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*Constitutional change and community development : Communities first under the Welsh government.*

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**Constitutional Change and Community Development:  
Communities First under the Welsh Government**

Sioned Pearce

June 2012

## **Abstract**

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This thesis is an original contribution to key debates on the politicisation, governance and scale of 'the community' in contemporary society (Etzioni, 1996; Bourdieu, 1989; Giddens, 1984; Taylor, 2003). It contributes to knowledge on constitutional change and community development in three key ways.

Firstly, findings from micro-geographical case studies in Wales are situated within global debates on the fragmentation of governance into networks, hierarchies and scales (Rhodes, 1997; Brenner, 2004; Gore, 2008). These complex and contested subjects are used to uncover the relationship between state and civil society using Multi Level Governance (Armstrong & Wells, 2005), theory on territorial rescaling and multi-scalar governance. These theories are encapsulated within one strand of the Strategic Relational Approach (Jessop, 2008) to understand the state. Use of theory in this way ensures that the findings add to wide-ranging and existing knowledge rather than replicating it.

Secondly, the research was carried out at a significant time in Welsh political history. Under devolution Communities First is the first national area-based community development programme to be exclusively designed and implemented by Ministers elected to represent the people of Wales. The thesis explores the impact of devolution on community development from the perspective of those involved at different levels of governance; from Ministers with a Wales-wide remit to community groups in neighbourhoods. It also explores the influence of UK regeneration policy and actors during the late 1990s (SEU, 2001; Lawless, 2011).

Thirdly, the research questions have developed directly from existing research on Communities First in Wales (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008). Published at the outset of this PhD the research provided an empirical base from which to develop a relevant investigation of the Communities First programme using the theoretical tools noted above.

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I take personal responsibility for any errors in this thesis.

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## 1. Introduction

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This thesis is an examination of the area-based Communities First (CF) programme established under the Welsh Government (WG) to tackle deprivation in Wales' poorest areas from 2001 to 2012. Using the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) theory of the state, the thesis presents findings from an in-depth qualitative research project carried out between 2008 and 2009. The hypothesis tested through this research is the assumption that Welsh devolution has had an impact on area-based regeneration and particularly community development in terms of people, place/space and policy in Wales.

The findings are drawn from three research questions and address the broader question: *what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?* The findings present a snapshot in time and space of people, their localities and (inter)relationships presented through selected narratives reflecting the tensions and balance between state and society.

While this thesis does not cover every aspect of the CF programme the findings give insight into the programme which are not always apparent in research, evaluations and reports published on the programme. This is because the findings come from a wide-range of varying perspectives, from local people living in CF areas to Welsh Assembly Ministers responsible for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme. Their collective narratives give a balanced overview of the programme that addresses gaps in existing literature on CF. The findings are a small, but not insignificant, contribution to knowledge on strategic decision-making within the rapidly-changing landscape of Welsh governance and the lives of people affected by it.

The research for this thesis was undertaken at an interesting and exciting time for Wales in terms of policy to tackle deprivation. While high levels of deprivation, economic inactivity and social exclusion have been a political point of focus in Wales since the 1920s, since 1999 the WG has been responsible for tackling these problems rather than being entirely dependent on external UK

and European funding regulations and policies made in Whitehall. CF effectively represents the first development programme exclusively designed and implemented by political actors who have been elected to represent the needs and interests of the Welsh population.

In the context of spatial / scalar governance of populations, debate on the most appropriate scale at which to govern forms some compelling arguments central to this thesis, including arguments for and against devolution. Because the research was conducted at a politically significant time for Wales, it sheds some light on these arguments. Particularly the argument that constitutional change means more tailored and focused policy-making in devolved regions and nations of the UK:

*' . . . decisions made at the regional level can take better account of the unique opportunities and challenges faced by an individual region' (DTLR, 2002 in North, Syrett & Etherington, 2007: 2)*

The effectiveness of the scale at which governance is operated is a complex matter and depends on a combination of factors including:

*' . . . geographical disparities in welfare and productivity, the uneven operation of the labour market, the governance of economic development, and the competing claims of 'regions', 'sub-regions' and 'city regions' as the appropriate arena for sub-national policy-making' (Gore & Fothergill, 2007: 56)*

Approaches to tackling deprivation after devolution in Wales, represent a significant test of this argument.

While the shape of this thesis has evolved and changed since the outset in 2007 the overarching aim to examine the impact of devolution on regeneration to tackle deprivation in Wales has remained constant. However, one major change is considered worthy of note. Before completion the working title of this research was *Constitutional Change and Regeneration* rather than *Constitutional Change and Community Development*. However, it emerged

during the research that CF is more of a community development than a regeneration programme in the full sense of the term because it does not focus on economic or physical infrastructure changes. This finding changed the title of the thesis and revealed that the WG does not currently run a Wales-wide regeneration programme but a community development programme. While the findings reveal many positive aspects of the CF programme it is possible to argue that, despite devolution Wales continues to rely, to some extent, on external funding sources to tackle the deep rooted economic and infrastructural problems causing deprivation.

### *1.1 Research questions and hypothesis*

The overarching question '*what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?*' has been examined in three case study areas through the following three research questions:

*How and in what ways have pre-existing, non-state community-run organisations been integrated into CF post-2001?*

*What are the (inter)relationships between CF staff (including volunteers) and local authority representatives involved in the programme?*

*What are the reasons given for and impact of change to partnership Grant Recipient Body (GRB) status since 2001?*

The questions have been developed to cover temporal, institutional and structural aspects of the CF programme as a whole through integration over time, institutional interrelations and funding arrangements for the programme. These aspects of the programme are key strategic points linked to a wide range of issues associated with the programme.

The geographical spaces within which CF partnerships function are significant in all three research questions. This is a reflection of the area-based nature of the CF programme and the fact that Wales is a space with delineated,

politicised and perceived boundaries. The questions are also designed to draw out the temporal aspects of CF rooted in the time limitations of the programme as a whole and within each partnership. This is also rooted in the relatively recent establishment of the WG and the National Assembly for Wales (NAW).

The questions have evolved from relevant literature on CF, the most significant of which is an evaluation of CF by Adamson & Bromilley (2008) at Glamorgan University entitled *Empowering Communities in Practice: the case of Communities First in Wales*. Rather than being a critique of Adamson & Bromilley's work this thesis builds on the interesting and significant findings emerging from it which were published at a pivotal time. Exploring the complex concept of 'empowerment' within CF, the Glamorgan research (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008) highlights the personal and structural levers and barriers to participation among community members engaged in the programme. It concludes that partnership status as a charity or a company limited by guarantee means more economic focus for the partnership. It also finds that in many cases local authorities are not responding effectively to good work by CF partnerships.

Following the publication of these findings a scoping interview was carried out with the first author, Professor Dave Adamson, to shape the research questions. The interview resulted in some interesting insights into the findings realised during the research but not published due to lack of evidence. These insights included reflection on the possibility that communication between partnerships was not encouraged by the WG.

Drawing on the published findings from the Glamorgan research and the interview with Adamson, the research questions for this thesis evolved around the three more significant reflections on CF at the time of its publication in 2007-8.

Firstly, the Glamorgan research identified a lack of interaction between partnerships in the form of joined-up working. This finding led the decision to investigate communication and interaction between CF partnerships and

community-run organisations in the same micro-geography. This decision was made to ensure a pre and post perspective of CF from groups existing in pockets of deprivation before 2001. This includes learning from and joining-up with pre-existing community groups. In addition, this line of investigation addresses the wider issue of the impact of state-run development programmes on grass roots initiatives.

*The isolation experienced by partnerships and the risks of creating highly localised and parochial responses to issues must also be protected against by ensuring effective communication between partnerships in the local area (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008: 61)*

Secondly the issue of local authorities sometimes failing to respond positively to CF partnership work was one of the more prominent findings within the Glamorgan research. It led to the development of a research question on local authority-CF relations to explore this issue further.

*'... the statutory sector has largely failed to respond to the community agenda and there is little evidence of community influence over budgets and service delivery, and no evidence of bending mainstream services to reflect the partnership process' (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008: 15)*

Finally the Glamorgan research showed that the structure of CF partnerships can affect the way partnerships function in relation to other organisations thus tying the previous two questions together with a critical factor. The creation of the third research question posed a way to explore the symbolic significance of partnership Grant Recipient Body (GRB) status on the structure of CF and agents within the partnership.

*'The partnership decided that being a Development Trust also provides an opportunity to have long-term economic impact and financial self-sustainability' (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008: 70)*

It is important to note that Adamson does relate the findings to a broader more theoretical context in an academic paper presented at a later date (Adamson, 2009) which highlights the advantage of an academic study, such as this one, where there is freedom to draw on theories and propose findings for further research.

## *1.2 Scope of the thesis*

This thesis is concerned with the concept of community in governance used in governing narrative on tackling deprivation *in* communities and *with* communities, pursued through spatially-based governing tools. Community and governance are contested concepts with a milieu of associated structures and agents represented at a micro-geographical level within the CF programme. Investigating them has meant casting a wide net to find broad movements and changes reflected in the relevant literature relating to the concepts of community and governance as they have evolved in the context of Welsh devolution.

Because of the relatively recent establishment of the WG and the NAW, the timing of this research has been pivotal in terms of its, scope, relevance and originality. Much work has been published on CF but none includes the range of actor representations within the programme, perhaps with the exception of the Glamorgan research (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008) which the research questions are designed to take forward.

The concept of community is particularly interesting from a policy perspective. As the review of literature on the Community Turn (CT) argues (from page 70), community has been used to mean different things depending on changing policy agendas and use of the term 'community' by the WG is no exception. The way in which community development is viewed from different perspectives reflects the political and cultural context in which it is placed and can therefore reveal highly significant insights: views of community in opposition to the state, for example.

The methodological approach used in this investigation reflects the subject matter. Methods have been carefully chosen to draw out complex and often unclear issues such as inter-organisational power imbalances and the symbolic significance of financial status.

### *1.3 Structure of the thesis*

The structure of the thesis is based on the logical process of undertaking a PhD. Starting with an outline of relevant literature, how it relates to the subject matter and the gaps that this research fills. It then goes on to develop the theory and methods needed to answer the research questions and gives justification for choices based on knowledge, rational deduction and long-term thought. The findings are the main part of the thesis and the substantiation of an original contribution to knowledge. The conclusions summarise the whole and tie key points and findings together to present this thesis.

The chapter following this one, chapter two, is an introduction to Communities First. It lays out the facts central to the programme including: context; geography; funding; structure; evaluation and the future of the programme in 2012.

Chapter three, entitled *Welsh Devolution*, looks at historical, political, social and economic causes and effects of devolution in Wales. Tensions between economic and socio-cultural factors in the process of territorial rescaling are revisited. Further detail is given on the complex interplay between different political motives behind Welsh devolution. The purpose of this is to politically and spatially contextualise CF and to unravel the decision-making process leading to it. This includes possible future political changes under devolution that may affect the current approach to community development and regeneration in Wales.

The chapter uses debate on motives for devolution in Wales, including spatially-based arguments, to question the idea of a distinctive set of Welsh 'policy needs'. It also uses arguments on Welsh devolution found in relevant literature

(Laffin, 2000; Brenner, 2004; Laffin, 2007; Howell, 2009; Kay, 2010) to frame the political decision-making process that led to CF. The final section of this chapter on *the Policy Perspective* looks at key documents reflecting the political context at the time of this research.

Chapter four tackles a central concern with the contested concept of community, its use and meaning within governance and policy. The way in which community is defined is presented through relevant literature including exploration using policy documents. The lack of political perspective within existing literature on communities is also highlighted as further justification for this research.

Chapter five puts the politicisation of community as a concept in the wider context of *Governance and Space*. Changes to meaning and understandings of governance in recent times are central to this chapter. Multi Level Governance (MLG) theory is used at the outset to enhance this exploration and distinguishes between different mechanisms of governance in relation to CF.

The chapter goes on to further justify a spatial and scalar approach to studying an area-based programme (CF) under territorial rescaling (devolution). It locates the thesis within debate on space and scale through differentiating between new regionalism and territorial rescaling to argue that the research is better located within territorial rescaling as it is not pursuing overtly economic objectives. Literature on partnerships under New Labour ties geographical levels of governance to the CT through critique of the wider process of decentralisation in the UK.

The way in which the concept of community fits with these wider governing agendas forms justification for further exploration into communities under devolution in Wales.

Chapter six entitled *a Theoretical Guide for Analysis* details the rationale for using Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) theory (Jessop, 2008) to guide analysis in the research. The structure-agency debate rooted in sociology,

social policy and political geography is presented in the theory chapter and is later given an SRA interpretation. It is argued that this approach aids better understanding of the research data and frames this understanding in a broad global and historical context relating to community, governance, space and devolution in Wales.

Chapter seven, *the Methodology*, explains the rationale behind choice of research methods by addressing the research questions in relation to the theoretical guide. The methodology chapter argues that the mainly qualitative methods used are the most practical and relevant way of collecting data for this type of research given the subject under study and possible constraints. It is acknowledged that research methods are often imperfect in terms of validity and outcome. However, this acknowledgement gives depth to the findings by ensuring transparency, on the subject of research bias, for example. This section elaborates on the advantages of using qualitative research methods in a study of this type. All three research questions require a closer examination of the subjective narrative of individuals involved in the networks, informal structures and processual changes for further understanding of cause, process and effect. For this reason the empirical research is predominantly qualitative with use of secondary quantitative data at the outset.

The findings have been divided into two chapters addressing the research questions and the context within which they are set. Chapter eight looks at the research questions under the headings '*Integration and strategy*', '*Statutory-community relations*' and '*Structure, independence and sustainability*'. It also recaps the research methods and research questions used in relation to the overarching research question: *what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?*

The second findings chapter, chapter nine, presents findings that contextualise the issues emerging from the first finding chapter under the headings: '*Design and implementation*', '*CF under devolution*' and '*Communities Next*'. Findings reveal insights into structural and individual relations from the perspective of community members, co-ordinators and local authority representatives in each

case study area in order to gain a rounded view of the situation. The section in this chapter entitled *Design and implementation* is an important part of the findings because it details reasoning and rationale used in policy rhetoric at the outset of CF in 2001 that links directly to some of the issues and problems emerging from all three research questions. It also allows for critique of fundamental principles of the programme, including the assertion that CF was never made clear at the outset, leading to over-expectations and confusion on the ground later in the programme.

In terms of the impacts of devolution on CF, the findings highlight key issues relating to community, governance and space examined in the literature review. Perceptions of the WG emerging from the findings highlight the contradictory nature of strategic relationally functioning institutions and the way that they are presented to the public, the public sector and other organisations. The findings contain debate on the contentious theoretical and political arguments surrounding community development.

Chapter ten concludes with five key findings. Firstly, community is a politicised terms used by the Welsh Government to deliver CF. Secondly, CF partnerships are often led by local authorities. Thirdly, there is a cultural clash between the statutory and community sector. Fourthly, there is a mismatch between rhetoric presenting CF and political actions and decisions at strategic level. At the heart of this misrepresentation is the strength of the statutory sector in Wales after devolution, an issue which has arisen consistently in various forms throughout the research. Finally, the role of key individuals and the political and social capital that they have at their disposal shapes the impact of devolution on regeneration. However, despite criticism a great deal of good work has been done across Wales within small geographical pockets of deprivation.

This study has strong implications for the WG approach to regeneration and subsequently contributes to knowledge on the impact of devolution in Wales.

## 2. Communities First

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This chapter broadly explains the workings of the CF programme. It aims to give a useful overview of how the programme came about, political and structural changes that have occurred over its lifetime and its perceived successes and failures. It also aims to be informative for the reader and allow some reflection on the 'facts' shaping CF, from its establishment in 2001 through to 2012 when this thesis was completed.

### *2.1 Context and geography*

This section of the chapter contextualises the CF programme under devolution in Wales. CF was labelled a 'flagship regeneration programme' at the outset and was designed by the WG to tackle deprivation in the poorest areas of Wales over ten years between 2001 and 2011 (then extended to 2012). It is argued here that the 'regeneration' label is contestable given the community development approach taken in practice at delivery level. In 2001, shortly after the establishment of a WG in Wales (1999), CF was implemented by the WG through partnerships based in 142 of Wales' most deprived areas.

Each CF partnership works locally and is governed by a three-way partnership between representatives of the community, the statutory sector and voluntary or business sector and was designed to be 'community-driven'. At the time of this research CF was established in the 157 most deprived wards, sub-wards and Lower Super Output Areas in Wales according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WG, 2008c). CF area populations average approximately 4,000. Areas are selected based on the overall rank in the Index and so specific domains of deprivation (income, employment, health, education, housing, access to services, environment and community safety) vary in rank between areas.

The pilot to CF, People in Communities, was originally conceived by a member of the Welsh Office before devolution in 1998. However, following the approach taken by New Labour to tackling deprivation in England, CF was implemented

four years after New Deal for Communities (NDC). While CF has been likened to NDC (Communities Directorate, 2001) the two programmes are difficult, if not impossible, to compare because of differences in funding, geographical scale, numbers and population. In addition the evaluation of NDC by the Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research (CRESR) is extensive, longitudinal and a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Carried out in two phases between 2002 to 2005 and 2006 to 2009 the research evaluated all 39 pathfinders using six key indicators based on the NDC themes: worklessness; crime; health; education and skills; housing and the physical environment. A similar evaluation of CF allowing comparison between the two programmes has not been possible within the resource and time constraints of this thesis.

However, the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* driven by the *Social Exclusion Unit* under which NDC was established has had some influence on the design of CF; this is explored further in section 3.6 of the thesis, *the policy perspective*, using key policy documents.

Before 2001 the pilot, People in Communities, was implemented in eight selected areas of Wales during 2000-1. The programme was allocated £3m and was designed as a precursor and a research project guiding the design and implementation of CF. The evaluation of People in Communities was published in October 2001 (notably one month after the publication of the initial CF Guidance by the WG) and gave significant insights into the problems and pitfalls of such a programme: these are discussed in more depth in chapter nine, the second findings chapter (page 231).

As stated earlier a defining feature of CF is that it has been designed and implemented exclusively by Welsh-elected representatives. In addition to this it is distinct from previous area-based regeneration programmes in Wales for three key reasons: geographical distribution is at a micro-level; it has long-term revenue funding over ten years and it takes a community-focused approach (in place of an economic or physical regeneration focus). The first two characteristics respond directly to the *Agenda for Neighbourhood Renewal*

under New Labour between 1997 and 2001, including the intention for a community-driven ethos stated by policy-makers:

*' . . . [NDC] partnership boards with representation from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors are running local regeneration programmes but the government's intention is that it is the communities that have real power and are very much in the driving seat' (Robinson & Shaw, 2001: 5)*

In April 2009 the second phase of CF was implemented following a consultation entitled *Communities Next* (WG, 2008b). Since the 1st April 2009 the CF programme funding structure has been divided into 'core funding' for the staff team, overhead and delivery costs in each partnership and 'outcome funding' to develop and deliver new activities, services and projects that benefit CF areas. In addition the CF Trust Fund can award grants of up to £5,000 to any community organisation working within a CF area. The CF Outcomes Fund allocated £25m across all partnerships over three years between 2009 and 2012 and placed a much stronger emphasis on measurable outcomes than the initial funding structure from 2001 to 2008. Consultation responses to the key policy document mapping these changes, *Communities Next* (WG, 2008b), reveals that the more outcomes-focused approach is favoured by those responsible for monitoring and evaluating the programme as a whole, but not always by those delivering on the ground.

*'Participants . . . [are] very daunted by the sheer magnitude of the Outcomes areas and their very limited ability to do anything other than support the responsible agencies' (WG, 2008b: 2)*

This is one part of an argument that there are fundamental problems with the design of the CF programme as a whole which is developed in the findings.

While some 'areas of interest' within the CF programme are based on themes such as child poverty and BME populations, which crosscut geographies, the majority of CF partnerships are geographical. 20% of the Welsh population live within the approximately 157 CF wards, sub-wards and LSOAs. For the purpose

of this research, and particularly the case study selection, Wales has been divided into urban, rural and valleys areas. In 2007 the majority of partnerships were in urban areas (65%), then valleys (30%) then rural (4%) (WG, 2011). These results show a shift towards more urban areas and fewer valleys than the original designation of CF areas in 2001 where the majority were valleys (47%) then urban (33%) then rural (20%).

In terms of intensity of population there are eight local authority areas with a higher than average population living in CF areas.

*'CF areas . . . vary enormously in terms of their size and, partly as a consequence, the degree to which they represent coherent and self-contained spatial entities' (WG, 2011: 20)*

Every local authority in Wales has at least one CF partnership, with the highest numbers in Rhondda Cynon Taff (24) and Caerphilly (18). While CF populations average at 4,000, some areas have numbers as high as 26,000 living there and some areas are smaller than a Lower Super Output Area and only have 300 or 400 residents.

## *2.2 Funding*

Total funding for the CF programme between 2001 and 2011 is approximately £300m with funds per head per year ranging between £17 and £400 (WG, 2011: 12). Before CF, area-based regeneration in Wales was largely funded by Objective 2, 3 and 5b structural funding from the European Union (EU). Projects funded by Objective 1 status in West Wales and the Valleys began in 2000 and ran concurrently with CF to some extent. Unlike CF, programmes funded by Objective 1, 2, 3 and 5b placed less emphasis on the role of community and more on tackling infrastructural and economic problems. Redistribution to deprived regions of the EU in pursuit of economic growth and to redress the balance between rich and poor is a core facet of EU structural funding (Hooghe & Marks, 2001).

Each CF partnership receives different amounts of funding, the details of which were not made public until eight years into the programme (StatsWales, 2009). Funding is administered by a GRB which is most commonly the local authority but can also be a voluntary sector body, a community sector body or the partnership itself. Local authorities are the GRB for 110 of the existing Partnerships and in total there are 55 organisations in Wales acting as GRBs. In 2001, 23 CF partnerships with a local authority GRB had a voluntary or community organisation acting as a managing agent employing the staff (WG, 2001). It is outside the scope of this thesis to examine the rationale behind the funding distribution for all 157 CF partnerships. However, in the context of the case study partnerships it is possible to speculate on problems with the rationale for funding distribution. Of the three case study areas, Caerphilly is the local authority with the most CF partnerships but receives the least amount of funding, for example. Caerphilly council received £585,107 in 2007-8 compared with the £862,695 received by Gwynedd in the same year and £2,143,198 by Swansea; both of which have fewer partnerships in the area (*Welsh Local government Data Unit Website June, 2010*).

Each CF partnership has revenue funding for a co-ordinator and a development worker with some employing additional development workers and youth workers. This amounts to approximately 350 posts over ten years in Wales created by CF, some of which is included in the overall cost of CF and some in external funding. £140m of the £214m (65%) spent on CF has paid for core services, the vast majority of which are staffing costs. It is possible to view CF as an employment generating programme and, in this sense, fulfilling its own purpose.

Before 2009 funding went to individual partnerships to support community development activity and projects. Following *Communities Next* in 2009 the WG ring-fenced £25m over three years for a centrally-administered Outcomes Fund to fund projects delivering outcomes under the six Vision Framework headings. By April 2011 £8.1 million of the Outcomes Fund had been approved for projects. CF community continue to receive core funding to cover staff salaries,

office and partnership costs but this funding has been reduced from £39m per year in 2008/09 to approximately £36m in 2011 (WG, 2011).

Some approximate comparison between core government funding figures for CF and its nearest English equivalent, NDC, is given here to address the financial side of this political separation. Between 142 and 157 CF partnerships had funding of £300m over a ten year period since 2001, amounting to approximately £30m per annum and £50 per capita per annum. 39 NDC partnerships have been allocated £2bn of government funding over a ten year period from 1998, amounting to approximately £200m per annum and roughly £500 per capita per annum. Per capita per year there is approximately a £445 difference between what CF and NDC partnerships will have received over roughly the same amount of time (see table below and on page 255).

TABLE 1: Communities First Funding Per Capita

CF Budget £	300,000,000
Welsh Pop	3,000,000
Eligible Pop	540,000
Per capita £	396
Per capita per year £	50

This financial inequity due to differences in core funding and number of partnerships in each programme shows that WG spread fewer resources more widely over CF while NDC focused more resources on 39 larger areas. This is not meant as an anti-devolution argument but it does raise questions around different approaches to area-based regeneration partnership programmes in the UK under devolution and particularly the impact of devolution in Wales at a micro-geographical level. This is an issue returned to later in the thesis under the literature review chapter on Welsh devolution and under the findings relating to devolution.

## 2.3 Operation

The CF programme is administered by the Communities First Unit which is part of the Local Government and Communities Division within the WG. The unit is responsible for providing a framework for the Programme, managing the budget, implementation, policy development, monitoring and evaluation of the programme (WG, 2007).

The CF Unit is made up of a 'National Policy branch' responsible for strategies and procedures and a 'Regional branch' that includes five regional implementation teams<sup>1</sup> responsible for giving advice and support on operation to CF partnerships across Wales. Within the WG at the time of this research the CF Policy Unit had 35 staff. The WG has commissioned various organisations to provide support, advice, training and information to CF partnerships over the years including: the Communities First Support Network made up of eight voluntary sector organisations; the WVCA (providing training and advice) and a community development company called Empower (providing information).

Interestingly the programme has been placed within three WG divisions since its design in 2000 reflecting (or perhaps contributing to) changes to the programme, they are: 'Housing', 'Regeneration and Economic Development' and 'Local Government and Communities'. The Ministers responsible for CF at the time of this research were Leighton Andrews and Carl Sargeant. The Minister for the department at the time of implementation was Edwina Hart. The department for Local Government and Communities is also responsible for issues such as council tax, statutory funding, equal pay and relations between the WG and local government.

Each CF partnership is working to six key vision framework themes defined by the WG, these are: Child Poverty, Environment, Community Safety, Jobs Business and Income Generation, Education Training and Skills and Health and Wellbeing. These emulate NDC key indicators to some extent but taking a

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<sup>1</sup>Communities First Implementation Team A (Caerphilly, Cardiff and Newport), B (Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen) and C (Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire and the Vale of Glamorgan), West Wales (Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Neath Port-Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and South Powys) and North Wales (Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, North Powys, Wrexham, Anglesey).

softer, less 'physical' approach: Community Safety instead of Crime and adding Child Poverty in place of Housing, for example. Each vision framework heading has a series of sub-headings or 'strategic priorities' which have been put into a matrix for partnership use.

Each partnership is expected to focus on one primary vision framework and to impact on other selected headings to a lesser degree. It is not expected that all partnerships will impact on all vision framework headings in their areas. Before 2009 CF partnerships were working to a long list of vision framework headings with little stipulation by the WG on the details of tackling these, in-line with the non-prescriptive approach to CF at the outset. In 2009 the Minister responsible for the programme, Leighton Andrews, announced the new matrix system and also stated that:

*'Each theme will also identify a series of different levels of partnership working – from mainly community (but with support from a service provider) to mainly service provider (with community involvement). This is intended to enable Communities First Partnerships and their partners to plot a level of intervention appropriate to the activity and the experience of the Partnership' (Welsh Government online, 2008a)*

At the outset each CF area was required to aim for a partnership between the statutory (local authorities, the police, health services etc), the community and the voluntary or business sector. This meant making strong and sometimes speedy links with local authorities and voluntary organisations in most cases.

The statutory sector in Wales is represented nationally by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)<sup>2</sup>. The WLGA was established in 1996 when local government reorganisation created a single tier of 22 authorities providing all local government services to local communities. It currently works with the Communities Directorate within the WG to promote good practice in partnership working in CF partnerships.

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<sup>2</sup> The WLGA represents 22 local authorities, 4 police authorities, 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities in Wales.

The voluntary sector in Wales is represented nationally by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). The WCVA was established in 1934 and provides formal advice and training to CF partnerships as well as managing the CF Trust Fund.

In order to achieve the partnership required some areas with little previous investment in community development were required to submit Capacity Building Plans to the WG outlining how communities could be better equipped for working with CF. In addition all partnerships were required to select a Chair, a secretary and to sign a partnership agreement, most often before submitting proposals for capacity building. In addition the partnership was required to submit a Community Action Plan with long term vision and short term goals included, which were monitored every six months.

Partnerships all have Boards which include a representative from the three sectors, as above. Frequency of partnership board meetings vary between partnerships, however, meetings are regular (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) in most cases with different frequency for sub-groups. Board meetings are held within the CF area and often follow an agenda including issues added by all representative groups and community members. Issues discussed are noted in the meeting minutes and partnership staff and volunteers are tasked with driving forward any actions arising.

In some cases partnership Boards have created sub-groups to tackle specific ongoing issues. Adamson & Bromilley's study (2008) found that these partnerships were more successful at driving actions forward because each group can give more attention to one issue than a board dealing with a number of issues. Issues are decided by the partnership board using local knowledge and sub-groups often develop as a result of recurring issues.

## 2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

This section of the chapter summarises key frameworks for monitoring the CF programme and key reports evaluating the programme from 2000 to 2011. The primary mechanism for monitoring the programme internally is the Annual Monitoring Report system run by the CF Unit within the WG. A number of internally commissioned and external evaluations of CF have been carried out over the life of the programme focusing on all aspects. A baseline evaluation, an interim evaluation and an evaluation of the programme process and outcomes have been commissioned by the WG and published in 2001, 2006 and 2010. Independent evaluations of the programme structure and impacts have been carried out by Adamson & Bromilley in 2008 and Hincks & Robson in 2011. In 2011 the auditor general for Wales carried out an independent audit of CF looking at the successes and failures of the programme. In addition some evaluation has been carried out in the course of reviews and consultation, most significantly *Communities Next* (2008) and *Communities First: the future* (2011).

Details of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) system for Communities First are unpicked in the findings for this thesis using data from an ethnographic internship within the WG data team responsible for collating and re-shaping the system in 2009. At the time of the internship in early 2009 the system was changing from a predominantly qualitative approach to a quantitative approach. This belies a move away from the initial non-prescriptive approach taken by policy-makers at the outset to a more controlled and tightly monitored approach with a focus on measurable outcomes and results. Following results from the AMR between 2001 and 2007 the second phase of *Communities Next* was devised and implemented under Assembly Member Leighton Andrews in 2008-9 taking a more economically-focused approach than the initial design of CF.

Before 2007 CF AMRs were submitted every May and written by partnership co-ordinators or Chairs. There were eight sections with a 200 word limit for every question. Sections one, two and three were about key achievements over the year (projects, programme bending etc), key barriers to progress and support received. Section four was a summary of non-CF funding sources. Section five set out programme aims, objectives and how progress would be

measured according to Vision Frameworks (Environment, Education and Training, Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety, Children and Young People, Active Community). Section six was a breakdown of partnership members, section seven an equal opportunities monitoring form for all partnership members and section eight was CF staff structure (co-ordinator, development worker, admin, youth worker etc).

Since 2008 the AMR has been a Data Collection Form on an Excel spreadsheet with 10 sections. Section one is now for the WG to fill and is entitled 'General' (number of completed forms, amount of CF funding allocated). Section two is 'Progress towards outcomes' based on Vision Frameworks and divided into four sub-sections: 1) number of agreed outcomes 2) number of agreed outcomes based on Vision Framework 3) progress made towards agreed outcomes 4) relevant data. Section three is now entitled 'Equalities and diversities' and divided into five sub-sections: 1) numbers of partnerships accessing support fund 2) number of partnerships undertaking some exercise to see who it engages with 3) hard to reach groups engaged with the partnership 4) questions of accessibility (location, meeting locations, meeting rotations) 5) languages made available. Section four is Welsh Language preference; five is entitled 'Funding Secured'; six covers partnership role in local service provision and engagement with partnership organisations; seven is partnership composition (board and volunteers); eight is now the equal opportunities monitoring form; nine is staff structure and ten is good practice examples.

In general the new, more structured, AMR forms have been well received by partnership co-ordinators, although demonstrating outcomes from activities to 'empower', e.g. building confidence in young people, is not always easy. The data gathered over each year is now much easier to collate and compare. Some of the data gathered during the first seven years of the programme under the old AMR structure has been collated to fit the new structures; however, almost inevitably sections remain incomplete due to the incompatibility of the two structures. The issue of incomplete and incompatible data is a significant theme linking the AMR system with the evaluations outlined below.

The CF programme was based on the People in Communities initiative piloted in eight deprived areas of Wales in 1999. People in Communities was designed by an MP working for the Welsh Office in 1998 and aimed to:

*‘ . . . demonstrate ways in which disadvantaged communities can achieve positive change: through co-ordinated action based on a strategic plan developed and agreed with the involvement of the community; by utilising and maximising the benefit they receive from central and local government funding and funding from other sources; and by influencing the provision of existing services in and to the area (Welsh Office Circular 24/98 in WG, 2001)*

Eight areas were chosen by local authorities in 1999<sup>3</sup>, the initiative was piloted in 2000, the CF programme was implemented in March 2001 but the evaluation of People in Communities was not completed until October 2001. This raises serious questions around the extent to which lessons learnt from the pilot were used to shape the CF programme.

This order of events resulted in inconsistency between incorporation of lessons from People in Communities into CF. For example, the recommendation to focus on capacity building and engagement with local service providers was incorporated into CF:

*‘ . . . [there is a need to] focus on thematic issues, capacity building rather than projects, engaging with local community and local service providers’ (NAW, 2001: 15)*

While not having local authorities as the key leading partners, was not:

*‘[there are good] . . . reasons why the local authority should be involved but none of them stand out as a reason for them to be lead partners. The*

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<sup>3</sup> The areas selected to pilot People in Communities were: Deiniolen, Dinorwig and Clwt-y-Bont (Gwynedd); Peulwys (Conwy); Southsea and Brynteg (Wrexham); Rhymney (Caerphilly); Rhiwgarn (Rhondda Cynon Taff); Duffryn (Newport); Gurnos/Galon Uchaf (Merthyr Tydfil); Blaenymaes/Portmead (Swansea).

*justification is usually the absence of any alternatives or at least any that have the same advantages (NAW, 2001: 37)*

A key problem arising from the People in Communities programme at the time was a need to install robust and long-term monitoring and evaluation systems to benefit from lessons learnt. This highlights problems with both the continuity between CF and its pilot and, linked to this, the evaluation frameworks put in place by the WG preceding CF.

*The absence of an ongoing monitoring framework and the lack of management of the evaluation process by the National Assembly has severely limited the evidence base for learning lessons (NAW, 2001: 6)*

In 2001 the WG produced a baseline report intended for measuring progress on tackling deprivation in CF areas over the span of the programme (2001-2012). The report gives a snapshot of all CF areas using a map and key population figures, demographic characteristics and household characteristics based on the 2001 census. However, the boundaries of each area were based on a mixture of indicators and not on statistically measurable geographies:

*[CF areas are] not based on geographies for which statistics are routinely and consistently produced. For example the 100 most deprived wards were based on the 1998 ward level boundaries, which are administrative boundaries and as such are prone to regular changes (WG, 2001: 4)*

The baseline for all areas was updated in 2006 to reflect statistically measurable geographies using Census Output Areas and Lower Super Output Areas to define CF areas. However, in terms of measuring long-term change in CF areas two key problems arise from using the 2001 baseline report as a starting point. Firstly, despite amending CF area boundaries to reflect

statistically measurable localities in 2006, there remains a period of five years between 2001 and 2006 when capturing change is difficult. This in turn could skew any attempt to measure change or improvement over the span of the programme. Secondly, key aims for the programme are very difficult to measure quantitatively; empowerment and capacity building for example. This problem could have been overcome using mixed methods providing the WG had been clear in its separation between qualitative and quantitative from the outset; which it was not due to the non-prescriptive approach to the programme.

An interim evaluation of CF was commissioned by the WG in May 2003, notably before changes to the baseline were made. Over three years the Cambridge Policy Consultants aimed to find 'lessons learnt' from CF as a non-prescriptive programme, evaluate the process and recommend direction for the remainder of the programme. The report reflects positively on the long-term and capacity-building approach taken by the WG. However, it reflects negatively on the non-prescriptive nature of the programme for causing confusion at local level. The report recommends a clear definition and more emphasis on mainstreaming and programme-bending to make links between CF partnerships and local strategic partners (WG, 2006).

As stated above the evaluation was not measured according to the baseline report (2001) because the CF areas were not statistically measurable. This is not an issue raised in the report despite the fact that the lack of data and inconsistency of measurement could mean an 'incomplete' picture of the programme. However, the research in question does give a comprehensive snapshot of the programme at the time. The reports' recommendations and findings shaped the subsequent guidance on the programme which raises questions around the WG approach to CF given that the report could not measure change to areas during the first five years of the programme. The issue of incomplete data leading the programme continues as a theme reflected in the evaluation of CF in 2006.

Following the publication of the interim evaluation in 2006 Adamson & Bromilley published their research findings on community empowerment in practice within CF in 2008. This was the first independent, programme-wide evaluation of CF since its implementation in 2001. The research looked at how far partnerships have empowered communities; partnership relations with other relevant bodies; the extent of community influence on other agendas and the impact of community-led regeneration.

The report found that despite the fact that CF was designed to allow community influence on voluntary, public and private sector practices, influence was variable at best and absent at worst. The involvement of voluntary, public and private representatives in CF partnerships showed a strong voluntary sector involvement, a weak business sector involvement and a variable public sector involvement.

The report was also critical of the assumption that the partnership structure (one third voluntary or business, public sector and community) would lead to equality of participation. However, a number of community participants reported struggling to learn the policy jargon required to participate, for example. The report also found that while capacity exists among community members in CF areas specialist skills and understanding must be learnt to make use of it. In particular specialist skills are required among voluntary and public sector representatives to utilise local capacity in a cohesive and productive way.

In line with the previous interim report (2006) Adamson and Bromilley identified a need for clarification from a strategic level to avoid further confusion around roles, aims and expectations. Finally, the value of pre-existing community organisations and involving / integrating them into CF work on a day to day basis was highlighted. This finding has been a direct influence on the hypothesis and research questions for this thesis, as outlined above.

A number of findings from Adamson & Bromilley's (2008) work and the Cambridge Policy Consortium (2006) overlap and relate. However, there appears to be more focus on the role of communities within the former.

In 2009 CF was evaluated by the Wales Audit Office. The subsequent report gave two key findings and related recommendations. Firstly, while a great deal of good work has been done and the monitoring system has been improved, there remains confusion around what the programme has achieved against its objectives. This is partly a consequence of setting un-measurable geographies for the first five years of the programme. In addition the report states that the objectives of CF are extremely ambitious. Secondly, despite improvements in process and a new focus on achieving measurable outcomes, there are significant challenges. For example, in 2007-8 the programme had achieved 565 out of 1,925 'outcomes'. However, use of this information is limited because outcomes were defined by partnerships and the term 'outcome' has different meanings for different people / groups. Many of the problems stem from a contradiction between a non-prescriptive approach at local level (resulting in a patchwork of partnership) and the need for a uniform and consistent approach to measuring progress, outputs and outcomes against objectives required of a national, government-led programme.

However, despite the widely recognised difficulty of achieving a 'complete' picture of CF, Hincks & Robson (2010) have evaluated the impact of CF between 2001 and 2008 using statistical measurements. Rather than evaluating the programme the research compares change in CF areas compared with similarly deprived areas using key change indicators, different trajectories taken by different partnerships and factors affecting change.

The key indicators used were:

*Change in working-age population claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (%)*

*Change in working-age population who are economically inactive (%)*

*Change in unemployment rate of working-age population (%)*

*Change in population (%)*

*Mean change in house prices (%).*

*(Hincks & Robson, 2010: 5)*

Hincks & Robson overcame the issue of un-measurable areas between 2001 and 2006 to some extent by using geographic information system (GIS)

analysis to identify LSOAs coinciding with 1998 electoral wards comprising the 132 most deprived geographical areas of deprivation in 2000. These areas are defined in the research as 'first generation' CF partnerships. The findings conclude that despite a mean increase in Jobseeker's Allowance claimants and an increase in economic inactivity in CF areas compared with similar areas, both CF and comparative areas had improved equally in terms of economic inactivity and unemployment.

The authors relate their findings to area categorisations / typology<sup>4</sup> and find that where people from less deprived areas have moved-in and people from the deprived area in question have moved-out, there has been more improvement. These so called 'gentrifier' areas are compared with 'isolate' areas where inward and outward migration levels are low; these areas showed little improvement. In addition the authors concluded that:

*'Between 2001 and 2008, Communities First areas have on average seen house prices and population increase and economic inactivity decline, but the extent to which this can be attributed to the programme itself is unclear' (Hincks & Robson, 2010: 7)*

The findings and analysis from this report leave unanswered questions around correlation between CF and change in levels of deprivation. If anything it shows that area-type and population patterns are a stronger influence on levels of deprivation than CF. To consolidate this argument the authors themselves state:

*'The analysis presented in this report, in keeping with the findings of previous Communities First studies, raises questions over whether Communities First as an isolated programme can be expected to deliver the wider outcomes needed*

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<sup>4</sup> Hincks & Robson's (2010) area typology consisted of:

**Escalator areas** - the in-movers come from similar or more deprived areas and the out-movers go to less deprived areas. It is likely, therefore, that moves involve upward progression through the housing market.

**Gentrifier areas** – where the social composition is altered by in-movers coming from less deprived areas and outmovers going to similar or more deprived locations.

**Isolate areas** - where moves are predominantly from, and to, more or equally deprived areas. The areas are consequently likely to be relatively isolated from the wider housing market.

**Transit areas** – where most in and out-movers come from and go to less deprived areas (for example involving early moves on the housing ladder for young households).

*to improve the conditions of people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods in Wales' (Hincks & Robson, 2010: 8)*

Despite overcoming the problem of statically immeasurable areas between 2001 and 2006, this evaluation fails to capture a full picture of the programme. In addition to only measuring indicators relating to only two of the eight domains of deprivation (employment and housing) and none of the six CF vision framework headings (directly); the report covers less than half the time-span of the programme. While it is a valuable and extensive piece of research it only goes part-way towards full-programme evaluation.

In 2011 the WG commissioned a full evaluation of CF covering process and outcomes between 2001 and 2010. This is the most extensive report on CF to date and closer to a full picture of CF than any other evaluation to date. The report is split into four parts and was undertaken by Amion Consulting Limited and Old Bell 3 Limited. The first part gives context; the second is an evaluation of CF outcomes in terms of community capacity, economic activity, education and skills, crime and community safety, health and wellbeing and environment and housing<sup>5</sup>. The third part is an evaluation of process including design, incorporation of previous evaluation findings, delivery at a local level, community engagement, service provider engagement, the Outcomes Fund and support arrangements (Welsh Government, 2011: 8). The fourth part is a summary of conclusions and recommendations.

Interestingly during this evaluation Amion consultants worked with Professor Brian Robson of Manchester University who, with Dr Stephen Hincks, produced the evaluation of CF using area typology in 2010.

The findings are summarised in the report:

*'Overall, while the majority of Communities First areas remain significantly more deprived than the rest of Wales, conditions generally have improved (despite*

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<sup>5</sup> Notably these are related but do not all directly correspond to the six CF vision frameworks: child poverty; environment; community safety; health and wellbeing; jobs, business and income generation; and education, training and skills.

*the impact of the economic crisis) and the gap with the rest of the country on a number of important indicators has narrowed' (WG, 2011: 1)*

While the report states that there has been addition and attributable improvement in CF areas the extent is not clear. The majority of change has been driven by CF staff which reflects the financial distribution within the programme.

The report also states that local service providers have generally engaged well with CF partnerships, however, programme bending typically happens from the bottom-up. Engagement with service providers at National level remains limited and has little visible impact on local implementation. While some CF partnerships believe they need to focus on all Vision Framework headings, partnerships that focus on one or two generally perform better. Significantly for this thesis the report found that partnership success does not depend on its Grant Recipient Body (GRB) being public or third sector. Finally while many local authorities have attempted to formalise relationships with CF partnerships, a large number are still dependent interpersonal relationships.

Drawing on these findings the report gives twelve recommendations. Central to these is the recommendation that there should be an area-based programme running in Wales beyond April 2012. Linked to this the authors feel that the CF brand should be retained. However, in some areas internal tensions make the programme unworkable in the foreseeable future and funding to these areas should be discontinued. Another recommendation is for partnerships to have more discretion on membership and particularly statutory membership. On more practical process issues the report recommended that the Outcome Fund and the AMR system remain and that the WG place strong emphasis on the personal and professional development of CF Coordinators (WG, 2011).

The problem of incomplete data from monitoring and evaluation has been improved if not rectified to date and to a degree. However, the extent to which findings from either will be used to guide the programme over the coming year remains to be seen.

## 2.5 Communities First: the Future

Following a WG consultation on the future of CF in September 2011 an announcement detailing subsequent changes was made at the CF annual conference in November 2011. The programme was re-labelled a 'Community focused anti-poverty programme' in a speech by head of CF, Paul Dear, at the conference. The themes for the programme, now called 'broad outcomes' were announced as: prosperous, learning and healthier communities. This will mean a focus on employment and economic development, education and health.

From April 2012 the 'Outcomes Fund' will become an 'Outcomes Framework' based on Results Based Accountability in line with the growing emphasis on outcomes since 2009. Area eligibility for CF status will be narrowed to include the top 10% of deprived areas in Wales according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2011). The programme will be based on clusters of areas with populations of between 10,000 and 15,000 which can include areas in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales under exceptional circumstances. Existing CF areas that do not qualify to be part of a new cluster will be provided with exit-strategy funding for March 2013.

Regional Programme Boards will be established across Wales with strong community representation to support, link-up and make clusters accountable. Funding will be provided to each cluster for a Delivery Team, a Delivery Plan and a Community Involvement Plan. In some clusters existing community organisations will be designated 'Community Hubs' to act as the lead delivery body for the cluster.

To qualify for this funding a cluster must demonstrate the ability to:

*' . . . deliver outcomes in line with Programme aims; show evidence of need, based on detailed analysis of WIMD; focus on vulnerable people; **have communities fully involved**; work in partnership with key services and other agencies; fit with other WG programmes'* (Presentation by Paul Dear, Head of CF Unit, CF Annual Conference, Cardiff, November 2011)

While details of 'CF the future' remain to be fully clarified there are already clear similarities between the original CF programme design and the recently announced structure. These include: a focus on community involvement and use of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation to decide area eligibility and Grant Recipient Bodies. In addition a move by the WG to re-label 'themes' as 'outcomes' and create an 'Outcomes Framework' reflects changes made in 2009 to promote measurable activity across all partnerships.

However, subtle differences and changes apparent in the new programme structure reveal a significant change in focus. Reducing the aim of the programme to three outcomes (prosperous, learning and healthy communities) could imply a move by the WG to be more prescriptive in light of some of the problems which arose from the original non-prescriptive approach. However, the outcomes themselves remain broad.

The programme description no longer includes 'regeneration' and instead uses the broader term 'anti-poverty'. In addition it no longer refers directly to 'deprivation' despite continuing to use the index as a selection tool. It is difficult to deduce any meaning from this change in description without knowing more detail about the changes, i.e. whether or not domains of deprivation will be used to measure outcomes. However, one possibility is that, as noted above in relation to this thesis title, regeneration implies an economic, social and geographical approach to tackling deprivation and CF is not an adequate vehicle for delivering this approach. If this is the case then, in contrast with other aspects of the new programme, 'anti-poverty' is a less prescriptive label (for a more prescriptive approach).

Basing the programme on clusters means a much more systematically enforced strategic structure for CF in the future. While two areas of Wales have created a CF 'overarching partnership board' at county-level with representatives from all partnerships in the area (Newport for example), this is not a common occurrence. It will be a new and potentially difficult process for many partnerships. The move to make partnerships accountable through Regional Programme Boards acting as Grant Recipient Bodies (GRB) is a big structural

shift for CF. It will mean competition between current partnership-level GRBs to become the overarching GRB. It may make programme bending easier for service providers and the private sector by creating a level of contact 'above' the 150+ partnerships in Wales. For some partnerships this will be the end of direct CF funding through an approach that could be seen as Darwinian or as a phasing-out of the programme to avoid dependency. Interestingly in terms of area population and size, the shape of CF will become more like New Deal for Communities: more focus on fewer areas.

The changes are happening at a crucial time in the process of Welsh devolution; shortly following the acquisition of primary policy-making powers in Wales and at a time when there is potential for political conflict between the Labour ruling party in Wales and a Conservative-Lib Dem Coalition Government in England.

The continuing effects of a UK and global recession continue to hit the poorest hardest (BBC-IFS 2011) which means an increasing need for government intervention and funding to help Wales' most deprived areas at a time when the CF programme is effectively winding-up. How the recent changes will progress remains to be seen and the question of what will replace CF, if anything, remains unanswered at present.

### **3. Welsh Devolution and the Policy Perspective**

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Communities First (CF) in its current form is a product of Welsh devolution. Thus to further contextualise the programme this chapter includes details on the complex process of Welsh devolution before and after the establishment of the Welsh Government (WG) in 1999. It aims to highlight the way WG led to CF in order to better understand the issues arising from the findings later in the thesis. In light of this aim the chapter focuses on the most relevant issues within the process of Welsh devolution to CF and does not compare types of devolution within the UK or wider afield.

As well its impact on CF, devolution is seen partly as a response to a global crisis in nationhood. This is the difficulty of national government being 'too small' to tackle global changes and 'too big' to rule rapidly fragmenting and diversifying national societies (Jessop, 1990). In Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) terms it encompasses both hierarchical and network conceptions of governance and territorial rescaling.

The chapter also highlights the perceived balance between economic or pragmatic and ideological or political representations of the WG. This reveals something about its strategic relations with other governing bodies in Wales, central government and, most significantly, community organisations.

#### **3.1 Welsh Devolution in Context**

Following their election victory in 1997 New Labour sought to devolve powers to the regions and nations of the United Kingdom. New Labour stated:

*' . . . bringing politics closer to the people, strengthening the rights of every citizen, making government more open and responsive' (The Government's Annual Report, 1998 in Daly & Davis, 2002)*

This is a key step towards Welsh devolution and encapsulates the context within which CF was established. In Wales the restructuring followed a

successful national referendum for devolution<sup>6</sup>. Restructuring also included establishing the Scottish Parliament, elected Assemblies for Northern Ireland and London, and Regional Development Agencies for the English regions.

In a 1979 referendum for Welsh devolution 20% voted Yes (and only one third of the majority Welsh-speaking Gwynedd). In 1997 49.9% voted for devolution making it a very marginal victory. This change between 1979 and 1997 can be partially explained through political history which is outlined below to highlight the division between ideological and pragmatic reasoning for devolution in Wales. It shed some light on how historical decision-making plays-out in CF design and implementation.

The lead-up to the 1979 referendum saw first Harold Wilson's and then James Callaghan's Labour government rhetoric promoting:

*'... modernizing the machinery of British governance' (Tanner, 2004: 2)*

This rhetoric served to move devolution up the political agenda. However, nationalism was also seen as a threatening force by UK central government and objections to Welsh devolution came from within the Labour party and the Conservative opposition during the 1970s. Despite these fears and some ideological reasoning for devolution, the 1979 referendum can be seen as a pragmatic decision based on divisions within the Labour party, strikes and unfavourable economic circumstances rather than a political ideology.

*'The referendums of 1 March 1979 in Scotland and Wales were the result of a concession made by the Labour government of James Callaghan to the opponents of devolution within Labour itself' (Thiec, 2008: 1)*

Thiec (2008) argues that contrary to the pragmatic reasoning for devolution in 1979, New Labour took a more ideologically based rhetorical approach to rationalising devolution in 1997. The complex movement leading to Welsh

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<sup>6</sup> This was a response by Tony Blair to commitments made by his predecessor, John Smith, preceding the election victory.

devolution in 1999 is most closely associated in the literature with widespread dissatisfaction with the Conservative government's approach to administering policies in Wales preceding 1997 (Thiec, 2008; Davies, 2008; Howell, 2009). The voting climate in Wales was primed for a favourable outcome in the 1997 referendum partly because of Conservative government policies. Policies on manufacturing industry which damaged the Welsh economy and decisions made by the Welsh Office were seen by many as unsympathetic to Welsh industry, for example.

*' . . . the [Welsh Assembly] was the result of developing consciousness regarding the need for alternative structures to meet different political aspirations that the political structures did not fulfil during the Conservative administration' (Howell, 2009: 225)*

While manufacturing policies and governing systems form pragmatic facets of explanation for the Yes vote in 1997, a more political reasoning has been argued. Some argue that the primary reason for referendum success in 1997 was a collective discontent with an economically, political and *culturally* unrepresentative Conservative government from 1979 to 1997 (Thiec, 2008; Davies, 2008). This position manifested through factors such as Thatcher's social and economic policies, her much-resented quangos (Thiec, 2008) and most notably the subsequent Welsh miners' strike of 1984-85.

*'At each general election since 1979 a large majority of the voters in Scotland and in Wales (up to three quarters in 1987 and 1992 in Scotland and 70% in Wales) had voted for a party other than the Conservative Party' (Thiec, 2008: 4)*

Partly because of the traditional Labour stronghold and liberal cultural trends (e.g. non-conformism and strong Trade Unions) in Wales, 18 years of Conservative government can be argued to have tipped the vote for devolution in the popular Welsh consciousness. This ideology continued to run through the Labour and Plaid Cymru's coalition policy rhetoric between 1999 and 2010. One example of this is the *'distinctive and creative culture'* of Wales noted in the National Economic Development Plan for Wales (WG, 2002: 2).

In the context of theories of governance on competitiveness and economic advantage of devolving power to smaller geographies, the WG approach to regeneration policy is distinctive from UK-wide policy in its more community-focused underpinnings.

In terms of arguments for Welsh devolution, more recently Andrews & Martin (2010) argue that Welsh devolution has become closely entwined with the pursuit of economic success through territorial rescaling.

*'The case for devolution was a deontological one and its value intrinsic (KAY, 2003). More recently . . . the devolution discourse has increasingly centred on its alleged benefits in terms of tackling democratic deficits and delivering economic dividends' (Morgan, 2002a)' (Andrews & Martin, 2010: 920)*

Thompson & Day (2001) make the link between New Labour's emphasis on community participation, the 'third way' and Welsh devolution. Their research highlights the influence of wider political movements in the shift from government to governance through devolution. It also highlights an important issue of motivation and justification for Welsh devolution at the end of the twentieth century. The emancipation of civic energies suppressed by a dominant central government echoes Ron Davies's (A Voice for Wales, 1997) emphasis on participation and inclusion in his original vision for Welsh devolution. This shows arguments for Welsh devolution to include long-standing, non-economic reasoning around identity and culture.

Andrews & Martin (2010) argue that there are both political and economic arguments for devolution, both of which relate to participation and distinctive cultural characteristics, stating that:

*' . . . the pro-devolutionist case rests on claims that sub-national governments are closest to their electorates and, therefore, most directly accountable to citizens . . . The main economic argument for devolution is that local politicians and officials are better placed than national policy-makers to recognize,*

*represent, and respond to the particular needs and aspirations of their localities'* (ibid, 2010: 921)

Kay (2003) argues that if opportunities for self-government become available under devolution, they may liberate the latent desire for this mode of government. One could argue therefore that devolution will create its own need and as Kay puts it:

*' . . . the full set of consequences will go much beyond that of satisfying the desires of those who already wanted it' (Kay, 2003: 54)*

An opinion poll conducted as part of an ESRC funded project (Cole *et al*, 2001) consolidates this argument with the finding that between 1997 and 2001 levels of support for Welsh devolution rose to at least the equivalent of support for the Scottish Parliament. To consolidate this further the referendum for increased powers to the WG on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2011 resulted in a majority (63.5%) Yes vote for these changes, again underpinned by a combination of ideological and pragmatic arguments.

Recommendations from the Richard Commission (2004) and the subsequent Government of Wales Act (2006) formalising the split between legislative and executive arms of the WG, add to the pragmatic argument. The Richard Commission (2004) found that the WG was fulfilling its various functions within its existing powers and capacities, but was increasingly pressing on the limits of these powers. The report made a strong case for an increase in the capacities of the WG, including its primary legislation and tax-variation. In addition findings by the Institute of Welsh Politics (2009) state that central government is acting as a *'brake on devolved policymaking'* (Jones & Scully, 2009: 9).

Nigel Johnson (2007) argues that the Government of Wales Act (2006) did not conclusively settle the constitutional issues of asymmetrical devolution. Asymmetrical devolution is signified by uneven and non-uniform devolution of policymaking powers including characteristics such as: uncertainty around distribution of power between London and Cardiff; the unclear role of the

Secretary of State; the clarity and transparency of Welsh governance; and the question of how long these interim arrangements will last before Wales gains legislative devolution (Johnson, 2007). The final issue is no longer relevant<sup>7</sup> but the rest are still under question.

One area of contention in the future of the WG is the devolved financial arrangement for Wales. Money is devolved from UK Central Government Treasury to WG using the Barnett Formula. The Barnett Formula is used to adjust spending plans for the devolved territories of the UK during public expenditure surveys in the UK. It has been a source of dispute for some because those better equipped to voice demands are at an advantage (Bristow, 2008; 2001).

Economic changes and increasing regional inequality could cause further dispute and problems in this area over the longer term (Richard Commission, 2004). The increase in public expenditure between 1999 and 2006 limited resource distribution-based conflict in inter-governmental exchanges. However, the more recent global and UK economic recession will mean fewer national resources meaning that political conflict between national Assemblies and central government in the UK is more probable.

In terms of politics, the change in central government ruling party from Labour to a Coalition between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties from May 2010 could have an impact on inter-governmental relations. In the case of Wales where the Welsh Labour party have been in power since the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 replacing a Labour-Plaid Cymru coalition ruling party, there are likely to be fundamental differences in approaches to policy-making and implementation between central government and the WG. This increases the likelihood of conflict and possible changes to the shape of devolution. A closer examination of the way these issues play-out is beyond the parameters of this study and is one recommended avenue for future research. However, this research does

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<sup>7</sup> As of March 2011 the National Assembly for Wales has been given policy-making powers following a referendum for the people of Wales so the situation is no longer uncertain.

serve to highlight the growing significance and impact of devolution in Wales on certain strands of policy in this changing context.

Through examining the past and possible future trajectory of the WG, its role as a scalar-temporally based instrument for adapting and implementing social policy becomes clearer.

### *3.2 Key Concepts in Welsh Devolution*

Literature contextualising devolution in Wales reveals key issues characterising the strands of argument in policy rhetoric promoting it before and after 1999. These can be categorised as political and economic. The arguments are reflected in WG rhetoric on the closer interface between government and localities (participation and citizen-centred approach) and a distinctive Welsh culture (policy and geography). The impact of these arguments cannot be fully understood without investigation into the territorial rescaling in policy implementation.

Devolution has created what Williams & Mooney (2008) term a 'new social topography' (a culture and geography), contributing to the emergence of a 'new discursive terrain': which refers to the impact of devolution on the language of social policy (Williams & Mooney, 2008). Increasing participation and responsiveness and Wales' distinctive economic and cultural characteristics formed arguments for devolution in 1997 (Leighton Andrews, 1999). It is therefore important to examine the applicability of these arguments over a decade later.

In terms of a closer interface between government and localities, political rhetoric promoting devolution in Wales before 1997 (coming from within New Labour, the Welsh Labour Party and Plaid Cymru) argued that devolution was a move towards more inclusive governance, participation and greater government accountability. McAllister (1998) and Laffin & Thomas (2000) contest this argument, stating that bureaucratic systems in the UK civil service are proof that increased participation in Wales is a myth.

There have been significant regional variations in the performance of a number of important public services during the years following the establishment of devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Andrews & Martin, 2010). Significantly, these were most evident in services such as health and education over which the new devolved administrations had substantial influence and where policy divergence had been most marked.

Between 1997 and 2010 New Labour emphasised the importance of user choice and competition between public service providers. Reform of the English education and healthcare systems stressed the importance of giving students, parents, and patients the right to choose which schools and hospitals they use (Andrews & Martin, 2010). Welsh policy-makers explicitly rejected this model claiming that population densities in most of Wales were too low to sustain the numbers of providers that would be needed to give users a genuine choice. Instead, they espoused a citizen-centred model of public service reform:

*'We need to find ways of **giving people a stronger voice** in their communities'*  
(WG, 2006a: 12)

The citizen-centred model's five basic customer service pillars included 'responsiveness', meaning delivering services according to need. In line with this evidence of what Rhodri Morgan (former leader of the WG) called the 'clear red water' between Cardiff and Westminster governments can be seen in the emphasis on welfare-based initiatives in Wales. Free NHS prescriptions, free school breakfasts for schoolchildren in deprived areas and free swimming for under-sixteens and over-sixties, for example.

In terms of Wales' distinctive characteristics the Labour-Plaid Cymru coalition policy document *One Wales: a progressive agenda for the government of Wales* (2007) the WG stated that:

*' . . . we have explicitly recognised the diversity of Wales – geographically, socially, linguistically and culturally. We propose a comprehensive programme*

*of government, for the full four year term, which covers the whole spectrum of policy and action' (WG, 2007: 5)*

According to the ESRC Programme for Devolution and Constitutional Change (2006) this focus on culture in rhetoric belies the underlying weakness of the WG and lack of primary policy-making powers at the time. The ESRC statement does not contradict the WG statement that Wales is a peopled geographical territory with administrative boundaries separating it from the UK. Neither does it fail to recognise that Wales as a geography has a differing socio-economic history and characteristics from other UK territories in terms of politics, language, cultural traditions and industry. Rather it questions the perceived simplicity of culture-based policy relating to an area with complex micro-geographies, distinctions and boundaries.

Welsh devolution relates to possession of power in governance. The process of devolution sees the transfer, often limited, of powers from central government to devolved administrations. The extent to which the new administration manages devolved areas of policy is one means of better understanding the policy impact of devolution. In addition the distribution of power and responsibility from national assemblies to local community partnerships is viewed here in the relationship between the WG, Welsh local governing bodies and local community groups.

The political and economic motives for devolution discussed here represent the most relevant arguments in literature defining and problematising Welsh devolution. CF emerged from a WG pursuit of closer interface and local democracy. It is an area-based programme and therefore designed to address Wales' specific geographical characteristics. Whether or not these amount to a distinctive set of policy needs in Wales is examined further in the following section on the role of space and scale in Welsh devolution.

### 3.3 *The Space that is Wales*

This section of the chapter links the issues of territorial rescaling and delineation of boundaries discussed below on page 54 to the spaces of governance in a Welsh context. It begins by looking at the territorial sub-division of 'the space that is Wales' for governing purposes.

There are 22 unitary local authorities in Wales represented nationally by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)<sup>8</sup>. In addition there are over 700 Community and Town Councils in Wales acting as statutory consultees for local authorities and the WG, a large number of which are represented by the umbrella organisation, One Voice Wales.

Historically the power of local authorities and the WLGA has been a strong municipal base for governance in Wales, particularly in the small, geographically isolated towns of the South Wales Valleys. The advent of CF in Wales under the WG provides a promising opportunity to examine the way that the statutory sector functions in one area of service delivery at a micro-geographical level post-devolution. The fact that CF is a product of devolution in Wales makes this study likely to raise the issue of new challenges within the Welsh statutory sector in dealing with the establishment of the WG.

The institutional relationship between local authorities and the WG in Wales is continuously reconfiguring, this is particularly in light of the two recent major changes to political structures in the WG: primary policy making power for the WG and a change in ruling party from coalition to Labour-led government. Historically Wales has been a Labour stronghold with a number of traditional Labour MPs and councillors holding power in the South Wales valley mining communities and the North Wales slate and iron industries. With the advent of devolution, local authorities and the WLGA supporting devolution expected reward in the form of relatively unchanged local governing powers for their support. This has resulted in close relations between the WG and the WLGA (Jeffrey, 2006). The situation has also manifested in increased independence

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<sup>8</sup> There are 25 Planning Authorities in Wales because the three National Parks have their own planning authorities.

for the WLGA and working with potentially less restrictive political control over its actions than English local authorities.

While arguments have been put forward promoting a harmonious relationship between central and local government in Wales (Laffin, 2007) there have also been issues of corruption within Welsh local government which has caused the WG to take power from certain local authorities. Corruption within local authorities can be seen as a UK and universal issue unrelated to devolution. However, the historical independence and former cultural, political and geographical distance of Welsh local authorities from central government before devolution coupled with the power of the WLGA makes cases of corruption in Wales particularly pertinent in this respect.

Laffin (2007) states that Welsh and Scottish Ministers are less confrontational than their English counterparts. According to Laffin this is one contributing factor to the two devolved administrations being less competitive and more collaborative with their local government than Westminster. This is part of his wider argument that devolution does not necessarily lead to regional centralism. Laffin argues that central controls are less important in the UK than the dominance of policy generating machines at the metropolitan centre which can be seen to influence policy-making in devolved administrations.

This thesis aims to shed light on how this balance of powers is changing through using Multi Level Governance (MLG), territorial rescaling and a Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) to state theory. The WG as a new institution requires support and close networks to make its policies work and this means a degree of political bargaining of power with local authorities and the WLGA. In addition the factors leading to devolution in Wales, discussed above, include the advantages of a closer interface between devolved administrations and civil society. The role of local authorities in this interface is unclear at present and questions remain around their influence on 'lower' tiers of governance. The interplay of power between the WG and selected local authorities in Wales gauged through this research sheds some light on the wider picture.

Harris & Hooper (2006) argue that the spatial politicisation of Wales is difficult because Wales is not functionally coherent as a region in itself. The North and South of Wales are particularly disconnected in terms of their distinctive physical and economic features and transport links. The East, West and Mid. areas of Wales are also, arguably, distinctive from each other in terms of culture and geography.

The Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) (2004) was designed to address the unique spatial identity of Wales (a significant strand in the argument for devolution). The most recent version of the WSP is in line with the policy document *One Wales: a progressive agenda for the government of Wales* (2007). While it is good practice for local planning authorities to take the WSP into account in their Development Plans, it is not a statutory requirement to incorporate it. The original aims of the document were: to establish a spatial context for social, economic and environmental activity in Wales; to act as a strategic framework for investment, resource allocation and development decisions; to explain the differential impact of policies across Wales; address the compatibility of different policies and to identify and express the character of different functional areas across Wales (Harris & Hooper, 2006). The six areas are North West Wales; North East Wales; Central Wales; South East Wales; Swansea Bay and Pembrokeshire.

Harris & Hooper (2006) argue that:

*' . . . far from realising its potential as a vehicle for developing spatial identity and promoting territorial cohesion . . . the plan at present is best described as a practical mechanism for sectoral policy integration' (Harris & Hooper, 2006: 64)*

The six WSP areas are delimited without clear rationale and without specific guidance as to where one area begins and ends. The descriptively-defined areas are based on a mixture including what the area can offer economically to benefit Wales. However, the economically beneficial characteristics are vague and the plan does not specify how they can be utilised. In addition when

interviewed the authors of the plan were reluctant to spell-out in detail how it will relate to different policy sectors, to do so was seen as constraining the potential of the plan. There is also concern that the defined areas are based on functional interrelationships and do not follow the existing administrative boundaries of local government and various agencies that operate at both the all-Wales and the sub-regional levels, which is characteristic of type two MLG. Harris & Hooper (2006) argue that despite a focus on the economic advantages of 'the space that is Wales' a large function of the plan was to create a shared national identity for people in Wales.

In short the WSP focus on the spaces within Wales provides insight into the WG motives for publishing it: to solidify (physically and culturally) the pro-devolution argument that Wales has a distinctive set of characteristics in need of specific political guidance. The fact that the geography of Wales was set-out in the WSP to pursue economic dividends provides further evidence for the need to have a government in Wales to run it effectively. In effect the WSP gives the geography of Wales an identity (or multiple, interlinking identities) which separates it geographically from the rest of the UK in line with political strategy promoting the value of devolution.

The WSP emphasises that Wales is a nation with regions within it rather than being a region in itself, again consolidating the need for a separate policy agenda in Wales. As stated in the section of this chapter on spaces of governance (page 54) it is important to discuss the impact of devolution and subsequent new governing structures in the context of pre-existing area-based trends in political, social and economic factors. Examination of the WSP raises the possibility that some of these factors are strategically and selectively emphasised for political purposes.

The use of scale in the politicisation of spaces relates to the research questions in this thesis in terms of identifying the points at which social interaction and partnership structures meet within spaces. The potential of these spaces can have an impact on individuals and groups using them: when a group becomes a community because of a shared interest in a shared space, for example. The

extent to which political emphasis (from national and local levels of governance) on shared spaces for utilising capacity influences CF partnerships is a point of focus in this thesis and is addressed in the findings.

### *3.4 The economic-pragmatic and the political-ideological*

Following the discussion above on historical, political, social, spatial and cultural arguments for and against devolution, this section of the chapter addresses two different arguments. Firstly, that devolution is the pursuit of economic or pragmatic aims. Secondly, that devolution is a reflection of political or ideological collectives.

Both are arguments that characterise Welsh devolution and relate closely to the issues dividing arguments for new regionalism (overtly economic) and territorial rescaling (political and economic), the latter being of more relevance to Welsh devolution.

Howell (2009) attempts to tackle this issue by distinguishing between 'calculus' and 'cultural' approaches to interpreting devolution in Wales. The culturally-based consciousness is affiliated with nationalism and the calculus with arguments for economic and political dividends of devolution. Howell deals with these differences by labelling calculus and cultural consciousness as worldviews which succeeded in influencing others enough to ensure a (albeit marginal) majority vote.

In line with this Kay (2003) divides reasons for devolution into arguments based on two premises: belief in the potential advantages of the process and belief in the inherent value of the process:

*'Some [arguments for devolution] are consequentialist: that devolution is desired on the grounds that it is believed to have good or desirable effects. Others are deontological: that devolution is thought to be intrinsically valuable' (Kay, 2003: 51)*

Both Howell's and Kay's reasoning for devolution can be divided into economic-pragmatic and political-ideological. The former equates to the tangible dividends gained from increasing power to devolved institutions and the latter refers to the ideological promotion of this value through other, often territorially-based reasoning. Regional Development Agencies (RDA) in England are a clear example of a discipline-centred approach to devolution because they were created solely for economic development purposes. While the location of capital accumulation is less of a justification for devolution in Wales, economic arguments have been made for devolution in-line with Howell's calculus approach (2009). These arguments have been contested by Morgan (2007) who claims that proponents of devolution used prospective economic benefits as part of their rationale in favour and that his review of the post-devolution evidence suggests that these arguments had little substance.

Ideological arguments from within the WG include that Wales requires a community-focused approach to regeneration (WG, 2007). This is strongly connected with the argument for a closer interface between national and local levels of governing. In terms of narrowing the research, the division between economic and ideological can be seen to play out in WG policy rhetoric, often in contrast with narratives from grass-roots level. More specifically the community-focused approach to regeneration in Wales represents the WG's response to Wales' distinctive set of policy needs as a further justification and consolidation of the value of devolution.

### *3.5 Statutory Influence*

This section of the chapter focuses on statutory bodies, in terms of their role in devolution and the impact of devolution upon them, which needs to be understood alongside the Community Turn (CT). This issue is closely related to Welsh devolution, territorialisation and historical institutions in Wales. Laffin, Thomas & Webb (2000) stated at the beginning of the current millennium that the question of devolved process:

*‘ . . . must be left to the next chapter in the history of devolution’ (Laffin et al, 2000: 532)*

More recently Laffin takes the view that Scottish and Welsh devolution were designed to have minimal impact on existing local governing powers (Laffin, 2007), as suggested earlier in discussion on the power-base of the Welsh statutory sector. It is possible to take this argument further using Howell’s (2009) work on institutional culture and path dependency.

In the context of Welsh devolution Howell (2009) analyses the cultural similarities and differences between the WG and Welsh political organisations pre-devolution. He explores the similarities and differences between institutional culture in the Welsh Office and local authorities preceding devolution in Wales and within the WG post-devolution. Through interviews with politicians and Ministers at the WG he tackles the question of whether or not the Whitehall and Westminster political model dominates the WG on the one hand and whether the WG reflects the values of its incoming membership on the other. Howell theorises on the WG as an institution and the ways in which it can alter the expectations of actors within it and as:

*‘ . . . moral templates for the interpretation of action’ (Howell, 2009: 225)*

Howell concludes that there is an amalgamation of two institutional cultures, Whitehall and local government in Wales, out of which a:

*‘ . . . new distinct path-dependency was emerging’ (ibid, 2009: 227)*

Her work raises compelling questions around the institutional culture of the WG. However, it does not fully address the potential ways in which local authority institutional culture impacts on resource allocation or policy implementation at a local level under devolution.

In this research the institutional path-dependency influences from statutory actors and structures constitute the most valuable question in relation to Welsh

devolution and local authorities. This question is addressed within the time and resource limited confines of this thesis through the research question: *what are the (inter)relationships between CF staff (including volunteers) and local authority representatives involved in the programme?*

In practice the research question on statutory-community relationships is pursuing three key local governing issues in Wales: firstly, the WG is a relatively new governing institution and therefore susceptible to influence from an existing power base in Wales. Secondly, the lack of policy-making power within the WG before 2011 meant that Welsh local authorities held more power over the WG than their English counterparts hold over Whitehall. Thirdly, a number of WG Ministers are former local councillors with a statutory sector mindset. These three reasons are summarised here as institutional, historical and individual and all three are taken into account when unpacking state power at community level through the research questions.

Local authorities are important to take into account in terms of the argument that the community-focused approach within the WG has led to a gap in the Wales-wider regeneration agenda. This is because they constitute the main delivery agents for regeneration and community development and are working in partnership with every CF partnership in Wales.

### *3.6 The Policy Perspective*

This section of the thesis aims to explain the role of institutional rhetoric in answering the question: *what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?* Using Central Government and WG policy documents and WG Plenary Records detailing policy decisions made affecting the design and implementation CF<sup>9</sup>, this section of the thesis highlights tentative reasoning for strategic decisions by policy actors and officials including media impact and short-sighted strategising. Documentary analysis is used to critique the way in which central government and the WG have laid-out the terms of community-focused area-based regeneration (under

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<sup>9</sup> Some evidence gathered through the ethnographic internship at the Welsh Government's Community Directorate in 2008 is also used to frame some of the arguments put forward here.

which CF was created) and then changed these terms over the period following the election of New Labour in 1997 and the establishment of the WG in 1999. It links the issues discussed in the literature reviews on the Community Turn (CT), governance and devolution above to policy affecting community development at National and regional levels of governance between 1997 and 2010.

One of the most significant documents affecting CF on a national scale in the context of the CT is the New Labour publication *New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 2001). It encapsulates New Labour's approach to regeneration in the early stages of its term in power and reveals a great deal about the approach to community development that influenced CF. Other significant documents examined in this chapter include: *Communities in Control: real power, real people* (CLG, 2008), *Communities First Guidance* (Communities Directorate, 2001; 2007), *Wales a Better Country* (WG, 2003) and *Regenerating our most deprived communities* (WG, 2000a).

As outlined in chapter two, *Communities First*, NDC is only crudely the English equivalent of CF in that it is a government-led area-based regeneration programme aiming to tackle deprivation at neighbourhood level. The two are not comparable in this research; however, something can be learned from examining the political context that shape them.

NDC was announced in 1998 as part of New Labour's *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* and was in its fourth year when CF was implemented in 2001. Differences between policy rhetoric on area-based regeneration in England and Wales reflect key differences in approach to governing. The key documents used for this reflection are two versions of *Communities First Guidance* (Communities Directorate, 2001; WG, 2007) and the National Strategy Action Plan *a New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 2001). These documents are useful because they represent significant turning points in policy decision-making relating to governance in regeneration and community development and reflect a great deal of meaning in the research findings.

The two key points derived from a close study of each are: firstly, that *Communities First Guidance* (Communities Directorate, 2001) follows the ethos of the *National Strategy Action Plan* (2001) but with a more community-centred approach. Secondly, that *Communities First Guidance* (2007) shows evidence of an attempt by the WG to make CF more like NDC through more private sector involvement and partnership independence. However, there is still more mention of 'community aspirations', 'local democracy' and 'community decision-making' (WG 2001; 2007) than in guidance on NDC later in the CF programme. Policy rhetoric and programme design shaping CF in light of, though not in comparison with, NDC illuminates the complex differences between area-based regeneration under devolution in Wales and in England.

*A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* was published by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2001 as a response to what New Labour saw as unequal distribution of neighbourhood deprivation in England. The document uses statistics and research to justify an area-based approach to tackling deprivation and the need to consolidate multiple policy areas into one to combat social exclusion. This issue arises as a problem in the findings of the research relating to CF because deprivation is complex, holistic and wide-ranging and its facets cannot be tackled using one approach.

The commitment outlines an action plan for reducing area-based inequality through funding to renew poor neighbourhoods. The document states that this is a *new approach* (SEU, 2001) to renewal for four key reasons. Firstly, it is tackling the problem at national level in 88 local authorities in England. Secondly, it is looking at all aspects of deprivation (not only the physical). Thirdly, it is a consolidated funding pot rather than scattered, one-off funding projects. Finally, it is aiming to get the community, voluntary and public sectors to work together (through Local Strategic Partnerships, for example). In addition the documents emphasise the importance of coordinating these changes at local level. CF is a national programme designed to tackle all aspects of deprivation, has one funding pot and is aiming for partnership between the community, voluntary and public sector. The fundamental design of CF is therefore clearly influenced by the wider agenda stemming from England. It is

the subtle and small ways in which the WG puts its signatures on the wider agenda that represents the shape of devolution at the time.

The word empowerment is used to unite coordination of neighbourhood renewal at local level. In addition a *Community Empowerment Fund* of £400,000 for each of the 88 most deprived local authorities in England highlights the similarities between Neighbourhood Renewal and CF. *Community Chests* worth £50m also put increased emphasis on the role of communities in renewing deprived areas<sup>10</sup>.

*'Government needs to support and monitor progress in local communities'*  
(SEU, 2001: 10)

This emphasises the shifting line between state and society and the implication that barriers were being broken down between those governing and those being governed in the early days of New Labour, as does the statement:

*'There will be genuine opportunities for residents to get involved in designing local strategies and communities will have their own resources to support them in this'* (ibid, 2001: 33)

The evaluation of the *Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (CLG, 2010) highlights some contradictions between New Labour's promise of non-political actor involvement in governance and the reality of neighbourhood renewal work:

*' . . . only a small minority of residents had been involved in neighbourhood renewal processes (with a particular lack of representation in some local authority districts from young people as well as residents of ethnic minority groups) and that residents were rarely involved in formal decision-making'*  
(CLG, 2010: 97)

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<sup>10</sup> In addition £800m was allocated for the 88 most deprived local authorities in England and £45m to support neighbourhood renewal pathfinders over three years.

The definitions used in the evaluation, based on broad commonalities, are used in the later evaluation of CF (Hincks & Robson, 2010). The findings of the evaluation show that some reversal of area-based inequalities in England was evident between 2001 and 2007.

*Wales a Better Country* (WG, 2003) is the national strategy most closely framing CF in its earliest stages. In this strategy the WG aims to:

*'[take] . . . action on social justice that tackles poverty and poor health, and provides people and their communities with the means to help themselves and break out of the poverty trap' (WG, 2003: 4)*

The document uses CF as the key tool for delivering this aim and goes on to emphasise the need for community involvement in community regeneration. Comparing this document with the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 2001) (acknowledging that they are only very loosely comparable given the lack of policy-making powers in Wales at the time) it is possible to note a lack of detailed strategy and of stipulation in action planning within *Wales a Better Country* (2003). Arguably it is the lack of policy-making powers within the WG that restricted possible actions for pursuing stated goals with the strategy. However, it is also possible to argue that the WG puts more emphasis on the importance of community participation and engagement in achieving social inclusion at a national level for strategic reasons. This belies the context within which CF was created and consolidates the argument developed in the literature review that the WG uses Welsh geography and cultural characteristics or distinctive needs as justification for its position as an institution.

The WG consultation document *Regenerating our most deprived communities* (2000) followed the publication of *Better Wales* (WG, 2000a) (a precursor to the strategy document *Wales a Better Country* (WG, 2003)) and builds on *Mapping Social Exclusion in Wales* (WG, 1999) which highlights disparities between localities in Wales in terms of deprivation. It emphasises the impact of such disparities on the lowered well-being, confidence and capacity of those living in

deprived areas. Contrary to a *New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 2001) which focuses on the economic infrastructural roots of the problem *Regenerating our Most Deprived Communities* (WG, 2000a) takes a more socio-cultural approach focusing on the symptoms.

For example, in presenting solutions a *New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (2001) makes a commitment to act and change policy while *Regenerating our Most Deprived Communities* (2000a) focuses on:

*‘ . . . the energy and determination of local people to recover the sense of respect and community which once prevailed’ (WG, 2000a: 3)*

It is important to re-emphasise that it is not fair to compare these two documents: one is a National Strategy document for a UK-wide commitment to regeneration and the other is a consultation document for a specific regeneration programme in Wales. However, both reveal insight into the process of governance since devolution in Wales.

The softer approach taken in the WG document can be seen as curtailed policy-making or as a response to a more community-centred topography in Wales. The findings from this research reveal that taking a softer approach to regeneration often means less measurable outcomes which are easily criticised: increased capacity and empowerment, for example. It is important therefore to note, using these policy documents as evidence, that the initial strategy driving CF was in-line with the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* but has replaced action points with less easily defined aims. Perhaps this is because of the lack of governing power within the WG to pursue such aims at the time.

Influence from central government on devolution is also reflected in the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) Plenary records from January 2000. The move away from the Urban Development Corporations of the Thatcher government with a predominantly physical and overtly tokenistic community engagement approach to regeneration and towards a more socially oriented approach taken by New Labour is reflected in these records. One Assembly Member stated:

*'The objective of Communities First is to build on the work that has been done and that continues to be done, but in a manner that recognises the importance of involving the community itself in establishing what needs exist . . .'* (National Assembly for Wales, 2000: 5)

As noted earlier in this chapter the documents revealed a similar rhetorical approach to regeneration partnerships in England and Wales with more of a community focus in Wales. However, the contrast between the 2001 and 2007 versions of the CF Guidance Documents showed a steady move towards a focus on outcomes over capacity building and a 'harder' more economically-driven ethos to the programme.

*Communities First Guidance (2001; 2007)* fails to stipulate the way in which the aim of tackling deprivation is to be achieved by CF. At the heart of the guidance is the assumption that communities will 'work it out for themselves' because community members are the experts on knowing what their communities need and how to tackle this. Questionable assumptions within this logic include both the expert status of unqualified community residents to carry-out community development and the existence of one like-minded community willing to work together to achieve a shared goal. In addition there is an assumption that adequate funding will be available for communities to tackle these problems. Finally, deprivation in itself is a contestable term and includes eight very different and equally complex and large-scale problems (WG, 2008c).

Again within the *Communities Next* consultation document (2008) it is explicitly stated that the programme is moving away from a capacity-building focus to a focus on delivery (WG, 2008). However, it does not specify how this is to be done in practice. This belies increased pressure and responsibility on CF partnerships without a great deal of guidance on how to deal with it. In addition there is an element of shifting blame onto community partnerships which comes with the responsibility to produce proof of outcomes which are difficult to capture (from capacity building, for example).

The publication *Communities in Control* (CLG, 2008) also notably excludes stipulation on practical implementation and makes large assumptions around the issue of shifting power to local people. A shift to a situation where local people are in control of aspects of public policy would require a complete socio-economic and political restructuring of democracy in the UK. It implies that central government power, control and responsibility will be given to local people. However, it does not differentiate between involvement and consultation on policy issues. In reality local people may have more direct say on public policy issues but this does not mean more influence.

Finally within all key documents there is no clear definition of 'the local', and specifically an interchanging between 'local' meaning local authorities and 'local' meaning local people which is a key point in this thesis. Again this belies an assumption about a collective with their geographical location in common willing to work together to improve it.

Putting political discourse on CF in the context of the wider related central government rhetoric revealed parallels with problems of assumptions, definition and clarity. This was a useful exercise during the initial stages of designing a methodology as it contributed to research question refinement and interview schedule design. In addition it highlights the importance of talking to people involved in CF from all sectors during fieldwork so as to reflect the different angles taken on the issues raised through documentary analysis. Finally, it acts as a contextualisation of the findings.

Subtle differences between Welsh and English area-based regeneration strategies belie both a lack of policy making powers and possibly a lack of confidence from within the WG between 2001 and 2008 when this research was conducted. A key difference identified in this section is the focus from English strategies on the economic infrastructural roots of the problem which the WG takes a more socio-cultural approach focusing on the symptoms. In addition there are contradictions in all strategy documents which exemplify arguments made in the *Community Turn* such as the paradox of state-led community

development and the subtle difference between state guidance or instigation and state control.

Finally, contested concepts such as deprivation and locality exist in both English and Welsh policy documents as well as assumptions that communities can mobilise to tackle deprivation.

### *3.7 Conclusion*

This literature review chapter has politically and geographically contextualised the research. Some key issues associated with Welsh devolution have been highlighted particularly those issues that relate directly to area-based regeneration in the UK preceding devolution and its influence upon the WG. A number of the issues identified have now changed or been resolved to some extent with the advent of policy making powers in Wales. However, the current political climate is a continuum of historical politics which is therefore relevant to better understanding of how we came to be where we are today. This chapter therefore remains important to the thesis.

The research question on interrelationships between local authority representatives and communities in the CF programme comes from a gap identified in the literature used to form this chapter. While a great deal has been written on WG-local authority relations (Howell, 2009; Laffin, 2007; Jeffrey, 2006) before and after devolution, little connection has been made between these studies and local authority-community relations. Local authority-community relations are another subject on which a great deal has been written (Davies, 2007; Taylor, 2003; Adamson & Bromilley, 2008; Armstrong & Wells, 2005). This provides an avenue into linking the issues on Welsh devolution directly to community development using Multi Level Governance, territorial rescaling and a Strategic Relational Approach to state theory to bring these together in this thesis.

Subtle differences between central government and WG approaches to area-based regeneration strategies have been identified through policy documents

relating to social exclusion strategies. The economic infrastructural approach to regeneration in England puts emphasis on the critique that Wales takes a 'softer' socio-cultural approach which can never tackle the roots of deprivation.

Pragmatic and ideological arguments for devolution before 1999 give insight into the political influences on the current form of Welsh devolution today. Specifically the strategies used to justify devolution internally and how these expand to become integrated into specific policies, such as regeneration. The community-focus in WG policy on regeneration is consolidated and justified in policy documents outlining the distinctive economic and cultural characteristics of Wales (Communities Directorate, 2001; WG, 2007, 2008). This in turn is reflected in the CF programme through its use of wards, sub-wards and LSOA as geographical distinction for CF areas. Micro-geographies reflect communities and community is an important flag on which the WG heralds its value and importance in Wales.

## 4. The Community Turn

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### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise, define and locate ‘the community’ in Communities First (CF). The Community Turn (CT) is used here to describe an emerging political and academic interest in the role of communities and the definition of ‘community’ from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s (predominantly under New Labour) in the UK.

Characterised by an increase in the use of terms like ‘communities’ and ‘localities’ in policy rhetoric and an emphasis on ‘local democracy’ and ‘community decision-making’, the CT is used here to describe the wider UK movements responsible for the emergence of CF in Wales under the Welsh Government (WG) in 2001.

The chapter begins with the assumption that community development is the ‘softer’ side of regeneration which often supplements ‘harder’ service delivery and economic development at a local level. CF is part of the CT in this respect. Tied closely to this definition is the assertion that communities cannot tackle the harder side of deprivation, such as economic infrastructure problems often due to lack of resources, expertise and power. These issues are often more effectively tackled by physical and economic regeneration implemented at a more strategic governing level. In the case of CF high expectations to tackle the harder side of deprivation are put on the programme, such as ‘tackling deprivation’.

Over-expectation and contradiction between aims and measurable outcomes appears inevitable in area-based regeneration programmes:

*‘. . . it would be unrealistic to claim that many ABIs could ever have reinvigorated entire cities and towns’ (Lawless, 2010: 25)*

In addition the assumption made that community development logically leads to tackling deprivation is questionable given that 'harder' development activity aims to tackle the roots of deprivation through economic and physical activity.

*'Key factors driving area regeneration are underlying economic strengths and weaknesses, the operation of the market, the availability of funding, and the suite of policy tools through which it is allocated' (Gore & Fothergill, 2007: 55)*

However, it is possible to argue that over-expectations are visible in CF and reflect over-expectations of the role and capacity of communities in the UK under New Labour shown in the comparison between UK and Welsh policy documents relating to regeneration. This refers specifically to the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* to tackle area-based inequalities in England (including related programmes like NDC) and the *Social Inclusion Agenda* in Wales both purporting transferral of responsibility *and power* to non-elected representatives.

It is possible to argue that because 'community' as a term has many different meanings it can therefore be adopted under many different political agendas to pursue political aims as well as a means of complementing representative democracy. The role of this thesis in this scenario is to question the definition of communities in politics and governance. This is a key part of exploring the impact of devolution on community development in terms of how the WG has used the term 'community' and why.

Community as a concept is defined below for clarity of use within this thesis. It is conceptualised using key theories and understanding defining communities and their meaning in practice. The role and development of this conception in politics and policy is then examined to track the political trajectory of the term and all its connotations. The conclusions in this chapter focus on defining community within wider theories of governance and space to better understand the repercussions of over-expectation on community when it becomes politicised.

## *4.2 Theories of Community: a contested concept*

The crux of the contestation of community are questions on: what a community is; where its geographical or imagined boundaries lie; who is included; who is excluded; why the community exists and what it means to those inside and outside its boundaries. All these questions relate to the WG definition of the 'community' in Communities First (CF).

Academic interest in the social interaction of localities and communities goes back as far as the Chicago School and its exploration of neighbourhood formation in the 1920s (Lutters & Ackerman, 1996). One way used to understand the use of the term 'community' in recent times is the distinction between 'community' and 'locality' (or neighbourhood).

It is important to distinguish between economic, social and cultural characteristics as processes happening within the same locality and shared forms of these characteristics (commonalities) between individuals living within them. This separates localities and communities as it is possible to see from Flint's definition of communities as:

*' . . . a form of social organization based upon some commonality between individuals which results in them being defined as members of such a community and simultaneously demarcates others who are not members of the community. **Communities need not be primarily spatially-based** (emphasis added) (ibid, 2009: 7)*

Localities are seen here as the spaces through which community commonalities can be studied or mobilised. When defining community it is important that a spatial element is not assumed within an established community and equally important that communities are not assumed to exist within a locality simply because they share a space. Communities can be spatially or conceptually based whereas localities are always spatially-based.

Notable publications in defining community include Etzioni's *communitarian manifesto* (1995; 1996) and Robert Putnam's (2000) popularised idea of social capital building on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) work on social, cultural and symbolic capital (Jenkins, 2002). Giddens' (1998) third way has also encapsulated a number of the changes to take place within community and neighbourhood policy under the CT, namely a contestable move away from excessive individualism of the market and collectivism of the state. Key academic positions on community are drawn from the work of Etzioni (1996), Bourdieu (1989) and Giddens (1998) and used here to shape the argument that communities can be defined for strategic purposes, often by forces acting outside the community, and able to use these strategies to their advantage.

Etzioni's (1996) theory of 'communitarianism' is based around the search for balance between social order and individual autonomy in the same society. Etzioni terms those communities that respond to all the 'true needs' of their members as an 'authentic community'. He acknowledges that this view is utopian and that there are inherent contradictions between social order and individual autonomy but argues that the tension between the two can be lessened through community responsiveness. Etzioni's work is useful for encapsulating the collective nature of community, in contrast to libertarianism which rejects notions of shared values, and arguing the value of it which is a key part of WG policy rhetoric on CF.

In terms of defining community Etzioni states that there are three key characteristics:

*'(1) A community entails a web of affect-laden relations among a group of individuals, relations that often crisscross and reinforce one another . . . (2) community requires a commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity in short, a shared culture . . . (3) Communities are characterized by a relatively high level of responsiveness'* (Etzioni, 1996: 5)

Etzioni's inclusion of 'responsiveness' within his definition of communities moves beyond the descriptive towards an emphasis on the value of community over individualism. Significantly the term 'responsiveness' is used in WG policy documents on CF from 2001 to date (WG, 2000; 2007; 2009; 2011). Given the fact that Etzioni himself acknowledges the ideology underpinning his theory, it is possible to argue that common terminology between communitarianism and WG rhetoric on CF, implies some ideology within the latter.

Etzioni discusses the dysfunctional effects of being denied membership of a community and while his work consolidates the importance of community in society the assumption that communities are always a good thing is questioned. This is because destructive collective action has occurred throughout history and because the value of community to the individual is not always inherent in community membership. However, the assumption that a community has the power to respond and that this power can be positive for the individuals involved is made clear in Etzioni's work. As argued in the *Policy Perspective* chapter above, there is not always a correlation between increased responsiveness and increased influence for communities. The issue of power through responsiveness is questionable in light of this argument.

The work of the French Sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1984), is used here to explore the concept of community in terms of power struggles and capital gain for further insight into the role of the term community within policy. Bourdieu coined the term 'social capital' to describe the reciprocity of social exchanges as a means of attaining and maintaining power. His work focuses on power maintained by elites through social (cultural, economic and symbolic) capital.

Bourdieu defines social capital as:

*' . . . social obligation ('connections) which is convertible . . . into economic capital' (Bourdieu, 1984: 47)*

Social capital is an exchangeable resource which comes from a durable network of institutionalised relationships. This network can be maintained by

symbolic exchanges or can be guaranteed, for example through a family name, and provides its members with exclusive access to 'credit' and symbolic power in society. This notion of social capital gives some enlightenment as to the commonalities present in a privileged community and goes further by outlining the advantages of this commonality to its members. Community is viewed as a commodity in capitalist terms and therefore a valuable asset for its members. In addition it emphasises the pivotal importance of power in the link between community and capital with members of a given community possessing the power.

Areas in Wales with CF status have been selected and defined by the WG precisely because of their lack of access to commodity and their disenfranchisement. CF communities are defined by pre-existing geographies which means that any reciprocal symbolic exchanges of social capital within these communities had little to do with CF status at the outset of the programme. However, the programme may have provided avenues for developing social capital, for example through better relations between individuals in communities and service providers.

Bourdieu's social capital has been developed by Putnam (2000) who views the creation of social capital as essential in tackling the cause and symptoms of social deprivation. In Putnam's work community is valuable as a commodity for its members and for society as a whole. Putnam's theory states that deprived communities can benefit collectively through fiscal accumulation, fostering social networks and strengthening community cohesion. He uses various formal and informal types of social capital to capture what he sees as the public and private value of networks and reciprocal relations which include:

*' . . . Your extended family . . . your Sunday school class, the regulars who play poker on your commuter train, your college roommates, the civic organizations to which you belong, the Internet chat group in which you participate. . . '*  
(Putnam, 2000: 4)

Social capital as a bridging, bonding and linking process can exist in deprived communities where there is little monetary capital to speak of. This means that communities can be rich in social capital but not directly benefit economically. However, for Putnam there is a direct causal link between high levels of social capital and public returns. This is an issue of correlation versus causation in the process and outcomes of commonalities forming communities. High levels of community solidarity occur with economic growth, but can also exist alongside low economic growth and because of this Putnam's theory is contestable. This contestation is tested in this research by examining the extent and impact of relations between pre-existing community organisations, local authorities and CF partnerships.

Bourdieu's social capital is conceived through power struggles while Putnam's social capital emphasises interaction and integration and Putnam's work has been critiqued in this light for being a: '*benign apolitical concept*' (Hadjimichalis, 2006: 694). Comparison between Bourdieu and Putnam reflects negatively on Putnam for assuming links and benefits to communities and for neglecting to fully pursue the issue of power which is pivotal in understanding communities.

Hadjimichalis has also criticised the assumed causal link between participation in voluntary organisations, dynamic economic development and improved democratic institutions in Putnam's social capital. The same can be said for the design of CF.

The idea of community as both the setting of and solution to, social problems in the UK is brought into question through Hadjimichalis' critique of Putnam's assumption that community action will tackle deprivation. It brings us back to the issue of over-expectation on communities under the CT in the UK from the mid 1990s to date. CF rhetoric states that in the process of capacity building communities are often assumed to exist within a given locality (SEU, 2001); they are then expected to acknowledge as a collective that capacity is low and finally they are expected to put collective and coherent effort into rectifying this. A series of assumptions, prevalent in rhetoric in CF, that is questionable.

Marilyn Taylor (2003) emphasises the value of politicising communities in the context of governance and public policy. The loss of community is seen by Taylor as a contributing factor to insecurity, rising crime levels and anti-social behaviour. From this perspective community is seen as a means of constructing and enforcing shared meaning and moralities in an increasingly individualistic society rather than for capital gain or more effective governance.

Taylor (2003) argues that policy-making always has tensions and imbalances that can be exploited by marginalised communities for small-scale influence. Under New Labour her work urged communities to make the most of opportunities arising from political emphasis on their value. Taylor's work is most useful for looking at communities defined by their relation to the state and takes a more moderate but powerful stance on the view of communities as tools used within governing power struggles and manipulated to fulfil governing aims. Jessop (2005) goes further by arguing that 'imagined communities' which are both spatially and non-spatially based represent a symptom of a struggle to redefine the state.

In summary community is formed from a series of commonalities, interactions and networks in which individuals are parts of a collective. They can be permanent or transient, and based on locality or symbolic relations and as such they are malleable, re-definable and viewed differently from the 'inside' and the 'outside'. Because of this the term community defined in terms of social solidarity and collective action can be used by governing forces and grass roots movements alike.

While community remains a contested term this section of the chapter has given some clear definitions of what a community is (Flint, 2009; Etzioni, 1996) what it can mean in society and in relation to forces of governance and power (Bourdieu, 1984) in affluent and deprived societies for private and public gain (Putnam, 2000) and how it can be used by policy makers (Jessop, 2005) and non-political actors (Taylor, 2003) to govern. The next section of the chapter develops the concept of community in politics including further insight into power struggles between state and society.

### *4.3 The Political Hold of Community (and the evolution of the concept)*

The previous section of the chapter sought to locate the community in the pursuit of action, representation and power using the work of key authors. This section of the chapter focuses on the use of community as a concept in politics.

The following quote by Thomas encapsulates the issue examined in this section of the chapter around the evolution of the term community as it moves between the activist, academic and political realms.

*‘ . . . [community development] was brought into being by those who held power – academics, administrators and politicians . . . as part of the apparatus of the welfare state rather than being born out of the grass-roots “rebellions” of the late 1960s and subsequently co-opted by the state.’ (Thomas, 1983: 37)*

Community has been used as a tool in governance globally and in various forms since before WWII<sup>11</sup>. The importance of including policy in studies of community has been highlighted by Cornwall (2007) who states that:

*‘ . . . understanding the politics of these spaces [occupied by communities] requires closer attention to the state, participatory and public spheres and to the implications of the articulations they make possible . . . ’ (Cornwall, 2007: 18)*

This section of the chapter locates the term community within these wider global and political movements and looks specifically at changes in policy to gauge the way that community has evolved over time to become the politicised concept examined in this thesis. It sets out the uneasy relationship between the state and community, in which the state is inherently eager to guide and shape the

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<sup>11</sup> One example is the community development work of Arizmendiarieta (Aiken & Cairns, 2008) who created the biggest network of co-ops in Western Europe during the 1950s through talking to groups of local people in Mondragon, Spain. Another is the development of the discipline of ‘sozialpädagogik’ (social pedagogy) in Germany during the 1980s which located community or social development within a learning framework and emphasised the importance of theory and practice (Buchkremer, 1995). Non-governmental organisations have led the CT in a number of developing countries, for example; Opare (2007) has written on this issue stating that in Ghana the community development role needs to involve community members to provide them with power that they can use against an, often, corrupt system of governance.

rules and resources for community action. The central problem is that, for those on the left, the state is redistributive and therefore notions of inequality within the state-community relationship are a concern.

The state-community relationship assumes a division between the two that is questioned here. It is possible to discuss state-driven and non-state driven uses of community using the terms 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'<sup>12</sup>. However, it is not possible or fair to divide state and community in this way without excluding a whole spectrum of varying types of action. Jessop (2008) has developed the idea of an 'imagined line' between state and society which addresses the problem of an overly-simplified dichotomy in top-down and bottom-up community forms. The imagined line is drawn and re-drawn by state actors to pursue a strategic aim which means that separating state and society into a dichotomy is not possible; state forces can be present in communities and community can be part of state action.

Using the concept of an imagined line the paradox of state-driven community action (or top-down implementation of bottom-up principles) becomes more complex and therefore more representative of the overlapping structures and relations, actors and strategic pursuits forming notions of governance and community. However, mechanisms of state rule and governing forces in possession of power still exist on one side of the line and individuals and groups without political power on the other. The point that Jessop makes is that the line between the 'sides' are not always clear and they are not a dichotomy but a complex array of overlapping boundaries, mechanisms of governing and strategic relational facets labelled 'state' and 'society' (in short a 'duality').

A case in point is the UK government emphasis on the importance of prioritising local ('insider') viewpoints over the view of experts ('outsiders') (SEU, 2000; CLG, 2008). Davies (2002) argues that the subtle distinction between passing

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<sup>12</sup> Bottom-up is viewed as a movement or a school of thought in the process of ongoing community development work. Top-down is seen more as a way of describing policy implementation in community development trams. Bottom-up is often termed 'grass-roots' approach and advocates community involvement, and non-state actor power and control over changes in communities/localities; often aiming to influence policy changes. Top down includes incorporation of the language of community development into policy rhetoric.

down power and passing on responsibility is important to make clear in the process of community development precisely because the line between state and society is blurred and this can lead to confusion, inequity and inequality.

Examining the ways in which state and community actors and organisations interact is complex, varying and dependent on spatial, temporal and political factors (among others). Jessop's (1997) work on imagined communities (part of the development of 'the imagined line' concept), and the idea of strategic relational forces of governance pursuing projects that serve their purpose, starts from the assumption that the narratives constructing our social identity are not always of our own making (Somers, 1994 in Jessop, 1997). In Jessop's work community-based strategies within governing structures are part of a strategic pursuit by forces of governance to increase competitiveness and develop an entrepreneurial culture. This approach mirrors the principles of neo-liberalism and is therefore contradictory to theories of communitarianism (Etzioni, 1996). This is central to the argument that it is contradictory, but possible, for a community to be both a tool for governance and a force for pursuing collective action for collective benefit (Taylor, 2003).

It is possible to argue that the perusal of a state-community relationship in the UK during the CT is, partially, a political strategy to increase public confidence. In looking at the state-community relationship from the state perspective, attaining and maintaining public confidence is pivotal. This is because citizens are more likely to comply with laws and policy when they trust government and confidence is consequential. The two notable factors attributed to public confidence in governing structures according to a study by Kelleher & Wolak (2007) are: levels of citizen information on governing issues which relates to accountability and the proximity of government relating to the potential for interaction with government officials. Both have been attempted by New Labour through devolution of governing mechanisms and particularly service delivery to Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, Regional Development Agencies in England and London.

In the UK, community balances between state and non-state driven action as a dividing line within both Labour and Conservatives in British politics for over 80 years. The community development experiments under Harold Wilson in the 1960s are one example of this. Oppositional movements at community level in the UK during the 1960s were often against destruction of communities and were a key ingredient in the subsequent emergence of the inner cities movements during the 1970s, for example in the name of slum clearance (Lawless, 1989). Community Development Programmes during the 1970s were replaced by Urban Development Corporations under Thatcher in the 1980s. These were non-departmental public bodies established under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act and had no obligation to involve communities in urban regeneration and housing developments. Taylor astutely stated in the aftermath of this period:

*' . . . there is far less space for community development workers to decide their own priorities and a greater pressure to measure results' (Taylor, 1992: 21)*

This quote can also be applied to community development workers in the UK under New Labour. What makes New Labour's third way different is the importance placed on community in the process of restructuring the welfare state and a shift in responsibility and, arguably, power from the state to groups of citizens in the process of service delivery and accountability for service failure.

In the UK from 1997 onwards New Labour took a more holistic approach to regeneration, including a re-emphasis on communities. This included using the principles of Etzioni's (1996) communitarianism which stipulates that the rights of communities are conditional on responsibilities under the third way. Rather than being a victory of pragmatism over theory by treading a path between democratic socialism and liberalism (Giddens, 1998), the third way is viewed here as an incorporation of socialist terminology into neo-liberal terminology and action (Callinicos, 2002)<sup>13</sup>. Elements of this critique are echoed in the findings

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<sup>13</sup> A great deal of influence on the UK model of the third way came from the Clinton administration in the US which is significant in terms of the neo-liberalisation of policy processes in the UK under New Labour.

of this thesis particularly in terms of over-aspiration from policy makers and over-expectation on the capacities of communities and localities to improve national problems.

Policy rhetoric under New Labour during the CT promoted citizen involvement more directly in processes of governance. This implies a more citizen-focused system of governance in the UK under New Labour in the form of *'harnessing local initiative'* (Giddens, 1998: 79). However, Ludlam & Smith (2004) argue that contradiction characterised New Labour in its attempts to appease a complex and diverse society while continuing to retain its centralised power in an increasingly fragmented policy-making arena. They paint a picture of New Labour as a reactive government navigating a course through diverse social waters. For community this means more allocation of resources to more recipients.

What was promoted as a balance between centralisation and devolution under New Labour has been contradictory in a number of ways. Acceptance remained for many Thatcherite principles such as privatisation and managerialism<sup>14</sup> alongside a strong emphasis on democratic notions of welfare state responsibility.

*'One of the most striking aspects of the Blair/Brown agenda is the highly developed progressive and modernist notion that the state has responsibility for improving the social conditions of groups in society' (Ludlam & Smith, 2004: 124)*

New Labour used the principles and language of 'traditional' community development in government policy rhetoric during the most recent UK CT. This is reflected in major government regeneration programmes including the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 2001), in the White Paper *Communities in Control: real power real people* (CLG, 2008) and subsequent devolved administration strategies with the aim of narrowing the gap between

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<sup>14</sup> A set of principles purported by Thatcher with the core belief that increasing management will improve the economy

the UK's least and most deprived areas (WG, 2001). This process has put control of funding and resource allocation and programme structures in the hands of political actors and government departments.

The way that community has been used and reused by political actors to pursue particular aims under the CT in the UK leads us to ask what this means for the community in question (real or imagined). The Community Development Project (now the Community Development Foundation) undertook a study from 1969 onwards to examine poverty and deprivation in community development (CDF website 04.12.09). The study takes a critical stance to government intervention and the perception that low capacity among individuals in communities is a cause rather than a symptom of deeper socio-economic problems (CDF, 2009). Similarly authors who have critiqued government intervention in community development for the associated assumption that the community in question is somehow failing (Davies 2002; 2007, Taylor 2009) have critiqued capacity building as a term and process for its association with community deficit.

This argument has been put into practice by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The North American-based IAF established by Saul Alinsky (1971) in the US during the 1970s strongly encouraged radical *non-governmental* community action, the principles of which are stipulated in his book *Rules for Radicals* and his successor, Edward Chambers' (2004) book, *Roots for Radicals*.

Taylor (2003), Davies (2007) and Chambers (2004) argue from a grass roots community development perspective. Adoption of the term community and its related rhetoric by state actors has led to communities losing ownership of the term and its associated meanings. This loss has been accompanied by a change in meaning from collective action, as defined by Etzioni (1996), to capacity building to increase social capital and restructure the welfare state, as defined by Putnam (2000).

The political hold on community can often be to the detriment of communitarian approaches and in favour of centralisation and a stronger role for the state in grass roots issues. Particularly in relation to locating power struggles (Bourdieu,

1984). The most recent CT in the UK under New Labour can be seen as disempowering for a number of community development groups and practitioners (Taylor, 2009; Davies, 2002).

#### *4.4 Limitations of community studies in understanding policy dynamics: governance and spatial factors*

This section of the chapter identifies a lack of governing and state theory within research on community. While most studies of community under New Labour during the CT include policy context few include theories of governance as tools for analysis or understanding. The benefit of using governance theory to analyse and contextualise research in communities stems from the belief that it can add depth to exploration and findings. Political factors affecting community can be better understood using literature on governance and the state giving insight into the context shaping the CT in the UK under New Labour. In addition, because the meaning of community has shifted in-line with the pursuit of strategic, political projects during the CT there is value in adding policy context when researching communities.

The argument that community studies can go further through use of governance and state theory is exemplified here through a comparison between studies on communities which do and do not take this approach.

Williams et al's (2005) comprehensive evaluation of community strategies in Wales is an example of the limitations of using community as a framework for understanding state-community relations. It outlines the parameters of public policy frameworks in the UK and Wales as context for the emergence of community strategies with reference to literature describing New Labour policy practices (Perry, 2002; Fielding, 2002). Key policy documents and political acts relating to the WG are summarised and levels of participation and power struggles between communities and statutory bodies are discussed in direct relation to the community strategies. However, governance theory is not used and while alternative models of governance for understanding and implementing community strategies are suggested the theory behind such

measures are not fully explained. This is a comprehensive and wide ranging study which reveals interesting insights into statutory-community relations but lacks explanatory power outside the parameters of the study.

In contrast Flint & Raco's (2001) study of communities, places and institutional relations aims to assess the role of area-based community representation in local governance in the early term of New Labour. Focusing on statutory and community relations in Scotland the study uses theory on governing mechanisms and structures which adds depth to the study.

The study uses Foucault's governmentality theory to illuminate practices in communities. This higher level of analysis allows the authors to argue for the idea of communities as governable spaces or rational spaces and the strategic construction of such spaces. The study exemplifies the advantage of using wider governing context to frame research because it makes the research more widely applicable (and contestable) to other such studies thus contributing to the wider arena of knowledge on communities and governance.

Davies (2002; 2007) writes on the creeping centralisation of policy administration in the UK under New Labour. He argues that regeneration partnerships created as part of the dispersal of power from central government downward increased central control over policy implementation and decision-making. Davies' (2007) later work on Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) suggests that communities working with LSP may benefit from an exit-strategy under the assumption that state-driven partnerships may not necessarily benefit the pro-active community members involved. According to Davies advancing managerialism and communication failures suggests:

*' . . . that community activists . . . would do well to consider exit-action strategies'*  
(Davies, 2007: 793)

It is possible to argue that Davies fails to refer to resources and the need for funding and support from external bodies among community partnerships in his arguments. More importantly his work includes a great deal of (good) empirical

evidence and policy-based research which relates to but does not refer to wider theories of governance. Without this theoretical angle the arguments can be critiqued for not having the power to apply more widely. Indeed while Davies' arguments are well evidenced they are limited to the political context in which they are set.

The same is true of Adamson & Bromilley's (2008) research on Communities First (CF) and the broader issue of empowering communities in practice. The study is a good overview of the CF programme and allows for better understanding of the statutory and voluntary sector dynamics. The research also highlights the policy context surrounding CF at UK and Wales level of government through a review of the relevant literature. However, it does not apply the findings to wider theories of governance as evidence to confirm or contest wider arguments. As stated earlier Adamson (2009) does relate the findings to a broader more theoretical context in an academic paper published at a later date.

This critique extends to a lack of spatial theories of governance within the study of a programme resulting from devolution. Adamson & Bromilley's study relates closely to issues of territoriality and rescaling and notably the work of Neil Brenner (2004). Brenner regards the production and transformation of statehood (a term used by Brenner to encapsulate the multi-faceted nature of the state) and government structures in relation to political space and rescaling. Brenner's argument includes neighbourhood based anti-exclusion policies targeting disadvantaged and marginalised neighbourhoods as geographical groups which:

*'... further consolidates the splintering of state space' (Brenner, 2004: 297).*

Within this process the problem of territorial inequity can be redistributed among different neighbourhoods rather than being alleviated. In addition Brenner argues that anti-exclusion policies targeting spatially-based communities address deficits of policies but they also reproduce the framework within which inequalities are generated. This theory adds depth to the findings in Adamson &

Bromilley's work exemplifying the value of spatial theories in work on community in policy.

Both Davies (2007) and Adamson & Bromilley (2008) are in favour of increasing locally-inclusive partnerships and both identify problems with statutory actors holding power in partnership with communities. However, despite the fact that both studies are relevant to wider theories of governance and spatial rescaling there is further scope to develop their arguments outside the political or spatial context within which they are set: that is what this thesis aims to do.

In contrast with this Taylor (2003; 2009) discusses public policy in the community in terms of what influence community members can have more generally. This includes promises of increased local democracy, [double] devolution of power and empowerment. Taylor categorises the perceived value of community participation into optimistic, pessimistic and pragmatic. She takes the pragmatic approach whereby communities and small groups can take advantage of wider political, social and global structures. Community empowerment is essentially '*political window dressing*' (Taylor, 2003: 3) but within this setting there are real opportunities and spaces where communities can influence their circumstances.

Taylor's approach to studying community is informed by empirical evidence through policy-based research which she has used to form a rounded theoretical triangulation which can be applied to other studies of community including this thesis. Taylor's argument is made stronger by the inclusion of wider political movements in shaping the three perspectives that frame her empirical research.

The state-community relationship has been discussed in the previous section of the chapter using Jessop's 'imagined line' between state and society. Using the concept of 'imagined communities' and the 'imagined line' between state and society, Jessop (2008) has developed a Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) to state theory encompassing both ideas among many others.

SRA emphasises that as well as being a spatial and temporally based force, *the state is a social relation* (Jessop, 2008). The state as a social relation communicating strategic political pursuits through discourse to civil society is a useful starting point for defining the state. However, the term community in policy means that state rhetoric is inevitably targeting particular groups and communities to pursue these strategic political projects. Using this logic the way that community is defined by the forces of governance can reveal state strategy. This thesis uses SRA to add depth to our understanding of community in policy and governance.

#### *4.5 Conclusions*

Community as a politicised term is a cornerstone of the CT in the UK under New Labour. The use of the word community in policy rhetoric comes with a complex array of overlapping meanings relating to power, distribution of resources and services and provision of welfare. It is therefore a term which has been used for pursuing political strategy and for re-labelling and re-shaping the community-state relationship or re-drawing the imagined line between state and society. For this reason it is argued that a full understanding of community and community development can be improved through use of state theory and governing practices.

The problematic issue of over-expectation and the assumed correlation between socio-economic improvements and collective social interaction has arisen in previous sections of the chapter. Firstly, when defining the term community in relation to power struggles, capital gain and social improvement (Bourdieu, 1984; Putnam, 2000) and secondly in relation to strategic relation pursuit of political projects (Jessop, 1999). The issue of whether governing forces project high expectations onto communities is better understood using theories of governance and space. Contradictions surround the concept of community in policy. It is a well documented issue and has been realised and explored in the context of English area-based regeneration programmes:

*' . . . after the election of the 1997 Labour government, the `community' came to be given a more prominent role. . .When launched, ministers apparently told local residents that this was `your money'. One narrative central to the programme is, however, the steady retreat from that position' (Lawless, 2011: 529)*

CF needs to be understood within the wider process of nation state and welfare state restructuring; in which communities, however defined, are required to take more responsibility for tackling economic and social problems.

## 5. Governance and Space

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The purpose of this chapter is to introduce theories of governance into the thesis as a means of opening up contemporary CT issues. State-driven community development is associated with governance and specifically the inclusion and exclusion of non-state actors in decisions affecting them. It is relevant to this thesis because of the direct link between governance and devolution and the issue of state direction in tackling deprivation.

This section begins with a review of relevant literature on the move from government to governance. Significant changes and developments in governing structures directly shaping the meaning and use of community are included. The key strands within this section include: the institutional shift from government to governance (networks and levels) (Rhodes, 1997, 2007; Lemke, 2002; Rosenau, 2004); the emergence of Multi Level Governance (MLG) and its limitations (Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Armstrong & Wells, 2005; Stubbs, 2004); and the incorporation of space and scale into governance including theories of economic competitiveness (Lovering, 1999; Bristow, 2010) through spatial reconfiguration compared with territorial rescaling (Brenner, 2004; Gore, 2008).

### 5.1 From Government to Governance

*'Much of what we associate with local governance is not so much the consequence of deliberative choice by local communities on the one hand and national government on the other, but the manifestation of much broader economic and social trends, a distant consequence of developments in global capitalism' (Leach & Percy-Smith, 2001 in Laffin, 2007: 75)*

The historical context for the shift from government to governance began on a global scale during the 1940s, 50s and 60s. This period saw the break-up of the empires, in particular Britain and France, post-WWII. Subsequent to the fragmentation of what were formerly seen as unshakable superpowers (or imperial powers) many other countries also sought to achieve independence. This zeitgeist was one of emerging nations and struggles for liberation among

nations marginalised in the previous global structures of power. Within the UK the process extended to a call for independence within Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

More recently was the institutional shift from governing to governance. Governing refers to the state as an established practice and becomes governance when the state no longer possesses all forms of governing power and relies on the support of others to govern (Bevir, 2009). However, possession of power in governance is a contestable concept (Jessop, 2008; Brenner, 2004) in relation to an increase in non-state actor participation in governing processes.

Governance is understood here as a mode of direction issued from one individual or collective to another with a common understanding that these directions will be followed (Rosenau in Bache & Flinders, 2004). This definition is pivotal in distinguishing governance from government because it allows for non-state actor involvement in areas of policy.

Central government possessing and wielding all state power no longer sufficiently describes the complex networks of power and governance within the UK. A key example of this change is arms length governing through the privatisation of public services on the one hand and the creation of quangos as part of the regulatory state on the other.

Bevir (2009) states that the current meaning of governance has become increasingly contested in its struggle to encompass all facets of a complex, changing and fragmenting landscape of government. That is part of the global shift away from hierarchical forms of governing towards networks of governance during the 1980s and 1990s (Rhodes, 1997).

Rhodes (1997) views governance as networks. His theory of 'policy networks' breaks-down the process of governing into networks, reflexivity and accountability. Policy networks refer to networks of resource-dependent organisations which are a defining characteristic of the British policy process

(Rhodes, 1997). Significantly the term 'polity' includes 'differentiated polity' in government which is an alternative to the Westminster model, replacing strong cabinet government, parliamentary sovereignty, HM's loyal opposition and ministerial responsibility with interdependence, a segmented executive, policy networks and hollowing-out (Rhodes, 1997). Governance is one part of the policy networking process according to Rhodes:

*' . . . [1] self-steering inter-organisational networks . . . [2] Policy making is not linear but recursive because interventions create unintended consequences, implementation gaps and 'policy-mess' . . . [3] direct management (or control) of this organised social complexity multiplies unintended consequences' (Rhodes, 1997: 405)*

Rhodes theory is useful and systematic in the evolution of our understanding of governing tools. However, Marinetto (2003) questions the fragmentation of governing and decentralisation, particularly in reference to Rhodes' work. Marinetto's argument is that the UK government has long been decentralised and that the capacities of governing agents have not changed drastically, rather the discursive tools to understand this movement have improved. However, he acknowledges the value of this re-conceptualisation in dealing with and debating governance.

The stance taken here on the changes to governing mechanisms in recent years is that discursive terminology describing and conceptualising different forms of governing are not necessarily developed in conjunction with changes in governing structures. Therefore, understanding the effect of devolution on regeneration in Wales requires a combination of perspectives, including political rhetoric and informed subjective views, to develop what will always be a limited understanding of governing mechanisms.

Using this logic the difference between understandings of change and the change itself in the context of Communities First (CF) can explain over-expectations. Policy rhetoric over the last decade has stated that non-state actors are more involved in the decision-making process of governing. The

involvement of the community in governance through devolution of power has been termed 'increasing local democracy' (Miliband, 2006; CLG, 2008). However, distribution of power and responsibility from central government to national assemblies and from national assemblies to local community partnerships as part of the CT is often weighted heavily on the side of responsibility.

Using the theory of Multi-Level Governance the conceptualisation of governing tools and changes to governing structures are explored further in the next section of the chapter.

## *5.2 Multi-Level Governance and its Limitations*

Multi-Level Governance (MLG) is a theory based on the movement from government to governance described above and is used here to describe the multiple horizontal and vertical channels of governance through which power is exercised. This is one form of understanding governance and must be considered in light of the argument made above that understanding of governing structures, tools, mechanisms and processes are limited in their reflection of the state under study. Bache & Flinders (2004) describe MLG as:

*'The transfer of competencies upwards to supra-national organizations, sideways to quasi-autonomous actors, and downwards to sub-national authorities has arguably transformed both the structure and capacity of national governments' (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 64)*

Gary Marks coined the term MLG in 1992 (Marks, 1992) to refer to European Union (EU) structural policy developments and later developed the term to apply to EU decision-making more generally (Bache & Flinders, 2004). MLG has been viewed by many as a theoretical guide, useful for untangling the relations between and within different levels of government. In its encapsulation of the shifting and complex political structures of the EU, MLG has become a useful tool for studying what are increasingly ill-defined and fuzzy governing structures within the nation states of Europe.

MLG as a normative construction for use by EU policy makers has been identified as an increasing global trend since the end of WWII (Perraton & Wells in Bache & Flinders, 2004). The process of decentralising governance is also perceived as more efficient (especially in terms of externalities), representative, facilitating credible policy commitments and allowing for competition. In relation to politicised community MLG argues against identity-based motivation for creating new levels of governance stating:

*'Identity expresses an intrinsic sense of belonging to a particular group rather than a preference across some set of policies' (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 15)*

The impact of Welsh devolution on regeneration (or more accurately community development) in Wales' poorest communities can reveal the values and problems associated with a new level of governance at regional and national level.

Hooghe & Marks' (2001) work defining two particular types of MLG, a typology that has shaped further thinking on MLG during the last decade, is relevant to this thesis. Type One MLG views authority as dispersed to territorially distinctive jurisdictions within a stable context with limited levels. Type Two MLG views governance as a number of territorially-overlapping jurisdictions existing within a flexible and un-tiered system of governance: both types exist in tandem (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). More succinctly put:

*'The first [type of MLG] conceives of dispersion of authority to a limited number of non-overlapping jurisdictions at a limited number of levels . . . A second distinctive vision of governance pictures a complex, fluid, patchwork of innumerable, overlapping jurisdictions' (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 4)*

These two types are not mutually exclusive but can co-exist and overlap. Hooghe & Marks discuss the types of MLG beginning with the fiscal intellectual base for type one and the task-specific nature of Type Two. In these

discussions the issue of advantages and disadvantages linked to motivation for both types are relevant to this research.

Sbragia (1992 in Hooge & Marks, 2001) uses type one MLG to argue that central governments will continue to be key actors despite dispersion of power to other distinct, limited jurisdictions. For Sbragia the reason behind this is the territorial claim that central governments hold over national boundaries.

While devolution is by definition Type One MLG, Welsh devolution includes political issues which correspond with Type Two, for example the lack of distinction between UK and Welsh political parties. In addition Welsh devolution functions through networks with some side stepping of traditional tiers of government, for example a House of Lords equivalent.

In Type Two MLG there are unlimited levels, reactive and flexible significantly territorially-overlapping borders of jurisdiction. The fluid nature of Type Two MLG means less focus on the hierarchical nature of governance resonating with network forms of governance (Armstrong & Wells, 2005 in Sagan & Halkier, 2005). Type Two MLG is most commonly located in the public and private spheres and characterises community development concepts of locally-led policy. Significantly for this research it has been extended by Armstrong & Wells (2005) to include non-public actors including the third sector.

The way in which Types One and Two MLG (Hooghe & Marks, 2001), co-exist and interrelate brings Welsh devolution (characteristic of Type One MLG) and CF (characteristic of Type Two) together. Strands from the Community Turn (CT) and governance form the contextual background for Welsh devolution, CF and further frame the research.

Armstrong & Wells (2005) have used MLG to study the relationship between state and civil society in the context of EU structural funding programmes during the 1990s. MLG is used to pursue reasons why actors may want to change the institutional constraints in which they operate. It is also used to examine the network-based influences required to make such changes. The research

concludes that third sector actors are used within micro-politics to legitimise political decision-making through their knowledge of engaging communities. In addition third sector actors gain influence and credibility in the eyes of programme managers and public sector actors in the process of partnership working. MLG aids this conclusion through its conception of state, society and networks (Armstrong & Wells, 2005).

Armstrong & Wells' study is set in the context of the redistribution process to redress the balance between rich and poor regions of the EU. Before CF Objectives 2, 3 and 5b structural funding funded large scale area-based regeneration in Wales during the 1990s. Objective 1 funding came to Wales almost concurrently with CF. Compared with CF, Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 5b programmes placed less emphasis on the role of community in tackling structural economic problems in deprived areas of Wales. Structural Funds did focus on the community to some extent but saw it more as an agent of structural economic change and took a more top-down approach to regional policy. However, Armstrong & Wells (2005) set their study in the funding trajectory leading to CF. In addition the catch-all approach of CF matches the overlapping, multi-faceted conception of Type Two MLG and is an example of public-community sector interaction at micro-political level.

The strong association with EU structural funds found in MLG and the specific way in which Armstrong & Wells (2005) have linked MLG with micro-politics and state-community relations makes it highly contextually relevant. Welsh devolution displays governing characteristics of Type One MLG and CF partnerships Type Two MLG. Both types of MLG co-exist and overlap which is apparent in the interaction between Welsh Government (WG) officials responsible for CF and CF partnerships. MLG therefore successfully characterises and categorises the subjects under study into usable and reusable concepts for further, more power-based theoretical exploration. For the following reasons it remains most useful as a descriptive form of understanding governance within which more complex forces of political powers play out.

Jessop (2008) has critiqued MLG in justifying his use of the term 'multi-scalar' instead of 'multi-level' meta-governance for three key reasons. Firstly, for reflecting a period when the focus of studies in governance was on merits of supra-nationalism, which is no longer the case. Secondly, for directing attention to vertical interdependent relationships, communication and joint decision-making while lacking explanatory power for these interactions and thirdly, for focusing on specific policy rather than policy problems across all areas.

On the first point it is clear that the work of Armstrong & Wells (2005) among others (Fairbrass & Jordan, 2005) has taken MLG beyond the supra-national to the national and sub-national. On the second point MLG can be used in alliance with other theories in order give further explanatory power. On the third point exploring networks of structures and actors within tiers of formal and informal governance sets a good explanatory context for use and development of further theoretical perspectives which allow for power interplays and reveal policy problems across all areas. Jessop's critiques do not detract from the usefulness of MLG in the context of this research.

However, the argument for a closer examination of the social forces in which the state is embedded, and the points at which state and society separate using Jessop's imagined line between state and society has a wider appeal than the more explanatory MLG.

*' . . . although the concept of MLG became an important tool for analysing the complexity of relationships across different levels of government, it, in turn, needs to be situated in the context of broader economic, political and administrative transformations that underlie the new complexity of territorial governance' (Jessop, 1992 in Loughlin, 2007: 386)*

A further and more significant critique from Jessop (2008) is that while it is a useful and complex theory, MLG cannot be complete without including issues of space and scale, hence preference for the term multi-scalar over multi-level governance. Although it is worth noting that while separate MLG and Multi Scalar Governance have roots in related academic disciplines and debates. It is

this argument which applies most closely to this thesis and area-based regeneration under devolution. With this acknowledgement the chapter now goes on to outline the issues of scale and space in relation to governance.

### *5.3 Governance of Space or Spaces of Governance*

This section of the chapter aims to address the gap identified in debates on levels of governance in the previous section through theory on space, scale and territory. The purpose of this is to contextualise the process of devolution and territorial rescaling in Wales since 1999 under which CF was designed and implemented.

MLG is rooted in political science while territorial rescaling is rooted in political geography. This distinction is fundamental to the thesis as the subject area deals with aspects of both, thus bringing together two very different and wide-ranging disciplines. Despite their differences both political science and political geography can be used to look at activity and legitimacy of the state whether problematising or looking at administrative processes within it. In the context of this research both intertwine in an examination of power and relations within and between actors and political structures and processes with spatial, territorial and scalar dimensions.

Spatial reconfiguration in restructuring governance frames two key aspects of the thesis. Firstly, it relates to devolution in Wales and the WG as a new spatially-based form of governance created through the delineation of boundaries. Secondly, it relates to CF which is an area-based regeneration programme with many of its principles hinged on the assumption that localities are the best level at which to generate community-led regeneration (WG, 2001). These respective levels of governance have been theoretically deconstructed to some extent using MLG.

Spatial frameworks have been used by political geographers since the mid 1990s to better understand governance arrangements in the UK (Gore, 2008; Gore & Fothergill, 2007; Brenner, 2004; Harrison, 2006; Morgan, 2002).

Dicken (2003) states that:

*' . . . existing institutional arrangements no longer even approximately match the increasingly complex spatial networks that characterise capitalist economic processes and reference points for locational decision-making' (Dicken, 2003 in Gore & Fothergill, 2007: 59)*

Territorial rescaling is of particular relevance to this thesis because the CF programme is spatially distributed, spatially managed and the institution responsible for the programme has a spatially based remit. Compared with territorial rescaling which describes social, economic and political issues associated with rescaling, New Regionalism describes a process of rescaling to pursue overtly economic aims through competitiveness (Bristow, 2010). This is the difference which makes territorial rescaling more applicable to this research.

Notably Delaney (2005) argues that the use of territory to understand other phenomena implies that it is a simple framework when in reality it is a complex social and political artefact that reflects the time and society from which it emerged.

As described above, devolution in Wales has occurred following a number of economic, political and socio-cultural arguments and affects all aspects of policy in Wales. It is a space to which new forms of government have been assigned and which existed as a defined space of governance before the emergence of competitiveness theories and newly created spaces of governance. In addition strong deontological and nationalistic arguments for devolution have been made (Morgan, 2002a; Kay, 2003). Finally, differences between rescaling processes within EU states such as Germany (federal process), Italy (regional process), France (national process) and Britain (hybrid process) highlight the different strands within territorial rescaling, while New Regionalism is concerned only with regional spaces.

Territory is a highly politicised and contentious issue and territorial integrity is one of the most fundamental principles of international law, one that is not always respected. Delaney (2005) argues that the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 by America is a clear example of territory not being respected as intended. Territory can, arguably, provide security for those 'inside' from those 'outside' of the territory in question. However, in the twentieth century when the nation-state achieved a global hegemony as the sole legitimate institution more than a million people were killed in wars that were either directly concerned with territory or used territory as a rhetorical justification them (Delaney, 2005). Delaney also argues that given the billions of territories within nation states, the issue of whether you are 'in' or 'out' matters. However:

*'For most people, perhaps, the micro-territories of everyday life may be more significant - or at least more noticeable, than the macro-territories of global politics' (Delaney, 2005: 5)*

This statement raises interesting questions around scales of governance. In light of the significance of micro-territories to people living within them, delineating power to micro-geographies could mean more engagement in political matters. However, the fact that territory is based on both physical boundaries and perception of where boundaries lie makes it far more complex to govern at micro-level.

In the UK since 1997 emphasis on territorial rescaling has formed a vital part of re-conceptualising spaces of governance, including during the Community Turn (CT). While some have called for the removal of space from discussion on governance (Marston & Smith, 2001) the incorporation of hierarchical, territorial, place-based *and* network processes that take place in society are vital to an understanding of spatially-based governing. In contrast to National Assemblies in the UK, debates on regionalism and spaces of regionalism focus more overtly on the economic advantages of constructing new spaces of governance. This is particularly notable in the New Regionalism debate focusing on competitive spaces and economic agglomeration of resources and business generation (Lovering, 1999; Harrison, 2006; Morgan, 2007; Bristow, 2010).

Devolution through the establishment of regional Assemblies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is one part of a wider spatial configuration characterising the restructuring of governance under New Labour. MacLeod & Goodwin (1999) attribute changes in UK governing structures to what they term the 'crisis of the nation state' and seek to expand research on central-local relations thus problematising the issue of scale:

*' . . . regional and local states are seen to have 'gained' an enhanced role in . . . governance, and have also begun to promote territorial and functional transnational linkages with other cities and regions, thus helping to bypass the nation-state' (MacLeod & Goodwin, 1999: 505)*

While notions of scale have been discussed as constructed concepts inarguably intertwined with governance, it is also important to take scale as a relational entity into account. Brenner (2004) focuses on the movement from simple, layered configurations that resemble aerial-waves (or ripples) to a more complex layered formation in spatial reconfiguration. Brenner states that it is important to distinguish between spatial terminology (such as localities) and relating concepts (such as communities) and to acknowledge that scale is a discursive construction in a state of constant flux.

Territorial rescaling relates to the facilitation of contemporary capitalism and in the context of geographical reorganisation of economic activity (Brenner, 2004; Gore, 2008). Here it is used to address the spatial dimensions of the fragmentation and complexity characterising MLG leading up to a Strategic Relational Approach (SRA). It has evolved to fill a gap in academic and political understanding of economic processes. However, it can refer to other aspects of the social world.

Jessop states that the nation is:

*' . . . now too small to solve the world's big problems and too big to solve its little ones' (Jessop, 2005: 13)*

Using the argument that state size and scale is inadequate in the context of globalisation and devolution of power, it is also possible to argue that boundaries defined by institutions are no longer applicable to the spatial configurations used for policy decision-making.

This argument is rooted in conceptualisation of power and political decision-making dispersed to existing and new institutional arrangements, as in MLG. However, territorial rescaling is concerned with the scale and geography of structures and where power is dispersed and located in governance.

Some key schools of thought relating to spatial restructuring for political and economic motives are referred to here. Their alliance with (and distinction from) the body of work on territorial-rescaling allows a more holistic and comprehensive contextualisation of the term (Brenner, 2001; Gualini, 2004; Gore, 2008).

Theories on regional spaces and spaces of regionalism (Jones & MacLeod, 2004); territorial and relational approaches to defining regionalism (Paasi, 2002); re-conceptualisation of New Regionalism (Lovering, 1999; Harrison, 2006); 'new economic geographies' (Krugman, 1998) and 'new institutionalism' (Amin, 1999) are all part of the academic concern with spaces of governance framing territorial rescaling emerging during the 1990s.

Experts in both new economic geographies and new institutionalism discuss agglomeration in the knowledge economy. This includes viewing invisible factors such as 'knowledge' and 'creativity' as the strategic resources for economic development. Referring to these factors the theory of institutional thickness developed by Ash Amin (1999) and Nigel Thrift (1995) asserts that economic success cannot be determined purely by narrow sets of economic factors.

Jones & MacLeod's (2004) work on 'regional spaces' and 'spaces of regionalism' has been a key development in defining spaces of governing. The

former relates to the regionalisation of economic activity and the latter to processes of political mobilisation. This is central in contextualising the spaces within which the WG was created and the CF programme designed. Use of territorial and relational approaches in defining regionalism (Paasi, 2002) means an acknowledgement of the need to attune policies to international flows. This theory highlights the distinction between spaces constructed for economic and non-economic (including social, political, geographical) pursuits, although the two often overlap.

In political and geographical sciences during the 1990s interest in regions increased in-line with a political focus on the role of the nation state attributed to forces of globalisation. The rationale for this turn towards economic considerations was often based on new regionalism which was seen by some in this context as the answer to the national question (Jones & Goodwin, 1999). Authors writing under the banner of new regionalism during this period include Michael Keating (1998), Ash Amin (1999), Jones & Goodwin (1999) and Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones (2000).

The processes of economically-driven spatial construction through predominantly discursive means have been criticised by Bristow (2010) who views regional competitiveness as a contestable and ill-defined form of neo-liberalist economic strategy. While theories of spatially-based economic advantage have been popular and forthcoming over the past decade, there remains a growing realisation that assumptions have been made based on neo-liberal policy tools and the advantages of mobilising spaces which have proven contestable at best (Bristow, 2010; Lovering, 1999; Morgan, 2007).

Goodwin, Jones & Jones (2005) contribute to the debate on territorial rescaling and particularly its relation to the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) (Jessop, 2008) which is introduced in chapter six, page 103, as the theoretical guide in this thesis. In the context of territoriality and space which pervades the fabric of state governance and institutions, governance can be understood through SRA in three ways (Goodwin, Jones & Jones, 2005).

Firstly, the state has definite spatial-temporal characteristics as it is formed in a particular geographical location within temporal horizons. The state, including the WG, is therefore a 'complex geographical achievement' forged through economic systems and social relations (Philo & Parr, 2000).

Secondly, certain political strategies are prioritised above others. This impacts the spatial dimension inscribed in the given structure of the state: allocating resources according to regional competitiveness is a primarily political process but could cause spatially-led policy outcomes, for example.

Finally, institutional forces that can gain access to particular branches of the state are bounded and scale-dependent: local authorities, for example.

In their study of spatial formations Goodwin, Jones & Jones (2005) conclude that gaining insight into the rationale behind territorial formation is difficult until a situation arises in which the formation becomes clear and the consequences play out. They assert, in line with arguments put forward earlier in the chapter, that it is equally difficult to gain this insight without looking at the politically, economically and socially driven mechanisms and sequences that led to the point in time under research.

Viewed from a SRA perspective the functions and processes of government through governing and governance are represented through policy rhetoric that does not necessarily reflect the 'reality' of governance. Competing perspectives are at once representations of structures and tools used to create and shape them. Gaining complete understanding of every facet of governance within the complex super-structure of the state in governing is unrealistic due to the large number of possibilities. Therefore the aim of this research is a better understanding of certain aspects namely the mechanisms driving regeneration policy in a newly devolved institution.

Framing this study in the context of political meanings and motives attached to the formation and delineation of boundaries can challenge accepted discourses. Delaney (2005) argues that political rhetoric based on territory simplifies

complex interplays of power and meaning. In this case it could be advantageous to think about territory in terms of motives and consequences. Devolution of power to the WG is a recent example of territoriality which differs in political, economic and social motives between Scottish, Irish and English devolution. It is important therefore to discuss the impact of devolution and subsequent new governing structures in the context of pre-existing area-based trends in political, social and economic factors, as this thesis aims to do.

Williams & Mooney (2008) argue that devolution provides a new discursive landscape within which to discuss aspects of policy. This is a two-way forum for discussion because the ongoing and changing impact of area-based devolution on policy areas, such as social policy and regeneration, is closely linked with the way in which the new structures of devolution adapt and deal with existing policy structures. Implementation of CF under devolution takes the form of geographically-based partnerships created and structured with the aim of allowing community-led and joint decision-making on local regeneration issues. These 'spaces of governance' have been created for economic, social and political pursuit and might therefore come into conflict with existing spaces of governance, such as local authority or Community Town Council boundaries.

When discussing devolution from a territorial angle questions arise around overlapping boundaries, imagined territories and vertical or horizontal rescaling. History, economy and politics are all influential in the creation of territories and it is the way that power is enacted within boundaries which is important to acknowledge in light of facilitating further discussion on Welsh devolution in the following literature chapter.

#### *5.4 Conclusion: the uneasy and fluid balance between community, space and governance*

This chapter has highlighted the need for a multi-level and multi-scalar examination of governance framing community development under devolution in Wales drawing from political and geographical science. It has covered a lot of ground but the key arguments arising from this chapter are threefold.

Firstly, discourses and tools for understanding governing structures do not always change and develop in-line with the state mechanisms under study and are therefore contestable. This includes policy rhetoric on transferring power and responsibility to communities which is contestable on the grounds that responsibility can be transferred without power. This situation means that 'higher' governing mechanisms still hold power over 'lower' tiers of governance and civil society. Following this logic a hierarchical approach is applicable for explaining governance in this research and MLG theory is therefore used in this chapter.

Secondly, in the move from government to governance the theory of MLG is most useful for categorising and defining different forms of governance. Both type one and type two MLG apply to devolution in Wales and CF which reflects the complexity of devolving power in its full sense. In addition applying MLG to one of the 'lowest' tiers of governance (micro-organisations) to examine the state-society relationship can yield interesting findings in the wider political context: EU structural funding to the UK's poorest regions preceding CF during the 1990s, for example (Armstrong & Wells, 2005). This consolidates the argument made at the end of the last chapter stating that studies of community can be enhanced, re-contextualised and expanded using theories of governance in tandem with political contextualisation.

Thirdly, critique of MLG for failing to include space and scale adequately and the need for a theory that includes space and scale to analyse this research is pivotal. Theories of territory, space and scale can be divided into spatially-led governance on the one hand and policy determined spaces on the other. Economic strategies pursued by the creation of spaces for increased competitiveness do not apply wholly to devolution in Wales. Devolution in Wales is a process of territorial rescaling to existing administrative boundaries rather than to spaces created for economic pursuit. In economic theories like new regionalism economic competitiveness is the prevailing factor used in arguments for regional transfer of power. In territorial rescaling deontological, cultural and economic arguments can be used to argue for spatial

reconfiguration which relates more closely to Welsh devolution than a solely economic approach.

Community, space and governance are relating concepts but together form a relationship that is not easy to understand in theory. However, in terms of over-expectations placed on community in a policy context, theories on governance, space and scale help to unravel the way in which spaces can be used for political motives. Politicisation of existing spaces and the governing structures leading it key to understanding the process of devolving power from central government to the WG and from the WG to communities in Wales. The literature examined in this chapter shows that the process is anything but the straightforward handover of political decision-making that political rhetoric might portray.

## **6. Theoretical Guide for Analysis**

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The theoretical guide for this research is a Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) which starts with the proposition that the state is a social relation (Jessop, 2008). It is used as a guide in this research because it takes the hierarchical and spatial aspects of governance into account in the process of analysis. Also because it links the micro-subjects under study with the wider theoretical and political spheres in which they function.

A gap is identified in relevant literature from chapter four, *the Community Turn*, in the form of understanding how power is operationalised within the political and social relations of a programme such as CF. SRA provides a means for understanding and analysing data on these issues. This chapter sets out how SRA may be used to this effect.

To avoid the danger of assumption in interview analysis, the approach allows for acknowledgement, insight and increased understanding rather than definitive answers on strategic-relations. For this reason the term 'guide' has been chosen over 'framework' for describing the ontological and epistemological strands guiding data analysis because it is less prescriptive and better encapsulates the way SRA has been used here: as a steering force rather than a way of structuring analysis.

One key reason for choosing SRA over more interpretive theories is it encapsulates trends in governance and state fragmentation on a global scale. This means that it effectively contextualises the research as well as guiding analysis and enables a constant awareness of the wider forces and factors shaping the findings. In addition it is precise in its terminology while remaining theoretical which aids application.

At the heart of SRA theory is the idea that the multiple covert and overt ways of viewing the world are 'actualities' articulated and represented by different people in different ways for different reasons. Through the lens of specific

research questions it is possible to draw out themes within and between narratives representing actualities which can shed light on the research questions. SRA approach to structure and agency, the *strategic actor* and the *strategically oriented context* can be used to gather a two-way interpretive account of the way(s) people view aspects of their contextualised actuality through narrative. The practical and most applicable ways of gaining the data for this type of analysis is the focus of the methodology chapter.

The theory states that every attempt to explain a complex phenomenon such as the state must be selective. In defining the nature, role and function of the state the theory is based upon the belief that state apparatus is both strategically selective and relational to society through interdependencies and strategic networks.

This chapter begins with a brief examination of the Critical Realist (CR) ontology as it has been developed by authors such as Collier (1994), Archer et al. (1998) and its architect Roy Bhaskar (1978; 1979). The purpose of this examination is not to make the case for a CR approach to research. It is to use constructive critique and comment on CR as a background and justification for using SRA. The structure-agency debate is outlined in the second part of the chapter to inform the development and use of SRA. The chapter then outlines a SRA approach to the structure-agency debate which is used to form the final model for a theoretical guide for analysis in this thesis.

The argument put forward here is that an SRA approach to conceptualising structure-agency adds depth to the findings in tandem with interpretive coding techniques to draw-out themes.

### *6.1 The Ontological Premise for SRA: Critical Realism*

The principles of Critical Realism (CR) are located between the theoretical aspirations of critical theory and the positivist methodology of scientific realism. Academics in various areas including health, politics and philosophy have

debated the validity of CR in application (Schostak, 2002; Jeppesen, 2005; Wong, 2005).

Most relevant to this research is the empirical application of CR in a project concerned with explaining the relationships between experience, events and mechanisms in society (Jeppesen, 2005).

Four core facets of CR manifest in SRA and frame the analysis for this research. Firstly, critical research is carried out with a view to contributing to social change. This puts a particularly strong emphasis on empirical and policy based research. Secondly, not all facets of the social world are visible or measurable. Thirdly, not all facets of the social world are discursively understood. This is particularly relevant in light of the ethnographic approach explained in the methodology chapter below. Finally, that structure is a necessary prerequisite for human action. While actors can create political structures through policy, they can only act within the structures in which they find themselves: hence the emphasis on the political history of Welsh devolution.

CR also maintains that there is one real world which exists externally to subjective human perception. For Critical Realists the 'one real world' contains everything including what we can (and can't) view and interpret. The concept has been criticised for attempting impossible claims of objectivity in research. Indeed this is one aspect of CR not accepted here, if there is no way of knowing what exists outside our perceptions of the world then surely a theory seeking to uncover the unknowable is going to fail. What CR can add is the acknowledgement that not all understandings of the world are discursive and not all aspects can be known.

Within SRA the idea of one real world has been developed to be a much more useful concept. That is an imagined line between state and society separating the 'reality' of state processes permeating every aspect of society and the formulated 'image' that state and society are clearly and definitively separated.

In contrast to the view that actual facets of the real world are discovered empirically within CR Schostak (2002) states that the conceptual meaning of 'the real' is lost in CR application:

*'Critical realism is in danger of closing down dialogue just when it is needed most by defining its project as a description of the real, modelling its conception of the real in terms of the natural order of things in the first instance and then framing a necessary difference with that of the symbolic order of the social' (Schostak, 2002: 2)*

In his critique, Schostak (2002) gives a useful theorisation of the concept of 'real' to argue that, in most cases those using CR do not pay enough attention to this conceptualisation before moving on to methodological issues. He uses the analogy of a dead body and the life that has departed it to discuss the dual concepts of real or symbolic and object, original or copy. Users of CR view the real as everything within the real world and the actual as concrete. In the case of the dead body Schostak argues, it is the physical form of the person not the real person that exists. By this logic the physical is not always the real and the real is not always measurable. This subtle distinction between concrete and real is an example of the problem with broad definitions of the real. The area in which the debate on what is real is most apparent is that of discourse and the line between knowledge and understanding, a key strand of SRA.

## *6.2 The Strategic-Relational Approach*

This section of the chapter begins by outlining SRA. It then goes on to focus on the SRA interpretation of the structure-agency debate and the ways in which this is relevant to the research subject(s) of this thesis and its methodology.

SRA is favoured over CR because it bridges the gap between the ontological within CR and the research subjects under study here. As an ontology CR inherently favours thinking over experiencing – transcendentalism - making the issue of interpreting 'real' experiences problematic from the perspective of the researcher. In addition CR lacks the inclusion of spatial and geographical

explanation and understandings of social and political phenomena present in SRA. However, in-line with CR, SRA requires structure as a prerequisite for agency action and maintains that there are extra-subjective factors in the social world that should be acknowledged during empirical work.

*Key Concepts in SRA*

Table 2 below puts SRA in its broad ontological and epistemological context in contrast with phenomenology, a more interpretive approach. The table shows that CR and SRA are more structurally oriented than phenomenology and its interpretive approach to research.

TABLE 2: Critical Realism and Phenomenology: a basic comparison

<b>Ontology</b>	<b>Epistemology</b>	<b>Reality</b>	<b>Basic Ideas</b>
Phenomenology	Interpretive Approach to Analysis	All realities are subjective	Human beings are conscious agents who act on the basis of their understanding. It is these understandings which have to be uncovered in the research. The logic of the research is (usually) that the discovery of meanings has to be undertaken with the collaboration of the research participants themselves – it is their subjective attuning to the situation which is to be revealed.
Critical Realism	Strategic Relational Approach to Analysis	There is one reality, understood in different ways through different mediums	All actions taken and all representations of those actions are conscious or unconscious choice and the way that these actions are reflected through discourse and action is strategically-selective. In addition distinction is made between the actual and the imagined in representations of events and processes by actors and collectives.

SRA is used as a theoretical guide within this thesis partly because it demands that attention be paid to the spatial-temporal aspects of structure-agency and to the integration of discourse or ‘discursive selection’ into the debate.

Examples of the spatial-temporal aspects of structure and agency within this research include: governing structures with a spatially-based remit such as the

WG covering Wales and staff within the WG covering different regions of Wales; local authority staff governing provision within regions of Wales and CF partnerships based in assigned boundaries that may not always correspond with residents' perception of boundaries. In addition actors within the WG governing areas from a distance without physically being in those areas, while local authority staff governing from less of a distance and CF partnership staff work day to day within their assigned space leaves less room for strategic selectivity on a personal level within smaller spaces. Finally, turnover of staff within the WG means changes to programme structure while turnover of staff over time within CF partnerships means loss of longevity in relationship and trust building at local level.

In addition SRA acknowledgement of the dialectical relationships between subjective (agency) and objective (structure) applies to the in-depth qualitative interviews within this research. While CR is a philosophical approach, SRA is a way of understanding the state which draws on CR but which also necessarily goes beyond what CR alone can do.

Complexity in SRA (and CR) refers to the inexhaustible possibilities for labelling and understanding the social world. The term 'meaning' refers to the focus of attention on one action over a milieu of possibilities creating the structural difference between the 'possible' and the 'actual' (Luhmann, 1990). In SRA:

*'... meaning, then, is actuality surrounded by possibilities' (Jessop, 2008: 234)*

The 'concrete-complex' in SRA therefore refers to what exists and the 'abstract-simple' to what could be. It also highlights the fact that concrete empirical findings have more limitations than abstract theory.

SRA views state apparatus as an object of 'complex-concrete' enquiry and a set of institutions. This allows for comprehension of multi-scalar and polycentric states and a move away from the view of governance as state-centric. In SRA political forces do not exist independently of the state. However, in the contemporary capitalist state, power is a social relation and state driven actions

can be motivated by economic and non-economic pursuits. The view that there is paradox in non-economic activity within the capitalist state frames the problem of state-driven community development highlighted within this research. Community development is not-for-profit in principle which when coupled with capitalist state direction and control compromises the principles of the discipline to the point of becoming paradoxical.

While SRA has been applied to problems of political economy in the past SRA understanding of the role of the state allows for its application in a wide range of spheres, including devolution and regeneration. Jessop has drawn on the work of Marx, Gramsci, Poulantzas and Foucault in his development of SRA. He seeks to understand the role of the state in theory and practice through a plethora of lenses including: the historical variability of the state; the relative strength and weakness of the state; the future of the national state in an era of globalisation; issues of scale, space, territoriality and the state; the rise of governance mechanisms and their articulations in government. Overarching facets of the state from an SRA perspective include its heuristic nature and its strategic-relational nature. The strategic-relational nature can be identified in a number of ways, the most relevant to this thesis being through an SRA interpretation of structure and agency detailed in the next section of the chapter.

Structure refers to institutional structures comprised of physical buildings, discourse and departments with geographical remits in Wales, for example. Agency refers to political and non-political actors from a variety of backgrounds involved in CF for various reasons and with varying degrees of power within the programme. SRA is a vehicle that allows theorisation on these structure-agency parameters of the research with the capacity to include the wide-ranging context of the Community Turn, Multi Level Governance and territorial rescaling discussed above.

Jessop (2008) has applied SRA to understanding globalisation and the state, the European Union as a supranational state and multi-level or multi-scalar governance among others. Within this application he describes spatial-temporal dynamics of sovereignty and the need for a (re)turn to temporal understandings.

Jessop uses the strategic nature of globalisation, increasing global interdependence and the EU as a Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national regime to explain the role of the state in light of trends. For example, hollowing-out:

*‘ . . . de-statizing current state functions by transferring them to private-public partnerships or place-bound market forces and thereby linking them to market-oriented temporalities. . . ’ (Jessop, 2008: 192)*

However, this notion has been critiqued and redeveloped by authors including Jessop himself (Jones & MacLeod, 2004). Within Jessop’s applications of SRA (2008) the most contextually relevant to this thesis is the increase of non-economic activity within the capitalist state reflected in emphasis on social capital and communities. This relates to the contrast between rescaling for the pursuit of economic and non-economic purposes. SRA provides a tool to dissect key political issues within the Welsh Government (WG) in the context of devolution and regeneration policy as they are presented in this thesis.

Using the SRA model it is possible to question not only the impact of newly devolved structures on agents acting within them and vice versa but to acknowledge that a particular action is a choice strategically selected from a milieu of other possible choices. At its core is the belief that the state is not a force in its own right, rather it is a:

*‘ . . . distinctive accomplishment of social development ’ (Jessop, 2008: 1)*

The state and society in some senses are indistinguishable, reiterating that the line between state and society is imagined.

The imagined line can be applied when looking at central governing powers and grass roots community development organisations. If the imagined line is drawn and re-drawn by political actors to fulfil political motives and reflects a desired political view of what separates government and community, then the strategic relational nature of this pursuit holds the key to understanding the re-

conceptualisation of community within the political sphere over the last five decades.

A simplified account of SRA theory views the state both as a series of social relations and interactions and as the site, generator and product of particular strategies devised by different political forces (Jessop, 2008). The state is paradoxically at once one part of a social and institutional collection and responsible for maintaining cohesion within the whole. Within SRA, social forces acting in and through the state use state strategies to harness state institutions towards particular socio-economic projects. The state as a unitary institution does not exist. Instead it represents the medium(s) through which different social forces implement their chosen strategies. Rather than seeing the state as an entity or force on its own, SRA emphasises the notion of strategic selectivity and the contingent nature of state strategies. In this context different economic and political systems privilege certain strategies, spatial scales, coalition possibilities and policy tools over others (Goodwin, Jones & Jones, 2005). Although the definition of social forces in this context would benefit for further clarification, the role of the state is dissected adequately here for application within this research.

The relational way in which social forces pursue their interests through the state:

*‘ . . . is not inscribed in the state system as such but in the relation between state, structures and strategies which different forces adopt’ (Jessop, 1990: 260)*

By looking at decisions taken at the outset of CF it is possible to understand the relationships between state and community through structure and agency.

### ***6.3 Structure and Agency***

This section of the chapter broadly outlines key arguments in the structure-agency debate. The debate is one strand of SRA used here for two key

reasons. Firstly, because it allows for further theoretical exploration into the interrelations, links and interpretations of the institutions and actors under study here. Secondly, choosing one element of SRA gives focus and clarity in what is otherwise a massively wide-ranging, deep and complex theory for a PhD research project. Fully understanding and using the theory would require time and resources beyond the parameters of this study; the structure-agency debate is an applicable response to this problem.

The long-standing debate around structure and agency addresses the extent to which individuals control their lives through their own actions, pre-dispositions and resources in order to reach their goals, compared to how their lives are structurally controlled by external forces. The following statement by Fuller (1998 in Hay, 2002) poses a critical starting point for this section:

*'Given the supposedly abortive attempts at solving the structure-agency problems, one is tempted to conclude that sociologists are not smart enough to solve the problem or that the problem itself is spurious' (Fuller, 1998 in Hay, 2002: 104)*

Hay (2002) combats this by making the case for the structure-agency debate as a language through which contending ontological differences might be acknowledged rather than a problem with an elusive solution. Indeed it is in the way this debate is used to shape arguments and to understand the social world that its value lays, to search for a definitive answer to whether structure predetermines agency or vice versa is to misinterpret its purpose.

Giddens (1984) wrote *the Constitution of Society* introducing his theory of structuration following 15 years of increasing interest in the reflexivity of human conduct within the discipline of sociology. Giddens' view of society is part of a movement which emerged after a period dominated by the view that human behaviour is a result of uncontrollable and incomprehensible forces. This sea-change was coupled with the decline in popularity of empiricist methods within sociology.

Giddens (1984) sought to combine the interpretive sociology used by Goffman in the 1960s and functionalism or 'system theory' to develop a model for examining reasons behind different types of social interaction. In his view, both functionalism and interpretation are inclined towards objectivism. This view, framing Giddens' assertion that structure drives agency, is arguable given that in SRA, interpretation is based on subjective viewpoints of extra-subjective actions. Much like Marx's view of structural constraints conditioning the proletariat, structuration states that structure is necessary for action:

*'What I call a stratification model of the acting self involves treating the reflexive monitoring, realisation and motivation of action as an embedded set of processes' (Giddens, 1984: 3).*

Hay (2002) argues that Giddens' structuration disarms the simplicity of a dualism by offering a 'third way' between the old left and new right and between social democracy and Thatcherism (Hay, 2002). In addition he attempts to replace a dualism or separation between structure and agency with a duality that interlinks and deals with both. This theory is especially applicable to this research given the role of Giddens' 'third way' in New Labour policy between 1997 and 2010. Understanding of structure and agency has therefore guided the research by linking the theoretical guide to the policy context of this research.

#### *6.4 SRA and the Structure-Agency Debate*

SRA views the state as a relational entity and the division between state and society as the product of specific governing mechanisms; therefore SRA questions the very existence of a duality between structure and agency. Instead it notes the way in which the structure-agency relationship overlaps and becomes a relational force for change. Again this places more emphasis on using the structure-agency debate than on answering it.

Jessop's (2008) SRA model for understanding structure and agency begins with the duality found in structuration. It then brings structure into agency to make a

'contextualised actor' and agency into structure to make a 'structured context'. He then brings the contextualised actor into the structured context to create a *strategic actor* and the structured context into the contextualised actor to create a *strategically selective context*.

This approach acknowledges that:

*' . . . agents both internalise perceptions of their context and consciously orient themselves towards that context in choosing between courses of action' (Hay, 2002: 129)*

This approach is useful and relevant for analysing the research in this thesis because it acknowledges the inseparability of structures and agency (the Welsh Government and Communities First structures and those involved in them) empirically, whilst acknowledging that they can be conceptually separated.

Research subjects are therefore viewed as strategic agents affecting and affected by the pre-existing strategically selective context in which they function. In addition the research findings are given theoretical depth through the division of findings into structure and agency; structure being the WG as an institution and its relationship with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), local authorities in Wales and CF partnerships and agency being representatives and strategic actors working within these institutional contexts.

Applying SRA to the structure-agency debate means an examination of the way certain structures prioritise some actors, strategies, spaces and actions over others and vice versa.

### ***6.5 A SRA Theoretical Guide for Analysis***

The preceding section has acknowledged the inseparable nature of structure and agency alongside the value of their analytical differences. This section of the chapter makes the link between the theory, the methodology and the methods in this research explicit. It then goes on to outline the key facets of

SRA to the long-standing structure-agency debate guiding the analysis and findings before moving onto the methodology chapter.

Analysis of the research data collected for this thesis accounts for a *strategically selective context* in the form of the WG, local authorities, voluntary organisations and the CF programme and partnerships. If structure is comprised of rules and resources then a strategically oriented structure uses these selectively to drive a specific strategy. SRA has meant analysis starting from the assumption that WG strategy (outlined in policy documents) accounts for selectivity, such as funding allocation to CF. A great deal of the data relating to the design and implementation of CF reveals strategically oriented structures consolidated by findings from the policy review.

The *strategic actor* implies that agents are:

*‘ . . . reflexive, capable of reformulating within limits their own identities and interest, and able to engage strategic calculation about their current situation.’*  
(Jessop, 2008: 41)

This is used in data analysis through attention to institutional references and the balance between interviewee viewpoint and the context given in narrative. In addition interpretative data coding is also guided by SRA in data analysis.

The concept of *discursive selectivity* in SRA is used in data analysis through comparison and contrast between narrative within and between interviews to identify consolidating or contradicting statements which may imply discursive selection. Originally developed by Hay (1995) selective discourse means the reason for and impact of intentional and unintentional choice of interpretation. Struggles over how to interpret a given situation depend on structures and discursive selectivity. An example of this is interviewees choosing to discuss a subject not included in the original research questions, as a means to explaining their views or choosing to focus on one aspect of the question.

The fundamental concepts of *strategically selective context* and *strategic actor* remain in place throughout data analysis to create a reasonable approximation of the role of structure and agency as defined here, and the methods discussed in the following chapter are justified in line with a SRA approach. For example, primary data collection methods are qualitative, thus gauging individual viewpoints in an in-depth and data-rich mode which allows for SRA guidance during analysis.

The data collection methods for this research include a number of different angles and perspectives within the data including self-acknowledged strategy from interviewees, speculatively observed strategic narrative through observation and ethnography and strategically oriented structural influences on narrative. One example is the WG choosing to include at least one CF partnership in each local authority in Wales as a strategic move to appease the relatively influential power base of Welsh local authorities. The issue of design and implementation is an area in which the strategically-oriented structures and the strategic actors become most apparent as CF is unpacked using a combination of experience-based knowledge and hindsight.

SRA maintains a consistent theoretical guide broad enough to encompass wide-ranging changes affecting the research questions in-line with the findings. For example, SRA conception of non-state actor involvement in governance encompasses the issue of successful community integration and influence from higher levels of governance which can be applied to a range of research subjects.

All three research questions look at what can be defined as structural issues; changes to the politically-driven parameters in the focus of the programme at WG, local authority and community level affecting the work of those involved in the programme. However, these changes are closely intertwined with and identified through individual narrative and observation which constitutes agency action.

### *Research question one*

Analysis of data relating to the first research question is enhanced by SRA guidance through its conceptualisation of the state as a social-relation and the reflection of this in its approach to structure-agency. In conceptualising the state and non-state community development organisations SRA acknowledges that these two structures are dualities containing rules, resources and actors.

### *Research question two*

In analysis of research data relating to the second research question SRA guidance enhances analysis to encompass relationships between statutory and community institutions and agents. SRA allows a degree of theoretical space in which to examine institutional (inter)relations and the role of individuals acting within them through questioning strategy and relation within the socio-political setting of this study. The inseparable nature of structure and agency and the strategic pursuits of actors within pre-existing structures results in less of a matryoshka, or Russian doll, effect in relations between governing institutions and more of an overlapping structural working within which actors must adhere to regulation while still having some variable margin of influence. This represents the empirical nature of the study relatively accurately.

### *Research question three*

In analysis of the third research question SRA draws attention to the impact of institutional and organisational structures on each other and reflects potential strategy. Different types and degrees of organisational impact depend to a large extent on the strategies and decisions made by the people acting within them. Contested decisions made within one WG department could cause repercussions later on: in the case of structural change within CF this could refer to the decision to make the majority of GRB local authorities rather than voluntary sector organisations as was recommended (NAW, 2001). SRA emphasis on the impact of strategy within institutions means further examination of possible reasons for these decisions thus opening the findings to wider influences such as narrative on political decisions made at the outset.

SRA is argued to be particularly pertinent to this research because of its attention to the spatial aspects of structure and agency. The WG was established in 1999 and has since acquired policy making powers in 20 devolved areas in 2011. During this period a number of changes have taken place such as departmental changes, shifts in political focus and Ministerial strategy changing particular aspects of political projects. The department within which CF sits has changed. Such changes have altered the emphasis on CF from empowerment to outcomes and now to physical regeneration meaning changes in representation of delivery on the ground. Changes on the ground are related through narrative during data collection thus contributing towards the findings for this thesis. In light of this there is no plausible way of conducting a study of the impact of devolution and constitutional change without accounting for time and space. Such a study would be one dimensional. Therefore the SRA focus on spatial-temporal aspects of structure and agency ensures rounded data analysis. SRA facilitates theorisation of the subject matter in this sense.

Integration of the discursive or *discursive selection* within the structure-agency debate is also an important part of SRA for this research. Different representations of the same institution, policy or decision can lead to problematic data. However, by bringing the strategic selection into discursive analysis it is possible to speculate on why representations are different and relate this back to the findings for more insightful understanding.

SRA acknowledges that narrative-based data cannot predict or confirm how agents are 'acting', it can only make headway to deducing what agents choose to express about the structures under study. Jessop critiques the idea that social structures are constraints determining agency action because action is part of social structures. This action can be analysed in terms of its performance by agents with strategically calculating structural orientation.

Finally, SRA takes both social policy and political geography into account when discussing political structures, spaces and agents and this relates to governance and spaces of governance as they have been conceptualised in the literature review chapters of this thesis. SRA tackles politics and territory thus

uniting theories such as Multi-Level Governance and territorial rescaling in understanding the role political motive and spatial factors shaping the state as a social relation.

Using a SRA approach to structure and agency it is possible to apply a dialectical analogy to spaces of governance and the relationship between different spaces of governance. This is a polymorphous understanding of space found in SRA theory (Jessop, 2008) which does not limit understanding of governing structures to networked or hierarchical, territorially distinctive jurisdictions or territorially-overlapping jurisdictions as a peopled space or an impersonal institution. In addition it allows acknowledgement that Wales is a state, a nation and a region.

TABLE 3: SRA interpretation of the Structure-Agency debate

	<b>Structures</b>	<b>Agents</b>
<b>Dichotomy</b> (a separation into two divisions that differ)	External constraints	Free-willed Actions
<b>Dualism</b> (a state in which something has two distinct parts or aspects)	Emergent Social Structures	Partly Socialised Agents
<b>Dialectical Duality</b> (a situation or nature that has two states or parts that are complementary or opposed to each other)	Structurally Inscribed Strategic Selectivity	Strategically Calculated Structurally Oriented Action.

Within the left-hand column ‘dichotomy’ refers to Giddens’ (1984) structuration approach to structure and agency: conceptual separation of the two as contrasting forces. ‘Dualism’ refers to a dichotomy in which structure and agency are mutually consistent. ‘Dialectical duality’ is the way in which ‘*a genuine duality can be created*’ (Jessop, 2008: 41). This genuine duality is one thing consisting of two parts which means that the impact of a concept like Welsh devolution cannot be studied without looking at both the structures and the agents working within it. Within CF the each partnership includes a representative from the public sector, the voluntary sector and the community as well as CF partnership paid staff. While all actors hold equal positions on the

partnerships board the different agency backgrounds hold the potential for a sway in influence and therefore a sway in power and ability to be strategic. In this way SRA adds a power dimension within analysis through which potential strategies or absence of strategy can be pinpointed.

In summary, the role of SRA in shaping methods used in this research takes the structural issues examined through the questions and terms them a strategically oriented context. This means that in analysis, action by agents can also be related to potential causes and outcomes of these actions (with an acknowledgement that there is no way of knowing the reality of why action was taken, or its full repercussions).

From the milieu of possibilities for action within structures recognised by actors, significance lies in the choice of actions taken and represented through narrative. This includes the choices made in the research process through selections made at every stage, participant selections, case study areas and questions asked. In addition the structures that are recognised by actors through narrative expression are the act of a reflexive actor choosing to express finite narrative reflection of their contextual experience, at the expense of other reflections and of the 'truth' behind the narrative (Schostak, 2002).

## **7. Methodology**

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This chapter sets out the methodology for the thesis. It includes the issue of subjective and contextual actualities and what they represent from a SRA perspective.

The chapter begins by explaining the research questions in three parts using practical examples. It then goes on to give the rationale and objectives behind them; this includes a comparison between area-based regeneration partnerships in the UK for better contextualisation. The rationale behind choice of research subject is explained with a focus on community-based approaches to tackle deprivation which characterise area-based regeneration policy rhetoric under the WG.

A predominantly qualitative research approach is justified in the context of the research subject and compared with a quantitative approach. The section reviews the well-rehearsed debate surrounding the relative values of qualitative and quantitative methods in relation to the question: *what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?*

The issue of subjective self in research is addressed including first person narrative on the reasons and rationale behind pursuing this research project. Within the context of qualitative methods the case study approach is given further explanation because of the multiple and varying issues surrounding the choice of this research method and the choice of final area-based case studies used in data collection.

The methodology is presented under the supposition that questioning policy rhetoric means opening dialogue around assumptions which requires primary data not used in previous debates, which can therefore be used to question or add to them.

## 7.1 Aims and Objectives

This section of the chapter begins by explaining the rationale behind the research questions on CF partnership integration with community groups, statutory-community relations and CF partnership structure, independence and sustainability. This explanation forms the argument for what the research aims to achieve and links the research questions with the methods for answering them.

### *Integration and Strategy*

The first research question is: *how and in what ways have pre-existing, non-state community-run organisations been integrated into CF post 2001?* Before embarking on the links between this and the methods it is important to acknowledge that integration can have negative connotations in historical and current contexts, one recent example being immigration laws. The spectrum on the meaning of integration has inclusion and collaboration at one polar end and forced conformity at the other. In the context of this thesis the term refers to the former use of integration while retaining awareness that it can be used with the purpose of forcefully changing one group or individual to fit in with another. In the context of this thesis the term refers to collaboration between two groups on the one hand and one group becoming embedded in another on the other, including the advantages and disadvantages of the process for each. The term integration has been chosen over collaboration because it covers both the positive and negative aspects of partnership working.

The position on community partnerships established through the literature review is that government-established community-based partnerships are regulated by government through local government often to the point of constraining community development work in its full sense (Davies, 2002; 2007). However, they still provide an opportunity for community members to express views and opinions and instigate change in their community (Taylor, 2003; 2009). This could be in the form of support and positive integration with pre-existing community development organisations.

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the question has been developed using previous research on CF under devolution (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008). In particular the question aims to develop the finding that there is little inter-partnership and inter-community group communication within the programme.

The question aims to unpick assumptions around both the positive nature of CF and community group integration (e.g. 'sharing best practice') and around the wider impact of CF partnerships within their geographical remit. From a SRA perspective, it is the strategically selective context of CF and the strategic actors working with it that can give insight into the validity of these assumptions.

#### *Statutory-community relations*

The second research question is: *what are the (inter)relationships between CF staff (including volunteers) and local authority representatives involved in the programme?* This is broadly based on the problematic issue of the relationship between representative and associative democracy manifested through formal partnerships. In terms of Taylor's (2003) pragmatic approach to community development and the 'window of opportunity' for community groups within any funded partnership, this is a key issue of power and control.

Assumptions can be made based on statements in policy rhetoric: that power is being handed to the community, for example. As identified in the literature review the challenges and implications of partnership working between community sector and public sector representatives is an avenue to questioning this rhetoric (Adamson & Bromilley, 2008; Davies, 2007; Taylor, 2003; Chambers, 2004).

In addition the added dimension of a strategically selective structure such as a local authority, and indeed the statutory sector itself, allows further investigation into the complexity of CF partnerships and the CF programme as a whole.

#### *Structure, independence and sustainability*

The third research question is: *what are the reasons given for and impact of change to partnership GRB status since 2001?* This is linked to the second

question and looks at contradictions in the idea of community partnerships gaining financial control to match their responsibility. The issue is addressed through the question by looking at partnership Grant Recipient Body status in relation to control of funding release and allocation at micro geographical levels.

The aim of this question is to gauge the extent to which public sector representatives influence the decision-making process in partnerships in comparison with the voluntary sector and the extent to which local authorities are accountable to the WG. It also aims to explore the reasons behind these structural changes as a way of examining the relations between different sectors in CF partnership. This relates to the wider idea of the imagined line between state and society and the way that it is drawn and redrawn to pursue particular political objectives.

In 2010 15 CF partnerships were their own GRB. This means that they received their core funding directly from the WG instead of through the local authority in their area, unlike over 110 out of the 157 partnerships with local authority GRB in 2010. In other cases partnerships have changed from having a local authority to a voluntary sector GRB. The aim at the outset of the programme was to enable as many partnerships as possible to become their own GRB.

*'It is an aim of the programme to increase the number of such local management arrangements in line with the "bottom-up" ethos of CF and in order to increase sustainability of community organisations' (Welsh Government, 2010: 8)*

All three research questions are pre-dispositional for qualitative, data rich and complex responses leading to better understanding rather than a definitive quantifiable answer, this is explained and justified further in the next section of the chapter. A short quantitative survey was carried out at the outset of the fieldwork for this research and resulted in useful but limited findings on the three questions. Issues to do with institutional and individual relationships and interrelationships require some more depth and a degree of interpretation that requires a qualitative interrogation.

## 7.2 Qualitative Research

This section of the chapter gives some reflection and justification on the use of qualitative research methods within this study. It argues that applying qualitative methods to the chosen areas of study outlined in the research questions has the potential to add depth to understanding of spatially-based governing structures through a more individualised, focused and biographical account of these structures and the activities surrounding them. The rationale for use of qualitative research methods is rooted partly in a SRA perspective of the social world and partly in the practical application of the questions detailed in the last section. It is also rooted in the subject matter itself which explores subjective issues such as partnerships, power and relationships none of which are easily amenable to quantifiable methods.

Quantitative research constitutes a vast and important part of what we know about social demographics, wide-scale trends and patterns of dispersion in partnerships and regeneration. But it cannot accurately explain certain phenomenon within the sphere of power, policy and social or institutional interaction. For example, in research question one a quantitative study of community development organisations existing in CF areas pre-2001 could state the number of successful integrations but could not explain the intricate complexities and challenges and the process of collaboration. In addition it would not allow for exploration into the complexity and multi-faceted conceptualisation of the term 'successful'.

Flick (2006) argues that there is an increased use of qualitative research methods within the social sciences and that the reasons for this are located in wider global trends and pluralisation of life worlds. Flick bases his argument on one strand of postmodernism stating that:

*'... the era of big narratives and theories is over' (Flick, 2006: 19).*

While 'big' narratives and theories relating to global, cultural and universal issues are applicable to a wide range of empirical research, the argument put forward by Flick points to a sea-change in the way that theories are formed:

*'Advocates of postmodernism claim that the era of big narratives and theories is over –limited narratives are now required. Instead of starting from theories and testing them, theories are developed from empirical studies and knowledge and practice are studied as local knowledge and practice' (ibid, 2006: 19)*

This perspective implies that in the past grand theories and narratives have been developed and then applied to empirical research and that now, more commonly, empirical research forms the basis of new and more fragmented theories. A smaller spatial dimension is also implied in the term 'local' which relates the idea directly to this study of CF partnerships at ward and sub-ward level. However, Flick's idea is questioned here in favour of a belief that the process and formation of theoretical development is a complex ebb and flow of burgeoning theories, ranging between highly empirically-based and theory-based, and derived from research at micro (local), meso (regional) and macro (national and supranational) scale. This leads to the formulation of new theories that can be adapted and used to test research findings in practice or in the development of existing theories. In addition this methodology chapter refutes the claim that the era of big theories is over because they have an important place in framing present and future research. Subjective viewpoints form a large part of the approach taken here to complement the 'larger' theory of SRA in this research for example.

The grand narratives referred to by Flick are viewed here as the outcome of research in practice, responses and resulting developments in the academic arena leading to multiple trends in thinking over a period of time. However, it must be emphasised that there is not one way within any temporal or spatial context in which theoretical development can be explained. To give an example, Foucault's (1980) 'conduct of conduct', or the power of government to act on the actions of the governed, looks at the conceptualisation of political programmes as they are defined by the underlying rationalities that shape their development.

This can be viewed theoretically in three ways: firstly, as an existing part of governmentality theory; secondly, as a new part adding to governmentality theory; and thirdly as the direct outcome of Foucault's empirical research; in reality it can be all three. It can be (and has been) used by researchers both in applied theory and in the formation of new theories (Flint, 2009; McKee, 2009; MacKinnon, 2000). The purpose of this example is to show that grand theories are both whole and made-up of a number of smaller contributing theories, ideas and studies from local knowledge. This theory is therefore seen as a predominantly qualitative contribution to large theoretical and empirical areas of knowledge.

The research undertaken for this thesis technically used a mixed methods approach with quantitative data at the initial stages to frame a context for the applied qualitative methods. This was a scoping exercise at the outset to narrow-down a large space and subject area.

While quantitative findings can make powerful statements on a large scale within the social world, qualitative research methods can add depth and richness to smaller areas of focus within a quantitative framework. Indeed the two are often used most effectively in conjunction. Quantitative data relating to CF's Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR), gathered from the Welsh Government's (WG) website StatsWales and expanded on through an internship at the WG Data Unit responsible for CF's AMR, has been used as a framework for further qualitative exploration within this research. This has provided a statistical overview in which to pursue and examine selected areas in more depth.

The rationale for a qualitative approach to the main body of data collection methods is now given in three parts according to the research questions.

Firstly, the question on integrating pre-existing community organisations into the CF programme after 2001 has been captured through meetings, reciprocal arrangements and the role of individuals. In the case of community development organisations it is necessary to get individual perceptions in order to grasp the subtleties of complex, often reciprocal, historically-based meanings

and attachments which people have to informal governing structures. This requires a richness of data that can be acquired through in-depth qualitative research. In addition this approach relates to the broader issue of questioning policy rhetoric on local democracy and community-led partnerships because in order to get insight beyond the status quo it is necessary to pursue the uncharted territory of narrative data.

Secondly, studying the relationship between local authorities and communities in partnership within the same locality requires an open-endedness permitted by a qualitative approach. The institutional weight of local authorities within communities points to a more structured and static framework within this second theme. However, below the surface is potentially a more complex network led by reciprocal favours, historically-rooted relationships and decision-making. The role and perception of individuals within this setting are central to a better understanding and can only be captured through a qualitative approach to study. The importance of a case study approach in surfacing and understanding differences between places and relations and between actors and institutions is also central to this question.

Thirdly, the politically-devised ethos within the CF programme in relation to communities becoming involved in the financial decision-making process that affects their area. Increased participatory democracy and local governance is encapsulated in this question by partnerships becoming more economically independent from the governing structures that initiated them. A move to become its own GRB could be interpreted as a move towards increased independence, increased capacity among its members and greater levels of local decision-making for a partnership. However, a qualitative approach can (and has) shed light on resistance to this from within by the WG and the process often involves animosity or disagreement between local authorities and communities. In this context the changing structure of CF partnerships is driven largely by individuals within organisations a study of which involves looking at structural change from individual experience. This requires a method which can trace the complex and varying aspects of an individual 'life-world' (Bourdieu,

1989), or spectrum of subjective perceptions, to capture events and motives leading to this separation.

All three research themes require a closer examination of the perceptive narrative of individuals involved in the networks, informal structures and processual changes for better understanding. For this reason the empirical research is predominantly qualitative with use of existing quantitative data at the outset.

### *7.3 The Self in Research*

Some reflection on the self in research is given here in the first person. This addresses the issue of researcher bias and the way that it has been tackled, to some extent, through transparency and research diaries. It also highlights the possible ways in which my background, motivations for undertaking the study and personal investment in it may or may not affect process-based outcomes and analytical outputs in the research.

Ortlipp (2008) uses reflective research journals as a means to greater research transparency, not as a way of avoiding bias but as a way of reconciling with the inherent presence of bias and a subsequent attempt at understanding the process through which it influences the research process. An awareness of the researcher's:

*' . . . presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process' (Mruck & Breuer, 2003 in Ortlipp, 2008: 695)*

This can clarify inevitable bias derived from personal assumptions, beliefs and subjectivities.

A research diary in the form of six A5 sized notebooks was used in this research, both for recording and reflecting on events and narrative over the course of the fieldwork. Entries were made immediately after each interview when possible and on ad hoc basis when thoughts, reflection or ideas occurred.

In terms of mitigating bias the diary served to capture details of each interview which were not included in the narrative and may otherwise have been forgotten or overlooked. In addition it gave room for further thought and reflection, and to gain a balance between reactive and reflective perceptions of the researcher, in each interview and situation. The research diary acted as a tool to draw as much information from the fieldwork as possible, thus allowing for a more informed view and richer data. It served other useful purposes, such as a memory refresher and forming key thoughts and ideas that became the foundation of the data analysis.

### *Locating the self*

My motivations for undertaking the research can be divided into personal, educational and professional with some overlaps between the three. The personal includes my place of birth, the South Wales Valleys, during the 1980s at a time when political activism and protest, linked closely with arguments for devolution were increasing. The wider context to this includes the European Union becoming more focused on the rights of minority countries. Focus was also on supporting deprived areas through economic and social structural funding. This gave weight to pro-devolution arguments and anti-Thatcherism centralisation in the South Wales valleys. As a result of this I developed a long-standing interest in Welsh socio-economic and political issues. Subsequently my higher education was on Welsh social issues, Welsh history and regenerating deprived areas in the UK.

My first job as a researcher at the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR), the leading research body for the National Evaluation of NDC, meant close contact with the programme and its evaluators. In addition research on various housing and regeneration projects during my employment at the centre, before starting my PhD has led to a keen interest in qualitative policy research and evaluation. The combination of these experiences shaped my original research proposal for this thesis focused on a Welsh regeneration programme running under the devolved WG.

My empirical research has been aided in practical terms through my personal circumstances. I have an existing base in Cardiff in relatively close proximity to all three case study areas. In addition being in close proximity to the WG buildings in Cardiff and Merthyr contributed greatly to the facilitation of an internship and interviews with political elites. A detailed knowledge of local regeneration history gained through experience and my MSc at Cardiff University also aided my interview technique.

Qualitative research involves analysing and understanding the peopled field within which I am working and the success of the research therefore depends on relationships built up over time (Coffey, 1999). Trust, reciprocity and engagement are all part of this process and therefore an in-depth understanding of personal standpoints and views, including that of the researcher were important. This aided debates and questioning within the research and helped to draw out the individual's perception of certain subjects in the most sensitive way possible.

My aim in conducting this research is to shed light on a small part of the impact of devolution as it has played out on the ground affecting the most deprived areas of Wales. The dual role of national and regional Wales is also a very interesting setting within which to work; it has required some thought to reconcile the two within this research. Finally the community development side which has developed during the course of the data collection and analysis for the thesis has increased my knowledge and understanding and is an area which I would like to develop in future research.

The issue of researcher bias is not seen here as a major issue. The reason for this is that it was acknowledged at the outset of the research as one of the most likely problems to occur because of its qualitative nature. The data gathering was carried out with this in mind and subsequently every assumption made has been questioned in relation to bias. This has not excluded researcher bias but has opened further possibilities for meaning within the research data, thus lessening the possibility of narrow or predetermined interpretations. One example of lessening the negative effect of researcher bias is the fact that I am

a supporter of Welsh devolution in general, but a number of the findings point to fundamental problems and flaws in the WG and its ways of functioning in relation to CF: these are included and explored rationally in the findings chapter.

#### *7.4 Case Study Approach*

This section provides a philosophical rationale for a case study approach as well as an outline of the methods used to clarify case study selection. The more pragmatic and practical reasoning for the approach is outlined in the next section of the chapter on documentary analysis and scoping study. Eisenhardt (2002) attempts to distinguish between qualitative research and the case study approach, he states that case study selection must be theoretical and not random in order to be distinctive from qualitative research in general (2002). This section of the chapter is therefore a tool and a descriptor conveying the theoretical rationale behind a case study selection process.

Yin (2003) covers a number of theoretical advantages to the case study method which apply to this research including focus on the research subject, theoretical flexibility and a synergistic view of the evidence. Other advantages such as the possibility of replicating or extending a theory through filling conceptual categories and strengthening the grounding of theory through triangulation of evidence, also apply here.

As stated earlier in this chapter qualitative research implies a diminutive approach to study which can be achieved through a decision-making process that rules out the majority and focuses the specifics. Case study method is one way of achieving this in practice. Flexible and opportunistic data collection methods, combined with an overlap between data collection and analysis, means that at some point the data is leading the collection. This organic process is realistic in tackling a messy and complex area of research such as partnerships and local democracy.

A more symmetrical view of the evidence can be achieved through comparison between case studies, as well as analysis and reflection of emerging themes

within case studies. In analysis the research themes have been compared both within case studies and between case studies so as to gain more depth of insight into the findings.

Development of theory can be achieved through qualitative research which does not take a case study approach. However, in the context of CF, a programme encompassing 157 partnerships, not taking a case study approach would require time and resources beyond the scope of this research. In this context a case study approach facilitates the research.

Pettigrew (1998) states that given the limited number of cases which can be studied in a doctoral thesis, it makes sense to choose cases where the object of study is transparently observable. Contrary to an experimental design, case study selection can be theoretically led by a two-way exchange between existing empirical knowledge of the subject under study and the policy-based theoretical underpinnings. In this case the research questions have developed within the parameters of existing academic and policy-based research with contribution from empirical findings leading to further empirical investigation.

Pettigrew's (1998) focus on the representation of study themes as opposed to geographies is useful in terms of representing a sample population. However, in the case of CF the research themes apply to every CF partnership in the programme. In addition the distribution of CF partnerships in Wales is significantly related to historically-based geographical influences. Finally there is not enough existing quantitative data on CF to answer the three research questions or the overarching question: *what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?* Because of this the case study selection used geographies and territorial distinctions as a means of narrowing down the physical areas from which to choose partnerships.

### *Case Study Selection*

Reflection on the geographies of Wales as a sampling framework is outlined here. Since the establishment of the WG the boundaries of Wales have been politically delineated. Wales has become a political body rather than simply an

administrative territory addressed as part of a political project rather than a bureaucratically expedient exercise. Harris & Hooper (2006) argue that this politicisation of space is problematic because Wales does not function coherently as a geographical region in terms of industry, culture and demographics. Tensions exist between the north-south political axis and the east-west functional axis (2006). While this tension cannot be reconciled in a research project of this size, an awareness of the area-based tensions and difficulties is recognised here as part of the framework for case study selection.

### *Geographies of Wales*

The WG spatial planning policy document *the Wales Spatial Plan* (WSP) (2004) is a 20 year plan for sustainable development in Wales and is particularly significant for improving an understanding of the perceived characteristic of Wales' distinctive geographical areas from a political perspective. This research takes the critical view that areas within the WSP are divided without a clear rationale, without distinctive boundaries and without specific guidance as to where an area begins and ends. This is important to recognise in case study selection. In addition the areas are grouped and generalised through descriptive factors based on loose socio-economic factors rather than detailed and standardised demographic patterns. Further research has revealed that the WSP is no longer functioning as a planning tool within the WG due to its failure as a guide for policy implementation.

Despite its failure as a spatial planning tool the WSP has been useful in the course of mapping the geographical space in Wales for the purpose of geographical case study selection in this research. Within the WSP (see annex two for further description and maps) the 'rural' area in the North and Central Welsh geographical areas and the 'Capital Network' area of South East Wales represent the valleys, city and rural areas of Wales. A representation of all three is necessary to get a clear geographical framework for case study selection.

The valleys refer to small mining communities in the South East of Wales with a strong industrial and distinctive socio-economic history embedded in mining. A large number of all CF partnerships are located in the valleys due to the high

levels of deprivation caused to some extent by the coal pit closures during the 70s and 80s in Wales. The local authorities included within this categorisation are: Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, the Vale of Glamorgan<sup>15</sup>, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Caerphilly.

Wales has three official City Council areas: Cardiff, Swansea and Newport. Older definitions of city (a town with a Cathedral) include Bangor and St David's. However for the purpose of this case study selection they have been excluded from the city categorisation on the basis of population size.

Rural Wales can be categorised as both the North East 'coastal' area and the 'high-quality living' area in mid-Wales (WSP, 2004). The local authorities included in this categorisation are Gwynedd, Powys, Conwy, Denbighshire, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and the Isle of Anglesey. These are all County Councils apart from Conwy which is a County Borough Council.

The remaining counties of Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council are all on the East of Wales bordering with England, they have higher levels of economic development reflected in lower levels of unemployment and higher average earnings than other parts of Wales outside the city-networks according to the WSP. There are fewer CF partnerships in these counties for this reason and on this basis they have been excluded from the sampling matrix of this thesis.

This breakdown of Welsh counties represents the first stage in case study selection. It defines the broad geographical areas from which one CF must be representative in order to be able to compare and contrast between case study area characteristics shaping Wales as a whole.

### *Scoping Study*

This section of the chapter goes on to outline a scoping study which was used to narrow down and select case study areas within the geographical context

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<sup>15</sup> All are County Boroughs apart from Vale of Glamorgan, which is merely a 'Council'.

outlined above. The study was a case of empirical work informing empirical design and is therefore a minefield in terms of validity. This section provides a brief outline of the problems and successes of the scoping study as a precursor to details of the study findings later in the thesis.

The pragmatic reason for taking a case study approach was the number of CF partnerships. In 2001 there were 142 CF partnerships in different communities within Wales' 22 local authorities and 10 areas of interest within the programme. In spring 2007 the WG began the process of adding several new Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) comprising new areas and joined-up combinations of former partnership areas. At the time of the fieldwork collection for this research in 2008 there were 132 CF partnerships of varying sizes in Wales and to date there are 157 altogether in Wales. Because of this large number a case study approach was required.

Following the division of key geographical areas (valleys, rural and city), a selection process that resulted in choosing 3 case studies was led by a scoping study consulting individuals at a strategic level within the CF programme. These individuals were approached for advice and guidance on the partnerships most applicable for study in light of the research questions. Contact details for all individuals employed by CF were available on the Communities First Support Network (CFSN) website up until December 2008. This was a useful tool in the initial stages of the research<sup>16</sup>.

The research questions were used as a key tool in gaining information from individuals involved in the programme. This was in line with a statement by Pettigrew (1998 in Yin, 2003) that the object of study should be transparently observable within case studies.

Emails were sent out to the WG, local authority, CFSN and voluntary sector representatives at strategic levels of the CF programme. This encompassed each local authority area in Wales falling within the valleys, rural or city

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<sup>16</sup> CFSN has now been disbanded and replaced by a support network run jointly by Wales Council for Voluntary Associations (WCVA) ('advice' and 'training & development' side of support) and the private Company Empower ('information services' support)<sup>16</sup> which does not provide the same facilities.

category<sup>17</sup> and came to 43 individuals in total. Of the emails sent out 7 were not delivered due to changes in job role or email address and were therefore discounted. Of the 36 emails successfully delivered 30 responses were received. The responses came from a relatively even mix of WG, public sector and voluntary sector representatives. There was an uneven mix of responses from city, valley and rural local authority area representatives; the majority were from the valleys. However, this is relatively representative of the programme as there is a clustering of CF partnerships in the South Wales Valleys.

TABLE 4: Initial contacts during fieldwork scoping stage

Representative	Emails Sent	Emails Received	Responses Received
WG (CF Unit)	7	7	7
Local Authority (CF Officers)	22	19	12
Communities First Support Network	3	2	2
Voluntary Association	11	9	9

Of the 30 responses three local authority areas were excluded from the case study selection process, based on what the CF lead within those authorities had recommended and from subsequent follow-up recommendations from representatives in those areas.

*‘ . . . [the area] has a complex history of community regeneration. It’s not particularly representative of other areas. . . ’ (17:1)*

As a result of these initial responses an interview was carried out with an officer from the CFSN. The interview questioned areas under the officer’s remit in the context of the research questions. However, the interviewee’s knowledge and background covered the CF programme as a whole and gave a great deal of insight into local authority areas outside of the job remit and subsequently gave a more detailed direction to the case study selection process. On the basis of information from this interview 13 of the remaining local authorities were ruled-

<sup>17</sup> The roles of individuals within the different organisations differed with some representatives working 100% for CF and others involved on a part-time basis.

out of the selection process on the basis of difficulties within partnerships, un-representativeness and historical reasons gauged from anecdotal narrative.

The remaining 8 local authority area respondents from Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Gwynedd and Swansea were then interviewed. From these interview findings Caerphilly (valleys), Swansea (city) and Gwynedd (rural) were selected as the final sampling matrix from which to select specific partnerships.

### *Case Study Selection Process*

TABLE 5: Case Study Selection: elimination process

Local Authority	Considered because of information given in scoping email responses (based on sound knowledge of the area).	Considered because of geographical representation (based on the WSP as outlined above)	Chosen as one of the three case studies based on email responses and geographical representativeness.
Anglesey	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Blaenau Gwent	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Bridgend	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Caerphilly	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Cardiff	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	No
Carmarthenshire	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Ceredigion	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Conwy	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Denbighshire	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Flintshire	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Gwynedd	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Merthyr Tydfil	No	<b>Yes</b>	No
Monmouthshire	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	No
Neath Port Talbot	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Newport	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	No
Pembrokeshire	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Powys	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Rhondda Cynon Taff	No	<b>Yes</b>	No
Swansea	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
The Vale of Glamorgan	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Torfaen	<b>Yes</b>	No	No
Wrexham	<b>Yes</b>	No	No

The selection process was a two-way dialogue between the researcher, aiming to use the information in a factual and systematic way, and the respondents giving the information based on their knowledge in context. The issue of bias was inevitable and in retrospect the areas chosen were chosen with a large degree of influence from personal agendas. One example of this is a partnership chosen within a LA case study area partly on the basis of advice from a council officer. Anecdotal evidence gathered later in the research

revealed that the partnership was not representative of CF in the area as it was closely controlled by the local authority and provided a model example for study. It was therefore in the interest of the council officer involved in CF to recommend the best example regardless of what the research questions aimed to study. This example is one of many ways in which the use of information from one or more person can be strategically oriented in some way, whether or not it is deliberately so.

Another example of overt bias is of the CFSN officer at the outset of the scoping research. The officer in question was facing redundancy at the time of interview and seemed to have little loyalty and some degree of open resentment towards people involved in the CF programme. Because of this the officer was forthcoming with information and advice and the case study selection was more informed which was advantageous. Lessons learnt from the issues of bias arising in this research are twofold: firstly, to question every source of information rigorously and secondly to apply a systematic approach to using qualitative information where possible, to lessen the effects of biased information. These lessons were implemented in the remainder of the research to form a developed critical perspective.

## *7.5 Data Gathering*

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

This chapter explains why semi-structured interviews were used as the main mode of data collection in this research. The previous reasoning for a qualitative approach to research focuses on the fact that it allows for a narrative, data rich subjective view of wider issues. Semi-structured interviews divide narrative. By providing answers to a series of questions while allowing the researcher to pursue issues relating to the research questions and issues arising separately within the body of narrative.

32 interviews were carried out with individuals involved, or previously involved, in CF with an in-depth knowledge of the programme. The interviews were carried out in two phases between November 2008 and January 2009 and in

April 2009. This was to allow some reflective thinking between sets of interviews. The interviewees covered a range of representatives from the voluntary, public and community sector as well as academics, WG officers and civil servants, WG Ministers and staff on the Communities First Support Network.

All interviews took between 30 and 120 minutes and have been transcribed verbatim. In writing the findings for this thesis the main advantage of having such a large volume of detailed data provided potential for more informed findings and an ability to go back and re-analyse very specific discourses. The main disadvantage was the surplus data and the time it took to transcribe and analyse. The interview schedules had a core structure and line-of-questioning based on the research questions. However, all were also tailored to suit each individual's role in each case study area and to draw as much useful information as possible from each interview. The interview narratives were not always fully in line with interview schedule questions and new significant themes emerged. Tailored design of the schedule depended on the role and knowledge of each individual of CF and wider issues surrounding it at the outset of the interview. Inevitably researcher knowledge increased as the fieldwork progressed, meaning that information gathered from some interviews contributed to shaping the interview schedule for following interviews. This was a clear case of the data leading the collection in an organic process.

The advantages of conducting semi-structured interviews included: the combination of free-flowing narrative and controlled questions; allowing time and space for numerous different peoples' viewpoints on the same themes; being able to capture an informed perspective on the three research questions themes within a specific time and space.

However, when conducting the interviews in this research the balance between free-flowing narrative and questions was difficult to strike. In some cases the narrative became closer to a life-history approach and did not relate sufficiently to the interview question. In interviews during the end of phase one, in January 2010, and the whole of stage two, in April 2010, the improved knowledge of the

interviewer meant a more focused and direct interview was possible. These imbalances were taken into account during analysis. It was often difficult to strike the balance between allowing space for individual viewpoints and the time constraints of each interview.

As outlined earlier the approach taken to interview numbers was to conduct as many as time allowed with an awareness of quality control. While all the interviews contained useful data and valuable information, not all interviews contained information that answered the research questions. This was not a problem because interviewing more people gave a wider understanding of the subject under study and a number of themes emerging during the interviews. Within the context of this research it proved highly useful in designing schedules and in analysis. However, in some cases understanding was widened to the detriment of focus on the issues in hand resulting in surplus data.

The issue of prioritising data according to individuals' role or data content was also problematic and required careful judgement. The data was analysed methodically according to coding techniques, using data contents as a whole without dividing it into the individuals' role. It was then re-analysed taking the institutional role into account, using the SRA strand of the structure-agency debate as a guide.

In terms of capturing a snapshot in time and space of the issues in hand the main problem lay in the fact that political, programme and individual situations change rapidly and the data inevitably becomes out of date. For example, the elections for reformed WG powers in March 2011 may change the meaning of some narratives within the data. This does not mean that the data becomes obsolete, because capturing a static and comprehensive temporal and spatial perspective based on research can be built upon as changes occur.

The interviews were carried out in two temporally-based stages as a way of giving some time for reflection between stages. The first 23 interviews were carried out between November 2008 and February 2009 and the second set of 9 in April 2009. There was no systematic logic to the order of interviews as

arranging interviews often depended on uncontrollable factors such as availability of the respondent and willingness to participate. However, the first stage involved more interviews than the second as the data narrowed the sample. The following table shows the number of respondents by sector and institution of employment and local authority area. However, rather than aiming for a certain number of respondents the interviews aimed for a level of knowledge and answers on the research questions and surrounding issues.

### *Interview Respondents*

TABLE 6: Interview respondents by organisation

LA	Voluntary Sector	Community	LA	CF staff	Academic	WG	CF	Total
<i>Caerphilly</i>	3	1	4	2	-	-	-	10
<i>Swansea</i>	1	2	1	1	-	-	-	5
<i>Gwynedd</i>	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	4
<i>Non-Case Study area</i>	1	-	-	4	5	4	1	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>32</b>

### *Issues Encountered*

In terms of sector representation more CF co-ordinators and members of the public sector have been interviewed than any other. This inclusion is very important because on the one hand CF co-ordinators are a link between all the different sectors and on the other local authority staff and councillors are easier to locate and contact through official mediums as opposed to informal mediums such as snowballing. Because of this more local authority officers have been interviewed. All local residents interviewed were reached through a contact at the CF partnership, usually the co-ordinator, meaning that all residents interviewed were people involved in CF in some way or another and who were willing to participate in a piece of research. However, a community sector representative was interviewed from each case study area thus representing the partnership in the research, albeit at a low level.

Some interviewees from non-case study areas were interviewed partly as a result of the scoping exercise to gain perspectives on the CF programme as a whole and partly due to snowballing techniques during the fieldwork.

Finally, a disproportionate number of respondents from Caerphilly have been interviewed in comparison with the other two case studies. The main reason for this is the making connections in Caerphilly was easier because of its close proximity to Cardiff and the unrelated fact that two interviews, originally arranged with one person were with two people.

### *Ethnographic approach to an internship*

An internship on its own is defined here as a short period of work within an organisation, whereby an individual is introduced to the ways of working, both cultural and specific, of that organisation. The move from an internship to a form of data collection changed the way it was conducted and this section of the chapter outlines the way in which ethnography influenced this change.

The key difference that an ethnographic approach makes to an internship is the way observations and conversations are noted for use as data after the internship. In this case notes on conversations, observations, meetings and processes were made overtly and sent to the key contact after the internship. For this research the most applicable ethnographic methods of collecting data during the internship were participant observation and interviews. This takes an action research approach which in this context means spending time with interviewees outside the allotted interview time to gauge a more rounded view of their roles.

An ethnographic approach to any research is rooted in the belief that social interaction is best studied in its more holistic context. The internship aimed to gather data from the CF Unit in its widest possible context. This assumes that all actions are interrelated and characterises an ethnographic approach to research.

Coffey (1999) discusses interaction between the researcher and others in ethnography through the construction and formation of relationships. This allows for examination of specific events and occasions leading to the collection of data and information through question and observation. For example, the appearance of a more neutral stance on institutional ways of working from the researcher can create the possibility of more forthcoming narratives from individuals working within the parameters and constraints of that institution. However, a neutral stance could also make the researcher appear as 'an outsider' and thus not eligible to access 'insider' information.

In terms of the theoretical standpoint taken in this paper the same ontology applies to ethnography. Using SRA as a guide in this research means including the contextualisation of action from *strategic actors* (colleagues in the WG) and the influence of the *strategically oriented context* (the relevant WG Departments, policies and internal structures).

The ethnographic internship, within the WG Community Data Unit responsible for collating and publishing the CF Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) spanned a period of 2 weeks (10 working days). The role involved the collation and division of data relating to the AMR returns for 2007/8 as well as general research.

Reflections on the internship as an ethnographic exercise are from observations of the dual role of researcher and temporary colleague on which the relationships with people on a day to day basis were based. As a new face within the department there were positive and negative points for gaining as much information as possible on the strategic running of the CF programme from within the WG.

When talking to individuals informally about their work the aim was to be as un-reactive as possible. Reserving judgement on what was said provided discursive space for individuals to relate their perceptions of formal and informal structures and relationships outside of the remit inherent in a governing institution like the WG. This was partly achieved through an initial vocal statement of intent to perform an exploratory study rather than an evaluative

one, also through a promise of confidentiality and the opportunity to comment on the transcript. The individuals involved in arranging the placement were informed at the outset that the information gathered through day to day work was to contribute to background information, rather than the main body of the research data which is comprised of interviews. This was followed by a verbal agreement that quotes and data gathered during the period were only to be used within the thesis, with the permission of the quoted individual or the head of the CF Unit. Two key individuals within the Communities Data Unit and the CF Unit were interviewed during the internship, with an understanding that the interview transcripts were primary empirical data for use within the body of the thesis.

Striking a balance between being an outsider and a temporary member of the team meant being open and inquisitive without overstepping the boundary between being investigative and interrogative. Not being aware of some of the cultural norms and values inherent in the institution gave the impression of naivety to some staff who saw them as a basic part of everyday life. Making mistakes due to this lack of awareness was a double-edged sword. In some respects it appeared to make individuals more obliging in explaining complex aspects of their job in a clear manner, without assumed knowledge on the subject. However, being an outsider also meant an ultimate lack of full understanding of the everyday interactions and relationships between individuals and departments within the institution. This was compounded by the relatively short time period of the internship.

The data gathered during the internship was a combination of notes and interview transcripts. The notes have been used as background for the thesis mainly contributing to an understanding of the WG as a strategically oriented structure/institution. Reports from the internship revealed some confusion between colleagues within the same department on ways of working and structural processes. Some of these were advantageous for individuals or strategic actors and some were confusing. All colleagues during the internship were aiming to work in a way that was most efficient and effective within an environment that did not always allow this. The set of rules for officers were

sometimes unclear, even at executive level, which resulted in some colleagues taking initiative and working relatively successfully in a messy situation and some being confused about what their role entailed. In analysis these observations shed light on decision made in the design and implementation of the CF programme which were not apparent when reading plenary records on the decision-making process.

This is testimony to the advantages of using an ethnographic approach to uncover issues and problems that would not arise in interviews, because individuals may not want to undermine their own role through criticising the institution, as was the case in interviews with respondents within the WG. In addition individuals working within an institution have a better knowledge of the positive and negative aspects of it which is very useful for research. However, this viewpoint will inevitably be influenced by long-term experience, while an ethnographic observation has an outsider's perspective and it is useful to have both. Problems of confusion, power imbalance and contradictory structures would also not arise in official documents because the mechanisms of an institution work to preserve the existence of the whole. In this case observation through being on the inside provided good insight into wider structural influences on issues arising within the interviews.

## *7.6 Data Analysis*

The interview data has been analysed in three stages, using an interpretative coding approach and the theoretical guide for analysis.

Stage one involved reading all interviews, coding them according to interpretation without judgement. Stage two involved categorising the codes into meaningful groups which was data-led process. Stage three involved drawing-out themes according to relevant research questions and additional, emerging, subjects of interest. Following these stages a summary of each theme was written to collate the summaries with a Strategic-Relational Approach in mind.

Qualitative research often takes a *grounded theory approach* coupled with a *constructionist approach* (Mills, 2004). For this reason a short summary of the theories and how they relate to this research is given here. Grounded theory is a process of the data leading to theoretical outcomes. Its aim is to develop new theory that is faithful to the data in question. It has been praised for allowing the researcher to change the direction or focus of a research project and possibly their research aims, due to outcomes in the data (Neuman, 2011: 158). In terms of data leading the research as in grounded research, there are some elements of this within the data collection undertaken for this research (namely in interview schedule design as outlined earlier).

Undertaking qualitative research requires the view that society is being constantly reformed and recreated by agents within, (in this case strategic actors) rather than something that is beyond the reach and influence of people. The data findings presented in this thesis were gauged through a practical approach with grounded research methods e.g. drawing-out themes using the data. However, theme summarisation was guided by SRA. In addition the literature-based development of the research questions indirectly influenced the final shape of the data and subsequently the data-analysis, making it both data and theory-led.

A constructionist approach makes the assumption that social phenomena and social reality is constructed through the interpretations and actions of individuals during social interaction (Parker, 2005). This research states that the narratives comprising the data represent one small part of a reality and each narrative is one representation in a wider of pool of possibilities. In addition the narrative relates a strategically-oriented approach based on individual and institutional agendas.

The practice and process of coding has been discussed by many authors (Casey, 2008; Salanda, 2009; Flick, 2006; Richardson, 1998; Seidel, 1998) with different views on key issues such as validity, ethics and bias. An overriding theme is the importance of recognising that qualitative research is a *messy process* and subsequently data analysis is something that can be carried out

over time, through in-depth exploration and rigorous examination and re-examination. Research diaries have been used throughout the fieldwork data collection and analysis. In addition all interviewees have been sent a copy of their transcript and asked to comment on any discrepancies or misinterpretations as they see them. This approach aimed to make the research a reciprocal and mutually-beneficial process (Ortlipp, 2008).

Each of the six fieldwork diaries were used in interview analysis to expand on points emerging from the transcripts. The diaries filled gaps in the interview transcripts and drew-out issues that would not have been immediately apparent through transcript analysis. The most common reflection on interviews noted within the diaries was visible interaction in conversation such as body language, long pauses between sentences on certain subjects and general attitude towards different subject matters. These details from outside the parameters of the transcripts added to depth of understanding in individual narrative and, in some cases, overtly strategic approaches to shaping the narrative.

#### *Strategic-Relational Approach to Interpretation*

This section introduces the way in which the theoretical guide influences the findings. The interview data gathered for this thesis has been analysed using a SRA as guidance. SRA developed largely from a Critical Realist (CR) ontological perspective (Fairclough, 2003; Jessop, 2008) and is used here as a response to problems identified in the application of CR.

SRA focuses on the state and state formation using capitalist theories and global economic interpretations. It is evident then that not every strand of SRA is useful for this research and neither would it be useful to try and include all strands in this thesis. Encompassing such broad parameters would likely prove a cumbersome practice causing more focus on bending and stretching the findings to fit the theory rather than using the theory to enhance data analysis. To this end only SRA's conceptualisation of structure and agency is used here for a higher level of analysis of the data.

The SRA conceptualisation of structure and agency has been used to view narrative data in relation to the institutional structure(s) framing the research on the CF programme, the WG and local authorities in Wales. Analysis starts with the SAR-based assumption that structure is as a necessary prerequisite for agency to act. Within this context strategy and selectivity are also included. Interviewees and interviewer are viewed in analysis as strategic actors functioning in a strategically oriented context which is represented (strategically) through narrative.

This approach draws on the concept of motives for action within a pre-existing and complex structure. The motives for action identified within the interviews are the ones stated by the interviewee: 'the reason I think this' or 'the reason this happened', for example. Outside of narrative statements of intent it is problematic to speculate on motives. However, a focus on interviewee reasoning during interview analysis has been used to give depth to the outcomes. Mills' (Mills, 1967 in Casey, 2008) 'vocabularies of motives' is closely associated with the approach taken here and states that reasons behind actors giving motives is illuminating in its own right. Mills terms motivation talk as:

*'... a technique for organising, controlling and judging action' (Casey, 2008: 4).*

Mills (1940) states that articulated motives reveal hidden motives or reasons for articulating one motive over another. The one element of Mills' theory adopted here is the importance of realising that all vocabularies of motive are located in specific situations.

*'Motives are of no value apart from the delimited societal situations for which they are the appropriate vocabularies. They must be situated' (Mills, 1940: 913)*

SRA goes further by focusing on strategic selectivity by actors and institutions, that is, the process of decision-making and acting to pursue an individual or institutional strategy. SRA places interviewee narrative into analytical categories which relate to a given situation, in this case institutions: 'the actual' and 'the imagined'. This separation means consistent comparison between and within

interviews to locate confirmation and contradiction on emerging themes. The actual is information confirmed by every given source and therefore undisputed within the context of this thesis (although still contestable). Contradictions between and within interview narrative can be made clearer through external sources of information such as policy documents, in this case National Assembly for Wales Plenary Records (2000). The imagined most commonly refers to rhetoric used by individuals to represent institutions, sometimes with the purpose of establishing or reaffirming that institution's status and shaping the way it is viewed. The actual can also be part of the imagined, especially when, as is often the case, the definition of the latter depends on the perceived existence of the former. Jessop uses the example of an imagined line between state and society being drawn and redrawn for the purpose of actors pursuing particular strategic agendas and this is the widest conception of the imagined in SRA (Jessop, 2008). This part of SRA has led cross-questioning between and within interviews during analysis.

In-line with SRA, strategic relations are identified through categorisation of respondents by institutional perspectives and role including: CF and community staff and volunteers, elected representatives, local authority staff and WG officials. The influence of role on perspectives reflected through narratives has been captured in analysis and the following paragraphs drawn directly from the findings give detail of this categorisation<sup>18</sup>

Respondents who are *CF staff or volunteers* are more likely to have a personal or theoretically-developed (often political theory) perspective. Motivation for working at a local level in community development is closely related with personal ideals and views rather than financial or material reward. This is especially in the case of volunteers but most staff members had also been volunteers at some point in their careers and had also worked for very little pay at more than one time. Ideals came hand in hand with a well developed sense of social justice often backed by activist theories. Some staff and volunteers

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<sup>18</sup> This is the one point of the thesis where the findings are presented before the appropriate findings chapter. This exception has been made because the findings in question are extremely relevant to making the point that actors and structures can both be strategically oriented. In addition these findings in particular serve a more fruitful purpose in this section of the thesis as they do not fit directly with any of the finding other themes.

were motivated to work in community development to benefit *their* community rather than being motivated by ideology. However, all CF staff and volunteers stated that they were working to improve their area and benefit the collective, rather than pursuing individual goals.

Local authority staff and officers stated that community development contributes to the greater good. However, most were also concerned with structure, funding and the practical constraints on idealistic intentions. Councillors often had a clear view of how they thought CF should be working in their area and were critical of the structure in general. Both local authority officers and Councillors were on the whole pursuing wider agendas and did not see CF as a priority.

WG officials responsible for CF were positive about current changes to pursue a more 'outcomes-focused' approach and talked about the future of the programme. These individuals often discussed strategic decisions in terms of programme-wide and Wales-wide impact, rather than on projects or people involved in the programme. The strategic angle is represented through discourse. While a CF officer would discuss funding reallocation using the terms 'jobs' and 'projects' WG members would discuss it using the terms 'support' and 'service delivery'.

In an SRA context these perspectives are competing discourses drawing and re-drawing the line between state and society or contesting it from another perspective. CF is a state-funded and strategically oriented programme which is labelled 'bottom-up' but governed from the top-down, this paradox is all the more visible as it is reflected in different roles and ideas.

### *Issues Encountered*

Of the 32 interviewees five responded to their transcript with comments. Most requested small technical changes to figures and wording in the transcripts. Three requested not to be quoted on certain, more sensitive, topics and one stated that they felt uncomfortable with the transcript as a whole and would rather it was not used. Overall responses from the five in question were not positive and contrary to Ortlip's (2008) assertion, the process did not appear to

be empowering for most interviewees. This raises the question of research ethics and the benefits of research for the people involved. The inherent value of relevant research is acknowledged here to reconcile the difficulty of interviewee benefits. The aim here has been to strike a balance between the value of the research as a politically and relatively grounded piece of work and the time and energy of the respondents.

## 8. Integration, interrelations and status

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The previous chapters have put Communities First (CF) in its broader context using literature on: Welsh Devolution (the state) and the Community Turn (and the community); and using Multi-level Governance, territorial rescaling and the Strategic Relational Approach to understand the relationship between the two. This chapter now presents the findings from research questions investigated using the methods justified in the previous chapter and the theory in the preceding one. Findings are drawn from analysis of 32 in-depth qualitative interviews with staff and volunteers involved in the Communities First (CF) programme and its pilot, *People in Communities*. Data collected through an ethnographic internship over two weeks at the Welsh Government (WG) has been used in conjunction with the main body of findings.

Conducted in three case study areas over two periods, the first between December 2008 and February 2009 and the second during April 2009, the interviews have been structured according to the three research questions and tailored according to interviewee role and case study area.

While the research questions (RQ) proved useful in guiding interviews (see Annex 4), the content of all 32 went outside the parameters of the questions to form new emerging themes. The three research questions that structured the interview schedules are addressed in this chapter and the findings emerging outside the parameters of the questions in the next chapter, chapter nine. The broader question of *what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution* is addressed throughout the findings. The questions come under headings to present the findings clearly, when in reality the findings were 'messy' in terms of subject and chronology.

The research questions are addressed under the following headings: *Integration and Strategy* (RQ 1: 'how have pre-existing, non-state community development organisations been integrated into the CF programme since 2001?'); *Statutory-community Relations* (RQ 2: *what are the (inter)relationships between CF staff*

*(including volunteers) and local authority representatives involved in the programme?); Structure, Independence and Sustainability (RQ 3: what are the reasons given for and impact of change to partnership GRB status since 2001?).*

In line with a Strategic-Relational Approach (SRA) to analysis the WG, local government and the CF programme and partnerships are seen as *strategically-oriented structures* with agents working within them as *strategic actors*. The theory illuminates the findings through highlighting the spatial significance of strategically oriented structures and strategic actors. In addition it highlights the governing powers of the WG in Wales, local authority governance in regions of Wales and CF partnership governance within wards, sub-wards and LSOAs. The CF programme as a spatial structure covers Wales but does not possess Wales-wide governing power. As outlined in the literature review on governance and space (chapter five) a complex interplay of economic, social and cultural factors influence the creation of territory.

In SRA terms space must be viewed in relation to time and vice versa which means recognition of such factors as the relatively recent establishment of the WG as a governing force, the time-limited nature of CF as a programme and staff turnover within local authorities and CF partnerships.

From a SRA perspective CF partnerships are both 'materialised' (established) and 'processual' (evolving) entities. Within analysis this has captured the changes that come about because an individual has joined or left an established partnership putting emphasis on the specific roles allocated within the partnership: the role of the partnership co-ordinator, for example. The way in which community development activities running before CF have been assimilated into the programme since 2001 can also be seen as strategically oriented for individual and organisational pursuits, particularly in the case of local authority structures.

## 8.1 Integration and Strategy

This section of the chapter on integration and strategy has evolved from narrative relating to the first research question: *how and in what ways have pre-existing, non-state community-run organisations been integrated into CF post 2001?* This question tested the WG policy rhetoric on:

*‘ . . . communities doing it for themselves’* (WG, 2000a).

Interviewee reflections on the integration of community development groups into CF after 2001 reveal that there is some value in this; such as inclusivity, local involvement and participation. However, cases where CF partnerships are seen to take responsibility for tackling deprivation from pre-existing groups reveal conflicting narrative within the CF partnerships. On the one hand it is improving the social impact of deprivation in an area and on the other it could be seen as taking leadership away from community members. In addition different approaches to integration reveal that in some cases local leadership results in integration between CF and community development groups. In other cases more statutory control means more integration between CF partnerships and existing state-funded programmes (Heads of the Valleys, European funded projects and Strategic Regeneration Areas, for example) and less with community development groups.

### *Defining pre-existing community organisations*

Different types of community organisations are important to distinguish between in order to highlight the complexity of the research question. The CF case study areas contain a range of different types of voluntary and community sector organisations conducting community development<sup>19</sup>.

Before beginning to answer the first research question, this section of the chapter gives a brief overview of the types of community development organisations existing in the case study CF areas. In some cases this distinction

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<sup>19</sup> At present the Third Sector Research Centre is investigating the geographical distribution of third sector organisations under the current Coalition Government's Big Society (Mohan 2011). Findings imply that there are fewer third sector organisations in acutely deprived areas.

holds significance for the meaning of the findings, particularly in relation to individual perception of them. Community organisations are in three categories within the findings based on the *purpose* of a given community development organisation in order to define pre-existing non-state community development organisations within the research question. This focus on purpose is closely connected with strategy and an SRA approach. The value of this approach was reaffirmed in the data by a number of respondents stating that community development requires a purpose in order to harness the energy and drive of residents in a locality.

The first category is community groups created by residents to pursue a specific issue(s) with the local authority (commonly housing issues). These organisations were mainly tenant and resident associations and lobbying groups. The second category includes groups organised by residents and voluntary sector staff to support service delivery of welfare provision and support at local level. These organisations include youth centres, support groups for young parents, support for the elderly, counselling services and drop-in centres. The final category includes community groups created to bring local people together to socialise or share an interest. These organisations included dance groups, groups with a particular interest e.g. history, boxing, scouts, church groups and football clubs. An additional category mentioned in interviews was organisations that existed in mining communities before the pit closures of the 1960s. These included boxing clubs, the Local Miner's Welfare Committee, St John's Ambulance, Girl's Life Brigade and the YMCA. However, these organisations disappeared from the case study areas with the advent of the pit closures. There was some degree of overlapping membership between different types of groups in the same area revealing some insight into social or civic core community membership.

While different types of community groups are created for different purposes they have a number of common characteristics all of which relate them to integration with CF post-2001. A number of different types of community organisations shared multi-purpose buildings which have become the base for CF officers and volunteers. In two of the case study areas integration between

community groups and CF had taken place in part because they shared a building allowing informal relationships to form over the long term. In the third case study area the CF building was purpose-built and the partnership staff recalled a struggle to 'get people through the door'. In contrast one respondent noted that having a non-council owned building (owned by the local diocese) gave a degree of independence and weight to the partnership from the perspective of external community groups. These findings are an indication of local authority domination, a strong theme spanning findings relating to all three research questions.

Defining the different types of community groups in each of the three case study areas revealed detail about the way in which CF fitted-in with these groups. Because the majority of community groups were formed in response to an identified need in the area (type one), in most cases if CF staff members supported existing development work the partnership had buy-in from local people.

#### *Perceptions of low integration*

Low levels of integration refers to a comparatively small amount of collaborative work between CF partnerships and those community development organisations existing actively within a CF area (as defined by the CF programme). This is measured through comparison between work that CF partnerships carry-out independently or with the local authority and community projects or organisation within the CF area or wider afield. The baseline for defining levels of integration is: the number of existing local community activities and organisations involved in CF, and the degree to which they are involved, in each case study. What has also been gauged through the data is the view from non-CF community organisation members on CF partnerships and vice versa. Co-ordinators put more emphasis on collaboration with members of local community groups, other CF co-ordinators and volunteers than with local authority or WG officers. Interestingly, interviewees at strategic level did not place great importance on CF integration with existing community groups, which is a contrast to policy rhetoric on communities 'doing it for themselves'. Exact

levels of integration by collaborative activity between organisations are difficult to quantify because of the, often, informal nature of community organisations.

Differing opinions emerged on the benefit and value of integration. Some saw it as an absolute necessity in terms of CF partnership working (mainly community group members and CF staff and volunteers) and others saw it a secondary advantage or 'bonus' to core partnership work (mainly local authority and WG officers). In two of the three case studies, members from pre-existing community organisations became volunteers or staff within CF partnerships and saw it as a good thing because it encapsulated the aim of CF: broadly, to build capacity and improve the lives of people suffering from the impact of deprivation. In theory all CF partnerships include representation from community members which often means members who are already active and willing to attend meetings, work on projects and carry out general tasks to fulfil the CF remit. This could lead to a lack of whole-community representation and the well-known issue of 'the loudest voices being heard'. The integration issue is therefore pivotal in many cases and hinges on partnerships reaching-out to individuals within the community which in turn depends on how important partnership members consider integration to be.

The findings show that levels of integration between CF partnerships and community development groups can be dependent upon the community groups in question being integrated into the partnership through representation on the board. Without this formal integration CF and community groups in the same area often work independently of each other.

*' . . . the partnerships need to become more strategic in order to [involve] . . . the community better . . . by becoming bogged down in running projects and doing all the legwork in community development partnerships are no longer a mediator between the community and the [Welsh Government] . . . they are part of the disaffected community, drowning in the economic and social problems that come with deprivation and failing to help practically' (17:7)*

In addition CF staff priorities are influenced by the level of statutory involvement in the partnership. If a partnership has strong statutory ties, there is the scope for the co-ordinator to take direction from the local authority. In one case study, the local authority focused CF work on supporting statutory delivery, leaving less staff time and resources for outreach and capacity building. This means low levels of integration within the partnership in question.

Drawing on the data it is possible to argue that: integration between CF partnerships and other local community organisations is seen as valuable and in-line with the ethos of CF; the CF partnership co-ordinator is pivotal to levels of integration and when CF partnerships are closely managed by local authority structures and individuals, the level of integration is lower than in areas where the CF partnership work has little direction from the local authority.

#### *Perspectives on community development*

As well as the issue outlined above, the structure of the CF programme can also be seen as a barrier to integration between CF and other community organisations. The data revealed that, on the whole, strategic actors favour statutory control over partnerships which implies an underlying incompatibility between the community and strategic CF stakeholder perspective. One respondent stated that community development could not happen while partnerships were accepting directives from statutory bodies or funding from the state:

*'Too much state money ruins the ethos of Community Development' (4:2)*

This view was backed by a more philosophical view of community development as independent from state funding and direction. The same respondent strongly felt that community development programmes implemented by government cannot deliver the right resources at short notice in the way that successful community development requires. The respondent went further by saying that it was impossible to have a state-funded anti-poverty programme in a capitalist society.

*' . . . neo-liberal capitalism . . . is based on self-interest as consumers in a free market . . . they are antithetical opposites' (4:7)*

Another respondent made a similar point. They stated that working within bureaucratic restraints does not help community development work, including integration, and that community development is best done by people who understand the people they are trying to help.

*'[the Community Development Foundation people] might be great at doing flip charts and OHP. . . but they're not going to cut the mustard with kids around here because they don't understand.'* (7:2)

This respondent felt that some aspects of CF are handicapped by a statutory culture and that this has manifested in tensions between 'true' community development and statutory service delivery. This was linked to low levels of integration in terms of methods for increasing participation. One respondent felt that state funding and control can be detrimental to traditional community development. The anti state funding perspective suggests resistance to the idea of co-option which is a key facet of CF at all strategic levels. In addition some examples imply that co-option and interdependence are seen in opposition to authentic community development philosophy and practice. However, in terms of integration the state funded status of CF does not have a direct impact according to the findings; rather, it is the mediator between the state and communities having an impact.

The issue of CF not adhering to traditional community development is a recurring reason for problematic integration running through the data. One community development officer gave an example to back-up the assertion that CF is not working as it was designed to work 'with' the community. Her group had developed organically from a childcare group where the carers identified a lack of ability among young parents to play with their children because they had become parents at a young age. This group was run by staff and volunteers from the child care group using the National Standards for Community

Development and was very successful in terms of achieving what it set out to do.

The group had some contact with the CF partnership in the area through individual initiative rather than structural collaboration. However, the group functioned remotely from CF overlapping only occasionally because the organisation's aims were very focused in terms of activities, target group, timetables etc and the CF was seen as having a broader remit. The respondent involved in the play scheme project deliberately separated the project and the use of the term 'community development' from discussion on CF in the interview. In this case the community development organisation in question was not well integrated into CF. The two were deliberately separated by reference to community development 'success' (play scheme) and 'failure' (CF) and a lack of community development expertise among CF staff was alluded to:

*' . . . [CF] people were appointed to roles as community regeneration development people [and]. . . they were great at putting through all the forms and the reams of paperwork and all that but they had no real feel for how the project should be working from a bottom-up approach' (6:4)*

Another example of the distinction between CF and certain specific definitions of community development is the importance of individuals and interpersonal skills over structures and funding in practicing community development. This manifested in a critique of CF for being more concerned with quantitative output than with the quality and sustainability of the work done. This was a common issue running throughout the findings and encapsulated by the question.

*' . . . there [is] a lot of pressure on them to achieve and reach numbers . . . how many people you had attending a community event, how many people you had at a summer carnival . . . And that's all very well but what did they do after? What did they get out of it? How did they develop through that? . . . Did they make choices about what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do? It was done to people rather than with people, yeah' (6:4)*

Strategic level respondents, however, did not refer to the integration between CF partnerships and community organisations in this way. Most continued to reinforce the narrative around CF as a community-led programme engaging with the community to tackle deprivation.

Some respondents see CF as a good structure in which to practice community development work. One respondent talked about community development as a skill which cannot be taught. Using the example of a community development worker from a notorious area of Northern England the respondent detailed what they saw as 'good' community development (including integration). The development worker in question walked around the estate talking to people and getting a feel for the problems in the area.

*' . . . making sure that the kids on the estate knew he was serious' (7:2)*

Over time people came to know him and trust him and approach him as a first port-of-call with problems and he would draw on his experience and resources to come up with practical solutions. His approach was non-prescriptive, difficult to measure and depended on the force of his character; this was seen by the respondent as a true form of community development which facilitated better collaborative working with other community organisations.

*' . . . from x . . . he'd been doing community development before it became fashionable . . . [he] didn't use the word 'stakeholder' and 'participatory appraisals' and all that bollocks' (7:2)*

Other characteristics required for successful community development and specifically in order to build the trust needed is a permanent base to work from. A number of respondents praised the CF model for its longevity following a series of short-term area-based regeneration programmes and initiatives. One respondent in particular talked about the value of having a permanent base in terms of drawing people into joining CF work.

*‘ . . . this guy comes and he connects with the residents and he does a really good job and he loses the funding and he’s gone. We see pots of money coming and going all the time and they think ‘here we go again’ . . . with us being here and solid for 9 years its like we’ve built up that trust . . . people do get to know you and trust you and people do start coming in . . . they’re like ‘oh X is working there . . . lets call in and have a cuppa in the café and see what else is going on’ (12:7)*

Another key facet of community development work is a local sounding board from the outset. This was seen as the ideal way to draw people into CF work because it gave them a stake in the partnership from the outset. This requirement hinges on the principle of co-working with residents in an area to achieve outcomes with them.

*‘Communities still get things done to them which puts a lot of power in the arms of officers . . . you can’t help it they will take the lead, their jargon becomes the way of doing things. On the other hand with CF, my way of seeing it, if we’re going to do it correctly we can’t listen until we’ve got the local sounding board. . . .’ (8:7)*

Having good negotiators on board was also seen as pivotal to good community development. It could be argued that this is a different way of stating that the loudest voices get heard. However, in one example it proved advantageous in terms of community and resident involvement in the partnership work. One resident in a case study partnership ensured that the partnership employed its own staff instead of the local authority by speaking out at a briefing meeting and questioning the approach laid out by the local authority officers.

*‘The guy that was chair at the time . . . was one of these naturals, you find them in the Labour movement, the Trade Union movement you find them in community activism. People who are natural negotiators who can naturally take over meetings, start running things and make council officials look stupid, excellent guy’ (8:9)*

Most importantly was the ability to interact with others from different organisations, draw them in and work collaboratively. This skill to engage and develop long-term relationships with unpaid community members and volunteers meant higher levels of integration between CF and existing community groups in two of the case study areas. The link between integration of CF and community organisations and 'community development' approaches, as they have been defined here, is significant. With this in mind the 'big bang' approach to CF implementation discussed under design and implementation in the next chapter is an important factor to take into account in the context of low levels of integration.

The data reveals that 'traditional community development', including skills to integrate community organisations, is viewed as a process of actors creating their own structures in response to arising needs in their community. In addition where solid local authority structures already exist and incorporate CF into these structures, integration between CF partnership and community groups is less than in areas where there is little or no directive for local authorities. Flexible structures, to accommodate reflexive projects and activities, quick decision-making and reciprocal relationships are necessary for community development.

*'If somebody says . . . 'I think it would be really great we've got a dozen people who want to do so and so this weekend all we need is £100 to hire a DJ or Hall' . . . oh no, you'd have to tell everybody 6 months in advance . . . I think that's what's caused the frustration . . . also there has been a bit of conflict between what the communities tell the co-ordinator that they want [and] what the co-ordinator's employer, the council . . . I know there have been instances . . . where the co-ordinators have been given the gypsies warning and told 'don't forget who your employers are' (6:5)*

CF partnerships sit between community groups and local authorities and the degree to which the partnership is influenced by each determines the level of integration to some extent.

Levels of integration between CF partnerships and other community development organisations not depend only on the community development skills of the individuals involved. CF is a structure which is a necessary prerequisite for actors involved in the programme to facilitate organisational integration between CF and other community groups. The context in which this discussion is set can be seen as strategically oriented in terms of views 'on-the-ground' contrasting with political structures; a common occurrence. CF community development workers tend to see integration with other community groups into CF as a strategic pursuit and local authority officers tend to prioritise service provision over integration. This reflects a contradiction at the heart of CF and a fundamental conflict within the duality that is agents and structures working within the CF programme. Different views embedded in a wider context and the choice to voice them over other views reveals a dialectic duality and an interesting contrast between CF structures and the views of those working within and outside those structures.

One example of the impact of structural strategy on integration is the context for the Caerphilly CF partnership case study. There was some discussion and some conflict between Caerphilly Council and the WG at the outset of *People in Communities*, the pilot programme for CF established in eight areas of Wales in 2001 including Caerphilly. This was because of the all-inclusive approach that the Council wanted to take. When CF was implemented in 2001 Caerphilly Council designed a structure enabling existing community development work done by the council. This meant CF working as another implementation level between the Council and existing development work. Of the 19 CF partnerships in Caerphilly all co-ordinators have a health officer, an environment officer and an education officer to work with and all are line-managed by the council. This approach provides a good example of a council mediating integration of pre and post CF development work.

However, some problems were noted by respondents in this case study, namely confusion around what CF was actually meant to be doing and frustration with a lack of official power over development officers. The health, environment and education officers in the area are line-managed by staff within the council which

makes the job of the CF co-ordinator very difficult. One member of CF staff stated that giving instructions was more like asking a favour than asking someone to do their job. For example, the health, social care and education officers working within the council did not have an obligation to contribute to CF work and therefore sometimes did not prioritise it and the co-ordinator was powerless to stop this without local authority assistance. Ultimately power over welfare provision direction, focus and process remains firmly within the local authority in this case study despite the political rhetoric stating that CF allows a redistribution of power through decentralisation. The contrast between how community development is defined in the data by community development workers (reflexive, responsive and flexible) is in conflict with the protocols and existing flows of power and hierarchy within local authorities.

The finding on the adverse effect of council domination on integration is consolidated by the case of one Caerphilly partnership which was mentioned by a number of respondents. It has changed its GRB from Caerphilly Council to a voluntary organisation after a great deal of conflict with the council over decision-making at a local level. The partnership had a great deal of support cut by the council at one point due to the conflict which had a massively adverse effect on its work with other community groups.

*'I think x Council Officer said 'fine, we'll pull all the support' which they did . . . that resulted in losing the co-ordinator, the support officer, the youth worker, the health officer, because although the health officers are employed by the local health board they are line-managed by the council . . . they had their website but that's gone now' (2:6)*

Interviews with individuals in the Caerphilly case study partnership were not particularly revealing regarding the connection between the partnership and community organisations in the area. While the co-ordinator and development workers make some effort to involve community groups in their work they are restricted by structures that do not support these attempts.

The theoretical guide allows this question to be further developed into an issue of structure versus agency. From a SRA perspective, if the CF programme is the structure in question and the individuals practicing community development the agency, the point at which they are conflicting is a duality, or one situation containing two parts. Both parts are strategically oriented and are therefore dependent on each other to some extent in the pursuit of their strategy. This reveals that despite lack of coherence between community development and CF in some cases, they are part of the same duality for different reasons. However, confusion arises when the structure is based on conflicting and contradictory ground: as both a state driven and a community driven entity, for example.

To summarise this case study, tight council control over CF implementation in the area means the partnership is integrated into existing council service delivery which puts existing statutory sector service delivery at a strategic level above community development work. While this model has been financially and structurally successful it does not allow for integration with community development organisations from the bottom-up in the way that the other two case studies that were implemented with much less council control over decision-making have allowed. In this case the structures in the Caerphilly case study do not aid integration between CF and community development organisations. This case study supports the view that more flexible approaches are required for successful community development including integration.

However, the WG views this case study as one of the most successful in Wales because of its cost effective structures incorporating CF partnerships into existing council work. This raises more serious questions around the perceived role of community groups in CF. Evidence from the research reveals that 'success' within CF, as it is defined by the WG, does not necessarily require a great deal of involvement from local people or integration of local community development groups. By contrast in the Swansea case study (detailed below) which is the most structurally and symbolically separate from the statutory sector, data revealed that community groups and local people feel that they are valued as an integral part of the partnership.

### *Perceptions of high integration*

High integration refers to frequent and consistent joint activity and collaboration between CF partnerships and other non-CF community groups in the same locality, defined according to CF's assigned boundaries.

One case study area in particular provided an example of high integration. In the Swansea case study community development work in the area before CF was predominantly bottom-up. In 2000 the area was chosen as a *People in Communities* pilot area because of the high levels of community development activity. *People in Communities* laid the foundations for CF in the form of involving representatives from all local organisations who were already part of a Community Development Team (CDT) (which started as a Tenants Association). The current CF partnership board is now comprised of roughly the same individuals who were running the CDT in the area before 2001.

The CDT was established in the 1990s because of housing reallocation and subsequent feelings of unrest in the community. The CDT comprises representatives from the police, a religious organisation called Cornerstone and two councillors in the area. The same key individuals involved at the outset of the CDT are now involved in CF and all respondents stated that CF has had a positive impact in terms of joining-up organisations in the area under one banner.

*'The same organisations, you know as they were then . . . they used to work individually but now they work all together under the power of CF. We do all their finances and things, if they're looking for funding we help them with applications and we look after their money' (12:3)*

The partnership co-ordinator stated that CF was better at harnessing community energy than *People in Communities*:

*'Prior to CF this area had 2 years of People and Communities but that was merely funding . . . just a grant. So the [CF] process worked better than*

*anything before because it gave people a label and a reason, a brand name basically, to work under and come together . . .’ (10:5)*

Staff and volunteers from this partnership stated that CF means a great deal of advantages such as funding for the co-ordinator, resources and subsequent renewed interest in community development among local people.

*‘I don’t think that CDT could have carried on for this amount of time without CF’ (12:3)*

Since the advent of CF the partnership co-ordinator (who comes from a business background and therefore had the necessary budget, accounting and audit management required for such a task) has assisted nearly all community organisations in the area with bid-writing to fund various small-scale community projects which has resulted in Lottery funding in more than one case. However, the fundamental structure of community-led decision-making which characterised the community development organisation before 2001 has remained the same since CF and, linked to this, the partnership became its own GRB in 2004. This case makes it possible to argue that the community development worker approach is as important to the success of CF as funding support and mechanisms.

One CF staff member, also a lifelong local resident, was positive about the impact of CF on herself and her locality. Starting as a volunteer this individual has gradually moved up the ranks to become a Community Development Officer for CF. She stated that while CF has integrated itself into pre-existing organisations in the area a large number of uninvolved people living in the area do not know what CF is. Nor what it has done to benefit the area despite its good work over the last nine years. To combat this she writes an annual newsletter which publicises CF work and activities.

*‘ . . . the boulders around the park area, the traffic lights all these different things area direct result of work we’ve done with others . . . but I don’t think the*

*community realise that it's anything to do with CF, they probably don't even know what CF is . . .'* (12:4)

The Gwynedd case study partnership shows a similar process of integration between community groups and CF through individual relations. Located on a relatively isolated estate it has had a high level of community activity in pursuit of social improvement at local level. The co-ordinator, one Councillor from Gwynedd Council, the CF Officer in Gwynedd Council and two community member volunteers were interviewed for this research in 2009.

Community development work existing before CF and the process of integration between old and new at implementation stages was a focal point for all respondents from this case study. Work in the area pre-dating CF can be categorised into two polarised types: top-down and bottom-up. The top-down community development comprised a Community Development Project run by the Community Development Foundation (CDF) from 2000 to 2002 focusing on the physical aspects of regeneration. The bottom-up community activity included the Tenants Association (TA) in the area involving a number of strong local characters who carried out protests regularly during the 1990s. In addition all respondents reported recurring instances of vigilantism on the estate before CF constituting a second form of bottom-up community activism.

All respondents criticised the first approach for encroaching on work within the second. The CDF officers were not seen as community development workers and the work they were doing was not seen to benefit the community. In one case study vigilantism was committed against gangs of children in their early teens causing fires, vandalism and general disruption on the estate. In response to this a gang of young people in their late teens and early twenties threatened the younger gang to stop their disruptive behaviour (one example given was 'dangling them over a river').

Under these circumstances residents interviewed felt that the vigilantism was a good thing and that it was successful in terms of lessening damage to personal property and keeping the general peace on the estate. Respondents on the

estate were in favour of bottom-up approaches to community development and communities keeping the community safe. This is an extremely important contextual factor affecting integration between CF and other community groups in the area. The favourable view of community-driven development was also reflected in general mistrust of the police among residents.

CF was not seen as a threat in this case study area because the co-ordinator involved everyone in the community in CF work and ensured that the bottom-up ethos was adhered to. The co-ordinator went one step further by condoning the principle of vigilantism. However, the CDF project predating CF did not receive positive reviews from interview respondents because it did not work with members of the community, rather it dictated what would improve the area. The funding, which amounted to £440,000 over two years, was said to have made no difference in the area because the project:

*‘. . . sent people in who were self important’ and who ‘clashed with the existing community activity’ (25:2)*

Community member respondents described two CDF staff as particularly *‘obstructive not constructive’*. Contrary to this CF was perceived as a continuation of existing local community development work partly because of its non-prescriptive approach and partly because of the individual co-ordinator fitted in well on the estate. Specifically the co-ordinators’ personality fitted with existing community member’s attitudes towards community development on the estate which meant higher levels of integration.

Other examples of personality contributing to integration were given by the co-ordinator himself. He recalled a community development worker employed by CDF working on the estate who found his job constrained by the prescriptive approach.

*[he] was doing it for 3 years here but he’d been doing it for about 30 years before that and he just didn’t fit in with CDF and with their management*

*structure . . . [He] was very handicapped by having to work in this sort of culture, very top-down . . . ' (7:10)*

The development officer in question was responsible for establishing a number of community-based groups which were integrated into CF after 2002. He established a gardening group with young people on the margins of the community which involved setting up a profitable small business selling flowers. In addition the individual had a huge impact on the structure of the CF partnership and the funding allocation through involvement in the initial stages of setting-up and through force of personality pitted against members of the council.

*'[he] was involved in setting [CF] up, taking them through things like lets get down what our aims are, who should be sitting round this table, do we close membership off or do we make it open (?) things like that, getting a partnership agreement drafted up so he was of immense value in that . . . ' (7:10)*

This is an interesting example of an individual taking advantage of top-down funding to benefit existing community organisations through bottom-up work. This is one point at which the conflict between structure and agency within the CF programme becomes a mutual agreement. It reflects a complex reality in which top down and bottom up are not mutually exclusive and in which structure and agency are part of the same duality.

In 2000 members of the council held a meeting at the local Social Club to explain to local people that the County Council would be the GRB for the partnership on the estate. The individual in question stood up at the meeting and questioned this approach publicly.

*' . . . he stood up and said ' . . . I thought you were going to determine our employment policy . . . and you were going to determine who our co-ordinator was . . . but you're not going to be paying for it? Well sorry mate we will decide who that is going to be unless you're going to pay for it" (7:6)*

His demands for local ownership of CF in the area resulted in a local parish council becoming the partnership's employer rather than the local authority making it easier for the partnership to become its own employer in 2006. The co-ordinator stated that the initial change in plan had been tremendously useful for him as a development worker in the area.

*' . . . if I worked for Gwynedd [Council] I'd just have to be in the pecking order wouldn't I . . . I have the freedom now' (7:5)*

This is testimony to the importance of personality in the process of integration before and during CF. It also reaffirms the adverse impact that local authority strategy can have on integration raised in the previous sections of this chapter. However, it is not a straightforward connection between local authority influence and integration. Community-led CF structures can aid integration when combined with the right personalities and circumstances and the right existing community organisations. In this case study area, the main community origination was the Tenants Association (TA).

The local volunteer and the local Councillor respondents focused on the TA which they were jointly responsible for establishing. The TA evolved from exasperation with visible vandalism and anti-social behaviour increasing in the area year on year.

One respondent stated that while she supported the results of the vigilantism preceding the TA:

*'Since we've had these boys (vigilantes), the crime has gone down; I know I shouldn't be saying this but crime has gone down' (6:3)*

She and others felt that a legitimate community organisation was still needed on the estate.

The TA was established in 1998 and both respondents responsible for the TA were women in their fifties who felt that CF had come at a time when the TA

membership's energy was beginning to wane. The establishment of CF and its integration into pre-existing development work on this estate has been successful according to the perceptions of individuals involved before and after 2001. There appears to be a consensus that community development in the area has moved from being a polarised juxtaposition of top-down (CDF) and bottom-up (TA and vigilantism) to being a more moderate approach including council members and community members.

### *The impact of integration in CF*

Having discussed the varying levels of integration within and between case study areas and possible reasons behind integration and lack of integration, we now turn to discussion on the positive and negative impacts of integration.

Reflections on impacts of integration between CF and community groups included less activity among formerly active community members who felt that CF had taken responsibility for tackling problems in the area since 2001. In one case study area the local people involved in the residents' association have stopped holding meetings and have stopped attending partnership meetings as frequently since the advent of CF. The co-ordinator expressed disappointment with this situation and compared the change in attitude with the influence of the tenants' association before CF. In the past he used the group's passion and willingness to fight a cause as a way of convincing council officials to comply with community development issues; he felt that apathy had made them less of a threat.

*' . . . they were like a little pit-bull on lead . . . now they've lost their teeth' (7:5)*

In a partial explanation for this one resident and former member of the TA stated that all the power of the TA had now gone to CF (6:4). The resident was not unhappy with this situation and saw the community group as 'struggling' before CF came along to improve the situation using WG resources and staff to keep the estate under control and work with the police.

The co-ordinator in Gwynedd also used Rhyl CF partnership as an example of the negative impacts of not involving pre-existing community groups in the programme. There is a residents association in Rhyl which the co-ordinator described as 'a hive of activity'. Despite the association winning grant funding from Children in Need and managing its own budget this enterprise had not been incorporated into CF in any way and was functioning independently. The co-ordinator pointed out the opportunities missed in the situation and was angered by the way that the partnership had been established.

*'Rhyl is the most deprived ward in Wales and 53% of people are on mental health related medication in the area!' (7:9)*

Some reflections on positive impact of integration included legitimisation of community group activity in-line with CF structures and protocols. One example of this is the CF programme emphasis on 'mainstreaming'. This has led to partnership working between community organisations, CF *and* other voluntary and public sector organisations. For example, one community group did not communicate with the police because they saw them as a common enemy before CF was established in the area. The CF partnership co-ordinator in this case study has now involved the police in events on the estate and subsequently more crime is being tackled by the police. Community members now interact with police more often and this is reflected in the increase in reporting on crimes in the area (unfortunately it has caused a statistical rise in crime).

The findings raise interesting questions around the impact of CF partnerships on community organisations in small localities after 2001. On the one hand CF partnerships are carrying-out activities using resources that were not previously available in the area. On the other it is causing a decrease in community member involvement. This raises questions around the CF aim to empower and generate community action and involvement in local decision-making.

In cases where community groups had been integrated into CF work the role of the co-ordinator is paramount. Interviews revealed that the co-ordinator's role

varies between partnerships but ultimately means working between multiple groups with different, often conflicting, agendas. The co-ordinator is seen by most as a mediator conveying community issues to the local authority and, subsequently, to the WG. As the first port of call for community issues co-ordinators are expected to be innovative, opportunistic and work independently. More than one respondent referred to the difficulty of the co-ordinator's role:

*'... It's like sending someone into a lion's den' (15:3)*

In terms of alignment between CF and community organisations in practice, not all co-ordinators are given the freedom and flexibility needed to carry out successful integration because of the dominance of the statutory sector. This barrier is closely linked with the recurring issue of imbalanced local authority-CF relationships identified through this research and discussed in depth later in the chapter.

Based on the pivotal role of the individuals in the high levels of organisational integration it is possible to argue that structure is not a necessary prerequisite for agency action. In this case integration is not organisational but based on relationships. However, all individuals in each case study were working within the structures of CF whether or not they adhered to the rules and regulations provided by the programme. The definition of bottom-up community development often carries with it an implication of 'structure-less activity' which is in conflict with the structured nature of CF thus making integration between CF and community organisations an important point to study. However, using SRA as a guide it is possible to argue that community development is not structure-less, only less rigidly organised than other structures. The dialectic duality used to examine structure and agency within SRA means that relationships and structures as interdependent through not inseparable.

### *Engagement and Participation*

Engagement and participation are both important parts of integration between community groups. Engagement encapsulates the idea of doing community development work *with* communities not *to* them and participation is essential to

engagement. The ladder of participation developed by Arnstein (1969) shows a hierarchy of participation techniques ranging from 'citizen control' to 'manipulation' and highlights potential questions around devolving power to civil society, tokenism and non-participation. In the case of CF the ethos of the programme advocated engagement over consultation participation techniques from the outset. However, CF is a state funded programme with targets, outcomes and rules which can deter non-CF community groups from becoming engaged. The findings show mixed views on participation techniques, some of which were a direct critique of CF.

One co-ordinator felt that community development practitioners can overcome motivational barriers and integrate community development groups more effectively into CF through engaging people with the things they are interested in. A number of respondents stated that commonly co-ordinators are not fully trained in community development and elected representatives or council officers can monopolise this deficit to pursue a council agenda. This in turn has led to exclusion of non-CF groups because engagement with these groups is not a priority for the partnership leader. This is an example of strategic actors altering an existing structure by changing the power dynamics for pursuit of their own political project.

The economic barriers to participation were seen by some as imaginary:

*' . . . poor people do work together . . . ' (6:7)*

Others felt poverty to be a valid reason for not participating in community activity:

*'I know . . . young parents . . . working on perhaps eight different part-time jobs between them just to try and keep the wolf from the door . . . when people are in that sort of place in their lives what right have I got to say 'hey come and do a bit of volunteering for Child Line' or . . . 'come and get involved in this community event you know, it'll be really good for you' I'd think 'fuck off' you know' (5:8)*

Barriers to group and individual participation in CF also included some partnerships being solely coordinator-led because of a lack of participation among local people. This was said to be the case in Rhyl CF partnership which was closed down by the WG in 2008 for failing to achieve any vision framework headings. However, one respondent gave their view on why there had been little participation:

*'[the] manager is a superintendent who is an excellent police officer but he's not a community development professional and they've been put on the second floor of the police station . . . We had to key a code in to get through the door . . . How can you ever engage with residents doing that?' (8:6)*

This can be related to the wider issue of cultural clashes within CF and the problematic nature of partnership working, mainstreaming and programme bending. It is possible to argue that successful integration with community groups also means successful integration with other partners on the CF board and the process is far more time consuming and complex than the original design of the CF programme implied.

### *Conclusions*

The degree of integration between CF partnerships and community organisations in the area is dependent on a multitude of complex factors emerging from the data which can be summarised into three using the findings presented here.

Firstly, the degree to which a CF partnership is integrated into local authority structures can affect integration with community groups in the area. The case study example of this also revealed wider issues to do with the WG approach to CF partnerships implementation, such as the support of local authority leadership because it is cost effective. On the one hand encouragement is given to community-led development and regeneration work in policy documents (WG, 2000a, 2007, 2008) while on the other praise is given to a local authority for cost effective integration of CF partnerships into statutory

structures. This raises questions around the ethos of CF as it is stated in policy documents promoting empowerment and capacity building at local level and how it is put into practice at a strategic level.

Using SRA in this context poses the question of strategic selectivity within structures governing CF. The strategy in this instance being financial savings prioritised over the stated strategy of wider community involvement in regeneration (WG, 2000a, 2007, 2008). Significantly, policy rhetoric as a dialectic duality contains contradictions which belie conflict within the CF programme at partnership level. To this effect the ethos of CF is based on sound community development principles, however, the cost of putting the principles into practice is more than the cost of incorporating CF structures in local authority structures. This means a real potential scope for statutory cultural domination.

The spatial dimension within SRA also allows for exploration of the data to go further and argue that local authority structures ruling spaces within Wales will always incorporate smaller spaces into their remit, a key question is: to what degree? SRA structural strategic selectivity lies in the discourse presented by the WG implying that it is in favour of community-led development while the data for this research implies that it is in favour of local authorities leading partnerships.

Secondly, individual attitude to integration can have some impact on integration at local level. CF stakeholders are functioning within programme structures; however, there appears to be more scope for individual discretion in decision-making in cases where local authorities are less involved in the day to day running of the partnership.

Finally, the way community groups in the area before 2001 view CF (e.g. as part of the local authority or not) makes a difference to integration. This links back to the typology of community organisations in CF areas, the dialectic duality between the structures and individuals that form community organisations and CF partnerships. In addition it relates to the findings

presented on the conflict between CF structures and community-led development. Some issues are pursued with more energy and purpose than others depending on the issue and what it means to people. Without WG or local authorities supporting integration at local level the degree of drive within the community can account for whether a community group becomes actively involved in CF work or not; this is a good empirical example of strategically selective structures at local level.

Pre-existing community organisations are not always integrated into CF, but in cases where they are, it can signify a move away from state and statutory roles in CF and towards what is seen as a more traditional form of community development. Individual impact on integration is also closely linked to the way community development is defined by respondents in this research involving trust, relationship-building and establishing a good reputation over time. This is essentially a bottom-up approach to regeneration which is one possible way of achieving high levels of integration between CF and community organisations in the same area. Linked to findings on the impact of statutory dominance on integration outlined above this section of the chapter concludes that in some cases CF partnerships are not well aligned with traditional community development despite policy rhetoric stating that they are:

*'The concentration of [CF] funding will be on capacity building within communities, community development work and coordinator/administrative support for Partnerships. The purpose of such funding will be to enable and empower communities so they have the self confidence, the expertise and the experience to engage with the organisations which provide the services which will help deliver community regeneration' (WG, 2007: 54)*

Using the SRA concept of the imagined line between state and society to view the way in which forces of governance represent aspects of society, in this case community development, it is possible to see the way organisations, groups and individuals become part of governing mechanisms. Governing mechanisms can influence non-government organisations. In the case of CF this manifests in a combination of appeasing local governing organisations and pursuing the

original political aims of CF within a set budget. However, at partnership level there is a great deal of community development activity which is largely attributed to individual initiative.

Significantly, comparison between case studies suggests that the level of community development ethos within a given partnership is connected to local authority influence on the programme's work in a given locality. The more a CF partnership is integrated into the local authority the less community development focused its approach despite other major players being involved in the CF programme such as Community Development Cymru and the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action.

### *8.2 Statutory relations within Communities First*

Findings from the second research question are presented in this section: *what are the (inter)relationships between CF staff (including volunteers) and local authority representatives involved in the programme?* The literature on governance and spaces of governance shows that on one hand interrelationships can reflect the power of one organisational structure over another enacted through such factors as decision-making, funding allocation and strategising and on the other certain structures can allow space for individual discretion (Brenner, 2004). This theme has developed to encompass wider analytical issues of governing structures and power during data collection and analysis and includes expansion on the issue of strategic local authority influence on the CF programme through individuals and their actions.

This part of the chapter also examines the influence held by some individuals within the programme, raising questions around the degree to which structure allows force of personality to lead in CF partnership processes. SRA views structure as a necessary prerequisite for action and it is argued here that the non-prescriptive structure of CF has been a necessary prerequisite for strong personalities to gain undue influence in some cases.

The issue of local authority influence within a number of CF partnerships is a significant reoccurring theme relating to CF as a whole. The issues are beyond numbers alone and findings show that power inequalities play out through financial and cultural differences.

*'People can be legally equal but unequal in the way that they work and the influence that they have within a partnership. A community member can be swamped by bureaucracy and give up trying to be involved. . . '* (17: 6)

Using SRA it is possible to argue that key phases in the design of CF were influenced by the strategically motivated actions of some actors within the statutory sector. In addition the findings suggest that the initial non-prescriptive design of CF has allowed statutory control over partnerships in areas where the local authority was running community or regeneration projects before CF. This argument is developed by the suggestion that CF has not been designed or implemented with traditional community development principles in mind, exemplified through WG support for integration of CF into statutory structures presented in the previous section of the chapter.

A number of respondents stated that the design and implementation of the programme promoted local authority control over CF partnerships through allowing them freedom to make key decisions relating to employment of staff, formation of partnerships and vision frameworks.

Using SRA it is possible to argue that there was some structural strategic selectivity at play between governing institutions, namely the newly established WG and the existing Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), in Wales during the early stages of CF. One senior level WG official stated that the WG was influenced by the WLGA because of its power-base in Wales built-up over years of political separation from central government in England before devolution. The initial CF design by academics and practitioners from a community development background working with the WG put the programme in the hands of the voluntary sector. The reasons for this were centred on the

bottom-up, non-prescriptive aims for the programme which went hand in hand with a voluntary sector ethos.

To strengthen this argument a number of respondents have highlighted the need for more neutral, less political adjudicators guiding partnerships to allow space for community level decision making. However, when the CF programme was implemented the majority of CF partnerships had local authority Grant Recipient Bodies (GRB). Bids for CF sub-areas were put in by local authorities rather than voluntary organisations and partnerships were put in each local authority area which could be seen as a move by the WG to appease the WLGA.

It is interesting to note that the accountability of most CF partnerships to local authorities mirrors the structure of New Deal for Communities (NDC) and area-based regeneration in England as a whole where central government overtly worked with local authorities to deliver the programme.

*'A number of principles have tended to underpin English regeneration policy. It was central, not local, government which drove this agenda. Working with, or through, local authorities . . .'* (Lawless, 2011: 520)

This belies a similarity between the two programmes that raises questions about the statement by the Minister for Economic Development and Regeneration at the time of this research: that Wales is taking a more community-focused approach to regeneration than England.

While the official structure of CF partnerships comprise one third local authority, one third voluntary sector and one third community (not in equal proportions in terms of numbers), in terms of power and influence the proportions are perhaps unsurprisingly, not always equal. Whether or not the partnership has a local authority GRB appears to have an impact on the power balance between local authority-CF relationships. GRB status does not give the body in question the power to allocate or dictate partnership spending. However, in cases where there are disagreements on spending allocation within partnerships, having

GRB status means having the final say in what money is released for. The impact of GRB status on dispositions and interrelationships is a fundamental point arising from the data and leading to the argument that there is symbolic power in being a GRB.

The arguments pertaining that a community-led approach is more favourable than a local authority-led approach fits the policy rhetoric on CF as a community-led programme aiming to put decision-making power into the hands of localities (WG, 2000a; 2007). Arguments from a broader traditional community development perspective also state that a programme like CF is community-led with local people dictating their own remit rather than integrating into the local authority remit. One senior local authority officer went further by stating that having a prescribed council involvement in a CF partnership is contradictory of the programme ethos.

*'[WG] said it's a bottom-up flexible programme that insisted on a partnership with quotas for the three thirds from the public sector that must write an action plan under the 6 themes whether they feel that's a relevant thing to do . . .'* (5: 7)

One possible counter argument is that through local authority-led relationships local authorities can support and guide CF partnerships using their resources and internal expertise for better overall delivery. From this perspective CF partnership integration into local authority work can mean more outputs and achievement of vision frameworks for CF partnerships.

The stance taken here is that while local authority support for CF partnerships is vital and beneficial for delivery and sustainability in CF the programme is officially designed to be community-led with strong emphasis on community decision-making, local democracy and the principles of community development, which is not always the case. Taking a relational approach the details of positive and negative local authority-CF relationships can produce a nuanced understanding of the varying balance between the two.

Numerous examples of the negative facets of local authority-CF relations have been given throughout the fieldwork. In some cases the issue of council domination is suggested. The different aspects of this include structural control and individual control. Some examples of structural control are: council officials line-managing CF co-ordinators, partnership meetings run like council meetings and council officers using CF as a vehicle to fund small scale service delivery. Some examples of individual control are: council officials dominating partnership meetings.

In the Swansea case study representatives from all community development groups in the area were invited to sit on the interview panel for a CF co-ordinator in 2001. However, the interview questions were written by local authority officers and the final decision was taken within the local authority. This process exemplifies the way that a council can take control of key partnership remit through instigating community involvement while continuing to hold executive power. Another example of council implicitly 'taking over' from CF partnerships in community development delivery is revealed in the Caerphilly case study where the council is the GRB and line-manages all staff under the CF co-ordinator therefore leaving the co-ordinator with little authority over their staff; this has inhibited the co-ordinator's powers of delegation. While Adamson & Bromilley's (2008) findings identified a lack of support and appropriate appreciation of CF work among councils, the issue of council domination in the findings for this research reveal an almost antithetical problem in some cases:

*'The council was taking over; they wanted to run us' (12:4)*

Not all CF partnerships react in the same way to a council-led local authority-CF relationship. In the Swansea case study dissatisfaction with the council's overbearing approach led to the partnership becoming a company limited by guarantee and, subsequently, its own GRB. This shows that council-led partnerships are neither absolute nor eternal.

However, in the Caerphilly case study CF staff's dissatisfaction with local authority control has been more difficult to action because the programme has

been directly integrated into existing local authority delivery structures. Interviews with local authority officers in this case study coupled with statistics detailing CF funding to this local authority area show that this approach has been financially beneficial for the local authority and for the delivery of the programme in this area which has been praised by the WG. Interviews with voluntary and community sector representatives involved in this partnership revealed a more negative side and some dissatisfaction stemming from this integration approach.

*'The local authority control the programme through basing the CF Health Officers within the council and giving externally advertised jobs to internal staff . . . it's unfair' (21:1)*

In this case study a structural hierarchy seems to exist in place of a partnership approach condoned by WG civil servants and Ministers:

*' . . . [the Welsh Government] would like to see CF partnerships assisting local authorities in local delivery' (17:4)*

Findings from the ethnographic internship at the WG revealed plans to commission research aimed at local authorities highlighting the financial value of working with CF as an incentive for increasing local authority interest in CF. This institutional attitude towards local authorities in Wales linked to the design of CF remains and continues to permeate the CF programme.

*'the Assembly . . . is very, very tied to the WLGA and you don't want to upset your Labour stalwarts even though they are fucking things up left right and centre!' 'we know best and we don't want these upstarts in our community telling us what we should be doing' (20:3)*

*Organisational relations*

The following sections have been divided into discussion on organisational and individual relations including sub themes on local authority officers<sup>20</sup> and elected representative relations with CF as they have emerged separately in the interview findings. The issue of organisational and individual relationships between CF and local authorities are variable and often depend to a large extent on personalities. The findings indicate varying relations with positive and negative repercussions on both sides as well as complications based on history, personality and context.

Comparison between the influence of elected representatives and local authority officers on CF partnerships has been useful in gauging organisational relations. Both councillors and local authorities have political goals. However, local authorities work to bureaucratic systems and structures while councillors, arguably, have more scope for professional discretion in their actions. From this perspective reflexive and responsive action is vital to successful community development and places councillors in a better position for pursuing community issues as they can work outside of the bureaucratic constraints of local authority structures. The findings revealed perceptions that local authority bureaucratic systems do not allow for reactive and flexible community development to take place.

*'[The local authority] is a big machine and to get things moving with community group and third sector organisations, when you want something to happen its got to happen now' (6:5)*

This finding reveals an interesting insight into local authority and CF relations from an organisational perspective. The most significant of these insights is that local authority structures can sometime clash with the reflexive and responsive structures of community development organisations. In most cases individuals can work around this clash of cultures by adapting to both. However, in some cases cultural conflict has led to individual conflict and a breakdown in functioning working relationships. Interestingly the findings also highlighted the

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<sup>20</sup> See Annex 1 for a table outlining LA-CF Relations

variation between different local authority cultures reflected in differing approaches to CF.

The aspects of local authority structures impacting on organisational relations include the hierarchy of role. Communities First co-ordinators line-managed by council officials have a place in the pecking order which can limit their capacity for pushing community issues forward within the Council. In addition local authority bureaucracy was said to slow the process of activities, projects and programmes within CF partnerships. Finally, the departmental nature of local authorities sometimes proves complex and difficult to negotiate for community members unfamiliar with the structure, for example when asking for advice or support.

MLG was discussed in the literature review chapter on governance in terms of the multiple channels into which power is distributed. Type one and type two MLG were described: the former being territorial distinctive jurisdictions and the latter being overlapping and flexible jurisdictions. The distinction between type one and two applies here to the statutory and community sectors as they have been presented in the findings. Statutory structures have a limited number of levels and are based within a solid system of rules and bureaucracy while the community sector has a task specific nature. Drawing on MLG it is possible to understand why actors want to change the structural constraints in which they work (Armstrong & Wells, 2005). In addition if a spatial dimension is added to this equation it is possible to say that the findings reveal a struggle within some CF partnerships to control the geographical space under their remit when the space is already being delineated by local authority rule.

It is possible to argue that local authorities are operating at a more strategic level than CF and therefore conflict is not necessary if both work in partnership working towards the same goal. However, CF partnerships require some degree of strategic selectivity in order to carry out community level decision-making. This is a dilemma that goes some way toward explaining the conflict between CF partnerships and local authorities embedded in a cultural clash.

The overarching theme linking these differing cultures in term of local authority-CF relations is the fact that voluntary and community sector and statutory sector cultures do differ despite variation in degree, adaptation and individuals within each organisation. To exemplify this one respondent stated that the co-ordinator should be employed by the partnership or by a ('neutral') voluntary association rather than a local authority because of the need to challenge local authorities in fundamental principles relating to CF and community development.

*' . . . [it is] better for coordinators not to be employed by the council because it means being outside the pecking order' (7:8)*

In early 2000 CF was based in the WG Housing Department. The Housing Minister responsible for the programme was willing to act on the advice of the community development experts to put the programme largely in the hands of the voluntary sector (20:2). However, at the end of 2000 CF was transferred to a new crosscutting WG department and subsequently a new Minister was responsible for the programme. The new Minister was less sympathetic to the community development advice given (20:2) and despite the strong advice against putting CF in the hands of local authorities instead of voluntary organisations, this is what happened.

*'I think the reason CF happened as it did was for political reasons more than anything else, I think the view was taken that the Assembly Government as a fairly new institution had to be seen to be doing something extensively in many areas so this was one way of demonstrating that really' (13:3)*

Due to political decision making within the WG and the mix between community development advice and the pursuit of a successful political image, confusing and contradictory messages were given around the nature and ethos of the programme. On the one hand it was promoted as a community-led and local programme while on the other being largely controlled, led and managed by local authorities.

*Individual relations*

The local authority officers who had a positive relationship with their CF partnership(s) did so when the officers were seen as available to CF partnerships if needed for support and guidance without getting involved in final decision-making on local issues. This balance between guiding and controlling has been achieved by one case study local authority. In this case the local authority officer makes regular contact with the partnership but does not make any key decisions relating to the micro-levels of community development under CF remit. In contrast representatives from the two remaining case study CF partnership view their local authority officers as overbearing. One representative explained that they take this view because: the co-ordinator is line-managed by a local authority officer; the CF partnership is part of the local authority structure and takes part in service delivery; the local authority is GRB for the partnership and makes decisions on where money is spent and claims were also made that the local authority uses CF as a department to fund temporary council staff.

*'[X local authority] is using Communities First funding as a way of controlling the area in the way that they did when they were a district and a county council . . . I mean they still refer to the old areas of X and a lot of externally advertised jobs for the partnership are given to internal candidates at the local authority, to deploy staff within the community you know' (22:5)*

Another representative from the two remaining partnerships explained that they took this view because the local authority officers on the partnership board were making decisions in partnership meetings that overruled community members. The local authority was seen to restrict community development work before the partnership broke off and became its own Grant GRB and company limited by guarantee.

*' . . . [becoming our own GRB] . . . has speeded things up for us . . . if I send in a claim to WAG now . . . I get a four day turnaround, the money is in the bank, prior to that I would send it in several weeks before a council deadline it would then wait for others in X [to apply] for it to be placed on the same table, then it would be a few more days and it would be several months before we saw the money' (11:5)*

The role of individuals is pivotal within this formula for positive organisational relationships. However, the structures within which they work also play a part. The interplay between structures and agents is useful in looking at individuals and their impact on local authority-CF relations. From a SRA perspective individuals need structures in order to act strategically and relationally with other individuals and organisations.

The local authority officers interviewed for this research gave a great deal of insight into local authority-CF relations. Two officers in particular highlighted the complexity of individual relations and the difficulty of getting it right. They had been working together at a valleys council on regeneration issues since its formation in 1996. Both were from the area and had personal motivation for regenerating the deprived valleys areas and 12 years experience in regeneration. During the interview the contradiction between bottom-up and top-down community development was acknowledged, understood and discussed in terms of getting around the system.

The officers were in favour of a bottom-up approach but felt that the structure of the CF programme did not allow for this. They had developed strategies to deliver bottom-up community development while adhering to the bureaucratic constraints. This was coupled with a degree of scepticism and a sense of humour towards what they saw as the confusing and complex nature of CF in general. They related problems that they had experienced with community members taking control of CF including: the loudest voices being heard and a lack of expertise, knowledge and experience of community development among community members.

There was a consensus among all interviewees that local authority officers running the programme through hiring, firing and making final decisions for the partnership was wrong in the context of CF. This was seen by community and voluntary representatives, and some council representatives, across all case studies as contrary to the purpose of CF and its ethos.

*‘. . . we went to this conference and it was eye opening, it was frightening, partnerships that are literally run by councillors’ (referring more to the outlying areas like West Wales) (12:5)*

And

*‘Community and Town Councils should have been able to voice their views and bring forward proposals but it was very local authority dominated from the beginning’ (20:5)*

From the perspective of community, voluntary and CF respondents the local authority relationship with CF partners is negative when local authority officers treat community consultation as a chore. This is seen as less problematic than a local authority officer actively trying to control the decisions made within the partnership to pursue statutory aims. However, it is still problematic in terms of lack of support and guidance from individual professionals within the local authority with more influence, power and resources at their disposal than CF staff and volunteers.

In some cases members of a CF partnership feel tied to the council or as if the council is taking over and running the partnership. This relates to individuals within the council having directive over CF activity and decision-making. This is less apparent in the data than cases of institutional take-over through structural integration between local authorities and CF discussed in the previous section.

This section of the chapter examines the interplay between personality and role of councillors and their relationships with CF partnership staff. Comparisons are also drawn between local authority officer and councillor-CF relationships. The relationship between local councillors and CF staff and volunteers in the case study areas varies and anecdotal evidence of both good and bad practice is given. However, the most significant finding based on the empirical strength of the data is that the councillors *can* hold the key to bridging problematic relations between local authorities and CF.

One respondent from within the WG stated that:

*'[councillors]. . . have access to the corridors of power, engagement with agencies, the key to spending departments and the skills and experience to take a leading role in the partnership' (14:2)*

Conflict has occurred between councillors and CF staff in some areas because CF was seen as a threat to the power-base of individual councillors. In addition, some councillors have been overbearing on CF work when they feel that they should be in control of community development in the area. In these situations councillors tended to have the power to overrule an inexperienced CF co-ordinator. In two cases there had been instances of councillors bullying CF staff and volunteers and in one case the partnership kept a log book of all 'incidents' with a bullying councillor which was then put to the council as part of a case for the councillor's resignation.

One interviewee involved in support for CF at the outset reiterated the point about councillor domination using force of will giving a clear example of an instance where a member of CF partnership staff was undermined by a councillor. A co-ordinator of a CF partnership was attempting to instigate an election and oust a controlling councillor who chaired the partnership. When this failed the councillor made claims which tarnished the reputation of the co-ordinator. This ultimately led to the co-ordinator leaving their post despite a lack of evidence to substantiate the claims against them following an investigation.

It is possible to argue, using the data gathered for this research, that there is a culture of influence and reciprocal favours built into local authority structures within small and isolated geographical locations over time which is incredibly difficult to permeate or understand from the outside.

*'[one] councillor saw CF as a threat to their patronage and networks which had developed over time and formed a complex web of reciprocal obligations mixed with the political and underlying power plays' (16:9)*

This example raises the wider issue of the impact of CF on pre-existing political cultures. The overarching issue of CF as a programme working within micro-geographical spaces of governance and their historical context runs through the data. Using the SRA spatial-temporal approach to structure and agency it is possible to argue that CF could be perceived as a threat to existing power bases in communities because it supports community-led decision making and operates at a micro-geographical level within boundaries that have a complex political history pre-dating CF.

While councillors can cause problems for CF staff due to their pursuit of strategic interests, the issue of conflict of interest raises questions about the extent to which councillors *can* influence certain structures relating to community development within their local authority area. Pending this issue we must also address the issue of whether or not councillors *choose* to support CF within the council. Again, it is difficult to generalise due to the variation in individual councillor approach to CF. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that some councillors do not see CF as a priority within their wider agenda and do not feel the need to support their partnership outside of the minimum requirements set out by New Labour's duty to involve on the statutory sector.

*‘ . . . we've invited them to ten meetings but we don't even get a 'my apologies I can't make this . . . ' (19:3)*

From a strategic point of view staff and ministers within the WG felt that Assembly Members played a crucial role in dealing with councillors in the CF programme. In addition there was recognition at executive levels of the programme that the WLGA is aiming to build the capacity of its elected members later than would have been ideal for CF.

However, overall the councillors interviewed for this research were positive and encouraging about CF and stated that they had regular involvement with the programme which has proved rewarding for them. This was confirmed by most CF staff and volunteers, and was not refuted in relation to any councillors involved in this research.

A number of councillors discussed their dual role as councillors and residents of a community. For some councillors this has led to a conflict of interest. In one case a councillor personally supports vigilantism because it was controlling problem gangs, while being politically unable to declare that support. In another case a councillor resigned from a CF board because of conflict of interest, the councillor in question was able to influence the impact of council decision-making on the CF partnership to a greater degree while not being on the Board.

### *State and statutory-run projects*

This section of the chapter relates to local authority-CF relations and integration. The previous section of the chapter on strategy and integration presents findings suggesting that the more integrated a CF partnership is into local authority structures the less well integrated it is into other community organisations in the area.

This section of the chapter also consolidates the argument made in the previous one that when CF partnerships are integrated into local authority structures they often have more interaction with existing state and statutory-run projects in the area than community organisations. In all three case study areas state or statutory-run projects included: Heads of the Valleys, Strategic Regeneration Areas<sup>21</sup>, Working Links<sup>22</sup>, People in Communities<sup>23</sup>, Objective 1 and 2 structural funding development officers and a European Funded Initiative called *Take learning out into the community*. While these do not cover the multiplicity of first and second wave government-funded community development happening in each area pre-CF, the initiatives that were mentioned by interviewees provide insight into the ways in which CF has been able to integrate and interact with state and statutory-run programmes.

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<sup>21</sup> There are seven strategic regeneration areas in Wales, *Heads of the Valleys* Programme area, Môn a Menai (Anglesey), North Wales Coast, the Western Valleys, Swansea, Aberystwyth; and Barry. They have been selected by the Welsh Government on the basis of their levels of deprivation. These areas are a focus for generating economic development and strategic regeneration.

<sup>22</sup> *Working Links* is a UK wide initiative funded by UK central government and running since 2000 to assist the long-term unemployed back into work.

<sup>23</sup> *People in Communities* was the Welsh Government's pilot programme for Communities First. Running in eight wards in Wales during 2001 the findings from the pilot were originally meant to guide design and implementation of CF. However, as the findings reveal the findings from the pilot were not finished at the time when CF was implemented implying that lessons learnt from People in Communities were not carried forward.

The two less local authority-led case studies have not linked-up with other government-funded community development initiatives aside from the pilot for CF, *People in Communities*. However, the case study partnership incorporated into the structures of the local authority GRB has been mainstreaming more effectively with councillors and making bids for Heads of the Valleys<sup>24</sup> and Working Links funding on behalf of the partnership. This is likely to be because of its close relation with the local authority and the subsequent access to local authority resources, expertise and connections (the local authority in question is partly responsible for running Heads of the Valleys).

The council funding applications have been at county scale with money spread between CF partnerships and other council projects. The power and influence of the council is shown here to be economically valuable in terms of mainstreaming. Again, this highlights the economic and structural advantages of local authority-controlled CF partnership but raises further questions around the contradiction of a bottom-up programme being implemented from the top-down. This issue relates back to the conceptualisation of communities in chapter two and particularly Talyor's (2003) idea of pragmatic community development whereby communities take advantage of windows of opportunity within political strategy.

WG guidance on CF clearly states that mainstreaming<sup>25</sup> and programme bending<sup>26</sup> are essential for every partnership and for the success of the programme. However, the micro-geographical and organisation level at which CF partnerships are functioning make programme bending difficult for partnerships with limited resources. Co-ordinators have difficult and broadly defined roles which require a great deal of reflexivity and diversity, problems

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<sup>24</sup> The *Heads of the Valleys* Programme is a 15 year regeneration strategy developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with five local authorities, (Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau-Gwent and Torfaen), and other local stakeholders to tackle the root causes of economic inactivity and other key issues in the area within the context of the Wales Spatial Plan.

<sup>25</sup> Mainstreaming is discussed in more depth on page 228 but a brief description gives two types: first, strategic mainstreaming which means a redirection of resources from public sector organisations onto neighbourhood level targets agreed with local partners. Second, initiatives mainstreaming which is effectively piloting one local initiative and transferring the model and lessons learned onto other initiatives.

<sup>26</sup> Programme bending is discussed in more depth on page 228 but a brief description is; streamlining services and applying one working practice to another area while engaging all agents involved.

arise when co-ordinators are attempting to win bids, fill-in monitoring reports and run the day to day work of the partnership; essentially working as a strategist and an a delivery agent. This puts constraints on the level of mainstreaming possible in this context.

### *Conclusions*

This section of the chapter concludes that in terms of organisational relations between local authorities and CF there is a cultural clash, the impact of which can be accentuated or alleviated to varying degrees by organisational strategic functions and individual actions over time. Where councillors are supportive of CF partnerships they can be an ally in terms of challenging local authority structures. In individual relations between CF and local authorities the way local authority officers are involved in CF work is essential to collaboration between organisations. Where there are good working relationships local authority officers act as mediators between the CF partnership, local people, the local authority and the WG making their roles extremely reflexive and responsive but also constrained by the bureaucratic structures in which they work. Where there are not good working relationships between CF staff and local authority officers it can mean institutional rifts.

The non-prescriptive nature of CF discussed in the introduction of this chapter has less of an influence on local authority-CF relations than the way CF was implemented at the outset. The non-prescriptive nature of CF refers to the lack of focus on outcomes and targets in the early stages and the discretion given to all CF members on decision-making within the partnership, at partnership level. At programme level the structures of CF are extremely strategically prescriptive and allowed for imbalances of power between communities, local authorities and voluntary sector representatives.

In addition in the context of mainstreaming and programme bending effectively CF partnerships are more likely to succeed with large amounts of local authority support. However, as highlighted in discussions on community groups, this level of involvement by the council can result in a reduced focus on community voice and local decision-making. Pivotal cornerstones of what defines success in CF

rely a great deal on councils running partnerships. This raises questions around the true meaning of 'communities' in CF.

### *8.3 Structure, Independence and Sustainability*

This section of the chapter focuses on the third research question: *what are the reasons given for and impact of change to partnership GRB status since 2001?* Structure, independence and sustainability refer mainly to the way GRB status affects the financial and organisational independence and longevity of the partnership in question. However, the issue of partnership structure and process also contributes to understanding of what the terms independence and sustainability mean in the context of CF. In the case study partnership that has become its own GRB, independence refers entirely to less dependence on the financial distribution mechanisms of the local authority and subsequently less dealings with obstructive local authority officers.

The section aims to challenge WG policy rhetoric advocating independent CF partnerships which are sustainable in light of actions taken in design, implementation and process of the programme:

*' . . . after individual projects have finished [capacity building] will sustain the momentum of community regeneration are the skills, ability and confidence that local people have learned and developed through their involvement in the process hitherto' (WG, 2007: 66)*

While sustainability was used as key term to describe longevity and community capacity in guidance and strategy for CF in 2001, the Communities Next consultation document (2008) uses sustainability to describe mainstreaming, programme bending and local authority involvement. The meaning behind this subtle change in rhetoric approach and how it relates to CF partnerships in practice is the focus here.

Use of the term sustainability is a common tension in mainstream policy rhetoric. Since the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987) for

the World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainability has become a consistently used term in policy. However, the meaning has been less consistent and the initial definition was:

*'Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987: online)*

The current meaning ranges from economic longevity to purely environmental continuity. Tensions arise because of the flexibility of the term and the way it has been adapted to so many different areas of policy. It brings with it a degree of manoeuvrability, which can obstruct accountability of policy makers for failing to honour their promises.

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to present findings which build on the key points made in the previous section: that at partnership level community members can be a part of decision-making on partnership aims and objectives but at programme level the structures of CF favour local authority leadership within the three-way partnership. This section of the chapter consolidates this point giving examples through case study comparison. Examples of communities successfully challenging the structures of the CF programme consolidates that those strategically selective structures exist and that there is space for change within them. In addition findings on this topic reveal more about the balance between community development principles and statutory culture within CF partnerships relating to local authority-CF relations.

#### *Grant Recipient Body (GRB) status, independence and sustainability*

Of the three case study partnerships the Swansea case study partnership was the only GRB and had been since 2004, having decided to break away from the initial local authority GRB. The Caerphilly and Gwynedd case studies both have a local authority GRB, although Gwynedd is its own employer. Discussions on and repercussions of having different forms of GRB are compared between partnerships here to gauge the significance of this role for partnership independence and sustainability. This issue is closely intertwined with the issue of local authority-CF relations.

The sequence which led to a change in the Swansea case study began with what has been described by long-standing members of the partnership as being:

*'... at loggerheads with the council' (10:3)*

The two key reasons for the partnership choosing to become its own GRB both stem from dissatisfaction with the local authority approach to management. This refers to conflict with council officers who were trying to take control of CF partnerships and the council's bureaucratic ways of working which did not coincide with the partnership's culture of community development work: paperwork and authorisation were delaying and extinguishing enthusiasm of community members.

Between 2001 and 2004 a series of conflicts occurred between local authority officers at Swansea council and the case study CF partnership. Discussions about these problems took place between the partnership chair, vice chair and treasurer who took the decision, based on consensus from within the partnership, to pursue other options for GRB. The partnership co-ordinator had the advantage of a background in business studies and was able to give the partnership the option of becoming a company limited by guarantee.

*'I helped them write their business plan when they didn't have the expertise at the time, that's one benefit of me being kitted out with a business mind' (11:3)*

The co-ordinator led the partnership through the process without difficulty and the partnership is now a Development Trust and company limited by guarantee. It is important to note that not all co-ordinators would be in a position to lead their partnership through the process. This is an advantage of involving the business sector in partnership work, something that is not prevalent in CF.

The impact of becoming its own GRB has been positive in terms of independence and empowerment. The conflict with the local authority has

ceased since 2004 and the partnership has been able to claim money for projects and events quicker than when the council was GRB.

In addition the partnership is making all its own decisions. While the co-ordinator reports to the council he clearly gets his direction from the community. One volunteer and one former volunteer, now member of staff, were interviewed for this research. From joining-in through part time, ad hoc involvement with various CF community projects and activities in the early stages of the programme, both stated that they now feel empowered by being part of the partnership. Both acknowledged that this feeling of empowerment comes from the genuine belief that the decisions they are making have an impact on the community. Both acknowledged that this may not have been possible with a local authority GRB. One recounted an instance at the time before becoming GRB of a local authority officer threatening to remove the co-ordinator from the partnership if the volunteers did not comply with council wishes.

*‘Regeneration in X came under education and so it was the education guy we were talking to . . . he was giving me his spiel and I said ‘what is it A. if we don’t play the game your way you take the ball away?’ (12:4)*

The partnership now has more control over how, when and where funding is allocated which has allowed freedom and space to respond to community voices. The co-ordinator of the partnership stated that since 2004 the partnership has had its own trading arm in the form of a café which builds financial capacity to fund two members of staff. This has meant an increasing sense of sustainability, valuable for the partnership in light of the CF funding cuts in 2009 and the end of programme in 2012. This would not have been possible without the degree of control over funding coming from GRB status.

*‘. . . we fund 4 staff members of our own without CF money all from trading and we want that to grow and become stronger. . . we need sustainability because the type of work we’re doing in these communities is going to take . . . a lot longer than the length of the programme’ (10:3)*

Another advantage for some CF partnerships of becoming a GRB is the direct links it can make with other organisations in the area which were formerly mediated through the local authority GRB.

*'By becoming its own GRB this partnership has had to gain the trust and conciliation of local organisations formerly working with the partnership through the medium of the local authority' (30:5)*

On the issue of partnership sustainability all members interviewed from this case study felt that they had an advantage over partnerships that are currently integrated into local authority work. All agreed that it is a positive step towards sustainability and empowerment with the acceptance that not all partnerships can become their own GRB due to being too small or underfunded.

*'The partnerships most likely to disappear in 2012 are the small, disparate partnerships and the ones that are council projects' (10:3).*

#### *The symbolic power of GRB status*

The symbolic power of GRB status is highlighted by these findings. Respondents from the other two case study partnerships and from within the WG were asked to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of partnerships becoming their own GRB. One overriding advantage running through the data was the symbolic power of GRB status for a partnership.

Amongst respondents who thought partnerships should become their own GRB or have a voluntary sector GRB where possible: staying out of council politics was a key reason for this.

*'... when things are political you don't have that freedom that you should have really' (19:7)*

A partnership becoming GRB through the company or charity route is not always a viable option. However, most partnership staff and volunteers agreed that having a non-local authority GRB presents a way of separating CF from the

local authority's internal politics which often acts as a barrier to the reflexive action required for community development.

In arguing the case for partnerships becoming their own GRB, one co-ordinator exemplified the symbolic power of GRB status. He visited Rhyl CF partnership before the WG pulled its funding in 2008 and found that the partnership was based on the first floor of a police station with limited access from outside. People in the area had a distrust of the police which made it impossible for the partnership co-ordinator to draw local people into CF activities. In another part of Rhyl town centre there was a Tenants Association with a large membership managing its own budget. Had the partnership been based in this part of the community with a Tenants Association GRB, CF may have been more successful in Wales' most deprived area.

*'I think that the local authority might be a good GRB [for Rhyl] in the interim if they had nothing else as a stepping stone but ultimately where it's possible it should be the residents association or residents board or the CF partnership itself' (7:8)*

A number of CF staff referred to the initial CF guidance in 2001 stating that they felt the intention had been for partnerships to become independent by 2012. This created an assumption among some that partnerships were moving towards acquiring GRB status.

*'The Communities First Programme is about a process of supporting communities to determine their own needs and play an active part in shaping the future of their community. It is about enabling them to develop the confidence, knowledge, skills and experience to take **independent** action' (WG, 2007: 65) (emphasis added)*

Another example of the symbolic power of GRB status was a case where the local authority approached a voluntary organisation and asked them to be the GRB for a new CF partnership in the area. This was seen by the co-ordinator of the partnership as a strategic move by the local authority to combat local

perception that the majority of council money is being put into the town centre rather than the surrounding estates and valleys.

One WG staff member responsible for CF was extremely sceptical about the process of partnerships becoming their own GRB.

*'[partnerships becoming their own GRB is] . . . an illusion, a mirage in the desert' (14:4)*

This respondent stated that the GRB can never be the partnership because there are too many differing perspectives within each partnership and too much commitment involved in running a business or a charity. However, the Swansea case study has become its own GRB successfully and through incorporating all the differing perspectives and building on the core group of partnership leaders. This raises questions around the WG's intentions reflected in the respondent's views and the findings for this research implies that the WG want CF more integrated into local authorities as opposed to partnerships becoming more independent.

Reasons given in this research for partnerships becoming their own GRB are focused on internal attitudes of local authorities towards CF partnerships and the clash in place of bureaucratic process between local authorities and community organisations; in short a cultural clash. While there is little difference in funding allocation when a partnership becomes its own GRB, the symbolic change has been fundamental in the case study examined here. Clashes causing partnership structures to change are seen here as a repercussion from the initial motivation for implementing the programme as a local authority rather than a voluntary sector-led programme.

Partnerships are not encouraged to become their own GRB by the WG which adds another strand in the argument set-out earlier: that the WG is actively encouraging local authority-control in CF partnerships contrary to initial aims for partnerships to become independent. Comments from respondents supporting the argument against partnerships acquiring GRB status place it as a symbolic

move. However, in the case of the Swansea partnership this symbolism has allowed confidence to grow and subsequently for the partnership to feel able to challenge the local authority on issues of contention. Therefore the symbolism of becoming a GRB can trigger and legitimise tangible outcomes and benefits for partnerships.

Independence from state and statutory funding and decision-making partially fits the traditional principles of a community development perspective; it facilitates local level decision-making on actions taken in the community. This is in line with the community and voluntary sector ethos and does not often fit easily into the statutory sector's bureaucratic systems. Becoming its own GRB or having a voluntary sector GRB does not mean financial independence from state funding for CF partnership but it does mean less influence on financial decision-making from statutory bodies and subsequently less influence from statutory cultural norms. As outlined earlier respondents from with CF communities stated that the statutory sector culture could put a stop to worthwhile activity.

As well as longevity the term sustainability in a CF context also relates to the end of core funding in 2012 and the potential move from state-funded to 'independent' partnerships. This means a move towards increasing grant funding and trading arms of partnerships which relates to Taylor's (2003) pragmatic viewpoint of public policy in the community: that state-led programmes offer an opportunity for communities to pursue local issues. Cuts in revenue funding will pose a sink or swim situation for most partnerships and some degree of financial independence pre-2012 could mean better chances of survival; as could the degree of dependence on the local authority. While the case study shows an association between partnerships with GRB status and financial independence through trading, the findings also show discouragement of this form of independence from within the WG. This shows a contradiction in policy rhetoric on the community-focused programme originally proposed by the WG. It also forms another strand in the argument presented earlier that the CF in practice does not reflect its design.

Also revealed through this case study is an example of the uneasy relationship between state and civil society. The assumption put forward at the outset, that devolution means a closer interface between state and civil society, is proven questionable at best.

### *Partnership structure and functions*

CF partnership structure is a three way division between community, statutory and voluntary representatives. Decisions are officially made at partnership Board meetings and every partnership has a paid co-ordinator, many also have paid development workers, youth workers and administrators. CF partnerships were set up to tackle deprivation in Wales at micro-geographical level and taking a community-focused approach. Partnership aims are structured according to Vision Frameworks<sup>27</sup> with a primary Vision Framework as the main focus. Vision Frameworks are decided by the partnership and do not necessarily connect to the biggest problem in the area (often it is the most visible problem that prompts pursuit through Vision Frameworks).

CF activities tend to be un-standardised because they depend on partnership size, funding, volunteers, co-ordinator and, most significantly, local authority influence. Partnership structure and function is a significant factor in the investigation of CF partnership independence and sustainability not only in relation to GRB as a financial structure but in relation to membership, power and politics. The strategically oriented structures of each partnership vary with interplays of power between strategic actors on partnership Boards.

Partnership structures were decided at the outset of the programme and some respondents stated that the WG had put pressure on local authorities to choose partnership boards as soon as possible. Two local authority officers stated that in the earlier stages of the programme the WG had rushed them into setting-up partnerships in all their CF areas. This was felt by some to detract from the bottom-up aspect of the programme in a fundamental way. The issue also contributed to the local authority-dominated design and implementation of CF

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<sup>27</sup> Vision Framework themes defined by the Welsh Government are: 'Child Poverty', 'Environment', 'Community Safety', 'Jobs Business and Income Generation', 'Education Training and Skills' and 'Health and Wellbeing'

which permeates every theme arising from the interview data. Again, this consolidates the point that the WG is not pushing for partnership independence from a community perspective but for integration of the partnership into local authority structures which does not constitute independence for the partnership.

However, independence for the partnership in terms of decision-making outside local authority remit was questioned by one councillor who felt that giving a lead to community members in partnership has led to unsuitable community leaders making mistakes in decision-making. He stated that there should be more mechanisms of accountability put in place.

*'He's a flamboyant, strong character and self-opinionated, led by him the partnership broke up. The emergence of that sort of individual with that sort of authority over the partnership is a clear example of a weakness in the [CF] system' (20:6)*

Again this provides evidence for strategic pursuit by the WG through CF but going beyond the parameters of the programme. It could be argued that the closer interface between state and society and the community-focused approach to CF is one strand of the WG strategy to justify its existence by running a programme in a hands-on way that could not be executed by central government with its political and geographical distance from Wales.

Some philosophical questions on the role and function of partnerships in CF arose during the fieldwork. A number of respondents reflected on their experience as part of a CF partnership in negative terms and as a difficult experience pursuing agendas of the most powerful member of the partnership and of conflict with little resolution. One respondent astutely stated:

*'... you don't create a working partnership by setting up something you call a partnership' (16:3)*

Building trust and relationships between partnership members from different sectors takes time and this was recognised by many respondents despite

numerous examples given of the opposite approach taken at the outset of CF. Another respondent stated that a partnership is not a group of people sitting around a table, it is a group who genuinely share decision-making in the work that they do. This raises questions around the importance of partnership structure and membership for long term sustainability of fully functioning partnerships.

In addition the difficulty and failings in representing a diverse community or communities (of age, sex, race etc) evident in this research has presented problems in UK regeneration partnerships since the 1970s. The findings reveal evidence of *'closed partnerships'* (Robinson & Shaw, 2001: 11) whereby the meeting is run as a council meeting and is therefore inaccessible to community members.

*'A quarter of the SRB partnerships in our survey are failing to implement any of the most basic practices associated with openness and accountability – such as publicly accessible Board meetings, publication of papers for meetings, an AGM open to the public and the publication of an annual report'* (Robinson & Shaw, 2001: 11)

The data revealed that a genuine partnership needs a focal point for pursuit. This relates to the point made earlier in the thesis about community groups being formed for specific purposes and disbanding when the CF partnership took over responsibility for the issue. The fundamental drive to tackle something that relates directly to an individual or group is motivating.

However, the drive requires the individual or group in question to feel that the issue is their problem by their historical, cultural or geographical relation to it. This leads us on to the next requirement for a successful partnership emerging from the findings, area-based loyalty. This can be built-up over time or come from sharing a common problem but again requires personal or group responsibility to be taken for the given issue.

The problems listed were not all within the remit of CF which belies a very significant point made earlier about over expectation within the CF programme and subsequently over expectation on individuals to improve what are arguably infrastructural and economically based problems in their areas.

Finally, a democratic structure and autonomy was seen as essential by most. This means everyone in the partnership having an influence on partnership aims, objectives, action and spending. This is a complex issue on which numerous examples of the difficulties in achieving true autonomy are given throughout the data.

In summary responsibility and power over locality among the people sharing space is required. This is a form of strategic selectivity among community members which exemplifies the imagined line between state and society through governing mechanisms outside the state performing governance.

Despite this, whether the partnership has power over decisions which affect problems in the community at a more strategic, and arguably more influential, governing level is questionable given the findings presented so far.

The balance between independence and sustainability within CF partnerships is a difficult one to strike. Independence from higher level governing structures could mean financial instability in 2013 when CF funding comes to an end. It is therefore possible to argue given the complex nature of successful partnerships, the changing nature of community development and the reliance on individual interest and motivation that sustainability is a difficult state to achieve without a losing a degree of independence through integration into large, more powerful and resourceful organisations.

One alternative to the difficulty of striking a balance between independence and sustainability is CF partnerships taking more of a governing than an implementation role as a way of community members gaining ownership over local decision-making equating to a form of independence. One respondent stated that the CF partnerships should be more strategic as their current input

into every aspect of programme delivery, from decision-making to implementation was distracting them from the key issue of driving the CF agenda in their locality.

Partnership meetings provided interesting insights into the balance of power within partnerships and its affect on independence. The key issues on partnership meetings arising in the interview data can be categorised into power or influence and agenda and attendance. In relation to power and influence, one respondent stated that the existing Community Development Team (CDT) has a '*more powerful board*' (6:4) since the advent of CF. This comment refers to the statutory and local political representation on the board which has meant greater prominence for community issues within council structures. In one case study councillor engagement, the arrival of paid CF staff, police involvement and local authority officer involvement with community group members through CF partnership meetings meant a far wider-ranging influence for existing community development groups.

In terms of agenda and attendance many community members only attend partnership meetings if they have a particular issue that concerns them. This has led to frustration among more strategic level respondents due to the fact that focusing on personal problems distracts senior officers and CF officers from driving the programme forward at a strategic level. More than one respondent stated that councillors do not attend partnership meetings unless they have an issue to pursue within the community. This links to the issue of power and implies that councillors have less influence to pursue community development issues within the council than they do to promote their agenda in the community. If this argument holds true then having more elected representatives on the CF partnership board does not make the board more powerful, it makes the councillor in question more powerful among community members.

This situation does not imply a sustainable or independent partnership for two key reasons. Firstly, membership within a CF partnership is likely to be transient over the long term. This means that power based on individuals pursuing

strategically selective objectives is lost from the partnership if the individual(s) leaves or ceases to pursue the issue in question. Secondly, while influence and resources from within the local authority can contribute positively to CF partnerships in terms of power to change things within the community, the balance between support and integration arises again in the issue of independence. It is difficult to see how partnerships can achieve independence and long term sustainability simultaneously when their decision-making is framed by local authority strategically oriented structures and strategic actors.

#### *Alternative routes to independence and sustainability*

While two of the case study partnerships are not their own GRB one is line-managed by the council and the other is its own employer of CF staff. The co-ordinator who is employed by the partnership stated that having a council GRB did not make much difference in practice. However, not being line-managed by the council is highly advantageous for his role. Being outside a local authority remit has meant freedom for the co-ordinator to challenge local authority decisions. Relating to this and in line with a community development perspective the recommendations from the *People in Communities* evaluation stated that:

*'The co-ordinator should be employed by the partnership if appropriately constituted or a nominated lead partner agreed by the partnership' (WG, 2001: 90)*

One co-ordinator consolidated this by saying that CF partnerships need a neutral guide, someone who is not caught up in council politics. This resonates with the initial proposals for the programme from community development experts advocating a voluntary sector-led approach. Interviews with the experts in question reveal that part of the reason for this design suggestion was to ensure a non-political bias in the overall running of the programme; this advice was ignored by WG officials in 2001 in favour of a more local authority-led programme structure.

*'There needs to be a neutral person to link things together really because people are too tied up in the politics. We are now six years down the line but I think that if the partnership had been structured differently at the outset then it might have worked better. . .'* (25: 1)

To conclude this section of the chapter independence for CF partnerships is most often seen in proximity to local authority structures and specifically political agendas within the Authority. This independence is reflected in the symbolic power of GRB status for partnerships. This is as well as the practical independence through receiving funding directly from the WG such as speedier payments for community development work. SRA can shed light on the strategically selective structures at work within partnerships through the medium of strategic actors pursuing agendas. In terms of sustainability closer ties with the local authority can mean security for the longer-term. However this security relates more to individual jobs within the partnership rather than the partnership as a whole and its pursuit of local improvement. In addition independence (from local political agendas) and sustainability (financial) do not always go hand in hand. This is a polarisation drawn from some of the data but other findings revealed a more moderate situation in most partnerships with tendencies towards independence and sustainability to varying degrees.

#### *8.4 Conclusions*

The findings presented in this chapter reveal a great deal of common issues and problems running through the CF programme relating to broader strategically selective structures in which it functions. Specifically, findings relating to all three research questions reveal overlapping themes around the strategy guiding CF from within the WG and local authorities in Wales. The research into integration of pre-existing community organisations gives insight that goes far beyond the question to uncover sometimes conflicting perceptions of the CF programme from those involved. Integration between CF and community groups was seen as essential by CF community development workers but not as essential by the WG, for example.

In addition a cultural clash between community, voluntary and statutory sector representatives on partnership boards arising from the findings on integration became more apparent through examination of local authority-CF relations. Corporate and bureaucratic cultures were seen to hinder the type of integration under study and the level of this hindrance depended greatly on the level and type of involvement of local authority structures (not as much on agents) in each CF partnership. Local authority officers from each case study area were interviewed and were located either within departments or units entitled 'regeneration' 'regeneration and economic development' or 'economic and community'. All had an economic development remit which partially explains the corporate approach and the cultural clash when considering the difference between economic and community development. Arms length support rather than intervention for CF partnerships from local authorities increases the likelihood of integration between CF and community groups while local authority involvement in structural issues or decision-making lessens it.

The impact of local authority-CF relations is a recurring theme throughout the findings from all research questions. The degree that the local authority influences the partnership through board meetings, line management of coordinators and integration of the CF partnership into the local authority's staffing and delivery structures, can dictate partnership approach. Specifically, partnership approach to integration with pre-existing community groups in the area, GRB status and decision-making.

The findings show that the WG favours local authority dominance of the programme through GRB status and through the partnership board structures which allows for local authority control and power imbalances. This is in contrast to the policy rhetoric on CF promoting community control through capacity building (WG, 2001; 2007; 2008; 2011). This is significant not only because local authority-led partnerships were promoted at the outset, which is understandable given the lack of capacity in some micro-geographical areas, but because they are still promoted seven years into the programme.

The WG, local authorities and CF have been viewed as strategically oriented structures and agents working with them as strategic actors in analysis. Because of this the findings reveal insight into the CF programme as a duality containing conflicting elements in the form of cultural clashes between sectors and between individuals which play out at partnership level.

The traditional view of community development presented an interesting contrast to the CF programme approach; although in some cases CF was seen as more community-focused than programmes existing before 2001. This echoes the issue of cultural clashes between sectors and implies that while partnerships vary in form, the programme as a whole is seen as heavily weighted towards the statutory sector culture. Interpersonal skills and long term, qualitative work in small geographical areas were favoured over the wider strategic aims from the traditional community development perspective. This was seen as more realistic. Building trust over the long term with community members was also essential to capacity building and was possible in two of the three case study partnerships; notably those without a local authority GRB.

Interestingly, good work has been done by CF partnerships on improving visible physical and social problems in the area (dog excrement on the pavement, young people hanging round on street corners and drug dealing). But this has resulted in less activity among previously active community groups and members. This turns the idea of CF communities doing it for themselves on its head and implies that communities don't want to do it for themselves, but sometimes they have to.

This finding crystallises the difficulty of distinguishing the thin line between service delivery and community development in governance. Service delivery by the statutory sector covers the eight domains of deprivation<sup>28</sup> which CF partnerships are meant to improve. However, the findings show that the programme can relieve communities of the responsibility to pursue these

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<sup>28</sup> Eight domains of deprivation: income, employment, health, education, housing, access to services, environment and community safety (WG, 2008).

improvements. In this sense the findings show the difficult balance between responsibility and having the power to act on it.

Empowerment can be in the form of a community group feeling that they can do something about the problems in their area. The purpose of CF is to facilitate such empowerment (WG, 2001). However, it is an assumption made in the programme design that once given responsibility and power (in the form of funding, resources and guidance) communities will choose to act on it. In this sense, the road to empowerment is paved with assumptions. It is argued here that it is in this sense that the programme has failed rather than in the sense of tackling deprivation in Wales, which was a high expectation placed on the programme.

CF is a capacity building and empowerment programme evidenced by the proportion of spending on staffing and partnership projects:

*'... £140 million of the £214 million spent on the programme, around 65%, went on staff and project costs within partnerships' (Coleman, 2010: 23)*

However, findings on the balance between independence and sustainability and the symbolic power of GRB status questions the argument that the CF programme has failed to empower communities. The case study partnership that became its own GRB achieved a degree of financial independence through developing a trading arm and broke away from the local authority, all community groups in the area are now closely involved in partnership work and apathy was not mentioned as a problem. The degree to which community members feel responsibility for problems in their area is varying and could be dependent to some extent on the partnership structure. This consolidates the theoretical argument in SRA that structure is a necessary prerequisite for agency action.

Power at a micro geographical level to tackle small problems which contribute to wider statutory service delivery is one route to empowerment. In this case independence is desirable. However, evidence is mixed when sustainability is taken into account. Partnerships with less independence from the local authority

are more likely to be supported by local authority resources once CF funding comes to an end.

The principles shaping the CF programme have been shown here to be missing in some partnerships but apparent in others. This inconsistency coupled with the difficulty of measuring improved capacity or empowerment reflects badly on the programme, an issue identified by the Auditor General for Wales in his evaluation of CF:

*'The lack of performance and outcome monitoring is a cause of concern as the Welsh Government cannot demonstrate value for money from the Communities First programme' (Coleman, 2010: 22)*

CF represents a process of trial and error in the difficult task of striking a balance between devolving responsibility and power to communities and between tackling problems in partnership. The findings reveal that the pitfalls are much more common and prevalent than those identified at the outset by the WG and arise in areas not predicted.

## **9. Design, implementation and power**

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This chapter presents findings from the research data which relate to wider issues contextualising the CF programme outside the parameters of the research questions. It builds on the themes developed in the previous chapter: integration with community groups, local authority influence and the symbolic power of GRB status. Most significantly it gives an insight into strategic selective activity during the design and implementation of CF, which partially explains some of the problems identified through the research questions in the previous chapter.

Further exploration into the context and strategic motivations shaping CF are divided into sections on design and implementation of CF and the impacts of devolution. Some reflections are also given to findings on the future of CF as perceived by the respondents involved in the programme. There is more of a focus on the structure of the CF programme in this chapter than the last chapter and more broadly significant revelations. This is because a number of the issues arising in the previous chapter: power, cultural clashes and partnership structure, for example, can be explained by findings in this chapter which relate to events from geographical and institutional levels above partnerships. The interview narratives often address the research questions directly and then move on to more in-depth discussion on the issues revealed in this chapter to explain why issues to do with the research questions have occurred.

The substantial section on design and implementation is a direct reflection of the proportion of research data dedicated to the subject. It not only exemplifies the retrospective thinking among those involved in CF which belies the time of research data collection when the programme was entering its second phase, but it also shows the vast amount of knowledge and long-term experience of those involved with the programme.

In terms of the impact of devolution on the findings, the focus is on the way in which the contextual findings explain issues arising in the previous chapter

addressing the research questions. This is particularly relevant to the findings on local authority-CF relations. The section on funding uses English programmes which are possible to compare with CF to calculate an approximate estimate of the financial impact of devolution on area-based regeneration in Wales. The section on geography gives reasons behind some of the issues arising in relation to local authority-CF relations and the micro-geographical approach to CF. Perceptions of the WG highlight the contradictory nature of strategic relationally functioning institutions and the way that they are presented to the public, the public sector and other institutions.

### *9.1 Design and Implementation*

This section of the chapter focuses on narratives from individuals on the design and implementation of CF. It reflects the strength of the findings through a better understanding of the strategic selective trajectory leading to CF from the perspective of actors involved and affected by strategic decisions made at the outset. It also gives a valuable temporal insight through looking back and asking why CF now has the problems and successes presented in previous chapters.

Using SRA theory the policy actors involved in this research are viewed as strategically-oriented enacting a mixture of political agendas and individual motives to pursue political projects. Problems identified through contradictions between perspectives from inside and outside the WG also reveal something about strategic structural representation.

The structures under study are viewed as strategic and decisions made are seen to create or preserve a perceived view of these structures. Leading on from this decisions made at the outset of the CF programme can be directly connected to subsequent deep-rooted problems embedded in the programme. These effects are perhaps not always intentional and are the result of a lack of strategic attention rather than a direct result of strategy.

Reasons behind these decisions are connected to three key motivations. Firstly, the aim of creating a perception that CF is a programme of importance through

a 'big bang' approach to implementation as a means of demonstrating capability of the WG to drive a Wales-wide initiative. Secondly, it was a move on the part of the WG to appease the local authority power-base in Wales. Finally, and linked to the first two, is the potential for a strategic move by the WG to create a political image for itself using CF which perhaps belies its relative institutional infancy and lack of policy-making powers during the early stages of the programme.

However, in terms of strategy the divide between perceptions of political disorganisation and political strategy are mixed. Despite the three overarching political motives for the final shape of CF design and implementation, the findings from this research also represent a more complicated and confused picture whereby an overarching strategic selectivity is difficult to discern at times.

Perceptions that significant recommendations from the evaluation of the CF pilot programme, People and Communities, were ignored in the implementation of CF were given by the majority of CF and local authority respondents. In addition there is a widely held belief that community development experts who were told by WG Ministers that they would be involved in the programme design were involved only in a tokenistic way. One senior level respondent within the WG stated that the WG approach to CF went against a number of fundamental community development conventions voiced by experts in the field. This could mean theoretical weaknesses in the programme. Despite community development expert advice that the programme needed to have lower expectations and more of a focus on fewer areas rather than a catch-all approach, the final programme design stated that local communities were going to be tackling deprivation in 142 areas of Wales.

*'Just theoretically it seems very surprising to me that people in deprived localities have . . . all the answers to their predicament. Obviously they've got a very important perspective and important insights. . . But I don't think anyone should think they have . . . all the answers. Particularly in relation to say the local economy . . .'* (13:3)

Lack of strategic direction was also a perceived problem among respondents which stemmed from decisions made at the early stages of the programme. This manifested in discussion on the overly-soft approach to regeneration within the programme aims. An economic aspect was seen to be missing from the programme's ethos causing a disproportionate emphasis on the social improvements which were seen as symptoms of deeper economic issues.

*'CF is a bit like asking people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps . . . it was a dubious proposition to my mind' (13:5).*

This was emphasised by comparison between CF and European Structural Funding Objective 1 and 2 within some interviews. While Objective 1 and 2 ploughed funds into infrastructural repair and regeneration, the aim of CF is to improve the same problems through tackling micro-level, surface issues such as tackling obesity through a local health club or tackling unemployment through a short computer course for five people; one does not logically lead to the other.

This focus on micro-issues was seen as another example of lacking strategic direction with the approach in the final design and interviewees critiqued the WG for spending a disproportionate amount of time on small issues while ignoring the big picture. Lack of strategic direction from the WG to avoid the pitfalls of local disagreements and problems was a strong critique in this context. One respondent stated that the programme works well on the ground because the people working on the programme took opportunities and used their initiative regardless of the fact that the strategic level has been less effective. The lack of strategic guidance was reflected in the fact that CF partnerships often chose to focus on issues that did not match the most serious (statistical) problems in the area.

*'I'm not saying that [a new playground] it's worthwhile but [it's] not transformative in the way CF was supposed to be transformative . . . is tackling fairly symptomatic issues rather than the thing which is underlying' (13:5)*

CF was seen as both lacking strategic decision-making and as overbearing by many during the design and implementation stages of the programme. Two key individuals hired by the WG to advise on the design and implementation of CF in 2000 gave valuable insights in the initial stages of CF. Jointly they advised the Minister in charge of CF at the outset and the instigator of the final programme design.

The WG consultation paper *Communities First: regenerating our most disadvantaged communities* (2000a) stated that CF was influenced by JRF research, findings from the Social Exclusion Unit and research on the Single Regeneration Budget (WG, 2000a: 4). The Consultation is vague in terms of defining what CF is and states that it is a:

‘. . . new concept in community regeneration’ (WG, 2000a: 4)

One interviewee involved in the design stated that they had based their advice to the WG on a combination of 30 years of personal experience in community development, academic theories such as French Inclusion theories, proven practice such as Irish Necklace Communities, guidance drawn from the *People in Communities* evaluation and WG consultation with comments from JRF and the Scottish Executives’ successful *Working for Communities* programme. This was said to have created a good balance of different sources of information and a good foundation on which to design and implement CF which shows the depth and thought that went into the initial design of CF from the community development side. This is not reflected in the final design and implementation.

The second interviewee consolidated this by talking about the policy trajectory leading to the development of *People in Communities* based partly on academic community development literature by Michael Carley (2000), Mark Shucksmith (2000), Duncan MacLennan (2000) and John Low (1999) among others. This literature was also used by JRF in response to the CF consultation (2001).

Key areas for improvement in the programme design arose from the response and were seconded by the advisory team in question. The improvements included joining CF aims with broader themes of the Better Wales (2000) document through mainstreaming. Disseminating good practice in regeneration with an emphasis on building and sustaining community involvement was also highlighted. Linking-up sub-regional planning to neighbourhood renewal and linking national, regional and sub-regional issues up were also key points of weakness in the programme design. The Communities First Baseline Report (2001) laid out the final structures of the programme and included more emphasis on mainstreaming, dissemination and linking-up. The report was clearer on the matter of definition:

*'Communities First is the Welsh Assembly Government's flagship programme to improve "the living conditions and prospects for people" in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales. The programme was launched in 2001 and was conceived as a long-term strategy to address the deep-rooted social and economic problems of those communities' (WG, 2001: 1)*

This reflects the policy rhetoric but the findings suggest that in reality the programme is a mix of social projects. The core advice for successful community development design and implementation given by both respondents to the WG in 2000 and 2001 included a phased rollout of partnerships. This would have meant ten CF established in 2001 with highly skilled community development professionals running them and training others to build overall capacity. Following this several more partnerships would be established at phased intervals over the next ten years as capacity rose and more people in more areas were able to run the partnerships successfully.

Another piece of core advice given by the WG advisors was to have a largely voluntary sector run programme. This was precisely because of the potential clashes between statutory and community cultures in contrast to voluntary and community cultures which have more in common (flexible and reflexive working methods for example). In addition it was advice given to ensure the involvement of communities in area-based decision-making.

A third piece of core advice was for the WG to have a long-term commitment to the programme, which was taken on board. Aside from the long term-commitment (12 years) all these recommendations were ignored by the WG Minister responsible for the implementation of CF. The details of this move have been pieced together in the following section of the chapter using a wide range of perspectives from people interviewed about their involvement in the initial stages of CF.

In relation to emerging research question themes presented in the previous chapter, the first two points that were ignored (having a phased rollout and putting the programme in the hands of the voluntary sector) are highly significant, particularly in relation to integration through successful community development techniques and the pivotal role of the co-ordinator in doing this. A strategic decision was made to announce and establish all 142 partnerships at once in 2001. This meant a lack of qualified community development workers employed by the programme. If a mentoring scheme had taken place in a few partnerships leading to the slow establishment of more, the issue of co-ordinator turnover and local authority hold on the programme may have been lessened. In terms of not being largely voluntary sector led, this has clearly impacted on the way some partnerships are run with heavy local authority involvement and the subsequent problems associated with this: a lack of empowerment and capacity building, for example.

Both former WG advisors stated that they were personally as well as professionally dedicated to community development and the advice given was therefore more than just doing their job. This meant a great deal of personal investment in the fate of CF and a degree of disappointment at the perceived failure of the programme as they had envisioned it. Both interviewees expressed some frustration at the internal and political way that the programme design was managed. Another respondent consolidates this contention by stating that a member of the audit commission evaluating at the outset of CF described it as:

*‘. . . the most politically motivated programme ever. . .’ (15:5)*

This suggests a strong element of strategically selective structures at work within the WG to pursue political projects.

### *The Big Bang*

More detail on the rushed, un-phased and large scale nature of CF implementation nicknamed ‘the big bang’ by respondents is presented here. This explains reasons for the research questions through knowledge on the strategic selectivity leading to CF. For example, issues arising from CF partnerships having local authority GRB (clashes between statutory and community sectors, local authority domination and the slowness of local authority processes limiting the responsiveness of community development) can be attributed to the design which favoured local authority GRB. In addition this relates to CF relations with local authorities, councillors and other community groups.

The plan for a phased rollout involved 30 partnerships being established in areas with a strong history of community development (and therefore with the staffing levels to run a CF partnership). After a prolonged period (1 or 2 years) of educating and training other development workers the established partnerships would then form new partnerships. Instead, 142 partnerships were established immediately in 2001 in small localities throughout Wales based on figures from the WIMD (WG, 2001b).

*‘The biggest flaw to me at that stage when it was rolled out was that Edwina Hart<sup>29</sup> decided that she wanted to roll the whole thing out at once ‘120 communities will be declared on Monday’ sort of stuff. At that point I just gave up really; this is just going to be a disaster’ (20:6)*

In 1999 the *People in Communities* pilot programme was established in eight areas in Wales (Gwynedd, Conwy, Wrexham, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taff,

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<sup>29</sup> Edwina Hart was the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration at the time of CF design and implementation in 2001.

Newport, Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea), chosen because of existing community development work in the area. In 2000 an interim evaluation of *People in Communities* was commissioned and published by the NAW in 2001 highlighting lessons for CF.

As outlined in chapter two on the evaluation and monitoring of CF, the report recommended that the plan to implement 30 CF partnerships in the first year building up to 100 slowly over a number of years was flawed:

*'We would recommend a much slower start which allows the management structure time to be put in place and also time to put in place a process for learning lessons . . . something that does not currently exist'* (NAW, 2001: 90)

The report strengthened the argument against *'as many as 30'* (*ibid*, 2001: 90) partnerships being implemented at the outset by stating that the NAW did not have the management structures capable of directing and supporting *People in Communities* *'let alone an initiative of [CF's] scale'* (*ibid*, 2001: 90).

Despite the strong evidence-based advice against this move it was decided amongst WG officials that the programme was to include 100 of the most deprived electoral divisions in Wales identified in the WIMD (WG, 2001b). Following this decision a consultation by the WG in 2000 and 2001 led to an expansion to include 32 additional pockets of deprivation (often referred to as sub wards) and 10 'Communities of Interest' or 'Imaginative Proposals' including: Black Minority Ethnic communities in Cardiff and Newport, victims of domestic abuse in Neath Port Talbot, young people in Pembrokeshire, and rural communities in Ceredigion, Powys, Gwynedd and Flintshire. Despite the identification of 15-20 good examples of existing joined-up holistic regeneration in areas of Wales before 2001, CF did not ask these areas to . . .

*' . . . carry on doing what you're doing, core revenue guaranteed long term. . . '*  
(20:2)

. . . as recommended by the experts. Instead at least one partnership was implemented in every one of Wales' 22 local authorities.

An interviewee working on monitoring and evaluating the *People in Communities* pilot programme recalls not having finished the evaluation at the time when CF was implemented. This has serious implications for the outcomes of CF as lessons learnt from the pilot were clearly not incorporated into the programme if they were not completed. The strategic selectivity of political forces during implementation are revealed in the findings to have prioritised speedy implementation over adequately informed design which belies a motive for implementation separate from policy rhetoric on tackling deprivation in deprived areas.

The *People in Communities* evaluation highlighted a lack of qualified and skilled community development workers in the most deprived areas of Wales given the difficult and complicated nature of the co-ordinator's job (part of the reason for implementing CF on a much smaller scale than 30 partnerships in the first year). The report stated that the:

*' . . . co-ordinator should be employed by the partnership if appropriately constituted or a nominated lead partner agreed by the partnership' (NAW, 2001: 90)*

The Scottish equivalent to *People in Communities* was *Working for Communities* established by the Scottish Executive (now Assembly) in 2001. *People in Communities* evaluation findings stated that:

*' . . . 'Working for Communities' Pathfinders were asked to nominate people for an 8 day course – 3 for the policy framework, 2 for partnership working and 3 for techniques and methods of participation. We would suggest that something equivalent is required for Wales to increase the number of people able to fulfil the co-ordinator's role' (NAW, 2001: 90)*

This recommendation did not happen in practice which constitutes part of the evidence behind the suggestion put forward in this thesis that the design of CF, led by the WG and dominated by the statutory sector, has failed to implement core facets of the community development principles on which the programme was based in policy documents and the media. One respondent stated that at the outset of CF staff were following the guidelines prescriptively without first becoming aware of existing work in their geographical area and building on that.

*'In a lot of cases new co-ordinators were reading the guidance and saying 'right, day one, this is what I'm going to do' . . . which points to a big issue around skills' (20:4)*

The big bang approach to implementation means that even now there are more partnerships than there are trained community development workers to staff them. One respondent gave an example of the problems with staffing: in one valleys town 48 jobs were advertised in the Western Mail on the same day. Under-qualified people in the area would apply for more than one job and gain experience of the interviewing process in order to get another one:

*'Some people were turned down 2 or 3 times and learnt the interview rhetoric like a parrot in order to get another post' (16:3)*

One other immediate repercussion from the big bang approach was the rushed creation of CF partnerships. One respondent from a local authority stated:

*' . . . we had an email from the Welsh Assembly Government asking us how much money the partnership was going to spend in the first year of the programme and we'd only just started the partnership'(15:8)*

While the programme is revenue funded a competitive approach to grant allocations has always existed and is increasing as the programme comes to an end (WG, 2008). The legal structures of the partnerships were decided immediately as part of the implementation which meant that people already working in the area such as local authority staff or councillors became

partnership board members automatically. In some cases where local authorities were the GRB they decided who became chair of the partnership which fundamentally contradicts a bottom-up approach to regeneration.

*'You have, you know, local government members saying, this is the so and so partnership and these are the people we're inviting to it and obviously, particularly within the valleys, communities felt totally cynical from day one' (20:5)*

The root of the statutory dominance in some areas of the programme starts to become clear here. The implementation was rushed and disorganised, local authorities existed, were established and relatively well resourced structures into which CF partnerships could be established in cases where time and numbers did not allow for independent partnership formation. This implies strategic selectivity to move quickly and act on short-term political motives.

#### *Area Selection and the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation*

Using SRA to guide analysis means focus on the spatial aspects of strategically selective governing structures leading programme design and implementation. This issue manifested in the form of the area-based selection process leading to the final 142 partnership established in 2001. The significance of this is the lack of qualitative research to establish a programme with qualitative aims such as empowerment and capacity building. This highlights a fundamental contradiction in the shape of a qualitative-focused programme as a solution to quantitatively determined problems, namely deprivation.

Area selection of CF partnerships was said to be a flawed process by one statistician involved at the outset: an insider's perspective in the issues highlighted in chapter two on evaluating CF. Before the WG decided partnership areas using the WIMD every local authority was asked about where the boundaries were:

*' . . . and it came down to 'is this street in it or not?' . . . this was a very unsatisfactory way to start a programme' (13:2)*

Insights into the use of the WIMD in the CF programme critique the initial use of the index as a mechanism for selecting CF partnerships. One interviewee gave a second-hand account of the meeting held with WG Ministers and voluntary sector representatives to discuss the community consultation carried out by local authorities in 2000 to aid the CF partnership selection process. The Minister at the meeting disregarded all findings from the consultation and used the WIMD as the sole means of decision-making, to the surprise and unhappiness of all local authority and voluntary sector representatives at the meeting. It has been suggested that the underlying reason behind this approach revolved around a lack of concern among key WG Ministers for the detailed nature of community development and a wish to complete the design of the programme as quickly as possible without complications.

*'I saw that the council put time into this, consulted the communities, consulted voluntary sectors, local organisations put them together, then staff read them in turn at this meeting where Norma Barry then went 'here's Swansea, they're out, they're in, they're out, NPT, they're out, they're'. . . someone said 'I thought we're meant to be commenting on these?' and Norma said 'Oh no, the minister has decided it's the top 100'' (4:5)*

Use of the index has also been critiqued for only using the overall rank of the areas on the index chosen to participate in CF rather than the specific domains in which they are failing.

*'It was misused as a simple way of deciding who was in and who was out, what should have been done was to look at the areas in relation to the different domains' (13:5)*

If a partnership is ranked number ten in the WIMD this does not specify that they are, for example, number 100 on housing. This argument means that the WIMD is not being used to its full capacity and subsequently that the correct statistical issues are not definitely being targeted by partnerships. Furthermore, this disregard for the detailed scope of the index raises questions around the

complex definition of the term 'deprivation' and the difficulty, when one begins to unpack the concept, of a small community partnership tackling something so large and complex. Moreover, CF does not address all domains of the WIMD.

The WIMD (WG, 2008c) dictates the domains of deprivation to be tackled and subsequently the areas of focus for each community through their vision frameworks. Choosing to use this as a tool for area selection in favour of areas with a strong history of community development has been explained by one respondent. Firstly, in order to implement the programme in 142 areas this was the most cost and time efficient means of identifying those areas. Secondly, deprivation includes eight different domains which cover all the statistically identified socio-economic problems in UK poverty measurements thereby adhering to the non-prescriptive ethos of the programme.

In using the WIMD it is possible to argue that reducing eight domains of deprivation has led to the perception by local people that they are tackling national problems at a community level. This is economically and geographically unrealistic in the context of CF and such perceived over-expectation could lead to problems of disempowerment and disillusionment in communities.

*'... where did them taking an interest in their community in coming together to improve quality of life become their responsibility to deliver against what they perceive as national targets?' (15:8)*

However, the problem of local people choosing to focus on very minor and visible issues also emerged as a problem within the more strategically-focused interviews. Emphasis on the WIMD could guide community vision frameworks towards the less visible but more serious, underlying problems. A statistician within the WG in 2009 stated that the WG will be making more effort in future to match community vision frameworks with the highest domain on the Index. However, contradiction between the argument stating that local people need to become more strategic and the argument that local people cannot be expected

to solve national issues such as child poverty remains. This is an issue that parallels findings from the national evaluation of NDC:

*'NDC areas have seen more net change with regard to place-related, rather than people-related outcomes over the 2002-2008 time period covered by this evaluation' (Batty et al, 2010: 8)*

Place based outcomes such as crime, housing and physical improvements take precedence over people based outcomes such as employment, education and health even in a more economic and infrastructural focused programme such as NDC. Both findings from this research and the NDC research imply that CF was and is very unlikely to improve on people-based outcomes over the long term which leads us to the next issue on design and implementation: expectations.

### *Expectations*

Expectations, and more specifically over-expectations, are a reoccurring theme running through the interview narratives and nearly always traced back to implementation. The way expectations are perceived by different respondents crystallises discussion on design and implementation. Expectations have been based on the role of individuals and small groups involved in the programme through policy rhetoric and media coverage. Unlike other government-led initiatives where the government is working to deliver, CF puts the expectation to deliver successful community development, often without adequate training, guidance or resources, on community members. Community members are not clearly defined in any CF guidance and the way that they are meant to tackle deprivation at local level is not made explicit. Expectations on an ill defined group constitute the 'imagined' in SRA terms as the line between governing and the governed has become blurry through a combination of policy rhetoric and strategic-level assumptions rather than solid evidence or logic.

Expectations for the programme were high at the outset contrasting with the reality of what small partnerships with relatively small amounts of revenue funding can achieve. Respondents reflected on the pressure after implementation to achieve numbers, to set up partnerships and the assumption

that the programme was going to solve deprivation. More than one local authority representative stated that they felt the WG was being pushy about partnership creation where they would have preferred a more organic process. In addition expectation from within the WG was based on the assumption that people in communities can tackle deprivation through goodwill and collective action. As one respondent pointed out, in reality:

*' . . . we don't control workforce immigration patterns from Europe, we don't even control county economic policy . . . how are we meant to succeed where the DWP has failed?' (7:6).*

Contrary to perceptions of some community-level interviewees that CF was going to tackle deprivation in Wales, Assembly Member Leighton Andrews stated that in terms of economic competition CF could not have a great deal of strategic influence.

*'It's harder to see how, apart from helping to raise incomes and therefore stimulating local economic development, it would help Wales more specifically compete globally, except in the area of skills' (17:6)*

This quote also relates to the ordering of neo liberal policy requirements as the Minister puts CF within a neo-liberal framework of limitations confronting policy makers with economic development at the forefront. The issue of devolving responsibility without power and subsequently placing blame on communities for failure to tackle the issues at a local level can be seen as a move to tackle a neo-liberal priority through community: a contradiction. Many perceptions of CF were based on the change from initial optimism in 2001 to disappointment stem from over expectation.

*' . . . when did them taking an interest in their community in coming together to improve quality of life become their responsibility to deliver against what they perceive to be national targets? . . . What do you do about child poverty at a community level? Knock on people's doors and ask if their child is living in poverty?' (15:3)*

The most positive aspect emerging from the data on CF day to day partnership work came from the small success stories. Examples emerged such as: an allotment set up by CF that is now running independently; a computing club which has helped more than one person in the community to improve on their qualifications and increase their job-seeking aspirations; a number of building renovations; football projects for ex-offenders and adult education courses. It is interesting and important to note that these successes are not measurable as statistical outcomes and may not register on the WG Annual Monitoring Report outcomes, but this clearly does not render them invaluable in terms of empowerment and capacity building. This point is an important reflection on contradictions and disjointedness between the way in which the programme is designed and the way success is measured.

Assembly Member Leighton Andrews focused on the statistical approach to measurement of the programme. He stated that this approach was an attempt to tackle problems caused by the initially flawed design of the programme outlined in the previous section of the chapter. This is the consolidation of the flawed design and implementation of the programme from the unique perspective of the minister responsible for tackling problems in the programme at the time of this research.

With funding of £214 million between 2001 and 2009 spread over 100+ partnerships at a roughly estimated average of £600,000 per partnership every two years (varying hugely between partnerships), CF cannot tackle deeply embedded causal economic infrastructural problems. This impossibility is reflected in the unrealised expectations of individuals and their perception of CF having not achieved what it set out to achieve.

As a route to long-term sustainable change for unemployed and economically inactive people CF was viewed sceptically. One respondent suggested that the programme had only contributed to the economy in terms of the jobs created for CF. CF has created jobs for people who are employed to create jobs for other people often without the knowledge, experience or resources to do so. This

view sees CF as a clever political tactic to create jobs directly from unemployment but leaves the deep rooted economic causes of unemployment un-tackled.

### *Mainstreaming and Programme Bending*

Programme bending as stipulated in the WG strategy document *Making the Connections* (2006a) refers to streamlining services and applying one working practice to another area while engaging all agents involved. More specifically in the context of CF it has been described as:

*'Getting services – the police, education, health, social housing, and transport – to re-focus more of their resources in favour of failing neighbourhoods, helping them to recover from years of decline' (ODPM, 2004)*

Mainstreaming can be divided into two types useful for better understanding as has been done by Cardiff Council's Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee in a research paper on CF (2010). First, strategic mainstreaming which means a redirection of resources from public sector organisations onto neighbourhood level targets agreed with local partners. Second, initiatives mainstreaming which is effectively piloting one local initiative and transferring the model and lessons learned onto other initiatives.

In 2008 the head of CF, Paul Dear, announced to Cardiff Council's Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee that the WG interprets the term programme bending broadly and flexibly. Extra funding for deprived areas, public service resources put into CF areas and new forms of engagement all came under the heading.

Programme bending and mainstreaming were seen by all interviewees as part of the unrealistic expectations purported through policy rhetoric. How and why programme bending was going to happen and who was going to make it happen in light of CF funding was unclear from the outset. Local authorities have little financial incentive to aid independent CF partnerships outside of their statutory duty, for example. These issues have yet to be addressed fully by

those within the WG who are running the programme. In addition the broad definition of programme bending and the promotion that it received by the WG in relation to CF could imply a strategically selective quick fix by the WG in terms of answering some of the questions on why CF has failed to achieve its expectations.

### *Funding*

The issue of funding is linked with mainstreaming and programme bending because funding distribution is largely controlled by the statutory sector. WG officials often discuss funding with local authority officers without involving community members. This highlights important decisions such as whether to put more funding into front line delivery and less into support, are not made by local people. Partnership influence on funding distribution is decreasing as the programme is steered more towards quantifiable outcomes, stricter funding control and standardisation of partnership working.

On the issue of revenue funding for partnerships, individuals involved in the design of CF stated that roughly the same amount of funding was to be allocated to all partnerships at the outset to avoid disparity. However, with hindsight one designer felt that this approach had compounded the inequity.

*'I thought Christ, we've started a really iniquitous process here' (20:6)*

Since then very different amounts of funding has been given to each partnership. In one local authority-GRB case study the council received £200,000 over the same period that a partnership in North Wales received £2m.

Available funding figures for each case study area and partnership are detailed here highlighting disparities.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

Monitoring of the CF programme is discussed here from a community development perspective in relation to the design of the CF monitoring system and more recent changes to rectify problems with this design. The significance

of this is to further emphasise the point that CF has a contradiction embedded in its structure as it is a soft approach to tackling hard and complex problems of deprivation. There emerges from the data relating to monitoring and evaluation a sense of disjointedness between the practice and outcomes reflecting this contradiction.

While the idea of bottom-up regeneration implemented by a governing body from the top-down is paradoxical it leaves opportunities for bottom-up control over decision-making (Taylor, 2003) and the degree through which this is achievable in practice ignores policy-based discourse. One of the spaces where this control can be exercised is the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). One co-ordinator stated that they fill in the AMR in the correct way as a means to an end, which is being left alone to do their real job in community development. This statement also reflects the divide between the language of governance and the language of community development from an SRA perspective.

AMR's are the WG tool for measuring progress within CF and are outlined in the methodology chapter. In 2007 the Welsh Local Government Data Unit (WLGDU) was commissioned to work with the CF Directorate within the Social Justice and Local Government Research and Information Unit at the WG on adapting the CF AMR system. Through the internship undertaken as part of the data collection for this research details of this change and reasons for it were revealed at a key stage of its development. Revised AMRs were circulated in March 2008, completed by the partnerships during the summer and returned by the end of the year. WLGDU have disseminated the findings through the statistical tool Gwion in a series of Cubes (three dimensional tables for viewing and sorting data). During the two week internship at the WG detail on the structure, aims and focus of the AMR's was gathered. The AMR system was originally developed from a Word document with widely ranging categories filled in by partnership co-ordinators to an Excel spreadsheet with more detailed categories.

Through the new AMR the success or failure of partnerships is measured. A number of CF co-ordinators responsible for completing the AMR stated that it is

an inadequate measurement for the type of community development work that partnerships do.

*‘. . .I keep the Assembly off my back, there’s the AMR and everything but broadly speaking as long as I’m keeping my residents happy and the directors we’re allowed to get on with what’s important’(7:5)*

Problems were identified with quantifying a community development programme which is based on relatively unquantifiable concepts such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘capacity building’. It is very difficult to find a correlation between partnership work and area-based improvement measurements. One respondent gave the example of ‘child poverty’ and activities that have benefited young people in the community. Activities like a day trip from the valleys to a city for young people to enjoy cultural experiences may raise a young person’s confidence and broadens their experience but that impact is impossible to measure quantitatively. In addition there are many different types of child poverty not specified in the WIMD such as poverty of aspiration, opportunity, emotional and economic, making measurement of ‘improvement’ through statistics even more problematic.

Within the WG there was a perception that partnership outcomes should reflect vision framework headings<sup>30</sup>; at present the AMR does not facilitate this because partnership members select their focus based on local knowledge. ‘Youth Work’ constitutes a large number of vision frameworks in areas where there are a lot of young people hanging around on street corners at night. However, because this issue is a visual symptom of deeper rooted problems it is perceived within the WG Data Unit as highly important that partnerships become more statistically informed when deciding which issues to tackle and how. This perspective of the AMR raised questions around the bottom-up nature of CF proposed at the initial design and implementation stage of the research.

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<sup>30</sup> Vision Framework themes defined by the Welsh Government are: ‘Child Poverty’, ‘Environment’, ‘Community Safety’, ‘Jobs Business and Income Generation’, ‘Education Training and Skills’ and ‘Health and Wellbeing’

In two of the three case studies the co-ordinators see themselves as mediators between politicians and community members relating policy rhetoric to local people's view of reality. In addition the co-ordinator will use language such as 'competitiveness' and 'productivity' in the AMR in order to appease WG officials and translate the community development work into the language of policy. However, in two cases the co-ordinators stated that the account given in the AMR is not a true reflection of the complexity of the work happening on the ground rather it ticks the evaluation boxes. This highlights another policy implementation deficit ingrained within the structure of CF which is a fault in the way the strategic level WG perceives CF work on the ground causing misconceptions. It is possible to argue that this has contributed to a perception of failure by the CF programme reported by various commentators (Coleman, 2010; Hincks & Robson, 2010; Welsh Government, 2011).

### *Conclusions*

Examination of the programme's origins has not only served to pinpoint potential repercussions throughout CF but also allows us to view some of the ways in which wider national and international power structures and influence play-out within the programme. Data on design and implementation reveals major deep-rooted flaws in the programme.

### *9.2 Communities First under devolution*

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to place the power relationships between local authority and CF representatives within their broader political context in order to better understand the strategic selectivity leading to power imbalances identified in the data.

Using key interviews with political elites at the WG and the architect of Welsh devolution, Councillor Ron Davies, the impact of devolution on community development in Wales is detailed under the headings: 'local authority-CF relations', 'Funding' and 'Geography'. Hierarchical power relationships within the structure of the CF programme are linked with the long-standing statutory structures in Wales and the relatively new institutional structure of the WG.

Within this context the roles and relationships of actors are examined in relation to power and control.

This section of the chapter draws on data that pinpoints key areas where CF is directly influenced by devolution in Wales. While CF is clearly a product of devolution the ways in which this has impacted on specific areas of the programme is made clearer through examination of the interview data. In addition clarity is given to a number of issues discussed in this chapter from a strategic or structural perspective.<sup>31</sup>

Some key comments on devolution made by respondents provide good background information for more detailed exploration of its impact on regeneration in the form of CF. Assembly Member Leighton Andrews stated that devolution essentially means a closer interface between organised community groups in society (such as trade unions) and politicians. However, a closer interface is not the same as having more influence for community groups over political decision-making through local democratic structures; again the difference between having a say and having an influence in local democracy arises. There is an assumption in a number of statements made by the Minister that devolution is a mutually beneficial process for community development groups and politicians when this research shows mutuality to be questionable.

Interestingly and perhaps unsurprisingly the Minister used elements of Whitehall rhetoric when discussing devolution referring to 'double devolution' (Miliband, 2006) and giving examples of the transferral of power from Whitehall to the WG and from the WG to trade unions and programmes like CF. However, he stated that the WG provides a platform for Whitehall to learn from its more community-focused approach to regeneration.

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<sup>31</sup> The National Assembly for Wales (NAW) and the Welsh Government (WG) formally separated in 2007. They comprise the Executive and Legislative arms of the NAW, respectively. At the time of this research devolution in Wales was based on NAW issuing secondary legislation on Westminster laws. The 'Government of Wales Act 2006' gave the NAW the power to make its own legislation on devolved matters such as health, education, social services, local government (known as Assembly Measures). In terms of the laws and primary before the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2011 the National Assembly for Wales has the power to adapt Acts of Parliament to 20 areas of policy for application in Wales.

Ron Davies acknowledged and critiqued this emulation of Whitehall within the WG in 2009 stating that it was not his intention as primary designer of Welsh Devolution to follow a Whitehall model.

*‘... as far as I’m concerned the biggest disappointment for me over the last 10 years with Rhodri Morgan is that he is trying to replicate the government style of Westminster’ (18:4)*

Davies stated that Blair had inherited a commitment to the principle of devolution in Wales but he wanted an Assembly similar to a County Council. In this context a picture of the three main ways in which devolution impacts upon CF as a programme is given.

#### *Local Authority-CF Relations*

Because of their geographical and political distance from central government between 1979 and 1997 the majority of local authorities and the WLGA hold stronger sway over WG decision-making than local authorities in England hold over Westminster: this is reflected in the design of CF.

*‘Because an awful lot of Assembly members used to be councillors, it’s very different from the Whitehall model. The connections are very, very close, they don’t want to be seen, at all costs, the Assembly doesn’t want to be seen to be threatening the power-base of local authorities’ (13:7)*

This impact could explain a large degree of the influence held by local authorities over CF partnerships in many areas. In addition it could explain the WG support of incorporation of CF partnerships into statutory structures.

#### *Funding*

Interview findings and statistics on CF and NDC funding highlight a deficit in Welsh regeneration funding which is, arguably, a direct result of devolution.

*‘... unlike NDC [CF] is putting very small amounts of money to each area, extremely small amounts of money, but hoping that somehow there will be co-*

*ordination between all of the different agencies and different interest and the bending, so called bending of mainstream programmes into the more deprived localities' (14:1)*

Comparative figures are given between NDC and CF funding in the methodology chapter of the thesis and the figures estimate a £450 per capita per year difference between CF and NDC.

TABLE 7: Communities First Funding Per Capita

CF Budget £	300,000,000.00
Welsh Pop	3,000,000.00
Eligible Pop	540,000.00
Per capita £	396
Per capita per year £	50

The comparable figure for NDC is £500 per person per year (Beatty et al, 2010: 7).

The figures show that NDC has been allocated close to 10 times more central government money than CF has been allocated under the WG. One possible conclusion that we can draw from this is that if areas of Wales had become NDC areas, which would have been more likely without the advent of the WG, they may have received more funding from central Government; this is difficult to prove in light of the complex and differing spatial boundaries marking NDC and CF areas.

When asked about Professor Kevin Morgan's public announcement in 2008 that there have been *'no economic dividends from devolution in Wales'* (*Western Mail, May 2009*) Leighton Andrews responded:

*'I think there have been significant gains. . . . [and I think] Kevin's is a partial response' (17:2)*

From this we can conclude that the Minister was referring to political gains such as transparency and accountability in democracy and social gains such as the Wales School Breakfast programme, while not focusing on the economic outcomes of devolution which have not been successful (the WG aimed to raise the national GVA per head from roughly 80% to 90% of the UK's GVA within ten years which has not happened). In terms of CF this is highly significant as findings from evaluation have reflected poorly on the economic outcomes of the programme (Hincks & Robson, 2010). This seems to imply that the impact of CF reflects the impact of the WG and is therefore highly important in forming views of Welsh devolution.

This reflection is extremely interesting in terms of strategy and strategic selectivity. The WG puts a large emphasis on the CF programme in media coverage. However, this coverage is mainly in Wales-centric media, the Western Mail, Wales Online and the WG Newsletter, for example, with the rare exception of BBC News and Regeneration and Renewal magazine. In terms of strategic selectivity it is possible to argue that CF is a tool used by the WG to promote and consolidate feelings of ownership over a distinctively Welsh programme in Wales which in turn consolidates the existence of a government to run this programme. Put in this context the Minister's comment about economic dividends is part of a dialectic strategy, originating from the Yes campaign for devolution in Wales (of which the Minister was a founder), to justify a WG.

It is not possible to make a correlation between this area of deficit and the CF evaluation in this study; however, CF has not been evaluated in the same way as NDC and not as much money has been spent on the evaluation.

It is possible to argue that had regeneration been implemented in Wales by central government it may have been through NDC areas which would have meant bigger geographical areas with more funding, a better evaluation and arguably, more successful outcomes. However, this is not possible to prove within this study and remains speculative.

### *Geography*

The WG is seen as a forum for dealing with Wales-specific secondary policies and for discussing Welsh issues that were not as easily approached under the Welsh Office run by mainly English MPs before 1999. A WG representative stated that it takes a more community-focused approach to regeneration (17:3) to correspond with the unique socio-geographical structures of Wales. One way that this approach has played out in CF is a higher number of partnerships at a smaller geographical scale. CF areas are at ward, sub-ward and LSOA geographical level and in many areas this reflects small localities in Wales formerly based around industry. The interview data suggests that small CF areas may compound the existing problem of economically and socially isolated communities, particularly in the South Wales valleys – inward-looking:

*‘ . . . where you’ve got 25 partnerships . . . there’s always a sense that you could be trespassing on someone else’s patch . . . I think that the programme itself has some responsibility to bear for rather encouraging people to think in that parochial way, it’s the nature of the beast. . . ’ (14:6)*

The WG motives for implementing CF at ward, sub-ward and LSOA level are unclear as outlined in the previous section on implementation. However, the interview with Leighton Andrews implied that the policy rhetoric explaining this move was largely based on the more community focused approach of the WG which distinguishes it from Whitehall and consolidates the need for a government in tune with Wales’ specific socio-economic and geographical issues. In addition findings from the data imply a power struggle between the fully established Welsh local authority base in Wales and the newly established WG. This has been strongly put forward as a reason for why the CF partnerships are geographically distributed as they are with one in each local authority.

### *Perceptions of the Welsh Government*

The WG was viewed relatively neutrally by most interview respondents working on the ground. Critical comments largely came from more strategic level respondents. The general perception of the WG is as an arms-length institution

while conflicts and grievances are dealt with by local authorities. A number of CF staff stated that a large number of local people did not know what the WG was and did not take an interest in the political side of community activity. In terms of direct communication with the WG outside of the AMR co-ordinators were unimpressed and frustrated with the WG approach. One co-ordinator stated that the WG:

*'... backs down when they're told that something is what residents want' (7:3)*

One local resident, when asked about her perceptions of WG influence on the programme, stated:

*'... when do [the WG] ever come into it?' (19:7).*

Local authority staff related having regular contact with WG officials within the CF Department and the Communities Directorate, to the point that they were friendly with the Head of CF at the WG and rang the department on a regular basis for first-hand information. This relationship backs-up a statement made by a WG official and reiterated in the section on local authority-CF relations:

*'In Wales the relationship between local authorities and the WG is very, very cosy. I think the Assembly Government is wary about not antagonising local authorities, not appearing to abuse their powers and very keen to keep local decision-making local' (13:8)*

While the WG clearly influences the CF programme the more local the individual's role (and subsequent lack of direct contact with the WG) the less likely they are of having direct contact with the WG and therefore the less likely they are of realising the extent of the power of the WG over the programme. This argument supports the case for increased community development to engage local people in politics at a scale which they can relate to.

Interviews with WG representatives revealed concern around WG structure and power:

*'It would be a huge mistake for the WG to get primary policy-making powers because it can't use its secondary powers properly yet' (13:8)*

At the time of this research New Labour was still in power and critique from a respondent working within the WG also reflected on the possibility of a Conservative government and its effect on the WG. This type of political change in Whitehall was seen to be a potentially positive challenge to the WG as rising economy and a New Labour government have allowed it to indulge bad policy-making and un-thought through decisions to date.

*'A Tory government in Whitehall would be a real test for Welsh devolution. They probably wouldn't try to subvert the WG but . . . the WG has not had to make difficult decisions because funding has been growing' (13:9)*

Under a Conservative government the macro-economic policies in central government would clash with the WG focus on social policy, which might force the WG to strengthen defence of its current 'soft' approach.

This critique has been contradicted by a statement from a WG Minister who said that there has been tough decision-making within the WG all the way down the line since 1999. The same minister stated that the WG is a forum where ideas about Welsh nationalism can be tested (17:3).

This section of the chapter concludes that issues arising from the research questions can be traced back to strategically-led decisions within the WG at the early stages of design and implementation. The perceptions of non political strategic actors focused on design and implementation in order to explain the way they addressed the research questions. The contrast between political impact and impact on deprivation in Wales is apparent from the findings.

Based on perceptions from the data, voluntary and public sector actors were peripheral in the decision-making process. This is reflected in different tensions within the case study partnerships. Selective discourse on design and

implementation from strategic political and non-political actors, interpreted in relation to the WG as a strategically selective context represents insight and information which is not visible in selective discourse representing the WG through policy documents, rhetoric and the media.

Decisions on the design of CF were made quickly for the biggest political impact through the announcement and introduction of the programme. Decisions were also made which went against advice from experts in the field of community development which contradicts policy rhetoric on the community focus of CF. These strategic decisions can be linked to the process of devolution in Wales and the internal political struggles and pursuits to present the image of a competent government to the outside. In terms of structure and agency from a SRA perspective, the fact that the WG is seen as a strategically oriented structure working within a structured context is a dialectical duality.

It is possible to argue that, to some extent, the relatively weak political position of the WG at the implementation of CF, has led to decisions that appease local authorities and make an impact on those 'outside' Wales. This has resulted in over-expectation, local authority domination and top-down conflict with a community development perspective within the CF programme. Exceptions exist in the form of strategically oriented actors from within community and CF partnerships working to achieve independence and sustainability in some cases. Some influence is attributed to the New Labour government in terms of wanting the WG to act as a large scale local authority which was contrary to what political supporters of devolution wanted.

### *9.3 Communities Next*

The final section of this chapter looks at different perspectives of Communities Next (CN), the next phase of CF at the time of this research (now 'CF the future' as discussed in chapter two). The CF programme has changed slowly over the past 10 years since its implementation to address continuing critique. The critique, in-line with arguments built-up throughout the chapter, is that there is conflict between a community development-perspective and a neo-liberal

influenced political strategy within the CF programme. This has manifested in the form of a paradoxically bottom-up programme implemented from the top-down.

This leads us to the final argument in the chapter drawn from all previous findings stating that the CF programme as it was initially conceptualised politically has not failed. It has only failed according to a fundamentally flawed design and subsequent expectations which have resulted in some of the key successes of the programme being overshadowed in critiques of the programme outcomes to date. This section of the chapter examines respondents' views of the next phase of CF which reveal some perceptions and reflections on the effects of programme design flaws and subsequent attempts to overcome these. Since the fieldwork for this research the WG has taken a strategic decision to continue calling the programme 'Communities First' rather than 'Communities Next' (CN). However, to avoid confusion in this chapter CF from 2009 onwards will be referred to as CN.

CN was devised and implemented under Assembly Member Leighton Andrews and his approach is more economically focused than the initial design of CF. While the CN Consultation (2008) does not state that CF has failed, it does highlight a deficit in the visible outcomes of the programme indicating a move towards the 'harder' end of regeneration. These responses are highlighted by the Auditor General for Wales in the most recent Welsh Audit Office Report on CF (2010).

*'The Auditor General found that while the Assembly Government has made progress in terms of addressing weaknesses in its management of the partnerships and there have been local benefits from the programme, it is unlikely to deliver its broader objectives without a more robust approach to programme bending' (Coleman, 2010: 7)*

Respondents expressed a mixture of feelings ranging from concern to optimism regarding CN but most felt relatively uninformed on the detail. Concerns tended to focus on funding redistribution from support to front-line delivery and funding

cuts in general. Optimistic views were on improved ways of working and the increased focus on outputs and outcomes. On the subject of CN there was a clear divide between individuals who will be directly affected by the funding cuts and individuals who will not. The former were mainly CF co-ordinators, staff and volunteers standing to lose-out on revenue funding cuts, the latter were strategic level staff within the WG, local authority officers and councillors. Local authority officers and councillors expressed concern at the possible loss of funding for the council but did not express personal concern. The key facets of CN will be discussed here in relation to the outcome of the consultation: the outcomes-fund approach and its match-funding, sustainability and standardisation.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 the CF Outcome Fund was established to subsidise the (reduced) core funding for the programme, providing £25m over three years. The aim of the fund is to develop new activities and projects in CF areas and funds can only be bid for by CF partnerships and match funded by local authorities. This is designed as a financial incentive for involving local authorities in CF partnerships and a form of programme bending. The Outcomes Fund was seen by many interviewees as a strategic way of cutting funds and as a reaction to the empowerment and capacity-building approaches which are not currently yielding measurable results, arguably, because their value is not quantifiable.

*'CF partnerships are the only ones who can bid for this money . . . obviously we know the local authorities are going to do a lot of the donkey work in putting these bids together; if we haven't got the letters from the partnerships saying 'we've discussed this, we support this' we won't give them any money' (14:5)*

However, the general consensus among individuals working at local authority level was that this was a very small amount of money in context.

*'£25m across Wales over 3 years isn't a bag of beans' (13:5)*

In addition, while WG staff stated that the Outcome Fund would require local authorities to work with CF partnerships, there was a strongly cynical attitude to this idea among CF staff. Contradictory statements have been made by interview respondents from different sectors. For example, one WG official stated that the cuts in funding would require partnerships to make harder decisions and become stronger, while a CF partnership co-ordinator said that cuts in funding would mean less scope for decision-making and further reliance on the local authority.

These antithetical views imply confusion and a lack of certainty among CF staff at all levels around the impact of CN. This links to the issue of sustainability and partnership independence from the local authority. As previously presented evidence from the research data has shown, the more integrated a CF partnership is into local authority structures the more financially beneficial it is for the WG. However, it also often means less community-driven activity, less empowerment and less chance of partnership independence from the local authority in the long-term.

The word 'unrealistic' was used more than once to describe the CN approach to standardisation between partnerships. Respondents widely agreed that standardisation to combat inconsistency between partnerships would be very difficult to implement at this stage in the programme because of the initial non-prescriptive approach to the programme and the subsequent uneven development of partnerships. This issue relates closely to problems highlighted in the section in this chapter on monitoring and evaluation, specifically the problems with quantitative measurement of a programme based on the qualitative ethos of the community development perspective.

Finally CF staff, volunteers and local authority officers' overall impression of CN as it had been presented by the WG at the time of research data collection focused on the loss of the community-driven nature of the programme.

## 9.4 Conclusions

This section of the chapter summarises the implications of the findings presented above and acts as a precursor to the final conclusions of the thesis as a whole. As stated in the introduction, the research questions address the overarching question *what factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?* In response to this, four broad factors are identified within the findings from this chapter which relate to the key findings from the thesis as whole presented in the conclusions chapter below.

The four factors determining the relationship between state and society in the context of CF under devolution are: firstly, the impact of established institutional influence and strategic selectivity on the shape of and ability to influence through new political structures in Wales. The second factor is contestable policy rhetoric that not only shapes but influences perceptions of institutional structures and mismatches. Thirdly, the impact of individual perceptions on actions within community, statutory and state structures in Wales is significant. Finally, the role of individual political actors working independently of their respective organisations impacts on state-community relations.

The first research question, *how and in what ways have pre-existing community-run organisations been integrated into CF post 2001?* is addressed under the heading *Integration and strategy*. The findings make it possible to argue that pre-existing community development organisations have been integrated very differently in each case study area. This difference is dependent on a range of factors, the most significant of which are local authority influence on the partnership in question and individual inclination to integrate. If an individual working on the ground within a CF partnership proactively engages with other community development organisations then there will be some degree of integration. In one case study this individual inclination has meant a move away from the statutory sector culture towards a voluntary and community sector culture.

In the case study partnership where there were strong statutory influences on partnership working, the integration with other community development organisations in the area was lessened. This does not mean that all CF partnerships with local authority officers playing a big part in the partnership will not integrate with pre-existing community organisations, only that local authority priorities are with service delivery and funding distribution and not all community development organisations are useful for this purpose. Based on this logic it is possible to argue that statutory culture is less sympathetic to community sector culture which is why integration between CF and pre-existing community organisations is less likely when local authorities are managing CF partnerships.

This research question was not originally designed to link so directly with the issue of statutory-community relations and the link belies a significant additional finding: the extent to which the statutory sector affects areas of CF.

The research question, *what are the (inter)relationships between CF staff (including volunteers) and local authority representatives involved in the programme?* is addressed under the title *Statutory-community relations*. Using the context of the Welsh statutory sector set in the literature review, the findings indicate that the CF programme is not always driven by communities and in many cases is being dominated by the local authorities. Adamson & Bromilley's (2008) research on CF found that local authorities are not responsive enough to good work by communities involved in CF. This research consolidates and expands on this finding. While local authorities are sometimes labelled unresponsive by interviewees, labels such as 'micro-managers' and 'overbearing decision-makers' were more common. This makes the issue of unresponsiveness more complex because local authorities are not necessarily unconcerned or disinterested in partnerships, rather they are responding to them in a counter intuitive way to the programme ethos. In addition, findings show that local authority domination is condoned by the WG. The case study partnership which is most local authority dominated has been publicly praised by the WG as having one of the most successful approaches to CF. The reason

given for WG approval of the approach is cost effectiveness through integration of CF into existing council structures.

Using this information to answer the original question is difficult because the findings reflect structurally-based relations, with interviewees often referring to 'the Council' rather than individual officers or councillors and 'the partnership' rather than community representatives and CF staff. Because of this the short answer to the question is: relationships between CF staff, volunteers and local authority representatives are partly based on agent perceptions of structures and structural relations. Respondents viewed individuals separately from their institutions and in relation to their roles and the control they were seen to have over the partnership. One CF co-ordinator referred to individuals within the local authority positively, by their first names and in relation to specific meetings but tended to focus more on 'the Council' as a barrier to community development in the area. This separation between structure and agents, a common theme running through the interview data, highlights the SRA perception that structure is a necessary prerequisite for agency action and goes further by blaming structures for agency action.

Issues around the symbolic significance of GRB status of partnerships relating to the third research question, *what are the reasons given for and impact of change to partnership GRB status since 2001?* are addressed through comparison between findings from the three case studies. The findings reflect positively on partnerships becoming their own GRB in terms of independence from local authority rules, sustainability and in terms of integration with other community organisations. The case studies reveal interesting insights into the differentiation between GRB and the impact that this can have on an ethos of independence and approach to economic sustainability: through creating a trading arm, for example.

The reasons given for change to partnership structure in the case study which has become its own GRB was that it was at loggerheads with the council. Again, the answer to this question relates to the second research question on statutory-community relations and the clash of cultures between the two

sectors. The impact of becoming its own GRB included better integration with pre-existing community development groups in the area. The direct connection between the change and the integration has been made by the partnership coordinator. Examples were also given of faster ways of working as a community GRB than bureaucracy-laden council GRB processes which appeal to reflexive, responsive community organisations.

Again as with the first research question, this third one was not designed to connect with statutory-community relations directly. However, as with the first question the findings reveal a direct connection between local authority dominance and the symbolic significance of GRB status for partnerships. In the case study that had become its own GRB it was precisely to gain some independence over financial decision-making and as way of separating from local authority structures, not how individuals; who were seen in a positive light on the whole by CF staff and volunteers. Again WG support for local authority dominance of the programme through local authority GRB was evident within interviews with WG officials responsible for the programme.

The section on design and implementation has revealed the reasons for some of the deep-set, long-term problems embedded in the programme. Political actors driving design and implementation within the WG is a key factor determining relationships between state and community under devolution in this instance.

A lack of strategic guidance from within the WG and the inherently non-prescriptive design of the CF programme have ultimately resulted in a change from a 'process' to an 'outcome focused approach' over halfway through. This has compounded over-expectation on communities and assumptions around how they can achieve their vision frameworks. Criticism or withdrawal of funds where the outputs cannot be achieved links back to the literature review findings on the politicisation of community. In this case there are clear examples of strategically oriented structures using community as a concept to pursue political aims. In this case it has had both positive and negative impacts on the multiple communities in question. Structurally it is mainly negative and as the

first WG driven all-Wales regeneration programme the outcomes appear patch-worked, disjointed and difficult to measure fairly.

The WG use of findings from the *People in Communities* pilot could imply political decision-making in pursuit of political aims which have affected CF. In SRA terms this represents strategically selective structures pursuing multiple political pursuits which do not always achieve the intended outcomes. This is also reflected in the 'big bang' approach causing nearly 150 partnerships to be established quickly in micro-geographical areas and with not enough capacity in each area to implement successfully.

Area-based selection carried out without community or voluntary sector consultation and using the WIMD in a way that does not capture the problems in each area potentially reflects political decision-making for strategically selective pursuits separate from the stated aims of the CF programme. Again the fact that local authorities were encouraged by the WG to be GRB over the recommended voluntary sector recipient bodies makes it possible to argue that the WG was influenced by statutory sector to some extent. Significantly Cllr Ron Davies stated in an interview that the WG was established to act as a local authority, against his advice, which consolidates the thread running through the findings on local authority leadership of the programme.

A number of changes have been made to the programme since 2001 which respond directly to some of the critique arising from this research. The most recent move to 'cluster' CF partnerships (WG, 2011) can be seen as a response to the issue of too many and too small partnerships at the outset, for example.

## 10. Conclusions

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This thesis contributes to knowledge by revealing previously un-researched fractions of a state-led community development programme reflecting a snapshot of the relations between state and society under devolution in Wales.

The hypothesis addressed in this thesis is: *has Welsh devolution impacted upon area-based regeneration, and particularly community development, in terms of people, place/space and policy in Wales since 2001?* The answer is a tentative 'yes' and has been reached using the overarching research question:

*What factors determine the relationship between state and community in Wales under devolution?*

The thesis allows the author to argue for the value of increasing primary policy-making powers to the Welsh Government to pursue a better-funded and clearer area-based approach to tackling long-term deprivation in Wales. Devolution has not entirely benefited the relationship between state and society in regeneration, as the findings show. However, the principles of devolving power and responsibility to new and existing structures are viewed here in a positive light and reflected in some elements of the CF programme. Clearer direction from the WG, backed-up by the power to change policy accordingly, could develop these elements to benefit the CF programme in Wales.

### 10.1 Key Findings

The findings have contributed to knowledge on community, governance and space by pinpointing ways in which the devolved Welsh Government (WG) makes use of the term 'community' in policy and by revealing aspects of the relationships between the WG, local authorities and 'communities' as they play-out at micro geographical levels of governance.

More specifically there are five key findings that contribute to different areas of the literature presented in chapter two to five on: Communities First (CF); Welsh

devolution; the contested concept of community and spaces of governance through original research findings on an under-researched programme.

Firstly, in-line with literature of the politicised concept of 'community' the term has been used by the WG in the pursuit of political projects through CF. The Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) concept of an 'imagined line' between state and society drawn by the state using political rhetoric, refers specifically to use of the term 'community' in the process of devolving power and responsibility. Because the findings show that CF is not aligned with the communitarian principles purported by the WG at the outset, it is possible to argue that this rhetoric is part of the imagined line. In this sense policy on community-driven regeneration can be seen as part of the strategic pursuit of a particular political objective (justifying the existence of a Welsh Government, for example).

The contested concept of community outlined in chapter four is linked to this finding. Because CF is an area-based programme implemented at ward, sub-ward and LSOA level, in some cases drawing a line between streets in the same locality, the findings relate more closely to spatially defined communities. Findings from this research reveal that the idea of a like-minded group of people working towards the same goal and pursuing the same values is not a common occurrence. Short-term, collective reaction to a very specific set of circumstances is more common.

Secondly, the findings reveal that local authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had substantial influence on the design and implementation of CF in 2001. This could be due to the institutional inexperience of the WG at the time of this research. The relative infancy of the WG has meant mixing the old and new institutional structures and relations in Wales and to all intents and purposes the WG functioned as a large local authority before 2011.

The data shows that the ability of established institutional structures in Wales to influence the WG takes the following form in the context of CF: a push from the

WLGA for at least one CF partnership in every Welsh local authority area; a leadership role in CF for many local authorities; an incorporation of CF partnerships into local authority structures in some cases and majority of local authority Grant Recipient Bodies (GRB).

The first and second key findings above have an identified component cutting across both: the issue of power. From a SRA perspective state power is both strategic and relational which means it depends on an object of pursuit in the enactment of power. Enactment of power within CF is seen by respondents in two ways: at the level of the individual with the power to act or change things affecting their lives and at the institutional level with the power to govern. These two perspectives are juxtaposed and often conflicting in terms of what power is in the context of CF. They can exist simultaneously such is the difference in their conception. When discussing which form of power takes precedence within CF the discussion becomes circular. On the one hand power as the ability of an individual to act and change can take place within the context of CF: a volunteer for a CF partnership has the power to change lives at a micro-level despite not having control over levels of funding, the structure of the programme or its duration. On the other hand a WG official working within the parameters of WG power over aspects of the CF programme can legitimately pull the funding from a partnership, making the work and existence of the partnership difficult if not impossible.

The concept of empowerment which strongly resonated through the initial phases of the CF programme implies a handing-over of power from institutions possessing it to the individuals in communities. This is commonly in the form of forums to influence decision-making normally taken by the institution and some leverage over funding allocation. However, not only has the term empowerment been phased out of the CF programme since 2001 but the ethos of the programme has changed from one driven by local people to one where local people are working to meet targets set by the WG. In addition it is possible to argue that it is the lack of power held by the WG which has led to the misconception that local people would not be working to pursue national strategy. Whether or not power within the CF programme was intended for

communities is debatable in light of the local authority-dominated approach to implementation. The rhetoric emphasising this delivery of power into local hands has evaporated in favour of an outcomes-focused approach where power is more explicitly possessed and used by the WG and local authorities.

The third key finding is a cultural clash between the statutory and community sector. This is evident in the research data and also through identification of discursive selectivity in narratives which put emphasis on different aspects of deprivation. Local authority actors emphasised value for money, systematised and hierarchical approaches to regeneration which would tackle the economic, social and physical aspects of deprivation. Community and voluntary sector actors emphasised the softer side of regeneration such as empowerment, capacity building and engagement.

Power struggles between the community sector (and to a lesser extent the voluntary sector) and the WLGA are reflected at every level within the CF programme. Drawing on the findings it is possible to argue that the CF partnership board structure reflects the inter-sectoral relations in Wales since 1999 at a micro geographical scale.

The symbolic significance of partnership GRB status reflects the struggle between the statutory and voluntary sector in Wales, particularly in those partnerships that have changed their structure. Independence and sustainability were found to be difficult policy concepts to reconcile within the CF programme. The fact that both are central to CF reflects some confusion around decisions around the design and implementation of the programme. In this sense CF partnerships are strategically oriented structures but often lack the power to pursue their strategies effectively in cases where they do not coincide with local authority or WG strategy.

SRA views the state as a social relation and the line between state and society as 'imagined'. As such the line can be drawn and redrawn by actors to pursue particular political projects for strategic reasons. CF is based on the idea of double devolution, the dispersal of power and responsibility from central

government to regional bodies and from there to communities. In the case of CF, the line between state and society has been drawn between communities and local authorities to depict a process of double devolution. This line comes in the form of structures, such as funding mechanisms and resource allocation, and policy rhetoric all of which are strategically selective.

The fourth key finding is a mismatch between the rhetoric that community involvement had a significant impact on the success of CF and the reality of this. In SRA terms this means that strategically oriented actors within the WG are using narrative to pursue a strategy which, in this case, has two conflicting sides. Policy rhetoric on CF is a strategically selective narrative representing the WG.

Policy rhetoric on CF has consistently emphasised the pivotal role of the community in CF through terms such as empowerment, engagement and capacity building promoted by the WG in various policy documents spanning the length of the programme (WG, 2001, 2007, 2008, 2011). The findings reveal this to be an over-expectation put on the programme causing pressure and perceived failure at operational level:

*‘ . . . Communities First areas remain significantly more deprived than the rest of Wales. . . ’ (WG, 2011: 174)*

It is possible to argue that high expectation of CF reflects the high expectations placed on the WG as a new governing institution in Wales. The arguments and campaigns that led to devolution in Wales (see chapter three) were, by their very nature, arguments for social, geographical and economic improvement framed by calls for a more ‘appropriate’ scale and space through which to govern. These arguments represent politically-led promises of progress that can easily be broken.

Applying this logic to the argument that Welsh devolution means more tailored, focused governance and a closer interface between state and society allows some reflection on why there is a ‘policy mismatch’ between rhetoric and reality

in CF. This argument, located in debates on the most appropriate scale at which to govern, also implies that the community-led element of CF is pivotal to a justification of the WG by the WG. In addition the focus on community within the programme could belie the lack of substantial financial backing for the programme compared with NDC, which was explicitly focused on tackling the roots of deprivation:

*‘... the idea that communities could somehow be `blamed' for their predicament was never an argument used explicitly by NDC partnerships or indeed by government. Ten-year strategies produced by NDC partnerships consistently pointed to the insidious impact of `structural' problems’ (Lawless, 2011: 529)*

The SRA concept of a strategically oriented actor allows for further analysis into WG policy rhetoric on community as a justification of its existence. The community-focused nature of CF is reflected in the micro-geographies through which the programme is implemented. The closer interface between state and society through devolution purported by actors within the WG during the research implies that the WG can reach micro-geographical areas in ways that central government, with its geographical and political distance from Wales cannot. The WG is using spatially-based arguments and actions to define community for strategic pursuits. This rhetoric brings with it the idea that community spaces are leading the programme and empowering lives. The findings reveal that this not always the case.

The mismatch is a key factor in the integration of community organisations into CF, for example. Integration is more likely where partnerships are working independently from their local authority or when the local authority has an arms length role in directing the partnership. In addition the more integrated a CF partnership is into local authority structures the less likely it is that community development and outreach work will take place. While this means less community-driven activity, less empowerment and less chance of partnership independence from the local authority in the long run. However, it is favoured by the WG because it is a low cost approach.

The final key finding is that the role of key individuals and the personal, political and social capital they have at their disposal has a significant impact on the relationship between state and community in Wales. The role of individual political actors working independently of their respective organisations is reflected at a micro level in CF through decisions made against the stated ethos of the programme. This can be seen as an example of the strategic actor pursuing political projects in line with a SRA approach. In some cases CF coordinators are working independently from the local authority and WG structures.

Relationships between CF staff or volunteers and local authority representatives are partly based on agent perceptions of structures and structural relations. Respondents viewed individuals separately from their institutions and in relation to their roles and the control they were seen to have over the partnership. Separation between structure and agents highlights the SRA perception of structure and agency as a dialectic duality, or one thing with two parts rather than two separate parts.

Table 8 below shows the way in which the key findings are located within the thesis as a whole and gives some tentative policy conclusions.

**TABLE 8: Locating the key findings**

Key finding	Contributing to literature on . . .	Critical reflection
<p>The concept of community is politicised and used by the WG strategically.</p>	<p>The role of communities and the politicisation of the concept (Bourdieu, 1989; Etzioni, 1995; Taylor, 2005; Davies, 2007; Adamson &amp; Bromilley, 2008).</p>	<p>Locating the 'community' in Communities First is more complex than WG policy documents imply. The relative infancy of the WG can explain the use of community to justify Welsh devolution; however, the term is also used to pursue objectives by those on the ground showing some contradiction carried out for mutual benefit.</p>
<p>Communities First partnerships are often led by local authorities.</p>	<p>The design, enactment and process of Welsh devolution and the arguments for and against it (Thompson &amp; Day, 2001; Kay, 2003; Tanner, 2004; Laffin, 2007; Thiec, 2008; Howell, 2009; Andrews &amp; Martin, 2010).</p>	<p>Some mutual benefit and pursuit of mutual aims for the WG and local authorities in Wales is also evident here. Partly because of the design of Welsh devolution in Wales making the WG function as a local authority.</p>
<p>There is a cultural clash between the statutory and community sector.</p>	<p>The scales, levels and spaces of governance at which power is enacted (Armstrong &amp; Wells, 2005; Hooghe &amp; Marks, 2001; Adamson &amp; Bromilley, 2008).</p>	<p>This is a reflection of a wider issue in Wales, perhaps compounded by the micro-geographies and micro-structures of Communities First partnerships compared with the county-wide remit of local authorities.</p>
<p>There is a mismatch between the rhetoric and the reality of CF.</p>	<p>Contextualisation and evaluation of Communities First using Welsh Government policy documents (National Assembly for Wales, 2001; WG, 2001; 2006; 2008; 2011; Adamson &amp; Bromilley, 2008; Hincks &amp; Robson, in 2011; Wales Audit Office, 2011).</p>	<p>In SRA terms this means that strategically oriented actors within the WG are selecting narrative to pursue a strategy which, in this case, has two conflicting sides.</p>
<p>The role of key individuals and the personal, political and social capital they had at their disposal has a significant impact on the relationship between state and community in Wales.</p>	<p>Strategic actors and strategically selective structures draw and re-draw the imagined line between state and society (Jessop, 2008).</p>	<p>This could strengthen the argument that individuals within government choose rhetoric to pursue political strategy that benefits the organisations in which they have a vested interest. In which case the line between state and society is drawn by actors.</p>

The author's view on the findings is that the statutory-led ethos of the programme which contradicts policy rhetoric on community is partially responsible for the cultural clash between the statutory and community sectors. In short, the problems identified within CF are embedded in the politicisation of the concept of community under devolution. However, the finding is a development of Marilyn Taylor's pragmatic viewpoint on public policy in the community. Communities within CF areas can benefit from the programme directly by taking opportunities as they arise rather than through structured political channels and partnerships are not necessarily restricted by unsympathetic structures. They can respond and adapt to pursue a strategy, consolidating Armstrong & Wells' work (2006) on hierarchical forms of governance and civil society.

Community development requires a way of working that is flexible and reflexive, whilst the statutory sector is highly structured and systematised by bureaucracy. CF combines both which has caused frustrations. Finding a balance between them depends on a number of factors including individual actors, councillors and the local authority itself. However, possibly the most effective way of ensuring balance is at a strategic level and the WG has not addressed this. Ultimately community development, the less established, less well funded and less systematised culture, is left to find and sometimes fight for windows of opportunity through which to thrive.

This is compounded by the fact that the statutory sector in Wales has sway over the WG and the funding for CF is not enough to facilitate its aims meaning more statutory support is needed. In addition the inexperience and 'newness' of the WG as a political institution in 2001 meant that CF was effectively 'poured' into existing moulds or structures rather than forming new ones in smaller geographies.

While, individuals representing institutions drive the programme decision-making, power remains at WG and statutory sector level.

The WG policy rhetoric implies an approach applicable to Wales as a space: small geographical areas, patchwork approach to implementation and local authority-led at local level. However, the programme has resulted in similar problems to many other area-based regeneration programmes. In light of this devolution could be seen as a chance to repeat mistakes made under New Labour in England between 1997 and 2010, or the reflection of a slow, steady move towards a separate Welsh political culture.

Finally, despite CF being hailed as the first Wales-wide regeneration programme designed and implemented exclusively by political actors elected to represent Wales, Wales still relies on external funding and politics to tackle deprivation to some extent. Moreover, CF is a community development and not a regeneration programme.

### *10.2 Reflections on Theory and Methodology*

Reflection is given here on the theory and methodology used to analyse the findings.

SRA theory has provided further insights into political decisions and how they may vary between government departments, individuals and other organisations. It has raised questions such as the use of community as a tool for governance and a force for pursuing collective action for collective benefit at local level.

The incorporation of a spatial dimension through SRA has allowed an understanding of the development of the WG in a particular geographical location over time: allocating resources to CF is a primarily political process but could impact on spatially-based policy outcomes, for example. SRA also specifies that certain political strategies are prioritised over others and this affects the spatial dimension inscribed in the given structure of the state. SRA theory has also simultaneously contextualised the research parameters, expanded understanding of key issues under study and indicated other similar

studies to show where this research fits and fills a gap in the wider research arena.

SRA has guided the research towards questioning the political decisions which impacted on CF. WG support for statutory sector domination of the programme is not made explicit within policy rhetoric or public facing discourse, for example. To support it openly would directly contradict the community-led ethos of the programme. A theory such as SRA is therefore required to prompt lines of questioning specifically around strategy and uncover such implicit occurrences in the findings.

In terms of methods the research is predominantly qualitative, which raises the well-played problems of bias, introspection, messy findings and the difficulty of generalising, all of which are tackled initially within the methodology chapter and reflected upon here. As stated in the methodology chapter a qualitative approach remains the most appropriate for this research examining often unquantifiable structural and personal relations.

Researcher bias has not been eradicated from this thesis under the assumption that it cannot be due to the nature of subjectivity. However, transparency of bias is achieved through the section on 'the self in research' within the methodology chapter. This section gives insight into the researcher's viewpoint and subsequently potential areas of bias. The aim is for reconciliation with bias and to allow further understanding of researcher motives. The researcher narrative and background also allows better understanding of strategic and relational rationale for undertaking the research. This understanding has permeated the issue of bias during the data collection and analysis which has been partially tackled through SRA guidance and partly through acknowledgement of this bias.

The point in the research at which bias from respondents became most overtly evident was the case study selection process. In one case information stemming from a scoping interview with local authority respondents resulted in choosing a case study which was not entirely representative of all partnerships

in the area. The strategy behind giving the information was that the case study represented the most successful in terms of local authority relations which reflected positively on the officers who were interviewed. This emerged later in the research when other respondents questioned the choice of case study in terms of representativeness. This example shows that qualitative information can be strategically oriented which has been partially tackled through acknowledgement of the strategically oriented actor with data analysis.

This type of misrepresentation stemming from the selection process is acknowledged within the findings and is not seen here to detract from their validity in terms of understanding of the CF programme as a whole, as any approach would have been limited due to the large number of CF partnerships and the small scale of the research project. What is important is the acknowledgement and awareness of such problems and the lessons learnt and applied from these in future research ventures.

The research presented here seeks to better understand national, regional and local governance arrangements affecting deprivation at micro-geographical level. In this sense the research is at risk of being geographically inward looking. The case studies are at ward and Lower Super Output Area level and the governing structures within CF partnerships are inherently inward looking due to their geographical remit. The responses in the research data are therefore more likely to be inward looking. This is an issue that could not be avoided due to the research parameters. However, the literature review setting the political, social and geographical context gives some view of issues outside the research data. In addition relating the findings to the theoretical guide gives a broader outlook.

The findings are presented clearly in the thesis chapters when in reality the findings were 'messy' and this is a direct reflection of three key issues. Firstly, when combined, subjective viewpoints are often conflicting and do not relate to a given structure even when they are responses to the same questions. It was very rare for a respondent to answer a question directly without explaining the background of CF. Secondly, the breadth and depth of the chapter on design

and implementation exemplifies the retrospective thinking among those involved in CF which belies the time of research data collection when the programme was entering its second phase. Finally it shows the vast amount of knowledge and long-term experience of those involved with the programme which in itself reveals something about the CF as it has been presented here.

The imbalance between subject-areas within the findings could have been due to a lack of clarity in interviewing technique which is again related to the messy nature of qualitative research from both sides of the interview table. However, it also reflects the personal priorities and factors affecting interview answers resulting in a disorganised data set. Data analysis has been pivotal in the sense-making process that transforms messy data into legible findings which is part of the reason why coding and categorising were employed over a theoretical framework for analysis (hence use of the term theoretical 'guide').

Unintended consequences within the CF programme uncovered within the findings are worth some reflection here. It is difficult to gauge which consequences are intended with the CF programme without knowing key actors' intentions. In addition intention is a fuzzy concept with difference between the state aims and the non-stated aims of a person or organisation. This research had used the political rhetoric around CF as a guide to what the intended aim of the programme is: to tackle deprivation in the poorest areas of Wales. The aim at strategic level is social justice at partnership level is: empowerment, capacity building, community-led change and lowering chosen domains of deprivation. Failure to achieve these intentions could be interpreted as an unintended consequence. The findings show that in one case study CF could be responsible for a decrease in activity for one community group, for example. However, some indication has been given of alternative intentions driven by political strategy which is reflected on within the findings.

These difficulties raise questions around SRA because there are similar problems with pinpointing strategy as there are with intentions. It is difficult to know the strategic approach of a person or structure, even when stated. What is more important to take into account is the fact that not all strategy is stated and

that strategically oriented structures and strategic actors exist and function with separate pursuits so that not all organisational outcomes are intentional. Governing bodies such as the WG are driven by decisions which may be contradictory and power influenced.

### *10.3 Future Research*

With the advent of policy-making powers and a new ruling party the WG has recently made further changes to the CF programme proposed within the consultation document *Communities First: the Future* (WG, 2011). It opens with the sentence:

*'From April 2012, the Welsh Government's Communities First programme will be a Community Focused Programme that will support the Welsh Government's Anti-Poverty agenda' (WG, 2011: 2)*

At first glance the programme appears to have the same ambiguity of direction as previous structures. However, further reading reveals that the consultation responds on many levels to the critique of the CF over the last decade. One key aim within the consultation document is to make CF a contributor to the wider anti-poverty programmes in Wales. This tackles the issue of over expectations of the programme to some extent. Some other key points arising from the consultation are: that CF is to be more consistent; that it will only aim to achieve education; economic and health outcomes; and that it will work within more flexible geographical boundaries and in 'clusters' of partnerships. Most significant is the aim for simplified management structures with much more responsibility being passed from the WG to GRB.

*'The new Communities First Clusters will be supported by a smaller number of Grant Recipient Bodies who will coordinate at the local authority or regional level. Their role will include engagement with key service providers and statutory bodies; monitoring of outcome and indicators; governance and financial management; sharing and promotion of good practice; and conflict resolution' (WG, 2011: 7)*

At present the majority of GRB are local authorities. However, the symbolic significance of a partnership becoming its own GRB is clearly exemplified here. Of all the findings derived from this research the one which appears most fruitful for future research is the finding that becoming its own GRB can mean independence and empowerment for a partnership and its members. It can also mean sustainability if the partnership creates a trading arm which is more likely if it has independence from the local authority because it can prioritise trading service provision, for example. Further research on this could reflect on the wider contradictions within the programme including the local authority dominance revealed in the findings and the questionable communitarian ethos of the programme in practice. There could be some really interesting stories to tell from partnerships who have wrested control from local authorities, the micro detail of which was beyond the scope of this research. It would also be a means of reflecting further on the strategic relational power struggle between the statutory and voluntary sectors played-out within the CF programme.

In addition further research is needed due to the rapidly changing nature of the programme and the policy context in which it is set. Some comparison between the findings from this research and future similar research could reveal big changes in the programme reflecting the space that is Wales. Some expansion on findings using a more standardised approach could also be used which will be easier now than in 2008 when this research was carried out because attempts at standardised measurement of the CF have developed through lessons learnt over the first six years. This is interesting, because in the same way that future research would develop from the changing shape of CF, this research can be seen as both a product of CF and Welsh devolution and an original contribution to knowledge on it. The community-state sector relationships will continue to evolve over time, conflict may change along with our understanding of the temporal and embedded nature of power and the role of individuals and organisations.

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### Analysis of local authority-CF relations

	Supportive	Non-supportive
LA Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-CF staff working with/for the council are seen as separate by local people</li> <li>- High ranking officers/chief executives at LA's are interested in the Outcomes Fund 'because we've put £25m on the table' (14:5)</li> <li>- LA's need to see CF partnerships as a resource for engaging local communities (17:5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the partnership immediately wanted independence from the council to make their own decisions</li> <li>- Working in RCT as an area-regeneration-coordinator means line-managing CF, CF takes up a lot of time for some LA staff</li> </ul>
CF Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-CF staff know where they stand in relation to council work because of clear communication</li> <li>-the LA does not dictate what the partnership does</li> <li>-the LA provides buildings at low/very subsidised rent</li> <li>-LA officers visit the partnership once a month to update and share good practice</li> <li>-there are no official structures in place within the council for a CF co-ordinator who officially works for the council</li> <li>-co-ordinator reports to the council but gets direction from the community</li> <li>-'... we have a great relationship. I can phone any council officer and generally speaking they will be here if I ask them... they've got to see you as being part of their work which is their manager's job' (10:2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LA Officers who treat community consultation as a chore</li> <li>- Council does not respond to work done by CF</li> <li>-CF partnership is 'tied to the council'</li> <li>-'the council isn't willing to change its way of thinking and working, doesn't respond to CF very well and sees it as annoying'</li> <li>- All community organisations were represented on the interview panel for the CF coordinator but the interview questions were prepared by the council (12:2) a classic example of tokenism</li> <li>- Council 'taking over' (12:4) – quote (12:4) 'they wanted to run us'</li> <li>-'we went to this conference and it was eye opening, it was frightening, partnerships that are literally run by councillors' – referring more to the outlying areas line West Wales (12:5)</li> <li>-At all the costs the Assembly doesn't want to be seen to be threatening the power-base of LA's (13:7)</li> <li>-Council's 'bureaucratic barriers' to reflexive CD work (example 5:3/4)</li> <li>- Initial bids were put in by LA's for CF partnerships and some CD projects were missed out – 'CVCs should have been able to voice their views and bring forward proposals but it was very LA dominated from the beginning' (20:5)</li> <li>- Financial micro-management through LA audit office risk aversion within LAs and among WG civil servants (20:8) – fish and chips example</li> <li>- LA control e.g. through basing the CF Health officers within the council, giving externally advertised jobs to internal staff (21:1)</li> </ul>
Welsh Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Assembly 'would like to see CF partnerships assisting LA's in local delivery' (17:4)</li> </ul>	-

<p><b>Perspective</b></p>	<p>-LA's responded positively to the more outcomes-focused approach of CN (17:6)</p> <p>-With the WG – concern among civil servants that CF was to be voluntary sector led 'Assembly . . . is very, very tied to the WLGA and you don't want to upset you Labour stalwarts even though they are fucking things up left right and centre!' 'we know best and we don't want these upstarts in our community telling us what we should be doing' (20:3)</p> <p>-Caerphilly structure; Objective 1 and 2 development officers were already there so CF coordinators were given semi-strategic status responsible for 4/3 partnerships, example of power of LA's over Assembly decisions (15:5)</p>	
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### **Wales Spatial Plan Areas**

During the preliminary case study area selection process documentary analysis of the Wales Spatial Plan (WSP): people, places and futures (WG 2004) was carried out as a way of better understanding the cultural, social, economic and geographical context of the bounded selection area. This section gives description of the WSP.

The WSP is a 20 year plan for sustainable development in Wales and is particularly significant to understanding the perceived characteristic of Wales's distinctive areas from a Welsh Government perspective. It aims for a clearer understanding of comparisons between Wales and other parts of the UK and subsequently between different area-based regeneration programmes in England, Scotland and Wales.

The plan is presented diagrammatically at an all-Wales level through a schematic map that identifies six areas and their socio-economic hubs and the aim, as set out by the WG, is threefold: to establish a spatial context for social, economic and environmental activity in Wales, to act as a strategic framework for investment, resource allocation and development decisions, to explain the differential impact of policies across Wales and address the compatibility of different sectoral policies. It is also designed to identify and express the character of different functional areas across Wales.

The five areas in Wales and their labels according to the WAP are North West Wales (Eryri and Mon), North East Wales (Border and Coast), Central Wales (High quality living), South East (the Capital Network), Swansea Bay (Waterfront and Western Valleys) and Pembrokeshire (the Haven) (2004).

**Central Wales** has smaller-scale settlements and a high quality natural environment which is economically advantageous in terms of sustainable rural development.

**North East Wales –Border Coast** is said to be harnessing economic drivers through improving physical quality.

**North West Wales – Eryri and Mon (the map for this areas is not available)** is described with a focus on its high levels of natural beauty and its culturally-centred

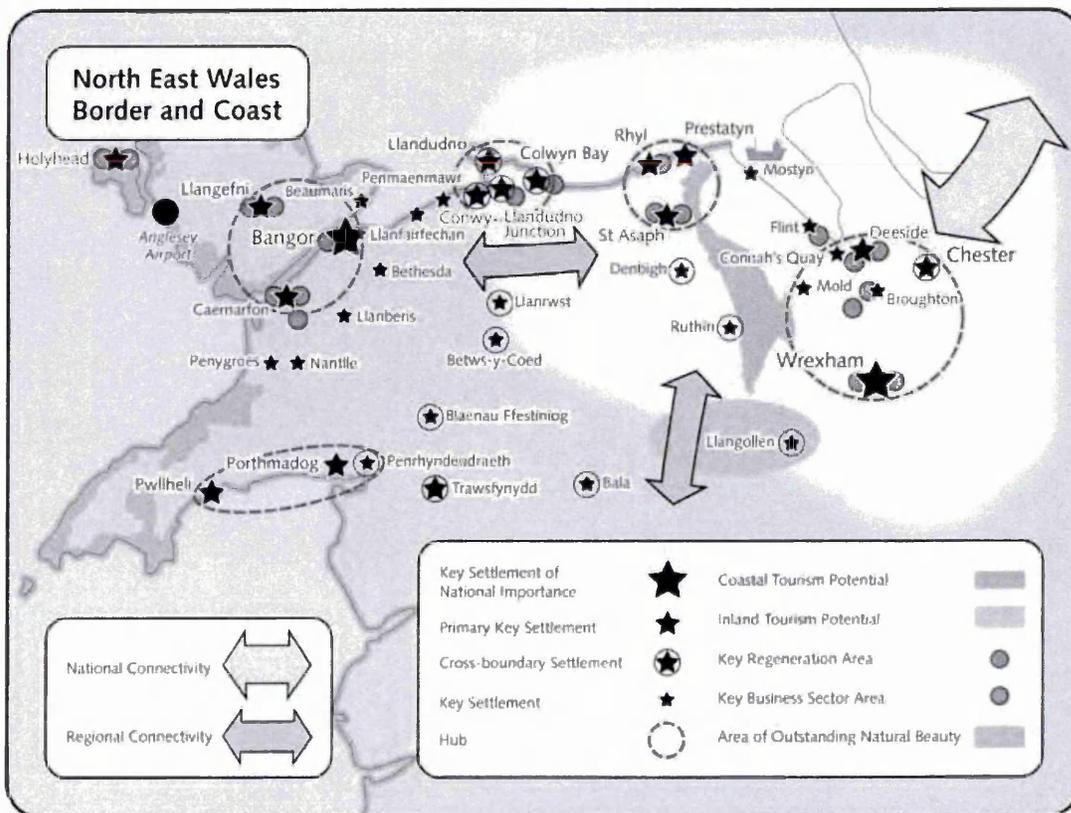
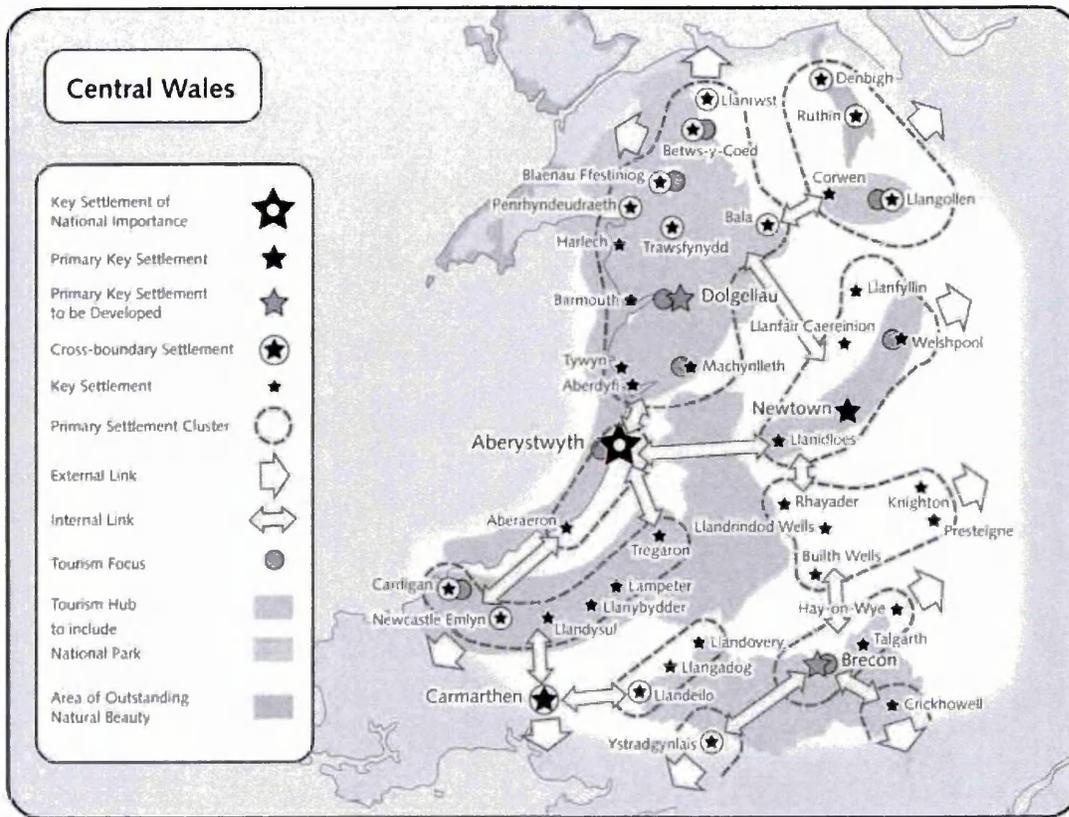
knowledge economy that aids it in maintaining its distinctive character and draw young people back to the area.

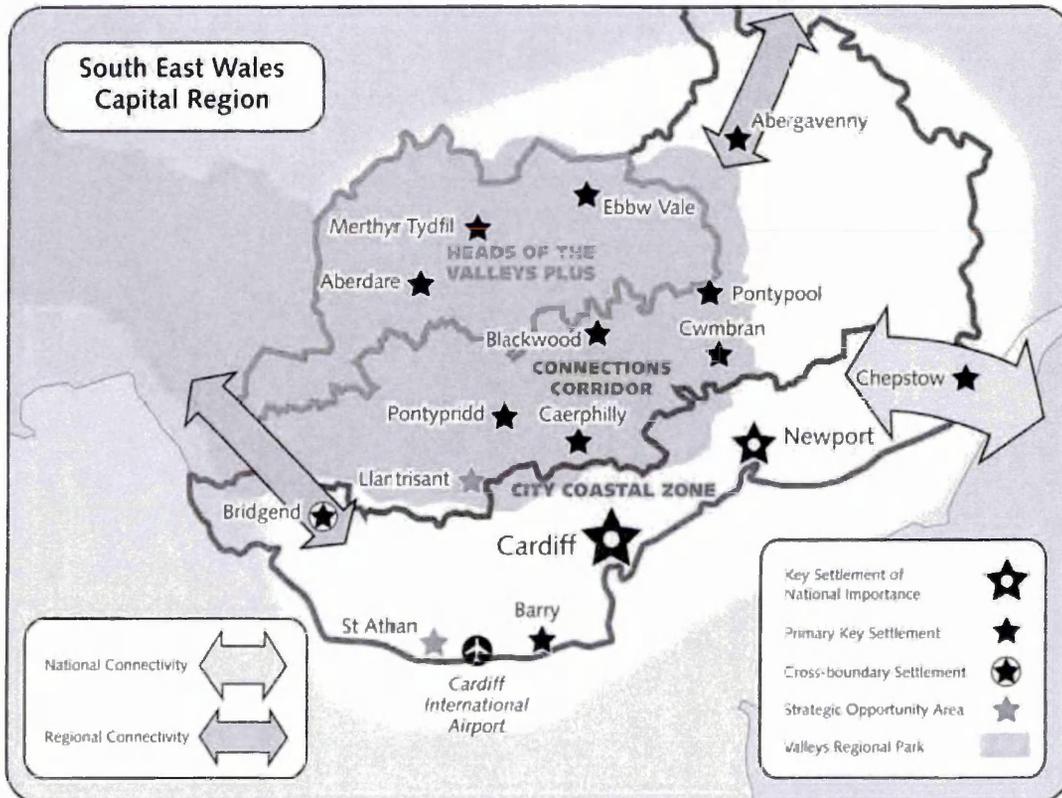
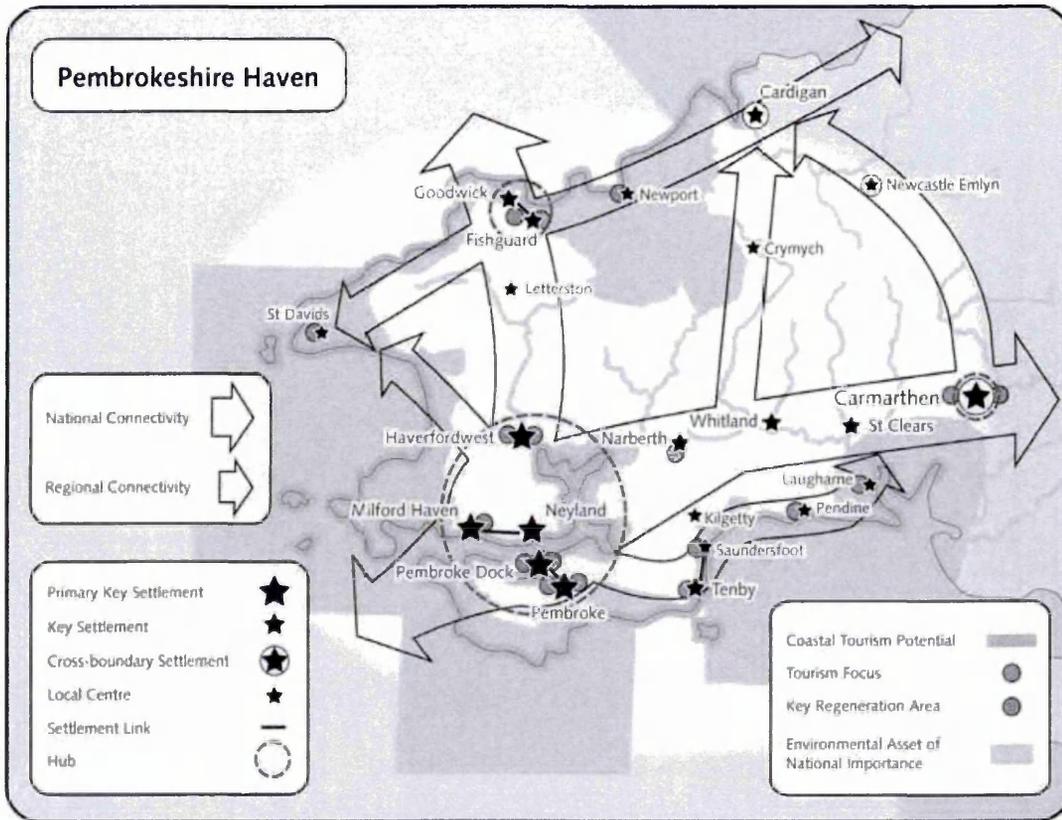
**Pembrokeshire –Haven** is described as having a strong economy based on the high quality environment which provides maritime access and subsequent tourist opportunities (WG 2004).

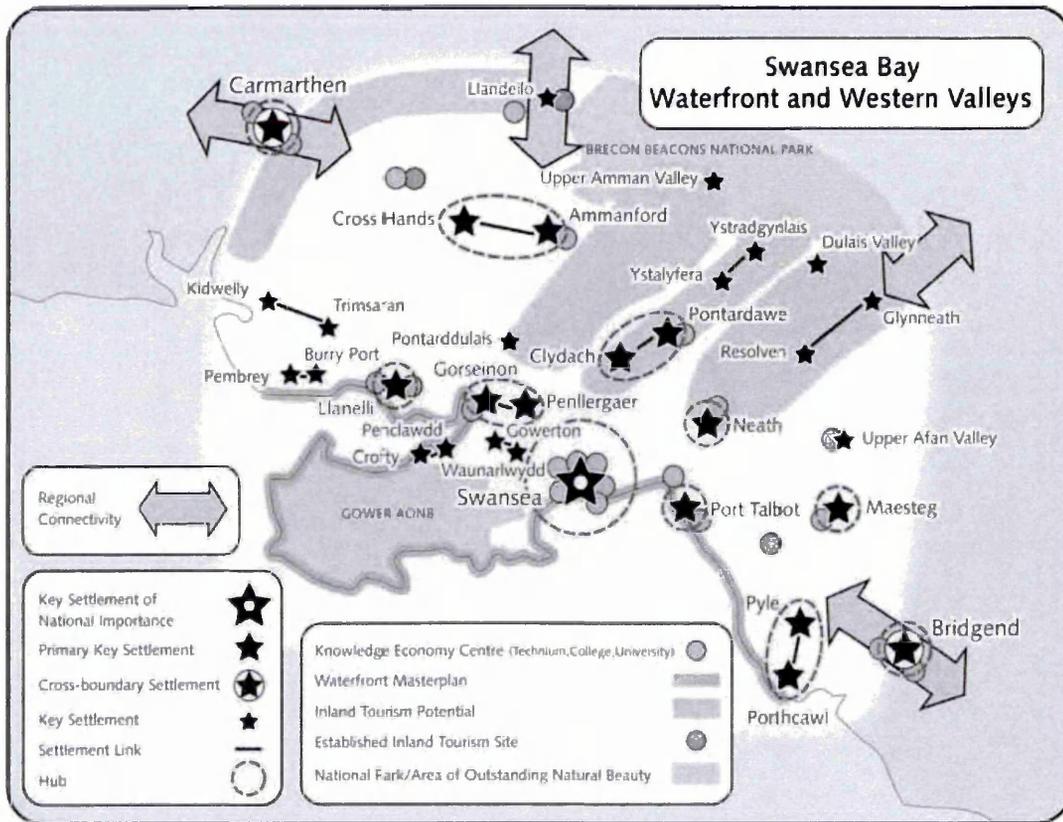
**South East Wales** is named 'the Capital Network' and combines both international yet distinctively Welsh characteristics. It is hoped that it will 'compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stringer links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area and benefiting other parts of Wales' (WG 2004).

**Swansea Bay – Waterfront and Western Valleys** is described as an 'area of planned sustainable growth and environmental improvement, realising its potential, supported by integrated transport within the area and externally and spreading prosperity to support the revitalisation of West Wales' (WG 2004 in Harris and Hooper 2006).

# Wales Spatial Plan Maps







***Meetings and consultation events***

X Communities First Partnership Meeting, Gwynedd, North Wales

*13<sup>th</sup> February 2009*

Internship at the Welsh Governments, Communities First Unit, South Wales

*7<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2009*

Caerphilly County Council Communities First Consultation event, South Wales

*31<sup>st</sup> January 2009*

Ministerial Address on Communities First, Community Development Journal

International Symposium, South Wales

*7<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

**Generic Interview Schedule Template (which was adapted by respondent role and location before each interviews)**

1. Could you tell me a bit about community organisations and activity in the area pre-CF?
2. Who was involved and are the same people now involved in the CF programme activities?
3. Has community activity changed since 2001?
4. If yes, in what ways?
5. Are there programmes running separately from the CF partnership?
6. If CF works with other community groups are the interactions formal / informal / changing? (do they have meetings)
7. How would you describe your relationship as an organisation with the local authority / CF partnership?
8. How much involvement does the partnership have with government run Programmes in the area?
9. Were organisations that existed before CF consulted in the boundary-drawing process? Were any organisations excluded?
10. In your view how well has CF worked to achieve the aims it set out with?
11. How do you view the success of the programme as a whole in terms of adding value to what was already happening before 2001?

## ***Welsh Government Statistical Geographies of Communities First***

### **Census Output Areas**

These are areas defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and were created using a statistical computer algorithm. The 9,769 Output Areas (OAs) in Wales were built from clusters of adjacent postcodes. Whilst they were not based on known local communities, Census data was used to ensure they had similar population sizes, on average 400 people, and were as socially consistent as possible. In the majority of cases, with the exception of 19 Wards in Monmouthshire, Output Areas, when aggregated, are co-terminous with all other higher geographies, including Lower, Middle and Upper Layer Super Output Areas, wards used for 2001 Census outputs and Local Authorities. For further information on Output Areas please see the National Statistics website: [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/census\\_geog.asp#oa](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/census_geog.asp#oa) (WG, 2011)

### **Lower Layer Super Output Areas**

These areas were also defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are an amalgamation of Output Areas. There are 1,896 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wales, with on average 5 Output Areas to every LSOA. In Wales, LSOAs have an average population of 1,500. Although this ranges between 1,000 and 4,000, with 93 per cent of the areas with a population of between 1,000 and 2,000. Like Output Areas, LSOAs are, when aggregated, co-terminus with other larger statistical geographies. For further information on LSOAs please see the National Statistics website: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/soa.asp> (WG, 2011)