panel.

Participation begins close to home

A fourth, and crucial, common theme was that participants' journeys into participation had often begun close to home, with an institution that they felt some close affinity to. This helps to confirm the findings of the existing literature (captured in the CLEAR model) that people's motivations to participate are heavily influenced by having some sense of attachment to the institution in question.

Tracey Hendry moved to Wythenshawe from Birmingham 11 years ago. As a single mother with young children, she felt she could easily become isolated on her arrival in this area of fiercely localised identities where people are often wary of outsiders. So she joined a local mothers and toddlers' group and, having gradually become more involved, was instrumental in setting up the SureStart delivery programme for Wythenshawe. For her, civic activism and self-interest blur when you live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods: 'When you can't afford to up and move, you've got to work it out through organisations like this'.

Brenda Grixti has lived in Benchill for the last 35 years, and is well known in the area as a childminder and foster parent. Brenda says she was drawn into public life because she had a vision of the potential of Benchill, which she knew would not be realised unless the community took charge. Benchill, at that point, was 'owned' by Manchester City Council and not by the community.

Youth work has given John Hallett first-hand experience of what can go wrong when you don't involve people in decisions that affect them. He recently spent a lot of time working with young people to turn a disused outbuilding into a youth centre and a popular place to hang out, only to see it closed because the council decided to open a prestigious, new, integrated children's and youth centre elsewhere in the neighbourhood. 'If you want young people to benefit from something you have to involve them from the start or they will either tear it down or completely ignore it', he

says. The importance of involving communities from the start is a message he is eager to bring to the work of the Communities First partnership in Ely, of which he has been elected to the board as a community representative. Fellow board members, who include representatives from the community, the voluntary sector, public agencies and local businesses, recently chose him as vice-chair.

In a focus group of school governors in Benchill, a number of people said their key motivation for getting involved was simply that, as parents, they had wanted to do what they could to ensure their child received a good education. One had joined the board of a school for special educational needs that her child attended. She talked of wanting 'to find out more about how the school ticked over' and felt that, particularly in a school that was outside the mainstream, being a governor would help to make her child's experience of schooling more transparent.

When Mike Jones' career was cut short by a long-term incapacity, he felt it was only natural to find something 'useful' to do to fill the space in his life that paid employment had once occupied. He began by helping out at his children's school, which led him into becoming a school governor.

For a group of young people in Benchill, participation had literally begun close to home. They became engaged with the housing association through trying to save a patch of grass near their homes. It was one of the few places nearby where they could play outside, but it was scheduled to be concreted over and turned into a car park. With support from a community activist, they were able to engage the housing association during a tenants and residents' conference, and succeeded in getting the plans changed.

An end to illusions

The final theme to emerge from our interviews with participants was that they were far from naive about the difficulties and frustrations that participation in governance brought. Many referred to the personal costs in terms of time and family life, the difficulty in mobilising the wider community to engage, and a real ambivalence about whether their participation had actually achieved anything. Tracey Hendry's account was fairly typical in its hard-nosed diagnosis of the realities of participation (see Box 4). Yet, fundamentally, participants shared a sense that, if there was an opportunity for their community to have a say, it was their responsibility to ensure that the opportunity was taken.

Box 4 Tracey's story

Getting involved in local governance was a relatively obvious step for Tracey Hendry. Her father was a local councillor and she grew up in a family imbued with a sense of 'civic duty'. This familiarity with the machinery of local governance has clearly been important. At a practical level, she has had longer than most to build up a tolerance of the meetings culture that surrounds local governance. It also gave her confidence in her ability to speak out and be heard. Perhaps most importantly, it has given her a profound sense that it is her responsibility to do so. These qualities made Tracey, in her words, 'rich pickings' for those looking to fill positions on local boards, panels and committees in Wythenshawe. She first got involved in governance through the local SureStart, later becoming a school governor. She currently heads up Wythenshawe Voices, part of the Manchester Community Empowerment Network (CEN) and the 'geographical partner' in Wythenshawe for the Manchester Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). She is also a community representative on the board of the Wythenshawe Forum.

This activism leaves her with a thorny personal and professional dilemma. On the one hand, Tracey knows that her level of involvement brings real costs. For a single mother whose evenings are packed with meetings for one or other of the boards or committees on which she sits, family life counts high amongst them:

> I don't want my kids growing up thinking mum was never here because she was always at meetings, but if I'm not there how can I have a say?

She is acutely aware of the defects of many governance arrangements, and their failure to engage and sustain people's commitment. And she realises that she is fighting against fairly engrained cultures of dependency. Tracey is employed as a community development worker with the Scarman Trust and many community groups initially approach her in the hope that she will give them money. The shift in mindset she is trying to engineer is to give them the knowledge and confidence to engage with institutions and win grants for themselves. She knows her own credibility as a community development worker is at risk if she becomes 'one of those people everyone rolls out' to show that they have involved the community.

(Continued)

On the other hand, Tracey receives a steady stream of invitations to join the latest local initiative or governance structure and cannot, she says, turn them all down. She would never – as a relative newcomer to the area – claim to represent the community, but does see it as her responsibility to fight their corner in the messy institutional environments in which real decisions get made, even when that means accepting compromise where necessary. This was put into sharp relief during Tony Blair's visit to Wythenshawe. Tracey agreed to give a speech at the event and was widely criticised by many in the community for having sold out. But she thought that, if she didn't stand up and tell him how it really was, then the community's perspective might be subordinated to other agendas.

Some of the comments made during a focus group with school governors reflect this ambivalence about what could actually be achieved:

> I can't say I get a pleasure out of it.
>
> I asked what's involved and they said, 'oh, just a couple of meetings'. Then they dropped a book the size of a bible on my desk.
>
> It's a bit like jury service – yay or nay?
>
> Jargon? I think they do it on purpose.
>
> They don't make it easy for you.
>
> It's 'Shall we do this, yes or no? Shall we do this, yes or no?' It's not 'What shall we do?'

Brenda Grixti has experienced the frustrations of community participation first-hand. When the council built a new community centre in Benchill in 1999, she was voted in as chair of the management committee. Soon after, she clashed with the council over the best way to administer a new grant (see Chapter 4 for a full account). A forthright activist, she resigned in protest at what she saw as the council's failure to respect the community's views, and other community members followed. The centre closed after just three months and remained shut for two years. With the arrival of the Willow Park Trust, the new housing association, came an opportunity for the community to take over responsibility for the centre from the council with the backing of Willow Park management. Brenda describes how she was 'pushed and pushed

and pushed' by City College into taking the demanding job of co-ordinator in the reopened facility (instead of chair of the management committee), acquiescing finally only because people in the area were so insistent that she was the best person. Brenda's philosophy is that she should accept offers to sit on the committee or board of something new wherever possible, 'because if I can use my position, I will'. Although she recognises the risk of burning out, fundamentally she thinks that to make a difference she 'needs to be there'.

The outsiders

Other people in Benchill and Ely take a quite different view of community participation. In one sense, these are the vast majority of residents that choose not to participate. But we were particularly interested in the experience and perceptions of those who showed a commitment to active citizenship, yet who chose to express this active citizenship through other kinds of involvement in community life rather than by participating in governance. Understanding the perspectives of these 'outsiders' is very important in testing the links between community participation policies and social capital.

The unifying theme in the accounts of the outsiders we spoke to was a mismatch between the immediacy of the issue or cause that motivated them to get involved in their community and the indirectness of the way in which power was expressed through community participation arrangements. They wanted to make a difference in their neighbourhood, but they found – or presumed – that participating in governance was not the way to do it. Greg's story was typical (see Box 5).

Box 5 Greg's story: playing the game by breaking the rules

When Greg was young he was, in his own words, 'public enemy number 1'. He grew up in children's homes and kept himself busy by making a nuisance of himself, like a number of the young people in Wythenshawe before and since. Years later he is very much a reformed character but believes that he retains a distinctive and authentic understanding of the experiences and challenges of young people in the area. He hoped to use that understanding to find a way of keeping them out of trouble. That was the inspiration for setting up a professional-quality but community-owned health and fitness centre, the United

(Continued)

Estates of Wythenshawe. The experience, and the frustrations it has brought, has moulded his perception of community participation in some highly uncomplimentary ways.

Greg is a social entrepreneur.[2] He identified an unmet social need, using his own experience of growing up in the area. He created value from an underused social resource, converting a disused part of a dilapidated and repeatedly vandalised Methodist church into an up-to-date gym complete with weights, resistance machines and a space for aerobics and dance classes.

The space is bright, modern and clean, with new parquet wooden floors and pot plants in the corner. Photographs, press cuttings and even a calendar featuring some of the gym's members adorn the walls. Greg features prominently in all of them – at six foot six inches and 18 stone, it would be difficult for him not to. The pride of the members towards their space is indivisible from their visible admiration for Greg for making it possible.

When it comes to participation, however, these successes have served only to increase Greg's bemusement that his achievements have not been recognised or rewarded by formal institutions like the city council or the LSP in the shape of grants and funding. From Greg's perspective, he has a rapport with young people that statutory agencies could not hope to have, and a track record of success that entitles him to their support. Through these relationships, he believes, he is one of the best-placed individuals to tackle problems on the estate like vandalism and youth nuisance. He makes no bones about being an outsider; for him, this is what makes him good at what he does. He views engagement with them instrumentally, as a means to the end of keeping his 'kids' happy – they have money, he has a good way for them to spend it. He understands the emphasis that bodies like the LSP place on due process and has tried to go about things the proper way, developing a detailed business plan with clear figures for what he needs. Trying to play by someone else's rules, and still not succeeding, has made him question the game itself. In a memorable incident, Greg and several dozen bodybuilders from the gym organised a 'walk-in' to a local LSP meeting and demanded to be heard – something that some of the attendees at the meeting were likely to have found alarming. Once the group had been given the floor they were moderate in arguing their case, but some felt that the direct approach to asking to be heard further entrenched the perception that Greg would not make a 'good' participant on the boards and committees whose decisions he would ultimately like to influence.

For some outsiders, like Greg, participation in governance was selling out. In one of our case studies, a martial arts expert who had a huge amount of informal social capital with young people in the local area was extremely reluctant to engage with the 'suits' associated with regeneration initiatives.

For some, the purpose of community activism was fixing everyday problems for local people and participation in governance was often not the most efficient or effective way to do that. In Ely, one community worker with whom we spoke was quite clear that he was interested in getting practical work done within the community, and engaged with wider forms of activism and governance only when he believed it acted as a means to an end. Similarly, it was embodied in the story of Graham Loose (see Box 6).

Box 6 Graham's story: fixing problems comes first

Every fortnight, Graham Loose comes to the Willow Park office on the corner of Benchill Road and Wodehouse Lane to chair a meeting of the Benchill Tenants and Residents Association (TRA). At 7.00 p.m. on alternate Tuesdays, local residents gather to demand action to fix gates and fences, tackle nuisance behaviour and troublemakers, and improve their immediate surroundings. Officials from the local council, the housing association and the neighbourhood wardens listen patiently but somewhat wearily to their concerns. And all the while Graham, his manner perfected over a decade of helping run the association, diffuses confrontations with compromise and sincere promises that he will personally see to it that progress is made.

The TRA is very much his association. Its members fear that it would certainly all fall apart without him. They hold him in such high esteem that they were outraged that he wasn't invited with other community workers to meet the Prime Minister on his visit to Wythenshawe.

A lifelong resident of Benchill, Graham's profound commitment to the area is shown by the monthly hotpot meals he and his wife provide for the local OAP club they run, the football team he organises 'to keep the lads out of trouble' and the annual fete he initiated on a small green space next to the majority of the TRA members' houses. So pivotal is Graham to local community life it was suggested he was 'on call' to assist in any local incident. Some residents were more likely to go to Graham as their first port of call than the police, should they see a dumped stolen car, troublesome youths, or a fight breaking out, such was their confidence in him to resolve their problems for them.

(Continued)

Despite the extent of his civic activism, Graham's style and preference for informal troubleshooting has limited his involvement in formal governance. He even resigned from a post as a tenant director on the board of the housing association, believing that his residents' interests would be best served by doing so.

And, for other outsiders, participation in governance was simply not a crucible for social change that was capable of sustaining their own motivation or galvanising others (see Box 7). As one interviewee put it:

> If you're not used to that formal set-up, talk through the chair, all that nonsense … the whole atmosphere says 'I'm not going back'.

Another expressed his frustration that he could not engage in the governance of his daughter's school because the whole approach was opaque, bureaucratic and, for him, exclusive:

> If you could just walk in, and they said 'come and give us your ideas' … but I struggle with it because of the forms.

Box 7 Mike's story – finding a better fit

On any measure Mike Blaney is an active citizen. He trained as a community development worker and has worked in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Liverpool and Manchester. He took a job in Benchill ten years ago. He now works out of a community centre funded by Barnardo's, Family Action Benchill, where among other things he helps run a local fathers' support group. In his work Mike can't afford to be anti-institutional. Knowing his way around funding regimes and grants programmes is essential to doing his job. But, even with that experience, he found in his personal life that formal participation in governance just wasn't for him. He tried being a school governor for a while. But the huge book of rules and guidance they handed him at the first meeting, the lack of support he felt he received and the knowledge that he could be personally liable for up to £25,000 if the school's finances were mismanaged was enough to persuade him not to go back. As far as Mike is concerned, if you are motivated by the possibility of social change, involvement in governance is often not the best option.

Forces of inclusion and exclusion

These stories paint a different picture of community participation to the one that is typically presented by policy makers. They suggest that, beneath the rhetoric of community empowerment, many community participation arrangements are characterised by countervailing forces of inclusion and exclusion. Some people find themselves drawn into an ever greater range of participation structures. Others, even though they may want to participate, find themselves at arm's length. The result is a sharp divide between a small group of insiders involved in a disproportionate number of governance activities, and a much larger group of outsiders, involved in community life but not necessarily able to translate their social capital into political leverage over decision making.

People like Greg, Mike Blaney and Graham are very active citizens. Much of their life is spent trying to create social capital. But, for them, participation in governance has not proved a helpful way to do it. This suggests that we need to be very cautious about equating community participation policies with social capital. Understanding who benefits from it, and how, depends on identifying the informal, half-hidden processes that shape how membership of the small group of insiders is composed and reproduced. This is the question to which we turn in the next chapter.

4 Network dynamics: explaining the pattern

> I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation between us and everyone else on this planet.
> (*Six Degrees of Separation,* John Guare)[1]

The last chapter confirmed what Chapter 2 inferred: community participation policies designed to open up decision making carry the potential to wall it off, making it the preserve of a small group of insiders.

This 'usual suspects' phenomenon is a familiar problem. But surprisingly little attention has been paid in policy circles to understanding it. It has usually been attributed to the behaviour of particular individuals or institutions – the failure of the usual suspects to recognise that exercising community leadership does not mean sitting on every committee; the failure of particular decision makers to look beyond the usual suspects and reach out to new constituencies; the failure of people in those constituencies to stand up and be counted. For instance, guidance about community participation usually suggests that this is simply a question of good practice and that the problems can be overcome if the institution in question tries hard enough.[2]

This chapter takes a different starting point. It asks whether the explanation for the emergence of a small group of insiders lies not in the behaviour of particular individuals or institutions but in the properties of local governance systems as a whole.

Specifically, if we understand community participation arrangements as interactions among social *networks* (as a social capital perspective encourages us to do), are there features of the way these networks tend to operate that provide a more plausible explanation for the outcomes they produce than simply pinning responsibility on one particular actor within the network?

We contend that there are. By marshalling evidence from our fieldwork and returning where necessary to the academic literature, we identify a number of 'network dynamics' that appear to have an important effect. Individually none can explain why community participation arrangements tend to run into the usual suspects problem, but their cumulative impact serves to make it highly likely.

To emphasise structure in this way is not to overlook the importance of agency:[3] more can and should be done by particular individuals and institutions to improve the situation. But the point is that a clearer understanding of the constraints within which actors are operating actually makes it easier to see where the points of greatest leverage on the problem are, and so to clarify what the most effective remedial actions might be. That is the focus of our final chapter. First, though, let us explore the network dynamics we identified.

Exploring network dynamics

We observed six network dynamics during our fieldwork. While each is distinctive in its own right, we found that they manifested themselves in interrelated pairs. The scale of our research was not sufficient to discern whether this would always be the case or whether they could exist in isolation. For that reason, we discuss each separately while clustering them around three overarching themes: inequity, exclusivity and dependency. Furthermore, while we contend that the six network dynamics we have identified could be observed across other community participation arrangements, we would not at this stage want to claim that this is the definitive list.

The six are as follows.

- *Inequity*
  1 Preferential attachment
  2 The rich get richer

- *Exclusivity*
  3 Closure
  4 Self-exclusion

- *Dependency*
  5 Community dependency
  6 Institutional dependency.

Inequity

Preferential attachment

The social networks surrounding community participation structures in Ely and Benchill are characterised by a common signature: a few 'nodes' (e.g. people or institutions) have a very large number of connections to other nodes and a much larger number of nodes have only a few connections. We saw in the last chapter, for example, that Jim sat on the committee of the Tenants and Residents Association, the Communities First partnership and the Patient Reference Panel, while Brenda was a governor of two schools and sat on the board of the Wythenshawe Forum and the SRB partnership.

It turns out that this pattern of a few nodes having a lot of links is a pervasive feature of contemporary social organisation not confined to community participation.[4]

A key idea in trying to explain this phenomenon is what has been termed 'preferential attachment'.[5] Suppose that, every time a new node joined a network, it formed a link with an existing node at random. In that case, we would expect the distribution of links to be roughly even, some having a few more, some a few less, but no wild differences between the two. This is clearly not what has happened in Ely and Benchill. That's because, in reality, networks don't tend to work that way. A new node in the network is less likely to form a link at random than to try to link to a node that already has a number of connections, because that will be more useful.

To illustrate, think about the strategies that airlines use when developing their routes. If you wanted to fly from, say, Exeter to Detroit, you would be unlikely to find an airline offering a direct flight. Instead, you might fly from Exeter to Paris, from Paris to Newark and from Newark to Detroit. This is what is known as a 'hub and spoke' system – flights are routed from a cluster of smaller airports (e.g. Exeter) to a large central airport or 'hub' (e.g. Paris). From there, passengers take flights on common routes ('spokes') to other hub airports (e.g. Newark), from whence they can catch connecting flights to their final destination (e.g. Detroit). So, when an airline wants to start flying from a *new* airport, the best option will be to put on a route to an existing hub airport. That way, passengers from the new airport will be able to choose from the widest possible range of final destinations. In other words, rather than form a link at random, the new node in the network connects to a node that already has many other links. But, crucially, each time this happens, it makes it more likely that it will happen again in the future, because it adds yet another destination that passengers can reach by initially flying to the hub airport. In short, the more links a node in a network has, the more attractive it becomes to others, and the more likely it is to acquire new links as a result. This is the law of preferential attachment.

In community participation, preferential attachment operates in a very similar fashion. By becoming a participant in one governance setting, that person often becomes more attractive as a participant in another governance setting. The currency traded in these circumstances is usually either information, or influence, or both. A participant may be attractive because their participation on one board, panel or forum gives them access to information that could be valuable to another participatory body. Or they may be attractive because their involvement with a participatory body means they curry influence and credibility with other individuals or groups that another board, panel or forum thinks may be helpful.

In Benchill, Brenda was asked to join the governing bodies of two nearby schools because she was chair of the committee of the community centre, which meant that she came into contact with a lot of local parents, and had knowledge about and influence over the provision of services like childcare and computers, which parents of children at the school might be interested in. Jim was invited to join the Cardiff West Patient Reference Panel because of his dense community ties in Ely through his involvement with local party politics, as secretary of the Tenants and Residents Association, and as a school governor.

The rich get richer

Beginning with Vilfredo Pareto more than a century ago, economists have sought to understand why, across time and across many different countries and economic and political systems, a disproportionate percentage of wealth has tended to be corralled and controlled by a small elite. Now new research by Jean-Philippe Bouchaud and Marc Mézard shows that the explanation for the consistency of this pattern lies in the dynamics of the networks through which wealth is spread around, created and destroyed.[6] And their ideas about why the ‘rich get richer’ potentially contain lessons for community participation.

The model is very simple.[7] It starts by assuming that changes in wealth occur in two ways: through *transactions* and through *investments*. Transactions transfer wealth from one person to another: an employer pays us to work; we buy food from the supermarket; and so on. The total amount of wealth doesn’t change. It is merely transferred from one person to another. Investments, on the other hand, can create or destroy wealth. We buy a house and its value increases over a few years, say, or conversely we invest in a company and then its share price drops.

What the model shows is that these two tendencies actually have a competing effect on the distribution of wealth. Transactions between people tend to spread wealth

around; for example, those with more wealth consume more products, which causes wealth to flow out to others in the network. But investments cause wealth to be concentrated, because those who get lucky then have more to invest and the chance to make even greater gains. It turns out that the concentrating 'rich get richer' effect produced by investments is *always* the stronger of the two and *always* cancels out the distributive effect that transactions might have. This is why the 'trickle-down' economics fashionable in the US and the UK in the 1980s proved so wrong.[8]

What are the implications for community participation in governance? There is no reason to suppose that what is true of financial capital will not be true of social capital.[9] Our contention is that, in key respects, Bouchaud and Mézard's 'rich get richer' model holds true for social capital too. Gaining linking social capital through participation in governance increases the likelihood of gaining more linking social capital. Participation confers benefits that do not necessarily 'trickle down' to non-participants.

One plausible explanation for why this should be so is that the benefits of participation tend to take the form of 'investments' that concentrate social capital rather than 'transactions' that spread it around.

First, participants invest in their human capital – their knowledge, skills and, crucially, the confidence in using them. 'You don't realise you're changing', said one interviewee, 'but you do become more confident. You get used to questioning.' Another described how, at the first meeting of a new committee, she had had to explain what her community group was:

> I nearly had a heart attack. But I did it, I got through it, I came back and explained I'd done it and I felt more confident to do it again.

One of the first things they learn is about the protocols of formal meetings (minutes, agendas, speaking through the chair and so on). Jim took on a governance role in the residents' association because of his experience with running meetings in the local Labour Party. Brenda explained how, through her experience in different forums, she had learnt not to be outfoxed by jargon or pedantic rules about how and when to have her say. More subtly, participants learn about how the system really works – about navigating the organisational politics affecting decisions; about advocacy, negotiation, persuasion and deal making; above all, they learn the confidence to apply this knowledge and skill in governance settings. 'Once you're on the inside you learn how things work and that you can't always get what you want', says Tracey. 'But the trick is to learn to compromise *and* fight your corner – I can still stand up for my principles.'

Second, participants invest in what we might call their 'reputational capital'. By developing a reputation as a 'good participant', whether that is defined by the community or by the institution, it increases the chances that they will be recruited or nominated for other governance activities. One participant in the Cardiff West Patient Reference Panel talked of having 'done my *apprenticeship*' (emphasis added) in that forum such that they were now able to move on to participate in what was perceived to be the more prestigious setting of the Community Health Council.

Third, participants invest in their social capital. They make contacts and build relationships with people who, by definition, are the sort of people likely to be involved in governance. Through these connections they hear about or are directly invited to pursue other opportunities to get involved in governance. Recall that, in one survey, 80 per cent of participants in governance were recruited through their social networks.[10] Through his involvement with the Cardiff West Patient Reference Panel, Ken White from Ely was asked to join both the All Wales Patient Panel and the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH) Stakeholder Panel. Another interviewee recalled how her first tentative steps into involvement in governance meant that she started 'to move in different circles' and so was drawn into other such activities with people like her. John joined his residents' association because of the influence of an inspirational person he had met, and first learnt about the opportunity to participate on the Communities First Partnership through his involvement with the Ely Development Forum.

Fourth, the other side of the equation is that community participation arrangements are not necessarily very good at increasing the number of transactions between participants and non-participants.[11] While many structures are under real and inescapable pressure to 'deliver', this is no excuse according to one interviewee:

> What we don't do is invest the time in talking to people so when you need things done quickly it doesn't happen because there isn't that trust.

One community participation initiative we looked at had initially been so shaped by the lead statutory body's world view that it had not budgeted for any administration costs involved in doing community participation work. We might even say that participation in governance actually *reduces* transactions, either for the simple reason that overburdened participants lack the time to engage properly with the constituencies they purportedly represent ('you can spend your life going to meetings', said one interviewee), or because someone's involvement in governance is seen by those constituencies as selling out – 'sometimes the decisions you make [to participate in a particular way] lose you friends', noted another.

Exclusivity

Closure

Chapter 2 introduced the concept of closure. It suggested that this potential 'dark side' is sometimes overlooked in more optimistic accounts of social capital, even though it seems to be an inherent feature of it. It went as far as to suggest that closure seems to be a key factor in giving value to linking social capital.[12] Given that its operation may be clandestine or even subconscious, closure is difficult to prove empirically. But we can infer from the literature and our fieldwork that closure is at work in producing the small worlds phenomenon in a variety of ways. Some of these may be deliberate and strategic, whereas others appear to result from tacit, unintended or subconscious institutional processes.

First:

> … public sector partners and other power holders too often select the community partners with whom they want to work. Inevitably these are likely to be those whom they find the easiest to work with or the most easily approachable.[13]

In one example we found, a successful community-run health and well-being project grew out of a local church and flourished into a successful provider of a diverse range of services, staffed and used by volunteers and residents from the area. When plans were announced to build a new facility very close by, offering a very similar suite of services, the project's management committee expected that they would be able to engage constructively with the statutory-sector body responsible, so as to avoid duplication of effort and enable both sides to benefit from each other's resources. Instead they faced a wall of indifference to their work. They were overlooked in the decision-making process, and even found themselves losing a grant for the provision of one of their services to the new centre. It was not that 'the' community was ignored *per se*. Participation and consultation did take place, but the voices being amplified belonged to a different set of community organisations, including one whose dilapidated building was to be demolished and replaced as part of the plan for the new facility.

Second, even where preferences are not expressed so overtly, institutions still have tremendous potential to 'load the dice' in favour of one kind of community leadership, and one breed of community participant, rather than another.[14] The ostensibly neutral demands of 'good governance' tend to favour participants with an appetite and a capacity to handle bureaucratic procedural and financial complexity.[15] In one of our

case studies, board members for a major new initiative were put through a recruitment and interview process organised by officers from the local regeneration partnership. The objective was to ensure that they would have the right combination of skills needed for the effective stewardship of a multimillion-pound enterprise. But it is easy to see how this might be interpreted as favouring a particular kind of community participant. As Taylor puts it:

> If [the usual suspects] are not carefully selected by partners, they are created by the short timescales, the proliferation of partnerships, the complexity of the rules of partnerships and the knowledge that is required, which mean that only those who can hit the ground running can realistically get involved.[16]

Third, community groups have their own incentives to promote closure, even if they would only think of it as doing the right thing for their members. In Benchill, for instance, a close relationship between one of its organisers and the council regeneration team made one community project aware of an opportunity to access some Learning and Skills Council money, which they wouldn't otherwise have known about at the right time. 'It's very much not what you know but who you know' was their verdict on the experience, but they might have added 'and who you know that other people don't'. Another example was residents' associations, typically dominated by older people, making little effort to include young people in their engagement with decision makers, even when the topic under discussion affected young people very directly (for example, pressing the police or housing association wardens to clamp down on 'nuisance' behaviour).

Self-exclusion

Initially self-exclusion is a difficult idea to wrestle with. Exclusion implies that an individual or group would like to participate but someone or something prevents them from doing so. Self-exclusion sounds like a contradiction in terms – why would someone exclude themselves from something they wanted to be part of?

In practice, however, it is not hard to find a host of reasons why this might be the case. And unpacking the motivations behind self-exclusion can lead to some extremely useful insights into the links between governance and social capital.

We found at least three motivations to be in play. First was *resignation* – people deciding that governance is not for them. Some groups or individuals display sufficient civic mindedness and engagement to suggest they have at least the latent

potential or appetite to participate in governance, yet this is either never activated or, once activated, swiftly suppressed. In the last chapter we met Mike Blaney, who tried being a school governor but found it was not for him, and now thinks governance doesn't really fit with his ideas about how to contribute to community life. A focus group in Benchill with individuals who were civically active as volunteers of some kind but had not been involved in governance revealed that the demands on their literacy – a set of skills in which they were not confident – imposed by more formal roles was enough to put them off. One volunteer at a sports project in Ely, which plays a hugely significant role in the community, balked at the idea of ever getting involved in formal governance, despite being on good terms with Welsh Assembly First Minister Rhodri Morgan, AM. One interviewee in Benchill made explicit reference to the way that the poverty of aspiration affecting the neighbourhood dampens enthusiasm for participation:

> People think 'Governance is for somebody else'. It's a status thing. Especially in Wythenshawe.

It is worth saying that resignation by some may be closely linked to the closure strategies of others. As these cases show, these choices reflect not just the individuals' preferences but also their perceptions (accurate or otherwise) of participation arrangements – perceptions that institutions and power holders can influence, if not control.

Second was *gamesmanship* – people deciding that their interests will be furthered by deliberately excluding themselves from community participation arrangements. Self-exclusion can be a strategy employed by those struggling to realise their goals within the existing rules of the game – in other words, within the formal parameters of community participation arrangements – and who believe their interests may be better served by shifting the game into other, less formal arenas where the rules work more in their favour. Graham Loose knew that resigning as a tenant director from the board of the housing association might deprive the residents in his neighbourhood of a seat at an important table. But he knew it would also serve a number of strategic purposes: sending a symbolic gesture to the housing association; and damaging their credibility and legitimacy enough that they would be prepared to make concessions to get the community back on board; strengthening his hand in any future negotiations by showing his threats were real. Whether he meant it to or not, it also consolidated his own support within the residents' association by rallying members around his decision.

Third was *resistance* – people responding to the absence of opportunities for meaningful participation by developing alternative forms of collective action that do

not, in the short term at least, rely on the conventional channels. Sivanandan has written of 'communities of resistance' emerging in black and minority ethnic communities in response to oppression and neglect by public authorities.[17] The concept is helpful in reminding us that it is not just 'good governance' that creates social capital; bad governance does too.[18] Newton, for example, found that the exclusion of minority ethnic organisations by Birmingham City Council in the 1970s actually helped to mobilise them and led ultimately to a much more significant influence on local decision making.[19] As Woolcock explains, 'communities can be highly engaged because they are mistreated or ignored by public institutions' as well as 'because they enjoy highly complementary relations with the state'.[20] In Benchill, a new community centre won £25,000 of lottery funding. Although the sum was not huge it was enough to make a big difference to families in what is a disadvantaged area. But the local authority insisted that half of this figure should be spent on external consultants because the community would not be capable of managing the grant properly. When the residents on the management committee refused, arguing that it was their money and they should decide how it was spent, some members of the committee responded by threatening to write to the funding body, declaring that the committee as a whole was not fit to receive the grant. The residents resigned en masse from the management committee in protest. The centre opened under council auspices but, with no buy-in from the local community, it was forced to close three months later because of lack of use. But, through the determination of a few key residents to have a good local facility, and after a lot of hard work and community organising, the centre was reopened a year later with support from the housing association. It is run by a management committee of residents and users. And it is now a thriving hub, offering childcare, holiday play schemes, out-of-school clubs' activities, adult learning, computer facilities and training, and employment and business support services.

Dependency

Community dependency

'Those who shout loudest get somewhere', said one of our interviewees. 'But who is going to ring up those people who weren't at the meeting and ask them if everything is OK?' By routinely taking on a disproportionate burden of governance activities, community participants perpetuate a vicious circle, which increases that burden *and* dampens the enthusiasm of others for alleviating it. Non-participants expect not to participate because they assume others already will be; participants expect to participate because they assume that, if they do not, others will not be willing to step in. These expectations then become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Participants do not

detect any eagerness on the part of newcomers to take on new governance roles and proceed to try to fill the gap themselves ('Most people just don't want to turn up to things', said one interviewee); non-participants observe that, whenever a new role opens up, it always seems to get filled by one of the usual suspects and don't bother putting their hat in the ring.

The attitudes that underpin these expectations can actually vary considerably. For non-participants it can take the form of over-reliance ('I don't need to get involved because people like X will be') or apathy ('There's no point in trying to get involved because people like X will already have it sewn up'). For participants it can take the form of self-aggrandisement ('I had the skills and experience so *naturally* I became the secretary') or deep frustration ('If I don't do it no one else will; I'm the only one trying to make sure our voice is heard'). But what is potent about the community dependency dynamic is that it still operates irrespective of which combination of these distinctive positions underpins the behaviour of participants and non-participants.

Institutional dependency

'There is a tendency to overuse the key people', says Tracey, explaining how institutions themselves also play a key part in fostering a culture of dependency on a small community elite. 'As soon as you start going to one meeting or other the vultures come in.' Community participation is often conceived by institutions as an instrumental problem of compliance rather than as a normative problem of democratic rights or a substantive problem of effective and legitimate decision making. As Taylor explains:

> … [institutional partners] want community participants to be representative and accountable to communities, but there is a culture of delivery about partnerships and partners want representatives to 'deliver their communities'.[21]

The result is often a temptation to go for the quick fix of recruiting an existing community governor who is a known quantity and can be trusted to understand and work within the constraints of a demanding delivery environment, rather than to invest scarce time and resources in attracting new blood who will take time to settle in and may not ever develop the right kind of working relationship. 'Once you see someone who's half-decent you try and get them involved in other things', says Tracey.

These problems are particularly acute for marginalised groups when there are pressures to ensure 'representativeness'. Participants from under-represented groups like the black and minority ethnic (BME) community or young people often find themselves in danger of burn-out because they become *the* BME or *the* young people's representative to whom a whole array of institutions then turn. Chloe falls into this category, as an articulate young person from a disadvantaged neighbourhood who has shown herself willing to get involved in governance activities. The youth worker who works with her is vigilant for any signs that she is being exploited by institutions or is at risk of burn-out.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the dominance of a small group of insiders in community participation lies not in the behaviour of particular individuals or institutions but in the properties of local governance systems as a whole. It turns out, as Marilyn Taylor argues, that 'the much maligned "usual suspects" are often created by the partnership system itself.'[22]

We identified six 'network dynamics' whose cumulative impact serves to explain why community participation arrangements tend to run into this usual suspects problem. A clearer understanding of these dynamics helps us to see where the points of greatest leverage on the problem are. If the emergence of a community elite is highly likely, given the way local governance systems are currently put together, we can use this understanding to frame recommendations both for confronting this reality more honestly in policy and practice, and, in the long term, for taking steps to remedy it. It is to this task that our concluding chapter turns.

5 Making the most of community participation: The 1% Solution

> You get to a point where you want to put something back into a community. I just wish more people did. Maybe they will later. I just hope they do at some point in their lives.
> (Interviewee in Ely)

> In short, knowing that one could not expect violent action from this large and torpid mass, Gandhi organized the inertia: he gave it a goal so it became purposeful. Their wide familiarity with Dharma made passive resistance no stranger to the Hindustani. To oversimplify, what Gandhi did was to say, 'Look, you are all sitting there anyway – so instead of sitting there, why don't you sit over here and while you're sitting, say "Independence Now!"'.
> (Saul Alinsky, describing Gandhi's selection of tactics for the Indian independence movement in *Rules for Radicals*)[1]

This report has sought to examine the relationship between policies to promote community participation in governance and social capital. It has tried to untangle the real impact of these policies on communities from the claims that are made on their behalf. The messages from our research send certain clear messages about possible ways forward.

Our basic position is that it is wrong to assume that introducing policies to promote community participation in governance and creating social capital are the same thing.

Community participation policies may support the formation of linking social capital – the relations between citizens and those in positions of power that we often think of as political leverage. But they also tend to concentrate this linking social capital in the hands of the usual suspects – a small, very active, group of insiders who are disproportionately involved in a large number of governance activities.

As we have seen, the origins of the usual suspect problem do not lie in the bad practices of particular institutions, but at the level of the system as a whole. It emerges from properties of the social networks through which community participation arrangements operate.

Whether or not the wider community benefits from this depends on another aspect of these networks – the extent to which they overlap and combine with the more informal, bonding and bridging social capital that grows out of everyday involvement in local community groups, associations and activities. As we have seen, this interaction cannot be left to chance.

If we want to strengthen the relationship between community participation in governance and social capital, simply encouraging more people to participate seems a forlorn hope, and creating more structures wrong-headed. The range of forces helping to perpetuate a community elite will make either approach ineffective.

Establishing some premises

This raises some fundamental questions for policy makers.The first question it raises is, 'what are we really trying to *do* by devolving power to the very local level?'. To answer that question we need to leave aside the specific objectives of community participation policies, and actually think about how we understand the social and civic context of local community life. We need to acknowledge and make explicit the *premises* on which community participation policies are based. We propose three.

1 More direct participation by citizens in decision making is the *only* credible basis on which democratic renewal will take place. But all citizens do not need to be equally involved for this participation to be legitimate.

2 Elites of various kinds have always been vitally important in creating social change.

3 Elites are only undemocratic if they are disconnected from processes by which they can be influenced and held to account by the communities they purport to serve.

Since the achievement of universal suffrage and free and fair elections in the UK and elsewhere in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, democracy has become synonymous with mass electoral representation. Universal representative rights remain, to be sure, a necessary condition for democracy and an all-too fragile asset in many parts of the world. However, the lesson of recent history is that they are not a sufficient condition. The decline of more active forms of participation in many different settings – political parties or pressure groups, trade unions or community organisations, parks committees or faith-based organisations – has weakened

representative democracy. Unless we can replenish these participatory energies, democracy withers.[2]

But the other lesson of history is that informal participation can strengthen democracy without the formal institutions of governance themselves being particularly participatory. As democratic theorists since Madison have argued, the hallmark of successful democracy is not the absence of elites but the way they are embedded in a genuine pluralism, which holds them in check, calls them to account, limits the influence of a single elite across different centres of power and, most crucially, prevents the transient power of one elite from crystallising into something more permanent.[3]

The way to do that is to ensure that the right connections are made in the right places between formal participation by elites in the institutions of governance and more informal participation by people in the institutions of everyday civic life: book clubs, gyms, SureStart groups, faith groups and so on. One group we spoke to had used different colour Monopoly money to allow both parents and staff at a centre to express their views on what the spending priorities for a service should be. As one of our interviewees put it:

> People already congregate in school, church, at the bus stop … We need to work harder to find them – don't assume if they don't turn up to meetings they're not interested.

For, by itself, the existence of a community elite is *not* evidence that policies to promote community participation have failed. The existence of a community elite disconnected from local civic culture *is*. What is worrying is how much attention is paid to creating formal structures that, in all likelihood, will only ever be inhabited by the committed few and how little attention is paid to ensuring that these structures interact with, and are embedded in, the places and organisations in and through which people actually live their lives. As we have seen, this cannot be left to chance.

So, rather than ignore the role of elites, we should draw attention to it and ask how it can be aligned both with existing representative structures, like local authorities, and with these much more informal forms of participation in mutually invigorating ways.

The 1% Solution

If we accept the premise that elites have an important role to play, what are the principles that might underpin an agenda for policy and practice, which is simultaneously more radical and more realistic than that which is presently on offer.

First, it's not getting everyone to participate in governance that matters. It's getting governance to reflect the contribution of a much wider range of types of participation. From the committed few who join the board of the local partnership to the many more who get involved informally in organisations that feel closer to home, the trick is to ensure that everyone's participation counts towards making the system as a whole more effective and legitimate, even if it cannot count equally.

Second, rather than try to change people's participation so it fits existing structures, we should change the structures so they fit people's participation. Instead of trying to corral the young people who attend a youth club or the mums in a playgroup into getting involved in governance, we should ask how governance can get involved with them. How can formal structures plug into the everyday social networks people do choose to inhabit, so that a much wider section of the community understands where the opportunities for influence are, and is far fewer steps removed from being able to use them?

Third, we need to pay much closer attention to the incentives for participation, and these are fundamentally about the devolution of power. Participants in governance will find it much easier to mobilise others and plug into their networks if the formal structures they inhabit are places where real power lies. They need to be able to invite people to join in the creative act of doing something for the community, not simply in making decisions about what others plan to do.

Fourth, the goal of policy should not be to invent ever more structures of participation, even though this is much easier to do, but to invest in changing cultures of participation in the long term.

Fifth, if these principles were adopted, we could begin to realise a system that not only mobilised 1 per cent of citizens to participate actively in governance but was also more legitimate, effective and a more promising basis on which to build for the future than the one we have now. From this our approach derives its name: *The 1% Solution.*

1% participation: a simple objective for community participation and social capital

In place of rhetoric about 'ownership' and 'empowerment', Government should substitute a simple, coherent goal for community participation – at least 1 per cent of people should participate in governance.

To some, this goal will seem unnecessarily pessimistic. To others, it will seem wildly unrealistic. To address these concerns, let us imagine what 1 per cent participation really means. For example, the adult population of England (16 and over) is approximately 40 million.[4] So *The 1% Solution* means mobilising 400,000 people to participate in governance. Around the country, it would mean mobilising the participation of approximately:[5]

- 7,850 people in Birmingham
- 3,200 people in Bristol
- 2,000 people in Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- 1,700 people in Milton Keynes
- 1,000 people in Preston
- 900 in Exeter
- 560 in Barrow-in-Furness
- 200 in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Another way to put this in context is to look at our existing governance requirements. Taking England again as the example, a rough and ready estimate is that there are approximately 480,000 governance roles to be fulfilled. This estimate is based on:[6]

- 350,000 school governors
- 4,000 Youth Offender Panel members
- 750 New Deal for Communities board members

- 2,500 public governors of Foundation Hospital Trust Boards (once all Trusts go to Foundation status)
- 5,000 members of Patient and Public Involvement Forums
- 200 independent members of police authorities
- 1,000 community representatives on Primary Care Trusts
- 4,000 community representatives on Local Strategic Partnerships
- 20,000 tenant representatives on housing association committees of management and tenant management boards
- 80,000 residents on ward and area committees, and other forms of neighbourhood governance.

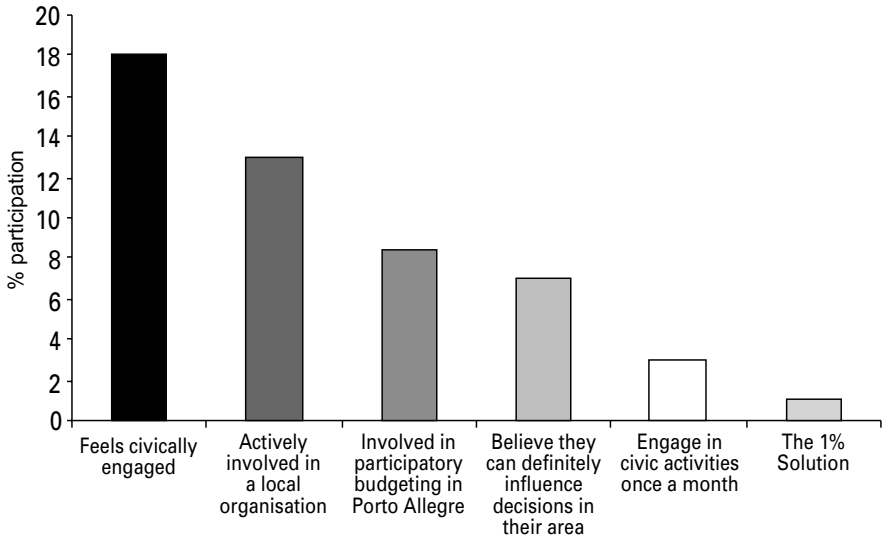
Given that this equates to 1.2 per cent of the population of England, this suggests that *The 1% Solution* is calibrated reasonably well. The challenge, of course, is that at present these 480,000 roles are *not* being played by 480,000 different people. As we saw in our case studies, the same people often wear several hats. We have no way of calculating how many additional participants would be required to ensure that it was a different 1 per cent in each of the fields we have identified, but it is likely to be significant. Nevertheless, 1 per cent participation does not seem to be an unachievable goal to be striving for.

A third way is to compare *The 1% Solution* in governance to what we know about levels of other kinds of civic activism. This gives us a sense of how realistic *The 1% Solution* is, because it offers some indication of the size of the pool of potential participants. We find that civic activism is typically around 5 per cent and that this figure declines as participation becomes more formal. The Home Office's *2003 Citizenship Survey* found that 3 per cent of people engage in civic activities like attending a public meeting or contacting a public official[7] at least once a month. In a study of deprived neighbourhoods, Liz Richardson of the LSE found that around 3–5 per cent of residents were actively involved in community-led and neighbourhood-focused activities.[8] The Community Development Foundation has estimated that there are around six community organisations for every 1,000 adults in the UK. If those organisations had a typical core membership of around five to ten people, then their estimate of active involvement would be around 3–6 per cent. Nationally, 13 per cent of people say they have been actively involved (i.e. with some level of responsibility) in at least one local organisation in the last three years, although in

the most deprived wards this figure drops to 7 per cent.[9] Again, all of this suggests *The 1% Solution* is reasonably well calibrated.

Finally, we can think about what level of participation we're ultimately striving for. One way to do this is to think about some benchmarks (see Figure 4). For example, participatory budgeting in Porto Allegre, one of the most celebrated of recent innovations in community participation anywhere in the world, is thought to have mobilised around 8.4 per cent of the adult population to participate at some point over a five-year period, which is impressive but not as daunting as might be imagined. In surveys in the UK, 18 per cent of people were categorised as 'feeling civically engaged' – that is, they felt they were well informed, could influence decisions and agreed or strongly agreed that local people could affect decisions relating to the neighbourhood. Could this group ultimately be persuaded to participate in formal governance? Could the 13 per cent who had been involved in a local organisation or the 7 per cent of people who 'definitely think they can influence decisions in their area'?[10] As we have explained, there is no guarantee that people who sign up for one kind of participation will automatically sign up for another. But there is at the least the potential that they might and that, if we targeted our policy interventions effectively, *The 1% Solution* could over time become the 3% Solution, the 5% Solution or the 10% Solution.

Figure 4 The 1% Solution: a comparison



Principles into practice

The message from our research is that, no matter how hard people try, existing forms of community participation in governance will only ever mobilise a small group of people. Rather than fight against this reality, the solution lies in maximising the value from the existing small group, while also looking at longer-term approaches to governance that would create a broader bedrock of support for governance activity. The suggestions here would help to move towards that aim of working incrementally with the grain of existing patterns in people's participation, rather than creating transformation by radically shifting our approach to governance.

Two clear objectives for policy and practice can be discerned: first, to mobilise 1 per cent participation; second, to embed this participation in the wider rhythms and routines of community life. What kinds of interventions might help to realise these objectives? The seven ideas that follow are not recommendations as such; rather, they are intended as illustrations of what *The 1% Solution* might mean in practice.

Backing the best 1 per cent

If 1 per cent formal participation is the best we can aim for, we can still do much more to ensure that it is the best 1 per cent and that they are liberated as far as possible to actually get things done for their community. As Paul Brickell explains, this approach makes us somewhat squeamish since:

> It suggests that power and decision-making in disadvantaged neighbourhoods might be vested in individuals and groups who 'can deliver', rather than in representative, elected committees and boards. It starts with people, rather than representative structures, and so challenges the dominant notion of what constitutes democratic legitimacy … Rather than seeing devolution in terms of creating more politicians and more institutions, it involves a further redistribution of power and decision-making discretion.[11]

The lesson of people like Greg is that, so long as there is more than one way to 'do' representativeness, our approaches to devolving power to communities need to accommodate different 1 per cents, authorised in different ways, empowered with different resources and whose legitimacy is measured on terms dictated by the community they serve.

A promising avenue is to recruit a different kind of community elite by *backing more social entrepreneurs to act as the vehicles for local change*. One way to do this would be to replace some community participation structures with 'community-interest companies', run by a social entrepreneur and with local people given representative rights as 'shareholders' in this enterprise rather than as voters or residents. This shift in emphasis should be mirrored in a shift in the type of support offered by the State, with a new focus on the transferral of assets to community control as a way of giving social enterprises the resources they need to get started, to secure loans and to provide the basis for lasting financial independence from Government.[12]

Disconnecting and reconnecting the 1 per cent

While it may not be possible to counteract the effects of the network dynamics we have identified, there are almost certainly opportunities to 'disconnect' and 'reconnect' community elites and their stakeholders in new ways. Even if we accept that 1 per cent is the best we can do, we can do more to ensure that a different 1 per cent matters at different times and places, and that it can be recomposed, refreshed, recalled and rotated. In the language of Chapter 4, community participation must foster 'transactions' that spread social capital and not just 'investments' that concentrate it.

As a first step, *local authorities should create directories and knowledge banks* about community participation in their area. For local people, this would make a terribly confusing governance landscape much easier to understand and navigate, and help them to see how community participation in governance can make a practical difference to their everyday lives. It would tell them who they needed to speak to in relation to different issues, what powers they had, what resources they might be able to access, what help they could be and how they themselves could get involved. For local and national agencies, it would mean that a whole series of more interesting and more important questions could start to gain traction on policy and practice. Who are the 1 per cent? What are they like? How diverse/reflective of the population are they? How are they connected to one another? How have they been recruited? Do they reflect the diversity of the communities from which they are drawn?

This knowledge would promote transparency and accountability, and assist better planning and recruitment processes. But mapping these connections and making them visible would also offer a different, more human gaze on governance, which could in turn generate ideas about how it might be improved.

One symbolic proposal that would very practically help to build new kinds of connections would be for more participants for governance roles to be *recruited by lottery*, with training and financial support to encourage those selected to take up their position. This would have a number of benefits. First, we know that mobilisation, and how people are asked to participate, are crucial. This would be a way to personally invite people who otherwise might never have thought of it to participate. It would send a clear signal that participation in governance really is an option for anyone. Second, it would grow the pool from which community governors are drawn, especially if a significant proportion (say a third) of participants were chosen in this way. Third, it would bring into participation people who had different social connections from those who typically get involved, giving them the capacity to mobilise and reach into parts of the community others could not, potentially bringing new voices into formal governance arenas.

Trusting participation intelligently

Many policy makers are still profoundly distrustful of community participation and its capacity to deliver effectively and legitimately, despite the emphasis that has been placed on its importance. We need to be honest about that and design approaches that allow them to gradually develop trust in the process as the cultures of participation around new governance structures strengthen and become more resilient. But we also need to recognise that, the more power a governance structure is perceived to wield, the more attractive it is to potential participants. Seeing a direct, tangible impact from participation is a big incentive to get involved, yet this is one of the things governance structures have generally been poor at showing. That means delegating more potent decision-making powers to community participation structures, at the same time as growing the legitimacy of those structures in exercising them.

One practical way to model this approach would be by reshaping funding streams. Rather than being given hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds in single chunks, NDC partnerships and other community participation structures should be given *geometric funding streams* – small pots of money that then double at regular intervals (say every six months). This would allow partnerships to grow in confidence and effectiveness, and to tolerate a more experimental approach to spending money. Unlike ‘earned autonomy’, it lowers the stakes attached to devolving power without patronising those whose power it was in the first place.

Box 8 Geometric funding streams: an example

New Deal for Communities partnerships were typically allocated £50 million to be spent over ten years. But many have found the generous funding crippling because of the weight of expectations, the time it has taken to build the capacity to spend the money effectively and the need to meet government-imposed standards of financial propriety.

On this proposal, the funding would have been distributed in a completely different way, lowering the stakes earlier on in the process, creating enough lead-in to plan bigger projects properly and allowing the time to generate the culture of participation around each NDC project for spending to be decided effectively and legitimately.

Table 3 Geometric funding streams: an example

Year	Annual allocation (£)	Cumulative total (£)	As % of total	Cumulative %
1	50,000	50,000	0.1	0.1
2	100,000	150,000	0.2	0.3
3	200,000	350,000	0.4	0.7
4	400,000	750,000	0.8	1.5
5	800,000	1,550,000	1.6	3.0
6	1,600,000	3,150,000	3.2	6.2
7	3,200,000	6,350,000	6.3	12.4
8	6,400,000	12,750,000	12.5	24.9
9	12,800,000	25,550,000	25.0	50.0
10	25,600,000	51,150,000	50.0	100

Empower the everyday intermediaries

Embedding pluralism at the local level, by finding new and creative ways to bind the 1 per cent into effective forms of accountability through their interactions with the local community, must be a priority if this approach is to sustain its legitimacy in the long term. Power must be distributed so that citizens are not lumbered with a 1 per cent they do not trust and cannot hold to account. This implies a key role for local community and voluntary groups – tenants' organisations, local parent–teacher associations, sports clubs, faith organisations, mother and toddler groups, community projects and so on. These bodies are much better than formal governance will ever be at mobilising the involvement of citizens and users, because

they are focused on the things that people most immediately care about and can respond to them.[13] The question is, can we harness this capability so that formal governance also benefits from it, by empowering these organisations to act as everyday intermediaries between citizens and formal governance?

Of course, the best community representatives already choose to work through this civic infrastructure as a way of mobilising support and ensuring legitimacy. Building on this existing good practice, are there aspects of institutional design that could turn this from a choice made by some to a requirement expected of all?

One democratic innovation that might help would be the establishment of *a local right of initiative*. This would allow citizens to set the political agenda directly by demanding a local body like a local authority or police force to take action on a particular issue of concern. This is similar to the 'trigger' powers being envisaged as part of the Government's plans for neighbourhood governance,[14] but is more ambitious in the types of responses that might be demanded. Having a right of initiative ensures that citizens can put something on an institution's agenda even if their community representatives are reluctant to do so. Community organisations would be well placed to mobilise the collection of the signatures required to trigger the right of initiative, creating a clear incentive for community representatives to engage them before that became necessary.

Long-term capacity building for participation

A key part of *The 1% Solution* is to ask which interventions, in the long term, stand the best chance of promoting participation among ever greater numbers of people.

A sensible option would be to merge local education authority (LEA) school governor services, Community Empowerment Networks and other community participation support functions to create a local *Community Governance Service*. The long-term goal of such a service should be to grow and diversify the pool of people involved in governance. It would play the key co-ordinating role in local areas, marketing governance opportunities, commissioning training and support, engaging in outreach, facilitating networking by participants, supporting succession management, and helping participants to consult, engage, mobilise and sustain relationships with their communities rather than being cut off from them.

Responsibility for delivering this service should be outsourced to local community organisations that have the know-how about mobilising people to get involved, and the infrastructure to link formal participation with the community groups, clubs and

associations that can act as everyday intermediaries between citizens and governance.

Making participation a national priority

The Government is committed to producing a 'neighbourhood governance offer' in the forthcoming Local Government White Paper.[15] This clearly demonstrates its view that the neighbourhoods agenda is a national priority, albeit one that, by definition, must be addressed in ways that are sensitive to the particular circumstances of individual places and the people who inhabit them.

But, if the neighbourhoods agenda truly is a national priority, then Government should start to take seriously a view of community participation as a universal entitlement, and not one that is simply concerned with the poorest neighbourhoods. At the moment, the design of funding streams undermines that view. For example, the £160 million specifically earmarked for neighbourhood work in the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) is directed only to 84 local authority areas that include the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Of course, there are good reasons for prioritising resources – but, in the long run, it risks creating a culture of what Marilyn Taylor calls 'prescribing community to the poor'.[16]

To symbolise a new universal commitment, we propose that Government introduce, as part of its neighbourhoods 'offer' in the forthcoming Local Government White Paper, a Neighbourhood Participation Entitlement – a package of funding and capacity-building support, provided by a Community Governance Service and available to every neighbourhood that wants it.

This could be achieved by:

- mainstreaming the neighbourhood element (which currently only 84 local authorities will be entitled to) into the overall SSCF, which all LAs receive
- with a presumption that all neighbourhoods should be entitled to some support
- allocations would be made to local authorities through the wider SSCF and Local Area Agreement process, and it would be for local authorities (LAs) and communities to decide how this money was allocated to neighbourhoods as part of the negotiation of 'Neighbourhood Charters'.[17]

Although this constitutes a significant additional investment, we cannot do participation on the cheap, and certainly not if we really hope to transform the culture of participation across the board. Instead we should follow Gordon Brown's advice that we must 'invest to save' in communities across the board. A growing body of research is beginning to show that effective spending on involving communities can ultimately end up saving money.[18]

Local councillors' role should be refashioned around a formal responsibility for community engagement

The big unanswered question in all of this is the proper role of local councillors and, in one sense, this lies far beyond the scope of this project. Yet local councillors have such potential both to facilitate the emergence of a different culture of community participation and to scupper it that it would be wrong to ignore them completely. Councillors themselves are clearly very suspicious of community participation, which they perceive as a direct threat to their role. The era in which local councils were the only channel for democratic engagement in their area, and local councillors the only representatives with a claim to democratic legitimacy, is over. Some degree of pluralism is here to stay. But we are going to need representative roles that are capable of connecting with and helping to join up those much more distributed patterns of power at the very local level. Though councillors have lost their monopoly on democratic legitimacy, a mandate acquired through the ballot box does make them first among equals in this task. The challenge for councillors is to recognise the responsibility, which that implies, to acknowledge the validity of other representatives' claims and to embrace a new, clearer role as the champion of community engagement in their area. That role might have a number of elements.

- Advocates: the most important shift is away from exercising 'hard' power over direct service delivery towards exercising 'soft' power over the activities of a much wider range of actors in the local governance firmament (police, health, regeneration) through influence, advocacy and persuasion.

- Arbitrators: under the new proposals to give communities trigger powers, councillors could be vested with powers to act as arbitrators, brokering settlements between service providers (e.g. the local police commander) and community representatives, which resolve the issue without drastic action being taken.

- Inquirers: the use of open inquiry processes, chaired or initiated by councillors, might be one effective way to mobilise local people to get involved in a process that celebrates and harnesses the knowledge of local people, generates useful information for local agencies and provides a different environment for balancing competing viewpoints.[19]

- Convenors: councillors should be responsible for mobilising effective community participation in decision making about their area. A programme of experiments in participatory budgeting should see a proportion of local authority budgets delegated to ward level, with councillors overseeing a participatory process for how it is spent. Councillors might also lead in involving residents in the design and delivery of Local Area Agreements,[20] initiating a cycle of participatory planning that began with priorities at the very local level and worked up towards more overarching, shared themes.

Conclusion

Community participation has the potential to remake our system of governance in a more democratic image. But we are not there yet and we must not squander the generational opportunity we have to realise that potential by promising too much too soon, or by basing policy on unrealistic assumptions about people's propensity to join committees in great numbers. Government should be congratulated for opening up our system of local governance to community involvement and for creating many more opportunities for people to have a say over how services in their area are run. But there are diminishing returns to creating any more structures. The key challenge over the next decade and beyond is about how we make the most of what we've got, through policies and practices that celebrate and liberate the committed few to be agents for social change, while binding them into a tighter web of informal, overlapping civic relationships that promote their legitimacy.

The radical American community organiser Saul Alinsky once wrote that 'In organising, the major negative in the situation has to be converted into the leading positive'.[21] *The 1% Solution* is proposed as a practical, ambitious but achievable way to take up this challenge. The fact that relatively few people choose to participate in formal governance does not mean we should discard the ambition of community participation, but rather that we should recast it. Margaret Mead's injunction – 'Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has' – is often quoted, but rarely acted on.[22] By rewiring our networks of community participation at the local level, we have a chance

to change that. If one person on every street in Britain were involved in some kind of governance, if they really had the power to make a difference, and if more people's everyday civic encounters were able to influence them, it really would have the potential to change many people's world.

Notes

Executive summary

1 S. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

Conceptual note

1 The organisation *Involve* has produced an interesting summary of the state of civic participation in the UK, which includes interviews with influential thinkers and academics. Involve, *People and Participation* (London: Involve, 2005), available at: http://www.involving.org/mt/archives/blog_13/People%20and%20Participation%20final.pdf.

2 M. Woolcock, 'The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes', *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 10, pp. 11–17 (Spring 2001).

3 M. Granovetter, 'The strength of weak ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, pp. 1360–80 (1973).

4 M. Woolcock, 'The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes', *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 10, pp. 11–17 (Spring 2001).

Chapter 1

1 Lecture by Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, MP at the 17th Arnold Goodman Charity on the 'Civic Society in Modern Britain', Thursday 20 July 2000, Merchant Taylor's Hall, London. Available at: http://www.cafonline.org/downloads/ev_goodman_lecture.pdf.

2 S. Arnstein, 'A ladder of citizen participation,' *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 216–24 (July 1969).

3 D. Carswell, P. Carter, G. Clark *et al*., *Direct Democracy: An Agenda for a New Model Party* (London: direct-democracy.co.uk, 2005).

4 Liberal Democrats, *The Real Alternative: The Liberal Democrat General Election Manifesto 2005* (London: Liberal Democrats, 2005), available at http://www.libdems.org.uk/party/policy/manifestolist.html.

5 Home Office, *Active Citizens, Strong Communities: Progressing Civil Renewal* (London: Home Office, 2003), available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs2/activecitizens.pdf.

6 Source: the Department of Health website: http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/SecondaryCare/NHSFoundationTrust/NHSFoundationTrustArticle/FS/en?CONTENT_ID=4062806&chk=4RDYwZ.

7 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and Home Office, *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* (London: ODPM, 2005).

8 Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), *Review of Community Participation: Report for Public Consultation May 2003* (London: NRU, 2003).

9 M. Woolcock, 'The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes', *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 10, pp. 11–17 (Spring 2001).

10 Speech by the Prime Minister Rt Hon. Tony Blair, MP at *The Guardian* Public Services Summit, Rickmansworth, Thursday 29 January 2004.

11 'SRB partnerships are expected to involve a diverse range of local organisations in the management of their scheme. In particular, they should harness the talent, resources and experience of local businesses, the voluntary sector and the local community.' Cited in B. Rogers and E. Robinson, *The Benefits of Community Engagement: A Review of the Evidence* (London: Active Citizenship Centre, 2004).

Chapter 2

1 Other studies have confirmed that social capital is correlated with political action, civic efficacy, more positive perceptions of governmental performance and higher levels of citizen satisfaction, e.g. E. Fahmy, 'Youth, social capital and civic engagement in Britain: evidence from the 2000/01 General Household Survey', *ESRC/ODPM Postgraduate Research Programme*, Working Paper 4, (2004); T. Rice, 'Social capital and government performance in Iowa communities', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol. 23, Nos 3–4, pp. 375–89 (2001); T. Cusack, 'Social capital, institutional structures, and democratic performance: a comparative study of German local governments', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 35, pp. 1–34 (1999) – all cited in Cardiff University, *Civic Education and Local Government: A Literature Review* (London: ODPM, 2005).

2 R. Putnam with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

3 For example, M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 802–20 (2000); G. Smith, W. Maloney and G. Stoker, 'Building social capital in city politics: scope and limitations at the inter-organisational level', *Political Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 508–30 (2004).

4 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 802–20 (2000); G. Smith, W. Maloney and G. Stoker, 'Building social capital in city politics: scope and limitations at the inter-organisational level', *Political Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 508–30 (2004); D. Rubenson, 'Participation and politics: social capital, civic voluntarism, and institutional context', paper for the European Consortium for Political Research, Joint Session, Copenhagen 2000. Available at: http://www.essex.ac.uk/ECPR/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/copenhagen/ws13/rubenson.PDF; V. Lowndes and D. Wilson, 'Social capital and local governance: exploring the institutional design variable', *Political Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 629–47 (2001). Lowndes and Wilson note: 'Our proposal is not that institutional design is more important than social capital in explaining government performance; rather, we are asserting that it is only possible to understand the role played by social capital if we consider the institutional design variable too.'

5 W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4*,* pp. 802–20 (2000); V. Lowndes and D. Wilson, 'Social capital and local governance: exploring the institutional design variable', *Political Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 629–47 (2001).

6 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

7 W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4*,* pp. 802–20 (2000); V. Lowndes and D. Wilson, 'Social capital and local governance: exploring the institutional design variable', *Political Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 629–47 (2001).

8 M. Woolcock, 'The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes', *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 10, pp. 11–17 (Spring 2001).

9 M. Granovetter, 'The strength of weak ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, pp. 1360–80 (1973); R. Putnam with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

10 D. Miliband, 'The politics of community', speech at the launch of the North West Improvement Network, Manchester, 24 October 2005, available at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1122746. See also, National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, *Bridging Communities – A Race Equality Action Guide for Citizens Advice Bureaux* (2002), available at http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/winnn6/bridging-communities.pdf. See also Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities*, Home Office Research Study 289 (London: Home Office, 2004), available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors289.pdf: 'Increasing bridging social capital is also likely to benefit the community as well as the individual. Building networks between people from different backgrounds is likely to increase people's awareness and understanding of other cultures and social groups. Hence it is particularly important for promoting good race and community relations, one of the aims of the Home Office's Community Policy.'

11 Home Office, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cantle* (London: Home Office, 2001).

12 M. Woolcock, 'The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes', *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 10, pp. 11–17 (Spring 2001), emphasis in the original.

13 For example, surveys recording levels of trust or neighbourliness are taken to stand for the social capital of a given area, neighbourhood or even nation (e.g. R. Putnam [ed.], *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002]). But, for an individual resident or citizen, that social capital only has any value if they know whom they can trust or rely on, when and under what conditions. Cf. J. Coleman, 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, pp. S95–120 (1988); M. Foley and R. Edwards, 'Is it time to disinvest in social capital?', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 199–231 (1999).

14 See Perri 6's account of hierarchical networks in, 'Your friendship networks: are they any of the government's business?', in H. McCarthy, P. Miller and P. Skidmore (eds) *Network Logic: Who Governs in an Interconnected World?* (London: Demos, 2004).

15 J. Coleman, 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', cited in W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 802–20 (2000).

16 G. Smith, W. Maloney and G. Stoker, 'Building social capital in city politics: scope and limitations at the inter-organisational level', *Political Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 508–30 (2004).

17 M. Foley and R. Edwards, 'Is it time to disinvest in social capital?', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 199–231 (1999).

18 W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 802–20 (2000); G. Smith, W. Maloney and G. Stoker, 'Building social capital in city politics: scope and limitations at the inter-organisational level', *Political Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 508–30 (2004).

19 V. Lowndes, 'Getting on or getting by? Women, social capital and political participation', in *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 45–64 (2004).

20 GEM Project, *Looking at Gender and Community Engagement in Manchester*, available at http://www.manchesterwomen.net/project_details.php?project_id=5 (accessed 28 November 2005).

21 C. Bromley, J. Curtice and B. Seyd, *Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?*, CREST Working Paper No. 106 (June 2004), available at http://www.crest.ox.ac.uk/papers/p106.pdf; Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities*, Home Office Research Study 289 (London: Home Office, 2004), available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors289.pdf.

22 T. Munton and A. Zurawan, *Active Communities: Headline Findings from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey* (London: Home Office, 2004).

23 J. Birchall and R. Simmons, *User Power: The Participation of Users in Public Services* (London: National Consumer Council, 2004); V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and political participation: how do local institutions constrain or enable the mobilisation of social capital?', St John's Social Capital Seminar, University of Cambridge, 19 November 2002.

24 G. Chanan, *Out of the Shadows: Local Community Action in the European Community* (Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1992), paraphrased in M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 76.

25 V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker, 'The locality effect: local government and citizen participation', cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

26 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

27 A. Ellis, *Barriers to Participation for Under-represented Groups in School Governance*, Institute for Volunteering Research, Brief No. RB500, December 2003; written evidence to Joint Committee on the Draft Disability Discrimination Bill from Engage, available at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200304/jtselect/jtdisab/82/82we81.htm (accessed 27 November 2005); T. O'Toole, '"Race", participation and the public sphere', in Civil Renewal Research Centre, *Researching Civil Renewal: A Set of Scoping Papers Prepared for the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham/Home Office Civil Renewal Unit, 2004).

28 C. Barnes and G. Mercer, *Disability* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

29 See C. Barnes and G. Mercer, *Disability* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); see also Disability Rights Commission (DRC), *Attitudes and Awareness Survey* (London: DRC, 2003).

30 E. Glaser, 'The formation of social capital', *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 10, pp. 34–40 (Spring 2001).

31 V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker, 'The locality effect: local government and citizen participation', cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

32 M. Coulthard, A. Walker and A. Morgan, *People's Perceptions of their Neighbourhood and Community Involvement: Results from the Social Capital Module of the General Household Survey 2000* (London: The Stationery Office, 2002).

33 NVCO, *It's Who You Know that Counts: The Role of the Voluntary Sector in the Development of Social Capital in Rural Areas* (London: NCVO, 2003).

34 L. Debertin and S. Goetz, 'A comparison of social capital in rural and urban settings', in *Proceedings: Using Housing Policy to Build Healthy Communities: A Response to Devolution and Welfare Reform* (Washington DC: Fannie Mae Foundation Housing Conference, April 1997).

35 M. Barnes, G. Stoker and P. Whiteley, *Delivering Civil Renewal: Some Lessons from the Research*, ESRC Seminar Series Mapping the Public Policy Landscape (Swindon: ESRC, 2003).

36 M. Barnes, H. Sullivan, A. Knops and J. Newman, 'Power, participation and political renewal: issues from a study of public participation in two English cities', *IDS Bulletin,* Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 58–66 (2004).

37 V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker, 'The locality effect: local government and citizen participation', cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

38 G. Stoker, 'New localism, participation and networked community governance', speech at the 6th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, Korea, May 2005, available at http://www.ipeg.org.uk/docs/NewLocalism-Korea.pdf.

39 M. Foley and R. Edwards, 'Is it time to disinvest in social capital?', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 199–231 (1999).

40 J. Birchall and R. Simmons, 'A theoretical model of what motivates public service users to participate', *ESRC Democracy and Participation* (2002), cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

41 V. Lowndes, 'Getting on or getting by? Women, social capital and political participation', in *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 45–64 (2004).

42 S. Verba, K. Schlozman and H. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); S. Rosenstone and J. Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1993) – both cited in M. Foley and R. Edwards, 'Is it time to disinvest in social capital?', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 199–231 (1999).

43 S. Verba, K. Schlozman and H. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), cited in M. Foley and R. Edwards, 'Is it time to disinvest in social capital?', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 199–231 (1999).

44 M. Foley and R. Edwards, 'Is it time to disinvest in social capital?', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 199–231 (1999).

45 C. Fox and H. Miller, *Postmodern Public Administration: Toward Discourse* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), cited in V. Lowndes and D. Wilson, 'Social capital and local governance: exploring the institutional design variable', *Political Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 629–47 (2001).

46 M. Barnes, J. Newman, A. Knops and H. Sullivan, 'Constituting the public for public participation', *Public Administration*, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 379–99, cited in M. Barnes, G. Stoker and P. Whiteley, *Delivering Civil Renewal: Some Lessons from the Research*, ESRC Seminar Series Mapping the Public Policy Landscape (Swindon: ESRC, 2003).

47 C. Pattie, P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, 'Citizenship and civic engagement: attitudes and behaviour in Britain', *Political Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 443–68 (2003).

48 S. Fitzpatrick, A. Hastings and K. Kintrea, *Including Young People in Urban Regeneration: A Lot to Learn?* (Bristol: Policy Press/JRF, 1998), available at http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/hr918.asp.

49 V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker, 'The locality effect: local government and citizen participation', cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

50 V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker, 'The locality effect: local government and citizen participation', cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

51 M. Barnes, J. Newman, A. Knops and H. Sullivan, 'Constituting the public for public participation', *Public Administration*, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 379–99, cited in M. Barnes, G. Stoker and P. Whiteley, *Delivering Civil Renewal: Some Lessons from the Research*, ESRC Seminar Series Mapping the Public Policy Landscape (Swindon: ESRC, 2003).

52 C. Barnes and G. Mercer, *Disability* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

53 V. Lowndes and D. Wilson, 'Social capital and local governance: exploring the institutional design variable', *Political Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 629–47 (2001).

54 J. Anastacio, B. Gidley, L. Hart, M. Keith, M. Mayo and U. Kowarzik, *Reflecting Realities: Participants' Perspectives on Integrated Communities and Sustainable Development* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2000).

55 V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker, 'The locality effect: local government and citizen participation', cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

56 V. Lowndes and D. Wilson, 'Social capital and local governance: exploring the institutional design variable', *Political Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 629–47 (2001).

57 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

58 M. Barnes, J. Newman, A. Knops and H. Sullivan, 'Constituting the public for public participation', *Public Administration*, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 379–99, cited in M. Barnes, G. Stoker and P. Whiteley, *Delivering Civil Renewal: Some Lessons from the Research*, ESRC Seminar Series Mapping the Public Policy Landscape (Swindon: ESRC, 2003).

59 M. Barnes, J. Newman, A. Knops and H. Sullivan, 'Constituting the public for public participation', *Public Administration*, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 379–99, cited in M. Barnes, G. Stoker and P. Whiteley, *Delivering Civil Renewal: Some Lessons from the Research*, ESRC Seminar Series Mapping the Public Policy Landscape (Swindon: ESRC, 2003).

60 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

61 M. Barnes, J. Newman, A. Knops and H. Sullivan, 'Constituting the public for public participation', *Public Administration*, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 379–99, cited in M. Barnes, G. Stoker and P. Whiteley, *Delivering Civil Renewal: Some Lessons from the Research*, ESRC Seminar Series Mapping the Public Policy Landscape (Swindon: ESRC, 2003).

62 V. Lowndes, G. Stoker and L. Pratchett, 'Trends in public participation: part 2 – citizens' perspectives', *Public Administration*, Vol. 79, No. 2, pp. 445–55 (2001).

63 V. Lowndes and D. Wilson, 'Social capital and local governance: exploring the institutional design variable', *Political Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 629–47 (2001).

Chapter 3

1 Quoted in P. Hetherington, 'Blair pledges "people power" for communities', *The Guardian*, 1 February 2005, available at http://politics.guardian.co.uk/progressive/story/0,13255,1402907,00.html.

2 C. Leadbeater, *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur* (London: Demos, 1997).

Chapter 4

1 J. Guare, *Six Degrees of Separation* (London: Methuen Drama, 1992).

2 For example, 'The initial challenge here is to reach beyond what are sometimes called the "usual suspects". The "usual suspects" are the residents who are most inclined (and able) to get involved and have their say. There is a strong case for considering consultation mechanisms that will give those who are not regularly involved a chance to consider the budget options faced by the council'. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Council Tax Consultation – Guidelines for Local Authorities* (London: ODPM, 2002).

3 C. Hay, 'Structure and agency', in D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995).

4 See, *inter alia*, D. Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (London: William Heineman, 2003) and M. Buchanan, *Small World: Uncovering Nature's Hidden Networks* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002).

5 A. Laslo Barabasi, *Linked: How Everything is Connected to Everything Else and What it Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life* (New York: Plume, 2003); M. Buchanan, *Small World: Uncovering Nature's Hidden Networks* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002).

6 J.-P. Bouchaud and M. Mézard, 'Wealth condensation in a simple model of economy', *Physica A*, Vol. 282, pp. 536–40 (2000).

7 See M. Buchanan, 'The science of inequality', in H. McCarthy, P. Miller and P. Skidmore (eds) *Network Logic: Who Governs in an Interconnected World?* (London: Demos, 2004).

8 Even when the scientists ran the model starting from a perfectly egalitarian model with all agents on exactly equal terms, the same highly unequal distribution eventually occurred.

9 M. Foley and R. Edwards, 'Is it time to disinvest in social capital?', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 199–231 (1999).

10 J. Birchall and R. Simmons, 'A theoretical model of what motivates public service users to participate', *ESRC Democracy and Participation* (2002), cited in J. Aspden and D. Birch, *New Localism – Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government* (London: ODPM, 2005).

11 'The pressures that partnership and participation initiatives put on community representatives can easily cut even the most accountable leaders off from their communities, especially when they do not have the resources to support effective accountability', M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 134.

12 W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 802–20 (2000).

13 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 134.

14 It's worth acknowledging, of course, that this might take the form of a kind of affirmative action. Birmingham's Race Action Partnership interviewed candidates but one of the criteria was that participants had *not* been involved in governance before. G. Smith, 'Innovations in democratic engagement', presentation at IPEG/ Young Foundation Seminar, 'Neighbourhood Governance: Just around the Corner?', Manchester, 18 October 2005. Available at www.ipeg.org.uk/docs/ 18%20Oct%20Slides%20for%20Web/Young-IPEG.ppt.

15 D. Purdue, K. Razzaque, R. Hambleton, M. Stewart with C. Huxham and S. Vangen, *Community Leadership in Area Regeneration* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2000), cited in M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

16 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

17 A. Sivanandan, *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism* (London: Verso, 1990).

18 W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 802–20 (2000).

19 K. Newton, *Second City Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), cited in W. Maloney, G. Smith and G. Stoker, 'Social capital and urban governance: adding a more contextualised "top-down" perspective', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 802–20 (2000).

20 M. Woolcock, 'The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes', *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 10, pp. 11–17 (Spring 2001).

21 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), emphasis added.

22 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Chapter 5

1 S. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

2 T. Bentley, *Everyday Democracy* (London: Demos, 2005).

3 'The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions', J. Madison, 'The structure of the government must furnish the proper checks and balances between the different departments', *The Federalist*, No. 51. First published in *Independent Journal*, 6 February 1788. Available at http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa51.htm.

4 Office for National Statistics http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/64.asp (accessed 1 December 2005).

5 Office for National Statistics http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/64.asp (accessed 1 December 2005). Estimates based on approximate adult population as recorded in 2001 Census.

6 To emphasise, this is a rough estimate as, in many cases, overall figures do not seem to be available. Where this was the case we extrapolated from the total number of a certain type of structure (Foundation Hospital, tenant management organisation, electoral ward) and the typical composition of its governance arrangements.

7 The full list includes: contacting a local councillor; contacting a Member of Parliament; contacting a public official working for a local council; contacting a public official working for part of central government; contacting a public official working for the Greater London Assembly or National Assembly for Wales; contacting a member of the Greater London Assembly or National Assembly for Wales; attending a public meeting or rally; taking part in a public demonstration or protest; and signing a petition. Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities*, Home Office Research Study 289 (London: Home Office, 2004), available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors289.pdf.

8 Private communication with the authors. To be reported in E. Richardson, 'DIY community action: neighbourhood problems and community self-help', (forthcoming).

9 M. Coulthard, A. Walker and A. Morgan, *People's Perceptions of their Neighbourhood and Community Involvement: Results from the Social Capital Module of the General Household Survey 2000* (London: The Stationery Office, 2002).

10 Sources: G. Smith, *Beyond the Ballot – 57 Democratic Innovations from around the World.* A report commissioned by 'Power: An Independent Inquiry into Britain's Democracy' (London: The Power Inquiry, 2005); Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities*, Home Office Research Study 289 (London: Home Office, 2004), available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors289.pdf; M. Coulthard, A. Walker and A. Morgan, *People's Perceptions of their Neighbourhood and Community Involvement: Results from the Social Capital Module of the General Household Survey 2000* (London: The Stationery Office, 2002).

11 P. Brickell, *People before Structures* (London: Demos, 2000).

12 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has signalled that this is the direction they would like to move in. According to David Miliband, MP: 'An asset base can

give community organisations the independence from the state that is the source of their identity and energy, and allows them to borrow money and set up new social enterprises that earn revenue'. D. Miliband, 'The politics of community', speech at the launch of the North West Improvement Network, Manchester, 24 October 2005, available at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1122746.

13 P. Skidmore and J. Craig, *Start with People: How Community Organisations Put Citizens in the Driving Seat* (London: Demos, 2005).

14 ODPM and the Home Office, *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* (London: ODPM, 2005).

15 Miliband's speech to the New Local Government Network (NLGN), available at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163065; the Lyons Inquiry report, *National Prosperity, Local Choice and Civic Engagement* (HMSO, 2006) also emphasises the importance of placing greater discretion into the hands of local communities.

16 M. Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

17 Miliband's speech to NLGN, available at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163065.

18 Neighbourhood Renewal Unit Research Report 16, *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas – The Role of Community Involvement* (London: ODPM, 2005).

19 Young Foundation, *Seeing the Wood for the Trees: The Evolving Landscape for Neighbourhood Arrangements* (London: The Young Foundation, 2005).

20 ODPM, *Local Area Agreements Guidance* (London: ODPM, 2005).

21 S. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

22 Margaret Mead (1901–78) was a cultural anthropologist from the USA. You can read more about her on Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Mead.