Constructing Non-Profit Collaboration: A Macro Discursive Institutional Perspective

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Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
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Abstract

This thesis takes the theoretical lens of Discursive Institutionalism (DI) to explore and explain the construction of non-profit collaboration in the UK. It is underpinned by an original discursive approach that renders the abstract concept of DI empirically applicable through the creation of a methodological framework. By taking a national or macro level perspective, the framework is subsequently used to explore two interrelated strands of inquiry; the temporal construction of non-profit collaboration in policy documents and the responding construction of collaboration in non-profit representative organisations (NPROs) documents.

The DI framework is incorporated into a discursive methodology centred around a granular and recursive interrogation of 35 policy documents and 12 non-profit representatives' documents, collectively totalling 2294 pages. The findings explore how collaboration as a construct is set out in policy and demarcate the evolving construction of collaboration revealing how the concept of NPO collaboration is catalysed (1997-2001), elevated (2001-2005), embedded (2005 - 2010), cast as empowered (2010 - 2015) and entrenched (2015 - 2019). The research creates temporal breadth, extending the linear representation prevalent in literature through detailed and nuanced explanation of what policy ideas do to frame the nature of NPO collaboration. The focus on NPROs adds a further dimension in explaining the construction of collaboration. Overlooked in extant literature, the thesis exposes their unique characteristics revealing how they persuade, challenge or make assumptions related to the nature and purpose of NPO collaboration.

Collectively, the findings make three original, interrelated contributions to knowledge. The first, the creation of the framework that extends DI theory, through the inception of a practical tool, crafted as part of a discursive methodology. This fills a gap in literature by providing a strong empirical example. Secondly, the application of the framework exhibits the overlapping ideas that construct collaboration in policy documents between 1997-2019. This illuminates the subtle ways in which it becomes an entrenched and expected way of organising in NPOs. Thirdly, the study provides a rare example of the distinct ways that NPROs construct collaboration in their documents. This sits in contrast

to the notion of NPROs as compliant and supportive of policy agendas of collaboration. Combined, these insights demonstrate the dynamic multifaceted ideas that construct NPO collaboration.

These findings are important in light of the central function that NPOs play in delivering welfare services. Collaboration matters as NPOs collectively respond to challenging and entrenched societal problems. Given this argument, the thesis is relevant to policy makers, NPOs, NPROs and scholars interested in the construction of organisational phenomena.

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Glossary of Technical Terms

TERM	DEFINITION
The ACEVO	The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
DI	Discursive Institutionalism
NPOs	Non-profit organisations
NPROs	Non-profit representative organisations (in this study they comprise of the ACEVO, the NCIA and the NCVO)
The NCIA	The National Coalition for Independent Action
The NCVO	The National Council for Voluntary Organisations
LAs	Local Authorities
Policy makers	The two key political parties in the UK between 1997-2019. Namely, the Conservative and Labour parties (as well as the Liberal Democrat party's contribution to policy documents between 2010-2015)
Policy Documents	The term is used to represent political documents as artefacts that represent one site of the intentions and ideas of policy makers or influencers
NPRO Documents	The term is used to represent NPRO documents and published blogs, as artefacts that represent one site of the intentions and ideas of NPROs

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

The foundations of the research are borne out of an interest in Non-Profit organisation[1] (NPO) collaboration, specifically how it is discursively constructed as a characteristic response to complex societal problems. Collaboration matters in an institutional context where NPOs are increasingly expected to respond to complex or wicked problems (Head & Alford, 2015; Prahalad, 2019) given the increasing institutional expectations that relate to NPOs in delivering welfare services as state provision is withdrawn (Macmillan, 2012).

The research takes a national perspective, departing from studies that consider focal organisations (Milbourne, 2009; Milbourne and Murray, 2011; Kara, 2014) or specific points in time (Lewis, 1999; Dey and Teasdale, 2016). This level of analysis is focused on the wider societal environment where key national documents reflect and represent ideas of NPO collaboration. From this, the study crafts a methodological approach that is sensitive to the interplay of ideas and their discursive evolution in contrast to studies that focus only on the outcomes of collaboration (Milbourne, 2009; Milbourne and Murray, 2011; Kara, 2014). Rather, the thesis is concerned with the societal or macro level to illuminate the unstructured co-ordination and overlap of ideas that construct and communicate the nature and purpose of collaboration (Phillips et al., 2006).

To undertake this, I adopt and extend the lens of discursive Institutionalism (DI) (Schmidt, 2008, 2010, 2011) to explore and explain how documents reflect ideational power, discursively constructing a trajectory for NPO collaboration. The thesis explores public documents published between 1997 and 2019, an era marked by an ongoing period of unprecedented political and economic change and turbulence for NPOs (Crees et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2018). This chapter sets the scene for the research, setting out the

[1] For the purpose of this research, the term NPO applies to organisations that are formally structured, operate exclusively for a not-for-profit purpose and are independent of government. The term is discussed in detail in section 1.2.

background, conceptual and methodological orientation that underpins the research. Finally, it frames the structure of the thesis presenting an overview of the chapters therein.

According to Gazley and Guo (2020), NPO collaboration has been under scrutiny since the early 1980s. This matters as NPOs are increasingly called upon to collectively respond to complex societal challenges. Though widely accepted and practised, the success of NPO collaboration is said to depend on the particular opinions that are being privileged (Phillips et al., 2000). The literature suggests the drive to collaborate has been dominated by policy agendas (Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Milbourne & Murray, 2009, 2011). Historically, the role of NPOs has been conceived as part of a pluralistic welfare system incrementally designed to reduce dependency and create an independent society through policy initiatives such as the Big Society (Taylor, 2011) agenda. Within the relationship between the state and non-profit sector, policy makers are generally considered to have greater access to traditional sources of power such as financial means or access to media to shape NPO collaboration and therefore play a discursive role in setting the trajectory for NPOs (Wells, 2013). This essentially posits NPOs as part of an institutional context where practices are directed by powerful policy makers.

In contrast to policy makers, in the relationship, NPOs tend to be portrayed as less powerful and passive, complemented and supplemented state provision (Lewis, 2004) and subservient to policy decisions (Buckingham, 2009). Furthermore, NPROs have been afforded little attention in terms of the way they influence NPOs. In a recent systematic literature review, Gazley and Guo (2020) argue that there is little knowledge of the mediators and moderators of collaboration that play an intermediary role in shaping organisational practice. This study emphasises the role of policy and NPRO documents to explore how these reflect the ideas of those mediating and moderating the ideas that represent NPO collaboration. In particular it emphasises the role of NPROs as institutional subsystems, less formal organisations that play a role in shaping institutional practice and agendas (Blau, 1970). Following this line of thought, NPROs, though representative of NPOs, are not considered to be entirely independent of the state (Coule & Bennett, 2018). As such, they are seen as important, though overlooked organisations that play a significant role in communicating and shaping NPO collaboration. Accordingly, they are

foregrounded in this thesis given the role they play working between policy makers and NPOs.

The focus on the construction of NPO collaboration is timely and useful as NPOs continue to play a significant part in the delivery of welfare services and to meet complex needs in society (Gazley & Guo, 2020). Some argue that the inequality currently experienced in society bears similarity to the issues that catalysed the development of the post-war welfare state (Thane, 2019). Though the period of study relates to data collected between 1997 - 2019, it is especially relevant in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Hardship and demand for services alongside a reduction in the number of NPOs, has led to a 'perfect storm' of need, prompting an even greater expectation that NPOs will collaborate in response (Larkham, 2021, p.2).

In this environment, there is a dearth of studies that explain how NPO collaboration has become widely accepted despite apparent problems in practice (Gazley & Guo, 2020). This is significant because some scholars argue that policy agendas dominate, framing collaboration as a way of replicating and professionalising NPOs rather than allowing space for it to challenge the structural causes of poverty (Rochester, 2014; Milbourne & Murray, 2017; Ishkanian & Glasius, 2018). This raises questions about how collaboration is encouraged and for what purpose. This is important in the sense suggested by Phillips et al., (2000) who argue that the outcomes of NPO collaboration are dependent on whose opinion is privileged. The interest lies in this strand of scholarship, not with the outcome or practice per se, but rather the meaning behind it. Hence, the gaze of the thesis rests with how the nature and purpose of collaboration is set out at a macro level.

1.1. Study background

I worked within the non-profit sector between 2002 - 2014 and engaged in a range of collaborative activities. Some of these relationships were considered successful in terms of the funding they attracted, the perceived benefits to the organisation and beneficiaries, and the potential to reach a wider audience being notable examples. Other relationships were problematic, transactional at best, the challenges of blending cultures, having different strategies and wanting different things from the relationship inevitably leading to failure. Along with this catalyst for the research, my working experience had

led me to believe that policy directives had led to increased and increasingly varied forms of collaboration from contracts that stipulated collaboration to social franchising.

In the early years of my time in the sector, this assumption was based on my limited awareness of policy agendas framed in the context of my work in ideas of social cohesion and efficient business practice. Towards the end of my career in the sector, the projects I ran relied on collaboration in response to what I perceived were the effects of austerity. In this, beneficiaries with ever more complex needs accessed the services and support provided as the state retracted responsibility for the delivery of welfare services. Collaboration became challenging as various stakeholders grappled with the changes, expectations and assumptions of how we might work together to address an apparently increasing demand for services. Essentially my latter experiences of collaboration were in contrast to my earlier expectations and assumptions.

My experiences summarised above resonate with the arguments set out by scholars such as Lewis (1999), Milbourne and Murray (2011) and Kara (2014) and who make links between this agenda and increased collaboration amongst NPOs. This insight sets out the problematic effects for NPOs in small scale organisational studies. Reflecting my experiences and assumption around collaboration, strands of the literature propose a disconnect between normative ideas of collaboration and the experiences of NPOs in practice (Milbourne, 2009; Milbourne & Murray, 2011). In other words, the normative idea of collaboration as reciprocal practice is mired by policy directives that dominate NPO relationships and shape the way they collaborate.

This thesis steps back from the practical experiences and outcomes of NPO collaboration to acknowledge and address the institutional environment in which NPOs operate. In this, the literature demonstrates the context for NPO collaboration, the close relationship between NPOs and state actors creating an institutional context where NPOs are drawn towards policy priorities despite experiencing problems in practice (Lewis, 1999; Lewis, 2005; Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Milbourne, 2009; Milbourne & Murray, 2011; Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012). In unison with this, it has been suggested that the dominance of neoliberalism, an ideological approach that favours economic success, set the context for NPOs to play a greater role in welfare services delivery (Bland, 2010; Mawson, 2010).

Within this institutional environment, policy priorities dominate NPO collaboration (Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Milbourne, 2009; Milbourne & Cushman, 2015).

However, Guo and Gazley (2020) argue research should be empirically rich and support evidence that looks beyond the process and outcomes of NPO collaboration. Specifically, they note that the role of those who mediate or moderate NPO collaboration, is overlooked. In this sense, NPRO, as well as policy makers are important representatives; interlocutors (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p.159) or bricoleurs (Alcock, 2012, p.19). In essence, actors shaping the state - sector relationship. The extant literature nods to the role of NPROs, inferring that they are broadly accepting of NPO collaboration (Alcock, 2012). However, despite their apparent importance, there is little detailed focus on the role they play in mediating and moderating the construction of NPO collaboration. This research responds to the tendency to focus on a one-dimensional approach viewing policy makers as the architects of collaboration, overlooking the role of other actors shaping NPO. This study takes the lead from scholars such as Coule and Patmore (2013), interested in the agency of apparently less powerful groups. Hence, this research therefore goes further, taking a granular view that recognises the role NPROs play either by aligning with state actors or challenging this prevalent institutional paradigm.

The literature's limited insight into the role of NPROs and the focus on collaboration at an organisational level suggested shortcomings in understanding NPO collaboration. Specifically, in how NPO collaboration has been shaped and evolved, especially over more recent times where the policy context has become ever more turbulent. The notion of discourse has been considered in relation to NPROs and the state sector relationship (Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Wells, 2013). The conceptual lens draws on Discursive Institutionalism (DI) (Schmidt, 2008, 2011). This 'new' institutional theory is foregrounded as a lens through which the wider context that provides a platform for meaning can be explored to explain how NPO collaboration has been constructed as an accepted form of organising.

Vivien Schmidt, a leading proponent of the concept of DI (2008, 2011) claims to show how ideational power discursively influences change and stasis in institutional subsystems such as NPOs. Scholarship emphasises the powerful capacity of ideas to affect change or stasis in institutional contexts (Schmidt, 2008, 2010, 2011). Moreover, DI

theory elevates the importance of ideational power, the capacity of actors or grass roots organisations who have less access to traditional sources of power in terms of physical resources or the media to affect change (Schmidt, 2008; Carstensen, 2011; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). The concept of DI offers a useful vantage to explore the construction of NPO collaboration at a macro level to show how practice has become an accepted approach to organising. However, despite its conceptual coherence, there is little evidence of the empirical application of DI to help researchers adequately utilise theory. The research and contributions made are guided by the following research questions:

- RQ 1: How can the concept of DI be empirically applied to understand the evolution of NPO collaboration?
- RQ 2: How is NPO collaboration constructed in policy documents over time and how does this change temporally?
- RQ 3: How do NPROs discursively construct collaboration in their own documents?

By developing answers to these questions, I address each of these contributions in detail in the sections below.

From this starting point, the thesis addresses gaps in the literature to make three interrelated and original contributions to knowledge. Central in the study is Schmidt's concept of DI (2008, 2010, 2011), specifically a recent elaboration on the theory that proposes three forms of ideational power (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). This is taken as a platform to create a unique discursive approach that renders the abstract concept empirically applicable through the creation of a DI model or framework. The framework is informed by and incorporated into a discursive methodology, taking a societal perspective that follows two interrelated strands of enquiry. This framework is used to interrogate policy and NPROs documents detailed in the methodology chapter (section 4.3.3). In total some 35 policy documents (1743 pages) and 12 NPRO documents (551 pages) are discursively explored. Through this, the study reveals how policy and non-profit representative organisations (NPROs) shape the nature and purpose of NPO collaboration.

The findings demarcate and characterise a complex, multifaceted and temporal construction of NPO collaboration in policy documents. This extends the linear

representation prevalent in the literature by focusing on the nuanced and subtle layering that represent ideas of collaboration overtime. This illustrates how the Labour Party's pronounced interest in the sector discursively catalyses collaboration (1997 - 2001) as a way for NPOs to play a more significant role in welfare provision in partnership with the state. However, over time, political turbulence limits policy concerns with welfare and interest in the sector fades. In later eras (2015 - 2019), the analysis illustrates the entrenched nature of NPO collaboration as it evolves into a camouflaged but assumed form of organising following in the wake of retrenched state welfare provision.

Correspondingly, I show how NPROs mediate and moderate through their own documents by using the framework to characterise their role in shaping practice. This builds on scholarship that challenges the passive portrayal of the sector (Coule & Patmore, 2013; Coule & Bennett, 2016) by illuminating how NPROs show their ideational power as they persuade, resist or support the impetus to collaborate. Finally, I address the practical use of the theoretical framework highlighting the ways it might be used to create knowledge around organisational phenomena such as NPO collaboration.

The conceptual framework in Table 12 summarises the interrelated components of the thesis and supports the three contributions herein. To empirically adapt the connect of DI, to show the nuanced and temporal construction of collaboration in policy documents and to reveal the role of NPROS in constructing NPO collaboration. It illustrates the literature chapters that consider the evolution of NPO collaboration vis-a-vis the state / sector relationship as well as highlighting the significance of the theoretical lens as a novel way to illuminate the construction of NPO collaboration. These feed into the methodology, an historic discursive approach that operationalises DI theory rendering it empirically applicable. Two findings chapters subsequently employ the lens to detail the evolution of NPO collaboration as it is constructed in policy documents. The second findings chapter reveals the distinct approaches evident in NPROs ideational power as exemplified in their documents. The discussion draws on the developments made in the thesis, highlighting the relative merits of DI as a methodological resource. It debates the multifaceted ways that NPO collaboration is constructed in policy documents addressing the layering of ideas over time. The chapter also addresses the findings vis-a-vis the role of NPOs adding clarity around their role and demonstrating how the application of DI

reveals expressions of ideational power. Having introduced the study and set out its background and context, I now address the concepts and boundaries of the study.

1.2. Underpinning concepts and empirical orientation within the thesis

Given the macro level focus of the study, it is important to consider how actors and the organisations they represent are framed in the study. The sections below highlight debates around the contested nature of NPO collaboration and related discussions around the role of NPOs in welfare service delivery. This considers how NPOs are characterised, the labels ascribed to them and the implications these might create.

The terminology around the non-profit sector is in itself a topic of discussion, in part because of the shifting role and expectations of the sector as well as the relationship between NPOs and the state. It is important to address these in light of funding arrangements and policy directives that link to ideologies, assumptions about their role and relationship with the state (Grimshaw & Rubery, 2012; Coule & Bennett, 2018). An example relevant to this study, is the notion and construction of the 'Third Sector'. The evolution of this terminology is traced back to New Labour and their preoccupation with the sector in 1997 when they cast NPOs as providers of welfare services and assumed shared goals (6 & Leat, 1997; Alcock & Kendall, 2011). This sectorisation is considered to be an important juncture, where NPOs were more closely aligned with the policy priorities. More recently, NPOs have been framed as part of Civil Society; the orientation of the sector is reflecting a shift in policy priorities focusing on widening volunteering and independence in society (Milbourne & Cushman, 2013). In this, the government is considered to play a discursive role, supporting and encouraging NPOs whilst simultaneously reducing the state's structural role in welfare delivery (Wells, 2013; Bennett et al., 2019).

Relatedly, there are also discussions about the multitude of organisations with differing purposes that are defined and positioned in the context of the UK as voluntary sector, Third Sector or civil society organisations. Described as a "loose and baggy monster", NPOs do not align easily with a single abiding definition (Kendall & Knapp, 1995). A broad definition, taken from the Johns Hopkins collection of international studies of the

sector[2], that uses the term of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) Casey (2016) references these studies, couching NPOs as organisations which operate as formal entities, existing outside of government and driven by mission. Hence this terminology is adopted in the thesis in relation to NPOs.

Of further note in relation to the sectorisation of NPOs is the influence of committees tasked with reviewing the sector (6 & Leat, 1997; Alcock & Leat, 1997). The Deakin report (1996) for example was significant in the way it framed ideas of partnership in the New Labour era (Lewis, 1996; 6 & Leat, 1997; Coule & Bennett, 2018). More recently, both the Conservative (2018) and Labour Party (2019) devolve themselves of responsibility, framing NPOs as an amalgamation of organisations, assumed to respond to policy agendas promoting an independent or 'self-service society' (Erikson, 2012; Bennett et al., 2019). In other words, the way the sector is discursively set out at a societal level orients the way NPOs approach relationships with other organisations and actors. This notion is significant, emphasising the influence of documents produced by public figures that intertwine the nature of the relationship between sectors and shape the purpose of NPOs. This underpins the empirical orientation of this thesis, to use documents as primary research material to explore how they position NPO collaboration.

The term 'policy makers' is used to refer to government actors; those producing documents that signal their policy intentions. Specifically, in the context of this study, this refers to the two key political parties in the UK over the last 23 years, the Conservative, Labour and parties (also including some Conservative / Liberal coalition documents). These are selected given that they have played a role in the administrative governance in the UK over the period of this study. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of definitional labels, they are adopted as representative of the policy ideas and priorities published in documents and available in the public arena at a national level. Within this

[2]COMPARATIVE NONPROFIT SECTOR PROJECT (CNP) https://ccss.jhu.edu/research-projects/comparative-nonprofit-sector-project/

context, the proliferation of policy documents[3] that focus on the role of NPOs in society produced over the period of the study suggests NPOs are considered to be important in policy agendas. Given that some scholars (Gazley & Guo,2015, 2020) argue NPO collaboration has been framed as a universal response to organising, documents are an apt choice from which to surface the evolving ideas that frame practice.

As well as the two main political parties, the discourses of non-profit representative bodies (NPROs) shaping collaboration are considered in the study. The perspective of NPROs is drawn from empirical material produced by organisations who, to some degree, represent the interests of NPOs at a policy level. This includes the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA). For each group, ideas may evolve, however, the regular publication of documents and ongoing focus suggest they play a significant role in framing NPO collaboration.

1.3. Defining collaboration in the study

NPO collaboration has been studied since at least the 1980s (Gazley & Guo, 2015), with increased attention in the UK linked to the New Labour administration's drive to address gaps in welfare service (Huxham & Vangen, 1996; Lewis, 2005; Carmel & Harlock, 2008). In order to fully appreciate the discursive construction in documents, it is important to set out how this is understood and to illustrate the broad range of terms synonymous with NPO collaboration. Certain terms may relate to a particular era; for example, it is widely accepted that the term 'partnership' has associations with the New Labour agenda (Lewis, 2005; Carmel & Harlock, 2008). Therefore, the terms considered in understanding NPO collaboration within the thesis include, though are not limited to, 'partnership' (Chaney, 2002; Lewis, 2005; Kendall, 2000; Alcock, 2010; Rummery, 2006), 'networking'

[3] Policy documents include manifestos, Green and White papers that indicate the intentions of state actors and policy documents such as the Compact (1998, 2008, 2011) between the state and NPOs. A full list of documents and the rationale for including them in the study is set out in Chapter Four (section 4.3.3).

(Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998), 'mergers' (Golensky & DeRuiter, 2002; Anheier & Kendall, 2012), 'co-production' (Bovaird et al., 2016; Brandson & Pestoff, 2006; Verschuere et al., 2012). The breadth of such terms, all associated with forms of working that involve one or more organisations, is important given this study's historical focus and concern with language and meaning.

The gaze of this thesis provides an added dimension to knowledge by illustrating the ideas that come to dominate and those which are suppressed. It is helpful to reflect how some scholars make sense of, and give meaning to NPO collaboration, to couch the empirical discussion in the thesis. Collaboration is a complex phenomenon and is arguably reciprocal in nature (Milbourne, 2009; Phillips et al., 2000). Sink (1996) for example, suggests the blend of two or more organisations is able to provide greater value to beneficiaries than an individual organisation alone. However, some highlight concerns that NPO collaboration is oriented towards ideological preferences for markets and hierarchies that cloud the focus on beneficiary needs (Phillips et al., 2000; Hardy et al., 2003). The contested nature of the term 'collaboration' is evident throughout the literature. AbouAssi et al. (2016) and Hardy et al. (2005) for example, suggest it remains undefined. Other scholars in the field concur that a collaborative relationship is based on common interests, such as resource sharing, problem solving, mission development, learning and knowledge exchange (Kara, 2014; Millar et al., 2004; Milbourne, 2009; Snavely & Tracy, 2002). Contemporary debates frame NPO collaboration as a complex and dynamic activity (Vangen & Huxham, 1996), in pursuit of mutual goals, shared purpose (Gray, 1989) and voluntary in nature (Milbourne, 2009).

Scholars such as Gazley and Guo (2020) and Koschmann et al. (2012), note the diversity of cross disciplinary relationships as well as the names and labels such as partnership, networking and alliances that fall under the umbrella of collaboration. In this thesis, the focus is deliberately broad. The choice not to distinguish between cross-sector and in-sector collaboration is considered a strength acknowledging the associated problems and adapted approach of NPOs that can diffuse across collaborative relationships as set out in the paragraph above. This reflects the importance of ideas as ambiguous; malleable constructs that can be manipulated for differing purposes or diffuse practice in different contexts (Radaelli and Schmidt, 2004). In this study, concerned with how language and meaning frame how collaboration might be enacted, ambiguity is

important. Indeed, it allows for what Schmidt (2006, p.251) describes as 'seeming coherence', the way ideas are open to interpretation and reinterpretation.

In this thesis, a broad view of NPO collaboration is considered, characterised as the coming together of two or more organisations to solve complex problems in the context of deferred state responsibility for welfare services. It pays attention to collaboration with other organisations to highlight the potential for such ideas to diffuse. This is important to explore how ideas are promoted in context and how shifts may take place over time which may point to implications for the dynamics of service delivery and for the relationship between NPOs and their stakeholders. As highlighted, Phillips et al. (2000) argue, the outcome of collaboration depends on whose perspectives are privileged at a specific point in time (2000). Hence this study takes an in-depth longitudinal perspective, taking a granular exploration of how ideas overlap and evolve, noting points of connection, contraindication and contestation through expression of ideational power in documents.

The vague and contested nature of NPO collaboration adds to the importance of this study where ambiguous ideas may provide a springboard for powerful actors to draw NPOs into new agendas. Schmidt's (2008; 2010; 2011) work, set out in Chapter Three (see section 3.2), considers how, through discourse, language and ideas can influence actions, change and stasis within institutions. In summary, the aim is not to provide an overarching definitive language but to extend literature through empirical exploration to tease out underlying policy ideas that may privilege and influence NPO collaboration at a societal level.

1.4. Conceptual overview

A further aspect of the study is the theoretical lens adopted to explore how actors construct collaboration. Power and ideas in DI (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016) is adopted as it emphasises significance of ideational power - the manifestation of language and

meaning within the complex web of an institutional environment[4]. Institutional theory is interested in how expectations of actors are established and how meaning is framed within organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Powell, 2007; Scott, 2008). In this thesis, the institutional aspect of the lens highlights the context in which the interplay of ideas is set out at a societal level through documents produced by state actors and NPO representatives. The institutional context has an enduring effect on the orientation of social relations between actors; how meaning influences action in an institutional context (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012).

A central tenet of institutional theory highlights the tendency of organisations to mimic other organisations, adopting practices and behaviour to be seen as 'legitimate' within an institutional context (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan , 1977). This form of institutional mimicry is better known as isomorphism (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983). It has been used by some scholars to describe market-like forms of NPO collaboration, concerned with income generation and efficiency (Carmel & Harlock, 2008). However, this strand of institutional theory only explains part of the story. Isomorphism is relevant in the sense that it supports a view of NPO collaboration as a taken for granted form of organising widely practised by NPOs. However, it is insufficient to explain how NPO collaboration has become embedded over time. Significantly it offers a one-dimensional explanation that fails to consider the role of actors. Specifically, how NPROs reflect their own ideas in an attempt to shape agendas and practice. However, this perspective has been challenged, showing how NPOs actively maintain and disrupt institutional practice (Coule and Patmore, 2013; Dey and Teasdale, 2016).

Specifically focusing on NPOs, Guo and Gazley (2015; 2020) argue that institutional theories dominate the literature and that there is a lack of empirical rigour and little attention paid to the "mediators and moderators of NPO collaboration" (Guo & Gazley, 2020, p.2). Hence a key contribution of this thesis responds to this gap by paying

[4] The institutional environment that comprises state actors, NPOs and their representatives working to achieve policy goals. This is further explored in Chapter Three.

attention to the role of NPROs and their agency; in other words, the capacity for NPOs and their representatives to shape the institutional context they are part of.

This links to the selection of Carstensen and Schmidt's power and ideas in DI (2016). It acknowledges the significance and implications of ideas, the language and meaning that are set out in an institutional context. This places a greater emphasis on ideational power, the discursive capacity of actors or organisations to set out ideas that orient the nature of organisational phenomena. Hence the lens of DI opens the potential to create a new perspective on the construction of ideas, taking a broader perspective of actors' ideas represented in public documents that orient NPO collaboration.

1.5. Methodological overview

The methodological approach was designed in conjunction with the research questions in section 4.1. To create insight into the discursive construction of NPO collaboration in an institutional context, the research adopts an inductive approach in iteration with theoretical concepts and data. This is achieved by teasing out Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) description of the three forms of power proposed and using these to create a framework illustrated in Chapter Four. The framework is subsequently employed to guide a granular exploration of the discursive ways that documents shape the role and purpose of NPO collaboration. This helps to unravel the conceptual puzzle by describing how one might apply theory. Relatedly, the application of theory explains the discursive construction in documents; how ideas in documents are introduced, appear to dominate or are couched as an hegemonic approach to organising. The methodological work that operationalises this theory is summarised below.

The rationale for selecting and utilising documents as primary data is detailed in Chapter Four. They are explored as a means to reveal how NPO collaboration is discursively influenced over time, interrogated in the same way one might approach an interview transcript. The choice of documents responds to the need to understand the orientation of collaboration at a national level and from a longitudinal perspective. The decisions, choices of documents selected, and actors represented, are borne out of a reflexive approach that was influenced by other NPO scholars. Indeed, some literature emphasises the value and significance of documents to explore their reach and influence across the sector (Lewis, 1995; 1999; Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Coule & Bennett, 2018; Bennett et al.,

2019). Moreover, research involving policy and NPO actors at a practice level would likely be challenging in terms of access. The use of documents mitigates this and facilitates a temporal view that looks back to the 1997 election of New Labour, considered as a discursive catalyst for NPO collaboration and concludes with the 2019 general election. This approach to analysis allowed exploration over a lengthy period of time to decipher the ideas of NPO collaboration that were being conveyed by a range of different actors.

The empirical aspect of the thesis is grounded in a study of 46 documents, consisting of some 2700 pages of text published by state actors and NPROs over a 23-year period. Specifically, the documents in question are published by five key groups of actors, the two main political parties in England (Conservatives & Labour) along with three bodies who represent the differing perspectives of NPOs. These are, the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA). A detailed rationale for the inclusion of these bodies is set out in Chapter Four section 4.3.3. The documents selected for the study were analysed iteratively, first by annotating the documents and highlighting segments of text associated with NPO collaboration and secondly a framework was created. Based on the work of Taylor (2004) and Fairclough (1992, 2001), the aim was to highlight text that demonstrated key facets of discourse, such as context, use of metaphors and roles assigned for NPOs. This first iteration of analysis is used to characterise the evolution over time and is summarised at the start of Chapters Six and Seven.

This text is subsequently reviewed through the discursive framework created from Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) theory. This theory suggests that ideas matter in the way they influence change (or stasis) beyond exogenous events or crises. It suggests that action is driven in a more subtle, nuanced way by actors in institutional contexts. The concept of power and ideas is operationalised in this thesis through a model that guides a reading of documents to reveal how ideas of NPO collaboration are framed. The creation of a framework that facilitates the practical application of the concept is a central pillar of this thesis and supports subsequent contributions that explain how NPO collaboration has become an embedded and assumed form or action. In doing so, this explains how, in a discursive sense, it has become widely assumed as common sense, an unquestioned form of organising. It also reveals surprising insights around the under-

researched role of NPROs illustrating organisational characteristics evident in ideas that persuade, resist or support the assumptions of policy makers. The granular exploration reveals a much more complex and multifaceted construction of NPO collaboration than is evident in the linear representation and dominance of state actors prevalent in literature.

1.6. The structure of the thesis

The following section illustrates the focus of each chapter showing how they lead to and support the contributions highlighted above summarised in Figure 1 on page 30. Chapter One has introduced the rationale for the study, framed key concepts and oriented the methodological approach taken. It has set out the research questions to demonstrate how these link to the three contributions of the thesis. First, it extends the theoretical concept of DI and ideational power, through the creation of a model that forms a part of a discursive approach, delineating complex theory and making it empirically useful. Secondly, through the application of the model, I set out how the study demarcates and characterises the construction of NPO collaboration providing a detailed description of policy and NPO representatives' discourses. In doing so, the thesis adds discursive breadth and depth in explaining the discursive construction of collaboration.

Chapters Two and Three focus on extant literature. The first of these presents literature that considers the historical context for NPO collaboration, spanning the post war era to the election of New Labour in 1997. By taking a chronological approach, it draws on literature to set out the evolution of the intertwined relationship between NPOs and state actors, highlighting the context and conditions under which it occurs. The tenuous role of NPROs in shaping NPO collaboration is also debated, specifically raising questions about who they act for and support. Thus, the chapter frames the challenges associated with representation, creating a platform for empirical exploration. Finally, the chapter critically engages with literature, reflecting the contested nature of NPO collaboration, demonstrating the problematic aspects of organisational action and illustrating the limits of extant literature.

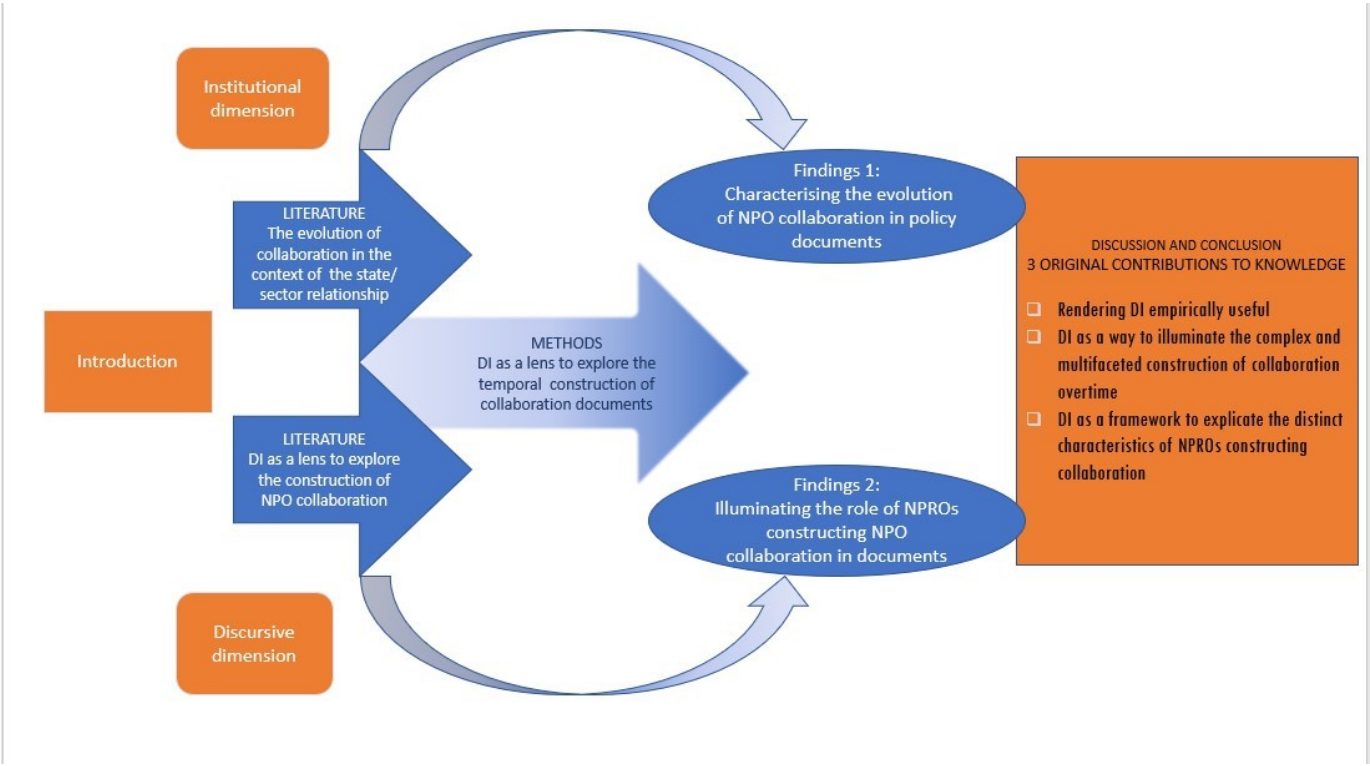
Chapter Three explores the theoretical lens and the key concepts that inform power through, over and in ideas (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). It presents the potential of the DI to support a thorough explanation of the ideas that drive NPO collaboration whilst

highlighting its empirical limitations. It shows the evolution of the abstract theory proposing how renaming, detailing and delineating the three forms of power proposed by Carstensen and Schmidt, can be marshalled into a model to guide a reading of documents. The chapter concludes by presenting a framework, a new approach that operationalises power and ideas in DI. From this, Chapter Four develops this proposal, presenting a detailed account of the methodological approach that responds to the research questions. It crafts a discursive methodology to explore how ideas are oriented in ways that are persuasive, challenging or imbued with assumptions. It illustrates the iterative and granular engagement with data through a discursive methodology applied to reflect the evolving character of NPO collaboration between 1997-2019. This takes Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) power and ideas 'through', 'in' and 'over' in DI and reframes them as 'relational', 'political' and 'ideological' power and ideas in DI. The empirical work is presented in Chapters Five and Six.

The next chapter highlights the findings from the empirical study. Chapter Five operationalises the model to chronologically demonstrate how policy documents reflect relational, political and ideological power and ideas in DI. This presents a series of eras that characterise the construction of NPO collaboration in policy documents, demonstrating the ideas encapsulated within each era whilst also showing their overlapping and layered nature. Chapter Six also applies the framework. However, the approach departs based on the recursive process associated with the analysis. It reveals the discursive character of representative organisation by reflecting how each NPRO exemplifies differing forms of power as they shape NPO collaboration through their documents.

Chapter Seven discusses these findings in relation to furthering discursive methodology vis-a-vis power and ideas in DI and the literature pertaining to the empirical data. It returns to three contributions of the thesis and responds to the research questions. Finally, the conclusion summarises these central contributions of this study, the potential for future application of the framework created and acknowledges the limitations of the study.

Figure 1 - Summary of thesis structure



Chapter 2 THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT AND NPO COLLABORATION

The chapter illustrates the limits in how we understand the relational context between the state and non-profit sector in relation to the construction of NPO collaboration. It brings together literature that frames the role of NPROs to demonstrate the institutionalised context in which NPO collaboration is constructed. Guided by the research questions, specifically the evolution of collaboration in policy and the role of NPROs in shaping NPO collaboration, the literature is structured around three key themes. The first theme considers scholarly insights that frame this context highlighting the advancement of the NPO – state relationship vis-à-vis notable junctures within the policy environment. Secondly, it addresses literature that focuses on the role of NPROs, drawing attention to the significant role they occupy, mediating and moderating the priorities of NPOs in public policy. Thirdly, it critically considers the motivation and tensions related to NPOs' perspectives and experiences of collaboration. Through this, questions are raised about collaboration as an unproblematic and straightforward practice. Collectively, the chapter forms a platform to question the way institutional practices such as collaboration, are constructed within this context.

2.1. NPO collaboration – the evolution of the policy environment and the context for collaboration

The first section of the study establishes how literature presents the association between the state and NPOs, setting out the institutional context for collaboration. This is significant for two reasons, firstly, to demonstrate the shifting proximity between the state and NPOs (Lewis, 2004; Alcock, 2010) which historically had separate concerns and interests, became intertwined over time. Secondly and relatedly, the shifting role of NPOs in delivering welfare services at a societal level emphasises the increasingly important role NPOs have played in relation to policy (Kendall, 2000; Alcock, 2010). In essence, the section summarises literature that outlines the institutional context where ideas of collaboration are constructed (see Table 1). The table headlines subsequent sections, illuminating the role cast for the state and for NPOs in relation to the evolving context for collaboration. The literature focuses attention across the pre-policy era, where the

state's concerns led to collaboration with philanthropists around the idea of a more equitable society (Lewis, 1999; Coule & Bennett, 2018). Overtime, however, complementary collaboration (Macmillan, 2017) gave way to state-controlled conceptions of collaboration (Harrison, 1984). More recently neoliberalism has given rise to an assumed consensus around collaboration (Craig et al., 1999). More recently, the relationship is said to be configured with NPOs responding to unmet societal need whilst the state plays a supporting role (Bennett et al., 2019), discursively convincing NPOs to play a greater role (Wells, 2013). Collectively this body of literature shows the trajectory for collaboration in a highly institutionalised context that illustrates the valuable role NPOs have been expected to play. In terms of collaboration, the context shifts from peers working together to solve problems to one where the state more overtly direct NPOs to collaborate to meet challenging needs.

Table 1 - The evolution of the policy environment and the context for collaboration

	The Pre-policy era.	The Welfare era	Neo liberalism	Assumed consensus	Big society to civil society
Time Period	1900s -1945	1945 - late 1970s	Late 1970s -1997	1997- 2010	2010-2019
Nature of Collaboration	Deliberative collaboration	Complementary collaboration	State controlled collaboration	Assumed consensus and collaboration	Collaboration as a response to unmet need
Characterisation of the era and relationship	Voluntary activity linked to philanthropic societies, collective individual or community support (Lewis, 1999). State and sector as Independent spheres (Lewis, 1999; Coule & Bennet, 2018).	NPOs as an extension of state welfare provision Paternalistic state. Shift of attitudes towards social equity (Macmillan, 2017). Collective responsibility in society underpinned by paternalistic state (Beveridge Report, 1942).	Policy landscape dominated by conservative party. Agenda underpinned by neo liberal values in support of free market principles. State in retreat (Harrison, 1984). Epitomised by Thatcher's "there is no society" Speech (Thatcher WRVS speech 1981).	Attempts joined up working across sectors (Hills et al, 2002). Assumed consensus- State promises equity in relationship with NPOs (Craig, 1999; Alcock, 2010). Partnership blends marketised thinking with social policy (Carmel & Harlock, 2008). Shared values and co-operation highlighted as community renewal (Fyfe 2005).	The Big Society reduced state intervention (Taylor, 2011). Emphasis on collective and individual action - decoupled state and sector (Macmillan, 2012). Diminishing interest in NPOs (Rees & Mullins, 2016).
Role cast for state	Growing concern for alleviation of poverty and promotion of equality supported by Fabianism (Alcock, 2008, Coule & Bennet, 2018).	Development of the Education Act and the creation of the National Health Service. Efforts to bring a range of services together (Lowe, 2005). Holistic state mired by bureaucracy and critique (Harris, 1984).	Rolled back welfare state. Managerial approach overseeing NPO activity through contracts. State support of individual voluntarism (Thatcher, WI speech, 1981).	Retention of contracts linked to Conservative administration (Lewis, 2004; Anheier, 2004). Age of the network (Lipnack & Stamps, 1994). Compacts replace contracts (Alcock & Scott, 2002).	Discursive role to convince NPOs to intervene in service delivery (Wells, 2013). Non -committal supporting role NPOs substituting for government (Bennett et al. 2019).

The chronological approach is taken to consider the key junctures summarised above. In exploring these junctures and responsibilities, we can understand how the policy landscape corresponds with the analysis of policy and NPRO documents later in the thesis. Specifically, how this creates a platform to understand the incremental ideas that facilitate subtle changes in collaboration. The literature considered here does not seek to explain the foundations of the state - NPO relationship in its entirety as to do so would inevitably deviate from the overarching aims of the study. Rather, the section illustrates the significant shift from charities as clusters of independent action (Harrison, 1982) to more formal collaboration between academic scholars and policy makers in debating how a more equitable society might be achieved (Alcock, 2008). In essence, this temporal view of literature concerned with the NPO – state relationship is key within the thesis to locate evolving policy agendas and to map the temporal significance of NPO collaboration.

2.2. Deliberative collaboration (1900s-1945)

The starting point for the review is the turn of the 20th century, considered an important era typified by NPOs and the state deliberating strategies rooted in a growing concern around societal welfare in the absence of state-run provision (Kendall, 1999). Towards the start of the pre-policy era (1900s -1945), the lack of welfare intervention is important in highlighting societal antecedents; those in need were expected to support themselves, accept help from friends, family or small charitable organisations (Kendall, 1999; Harrison, 1992).

By the turn of the 20th century, concern with alleviating poverty became widespread in society. Within this, collaboration is symbolised by the shift from charities as clusters of independent action (Harrison, 1982) to more formal partnerships between academic scholars and policy makers in debating how a more equitable society might be achieved (Alcock, 2008). The debate moved from the potential merits of adopting social policy to practical questions around 'how' welfare might be delivered. Scholars such as Lewis (1996), Alcock (2008) and Lowe (2005), argue that this era marked a key transition in the state and NPO relationship. NPOs were likened by Beatrice and Sidney Webb in 1912 as parallel bars to the state, independent but with shared interests around an equitable society. Debating how these independent spheres of state and NPOs (Lewis, 1999) might

be drawn more closely together, Beatrice and Sidney Webb offered an alternative metaphor of NPOs as an extension ladder to the state (Alcock, 2008).

Coule and Bennett (2018) couch this as an important conjuncture, signifying the evolution of collaboration between the state and those concerned with philanthropy. Here, the state-NPO relationship was conceived as a gradual transfer of responsibility from informal collaboration (collective societal support) to the emergence of a state-run centralised welfare system complemented by NPOs and voluntarism (Lewis, 1999; Grant, 2011). Notably, the emergence of NPROs, such as the NCVO can be traced back to this period. This advanced the professionalisation of NPOs through "*the development of institutions that not only existed to coordinate and further the interests of voluntary action but also promote mutually supportive links between statutory and voluntary "sectors""* (Coule & Bennett, 2018, p.142). This is significant in the thesis to underpin the importance of NPROs. The ongoing tensions in their role as mediators and moderators of collaboration (Gazley & Guo, 2020), traversing a role that enables a close relationship between NPOs and policy makers, whilst simultaneously coordinating actions between, and representing the interests of NPOs. Hence, this saw collaboration from NPOs as an extension of early ideas of welfare service delivery, where separate entities worked together to address shared concerns, whilst operating independently of each other.

2.3. Complementary collaboration (1945- late 1970s)

The emergence of state welfare provision formalises the context for collaboration. At a macro level, the continued focus on cultivating equity through an interdependent approach blending state, societal and voluntary action was driven by the Labour Party between 1945 -1950 and the Conservative Party between 1950-1959 (Alcock, 2008). The development of social policy continued following the Second World War as class structures blended, fostering a climate of mutual support between state and citizen and a spirit of collaboration at a social level (Grant, 2011).

Key in this, the publication of the Beveridge report 1942, created a blueprint for policy reform underpinning the formation of a state run welfare service (Coule & Bennett, 2018). This included the Education Act of 1944 and the NHS, which furthered the interests of a centrally controlled state-led welfare system. Concurrently, NPOs continued to deliver specialist services around mental health provision and children's services for

marginalised groups who fell through the net of the welfare system (Lewis, 1999). Over this period where state welfare activity experienced significant growth, some scholars argue that the role of NPOs evolved complementary to, rather than in competition with, or directed by, the state (Hilton et al., 2013; Rochester, 2014). Indeed, since the First World War, it had become common for NPOs to seek state funding to support the delivery of services (Lewis, 1999) as part of this complementary role alongside the state. Kendall and Knapp (1996) however, highlight an important distinction; through the rise of the legislative power of the state in welfare services, NPOs were cast in a subservient role to the state. This marks an important distinction in the conception of the state - NPO relationship, extending the reach of state power over NPOs and NPO activity and shifting the nature of collaboration between actors.

Over time, concerns were raised about the nature of a centrally controlled state welfare. Subsequent reports by Beveridge (1945 and 1948) elevated debate relating to increasing dependence on the state for welfare and the potential for decline in voluntary and community action and concern with the principles of social equity (Lewis, 1999). Beveridge (1948) emphasised the significance of collective responsibility and the role of collaboration as part of a welfare society as opposed to a welfare state. Beveridge argued that a welfare society should engage NPOs, the private sector, communities and individuals in mutual support, where services are owned by people throughout society as opposed to the state. This altruistic view, echoed by Titmus (1964), supported collective responsibility distinguishing between want, need and mutual aid, pointing to informal grassroots forms of collaboration and pre-empting the limits of state funded welfare.

Despite the success of reforms in health and education, in the 1960s, changing social attitudes led to the challenge of a welfare system dominated by the state. Lowe (2005) points to the examples of council housing and free school meal provision as being associated with stigma and inequality in society, reflecting the growing unease with a paternalistic welfare system. The Seebohm Report of 1968 was a further catalyst for critique of the state (Donnison, 1969; 6 et al., 2002). The report confronted the lack of accountability and argued for the need to professionalise services. The report attempted to reverse the proliferation of separate and specialised services, making the case for closer collaboration between the state and local government to support communitarian

rights and needs. The Seebohm Report was important in advancing a social service department that rendered service providers such as NPOs, accountable to the state (Younghusband, 1973). This intensified the reach of the state; NPOs were further cast as part of a state-led network, tasked with providing services in response to the direction of the state (Finlayson, 1994).

By the late 1960s, NPOs were established as part of a pluralist provision of services alongside the private sector and community support with NPOs complemented and supplemented state provision (Lewis, 2004). Over this time, the role of NPOs evolved alongside the rise of self-help and pressure groups, underpinned by notions of active citizenship (Lowe, 2005). The rhetoric of NPOs as the 'lifeblood of society', as expressed by a minister in a debate of the Beveridge Report (Brasnett, 1969), was resurfaced to advance a concept of citizenship and participation. Debate around the notion of self-sufficiency within a vibrant society was reflected by both the Labour and Conservative parties. This led to a growing unity across political parties that promoted the importance of volunteerism as a central pillar of the welfare system (Finlayson, 1994; Lowe, 2005).

Given the growing proximity between state and NPO spheres, the campaigning role of NPOs reflected an 'uneasy consensus' (Lowe, 2005, p.286). Brasnett (1969) illustrates how the conception of collective action led to the emergence of campaigning groups, such as Child Poverty Action and Shelter. These organisations were influential and therefore able to work both with and against the state, given their capacity to generate public interest in areas such as homelessness. Causes which had historically received little in the way of public sympathy now captured a mood at a societal level to engage wider participation in voluntary action. Crowson et al. (2011) accounts for NPOs' undertaking a significant role to challenge and campaign on behalf of their beneficiaries.

Towards the end of the welfare era, NPOs were able to grow and extend their reach; as part of a networked body (albeit under state control) delivering welfare service, whilst also campaigning to highlight inequality and marginalisation within society (Lowe, 2005). The period marked a significant turn in the relationship between the state and NPOs (Brenton, 1985). By the 1970s, the welfare system was mired in state bureaucracy, the impact of this providing a catalyst for a changed approach to the relationship between the state and sector (Harris, 1984). The welfare state was widely believed to be in crisis,

intensified by economic issues (Alcock, 2008; Le Grand, 1990). Some scholars argue the period was defined by changing attitudes and a society less willing to fund public welfare, paving the way for an enterprise culture defined by cuts to public services and privatisation (Coule & Bennett, 2018). The Wolfenden report (1978) is notable in the era in setting a path for transition in the state-NPO relationship. This challenged the state's dominance of welfare services and argued that NPOs could potentially play a more significant role (Finlayson, 1994).

2.4. State controlled collaboration (Late 1970s-1997)

A new policy era led to a shift from paternalistic state to neoliberalism, advocated by Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister and the Conservative Party (Kendall, 2010; Fine & Hall, 2010; Bunyan, 2013). This manifested in a landscape of reduced support and declining social concern for funded welfare (Harris et al., 2001; Milbourne, 2013) with an ideology that advanced marketised ideas of competition, efficiency, and managerialism (Lewis, 1999; Coule & Patmore, 2013). The idea of volunteerism in decline was used by the Conservative Party to support alternative forms of welfare services (Coule & Bennett, 2018). This is framed as a shift from public administration and charity centric institution building to new public management and the mainstreaming of NPOs (Kendall, 2000; Coule & Patmore, 2013).

The management-led approach of the Conservative administration linked service delivery by NPOs to the state agenda (Mold, 2009). The approach, underpinned by Wolfenden's (1978) blueprint of pluralistic provision, was distinguished by competition catalysing ideas of choice, efficiency, accountability, value for money and profit (Lewis, 1995; Macmillan, 2011). Some scholars suggest the rise of the contract culture undermined the ethos and value of NPOs, where NPOs funded to deliver services became agents of the state (Lewis, 1993; Osbourne & McLaughlin, 2004). The economic and market drivers of services, which demanded scale and efficiency lead to the narrowing of services and detracted from NPOs' overarching concern with disadvantaged communities and human need (Billis & Glennerster, 1998; Lewis, 1994). Finlayson (1994) also highlights the reach of ideology in influencing funding decisions. As 6 and Leat (1997, p.41) argue:

> *In many ways the invention of the sector in the years immediately before and after Wolfenden, was an attempt to chain together 'establishment' and dissident*

charities and other bodies that had previously seen themselves as being on the other side of arguments.

In this context, NPOs had little choice other than to engage with the state agenda given the scarcity of resources (Lewis, 1993). However, despite an apparent compliance among NPOs towards state control, NPOs did not blindly respond to the shift. The Church of England Children's society for example argued that good relationships between the state and NPOs were important in order for organisations to remain viable and that they should work alongside each other rather than form an amalgamated body (Finlayson, 1994).

Therefore, epitomised by Thatcher's "*there is no society*" speech (Thatcher, WRVS, 1981), the rapid policy change and associated cuts to the welfare budget were framed as 'rolling back the state' (Harris et al., 2001; Milbourne, 2018; Coule & Bennett, 2018). Harrison (1984, p.4) argued that the state agenda pointed to the '*exciting prospect of a state in retreat*' leading to transformational arrangements, promoting blurred boundaries between NPOs and other sectors (Billis, 1993) with the notion of welfare and NPO activity driven by a constellation of powerful interests. It is argued that the Conservative administration explicitly sought to devolve state responsibility and achieve value for money as opposed to a desire to strengthen the relationship or role of NPOs per se (Lawrence, 1982; Crowson, 2011). Despite an overt pol+icy intent to strengthen the state - NPO relationship, contracting was initially welcomed by NPROs who embraced the potential for growth and emergent 'voluntary sector' discourse of this period (Alcock, 2010; Alcock and Kendall, 2011). Moreover, intermediary bodies, NPROs representing NPO interests (such as the NCVO) supported the state agenda, welcoming a key role for NPOs, signifying a willingness to nurture a collaborative relationship with the state (6 and Leat, 1997).

Over this time, NPOs found themselves competing with local authorities (LAs) to deliver services or to collaborate with LAs to challenge the state agenda. Despite the tensions between LAs and NPOs, authorities with left leaning tendencies found themselves in a unified relationship with NPOs (Lowe, 2005). In such instances, NPOs and LAs collaborated at a local level in protest over state dominance of the welfare agenda, however this had implications for the funding of LAs (Finlayson, 1994; Crowson et al.,

2011). This form of collaboration was actively discouraged by the state; LAs were excluded and funds were withdrawn (Ware, 1989). For many, the rise of a competitive contract culture was defined by antagonism rather than reciprocity, where NPOs and LAs found themselves competing to deliver similar services (Crowson et al., 2011). Through the influx of funding for alternative welfare provision, NPOs were drawn into the neo liberal ideal of free markets, engaged in competition with other non-state organisations, bidding for contracts (Lewis, 1993).

In addition to the tensions arising from a competitive market, NPOs found themselves 'locked in' to funding arrangements, where state policy adapted and subsequently influenced the activities of NPOs (Lewis, 1996; Crowson, 2009). Crowson (2009, p.496) for example, highlights the Alzheimer's Disease Society as a case of an NPO being forced to collaborate with Age Concern. Here, the dominance of the state's capacity to influence organisational structures and resources had far reaching implications; not only in terms of the state-NPO relationship but for NPO collaboration resulting in change of mission or beneficiary focus. Within this context, NPOs themselves became stifled by the state as the consequences of withdrawn funding increased. This led to NPOs finding themselves in a precarious position, threatened by compulsory collaboration where their priorities fell outside the state's concerns (Ware, 1989). Thus, policy agendas in this era cast NPOs in a supporting role, managed as a subservient partner to undertake and deliver state services. This marked an important shift in the NPO- state relationship, which extended to funding bodies and inter-organisational arrangements.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, the Conservatives projected neoliberal ideas, that through market forces, the provision of public services might become 'more efficient, responsive, and flexible' (Pearce, 2014, p.31). Towards the late 1990s, political infighting within the Conservative government and the concurrent rise in popularity of the New Labour movement led to the evolution of a new structural relationship between the state and NPOs (Coule & Bennett, 2016). The transition and subsequent shift in governance in 1997 from a Conservative to Labour administration led to an adapted form of Thatcher's neoliberal idealism (Giddens, 1998). This manifested as a scaled back version of Attlee's version of socialism in favour of devolved and shared responsibility, with NPOs expected to play a key role (Alcock, 2008).

2.5. An assumed consensus and collaboration (1997-2010)

Inspired by the concept of the 'Third Way' (Giddens, 1998, p.13), the Labour Party's version of a neoliberal ideology was grafted with neo-communitary notions of social interdependence (Fyfe, 2005; Haugh and Kitson, 2007). Reflected in what has been described as an assumed consensus between policy makers and NPOs (Craig; 1999; Alcock, 2010), the importance of collaboratively solving societal problems was enhanced (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2000; Alcock & Kendall, 2011). Setting the scene for collaboration with NPOs, Chaney (2013) notes that like the Conservative Party, New Labour focused on a pluralistic approach to welfare service. This mixed economy of welfare furthered the idea of partnership in the early years of the New Labour era (Powell, 2007) delivered through state collectivism. In other words, the approach to service delivery as with the Conservatives relied on partnership working by drawing on the collective resources of the state, LAs, the private sector and NPOs.

Over this period, policy makers' ideological orientation towards NPOs is described by Kendall (2000) as hyperactive mainstreaming of NPOs, defined by a strong emphasis on collaboration with the sector (Lewis, 2005; Milbourne, 2005). This shifting approach and relationship with NPOs was informed by the Deakin Report (1996). Published independently of the state, like the Wolfenden Report (1978), it signalled a milestone in the policy landscape and relationship between NPOs, orienting the non-profit sector towards the adoption of neoliberal ideas. As the role of NPOs in delivering services grew, so did policy that placed an emphasis on collaboration framed as partnership (Lewis, 2005). Alongside this, promises were made to NPOs that they could expect heightened communication, fair treatment and increased respect as part of an assumed consensus (Craig et al., 1999. Alcock,2010). Communication with the sector set out to explicitly inform the relationship between the state and NPOs through a proliferation of documents produced over the era; testament to the significant role set out in policy and welcomed by NPOs (Alcock, 2010). These documents form the basis for the study of how ideas over this period incrementally shaped collaboration and are explored in detail throughout Chapter Five.

Despite intentions towards a more equitable relationship, neoliberal principles allowed a pragmatic approach to collaboration whereby seemingly competing ideas could be simultaneously employed to shape action (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2000).

According to some, this assumed consensus situated NPOs as part of a landscape dominated by state priorities poised for policy intervention and control in a context that blended marketised thinking with social policy (Carmel & Harlock, 2008). Furthering this, the pursuit of a Compact by New Labour, reconfigured and formalised collaboration between the state and NPOs. The Compact was presented as a unifying symbol of the state and NPOs as equal partners (Morison, 2000; Newman, 2011). However, some scholars (Kendall, 2000; Alcock & Scott, 2002) argue that the Compact served only to draw NPOs closer to state priorities. In a critical account of the reach of the Compact, Carmel & Harlock (2008, p.155) suggest that the mechanisms of procurement and impact measurement had implications for NPOs and their beneficiaries through arrangements which constituted a 'new governable terrain'. Furthermore, through the proliferation of policy papers concerned with the state and NPOs collaborating, the *"The goal of partnership with the third sector appears to express a politically neutral collaborative mode of governance but in practice it enhances the ambiguity of third sector organisations' position vis-à-vis the state"* (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p.167). In other words, the Compact served to shape the role of NPOs by refining their role in relation to policy directives.

Further to the 'contractual' partnership arrangements set out in the Compact, Milbourne & Murray, 2017 suggest that as NPOs imitated or were pressured to imitate the arrangements and practice of more powerful organisations. This had implications for the social context in which NPOs operated (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; Clegg, 1989), effectively institutionalising practices such as collaboration. Moreover, Labour's use of partnership rhetoric was driven by an agenda to create a sense of legitimacy in NPOs rather than to support an equitable and reciprocal relationship (Tanner, 2007; Wynne, 2008). In such instances, NPOs engaged in intersectoral partnership (i.e. collaborating with organisations from other sectors) and tended to align their agenda or purpose towards state actors' priorities (Ling, 2000). The Compact therefore, replaced the previous Conservative administration's agenda, with the balance of power tipped in favour of the state or LAs (Alcock & Scott, 2002). Morison (2000, p.119) asserts that through the Compact, the state was able to graft market-like ideas on to service delivery:

> *Through the compact's process, the sector is being encouraged to exercise a 'responsibilized autonomy' and pursue its interests through a framework where the*

'systems of thought' and 'systems of action' emphasize and reinforce an economic rationality alongside the more traditional welfare ethos.

Hence, the Compact is considered an important artefact in terms of meaning, shaping the way NPO actors saw and enacted their role in society. This reflected a primary focus on business-like ideas that valued effective and efficient practice and diffused priorities through intersectoral collaboration, aiming to provide solutions to social problems (Milbourne, 2009; Hills et al., 2002). In this strand of scholarship, collaboration is seen to be underpinned by the state's focus on competition, productivity and entrepreneurship (Haugh & Kitson, 2007; Carmel & Harlock, 2008), effectively institutionalising collaboration.

Further, as with the previous Conservative administration, collaboration as partnership was still driven through the propagation of contracts and funding of NPOs directly to deliver services (Anheier, 2004; Lewis, 2005). The Labour administration cast NPOs as responsive public servants in delivering services as part of the 'third sector' in a governable environment of marketised service providers (Carmel & Harlock, 2008). Therefore, this suggests that this relationship between the state and NPOs' reflects a lack of shared exchange and direction in the construction of collaboration. Huxham and Vangen (2000, p.1172) caution that "*Without a discerning vision of where and how joining up is to be achieved, it is doubtful that attempts to link organizations will be able to deliver collaborative advantage*". In terms of the relationship between NPOs and the state along with partnerships within pluralistic welfare provision, the lack of equity in sectoral collaboration suggests that action itself could be problematic.

The context and policy agenda prompted concern that the NPOs were losing their unique and distinctive nature as policy goals favoured ideas linked to the economy and efficiency rather than the needs of beneficiaries (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Bromley & Meyer, 2017). This adapted organisational model was also mirrored in state services, transferring concern from service provision to a focus on financialisaton, marketisation and privatisation in the public sector (Whitfield, 2012). Within this context, the drive for business models and the marketisation of NPOs (Hogg & Baines, 2011) underpinned notions of collaboration as a drive for economy and efficiency (Gazley, 2008).

Other policy initiatives framed by Alcock (2010) as the 'builders' agendas (Capacitybuilders, Futurebuilders and CommunityBuilders) are relevant in shaping the climate for collaboration. Associated with Capacitybuilders, for example, the imperative to '*do more with less*' couched collaboration as a way of sharing resources to further the reach of NPOs (Hambleton & Howard, 2013, p.47). Seeking to build the capacity and profile of NPOs, programmes led to benefits for the sector, alongside increased funding based on an elevated role and the importance of partnership work (Macmillan, 2010). However, such schemes led to division suggesting that certain NPOs were more favourable partners than others.

> *The divide was sometime[sic] presented as creating a distinction between the insiders (compliant and welcome 'professional' partners) and the outsiders (challenging and potentially threatening opponents)* (Alcock & Kendall, 2011, p.462).

The growing emphasis on collaboration therefore seemed to open up opportunities for certain NPOs, particularly those that were larger, more powerful and able to work at a policy level as well as being considered legitimate in their approach to delivering services (Craig & Taylor, 2002). More importantly, the organisations that gained most from such initiatives tended to be larger rather than small grassroots organisations who could become *"overwhelmed"* by the demands of collaboration with the state (Craig et al., 2004, p.228).

The relative might of large and powerful NPOs raised concerns about their potential to dominate the sector in the context of the neoliberal climate, where collaboration was driven by economies of scale. Here, 6 & Leat, 1997, p.43 argue that small NPOs, subcontracted to work on behalf of larger organisations, found collaboration problematic.

> *It has often been driven by a myopic fixation on economies of scale, ignoring economies of scope, which have therefore often been ignored (or even undermined) by the ways in which partnerships have been pieced together. In particular, those professional skills which are relationship-oriented (customer empathy, team working, partnership-building) may be undervalued by the one-dimensional*

business case and evaluation frameworks which are commonly used to assess collaborative strategy options.

This illustrates a sense of concern associated with the dominance of a small number of large NPOs trusted by policy makers because of their size, scale and apparent legitimacy. 6 and Leat (1997) go on to liken this to cartels that restricted equitable competition, arguing that the domination of larger NPOs, being funded to deliver services, would lead to hearings by the Office of Fair Trading if such dominant practice occurred in the private sector. Collaboration here is considered to be a response to such policy direction, mimicking business ideas that reflected economies of scale and making it easier for state actors to scale and extend the reach of welfare services (Mullins & Craig, 2005). Consequently, the 'builders' agenda's drive to expand the role of NPOs in delivering welfare services is framed as a source of tension in the sector. Subsequently, the focus, balanced towards scale and efficiency, is argued to have undermined the scope of relationship-oriented approaches to collaboration (Rees et al., 2010).

The financial collapse of 2008 led to deeper cuts to public services encapsulated within the discourses of austerity (Lowdnes & Pratchett, 2012) and deficit reduction (Macmillan, 2013). Ultimately, focus on the financial crisis subsequently led to difficulties in maintaining the focus on NPOs and therefore the support for them diminished (Alcock, 2010). Within this landscape, a decline in popularity of the Labour Party saw the demise of the Labour administration in 2010 and the subsequent election of the Conservative - Liberal Democrat coalition government (Teasdale et al., 2012).

2.6. Collaboration as a response to unmet need (2010- 2019)

Leading up to the 2010 general election NPOs were considered to have become closely aligned with, and less distinct from, the public sector (Cairns, 2009). Under the leadership of David Cameron, the party's intentions towards NPOs were first articulated in the Green Paper (explored in Chapter Six section 5.5) setting out plans for NPOs. The Coalition government, pursuing plans outlined by the Conservatives in their 'Building A Big Society' paper (Cameron, 2010) progressed these ideas. This tasked NPOs with greater responsibility to address societal problems and to meet unmet needs in the wake of austerity.

The Conservatives framed the need to increase voluntary action and further independence as a response to problems in society with more freedom and less bureaucracy for NPOs (Macmillan, 2010). Relatedly, The Big Society sought to devolve responsibility at an individual level through withdrawal of state support under the austerity agenda (Hall, 2011, p.710). It is argued that The Big Society effectively acted as backdrop for cuts, reduced state intervention, and further support of the markets cuing privatisation (Taylor, 2011), effectively decoupling the state and the sector and moving responsibility for welfare to individuals and NPOs (Macmillan, 2013).

Some argue that The Big Society presented an adapted form of the rolled back state, conflating compassionate conservatism with the austerity agenda and related cuts to services (Milbourne & Murray, 2017). Links are made between The Big Society rhetoric and the Thatcher era in the face of similar economic turbulence providing a backdrop to retrench funding for welfare (Crowson et al., 2009). This was reflected not so much in rolling back state support but in reconciling societal expectations that emphasised collective action and mutual support in the face of welfare cuts (Smith & Jones, 2015). In this context, the Coalition government dismissed the Labour Party's overt ideas of 'partnership'. Instead, policy emphasised the importance of community-based collaboration above state intervention (Scott, 2010; MacLeavy, 2011). However, assumptions embedded in this arrangement are considered to overlook the continual investment, time and effort needed to catalyse and support collaboration (Vanleene & Verschuere, 2018).

Despite the retreat of the state, the apparent willingness of NPOs to follow policy directives was key to organisational survival, (Taylor, 2011; Milbourne & Cushman, 2015). Taylor (2011, p. 263) expands on the need for NPOs to comply:

> *Finding allies where it can, using resources available to maximum opportunity and recognising the need for a variety of approaches - inside and outside the Big Society tent - if change is to be achieved and communities are to survive*.

The funding cuts embedded within the Coalition and subsequent Conservative policy raised questions about the expectations and ongoing role cast for NPOs in service delivery (Milbourne & Murray, 2017; Benson, 2015; Wells, 2013). Accounts indicate that over this time NPOs became a subsite for state supported welfare (Bennett et al., 2019).

Indeed, Wells (2013, p.80) argues that Coalition's discursive power convinced NPOs of the need to intervene in service delivery and fill the void left by a lack of state provision. The fiscal context, coupled with persuasive policy intentions, point to competing ideas surrounding collaboration. This points to NPOs being coerced to provide welfare and comply in order to respond to need and survive. This suggests that the meaning of collaboration at this juncture ran beyond the benign common-sense understanding of collaborative relationships.

The literature presented so far in the chapter points to a shifting relationship between state actors and NPOs from independent organisations, willingly collaborating to create an equitable society to one that reflects more hierarchical arrangements with a state that expects NPOs to collaborate to address unmet social needs. From the 1970s onwards, the literature suggests that the state has increasingly influenced the activity of NPOs (Lewis, 1999; Crowson at al., 2005; Coule & Patmore, 2013; Coule & Bennett, 2018). This context presents a climate where NPOs' agenda is aligned to the state, directing NPOs to relationships that foregrounded ideas of efficiency and efficacy in a competitive environment. Within this, collaboration is located as a way to gain legitimacy with larger NPOs and with other organisations. In more recent eras, the literature illustrates a state concerned with directing other organisations and citizens to solve societal problems. As part of this decoupling, NPOs have been framed as independent, poised to play a greater role as a response to devolved state responsibility. Thus, this creates the context for collaboration to respond to complex societal needs (Guo & Gazley, 2020).

In summary, the literature presented thus far illustrates the tendency of some scholars to attribute collaboration to overarching policy initiatives such as 'The Big Society' or 'The partnership agenda' (Craig, 1999; Lewis, 2005; Carmel & Harlock, 2008, Alcock, 2010). This presents collaboration in a linear direction that neglects to explain how actors' intentions shape collaboration. Moreover, state actors are often presented as the architects of collaboration, overlooking the input of NPROs who arguably transmit and translate policy messages to their constituent NPOs whilst simultaneously representing the views and insights of NPOs to policy makers. Though some scholars nod to the role of NPROs, research often lacks a level of scrutiny, specifically in relation to shaping the ideas that frame collaboration. This gap is highlighted by those who argue that the role of those who mediate and moderate, influencing the preconditions for collaboration has

been overlooked (Gray & Wood, 1991; Gazley & Guo, 2020). The next section therefore turns to the literature that addresses the role of these groups as a prelude to understanding their role in discursively shaping NPO collaboration.

2.7. NPROs and the context for collaboration

As argued above, much of the research presented above fails to fully recognise the interplay between the NPROs and policy makers. This is important to note and shapes the empirical aspects of this thesis, concerned with the interplay of ideas that shape the purpose of collaboration at a societal level. Morison (2000) conceives the role of representative organisations as part of the policy system, shaping and influencing the economic focus of initiatives such as the Compact, facilitating collaboration between the state and sector. NPROs historically were established as intermediary organisations, channelling funds from philanthropy into what were deemed deserving causes, in essence to help policy makers co-ordinate their efforts to address issues (Harris, 2010). In essence, in this context NPROs are framed as intermediary organisations who support the governance of the sector (Morison, 2000), facilitating co-operation between the state and welfare providers and NPOs supplementing service provision.

The NCVO for example, was pivotal in initiating activity following the 1978 Wolfenden Report. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, the NCVO emphasised ideas of efficiency and efficacy, establishing a Management Development Unit to orient a more business-like approach in NPOs (Coles, 1993). Towards the 1990s, the NCVO further shaped the future of NPOs supporting the Deakin Report of 1996. This was considered a landmark in creating the case for closer collaboration between the state and NPOs (Alcock, 2010). The Deakin Report along with a similar report commissioned by the NCVO's Scottish counterpart in 1997 was significant in setting out the role of NPROs. "The creation of these new institutional structures has been critically important in shaping relations between the third sector and government" (Alcock, 2012, p.227). This emphasises the significant role of NPROs, specifically their influential place in constructing the institutional relationship between the state and sector.

As highlighted by Coule and Bennett (2018), the role of these organisations cannot be seen as wholly independent from the state given the institutional context set out above, where NPOs follow practices legitimised by policy makers and work in tandem with them.

The role of NPROs is complex, given the challenge of providing a collective voice for what might be a diverse and fragmented cluster of individual organisations that support an equally wide-ranging community (Guo & Musso, 2007; Buckingham et al., 2014). In terms of collaboration, this raises questions about the extent to which NPROs can legitimately speak for and represent the ideas and concerns of a multitude of diverse NPOs. Their role in both shaping and responding to policy ideas are notable. NPROs are important in the way they construct collaboration, transmitting messages to NPOs, whilst simultaneously acting as a voice on their behalf.

Buckingham et. al. (2014), argue that NPROs can be considered to have taken on a more prominent leadership role. A further challenge related to the role of NPROs reflects the extent to which those in leadership roles can be detached from the beneficiaries and communities they serve (Bolduc, 1980; Guo & Musso, 2007; Buckingham et al., 2014). Aligned with this, Albareda (2018) posits that NPOs suffer unduly because of flawed representation, adding to challenges that are associated with listening to members and talking to policy makers. Balanoff (2013) argues that legitimacy, the capacity to act upon and represent NPOs has implications for beneficiary relationships and organisational mission, diluting the space NPOs hold as separate from the state. According to Bolduc (1980), whose case study explores representation and legitimacy in neighbourhood associations, the issues sit in part with the background and experiences of actors in representative roles. The study demonstrates how such individuals' professional skills and experience help them to interact with those in powerful positions. However, these skills, experiences, and managerial orientation, can limit their capacity to represent those whose interests they supposedly stand for. Returning to Gray and Wood (1991) this raises questions about how organisational conceptions of leadership have informed the process or preconditions that inform ideas of collaboration.

In the context of Europe, Flöthe (2020) employs the metaphor of representatives as 'transmission belts' (p.258) responsible for enhancing government's capacity to respond to citizens. This aligns with them being framed as cultural dopes or dupes who merely accept policy agendas (Leca et al., 2009; Suddaby, 2010). Albareda (2018) however, argues that the role of NPROs is complex and problematic and raises questions about the extent to which they are concerned with representing their constituents or elevating their own status (Abzug and Galaskiewicz, 2001). In the context of this thesis, the interest

lies with the degree to which representatives' ideas of collaboration support the priorities of beneficiaries, NPOs or policy. The literature presented in the sections above alludes to the span of relationships that are pertinent to NPROs and on whose behalf they seek to shape action. However, it is only part of the story. Some scholars note the significance of these representatives as interlocutors (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p.159) or bricoleurs (Kendall, 2009; Alcock, 2012). In other words, collective groups, who layer and shape meaning to influence the institutional relationship between state and sector, orient action and create a sense of unity. In terms of collaboration, NPROs have been considered to be complicit in creating the conditions for action. For example, *"the discourse of partnership thus appears to unite voluntary organisations and public service agencies in the pursuit of shared goals"* (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p.159). This suggests that the idea of collaboration itself has been a mechanism to create a sense of a compliant sector acting alongside and on behalf of the state.

Nonetheless, there is little to help discern the nuanced ways collaboration has been oriented or legitimised in this way by representatives *"what remains to be investigated is whether ambivalence ever translates into resistance - among commissioning authorities and VCOs - what forms such resistance takes"* (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p.167). Alcock (2010) argues that NPROs have played a central role in shaping the role of NPOs, strengthening the appeal of the sector. However, the literature that details the role of NPROs as 'sub-elites' (6 and Leat, 1997; Rochester, 2014) remains limited. Though these sub-elites may have less access to material resources (Lewis, 1999), the literature shows that they occupy an important role, communicating with policy makers, NPOs and beneficiaries, to influence the ideas that frame collaboration. This raises questions about the fragile nature of a relationship that balances the need to speak to policy whilst acting on behalf of a 'broad and indispensable community' (Alcock, 2010, p.21).

This carves out space for a longitudinal, detailed empirical study of NPOs representatives' role, addressing the gap in literature around how NPROs shape meaning to set the direction and tone of collaboration, Carmel and Harlock's questions above, lead to the lens through which the study is undertaken as does literature that impresses the discursive nature of the societal context that NPOs are part of (Alcock, 2010; Macmillan, 2012; Wells, 2013). The attention to the way organisational phenomena is discursively shaped is interesting and points to a way to extend the prevalent institutional insights

set out so far and evidenced by scholars such as Guo & Gazley, (2015, 2020). By extending an institutional perspective by adding a discursive lens, there is scope to create new knowledge based on the granular ideas in the public realm that layer in relation to the discursive construction of collaboration. Moreover, NPRO organisations are often described as an homogenous group that acts collectively. In this thesis, the attention on three different and distinct groups, the ACVEO, NCIA and NCVO scrutinise the distinct ways that individual groups construct collaboration. This will help to add clarity around the extent to which NPROs facilitate (or not) the governance of collaboration.

Therefore, there is scope to fill this gap and consider not only how policy makers shape action but also to enquire about the role played by NPROs. Table 2 on the following page summarises the section and sets out how this thesis seeks to extend understanding of such examples of the mediators and moderators of NPO collaboration. Fundamentally to understand how they shape or construct meaning in such a way that explores the extent to which they persuade, resist or seek legitimacy in support of the prevailing view of collaboration as common-sense.

Table 2 - Summarising the role of NPROs vis-à-vis collaboration

NPROs and NPO collaboration	Challenges of representation	Raises questions relating to the discursive construction of NPO collaboration
Mediators and Moderators of collaboration (Gazley & Guo, 2020).	Not wholly independent from the state (Coule & Bennett, 2018). Complaint and accepting of policy agendas (Leca et al., 2009; Suddaby, 2010)	
Play deliberative role - collaborating with state and NPOs (Coule & Bennett, 2018).	Representatives as 'interlocutors' (Carmel & Harlock (2008 p. 159) or 'bricoleurs' (Alcock, 2012, p.19) shape meaning for constituents.	How do NPROs shape the meaning of collaboration? How do NPROs frame the purpose of collaboration?
	Legitimacy vis a vis interaction with those in powerful positions vis-a-vis the communities they represent (Bolduc, 1980).	
	Who do representatives act for and who do they stand for (Guo & Musso, 2007).	
	Representatives act on what they think they should do rather than act on what members want (Bolduc, 1980; Abzug & Galaskeiwicz, 2001).	From whom do they seek legitimacy – to what extent do they align with NPOs or the state?

2.8. The context of NPO collaboration - the organisational level

The policy context and the role of NPROs constructing collaboration cannot be considered without addressing scholarly accounts of the real consequences of collaboration at an organisational level. Though my study is not focused on the practice of collaboration it is important to reflect that ideas formed at a societal level influence practice at a micro level. Consequently, this final section focuses on some of the issues, to contextualise the interest and relevance of how policy and NPROs construct collaboration. In recent times, it has been argued that NPOs collaborated in response to meet complex social needs (Guo & Gazley, 2015; Gazley & Guo, 2020) with the state

playing a 'non-committal' supporting role (Bennett et al., 2019, p. 3). Previous section 1.3 highlighted normative definitions of collaboration as a complex, reciprocal activity (Phillips et al., 2000; Milbourne, 2009), where organisations can blend to provide greater value to beneficiaries than one organisation could do in isolation (Sink, 1996). Such sentiments appear relatively straightforward. However, the dynamics of the policy environment highlighted in previous sections, suggests that the competitive climate can lead to problems in practice. The literature is considered to understand the links between the meaning making system, the macro context where ideas of collaboration are promoted, in light of the challenges set out below.

It is argued that collaboration continues to play a role with NPOs responding to societal problems (Guo & Gazley, 2020; Jacklin-Jarvis & Potter, 2020). In tandem with these challenges, the institutional context presents issues for NPOs, where institutional ideas align collaboration with policy agendas that override beneficiary needs for example (Milboune, 2009; Buckingham, 2009). And, at a time when NPOs are located as part of civil society, NPOs ideas may be overlooked or ignored (Milbourne, 2009). Notably, the literature has problematised collaboration, arguing it fails to address the structural causes of entrenched problems such as poverty or homelessness, allowing policy makers to devolve their responsibility for resolving societal problems.

In recent times, marked by challenges associated with income generation and funding, collaboration has been linked to retrenched state support (Hambleton & Howard, 2013). The need to secure organisational sustainability and secure resources, such as space, time and staff in a competitive climate all fall within the rationale to collaborate within the literature (see Milbourne & Murray, 2011; Milbourne, 2009; Guo & Acar, 2005 for examples). In this challenging fiscal context, collaboration that is considered by some to be a vehicle for power-sharing through the experience of NPOs, suggests that collaboration in reality is linked to squeezed assets, aiming to do more with less funding (Hambleton & Howard, 2003).

Some suggest that collaboration provides a strategic way of staying viable *"to increase centrality and the degree of influences over other organisations" (*Hardy et al., 2003, p.328), allowing NPOs to create a competitive advantage. This relates to the concept of collaboration in the context of a neoliberal climate that values efficient and effective

practice, whilst helping to facilitate income or profit. Within collaboration driven by economies of scale, some scholars have highlighted the propensity to fund large organisations in order to achieve economies of scale rather than develop quality of provision with smaller NPOs (Salamon & Toepler, 2015; Selsky & Parker, 2005). From the perspective of larger NPOs, the appeal of collaborating in this way extends their reach to diverse groups, the range of services they may offer and enhances their own competitive advantage (Patmore & Sanderson, 2015).

In practice, despite the normative views of collaboration that frame the "glittering effects" of collaboration (Steen et al., 2018, p.284), the challenges attributed to action are perceived to mask the reality of time consuming and risky work (Mills et al., 2011). Others report a sense of fatigue with the notion, challenged by the need to find shared aims (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Brandson et al., 2018). Moreover, organisations involved in failed collaborative work tend to move on without considering or reflecting on why the relationship proved unsuccessful or failed to generate the learning anticipated (Milbourne, 2009).

Where NPOs have worked with larger organisations to enhance their profile, some argue that it leads to predatory behaviours where larger organisations access NPOs to advance their competitive reach and work at scale (Milbourne & Murray, 2011, 2017). Patmore & Sanderson (2015, p.56) explain:

> *Smaller organisations also are reported as often being fearful of entering into collaboration with other organisations as they might end up being swallowed up or cut out of the picture completely. This further intensifies mistrust, perceptions of competitiveness and entrenchments through a desire to protect their own turf.*

For smaller NPOs, collaborating in such a context can be problematic, presenting a fine balance between potential financial security in tandem with maintaining their social mission and the capacity for reciprocal exchange.

It is argued that funding arrangements that encourage collaboration to bridge relationships between beneficiaries and policy makers can prove detrimental to NPOs. In such instances, the literature suggests that organisational mission and beneficiary needs may be displaced in favour of survival linked to contractual arrangements and the agenda

of dominant partners (Milbourne, 2009; Milbourne & Murray, 2011; Backus & Clifford, 2013; Kara, 2014). In this context, collaboration couches NPOs' as mediators, to work with citizens and facilitate ideas and knowledge sharing to help beneficiaries consider how they might solve their own problems in the absence of state support (Hemmings, 2017). This orients NPOs towards a role as subcontractors who are used for their close relationship with service users. Where this deviates from NPOs' mission, it can cause organisations to divert time and organisational resources (Rummery, 2006). Here, collaboration can compromise relationships and trust, where hierarchical ideas in a target-oriented context, creep into practice (Lewis, 2005; Milbourne, 2009). Consequently, the purpose of collaboration deviates from one aiming to share learning and insight that informs policy to one that sets out to embed policy around independence as part of a self-service society in the wake of absent state support (Erikson, 2010; Coule & Bennett, 2016).

In this vein, Milbourne (2009) highlights the case of Sure Start projects that focused on early education and family support at a community level. NPOs collaborating as part of the project were cast as subcontractors. Associated with this, the imperative to replicate what was considered good practice through collaboration was marred by policy-led goals and timeframes that were unrealistic in practice. Milbourne (2009) points to the way Clegg (1989) frames power in this context, highlighting that influential actors set the rules, thus undermining the scope for reciprocity and collective action. Indeed, the case illustrates how NPOs attempted to collaborate to shape priorities but found that their contributions, ideas and practices were overlooked or ignored (Milbourne, 2009).

Further attributed to the tendency to overlook the needs of beneficiaries and the attempts of NPOs to shape the policy landscape, some note that by collaborating with the public sector, NPOs have become compliant - ignoring or failing to voice the needs of beneficiaries in a meaningful way (Alcock, 2005; Ellison, 2006; Milbourne, 2009). Borne out of the strategic need to attract or retain funding in a competitive climate (Harris, 2001; Milbourne, 2009; Bunger, 2013), covert forms of collaboration are exemplified by tacit arrangements between NPOs and public sector actors' commissioning services (Dey and Teasdale, 2016). The example illustrates how NPOs collaborate by means of 'tactical mimicry' (p.485) with policy makers. In such instances, both parties understand that NPOs follow policy goals to secure funding, whilst continuing to run projects linked to their

own priorities. Dey & Teasdale (2016) frame this as a form of deviance, arguing that even though it may help to secure the funds to run services, it masks the policy agendas that lead to structural inequalities in society. This is problematic where NPOs collaborate with policy makers in a way that hinders the potential to meaningfully represent their constituents and simultaneously increases dependence on the public purse for funding. Here, the tacit effects of collaboration are considered to effectively silence beneficiaries. Through such practice, organisations effectively disempower the people they claim to represent (Ellison, 2006; Milbourne, 2009) limiting the potential to collaborate to address issues of power and dominance (Spicer & Böhm, 2007).

A further issue both motivating NPOs to collaborate whilst simultaneously creating issues for NPOs, is the competitive climate that NPOs are considered to operate in (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Milbourne, 2009; Harris, 2012). The competitive environment that surrounded procurement arrangements for NPOs involved (or wanting to be involved) in delivering welfare services is considered to rest around the challenging balance between 'mission and money' (Topaloglu, McDondald & Hunt, 2018, p. 229). Despite having specialist insight, smaller NPOs may be overlooked where larger organisations are able to operate in cost effective ways and scale (Aiken, 2014; Aiken & Harris, 2017). Here for example, Milbourne points to the relative ease that well known and networked NPOs enjoy in terms of accessing funding; *"There was little trust that value in services, rather than costs, would determine future decisions, and fear that better-resourced, 'smart' organisations would gain new contracts without the commitment and local knowledge to generate appropriate provision"* (*2009, p.291).* This posits that those who are smaller, lacking resources and networks find it harder to seek funding. For some NPOs this drives collaboration through the need to network with the organisations that are able to gain access to funding in a climate of diminishing financial support (Aiken & Harris, 2017). For smaller NPOs this stands to dilute their distinctiveness, where their expertise or values are overlooked (Harris, 2015).

The literature presented in the section above illustrates that collaboration in practice is not wholly unproblematic. The specialist nature and mission of certain forms of NPOs may be diluted through collaboration with dominant partners or where funding or policy goals inhibit or detract NPOs from their organisational goals or mission. This has implications not only for NPOs but also the beneficiaries whose interests they serve.

Notably, the issues highlighted through the literature above situates NPO collaboration as a top-down activity, dominated by a state delivering its mission in such a way that the structural issues that create needs and are said to drive collaboration (Guo & Gazley, 2020) appear to be overlooked. This suggests an imbalance with the notion of collaboration as an exchange that fosters learning and meaningful exchange relative to NPO experiences that present it as a top-down activity that detracts from mission and beneficiary needs. This furthers the importance of understanding how the meaning of collaboration is constructed at a macro level. In particular, the way that NPROs reflect the issues highlighted in the section above to mediate and moderate the construction of collaboration.

2.9. Chapter summary

The chapter has highlighted the strands of work showing the evolving relationship between NPOs and the state, the role of representative bodies in shaping collaboration and the challenges of collaboration for NPOs. The first of these was central in framing the evolving context for collaboration, illustrating a climate where NPO agendas have been aligned to state priorities through an assumed consensus and more recently to respond to unmet needs. This aspect of literature suggests that policy priorities have limited state responsibility for services, locating collaboration as a means to institutionalise NPOS as a governable terrain (Carmel & Harlock, 2008), discursively persuading NPOs that they should respond to societal needs. Though useful in setting the context for the thesis, policy makers are presented as the architects of collaboration, with NPROs being given scant attention in the way they shape action. There is scope to extend knowledge about the role of NPROs in the policy context. This supports the next element of literature that shows the challenges of representation for NPROs (Albareda, 2018), specifically who they act and stand for (Bolduc, 1980). This reflects the need for a greater understanding of the role of NPROs as the mediators and moderators of collaboration and the myriad of NPOs they represent (Guo & Gazley, 2020). Therefore, there is scope to pay closer attention to the incremental construction of collaboration by policy makers and NPROs.

The challenge remains to open the black box of collaboration, to improve theories and offer additional empirical insight to explain how it becomes positioned as a common-

sense approach to solve entrenched societal problems in the place of government (Guo & Gazley, 2020). As well as limitations in understanding the role of representative bodies, there are shortcomings in the extant literature that scrutinise the policy ideas that influence collaboration (Macmillan, 2010). Documents signal and shape policy agendas, framing a role for NPOs (Dayson, Ellis-Paine, Macmillan & Sanderson 2017) and have been used to consider how ideas layer and shape perceptions of the non-profit sector (Coule & Bennett, 2018). This carves out space to foreground ideas in documents to create new insight and create a dynamic view by interrogating the way that NPO collaboration is constructed. The empirical aspect of this thesis attends to this and considers how multiple organisations' ideas intersect in ways that persuade, dominate and assume forms of collaboration that influence the role and purpose of NPOs.

This chapter has set out literature that charts the evolution of the state and sector relationship to frame the context for collaboration. The literature points to several shortcomings in how we understand NPO collaboration. Extant knowledge is dated and fails to provide detailed insight into how NPO collaboration has been shaped and evolved, specifically over more turbulent periods from 2015 onwards. Relatedly, the impetus to collaborate tends to be attributed to the state as powerful agents in terms of their access to media and financial resources with NPROs playing a supportive and largely passive role. It has problematised the representational role of NPROs who straddle a line between support and legitimacy in their relationships with policy actors and the NPOs they represent. Further, it summarises literature that highlights the problems associated with NPO collaboration which contrast with the notion that it is a straightforward or unproblematic way of organising. Finally, the notion of discourse is considered in relation to NPROs and the state sector relationship. Though mentioned by some scholars in relation to the state sector relationship (Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Wells, 2013), there is a dearth of empirical work that focuses on the wider institutional context that informs the meaning and orientation of NPO collaboration. It is this gap that the study seeks to fill by adopting a conceptual lens that draws on discursive institutionalism, (Schmidt, 2009, 2011). In the next chapter, this 'new' institutional theory is foregrounded as a lens through which the wider context that provides a platform for meaning can be explored to explain how NPO collaboration has been constructed as an accepted form of organising.

Chapter 3 INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

The early sections of this chapter trace the evolution of theory, setting out the connections between institutional scholarship and NPO collaboration. The chapter then turns to 'new' institutional scholarship, highlighting the interrelationship between discourse in production and the mutuality of collaboration in creating and reinforcing institutional contexts. The final sections address more recent iterations of institutional scholarship setting out a critique and accordingly showing how conceptual thinking has attempted to respond. This concept underpins the gap and related contribution this study makes to this field, creating a platform for a methodological approach. This effectively extends understanding through the empirical application of discursive institutionalism.

The interest in institutional theory originates in economics, politics and sociology and is also classed as a branch of organisational scholarship (Scott, 2008). Institutional theory is interested in the space or fields (Scott, 2008; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), where the roles and expectations of actors are established. Scholars, (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) emphasise the situational, material and relational environment that orients meaning. Broadly, it refers to organisational behaviour that manifests as "*widespread social conceptions of appropriate organizational form and behaviour that constitute the institutional environment for organizations*" (Tolbert, 1985, p.2). In this context, organisational conventions that are practised become widespread, duplicated and go unquestioned. "*Social processes, obligations or actualities come to take rule like status in social thought and action*" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p.341) and an alternative course of action "*may be literally unthinkable*" (Zucker, 1983, p.25). In other words, what becomes 'common sense' or 'taken for granted'.

The theory proposes the significance of the relationships between organisations suggesting that within these, powerful external forces ascribe meaning as a precursor to outcomes (Powell, 2007). The fundamental basis for institutional theory suggests that organisations are influenced through the relationships they experience within their network (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Moreover, seminal theory suggests that to be accepted within institutional settings, organisations may adopt practice and behaviours to be seen

as 'legitimate' actors within a given institutional context (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Dacin, Munir and Tracey (2010) show how those in such institutionalised contexts purposefully maintain their stability and legitimise their position. This suggests that organisations considered to have low power such as NPOs have limited agency and are self-replicating (Dacin et al., 2010). In addition to issues of legitimacy, some aspects of institutional theory, such as isomorphism (DiMaggio, 1988) highlights the propensity of organisations to be homogenous, more alike one another. Scholars have demonstrated how NPOs have come to operate in ways that are reminiscent of the private sector, driven by the need to earn an income, become competitive, innovative and more efficient (Taylor, 1992; Lewis, 1999; Chew & Osborne, 2008). To some extent, this reflects the significance of the institutional context and the potential for enduring effects on the material and social relations between actors (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012).

The notion of fields sees organisations within institutional environments respond to rules and structures (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Here, action within an organisation may be driven by material resources such as funding, pointing to the potential for actors who allocate resources, to reinforce rules or standards (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). Whilst this focus neglects to consider the capacity of actors to act, it helps to explain how policy drives collaboration through formal mechanisms such as Compacts, contracts or funding at a societal level. Scholars argue that these formal mechanisms render NPOs a '*governable terrain*' (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p.55), shaping their nature and purpose (Lewis, 1999). Based on this premise, the practice of collaboration itself may facilitate and replicate organisational practice in an institutional network as part of a complex recursive process.

So far, the chapter has highlighted the problems associated with institutional scholarship reflecting the sense that elite or dominant actors are the architects of institutional structure (Dacin, Munir & Phillips, 2010). This is apparent in the NPO literature, where the need to collaborate is attributed to overarching policy initiatives such as Labour's partnership agenda (Lewis 1994; Carmel & Harlock, 2008), 'The Big Society' (Alcock, 2010; Milbourne & Murray, 2011) and later austerity (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012). As previously highlighted, Gazley and Guo (2015, 2020) argue that institutional theories dominate

accounts of NPO collaboration. However, they fail to empirically open the black box that explains the institutionalised nature of collaboration as widely accepted (Thompson & Perry, 2006; Gray & Wood, 1991; Zucker 1991). 'New' forms of institutional theory however, take a dynamic view of institutional contexts that emphasises the importance of the discursive elements of institutions and the actors who are part of, and operate within them (Schmidt, 2008, 2010. 2011). In other words, new perspectives of institutional theory highlight the capacity of actors to act. This reflects a critical conjecture in the theoretical lens given the commitment to understanding and explaining how organisations communicate meaning around the nature and purpose of collaboration.

3.1. 'New' institutional theory and NPO collaboration

As has been highlighted so far, the concept of institutional work underpins the role of actors in shaping their role and purpose (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2011). However, 'new' institutional scholarship foregrounds the interplay between the social elements constructing the '*institutional story*' (Suddaby, 2010, p.16) that guides and reproduces action in organisational contexts. In other words, it considers the important and collective role of human action in the organisational structures that shape social life (Giddens, 1984; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Mutch, 2007). In sum, new institutionalisms consider the intelligent actions of those within organisations (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) and therefore the influence of actors within institutions (Lawrence et al., 2011).

Associated with the development of new institutional theory, collaboration is argued to be a conduit that reproduces social order through relationships that both inform and safeguard the status of organisations as credible or legitimate (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004). In tandem, organisational relationships may be shored up by material resources such as funding, pointing to the powerful place of those who allocate resources, to reinforce rules or standards (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). This resonates with a view that NPO collaboration has enabled change, depicting it as strategic and planned (Ostrom, 1990; Schmidt, 2010) aligning the acceptance of a linear perspective enabled by agendas such as the Big Society. In part, this supports the perspective outlined in Chapter Two section 2.6 that argues market-like

behaviours associated with competition and efficiency have permeated the wider agenda of NPOs (Eikenberry, 2009).

Scholars have argued that new institutional scholarship can demonstrate the efforts of actors to generate change (Zilber, 2002, 2009; Gawer & Phillips, 2013). In the case of medical care in Canada for example, Reay and Hinings (2005) show how seemingly competing ideas of business, efficiency and customer satisfaction coexist alongside medically driven ideas of enterprise and care. In a similar vein, Coule and Patmore (2013) critique institutional studies that overlook agency - the capacity of actors to act. They show how NPOs both transform and stabilise through working with competing logics, to support their interests to transform and maintain and recreate institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

Coule and Patmore (2013) ascribe such transformative work to discourse. They explain how NPOs draw on their institutional positioning, framing the importance of consumer choice, innovation and efficiency (Griffiths, 1988) to their advantage in transforming and maintaining services. One NPO builds on its historical reputation to perpetuate its role to underpin collaborative provision to maintain its legitimacy. Conversely, the other instigates change, ignoring its historical role, focusing attention on the potential for cost savings by taking an alternative approach to service delivery. Hence, the study centres the importance of the discursive ways that both change and maintain institutional practice (Coule & Patmore, 2013).

This more complex relationship between actors is proposed by Giddens (1979) who argues that in institutional contexts, actors seek to belong through adopting practice, whilst simultaneously adapting ideas for their own purpose (Gawer & Phillips, 2013; Creed et al., 2010). Aligned with the interest in, and focus on, NPROs is the work of Maguire and Hardy (2009), who show how 'outsiders' can deinstitutionalise the pillars that underpin practice over time through discursive efforts. This emphasises the discursive role of actors to create the impetus for change, by problematising and therefore *"undermining the pillars practice"* (Maguire & Hardy, 2009, p. 148). They show how the widespread acceptance and use of an insecticide in the United States was destabilised through translation (Zilber, 2002) and discourse (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004). From this we can see how meaning can be shared, negotiated and diffused in such

a way that de-legitimises what has been commonly accepted. In the context of this thesis, a discursive perspective is important, framing the potential to generate insight into how seemingly less powerful actors respond to power in institutional environments (Scott, 1995, 2008).

3.2. Discursive Institutionalism as a lens to explore the pillars of NPO collaboration

Within new institutional scholarship, Schmidt (2008, 2010) takes a dynamic view that stresses the significance of discourse, highlighting the constant and dynamic interplay between organisations and the institutional context that they are part of. The mutuality between discourse and institutions is considered by Hardy et al. (2004). This outlines the reinforcing relationships between organisations and argues that it is through discourse that the nature of institutional life is mapped out. Specifically, this addresses the interplay between actors' discourses as a means to define and shape institutional expectations.

> *Discourse works at two levels; at the everyday level of generating and communicating about institutions, and at a meta level, as a second order critical communication among agents about what goes on in institutions, enabling them to deliberate and persuade as a prelude to action.* (Schmidt, 2008a, p.316)

By setting out cues for action that respond to issues in an institutional context, actors set out opportunities or ideas that address certain audiences, in certain ways and at certain times. This moulds understanding and indicates the ways that actors should act.

Reflecting an important gap reflected in the literature in Chapter Two, this highlights the absence of detailed accounts that consider the role and influence of less powerful organisations such as NPROs. As Crespy and Schmidt (2014, p. 1090) argue, *"the power of ideas will be effective only through discursive interactions, i.e., the way they are carried by agency"*. As such, the attention to agency adds detail; the interplay of collective organisational perspectives that construct the institutional story (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Boyce, 1996; Suddaby, 2010). Therefore, the aim is to open the black box of this puzzle to explain how NPO collaboration becomes an entrenched approach to organising that considers the wider role of the "moderators and mediators'' (Gazley & Guo, 2020, p.212), how they demonstrate ideational power.

Some scholars, for example Alcock (2010) and Brown et al. (2010) refer to discourse in relation to NPOs, with Alcock highlighting the way that reports frame the sector as a homogeneous entity (2010). However, such research does not undertake an empirical exploration of NPO collaboration from a discursive perspective in any depth. Coule and Patmore (2013) and Dey and Teasdale (2016) have gone further, highlighting how NPOs actively maintain or disrupt institutional practice. Nonetheless, extant literature has neglected to explain how collaboration is constructed between policy and NPROs.

DI is argued to be a way of understanding the dynamic interplay of ideas that shape organisational behaviour, attitudes and beliefs (Schmidt, 2010). Moreover, DI considers not only the importance of powerful actors whose discursive impact is fanned by economic and structural means (Hall, 1989; 1993) but also those who have limited access to material resources. Supporting this assertion, scholars posit that less powerful organisations may use their ideational power to challenge or inform policy agendas to convey messages to the organisations they represent.

> *It* [DI] *takes a more agency oriented approach in focusing on the interaction between elite policy actors in wielding ideational power, along with the interaction between elites and groups less powerful in terms of resources or institutional position* (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, p.320).

The concept of ideational power renders it a relevant lens to explore and explain the representation of NPO collaboration. In doing so, it enables analytical understanding of the collective efforts of actors, including those who may be considered less powerful to set out how their ideas contribute or affect the power process (Hay, 2002; Barnett & Duvall, 2005). In other words, the multifaceted ways that a range of organisations in an institutional context contribute towards the possibilities related to the practice of collaboration.

As previously set out (in section 2.7), this thesis considers not only the role of policy actors, arguably more powerful than NPOs in terms of the platforms available to them to support their ideas. DI therefore offers a way to explore how representatives straddle the relationship between policy actors and NPOs. Hence, the concept of agency in the production and reproduction of the ideas, affords the scope to scrutinise how NPROs ideas support, challenge or make assumptions in constructing collaboration. The

mutually informing role of discourse within the content of institutional structure challenges the assumption that institutions are dominated by powerful actors, their resources or external events. As Schmidt (2010) points out, organisations can create and follow institutional ideas whilst simultaneously engaging in critical communication that changes or maintains them. The subsequent section charts the evolution of DI, highlighting the potential and limitations of the lens in the context of explaining how NPO collaboration is constructed at a macro level.

So far, the conception of DI presented by Schmidt (2008) supports an empirical study concerned with exploring and challenging the notion of NPROs as passive, compliant and accepting of policy actors' directives (Campbell, 1998, p.383; Suddaby, 2010). This focus on multiple and oscillating discursive ideas underpins the importance of DI in this thesis as a relevant lens to surface and reveal the enduring prominence of NPO collaboration. Thus, a DI lens facilitates a way to add depth to studies that consider NPO collaboration as an important facet of welfare service delivery (Lewis, 1999; Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Milbourne, 2011; Milbourne & Cushman, 2016). It enables a challenge around the notion of NPOs and their representative organisations as cultural dopes (Campbell, 1998, p.383; Suddaby, 2010). Rather, it emphasises attention to the way such representatives respond, bargain or persist through their own communication channels to shape an agenda for action.

Despite DI filling a gap by underlining the importance of ideas shaping action, scholars (Clegg, 2010; Willmott, 2015) critique new institutional scholarship asserting that an emphasis on power has been neglected. Such critiques are relevant to this study and the commitment of this thesis to challenge the notion of collaboration as simple and straightforward as a pillar of critical approaches as advocated by Grey and Willmott (2005). A recent elaboration of DI theory foregrounds the interplay of power and ideas in DI (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016). This emphasises the effects of ideational power, taken as both the formal and informal capacity to influence, not only through compulsory means but also by appealing to values and expectations (Lukes, 2018; Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Dhal, 1957).

Conveyed through discourse, ideas form an important facet of discourse that reflect aspects of ideology; the values, morals and principles that shape thinking (Weir, 1992). The importance of ideas is explained by Mertha (2011, p.24):

> *Asserting that ideas do not matter would mean that shifting ideals about science, religion, democracy, slavery, colonization, gender, race, and homosexuality to pick just a few salient examples [...] have not appreciably affected how people act.*

In other words, how ideas matter is important in so much that they hold the power to influence how people act. Such a sentiment is seen as important by scholars such as Schmidt (2008, 2010) who argues that ideas take centre stage forming the substantive content of discourse that shapes institutional contexts. The evolving debate around how ideas can be considered to shape action considers not only the perspective of dominant elites such as policy actors, but the power of those more broadly engaged in shaping practice, such as NPROs. By tracing the historical evolution of ideas across time, discourses, which may not be perceptible or captured in existing literature can be illuminated (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). However, in order to fully reflect the ideas that emerge, are obscured or fade, it is important to consider the role of power. As well as emphasising the importance of ideas, recent DI scholarship (Carstensen and Schmidt,2016) stresses the influence of power. This allows a focus on the way actors legitimise their ideas (Cox, 2001) or define how societal issues should be tackled (Blythe, 2001), reflecting the social constructionist perspective of the theory. Hence, theory addresses the need;

> *To distinguish more clearly between the general claim that ideas matter in politics, and the more specific argument that one significant way ideas matter is through agents' promotion of certain ideas at the expense of the ideas of others* (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, p.319).

The focus on power is not solely concerned with institutional power - the capacity of elites such as policy actors arguably have greater sources of power to dominate in terms of the resources they can access (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Schmidt (2011) argues that less powerful organisations may use their power in different ways to challenge or inform policy agendas to convey messages to the organisations they represent.

The concept of ideational power enables analytical understanding of how the efforts of actors, including those considered less powerful, set out their ideas to contribute to and create support for the power process that galvanises meaning (Hay, 2002; Barnett & Duvall, 2005). In other words, the multifaceted ways that a range of organisations in an institutional context contribute towards the construction of NPO collaboration. This is an important element of the concept, rendering it a useful lens given that it considers the ideational power of non-elites, organisations who have more limited resources such as NPROs and the NPOs they represent.

3.2.1. Introducing three forms of power and ideas in DI

In the context of NPOs, Alcock (2010, p.18) highlights the interplay of discourse in practice in the context of welfare service delivery; "*Of course there are in fact a multitude of discourses of practice; and within these it may be more difficult to establish the power or influence, still less the hegemony, of any than in the government-dominated policy discourses*". Reflecting this, Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) argue that the agency of all actors in institutional settings have the capacity to influence, through the ideas they express and the way that they deliberate through documents. Moreover, they are concerned with the interactive nature of ideas and how they transfer across and between actors. "*I am sure we agree that agents, ideas and institutions all matter. The goal, then, should not be to privilege certain of these elements theoretically, but to theorize and study their interactions empirically*" (Bell, 2011, p.714).

The concept of DI is worthy of closer exploration. However, the challenge for scholars adopting the lens of ideational power, is locating and demonstrating the dynamic exchange in which ideas are meaningful at a macro level. The focus on the way ideas develop between actors is well-placed to reflect not only policy but also NPROs' ideational power in the transfer of ideas. Though DI offers an interesting way to explore the dynamics of ideas that construct NPO collaboration, there are limited empirical studies to draw on as a guide in terms of methodological application. DI has been applied by scholars to reflect changing language in environmental policy (Gillard, 2016) and in policy relating to teaching quality (Berkovich & Benoliel , 2020). Adopting a DI lens, Gillard (2016) illustrates how climate change policies are introduced, imposed or excluded by policy actors under the Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition

government. In the production and interplay of social relations, Gillard (2016) shows the bricolage or layered ways that reflect the dominance of austerity economics as a way to delegitimise ambitions to address climate change. Alternatively, Berkovich and Benoiel (2020) examine how ideas promote control in discourses relating to professionalism and teacher quality in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Though both of these studies are illuminating and offer an empirical account and application of DI, however, they address the dynamic aspects proposed by Schmidt (2009; 2011) and Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) or Kamkhaji and Radaelli (2021) as neither details the ideas of less powerful actors. This leaves little room to guide scholars interested in empirically engaging with the theory. From this point my study sought to respond by enhancing the concept to make it empirically operational. Schmidt suggests that;

> *The discursive processes alone help explain why certain ideas succeed and others fail because of the ways they are projected to whom and where. But the discourse itself, as representation as well as process, also needs to be evaluated as to why it succeeds or fails in promoting ideas* (Schmidt, 2008, p.309).

To evaluate the meaning in the context of this thesis, the challenge remained to methodologically operationalise Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) three forms of ideational power to scrutinise the construction of NPO collaboration at a societal level. The next sections of the chapter pre-empt the methodology by showing how the thesis extends the capacity to understand the forms of ideational power, through, over, and in ideas by showing how they are discursively represented in documents concerned with NPO collaboration.

3.2.2. Power through ideas

In elevating the importance of ideational power, three stands of power are proposed by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) that position the ways in which ideas may compete to become legitimised. These are defined as follows;

> *Power through ideas, understood as the capacity of actors to persuade other actors to accept and adopt their views through the use of ideational elements; power over ideas, meaning the imposition of ideas and the power to resist the inclusion of*

> *alternative ideas; and power in ideas, which takes place through the establishing of hegemony or institutions imposing constraints on what ideas are considered* (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, p.318).

These three forms of power are subsequently detailed and delineated, highlighting the characteristics of each as heuristics that can reveal the interplay of ideas, power and resistance. The consecutive sections deal with each of these, outlining the defining features and debating how they are framed.

As explained above, power through ideas is broadly associated with persuasion. This form of power suggests that actors' use of cognitive arguments that define problems and normative arguments appealing to the emotive aspects of public life (Berkovich & Benoliel, 2020; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016; Gillard, 2016; Bevan, 2020). As such, it is considered the most commonly studied of the three ideational powers (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). This form of power reflects the need to create solutions to problems (Campbell, 2004; Schmidt, 2006; Mehta, 2011) by setting out problems along with possibilities in terms of how others can and should respond to such problems.

This frames the interrelationship between problems and values by indicating what they are and how they should be solved (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2021). In doing so, issues become applicable. In other words, power through ideas helps actors in organisations relate to how they, along with others, should go about addressing them. According to Schmidt (2006), an important facet of power through ideas is the extent to which ideas support apparent coherence of a given issue coupled with a level of ambiguity (Schmidt, 2006; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Ambiguity is a notable feature of power through ideas, it creates the potential for actors to consider how they might approach certain situations. Ideas engage actors, allowing them to consider their own particular circumstances alongside the idea(s) presented *"diverting the collective fears, anxieties, and moral indignation*" (Moisander et al., 2016, p.963). Consequently, the element of ambiguity is considered to be an important tenet, allowing actors a level of imagination to relate the ideas to their own context. This suggests that collaboration in itself might be prey to the capacity of power through ideas given the prevalence of societal problems, such as homelessness or poverty. In such circumstances, a general level of need coupled

with the adaptable nature of collaboration, allows for interpretation at a local or organisational level that helps impel actors to act.

Power through ideas is associated with communicative discourses, reflecting the public nature of discourse; where ideas are set out and who they are aimed at. As such, organisations are directed not only via top down, but also from the bottom up. In other words, by representative bodies or activists who are also concerned with persuasive communication as well as those with more evident power such as policy actors (Schmidt, 2002, 2006, 2008). This is important in this thesis and emphasises the important role of others engaged in shaping NPO collaboration, such as their representative bodies. Such organisations themselves are concerned with the way ideas of collaboration are engaged with, deliberated over or contested. Indeed, these actors' role is to share and translate ideas between policy actors and NPOs and vice versa. Hence, the relational aspect of power through ideas is relevant in both change and stasis in ways that transform or are more incremental in the way they create legitimacy.

A key contribution of this research is extending the theory discussed above to reveal how ideational power reflects the discursive construction of collaboration. Despite the descriptions of the forms of power by Carstensen and Schmidt, they remain abstract. The term 'power through ideas' for example, does not help to readily identify how it shapes meaning through the representation of ideas. In order to address this, the descriptions of power through ideas, as well as the other two forms of power proposed, were scrutinised. This took shape by highlighting key attributes, detailing the descriptions and compiling them into a list of discursive acts associated with what a given form of power was claimed to 'do' in a discursive sense.

Here the descriptions of power through ideas are taken, highlighted and marshalled into a framework as shown in Table 12. The framework adopts and adapts the descriptions by contextualising them in relation to the discursive construction of NPO collaboration. Further, the descriptions are used to create themes that reflect the essence of each form of power and subsequently furthering the capacity each to be recognisable in terms of how it is represented in documents. This process is set out in detail below and summarised in appendix A showing how each form was delineated and renamed in order

to add clarity. Hence the figures and tables in this section illustrate how power through ideas became *relational power through ideas*.

Figure 2 - Highlighting the description of power through ideas (taken from Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016, pp. 323-326)

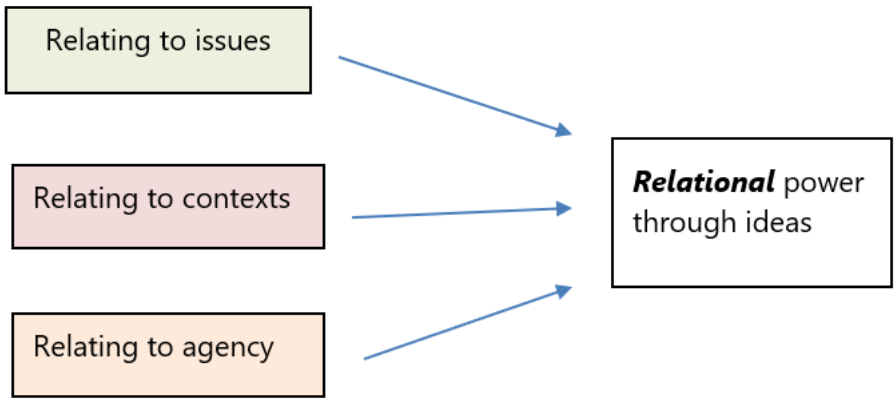
- vagueness or ambiguity makes for discursive success, as different parties to the discussion can interpret the ideas differently
- persuasiveness dependent upon the extent to which they are able to demonstrate its appropriateness in terms of the values of a given community
- generally accessible narrative about the causes of current problems and what needs to be done to remedy them that resonate with the public
- this means that mass expectations about how the economy should work
- by invoking 'common sense' images
- the agency-orientation of this understanding
- it emphasizes actors' ability to 'stand outside' and critically engage with the ideas they hold and promote
- that enable them to communicate and deliberate about taking action collectively to change their institutions
- persuading other agents about one's understanding of an issue
- influence on what is considered 'common knowledge'
- power through ideas occurs not only from the top – down but also from the bottom –up. Power through ideas can have effects that matter for both stability and change

Table 3 – Relating the delineated descriptions of power through ideas to the discursive constructions of NPO collaboration

Description of power through ideas (taken from Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016, pp. 323-326)	**Contextualising the descriptions vis-à-vis NPO collaboration**	**The overarching themes of power through ideas**
The agency-orientation of this understanding.	Show how ideas of collaboration can be adaptable.	**Relating to issues**
Enable them to communicate and deliberate about taking action collectively to change their institutions.	Creates a sense of agency around collaboration.	
Invoking 'common sense' images.	Resonate with other actors (policy makers/NPOs/beneficiaries/wider public).	
Persuading other agents about one's understanding of an issue.	Promote / persuade that collaboration is a good idea in relation to given issues.	
Persuasiveness dependent upon the extent to which they are able to demonstrate its appropriateness in terms of the values of a given community.	Persuasive elements that encourage acceptance / adoption ideas.	**Relating to contexts**
Vagueness or ambiguity makes for discursive success, as different parties to the discussion can interpret the ideas differently.	Introduce NPO collaboration in a way that is vague and allows for local / contextual interpretation.	
This means mass expectations about how the economy should work.	Appeal to perceived knowledge of actors creating a sense of how things should work e.g. tightening the purse strings at times of fiscal constraint.	
Emphasises actors' ability to 'stand outside' and critically engage with the ideas they hold and promote.	Link ideas to the principles of NPOs.	

Influence on what is considered 'common knowledge'.	Illustrate the mutual value of collaboration to enhance its acceptability as common knowledge or a common response to organising.	**Relating to agency**
Generally accessible narrative about the causes of current problems and what needs to be done to remedy them that resonate with the public.	Set out how collaboration can solve problems.	
Engage in a 'coordinative' discourse of ideational generation and contestation…respond to critiques from competing coalitions and sustain the legitimacy of existing institutions.	Build potential coalitions of actors around evolving ideas of collaboration	

Figure 3 - Characterising power through ideas as relational power through ideas



3.2.3. Power over ideas

Power over ideas highlights more radical attempts to influence and is concerned with the way that meaning is controlled (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016; Gillard, 2016; Berkovich & Benoliel, 2020). Power over ideas observes how ideas control meaning through domination, imposition or by shaming others to influence conformity. According to Carstensen and Schmidt (2016), it addresses how elites, as well as less powerful actors, shame others into adopting their ideas or by the way actors resist and challenge ideas. Thus, power over ideas sees attempts to control what is considered legitimate and doable

(or not). It reflects the political means by which ideas are ignored, promoted at the expense of others or where ideas of collaboration are overlooked or criticised.

This appears as a political approach in the sense that it resonates with the conception of political power reflected in traditional forms of control to generate compliance or to challenge or constrain salient ideas through power relations (Lewis, 2008; Hardiman and Metinsoy, 2019). Here for example, Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) point to the way public communication shapes meaning and limits other possibilities. As well as highlighting the closer proximity of policy actors' access to, or relationship with the media, it also serves to underline the capacity that policy actors have in producing documents that promote a given agenda. In such instances, policy papers wield certain messages and reflect hierarchy in whose ideas should be privileged (Halliday, 1985). In the context of NPOs, this is supported by Alcock (2010, p.6) who posits "*not all discourses are of equal importance or impact. Those of powerful interests speak more loudly, and perhaps more articulately, than others*". In such instances, NPOs' own views of collaboration would be silenced, with a sense of compliance expected as a means to serve the interest(s) of policy actors.

A further aspect of power over ideas suggests that attitudes are shaped through an emphasis on conflict in relationships as a way of creating pressure to dominate, constrain or control (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016; Hardiman & Metinsoy, 2019). This is relevant to those with less access to traditional forms of power. In such instances, actors may aim to raise awareness through ideas that shift practice by shaming more powerful actors through social or rights-based movements (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Risse et al., 1999). This is considered to be particularly important in times of crisis where actors battle for authority (Hall, 1993). This shows the way that certain actors may align to form a coalition or cluster around an idea to demonstrate its significance to a wider audience (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016; Gillard, 2016). For collaboration, this invites an exploration into the ways that NPROs, who have arguably less power, attempt to challenge policy actors' apparent dominance over NPOs through collaboration.

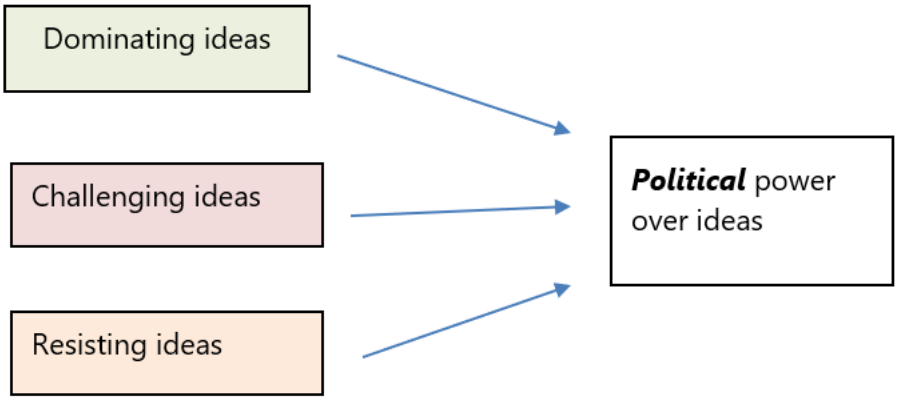
Finally, power over ideas reflects a more general sense of meaning to exercise control, in the way actors ignore or resist efforts to influence change. Gillard (2016) for example, illustrates this by showing how the Treasury, along with media outlets, cast doubt on the

government's capacity to operate as a climate change leader in times of austerity, thus limiting the government's role in climate change. As highlighted through Chapter Two, outside of periods of crisis, NPOs have faced similar dominance. The focus on neoliberal agendas concerned with efficacy and quality, mapping and modifying the organisational and operational trajectory for organisations such as NPOs through language and meaning (Clarke & Newman, 1997). NPOs were 'shamed 'in the sense that 'a new public management discourse' (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p.164) framed a perceived lack of professionalism, coordination or quality.

Table 4 - Relating the delineated descriptions of power over ideas to the discursive constructions of NPO collaboration

Description of power over ideas (taken from Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016, pp. 326-328)	**Contextualising the descriptions vis-à-vis NPO collaboration**	**The overarching themes of power over ideas**
Capacity of actors to control and dominate the meaning of ideas.	Point to actors' attempts to control or dominate the meaning of collaboration.	**Dominating ideas**
Reflect institutional structures who can [...] promote their own ideas to the exclusion of all others.	Reflect on how institutional structures and access allow the promotion of certain idea of collaboration.	
Set the parameters for what action is considered doable.	Set parameters or conditions around collaboration.	
The power to impose their ideas.	Impose ideas of collaboration.	
A competing coalition of policy actors is able to challenge the authority of an epistemic community.	Challenge ideas of collaboration.	**Challenging ideas**
Advocacy networks [...] who employ shaming tactics that raise consciousness.	How do relatively powerless organisations shame other actors.	
Capacity to resist by setting out alternative ideas.	Resist ideas of collaboration.	**Resisting ideas**

Figure 4 - Characterising power over ideas as political power over ideas



3.2.4. Power in ideas

The final form of power proposed by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016, p.329) points to *"the authority certain ideas enjoy in structuring thought at the expense of others' ideas [...] constituted by systems of knowledge, discursive practices and institutional setups"*. Power in ideas is said to reflect structures and established roles of actors that are recognisable throughout society (Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016; Gillard, 2016). In essence, power in ideas reflects the guiding assumptions that are associated with historical meaning making systems. In this way, power in ideas can be seen to guide the allocation of resources in ways that reflect preferences, guiding actors to shape and cyclically reinforce identities (Howarth, 2009).

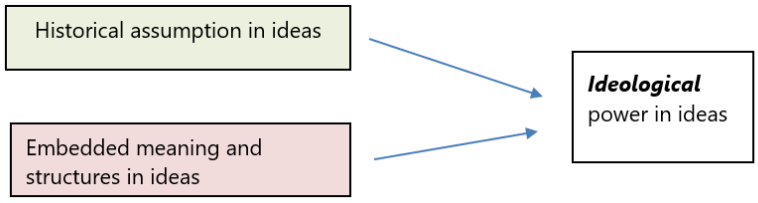
Power in ideas is seen by some as quiet power, more nuanced than political power over ideas (Hardiman and Metinsoy, 2019). Gillard's (2016) research highlighting the discursive construction of climate change, he stresses the significance of power in ideas, explaining how the concept aligned with the economic crisis and austerity agendas reflected in expectations of fiscal restraint. As such, the guiding ideology, though not expressly articulated, responded to short-term economic priorities rather than long-term investment to address climate change. Such deeply held principles are reminiscent of ideological approaches, in so much as they reflect deeply held beliefs. Such values guide decisions around the allocation of resources as well as the capacity to veto ideas in a way that limits question or challenge (Gillard, 2016). Reflecting this, power in ideas becomes

ideological power, constraining what is possible based on deeply ingrained expectations in context.

Table 5 - Relating the delineated descriptions of power in ideas to the discursive constructions of NPO collaboration

Description of power through ideas (taken from Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016, pp. 323-326)	**Contextualising the descriptions vis-à-vis NPO collaboration**	**The overarching themes of power through ideas**
Emphasize how fundamental and historically specific structures of meaning.	Reflect ideas of collaboration based on historical relationships and understanding.	**Historical relationships and assumptions**
Are connected to the dominance of certain traditions, philosophies and ways of thinking [hegemony].	How do ideas in the text reflect hegemonic assumptions around collaboration.	
[Ideas] recede into the background, meaning that they become so accepted that their very existence may be forgotten [...] structure [...]thoughts about society.	Suggest that collaboration is assumed; an idea so acceptable it recedes into the background.	**Embedded meaning and structures**
Structuring thought at the expense of other ideas.	Assume what is considered viable or reasonable in ideas of collaboration.	
Usually develop slowly in an evolutionary manner through incremental steps via adaptation and adjustment to changing realities.	Ideas that reflect the evolutionary nature of collaboration.	
The employment of public philosophies (Schmidt, 2008) or public sentiments (Campbell 1998).	Locate collaboration as an idea that is recognisable to both elites and the mass public.	

Figure 5 - Characterising power in ideas as ideological power in ideas



3.3. Chapter summary

The closing sections of the chapter have shown how the concept of DI, specifically Carstensen and Schmidt's three forms of ideational power, are rendered practically useful, making it possible to locate the representation of ideational power in documents. Hence, power through ideas becomes relational power through ideas. Power over ideas becomes political power over ideas and power in ideas becomes ideological power in ideas. The descriptions of the three forms of ideational power have been teased out and detailed to support an exploration and evaluation that can provide cues about how they construct the nature and purpose of collaboration. As such my framework is designed to address gaps in knowledge outlined by Bell (2011) by rendering the theoretical concept practically useful.

The frame created above is applied to explore the ways ideas are represented and extended over time. It is used in this thesis to explore the discursive role they play; the ideas that are successful and those that are overlooked. The development of the conceptual lens forms the basis of a framework that can help guide insight into the construction of NPO collaboration. The evolution of the concept forms an integral and novel discursive approach to elicit how relational, political and ideological power and ideas in DI are represented in the constitution of NPO collaboration. The subsequent methodology chapter adopts the concept and explains how the framework created is empirically applied through documentary analysis (Scott, 1990; Khandelwal and Mohendra, 2010) in this thesis. Through the discursive application of the concept, the thesis adds nuanced insight around the historical evolution of collaboration; the interplay of ideas and the overlooked contribution of NPROs.

The chapter has illustrated how the theories which are brought together in Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) conceptual lens create a platform from which the exchange of ideas between policy and NPROs can be explored. This approach distinguishes this study from

others which have explored NPO collaboration given the focus not only on how policy constructs NPO collaboration but through a conceptual lens that takes an holistic approach focusing on less powerful actors. In the case of this thesis, this focus sits with NPROs. It has created empirical clarity to the theoretical understanding of power and ideas in DI by extending the concept and making it empirically useful informing the development of a methodological framework in section 4.5. The subsequent chapter sets out a methodology that aligns with, and extends the theory presented in this chapter. It frames a way of exploring the perspectives and contributions of different agents - policy and NPROs to explain how they project their ideas of collaboration. By looking more closely at the interplay of ideas, gradual change and the ways in which actors set cues for collaboration, it seeks to illuminate aspects of discourse that would otherwise remain unseen (Widmaier, 2015). Consequently, the framework is used to open the black box of NPO collaboration.

Chapter 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the chapter is to set out a methodology that aligns with, and extends the theory presented in the previous chapter and the context for collaboration as set out in Chapter Two. The methodology crafted responds to gaps in literature, specifically in the way it renders Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) power and ideas in DI (discursive institutionalism) a useable framework to interrogate how the prevailing notion of collaboration amongst NPOs as common-sense is temporally constructed. It extends knowledge through a methodology that underpins a granular and recursive exploration of documents from policy makers and NPRO bodies, the mediators and moderators of collaboration, a dimension that tends to be overlooked in the literature. The sections are set out in the overview of the research, illustrated in Table 2. This summarises the choices made; the philosophical underpinnings of the research, the theoretical commitments, the discursive methods and related credentials that support the approach adopted.

4.1. The research questions

As highlighted, the research questions below were used to guide the research to create new understanding around how collaboration is constructed in documents.

- RQ 1: How can the concept of DI be empirically applied to understand the evolution of NPO collaboration?
- RQ 2: How is NPO collaboration presented in policy documents over time and how does this change temporally?
- RQ 3: How do NPROs discursively construct collaboration in their own documents?

Table 6 - Overview of the research methodology, adapted from Crotty (1998, p. 5)

Ontology	Epistemology	Theoretical Lens	Methodology	Methods
Constructionist	Meaning is fluid and constructs reality is constructed in institutional contexts	Discursive Institutionalism	Discursive analysis	Interpretive methods / Documentary analysis
Collaboration is a practice that is out there and engaged in by NPOs. There are real effects and associated with collaboration for NPOs. e.g., Funding programmes, policy goals; Lewis, 1999; Carmel and Harlock, 2008; Buckingham 2009; Milbourne & Murray, 2017	Social aspects of institutions inform ideas and meaning. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) Social Systems influence and can alter the tacit rules of engagement. (Gergen & Gergen, 2008)	Highlights the constant, dynamic interplay between organisations in institutional contexts (Ostrom, 1990, Schmidt, 2010) Institutional life is mapped out through ideas (Hardy et al., 2004) Discursive approaches consider deliberation and persuasion an important prelude to action (Schmidt, 2008) Language and communication shed light on meaning to reveal underlying perspectives. (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2003).	Draws on: Historical Discourse analysis (Jóhannesson, 2010) Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 1993; 1997; Fairclough, 2001, 2003; Taylor, 2007) Layered historical interplay of ideas highlight the course for change and stasis (Coule & Bennett, 2018)	Credible and authentic – documents contain ideas that represent meaning and influence the orientation of collaboration at macro level (Scott, 1990) Textual exhibits tell a story and illustrate richness (Gephart, 1993) Intertextuality - how other documents reflect the context and convey messages. (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004) Documents are designed to 'do' something (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

Corresponding with the research questions, the methodology was designed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of empirical data, in the case of this research policy and NPROs documents, to allow the discourses driving collaboration at a societal level to emerge. The research design employed an interpretive strategy which took the power carrying capacity of ideas seriously (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). In other words, what is presented in texts is explored in detail to uncover meaning. In the context of the thesis,

the less evident aspects of text the ideas that construct meaning relating to NPO collaboration. The study intentionally focused on documents produced by policy and NPROs at the macro or societal level. In other words, documents in the public domain, produced by policy makers, taken in the thesis as the Conservative and Labour and parties (as well as the Liberal Democrat party as part of the 2010 -2105 coalition government) and NPROs (as opposed to documents from NPOs at an organisational level). Documents play a crucial part of successfully communicating how collaboration should be enacted. Some scholars argue that documents are carefully crafted and created to 'do' something (Bryman and Bell, 2015). To interrogate the way collaboration between NPOs is oriented at a societal level, the methodology uses documents as a primary material to undertake empirical research. Data is taken from 47 documents, consisting of some 2294 pages of text. These are published by policy makers and NPROs over a 22-year period starting in 1997 and concluding with manifestos from the most recent UK election in 2019. A summary and rationale for their inclusion are set out later in the chapter (see Table 8 & Table 9).

By interrogating documents, the research reflects ideas that construct collaboration and in doing so, considers the implications of NPO collaboration. This leads to an important conjuncture where the chapter addresses the ontological and epistemological orientation of the thesis. Notably, the methodological choices were not employed in order to seek or make 'truth' claims. Rather, an in-depth interpretative approach allowed an historical exploration of policy ideas and the subsequent consideration of their potential effects and implications for NPOs. As such, they are designed to consider and explicate the discourses presented in them (Gephart, 1993). This accepts that there is a reality - collaboration driven by contracts for example (Carmel & Harlock, 2008). However, this study addresses and traces the ways in which institutional organisations persuade, resist or assume certain ideas of collaboration.

The research design extends knowledge in three distinct ways. Firstly, by reflecting a temporal picture of the ideas that drive collaboration at a national level. Secondly, in setting out the nuanced and complex nature of collaboration. Thirdly, having rendered Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) concept empirically useful, it is used in the thesis to explore how certain ideas of collaboration prevail and others are overridden.

Consequently, the methodology illuminates how, in a discursive sense, NPO collaboration is framed and evolves. In essence, how ideas shape action overtime.

4.2. Philosophical assumptions in the research.

The philosophical or meta theoretical underpinnings of research are central components of the research strategy, highlighting the commitments that guided the development and application of the methodology (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Gill and Johnson, 2010; Saunders et al., 2012). The ontological position reflects the political and social realities of the phenomenon being explored (Hay, 2006). Burrell and Morgan (1979) contend that the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions directly influence the methodological nature of research. Some scholars (Crotty, 1998; Johnson & Duberly, 2000) stress the significance of what we know about the reality of organisational phenomenon (ontology) and how we know or understand the social world (epistemology). Accordingly, this section locates the ontological and epistemological commitments that contextualise this research and the subsequent claims of knowledge developed through the study.

From an ontological perspective, the study acknowledges and accepts that the reality of collaboration exists beyond the minds of those who shape the nature of action. As the literature in Chapter Three posits, collaboration is an organisational practice that is participated in and experienced by NPOs. Moreover, the impetus to collaborate has real implications for NPOs in terms of access to funding and financial resources (Lewis, 1999; Carmel & Harlock, 2008; Milbourne & Murray, 2011). Whilst not looking at the practice of collaboration itself, the intersubjective nature of ideas that construct how and for what purpose collaboration should be enacted, matter. Hence, the reality of collaboration has consequences for NPOs.

Concurrently, if collaboration matters, then the ideas that shape collaboration matter, the underpinning ways that collaboration is discursively constructed and the interplay of ideas that shape action are of prime interest, given their potential for real consequences. The way that collaboration is constructed however, is subjective. Some scholars argue that institutional contexts or structures are a social system that construct meaning (Giddens, 1984; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). As illustrated through literature in Chapter Two, NPROs and policymakers form part of such an institutional system. The interplay

between their ideas in an institutional context are mutually constitutive, reflecting social structures that have agency – the capacity to shape action (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Seo & Creed, 2002). Documents represent the ideas from the perspective of multiple organisations and are crafted to set out intended ideas that signal how collaboration should be enacted. In other words, the practice of collaboration is framed by ideas that are constructed between actors. This aligns with an epistemological perspective that is subjective that emphasises the importance of the construction of ideas that shape meaning (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, the orientation of this thesis reflects the interest in the ideas that shape the meaning of collaboration. Specifically, how they are publicly communicated in an institutional context, who they represent, how they orient collaboration and how they evolve.

My own role in the construction of this thesis is another important aspect of the philosophy. Decisions have been made as to what is included and what is not included in the research, the organisations whose ideas are reflected and those who are not. The subjectivity of both the researcher and those whose words are represented in documents, are an important dimension that reflect beliefs (Gill & Johnson, 2010). For Charmez (2006), the inductive constructivist perspective sees the researcher as important, shaping what they see making and limiting neutrality. My position is therefore congruent with the orientation of the research. The subjectivity of myself and those whose words are represented in documents, are an important dimension that reflect beliefs (Gill & Johnson, 2010). I was not neutral or detached from the search for meaning in ideas. The development of the research from the initial proposal to the exploration of interplay between theory and data is part of this process. This recognises the role of theory in shaping my relationship with data and conceptual knowledge (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Therefore, the study does not claim to make generalisable claims about the nature of collaboration. Rather it presents a rich collage, drawn from recursive engagement with language and aligned with theory to explore how language forms pillars of meaning (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

4.3. Research approach and strategy

The research draws on constructionist approaches compatible with the research questions. It is concerned with exploring how ideas of collaboration are shaped or

constructed and communicated through documents at a societal level. The term 'social construction' draws on the seminal work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) and highlights the unconscious link between thinking, meaning and action (Cooley, 1902; Hughes, 1936). For some scholars (Gergen & Gergen, 2007), meaning may change but nonetheless inform 'the rules of the game' (p.463). This considers institutional contexts as fundamental realms that inform consciousness around social action (Crotty, 1998). This posits that institutional contexts are much more than subjective human constructs, rather that they shape thoughts and practice.

The central assumption in the thesis is that social phenomena and meaning are not static but are constantly constructed by actors - shaped and reinterpreted through ideas. In the context of this research, the assumption is taken that ideas construct collaboration in documents and shape the nature and purpose of action. Hence, documents are considered important artefacts that inform the meaning behind action. The policy environment can be conceptualised as a social phenomenon in so much that narratives and stories are constructed and presented to simplify complex problems and create unity in developing solutions to these problems (Hajer,1995; Eleveld, 2012). Accordingly, the way that collaboration is constructed in documents changes, or reinforces the foundations of practice based on specific priorities and situations being addressed at a given point in time.

As such, an inductive approach is taken (Saunders et al., 2016). This aligns with the essence of the research questions, to shed light on how collaboration becomes a widely assumed way of organising between NPOs. This approach is conducive with theory building in two interrelated ways**.** New insight is developed by exploring how ideas of collaboration evolve over time in an institutional context and by creating a unique framework that empirically operationalises power and ideas in DI. Thus, research is designed to create a new perspective through institutional intentions, the constructs intended to shape how NPO collaboration should be enacted.

Given the preoccupation with how ideas shape meaning and sensemaking, a discursive orientation seemed fitting. Discursive methodologies are compatible with the philosophical commitments of the research set out so far in the chapter, given the focus around the intertwined nature of meaning and power in an institutional context

(Hafner- Burton & Schneider, 2017) and the construction of language to influence social phenomena (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Tonkis and Skelcher, 2015). Moreover, they consider how ideas of collaboration become legitimate to *"identify the involvement of the individuals and groups at stake, how they have become normalised in the discourse, and how they take certain assumptions for granted"* (Jóhannesson, 2010, p.261). For scholars interested in the way organisations consider a phenomenon, a discursive perspective provides a means to illuminate the mental constructs that shape practice through social strategies (Van Dyjck, 1993; Gee, Michaels & O'Connor, 2007; Jóhannesson, 2010). Discursive approaches do more than merely describe what is said and to whom rather, their aim is to explain why certain phenomena, such as collaboration, becomes widely accepted and practiced (Crespy, 2015).

The importance of context in meaning making systems is a precondition of discursive approaches that cannot be overlooked (Fairclough, 1995). Schmidt (2008) considers the complex historic and social interaction within documents and this thesis therefore acknowledges these dimensions through the dynamic interplay of ideas in documents; the messages intended for consumption in an institutional environment (Hardy, 2011). Related to this perspective, an inductive research approach emphasises the significance of documents as humanly constructed artefacts. The study situates documents as one site that represents policy and NPRO's ideas vis-à-vis these intentions. In other words, the ideas that manifest as text, images and language in documents, are seen as important features that orient NPO collaboration. Through the discursive approach taken, it is possible to highlight fine-grained detail that represents the messy interplay of ideas, creating a trail that reflects their evolution. Therefore, the construction of documents is suited to an inductive approach to interrogate how the intentions, set out in documents, informs collaboration.

Moreover, and as discussed in detail through Chapter Three, Carstensen and Schmidt's power and ideas in DI (2016) is a useful, though underutilised lens through which to gain insight into the ideas that shape action. An inductive approach allows this thesis to extend DI theory making it practically relevant through iterative and reflexive engagement (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). It draws on discursive methodologies (as discussed in section 4.3.2) in an interpretivist research design (Prasad, 2002). Though more readily associated with quantitative research, Hardy et al. (2004) argue that

reliability in discursive research should be taken in the interpretive element associated with constructivist approaches. This recognises the importance of following academic norms - the ideas, insights and experience of other researchers whilst allowing for the possibility of other interpretations of data.

In practice, this involved moving between theory and data to consider the discursive construction of collaboration, whilst simultaneously developing, and subsequently applying a conceptual framework based on the characteristics of power and ideas in DI. The approach was less rigid and therefore allowed flexibility in the research (Thomas & James, 2006). This was important given the iterative nature of the research project. Consequently, the research refines insight (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicolson et al., 2018), specifically into the construction of collaboration in documents and by elaborating Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) theoretical concept.

4.3.1. Addressing rigour

Qualitative approaches can fall prey to criticism that they lack the rigour associated with quantitative research; limited in terms of the context and lacking the scope to generalise the claims made (Symon & Cassell, 1998; Gray, 2014). The next section sets out how this research tackles such critique, demonstrating how issues associated with rigour are addressed in this research.

In qualitative research the notion of rigour and verification is problematic (de Ruyter & Scholl, 1998; Healy & Perry, 2000; Morse et al., 2002). This research supports the view that qualitative research cannot be judged by such criteria. Indeed, the approaches acknowledge the multiple perspectives and ideas that are reflexive or fluid - the paradigm rejects reality as fixed. Lincoln and Guba (1986) argue that the qualitative researcher can mitigate criticism and create confidence in the trustworthiness of their research through a close relationship between thick description and explanation in the interpretation. Many qualitative researchers build on the work of Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Hoepfl (1997) to demonstrate trustworthiness by justifying their methods alongside the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In this research, the trustworthy nature of the research diverges slightly by incorporating them into a criterion that are more congruent with the discursive approach adopted. This is

addressed by following the lead of Hardy et al. (2004), who pose a series of criteria by which discursive interpretivist research can demonstrate rigour.

The discursive approach adopted emphasises the importance of meaning, how, in documents, ideas are presented at certain points in time that construct the meaning of NPO collaboration. Lammers (2011) relates to the importance of meaning systems that intentionally and unintentionally communicate enduring messages in institutional contexts. Meaning is significant in this thesis in the way that ideas in documents create the pillars that construct collaboration, discursively orienting its nature and purpose. Simultaneously, the context and wider societal issues that influence the construction of collaboration are also an important facet of meaning in the way the responsibility for action is ascribed to NPOs or the impetus to act at particular points in time.

Another element that underpins the importance of meaning is the way that ideas evolve and overlap (Kern & Howlett, 2009; Skogstad, 2011). This shows how meaning is created and adapts over time emphasising social interplay through reading, writing, and responding to documents. Finally, meaning is important in discursive analysis as it also reflects the researcher's own interpretation in this socially constructed process. All of these factors shape and influence the 'precarious nature of meaning' (Hardy et al., 2004, p.20). As such, they are aligned with the commitments, exemplified through the research approach set out throughout this chapter and demonstrate the integrity within the paradigm of this research.

To summarise, the approach advocated supports an iterative exploration between theory and empirical data. This facilitates the perspective of the study into how policy ideas frame collaboration, adding a further dimension that details the role of NPROs and elaborating a theoretical construct to extend these rich fields of study. By interrogating how ideas of collaboration are discursively presented in documents, the meaning making of subsystems in an institutional context in texts is set out. In reflecting these discursive acts, the research accounts for the inter-relationship between this institutional system and the construction of collaboration. This is set out in the previous chapter that highlights the mutuality between structure and agency (Giddens, 1984); how collaboration shapes and orients NPOs and in turn, policy or institutional priorities related to NPO collaboration through meaning in documents.

4.3.2. Discursive documentary analysis

Undertaking discursive research via documentary analysis (DA) in this thesis is attributed to several key events described below and reflects the iterative, inductive and reflexive approach. The decision was made not to pursue field research following two presentations at conferences that encouraged further engagement with NPROs documents (often only given scant attention in research). When the initial research proposal was presented at a Voluntary Sector Studies Conference (2016), it was suggested by colleagues in the field that, as well as looking at how policy makers framed collaboration, it might be equally useful to understand the views of NPROs themselves through their documents. In particular, one researcher at the conference pointed out that the ACEVO had produced their own manifesto (Free Society, 2015) to influence policy makers orientation to the sector, shortly before the 2015 general election.

At a similar time, Gazley and Guo's (2015, 2020) commentary on collaboration between NPOs in their systematic literature review suggested that there was rich detail around the organisational experiences of collaboration between NPOs. The publication of this paper and the comments from peers in this field of study shaped a route into the discursive construction of NPO collaboration in national documents. Whilst developing the research proposal, I decided to conduct the study from a macro (societal) perspective. I had strong ties with various NPOs through previous work. The decision to undertake a study of national documents rather than a micro (organisational) level, may have led to issues of bias given my experience and proximity to the sector. Hence, this decision to focus the study only at the macro level avoided issues associated with fieldwork (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016).

Essentially, the methodology is borne out of reflexivity, the decision to use documents as primary data reflecting Glaser and Strauss' (1967) strategy that researchers should consider the practical utility and the serendipitous inclusion of data, which deviates from initial research plans. This is an important aspect, orienting the methodology; the researcher's decision making, and role was central to create and layer insight by incrementally developing theory from the data (Gill, Johnson & Clarke, 2010, p.165; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Johnson & Duberley, 2000). The issue of reflexivity relates to the integrity of this research. Indeed, Hardy et al. (2004) consider this as integral to discursive research; the researcher themselves forming a central part of the construction

of meaning. This explains my orientation and choices in undertaking the research. I have made clear a lack of neutrality and apriori experience in the field of non-profits. In relation to sensitivity, care has been taken to reflect a range of perspectives and not to privilege particular groups' ideas over and above others where possible. Nonetheless, as has been acknowledged, my interpretations and role in revealing the meaning of documents are significant, though countered and checked through engagement with peers at conferences and in supervision.

Documentary research provides what Jacklin-Jarvis and Potter (2020, p.1387) describe as "building blocks" in understanding the construction of collaboration at a societal level. This created a level of insight that was new to this researcher and a strong fit responding to the gaps in literature highlighted in the conclusion of Chapter Two. Further, the approach aligned with the conceptual approach as discussed in Chapter Three, exploring the discursive construction of collaboration in the institutional context illustrated in Chapter Two. Data collection involved searching for and selecting the documents for the analysis. Scott (1990) proposes criteria that argues documentary research should include authentic, credible, representative and meaningful data. Addressing the authenticity of the documents, all the texts used in this study are widely available national documents in the public realm. As such, they represent the intentions and ideas of relevant institutional organisations vis-à-vis collaboration between NPOs. Specifically, they are authentic in the sense that they are produced, published and publicly available documents (and websites) by known and formal bodies.

The decision to use documents as empirical material was an important factor in allowing scrutiny into ideas at a macro level which would otherwise not be possible, given the exclusive nature of policy development (Gillard, 2016). Ideas are driven by policy agendas or issues in society and affect change (Blyth, 2001 & Hall , 1993). As discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.2, ideas influence because they have different meanings to different actors (Beland & Cox, 2016; Jenson, 2010). Documents provide an interesting and accessible means to critically explore the proactive ways in which ideas are exhibited, that renders them rich and meaningful (Gephart, 1993). This supports this research in that it is less concerned with what is accomplished as a result of the documents, but rather is interested in exploring the intentions that are expressed within documents.

For many social scientists, documents tend to be overlooked (Ritchie et al., 2013) despite being rich sources of data. Hakim (1983) argues that the notion of documents as 'secondary' material neglects their potential to glean new and original insight into institutional phenomena. This research takes the lead from Prior (2012, p.173), challenging the notion that documents are "*passive, inert sources of information*". Indeed, in this research, documents are considered active in the sense that they construct or shape social action, *"written to get something done and as such are parts of chains of action that are potential research topics in their own right"*, significant *"in terms of the parts they play in organisations and elsewhere"* (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.569). Prior (2008, p.230) notes with surprise that documents seem to be an overlooked, though valuable sources of data "*It is worth noting that Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, in their renowned description of grounded theory, considered documents on a par with an anthropologist's informant or a sociologist's interviewee*". So, documents matter in organisational research as important artefacts designed to influence action. This research, like May (1997) and Coffey (2014), takes documents as a reflection of the layers of meaning which inform social practices in institutional environments, allowing access in situations when it would be impossible for a researcher to be physically present.

As well as being rich sources of data, documents also play a valuable role in exploring different discursive institutional perspectives. Another of Scott's (1990) criterion for documentary analysis argues that the texts should be representative and meaningful. The documents selected meet these criteria in the sense that a range of key policy and NPRO documents were included and demonstrate differing perspectives and meaning of collaboration between NPOs. To reiterate the point made in Chapter One policy makers and NPRO bodies are considered to comprise numerous constituent parts. In terms of the discursive artefacts that orient collaboration, they provide a source from which one can explore the interconnected nature of ideas (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; Lammers, 2011).

As previously discussed (1.5), the documents of three specific NPROs are studied in the thesis. Each was selected because of their differing traditions and apparent attitudes towards NPO collaboration. In turn, this provided insights into a range of perspectives. Both the process and choices around selection were consistent with the reflexive commitments of the thesis, responding to the input, insights and expertise of others

whose work focused on non-profits. Coule and Bennett (2018), Alcock (2016) and 6 and Leat (1997) are relevant examples of scholars who consider the influence of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) as an organisation that is not wholly independent, working both with and against the state's agenda. As well as their support for collaboration, the NCVO is key in catalysing greater engagement between the state and sector, funding and engineering the state sector relationships following publication of the Wolfenden (1978) and Deakin (1996) reports (6 and Leat, 1997). Hence, the NCVO is an important organisation to include in a study focusing on the construction of collaboration at a societal level.

Similarly, the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) had also been cited by Alcock (2016) who considered their approach, like the NCVO's, to be broadly supportive of New Labour's Partnership agenda. The decision to include the ACEVO was further cemented via an interaction that followed the progression of this thesis, whereby a colleague asserted that they were closely aligned with the state, and that their views were considered to be congruent with those of the state. This assumption was underpinned by issues such as Stephen Bubb's (then CEO of the ACEVO) secondment to a forum focusing on the future of the NHS (Mason, 2011), again reflecting the intersecting role of some NPROs with the state. Such interdependencies and relationships not only piqued my interest, but also emphasised the limited empirical focus on the ACEVO's and NCVO's ideas vis a vis collaboration.

The final organisation whose documents were selected for analysis was the National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA). The NCIA was introduced to me, at a voluntary sector conference in 2016, by a researcher whose work focused on the non-profit sector. The researcher in question pointed out that the NCIA had taken an explicit stance against collaboration, suggesting it was a way of drawing NPOs closer to the state's agenda around the devolution of welfare. The organisation's broad aim of retaining an independent non-profit sector therefore was seen as offering the opportunity to look at the ideas that were out in the public arena, standing in contrast to the position of the NCVO and the ACEVO. These choices and the rationale for inclusion are summarised in Table 7 on the following page.

Table 7 - Description of NPROs in the study

NPRO	Organisation description	Rationale for selection
The Association for Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO)	Seek to inspire and support civil society leaders by providing connections, advocacy and skills. Members include the leaders of small, community-based groups, ambitious medium-sized organisations and well known, national and international non-profits (The ACEVO, About us, 2022).	Not wholly independent of the state, working both with and against the state's agenda (Coule and Bennett, 2018). Considered to be broadly welcoming of the partnership agenda (Alcock, 2016).
The National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA)	In operation between 2010 and 2015. Responded to changes in voluntary action, concerned that business practices and bureaucratic cultures were taking the place of principled and political purpose, collective action and community needs. Emphasised the historic job of holding the state to account. Intended to encourage community groups, voluntary services and umbrella groups to resist their incorporation into the state's agenda and emasculation (Adapted from the NCIA, legacy website, 2022)	Purpose of the NCIA highlighted at a voluntary sector conference. Congruent with their role, the NCIA explicitly resisted collaboration as a way of drawing NPOs closer to the state's agenda / devolution of welfare. Aimed to retain an independent non-profit sector. Present an alternative perspective to the NCVO and ACEVO's ideas of collaboration.
The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)	Aim to create a collective impact across the country, for stronger communities. Champion the unique role of charities and volunteers, speaking up and supporting one another to make a bigger difference. Represent over 17,000 voluntary organisations, charities, community groups and social enterprises across England (Adapted from the NCVO, About us, 2022).	Like the ACEVO, not wholly independent of the state, working both with and against the state's agenda (Coule and Bennett, 2018) Key in catalysing greater engagement between the state and sector, engineering the relationship that evolved from the Wolfenden (1978) and Deakin (1996) reports (6 and Leat, 1997).

In extant research, discursive approaches are applied through DA in a number of ways. To explore conflict resolution (Freidman, 2017), in disability studies (Jóhannesson, 2010), the evolution of educational policy (Taylor, 2003), political ideology (Pearce, 2014) and changes in environmental policy (Gillard, 2016). More closely aligned with the approach of this thesis, Coule and Bennett (2018) explore the close proximity of change and stasis in NPOs by comparing the discursive ideas that are framed by the Wolfenden (1978) and Deakin Reports (1996).

4.3.3. Document selection process

To enable an exploration of how the meaning of collaboration evolves in an institutional context, national documents were selected from the period spanning the election of New Labour in 1997 and concluding with the general election of 2019. These are considered vehicles that reflect the ideas constructing collaboration. As highlighted in Chapter Two (section 2.5), the start of this period corresponds with what has been described as a hyperactive policy environment, marked by the mainstreaming of NPOs through partnership (Kendall, 2009; Alcock, 2010). However, those discussing the context at this time do not go into a level of detail about the construction of collaboration across a range of policy and NPO documents. This was an apt point at which to start a detailed discursive study of the temporal construction of collaboration, given the overt efforts of the policy context to promote a discourse of partnership prior to and following the general election of 1997.

The study concludes with the general election of 2019. This allowed the analysis to explore documents presenting the role of NPOs as part of wider society in the wake of a protracted period of turbulence following the financial crisis and fallout from Brexit. Additionally, the focus on NPRO documents allowed in depth insight to chronicle their ideas on collaboration through response to election manifestos and the documents cited above. By attending to the use of language, I was able to determine how more recent documents constructed collaboration, given its ongoing significance in responding to societal problems (Guo & Gazley, 2020). The full list of documents represented in the study are set out in Table 8 and Table 9.

Given that documents represent meaning (Scott, 1990), documents are carefully crafted to convey a particular message at a given point in time (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004;

Pearce, 2014). The choice to use documents as data was congruent with the theoretical lens, facilitating a way of exploring the discursive construction of ideas in documents vis-à-vis the institutional context they were published in (Fairclough, 1989, 2003; Van Dijck, 1997). Hence, the documents adopted in this study are therefore considered a faithful representation of the discursive intent of actors. In other words, the ideas that reflect collaboration are not merely surface ideas but reflect deeply held beliefs about how action should be enacted.

As well as facilitating the temporal evolution of collaboration in NPOs between 1997-2019, documents were also relevant and accessible sources of data to explore the perspectives of NPROs. Alvesson et al. (2008) argue that it is important to reflect the voices of a range of actors in organisational research, not to privilege one over another. The inclusion of three NPRO, the ACEVO, NCIA and NCVO alongside the two key political parties in the UK over the period of the study (with the inclusion of some Coalition Government documents), allowed insight into a multitude of different ideas constructing collaboration.

In terms of the credibility of documents, the researcher needs to be aware of the context in which the documents were produced. This is important, as explained above, to explore goals in relation to temporal effects of policy where external environmental factors, such as financial constraints influenced a change (Taylor, 2001). This related to the core job of Chapter Two, highlighting the relationship between the state and non-profit sector as the context for collaboration. To reiterate, the meaning of documents is of prime significance in this study. As highlighted in the section above, data is not explored in terms of a literal reading and interpretation. Rather, it focuses on the deeper meaning and interplay of different ideas in context and over time. Fairclough (2013) argues that policy texts are inextricably linked to the evolution of common understanding that becomes embedded in everyday practice, such as collaboration amongst NPOs.

The broader the range of documents considered, the wider the scope from which to explore and understand the overarching ideas shaping collaboration. The documents selected in the study include election manifestos and Green and White papers from policy makers in the UK, represented in this study by the Conservative and Labour parties (and to some extent the Liberal Democrat party, given their role as part of the

2010-2015 Coalition government). Such documents indicate the intentions towards the non-profit sector as well detailing the ideas that frame how collaboration is anticipated to be enacted.

Related to this, the first documents selected for analysis were election manifestos. This responded to a lack of research that specifically mapped policy intentions towards the sector and collaboration at the start of election campaigns. These were selected as a source to undertake an initial scoping exercise in the early stages of the study. As well as material to frame a given political party's intentions, they were linked to election cycles, providing a scaffold at specific points in time that framed the evolution of collaboration. Given that election manifestos provide critical cues to policy intentions, they were important artefacts to create the context for collaboration, signalling the intentions and transitions of policy makers to the sector at regular intervals over the course of the study. Hence, they were selected for inclusion to demarcate the construction of collaboration at specific points in time.

Here, Pearce (2014) highlights the value of manifestos as a source of data,

> *Election manifestos will inevitably refer to the various groups of social actors involved in these power relations, in particular the political party producing the manifesto and the members of the public who are often represented as the potential beneficiaries of the proposed political actions of those parties* (Pearce, 2014, p.27).

Though focused explicitly on the ideological orientation of political parties, Pearce argues that the ripple of what is set out in documents has wider meaning and implications that frame future action.

As well as providing useful junctures that illustrated policy intentions and transitions, these periods often saw corresponding documents being published by NPROs. The focus on NPROs discourses is a unique aspect of empirical data that illustrates the tensions that prevail in NPROs vis-à-vis the construction of NPO collaboration. A series of documents from three NPROs (see Table 9) are interrogated to explore how they respond to challenge or support policy discourses of collaboration. The significance of ACEVO's function for example, in shaping NPO practice and policy is described on their website in 2019:

> *Through our policy work, we represent our members' interests in key areas of importance to the third sector and our members' work - and together we offer a decisive voice that shapes the agenda on the ground, at the local level and in concert with national media and government* (ACEVO, 2019).

The ACEVO along with the NCVO have a role as conduits or subsystems within an institutional context. This is an important facet of their role**,** the transfer of ideas between NPOs and policymakers. Given their prominence, they were significant in terms of understanding how they constructed collaboration, the extent to which their ideas could be seen to legitimise policy commitments or reflect the views of less powerful NPOs through their documents. This related to their role as described in Chapter Two (section 2.7).

Also noteworthy, is the inclusion of the National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA). Unlike the ACEVO AND NCVO, this representative group took an overt stance against collaboration, arguing that NPOs should remain independent of the state. Therefore, documents from this representative group present an interesting perspective relevant to the analysis, reflecting a more overt stance against NPO collaboration than was evident in documents produced by the ACEVO and NCVO. Therefore, the NICA, along with the ACEVO and NCVO represents a significant inclusion that supports this thesis in making it meaningful by addressing the limited attention and tendency to homogenise representative bodies in the extant literature.

In addition to documents, the data analysis also includes web-based blogs from public bodies. Such forums were utilised towards the latter eras. This allowed the inclusion of more current perspectives, allowing the inclusion NPROs perspectives around the time of post 2015 election campaigns. This reflects the increasing use of such mediums over the period that the study of collaboration relates to and allows the study to capture NPOs' ideas towards the end of the period of this study, where hastily arranged elections, limited budgets and a rapidly shifting policy environment may have limited the sector's capacity to produce extensive documents. It was therefore considered appropriate to include these other genres in this section of the analysis.

This was important towards the final stages of the period considered in the analysis, supporting Scott's (1990) assertion that documentary data should meet representative

and meaningful criteria. This a fast paced and evolving policy landscape, with three general elections taking place between 2015 - 2019. Finally, the documents are representative and meaningful in relation to the longitudinal aspect of the research. Using documents produced between 1997-2019 affords a sense of the evolutionary construction of collaboration from multiple perspectives.

Not all the materials highlighted were included in the final analysis. Some were interesting, for example a keynote speech given by the Duke of Cambridge at the 2018 Annual General Meeting of the Charity Commission, and a series of papers published by New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), an organisation orientating the role of NPOs based on the ideas of funders. Whilst this data was fascinating, the documents were considered to articulate one person's perspective, in this case of the Duke of Cambridge, and the views of funders (NPC) rather than bodies specifically representing NPOs. Consequently, they were not included in the final analysis.

The documents explored and included are considered extensive in terms of the temporal aspect of the study and documents included and representative, in terms of the range of policy and NPROs considered. They are therefore a useful resource to articulate the discourses in sufficient depth and rich detail, to support the study and be congruent with the research questions stated in section 4.1. Through an exploratory discursive approach, certain points in time are suspended to highlight the discursive representation of the ideas and attitudes which prevail in a particular era. Therefore, the methodological approach is useful in its capacity to illuminate the ideas of collaboration that can diffuse organisational practice over time and from the perspectives of different institutional representatives.

Table 8 - The rationale and selection of policy documents in the study

Document owner	Total number of pages	Date of public-cation	Publisher / type	Theme /rationale for inclusion in the study
The Conservative Party The Labour Party	982 (Combined total)	1997 2001 2005 2010 2015 2017 2019	Manifestos	-Context setting -Framing the broad intentions of collaboration amongst NPOs vis-à-vis the ideas of other institutional organisations.

The Labour Party	6	1997	Building the future together, Labour's policies for partnership between government and the voluntary sector	-Signalling the Labour Party's intentions towards NPOs -Presenting the importance of partnership -Catalysing new expectations of collaboration in NPOs
Home Office	11	1998	The Compact	-Setting out the terms of collaboration / the relationship between NPOs and policy makers.
HM Treasury	52	2002	The role of the voluntary and community sector in service delivery; a cross cutting review	-Developed by policy makers with participation from the ACEVO, NCVO and large NPOs, including the Red Cross. -Locates ideas of collaboration aligned to investments. -Associated with the 'Future Builders' project -Develops consensus around cost effective collaboration.
The Labour Party	135	2006	Local Government White Paper Strong and prosperous communities Vol 1&2	-Focus on health and wellbeing at a local level. NPOs are expected to reach out to vulnerable communities to co-operate to meet targets by proactively working together to engage with vulnerable and socially excluded groups.
The Labour Party Cabinet Office- Office of the Third Sector	15	2007	Social Enterprise and social innovation: Strategies for the next 10 years	-Introducing market-like forms of collaboration such as social franchising. -Collaboration framed to test, refine and share.
The Conservative Party	86	2008	Stronger society, Voluntary actions in the 21st Century	-Sets out the Conservatives' intentions for NPOs. -Suggests scope for fragmented organisations such as NPOs to come together to solve complex societal problems. -Frames market like ideas of collaboration.

The Labour Party Communities and Local Government	145	2008	Communities in control, real people, real power	-Devolving power to communities. -Tasks NPOs with responsibility to draw citizens closer to the policy agendas. Argues for greater sustainability and accountability through collaboration in local strategic partnerships.
The Charity Commission	26	2009	Choosing to collaborate: Mergers and Collaboration	-Concerned with forms and due diligence around collaboration. -Timing of the document is significant indicating the likelihood of increased collaboration following the financial crisis.
HM Government	14	2010	The Compact	-A refresh of the Compact. -Signals a greater focus on the role of NPOs getting citizens more engaged and involved in the communities around them. -Symbolic indication of devolved responsibility and expectation of greater independence in society.
The Coalition Government	3	2010	Building the Big Society	-Short document promoting independence and collective action in society. -Infers that collaboration is integral to the sustainability of services.
The Coalition Government	58	2011	Open Public Services	-Sets out plans to deliver better public services with less money. -Promotes devolved services, increased responsibility in communities and collaboration through shared services / spaces.
The Coalition government	74	2014	The Lobbying act	-Positions the importance of service delivery above campaigning. -Inference guides collaboration towards the latter rather than the former through unspoken

				assumptions that NPOs are silenced by the act.
The Conservative Party	123	123	The Conservatives Civil Society Strategy: building a future that works for everyone	-Reminiscent of the Big Society. -Promotes individual and collective responsibility to create a more independent society. -NPOs assumed to collaborate as part of this. -Government takes little responsibility for action indicating NPOs will step in (and may need to collaborate) where needs are unmet.
The Labour Party	13	2019	From Paternalism to Participation Putting civil society at the heart of national renewal	-Setting out the Labour party's strategy for working with NPOs. -Welcomes collaboration as activism associated with investing in communities to deliver services. -Supports the role of NPOs in delivering services digitally. -Reflects the importance of collaboration with other NPOs.

Table 9 - The rationale and selection of NPRO documents included in the study

NPRO	Total number of pages	Date of public-cation	Document title	Theme /rationale for inclusion in the study
The ACEVO	87	2003	Replacing the state	-Argues that NPOs can play a more significant role in delivering services. -Sees collaboration as an important aspect within the state and amongst NPOs. -Draws on the historical relationship with the state -Sets out a series of case examples to justify the argument.
The NCVO	120	2004	Voluntary Action; meeting the challenges of	-Emphasising the role of NPOs. -Challenges policy framed by a concern that the unique nature / independence is being diluted through collaboration.

			the 21st Century	
The ACEVO	19	2006	Choice and Voice	-Taken from a presentation from Stephen Bubb (Then CEO of ACEVO). -Argues that NPOs are well placed to be part of pluralistic service provision. -Lobbies for a greater role for NPOs. -Introduces the idea of collaboration as co-production, working more closely within communities to create a more independent society.
The NCVO	46	2004 re-published 2008	Standing apart, working together A study of the myths and realities of voluntary sector independence	-Responds to the Compact and emphasising the importance of and independent sector and the right to challenge policy. -Re surfaced to highlights growing concern that the sector is losing its independence through collaboration.
Davies / The NCIA	3	2011	For insurgency; the case against partnership	-Part of an academic paper published on the NCIA legacy website. -Sets out an explicit argument against collaboration between NPOs. -Suggests NPOs are passive and colluding with policy agendas.
The NCVO	50	2012	Open Public Services; experiences from the voluntary sector	-Responds to the Coalition governments Open Public Services paper of 2010. Reflects the ideas of the Beveridge Report of 1942. -Raises concern that the way policy makers work with NPOs is not addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. -Indicates that collaboration works best when it enables new and innovative forms of collaboration and is more responsive to the ideas of NPOs.
Water-house & Scott The NCIA	45	2013	Here we stand; inquiry into local activism and dissent	-Promotes activism as a response to perceptions of injustice in society. -Frames the potential for NPOs to influence institutional change through collaboration.

The ACEVO	65	2014	Real local change: how charity and social enterprise alliances can transform public service delivery	-Provides examples of cost efficiency and improved quality of services through collaboration.
The ACEVO	62	2015	Free Society	-Highlights key messages for the incoming government through this manifesto -Frames the sector as the UKs "*life support machine*" (p.4) -Argues the case for collaboration as a strategic partner with NPOs playing a key role in consortia
The NCVO	24	2016	Voluntary sector consortia; Stronger together?	-Reviews the factors of success in collaboration as consortia. -Questions the sustainability of this form of collaboration vis-à-vis issues of relationships, resources, expertise and time. -Represents collaboration in its aim to unify the sector and challenge the lobby act
The NCVO	29	2019	A review of the Voluntary Sectors Operating Environment; The Road Ahead	-Considers the trends that influence the nature and purpose of the sector. -Anticipates a greater role for the sector and for collaboration to run places /spaces to meet, be together and engage both in situ and online.
Neate / The ACEVO	1	2019	Election blog	-Written by Polly Neate (CBE of Shelter). -Raises concern about the potential for large NPOs to dominate in collaboration. -Appeals to smaller NPOs to be open to working with larger NPOs that are open to mutual learning.

4.4. An overview of the analysis

Having selected documents, a means to empirically explore them needed to be developed. This occurred through oscillation between theories and the data (Hardy et al.,

2004), a recursive analysis that was iterative and nonlinear in nature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The second aspect of Hardy et al.'s (2004) approach to rigour locates the importance of categories. In content analysis, meaning is taken for granted as stable, drawn from precise analytical procedures that can be applied, replicated and generalised (Silverman, 2001). In discursive approaches however, analysis is couched in how meaning is constructed in data and theory. The section below highlights how this research, guided by the research questions, organised emerging categories of the ideas constructing collaboration. This is a central tenet; the result of an oscillating approach aligned with the inductive commitments of the thesis. Through four strands of analysis detailed in the section below, empirical categories relating to the evolution of collaboration vis-à-vis the DI framework (outlined in section 4.5) are surfaced.

Following this, the next section details these strands or steps of analysis that moved back and forth between the data, theory and the conceptual lens of DI. Four recursive strands draw on discursive documentary analysis to elicit the elements of the text that characterise collaboration over five distinct political eras. It highlights the first step of analysis, to become familiar with and gain a sense of the overarching purpose of each document. Steps two and three worked to highlight and then detail how the documents constructed collaboration. The fourth of these strands, introduced later in the study, adopts the framework created, that operationalised the theoretical concept of DI. This was developed and applied later in the research process through close engagement with and delineation of Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) concept of power and ideas in DI. Having delineated and framed each form of power (see Chapter Three section 3.2), the task was to explore ideas and illuminate what relational, political and ideological power 'do' in a discursive sense, to shape collaboration between NPOs within the eras proposed. The sections below, summarised in Table 10 on the following page, details the purpose of these strands of analysis, how they were undertaken and how they relate to each other.

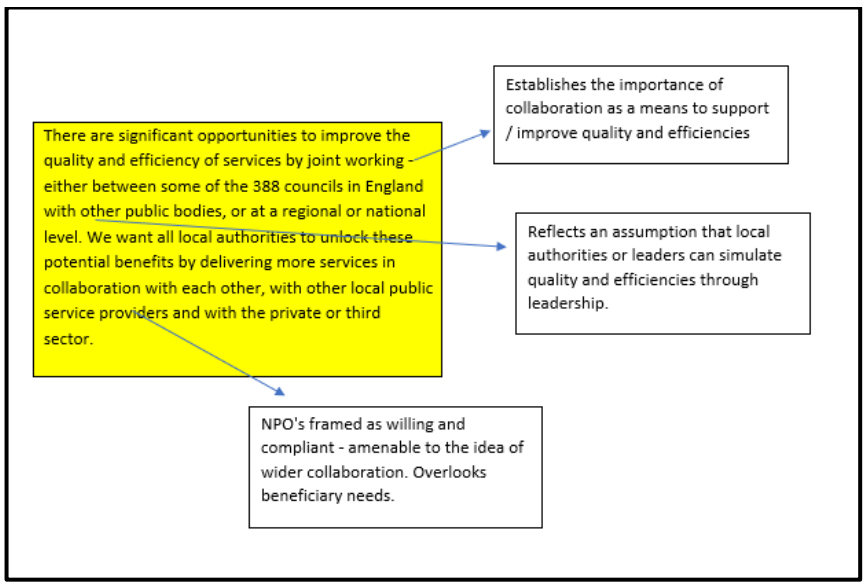
Table 10 - Recursive strands of data analysis

	Strand 1: Initial reading of documents (Jóhannesson, 2010).	**Strand 2: reading and annotating documents. (Jóhannesson, 2010)**	**Strand 3: Using discursive framework (developed from Fairclough, 2001 O'Connor, 2013).**	**Strand 4: Application of DI framework**
Purpose	**Familiarity** engaging with the key messages to gain a sense of the overarching aims of documents.	**Identifying key content** relevant to collaboration between NPOs. Disregarding aspects of documents irrelevant to the study.	**Guided reading and collection of text** to sharpen the focus - understanding of the roles organisations are anticipated to play and gathering metaphors shaping collaboration.	**Highlighting the forms of ideational power**, reflecting how these were apparent in the text.
Process	Reading the documents, discounting documents not relevant for the study.	Using the research questions to guide reading, note making highlighting or eliminating segments of tex.t	Reading and notetaking guided by initial discursive framework. Creating a timeline of the construction of collaboration.	Using the DI framework to support reading. Collating segments of text, detailing how they mapped to the three forms of ideational power Creating a timeline vis a vis of relational, political and ideological power in ideas drawn from documents *For NPRO documents only, framing their overmatching characterises in constructing collaboration vis a vis the three forms of power.
Relationship to previous strands of analysis.		Developing understanding of the how the document frames collaboration in the context of the relationship between institutional subsystems. Noting similarities and differences over time.	-Initial characterisations of discursive eras. -Detailing the ideas constructing collaboration. -Detailing changes / overlap	-Applied to data collated in strand three. Creating a nuanced picture to develop and demarcate the different eras vis a vis power and ideas in DI -Considering how actors ideas reflected the form of ideational power.

The first of these involved becoming familiar with the broad purpose of each document, gaining a sense of the overarching aims and orientation. Through this, it was possible to glean a general sense of the intended audience, what was said in relation to the broad historical context at the time that each document was published, together with the people and organisations that a given document focused on. This stage of the process drew particularly on the work of Jóhannesson (2010) who argues that discourse analysis should simply start with the reading and familiarisation of the content and context of documents. In doing so, it was possible to gain an initial understanding of what was being said to gain a sense of the importance, emphasis and orientation of NPO collaboration.

Whilst still intended to allow the researcher to become more familiar with what was being said about collaboration amongst NPOs, the second strand or iteration of analysis allowed a more detailed consideration of aspects of the documents concerned with ideas of collaboration. Encouraged by Jóhanneson (2010) and guided by the research questions, this facilitated insight into overarching context and allowed sections of the text that were not relevant to the study to be discounted. Initially this second reading of the text involved highlighting elements of interest in the texts relating to NPO collaboration as shown in the example of Figure 6.

Figure 6 - Analytical extract from Labour's Local Government White Paper, 2006, p.137



This drew attention to notable elements of the text; what changed over time or between, the extent to which collaboration was couched as positive, or where a differing or more

cautious view was presented. The extracts highlighted in Figure 7 & Figure 8 show a notable change in how ACEVO construct collaboration in their manifesto, Free Society, published ahead of the 2015 general election and their 2019 pre-election blog. In the first example illustrated in Figure 7, the ACEVO apparently legitimise ideas of collaboration by couching them in market like terms associated with neoliberalism. Conversely, their pre-election blog in Figure 8 of 2019 demonstrates a less characteristic critique of collaboration, framing issues associated with the dominance of larger NPOs and commissioning bodies. Through the blog, they argue that collaboration is not be a panacea for NPO practice and warn that continued domination by larger NPOs will have long term implications affecting the diversity of the sector.

Figure 7 - Extract from discursive analysis, strand 2-part a: ACEVO Free Society, 2015

The paper is produced ahead of the general election to influences policy intentions towards the sector. Free society links to / alludes to the notion of the Big Society – a play on words in support of Conservative vision? Argues that NPOs can play a more significant and wider role in service delivery. Frames the potential for collaborative commissioning and alliance contracting (p.12) specifically to support the development of collaborative consortia. Commoditises collaborative union "conduct research on the nature of alliances and consortia - and the conditions under which such alliances become investible with a view to wholesaling the market in these ideas" p.15. This reflects a strong association with a neoliberal / marketised ideology. Collaboration is framed as a way to scale where projects are worthy of investment. However, there is little concern with needs / the nuanced role of smaller NPOs. Seems to focus on homogeneity. ACEVO also highlights community ownership – NPOs running / owning spaces and services. Adapting the purpose and function of NPOs to manage and runs well as deliver services. Would rely on collaboration and likely involve NPIOs at c community level. Makes links to legitimise the ACEVO through its links with the office for civil society (OCS) and the Cabinet Office (p.16). Linking ACEVO to policy makers demonstrating proximity to policy makers rather than reflecting NPOs and their beneficiaries. Consortia are also seen as a way of responding to societal problems "As part of this extension it should initiate a 'consortia first programme' encouraging councils to work with group of collaborating third sector organisations on complex issues of importance who have come together or who wish to come together to deliver on complex services" (p.25). Collaboration and NPOs are couched as needing to respond therefore mitigating the role of the state in addressing the structural causes leading to issues.

Figure 8 - Extract from discursive analysis, strand 2-part b: ACEVO, from competition to collaboration: what is the role of larger charities rebalancing the relationship.

Concerned with addressing the "spirit of partnership" in the context of a competitive environment. This acknowledges rather than overlooks the issues. It particularly urges larger NPOs to seek to improve the way they work with smaller NPOs. Pointing out the apparent "privileges" experienced by larger NPOs, it promotes the important role of smaller charities warning that by dominating in collaboration, larger NPOs make the sector less unique and diminish the role and bespoke nature of smaller NPOs. It also highlights that wining tenders is problematic, that it stands to stifle the bespoke nature and services of smaller NPOs faming them as "living, breathing organisations". This also argues that such orgdationsns are "unlikely to win a tender". It also challenges the role of NPOs, amalgamated with others as "service providers" suggesting the term homogenises NPOs and is reductive in terms of limiting expertise and specialist knowledge. The sentiments of this blog seem to further the importance of independent and small NPOs, warning larger organisations and by association and challenging straightforward view of collaboration that diminishes the bespoke nature of smaller NPOs. It highlights and holds up the value of individual organisations effectively turning away from ACEVEOs dominant support of collaboration as a way to play a bigger role / work at scale in service delivery.

As part of this approach, the third strand or iteration of the analysis built on the texts selected and captured from the documents, adopting a more structured discursive approach. Shown in the example of Table 11, this involved a further reading of the text extracted from documents guided by the use of an initial discursive framework to help detail particular aspects of the text that focused on NPO collaboration amongst NPOs. The reading of policy documents was led by research question 1. To recap.

- RQ 2: How is NPO collaboration between presented in policy documents over time and how does this change temporally?

and NPROs' documents were led by research question 2.

- RQ 3: How do NPROs shape collaboration through their own documents?

In this strand of analysis, it was key to understand the meaning of the texts (Fairclough, 2001; Taylor, 2007; Gillard 2016); in other words what the language in documents was 'doing' in a discursive sense to influence collaboration between NPOs over time. This involved highlighting and capturing segments of text to surface the meaning in terms of

the roles assigned for actors or the metaphors employed to construct how and for what purpose collaboration should be enacted. From this stage, a collection of extracts from documents that responded to the framework emerged.

This iteration of analysis sharpened the focus of documents. It allowed the researcher to locate the purpose of collaboration, the meaning making content (Gillard, 2016) in a given document. Specifically, this revealed the roles assigned in organisations, where elements reflected a sense of hierarchy between NPOs and other organisations or actors. Also included in the frame were metaphors, establishing aspects of what Schmidt (2010) describes as communicative discourse, providing insight into the underpinning sense of different perspectives in relation to collaboration. Finally, what was ignored or unspoken was significant, a common example being where beneficiaries' needs were overlooked (see Table 11). This was intended to unpack the overarching orientation of a given group of policy or NPROs towards NPO collaboration, highlighting what their expectations were in relation to others.

At this stage of the analysis, the DI framework had not been fully developed. However, the third strand of analysis generated more focused insight that responded to the questions posed in the initial discursive framework and thus refined insight from the data. Each document was carefully explored, the notes generated, and segments of text forming an important foundation for subsequent interpretive analysis using the DI model. Hence, tabulating sections of the text or copying pictures that appeared in the documents was the first stage of interrogate how the text was moulding NPO collaboration.

In this way, by interpreting the text alongside the discursive framework, and by clustering the analysis of documents over time, a sense of clarity emerged; insight into the guiding ideas that shaped collaboration. This strand of analysis illuminated how ideas of collaboration emerged across the election cycles between 1997-2019. This played a role in capturing and recording the temporal evolution of collaboration.

Table 11 - An example / extract of the initial discursive framework

Framework	Examples from the document	Interpretive commentary
Description of the discursive context (setting, reflecting public ideas, sentiments, and priorities of the time)		-The Labour Party Paper on Partnership (1997) -Published ahead of the 1997 election. -Signals the intention to emphasise the role of NPOs. -NPOs to play a greater role in service delivery. -Work more closely with policy. -Policy makers as the architects / leaders of change.
What role is cast for policy makers?	*The responsibility of government in nurturing a vibrant and creative voluntary sector (p.2)* *Building a partnership through which Government and the Voluntary Sector can tackle the task of making Britain a caring, efficient pleasant place to live (p.3)* *In government we wish to develop a consensus that will work (p.3)*	-Parental role for policy makers. -Policy makers leading partnership, incorporating neoliberal priorities. -Policy makers create consensus through collaboration, homogeneity rather than individual needs.
What role is cast for NPOs	*The detail of the national compact in partnership and consultation with the voluntary sector [...] with the practical details worked through at departmental level and in each agency of Government* *(p.3)*	-To work with policy/ government departments to consult on the practical nature of developing partnerships.
How are metaphors used to orient action/ collaboration?	*Define the healthiest relationship between the government and voluntary sector (p.1)* *The responsibility of government in nurturing a vibrant and creative voluntary sector (p.2)*	-Notion of a healthy relationship and Labour Party able to nurture /set the tone for collaboration with the sector. -Suggests a parental guiding role for policy makers shaping 'childlike' NPOs. -Introduces ideas of 'problem and solutions, efficiency and impact.
What is missing or absent in the text?	*"For the many not the few"* (p.2)	-No focus on the implications for the independence of the sector. -Lacks consideration of individual beneficiary needs/ bespoke nature of NPOs -Potential to limit the creativity or bespoke services of some NPOs.

4.5. Analytical process – using the DI framework

Towards the end of the third stage of analysis, the DI framework described in Chapter Three (section 3.2) was marshalled into a framework to support the next stage of analysis. This was subsequently applied to the refined data that had been drawn from the documents to explore and reveal how ideational power related to and helped to explain the evolution of NPO collaboration. This fourth strand of analysis responded to RQ1:

- How can the concept of DI be empirically applied to understand the evolution of NPO collaboration?

As discussed in depth throughout Chapter Three, power and ideas in DI presented a potentially useful lens, however, there was little to guide researchers interested in the concept about how this abstract theory could be applied to data. In response to the critique of DI (Bell, 2012) that argues it is theoretically interesting but empirically unexplored, the researcher created a framework to detail and delineate the forms or themes of relational, political and ideological power and ideas in DI. The conclusion of Chapter Three (section 3.2) showed how the three forms of power were renamed and delineated to reflect the essence of each more clearly, thus creating a sense of how they shape meaning. The framework incorporated the renamed forms of power, elaborated to more clearly articulate and emphasise Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) description of each form.

The attributes of each were compiled into the framework below. The outcome of this process resulted in the creation of a further discursive framework using the forms of power (see Table 12). This was used in conjunction with segments of text extracted from documents in the first iteration of discursive analysis (Table 11). Through this, the researcher was able to interrogate the data and decipher which form of power most closely resonated with what was expressed in relation to collaboration. Therefore, it was possible to reveal what the forms of power were 'doing' discursively to persuade, dominate or make assumptions about collaboration between NPOs and thus shape or challenge organisational practice.

This final strand of analysis facilitated a granular exploration of the data and consider how patterns or themes in the text related to the forms of ideational power were reflected

in ideas of collaboration. The forms of relational, political and ideological power and ideas in DI were mapped out in the framework. The questions posed in the framework were read and reviewed alongside segments of the text, extracted from documents in the previous strand of analysis, to surface the forms of ideational power. Notes were made that highlighted what the sections of text 'did' in relation to the form of power in the way they presented and constructed ideas of collaboration.

Table 12 - Framework empirically operationalising power and ideas in DI in the study

Relational power through ideas **Igniting, promoting and persuading; How do ideas in the text facilitate change in collaboration?**	***Political power over ideas*** **Dominating, shaming and blaming; How do ideas in the text indicate attempts to dominate collaboration?**	***Ideological power in ideas*** **Common-sense collaboration: How do ideas in the text demonstrate hegemonic or historical assumptions that influence collaboration?**
What does the document 'do' to? Show how ideas of collaboration can be adaptable. Create a sense of agency around collaboration. Resonate with other actors (Policy makers/NPOs/beneficiaries/wider public). Promote / persuade that collaboration as a good idea in relation to given issues. Reflect persuasive elements that encourage acceptance / adoption ideas. Introduce NPO collaboration in a way that is vague and allows for local / contextual interpretation Appeal to perceived knowledge of actors creating a sense of how things should work e.g. tightening the purse strings at times of fiscal constraint. Link ideas to the principles of NPOs. Illustrate the mutual value of collaboration to enhance its acceptability as common knowledge or a common response to organising. Set out how collaboration can solve problems. Build potential coalitions of actors around evolving ideas of collaboration	**What does the document 'do' to?** Point to actors' attempts to control or dominate the meaning of collaboration. Reflect on how institutional structures and access allow the promotion of certain idea of collaboration. Set parameters or conditions around collaboration. Impose ideas of collaboration. Challenge ideas of collaboration Show how relatively powerless organisations shame other actors. Resist ideas of collaboration.	**What does the document 'do' to?** Reflect ideas of collaboration based on historical relationships and understanding. Reflect hegemonic assumptions around collaboration. Suggest that collaboration is assumed; an idea so acceptable it recedes into the background. Assume what is considered viable or reasonable in ideas of collaboration. Ideas that reflect the evolutionary nature of collaboration. Locate collaboration as an idea that is recognisable to both elites and the mass public.

This last strand of analysis added further detail around the data, building on the scaffold developed from reading the documents in conjunction with the initial discursive framework. In this final iteration of analysis, sections of the documents were reread alongside the DI framework to reveal the nuances of ideational power in the construction of collaboration. Here, the data was compiled into tables, highlighting how meaning in language reflected the three forms of ideational power. In other words, sorting aspects of language in the documents that reflected elements of relational, political or ideological power in ideas.

Through this part of the analysis, ideas in documents were categorised and tabulated. Through the table, extracts of text were scrutinised and interpreted. The interpretations were noted, detailing how elements of language reflected a specific form of power. Tables chronicling this process were populated in categories that reflected the three forms of power. In some cases, as can be seem in the examples shown in Table 13, Table 14 & Table 15, the data resonated with more than one form of power. Where possible the extracts of text were attributed to the form of ideational power they most closely resonated with. However, this was not always possible as is indicated in the example in Table 14. This illustrated the overlapping nature of the three forms which are presented as being distinct by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016).

NPRO documents were subjected to a further iteration of analysis using the DI framework. Initially grouped and recorded historically like policy documents, the analysis revealed tendencies for certain forms of power to be more prevalent in certain organisations documents. The NCIA were a particular example, their ideas often reflecting a strong association with political power over ideas. This was not to claim that the NCIA's or the other NPRO's documents only resonated with a specific form of power. Rather that they resonated with one form of power more often than others. This unexpected element of the analysis was discussed in supervision. From this, I decided to organise the data from NPRO documents differently, viewing individual NPROs through the lens of a specific form of ideational power. Hence the NCVO were considered through the lens of relational power through ideas. The NCIA as described above through the lens of political power over ideas and the ACEVO through the lens of ideational power in ideas.

The categories of relational, political and ideological power and ideas in DI were used as a basis to frame the subsequent empirical discussions in Chapters Five and Six. This iterative, interpretive approach added depth to reveal the dynamic, discursive construction of collaboration in documents, and the way that ideational power reflects the nuances and agency of NPROs. Consequently, this added detail to inform the characterisation of collaboration over time using data from policy documents and how NPROs reflects a specific form of ideational power. This work forms the basis for the discussions Chapters Five and Six to reveal the dynamic and multifaceted ways that NPO collaboration is discursively constructed at a macro level.

Table 13 - Applying Relational Power through ideas to the text 1997 - 2001

Relational power in ideas; examples from the text:	**Constructs collaboration between NPOs by:**
Introducing a one nation society (Labour, 1997, p.1)	-Introducing the idea of collaboration on couched in a sense of collective endeavour. -Setting out a simplistic tone that reflects a sense of a shared agenda.
We have already demonstrated our commitment to such a process by asking voluntary organisations throughout Britain to join in setting Labour's agenda (Labour, 1997a, p.3)	-Emphasising the important role NPOs are expected to play. -Creating a sense of anticipation within and between NPOs -Inviting NPOs to consider their own priorities vis a vis Labour's agenda. -Creating a sense of agency and potential action.
We are keen to encourage a variety of forms of partnership and enterprise, spreading ownership (Labour, 1997b, p.16)	-Creating a sense that collaboration in various forms will be adaptable. -Allowing NPOs to imagine the ways they might enact collaboration. - Promoting collaboration as a positive idea

Table 14 - Applying Political Power over ideas to the text 1997-2001

Political power over ideas; examples from the text:	**Constructs collaboration by:**
But there is something else too. I value those aspects of our national life which are bigger than individuals and families. That is why we will nurture our towns and cities, our countryside, our local institutions, our charities, our democracy - for they make us who we are as a nation. This meddling and interfering Government is eroding our freedoms as well as weakening the institutions that give us a sense of common purpose" (Conservatives, 2001, p.1).	-Shaming / dismissing the Labours party's interest in collaboration. -Reflecting assumptions about the role of the state limiting shared purpose / collaboration.
Our aim must be to build a new partnership using the sector's strengths to challenge and stimulate new ideas, complement our shared objectives and take forward the development of social policy generally. This partnership is about fresh ways of thinking through the role and structure of government and the voluntary sector and the way we deliver public services (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002, p.3).	-Situating collaboration as achievable and supporting the institutional promotion of collaboration. -Language use of "must" indicates imperative nature of collaboration.
And now, following on from this report, the Government's Strategy Unit, taking on the work of the Performance and Innovation Unit, will shortly be publishing proposals on the legal and regulatory framework for charities and the Regional Co-ordination Unit will publish its study of access to regeneration funding. This report provides a template for how government and the sector should work together – we need to implement the Compact, get the funding relationship right and build capacity in the sector (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002, p.3).	-Setting out terms and conditions (parameters) for collaboration. -Relatedly setting out the state's dominance in directing the formalities of collaboration.
Knapp and his colleagues considered a list of potentially distinctive features of the sector, including: • the provision of different/specialised services. • cost-effectiveness of provision. • flexibility and innovation. • advocacy; and • citizen participation [...] Some hold that there are services – especially those to vulnerable or hard to reach groups – that the VCS is especially better placed to deliver than either the State or the market. And others go even further and claim that the VCS's ability to bring special skills and experience to service delivery – to bring its own	-Appealing to peer recognition, the text in this section also refers to the work demonstrating the importance of collaboration. -Reflects on how institutional structures and access allow the promotion of certain ideas through the inclusion of scholarly accounts to legitimise collaboration.

unique "added value" – make it the presumed provider of all public services. (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002p.15) *(see also ideological power in ideas)*.	
High quality schemes that exemplify good practice, encourage partnership working and replicate success will be candidates for funding (Labour, / HM Treasury, 2002, p.32.	-Policy makers setting out / pointing to the conditions for collaboration.
The current infrastructure has developed piecemeal and, while some parts of the sector are well served, the overall coverage is variable in quality and fragile. There are significant gaps in networks and some duplication. There is further scope for collaborative working between organisations. (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002, p.20).	Employ shaming tactics in the sense that the sector is not operating at a consistent standard. Discursively dominating through the assumption and imposing collaboration to support a form of quality control.

Table 15 - Applying Ideological Power in ideas to the text - The ACEVO

Example of text constructing collaboration (ACEVO, 2006, p.7).	**Interpretive analysis in iteration with the DI framework.**
Many of the advances in child care, mental health and disability services have been developed in sector organisations. *Harnessing the talent for networking, flexibility and different approaches and ideas is a core strength of the sector.*	Steeped in similar assumptions that emphasise the role of NPOs as an extension of the state. Reflecting the historical role played by NPOs as part of specialist provision. Asserts the sector's position as part of a wider institutional structure. Capitalising on the notion that NPOs have unique, specialist insight. Networking is located as a deep-rooted feature of the sector. Camouflages collaboration as an expected part of NPOs' character.

4.6. Ethics

There are a range of ethical issues to consider in any social research. These are important in the thesis despite the public availability of the data used for analysis. Each of these areas is set out below, addressing issues such as researcher bias and to satisfy the University's ethics requirements, demonstrated in the University's ethical approval of the study in Appendix D.

Documents can be grouped according to their public or private nature. Duffy (2005) cautions that some documents may be private and hence not intended for public debate or discussion. Conversely, Largan & Morris (2019, p.125) suggest that documents, such as those included in this study, are 'fair game'. This regards documents as material open for exploration and analysis, available in the public domain, open to debate and interpretation. The documents explored in this study fall into the latter category. Developed for the purpose of informing action, they are arguably produced to guide organisations including NPOs, their volunteers, funders and beneficiaries. As such, they provide a useful, insightful, relevant and appropriate source of data, open for interrogation to reveal the nuanced ways that documents shape the nature and purpose of collaboration amongst NPOs.

This researcher's own capacity for bias is also acknowledged, addressing my own role in planning and disseminating the empirical aspects of the thesis (Cassell, 2005). The choice of research focus is unquestionably fuelled by personal experience of working and collaborating within and amongst NPOs. Undoubtedly, this experience led to assumptions about the role of policy vis-à-vis the sector. The proximity to the research area, along with my experience of both positive and negative aspects of collaboration were part of the initial catalyst to explore the phenomenon.

There are many benefits of founding research methods in archived material from the public domain. These include avoiding issues or assumptions from experience or the power dynamics that can arise in field-based research projects: for example, the potential for participants to react in response to the researcher (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Henn et al., 2009). I have highlighted the experience brought to the research from several years working within the non-profit sector. In part, and as is explained in section 1.1, this contributed to the rationale in locating the study at a societal rather than organisational level. Indeed, not only has this avoided the issue of bias towards particular organisations or data which may have resonated with my personal experience, but it has also allowed me to extend my research repertoire. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that both the elaboration of theory and the data analysis are guided by extant insight and are subject to my own world view.

4.7. Chapter summary

The aim of the chapter was to set out the research methodology employed to fill gaps in the literature, extending what is known about the construction of collaboration at a societal level. The discursive approach crafted within the methodology is designed to unpack how collaboration is constructed. In order to elicit how through documents, institutional organisations persuade, dominate and assume how collaboration should be enacted, the DI framework created in Chapter Three is made practically useful as part of the methodological approach. Thus, theory is made practically useful.

The inductive and qualitative research strategy presented facilitates deep insight that allows the research to elaborate on and extend what is known about collaboration. The research method, a discursive, granular exploration of documents, is discussed and justified. This positions the research as a valid, suitable and trustworthy approach to developing knowledge around the construction of collaboration over time at a societal level.

The succeeding chapter follows these traditions, detailing the findings from exploration and analysis. Through the frame of relational, political and ideological power in ideas, the analysis sets out a chronological account that draws on policy ideas in Chapter Five. Chapter Six takes a different approach, using the framework to explore each form of power in depth in relation to separate NPROs. Hence, the NCVOs ideas are set out through the lens of relational power through ideas, the NCIA through the lens of political power over ideas and the ACEVO through the lens of ideological power in ideas. In summary, the goal is to follow the methods set out to explain how policy documents construct ideas of collaboration in documents and to show how NPROs respond through their own documents.

Chapter 5 POLICY DOCUMENTS AND THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF NPO COLLABORATION

The first of two empirical chapters, this chapter adopts the methods set out in the previous chapter to undertake a detailed and critical exploration of the discourses that emerge through policy documents. The analysis presented here goes beyond a surface reading of documents to set out how ideas shape the nature and purpose of collaboration. Rather this is a detailed discursive analysis of documents. Empirical data is drawn from an analysis using the framework created and presented in the methodology (Chapter Four, section 4.5). It illuminates how policy ideas reflect the three forms of power; relational (power through ideas); political (power over ideas) and ideological (power in ideas). The analysis interrogates the relationship between the forms of power proposed by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) to illustrate how they construct and frame the nature and purpose of inter-organisational collaboration between NPOs.

5.1. Introduction

The chapter therefore spans the time from the general election of 1997 and concludes with the general election of 2019. It is organised into sections which reflect the different political eras over a given period. Each era draws on the initial discursive analysis of policy documents following the approach detailed in section 4.4. This is used to create an overarching framework that is unpacked in the subsequent analysis. Each section presents ideas from policy discourse reflecting relational, political and ideological power and ideas in DI in a given era. By illustrating the historical context, the subsequent analysis explains how, in a discursive sense, ideas in policy documents point to Conservative, Labour and coalition governments' orientation towards collaboration. This is mapped through the sections below to illustrate how inter-organisational collaboration is catalysed (1997-2001), elevated (2001-2005), embedded (2005-2010), cast as empowerment (2010-2015) and entrenched (2015- 2019). Each of these eras, summarised in Figure 9 & Figure 10, is discussed at a granular level in the sections below, starting with an explanation of the overarching context in which the documents are published. These illustrate how, over time, collaboration is framed in policy analysis and broadly summarise how policy discourse orients the nature and purpose of collaboration over a given time frame. The data ebbs and flows and accordingly each section is not

equidistant. This reflects the attention to NPOS reflected in policy documents in a given era. Each era is subsequently unpacked. Sections of the chapter relate to each of the eras, setting out a detailed and in-depth analysis that illuminates how ideas of collaboration between NPOs evolve, are transferred, adapted, ignored or rejected over time. This is aligned with the methodological framework, designed to locate the representation of relational, political and ideological power and ideas in policy documents (detailed in Table 12). Consequently, the empirical analysis presented below charts not only key changes in time, but also reveals subtle shifts in the way the ideas in policy documents frame collaboration.

Figure 9 – Discursive timeline of policy documents orienting collaboration between 1997-2010

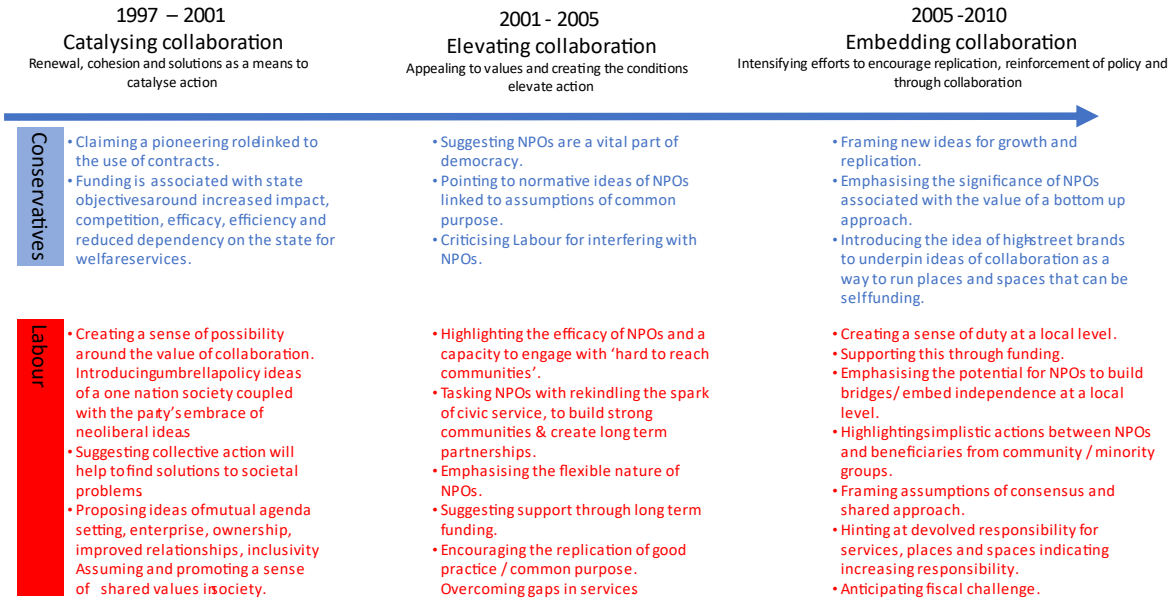
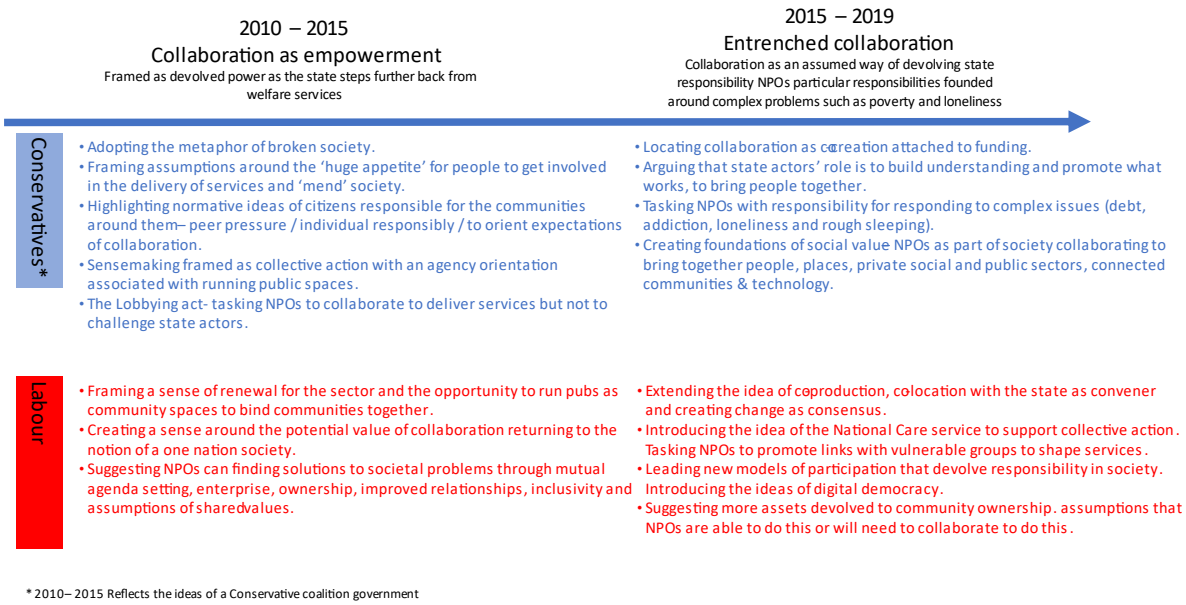


Figure 10 - Discursive timeline of policy documents orienting collaboration between 2010-2019



* 2010– 2015 Reflects the ideas of a Conservative coalition government

5.2. Catalysing collaboration between NPOS (1997-2001)

This era draws on the Conservative and Labour Manifestos and Labour's paper on Partnership also published prior to the general election of May 1997. Another significant document was introduced later in 1998, The Compact, an agreement initiated nationally framing the terms of reference around collaboration with NPOs. The number of documents in this period is somewhat limited in terms of quantity. They are important in presenting a change in the way collaboration is seen and valued. Notably, they suggest a new direction that draws attention to the perceived importance of collaborative approaches to addressing societal problems whilst elevating the significance and central role NPOs are anticipated to play in delivering services.

5.2.1. Relational power through ideas catalysing collaboration

Relational power through ideas in DI is characterised by the way ideas in text facilitate change. In this period, policy discourses orienting collaboration are arguably dominated by the Labour Party given the party's emphasis on contemporary forms of partnership relating to the governance of welfare. This is highlighted through their Partnership paper, published shortly before their landslide victory in the 1997 election. Documents produced by the party create a sense of anticipation and a commitment towards what is

presented as a new and equitable society. This is reflected in both their paper on partnership and manifesto published prior to the election;

> *Partnership with the Voluntary Sector is central to Labour's Policy of achieving social cohesion in a one -nation society. Voluntary action and the act of volunteering are both essential to citizenship and to re-establishing a sense of community" (*Labour 1997a, p.1).

and their subsequent manifesto,

> *I want a Britain that is one nation, with shared values and purpose, where merit comes before privilege, run for the many not for the few*" (Labour, 1997b, p.1).

The sense that collaboration will be important is expressed in the text through the emphasis of a shared approach to solving societal problems, relating to their welfare agenda promoting a more equal society and as part of that, more equal relationships with organisations involved in partnerships.

The Labour Party paper on partnership pre-empts the party's aim to catalyse action by creating a sense of mutual agenda setting, orienting the potential of collaboration between the government and NPOs to deliver societal changes;

> *Building the Future Together indicates a new focus on and commitment to establishing partnership and co-operation between the government and voluntary sector in a way that will stand the test of time. The Labour Government intends to put into practice our Clause 1V commitment to work in partnership and cooperation with voluntary organisations. Building a partnership through which government and the voluntary sector can tackle the task of making Britain a caring, efficient, pleasant place to live* (Labour, 1997a, p.3).

The paper in itself promotes collaboration by expressing the important role the party intends NPOs to play in policy. It anticipates the need for collective action through an assumed mutual agenda that responds to the normative sense of a caring society. Notably the text above also frames the significance of efficiency within this approach, orienting collaboration as a means to introduce the party's new focus not only on collective action, but also reflecting a new focus around behaviours typically related to a

preference for market-like thinking. The paper goes on further couching the party's orientation towards collaboration;

> *As the Labour Party's draft manifesto* ***"New Life for Britain"*** *[emphasis in original] makes clear, a new Labour Government will not be seeking to impose solutions from the top down. Instead, we will be building partnerships to tackle the problems which afflict our society. Public, private and voluntary sector will be encouraged to work together both locally and nationally to provide solutions* (Labour, 1997a, p.2).

The text creates a sense of anticipation of greater collaboration both with NPOs and other sectors and amongst NPOs. The ambiguity around the purpose of collaboration, presented as an overarching idea of a one nation society resonates with an important facet of relational power through ideas. The vague nature of language, under the umbrella of unspecified policy, carries the potential for NPOs to shape their own understanding by using their own tacit knowledge to imagine or anticipate how collaboration may lead to solutions. This constructs NPO collaboration around the sense of shared value in NPO's own context. Whilst this does not explicitly instruct NPOs to collaborate, it is significant in the broad context of the era, indicating the importance of NPOs and collaboration in relation to Labour's agenda. Though aspects of the text are important in emphasising volunteerism they are notable in framing the significance of collaboration to support connections and solidarity at a societal level. This emphasises a key role for NPOs along with other organisations as part of a one nation society. Hence, collaboration is catalysed through the emphasis on collective action alongside the promotion of shared values.

A further aspect of relational power through ideas catalysing collaboration is the way Labour reframe the relationship between the state and NPOs;

> *We have already demonstrated our commitment to such a process by asking voluntary organisations throughout Britain to join in setting Labour's agenda"* (Labour, 1997a, p.3).

The text promotes what appears to be a positive step change in the state / sector relationship, proposing the ideas of mutual agenda setting. Later in the era, this is further impressed through the introduction of the Compact. In itself, the Compact agreement

represents relational power through ideas, prompting a realigned relationship with an agency orientation that reflects a sense of shared values. It emphasises the importance of partnership, promoting collaboration as good sense; *"It provides a framework to enable relations to be carried out differently and better than before" (*Labour, 1998, p.5). Hence, the new relationship between the state / sector frames collaboration with normative ideas of equity between NPOs and government, with opportunities for mutual agenda setting.

5.2.2. Political power over ideas; catalysing collaboration

Political power over ideas is mapped by highlighting policy discourse related to control, domination or through attempts to shame other actors. The next section explores how such approaches catalyse collaboration, detailing how language or compulsory means are used to promote particular ideas by setting conditions or parameters about what is considered possible or achievable. The Conservatives, for example, do not appear to persuade NPOs to collaborate. The tone set by the Conservatives is overarchingly more dominant and reflects a sense of hierarchy. Political power over ideas reveals an assumed role for government that directs and devolves responsibility for action to organisations, including NPOs at a local level;

> *We are developing a new vision for local government.*
>
> *We believe local government should take a lead in the planning and development of their communities. To achieve that, we have encouraged them to work in partnership with central government, with private enterprise, and other organisations in their community. The impact of local government is multiplied when they work in this way* (Conservatives, 1997, p.28-29).

This clarifies the policy intentions around the Party's role vis-à-vis other organisations. Indeed, it sets out the parameters of collaboration - the conditions upon which collaboration should be enacted to extend the reach of the state nationally. Specifically, language is concerned with impact, related to a sense of efficiency associated with economies of scale. Notably, there is little sense in the text that the importance of NPOs or other organisations' mission, agenda or purpose has been considered. Rather the emphasis sits with local government to set the agenda. Moreover, the form of

collaboration encouraged overlooks normative ideas concerned with knowledge exchange, learning or sharing. Rather, it overtly dominates by directing collaboration that assumes shared policy priorities.

Labour's policy discourses also reflect political power over ideas building on relational power and proposing an approach that somewhat deviates from that of the Conservatives. Here, text from the partnership paper of 1997 highlights new structural ideas, whereby NPOs are primed to influence the state's strategy; *"We have already demonstrated our commitment to such a process by asking voluntary organisations throughout Britain to join in setting Labour's agenda"* (Labour, 1997a, p.3). The text later in the paper also chimes with political power over ideas in the way the text subtly shames the Conservatives.

> *In many instances "contracting" has become too legalistic and bureaucratic. Labour will change the "contract culture" in order to establish a "partnership culture". In particular we will ensure that voluntary organisations are involved in the development of the strategies in which their participation is sought* (Labour, 1997a, p.5).

This reflects the sense that Labour intends to 'improve' on the Conservatives' approach by involving NPOs in collective action. This creates an alternative idea of how contracting for collaboration might work and indicates the potential for NPOs to have a more equal say in mutual agenda setting to catalyse collaboration. Despite the promise of a more equal relationship, it indicates that NPOs play a participatory rather than leading role.

5.2.3. Ideological power in ideas; catalysing collaboration

Ideological power in ideas demonstrates assumptions that catalyse collaboration by creating competition between NPOs. Building on the dominance expressed in the previous section, ideological approaches construct NPO collaboration by drawing market driven approaches, historically favoured by the Conservatives. Labour's ideas are infused with the party's embrace of neoliberalism, alluding to the creation of;

> *a stakeholder society [...]recreating a civic society in which the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect* (Labour, 1997a, p.3).

The ideas here do not so much invite collaboration, rather they catalyse action through the assumption of shared responsibility in society as a fait accompli, an assumed foundation for collaboration associated with the party's embrace of neoliberalism.

The introduction to the Labour Party's 1997 manifesto further reflects the change in the party's recently adopted neoliberal direction; *"I want to renew faith in politics by being honest about the last 18 years. Some things the Conservatives got right. We will not change them"* (Labour, 1997b, p. 1). The implications of this change are more explicitly set out by linking collaboration to enterprise.

> *We are keen to encourage a variety of forms of partnership and enterprise, spreading ownership* (Labour, 1997b, p.16).

This is reminiscent of the Conservative's position illustrated here;

> *We have pioneered new ways of building partnerships that engage the sector in areas previously dependent on the public purse"* (Conservatives, 1997, p.1).

This draws attention to the Conservative's structural position locating themselves as pioneers of partnership through the use of contracts. Collaboration in this sense is seen as a means for NPOs to become more enterprising - to earn an income, either through contracts that link NPOs to state priorities, to reduce dependence on welfare services, or through collaborating in ways that generate finance rather than focus on a service-based mission. The ideas here do not overtly dictate the terms upon which NPOs should operate. They do, however, make clear links between collaboration and organisational forms or ideas that would be typically associated with the private sector. This further reflects the umbrella of ideas and expectations that create a platform around the way collaboration is shaped. Once again, this links to the characteristics common to ideological power in ideas; the impetus to generate income does not invite debate, rather it is assumed as a reasonable way of framing collaborative relationships.

Ideological power in ideas catalyses collaboration through text that refers directly to structural power resources, such as finance;

> *to encourage this partnership, we have developed the new approach of Challenge Funding. We set up a fund to meet a particular objective and then invite competing bids for the money. Those who form effective partnerships are far more likely to win those bids* (Conservatives, 1997, p.28).

Here, the process of bidding and the element of competition suggest that NPOs who secure funding should adapt their mission to reflect the Conservative Party's objectives and meet the demands of policy rather than beneficiaries. This agenda does not invite the perspectives of NPOs. The sentiment is echoed by Labour, whose partnership agenda promotes devolved welfare and couches responsibility at a local level; *"Public, private and voluntary sector will be encouraged to work together both locally and nationally to provide solutions"* (Labour, 1997a, p.2). The idea is seemingly viable and reasonable, situating collaboration between sectors as common sense. However, it overlooks the substantive differences between organisations, the potential for differing perspectives, priorities and power positions between potential organisational clusters. This approach appears to be a common feature of collaboration in policy discourse and shows a lack of consideration for differing concerns; the private sector in terms of wealth creation, the public sector to deliver services that support the public good and NPOs to respond to unmet needs in society.

As well as the sense that collaboration should encourage competitive behaviour and involve a range of different sectors, it is given further attention through the notion of quality.

> *Ensure that where voluntary organisations deliver a service paid for from public money, the quality of service received is of the highest. Agreements between a public body and a voluntary organisation, will be set out in a document which defines what each will contribute, what each will perform, and what standards are to be met* (Labour, 1997a, p.5).

Labour's sentiment expressed above in the wider context of partnership, is symbolic of the prevailing assumptions that merge quality and funding, embedded in the party's

recent embrace of neoliberal ideas. In this case, the text focuses on the capacity of policy actors to lead the debate around what is perceived as quality with structural power positions formalised via contract. The terms of both Labour and Conservative policy discourse reinforce collaboration linked to policy priorities to replace the state's role in delivering services.

Figure 11 - Catalysing NPO collaboration (1997-2001)

In summary, the analysis, summarised above in Figure 11 shows how Labour's policy ideas imbue a sense of change that invites NPOs to imagine news ways of working within a wide context of partnership. Significantly, the policy discourse presented reflects a contrast in the ideological perspectives of the Conservative and Labour ideas that orient collaboration. This catalyses not only ideas of partnership with other sectors, but also collaboration between NPOs. Adopting the dominant approaches of the Conservatives, who locate collaboration between NPOs with contracts, Labour graft these ideas by stressing the importance of quality, conflating this with business-like forms of organising framed by neoliberal ideas. Thereby, collaboration is catalysed in such a way to emphasise aspects of enterprise and financial independence. This suggests that ideas of quality not only pertain to the services that NPOs deliver but also underpin collaboration in terms of fiscal independence.

5.3. Elevating collaboration between NPOs (2001-2005)

The era considers how between 2001 – 2005 collaboration is elevated through policy discourse that emphasises ideas of cost efficiencies and the replication of good practice. The sections explore manifestos indicating intentions from Labour and the Conservatives at the start of this era and a review of collaboration between NPOs and policy makers that gives a much sharper insight into the party's intentions. Published by HM Treasury, it;

> *provides a template for how government and the sector should work together – we need to implement the Compact, get the funding relationship right and build capacity in the sector* (HM Treasury, 2002, p.3).

The paper makes clear policy intentions not only to elevate the role of NPOs but also to advance collaboration to overcome perceived gaps in services and replicate practice in delivery. The analysis of documents from this era adds further depth around the orientation of policy towards NPOs to elevate collaboration.

5.3.1. Relational power through ideas elevating collaboration

Labour stress their value of the (non-profit) sector in their 2001 manifesto; *"we are passionately committed to the work of the voluntary sector"* (p.3) and position NPOs as central to help *"rekindle the spark of civic services that fires the building of strong civic communities"* (p.3). The text orients collaboration by a persuasive approach reflecting an ambiguous shared agenda about the potential to build strong communities and to enhance the role of NPOs in service delivery.

Labour policy discourse is overt, giving momentum to, and clarity around collaboration, thereby elevating its significance. In 2002, the HM Treasury review of the role of NPOs delivering services is key in the way it advances the idea of long-term relationships. The opening address prompts collaboration by stressing assumptions of mutual values, to rekindle the spark of collaboration with NPOs.

> *Our aim must be to build a new partnership using the sector's strengths to challenge and stimulate new ideas, complement our shared objectives and take forward the development of social policy generally. This partnership is about fresh ways of*

thinking through the role and structure of government and the voluntary sector and the way we deliver public services (HM Treasury, 2002, p.3).

Notably, the document involves leading non-profit representatives, namely Stephen Bubb from ACEVO, Stuart Etherington from NCVO along with leaders from large charities, such as the British Red Cross. Further elevating the importance of collaboration and reflecting relational power through ideas through text sugaring this is a new or 'fresh' perspective. To further add to the normative appeal and relevance of collaboration, the work of scholars is included to simultaneously legitimise and promote the party's orientation towards NPOs. Leat (1995), Knapp et al. (1990) and Billis and Glennerster (1998) for example, are referenced in support of NPOs' flexibility, innovation and cost-effective nature (see HM Treasury, 2002, pp. 15-16). By highlighting the supposed flexible nature of NPOs and the *"distinctive ambiguous and hybrid structures enable them to overcome problems, which are endemic in public sector or market delivery"* (p.16) the potential for collaboration is couched in new structures, emphasising the assumption that NPOs can easily adapt their structure and are amenable to solve societal problems.

This sets out a shared agenda between state and NPOs promoting a sense that this is a good, if somewhat vague idea as a platform for shared action. As discussed in previous sections, ambiguity in text is a central facet of relational power through ideas allowing actors to imagine collaboration in their own context and projects and therefore prompting action. Notably, it impresses the sense of control, stressing that NPOs share responsibility for developing and delivering against the policy agenda.

5.3.2. Political power over ideas; elevating collaboration

The HM Treasury Review offers several notable examples of how policy discourse reflects aspects of Labour's dominant approach. Aligned with power over ideas, the text effectively directs how NPO collaboration should be practiced;

> *The current infrastructure has developed piecemeal and, while some parts of the sector are well served, the overall coverage is variable in quality and fragile. There are significant gaps in networks and some duplication. There is further scope for collaborative working between existing organisations (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002, p.20).*

> *Central government supports VCS infrastructure by providing technical support for specific projects and building capacity within small community groups. But current practice across Whitehall is inconsistent. The value of this investment would be enhanced if it were brought together into one cross government strategy for VCS capacity building and infrastructure support, with common purposes, resulting in more coherent and effective delivery* (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002, p.20).

There is a sense that Labour elevates collaboration by critiquing NPOs' potential to duplicate projects and by suggesting that there are gaps in service provision. This simultaneously promotes the replication of projects aligned through an assumed common purpose. However, this fails to consider the possibility for nuanced or overlapping approaches in service delivery. Relatedly, the critique that there are gaps in services appears to shame NPOs rather than the state for responding to unmet societal needs. Moreover, it encourages collaboration yet glosses over what and where services are unmet, offering little to guide NPOs as to how a different approach might lead to a less fragmented service provision.

A further level of dominance exhibited in the HM Treasury review forms part of a section in the document entitled *"key lessons"* (p.17). This alludes to learning around the parameters related to collaboration;

> *policy makers need to recognise that there is a significant lead-in time where new partnerships are being established to deliver services. The profile of funding and monitoring of outputs needs to reflect this* (HM Treasury, 2002, p.17).

Though seemingly supportive of NPOs, the text clearly locates the responsibility for leading and directing collaborative relationships. Further, the material resources and targets set around the relationship further reflect a sense of structural parameters that support dominant state ideas with the promise of long-term collaboration. The extract shows how the idea of collaboration appeals and persuades (relational power) through a normative sense that NPOs have been listened to and need priming for collaboration. However, it also reflects political power over ideas, related to the capacity of policy makers to set out funding criteria thus pointing to the dominance of policy makers. Additionally, the text is also congruent with ideological power in ideas. This is exemplified by the allocation of funds to orient the nature and purpose of collaboration and the way

the idea reinvents the contracting approach of the previous Conservative government. This illustrates the overlapping nature of the three forms of power and the way they can support change and stasis simultaneously.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the origin of the paper in the Treasury department, it emphasises assumed benefits of collaboration associated with return on investment. Here, the assumed cost-effective nature of collaboration is grafted with normative ideas of learning, knowledge exchange and a shared purpose.

> *Central government supports VCS infrastructure by providing technical support for specific projects and building capacity within small community groups. But, current practice across Whitehall is inconsistent. The value of this investment would be enhanced if it were brought together into one cross government strategy for VCS capacity building and infrastructure support, with common purposes, resulting in more coherent and effective delivery* (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002, p.20).

In addition to demonstrating how structures and funding create conditions for collaboration, the review also subtly shames NPOs, inferring that practice is inconsistent and that funds are not used in the most effective way because of these inconsistencies. Hinting at a new approach that will involve NPOs in agenda setting, Labour implies that NPOs' role will be elevated and simultaneously emphasise the potential of collaboration.

> *Partnerships are of increasing importance in service delivery but can be hard both to build and sustain. Meaningful involvement can be a problem, particularly for small VCOs including social enterprises who continue to report some common difficulties with new programmes* (HM Treasury / Labour, 2002, p.21).

The promise of a more equitable approach to planning alludes to the importance of NPOs to the state, creating a sense that NPOs are peers and suggests that they will take a shared approach by developing the strategic orientation of collaboration. However, this overlooks the ability of some NPOs to participate in this agenda. For example, small NPOs with limited resources and structures may struggle to engage in the strategic direction of collaboration at a policy level. Notably this also suggests that those who secure long term funding will become dependent on the public purse.

To further the orientation of NPO collaboration as a means to address societal needs, parameters in relation to the terms of contracts, outlining the conditions for collaboration, are also proposed in relation to financial support; *"to a more stable funding relationship – longer contracts and longer term partnerships"* (HM Treasury, Labour, 2002, p.25). Hence, the message is consistent with political power over ideas sees long term fiscal support to extend collaboration in terms of its importance to the state, but through conditions that encourage the development of longer-term collaborative ventures. Thus, the longevity of funding and control of the state allows efficiency from the perspective of policy by facilitating similar organisational aims and approaches to addressing societal needs. Therefore, collaboration is elevated by setting out the conditions under which collaboration between NPOs should take place, promoting the state's ideas of success, reinforced through the promise of new planning and financial support.

5.3.3. Ideological power in ideas; elevating collaboration

Ideological power in ideas between 2001-2005 is couched in the way that the Conservatives situate collaboration between NPOs within historic assumptions about the role of NPOs. Labour's documents also invoke similar historical assumptions but show the party's embrace of neoliberal values, reflecting means such as funding and ideas that have mass appeal to promote collaboration. This subsection therefore illustrates the intricate blend of material resources, historical assumptions and ideas that are framed as making sense. Hence, ideological power in ideas elevates and constrains collaboration in the way it is framed as reasonable and not open to challenge.

The Conservative manifesto of 2001 generally pays little attention to the NPOs. However, the opening address from the party leader at that time, Iain Duncan Smith, reflects ideological power over ideas by alluding to presumed common issues and principles between the Conservatives and NPOs framed by a sense of shared purpose as common sense.

> *But there is something else too. I value those aspects of our national life which are bigger than individuals and families. That is why we will nurture our towns and cities, our countryside, our local institutions, our charities, our democracy - for they make us who we are as a nation. This meddling and interfering Government is*

> *eroding our freedoms as well as weakening the institutions that give us a sense of common purpose* (Conservatives, 2001, p.1).

Though less overt in their interest in NPOs, the Conservatives still reflect the importance of collaboration in the sense they value the ideas of NPOs having a shared purpose, and an essential part of a democracy in society. However, the inference of their manifesto is critical of what is positioned as Labour's apparently interfering and managerial orientation.

Labour however, epitomises ideological power in ideas through policy discourse that frames collaboration as not open to question or challenge. To do this, the structural power of the party is invoked through funding mechanisms framed as the "*Futurebuilders*" (p.32) agenda;

> *The fund offers a unique opportunity for organisations to take advantage of the new framework that the implementation of this review will create and to strengthen their service delivery role. The fund will provide strategic investment to modernise the sector. It will be directed towards organisations directly involved in delivering key services in the areas of health and social care, crime and social cohesion, in education and for children and young people. It will harness the vision, specialist knowledge and expertise of service providers to transform their capability, push out the boundaries and, most importantly, improve service outcomes. High quality schemes that exemplify good practice, encourage partnership working and replicate success will be candidates for funding* (HM Treasury, 2002, p.32).

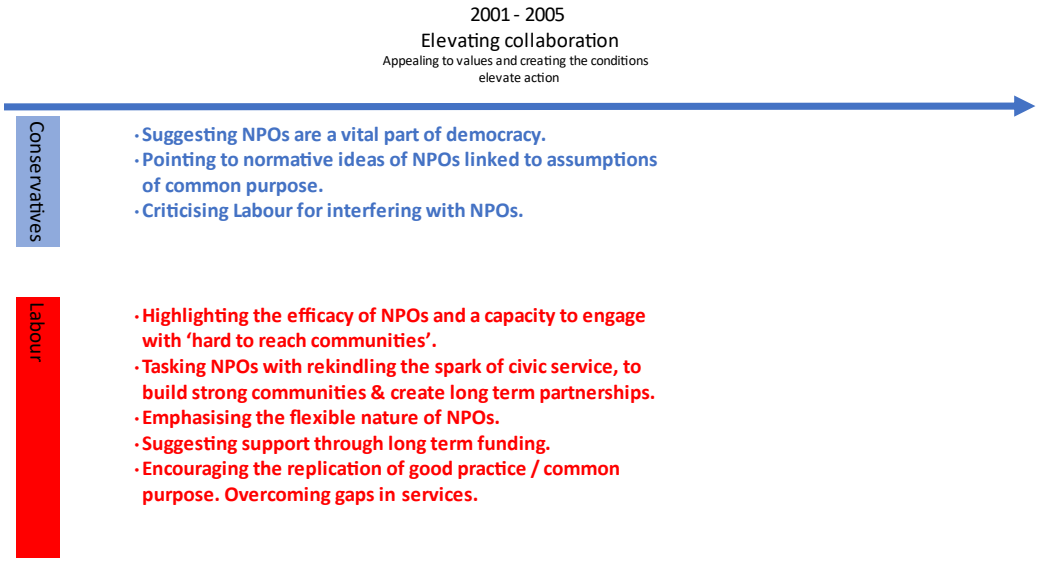
Ideological power in ideas considers hegemonic and historical ideas that do not always explicitly outline collaboration. However, they elevate collaboration by promoting assumptions about the ways that NPOs work. For example, by indicating that NPOs are best placed to reach vulnerable or hard to reach groups, innovate and work in ways that are cost effective. Labour speculates that NPOs are able to work in ways that are beyond the capacity of other organisations in the way they can reach audiences assumed to be vulnerable or beyond the state's reach;

> *VCOs may therefore be able to deliver services more effectively to certain groups because their particular structures enable them to operate in environments which*

the State and its agents have found difficult or impossible. (Labour / HM Treasury, 2002, p.16)

As presented in relational power through ideas (see section 5.3.1) the idea is given further credence by citing the work of NPO scholars, such as Leat and Knapp (Labour / HM Treasury, 2002, p.15). This cements the credibility of the argument, resonating with ideological power in ideas in a way that appears recognisable to elites and also a wider societal level by emphasising the flexible nature of NPOs.

Figure 12 - Elevating NPO collaboration (2001-2005)



As illustrated in the summary in above Figure 12, power and ideas in this era reveals the way that collaboration is elevated through policy documents; extolling a sense of shared purpose, articulating the value of NPOs and simultaneously impressing the need to deliver cost-efficient services. Political power over ideas sees an apparent change of tactics employed to frame action. Here, collaboration is situated as a response to fragmented services. Finally, ideological power in ideas sees NPOs as a valuable resource but orients the purpose of collaboration through a neoliberal approach that emphasises ideas of efficacy and the assumption that NPOs can diffuse these ideas beyond the reach of the state.

5.4. Embedding collaboration between NPOs (2005 -2010)

At the start of the era the Labour Party had secured a third term in office, albeit with a smaller majority than they had in the previous two elections. As with previous eras, data is drawn from the analysis of manifestos as well as papers published by Labour and the Conservatives. Labour's focus sets out benefits of collaboration at a local level through their 'Local Government White Paper'. Midway through this period, the Conservative Green Paper, 'A stronger society, voluntary action in the 21st Century' takes a similar stance to Labour, emphasising a bottom-up approach to strengthen society through the notion of growth and replication facilitated by NPO collaboration to tackle societal problems.

5.4.1. Relational power through ideas; embedding collaboration

Documents appeal to NPOs' sense of duty to work with other organisations, introducing ways in which services and spaces might be devolved to encourage communities to come together. NPOs are seen as an important conduit to draw hard to reach communities, closer to ideas of an independent society. Hence, collaboration features as a route to bring together NPOs and beneficiaries in ways that reduce the need for state run service provision.

The Labour Party ideas see collaboration as a way to devolve responsibility whilst still retaining a sense of leadership. In other words, NPOs are oriented to support an agenda to create independent communities. Indeed, the aim of the Party's Local Government White Paper of 2006 was to *"enable communities to have a say in the issues that matter most to them[...]ready to make the most of the opportunities of the 21st century"* (Labour, 2006 p.2-3). Framed by the notion that local government should oversee action the sense that collaboration should be a de facto form of organisation is embedded in the document hinting at the prospect of devolved services and increasing community responsibility. This is further framed through an assumed consensus, for example

> *The problems experienced by vulnerable groups are often cross cutting. Joined up working is vital to ensure a coherent response to complex needs* (Labour 2006, p.26).

Though subtle, the idea does not focus on NPOs explicitly, nonetheless, sense of a shared approach to meet needs is expressed. More overt in the text the notion of *"joined up working"* embeds the importance of collective working and a sense of duty in responding to the needs of vulnerable groups. It creates a call to meet the needs of vulnerable groups and is therefore relevant to NPOs as organisations who arguably see this as their purpose.

Labour's local government White Paper cues devolved services, advancing the concept of an independent society. Through this, the need to develop collaboration between NPOs constitutes a central message. Influencing this, the Labour Party emphasises a mutual sense of obligation between NPOs and local authorities. Underpinned by the ideas of shared aims and joined up working, the meaning in the text devolves power to encourage a local interpretation of policy ideas. In this context, collaboration is framed as

> *A new duty for the local authority and named partners to co-operate with each other in agreeing targets in the LAA [Local Area Agreement] and to have regard to those targets once they have been agreed* (Labour, 2006, p.17).

In this, partners would include NPOs selected by local authorities to work together. The idea not only points to a sense of mutual duty or obligation, framing the purpose of collaboration around local policy targets, but also locates the local authority as having power over who collaborates with whom.

This adopts a top-down approach that devolves responsibility, whereby the local authority makes decisions about which NPOs are selected to deliver services and run spaces. Thus, not only are policy ideas developed but they also embed collaboration in such a way to suggest that certain NPOs are preferred NPOs above others (i.e., those most likely to undertake the state's bidding) are also in the hands of local policy leaders. Thus, the Party attempts to promote greater independence, whilst shifting the onus away from state services. For the Labour Party therefore, the embedded nature of collaboration facilitates the devolution of power at a local level and empowers citizens to shape the purpose of action. NPOs are therefore situated as a bridge to draw citizens closer to the state's ideas of decentralised governance and embed independence at a local level.

Labour's subsequent White Paper of 2008 emphasises the importance of collaboration as a vehicle to support further independence from state welfare services. The capacity of NPOs to support those considered to be hard to reach, as suggested in the previous era by the party (see section 5.3.3), continues to be an idea that persuades NPOs to collaborate. Couched in relational power through ideas, the importance of action is stressed by the Labour Party, who encourage collaboration to support vulnerable groups.

> *The problems of vulnerable groups are often cross cutting. Joined up working is vital to ensure a coherent response to complex needs* (Labour, 2006, p.26).

The language used creates a sense is that NPOs should collaborate to build bridges and embed a collective approach. In doing so it is assumed that NPOs can solve problems framing the potential for NPOs to bring people from different backgrounds together, to meet the needs of different faiths, and local groups through an assumed consensus;

> *Partners such as the local third sector can play a huge part in building cohesion. They [NPOs] can be the glue that binds communities together and create the opportunities for people of different backgrounds to work together for shared goals. They can also reach groups at grassroots level whose voice is critical to the debate* (Labour, 2006, p.159).

The enormity of the task above is downplayed through the metaphor of NPOs as a glue to bring people together creating a sense of ease associated with seemingly simplistic action. Furthermore, it assumes that NPOs and their beneficiaries share similar aims to those set out in the document at a community level. Thus, the nature of action fails to consider differing needs and wants at grassroots level or from different community members. NPO collaboration is further embedded through the example of community building events involving litter picking;

> *Lozells is an inner city area of Birmingham blighted for many years by litter, fly-tipping, graffitti [sic] and fly posting. Fed up with filthy public spaces, a gathering of Black Majority Churches joined St Paul and St Silas Church who ran the Lozells Community Clean Up to improve the local environment* (Labour, 2008, p.45).

The example emphasises a sense of mutual value and community responsibility associated with place and space, drawing NPOs and their beneficiaries together. Consequently, a practical and ostensibly simplistic example of how things should work through collaboration, appeals to normative ideals, yet obscures the capacity of collaboration to address the more complex needs of vulnerable groups highlighted above. Moreover, sense making in the text highlights the aim of an agenda for greater independence in society. Therefore, collaboration as a simple unified community all working together overlooks the potential problems, tensions and complex societal needs that exist between or within groups and the NPOs that support them.

The need to work at a grassroots level is further signposted through the devolution of assets; public buildings and spaces by both the Conservative and Labour parties. The assumed ease of the transfer and capacity to run such spaces is highlighted by the Labour Party. As well as the devolution of responsibility to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, a further layer of policy discourse positions physical assets as a catalyst. This embeds collaboration as a response linked to the practical demands of running physical community assets:

> *We will make it easier for communities and community groups to take on the management or ownership of local authority assets by establishing a fund to give local authorities capital support in refurbishing buildings marked for transfer to community groups. We have also set up an independent review to consider existing powers and policies relating to community management and ownership, examining their effectiveness at dealing with barriers, and considering new policies to facilitate closer working between communities and local authorities in devolving responsibilities for local assets* (Labour, 2006, p.57).

This idea roots and orients collaboration through the unspoken assumption that running such spaces requires a multitude of skills and resources, potentially more than one NPO alone would be able to take on without the combined skills, effort and resources of others. Consequently, relational power through ideas is reflected in a sense of power and shared community purpose along with the devolved responsibility for physical places and spaces are shaped by the assumption that collaboration will take place.

5.4.2. Political power over ideas; embedding collaboration

The previous section focused on relational power through ideas and highlighted the ways that duty was applied to frame action. This devolution of power at a local level also emphasises political power over ideas. In documents, this impresses the way that hierarchical structure relates the purpose of collaboration through funding arrangements between LAs and NPOs. In doing so, the ideas locate policy actors as leaders with LAs cast as deputies and NPOs playing a supporting role. This could influence collaboration, not only by promoting the issues, communities or priorities that matter, but also by overtly encouraging collaboration between NPOs:

> *The changes proposed in this White Paper will enable local government to use its role as community leader to champion the interests of those who are disadvantaged and discriminated against, strengthen partnership working and empower communities to play a part in shaping the services they want and need* (Labour, 2006, p.21).

Here, collaboration is framed as important by driving NPOs to work with others who are connected to or involved with those beneficiaries who are seemingly disadvantaged or face discrimination. Indeed, local government is tasked with highlighting the communities or priorities that matter in policy whilst overtly embedding collaboration through institutional relationships led by local government. In 2008, the Labour Party echo this approach:

> *Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs): these partnerships between local councils and other local agencies provide the forum to create a shared vision and a shared sense of priorities for a place. Third sector organisations are full and equal partners in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).*
>
> *The duty to involve, placed on a series of individual partners, will ensure that people have greater opportunities to influence decision-making and get involved* (Labour, 2008, p.16).

At a surface level this suggests a less hierarchical approach; it indicates that NPOs are equal partners and that they can influence local decisions. There is no clear sense that NPOs will be involved in collaborating to shape policy priorities or agendas. Moreover,

there is also a caveat which infers that the ultimate capacity to make decisions about the vision and associated priorities, resides with local public sector leaders. This apparent structural hierarchy is further emphasised in the parameters around collaboration:

> *This fund, which replaces the proposed Strategic Partners Programme, will provide support for existing national third sector organisations operating across England which are helping local communities turn key proposals into practical action on the ground in areas such as community leadership, involvement in planning and social enterprise* (Labour, 2008, p.26).

Here again the structural hierarchy in the text locates NPOs as delivery agents, expected to deliver policy proposals. The idea of "practical action on the ground" embedding NPO collaboration by setting out the expectation that NPOs will enact policy proposals in community settings. Relatedly the idea of leadership infers that particular organisations will be playing a more significant role than others, embedding hierarchies and competition in collaboration.

Another facet of political power over ideas evident in this era are tactics to coerce NPOs to collaborate. Labour's white paper reflects an autocratic tone towards LAs and NPOs to work more closely with vulnerable groups; *"we will expect local authorities to work with third-sector organisations in proactively consulting these hard-to-reach groups"* (Labour 2006, p.16). As well as further underlining the hierarchical nature of the state sector relations described above, the autocratic tone reflects a critical undertone in this instance towards both LAs and NPOs. By inferring that NPOs need to do more to reach out to potential beneficiaries, it emphasises the need for closer links, embedding collaboration to support the vulnerable in society.

Conversely, the Conservatives oppose the actions of the Labour Party. Associated with political power over ideas, those in opposition are particularly powerful in their capacity to shame and influence. This is exemplified in David Cameron's speech, printed in the party's 2008 Green Paper and set out below:

> *The result has been an explosion of bureaucracy, cost and irritation, endless upheavals and pointless reorganisations the elbowing aside of colourful, human, informal relationships based on common sense and trust in favour of the grey,*

mechanical, joyless mantras of the master planner with his calculations, projections and impact assessments (The Conservative Party, 2008, p.71).

Whilst this is unsurprising in the run up to the election, it is noteworthy in terms of embedding collaboration by criticising the Labour Party and at the same time communicating the potential for a new approach to societal relationships. Arguably, it is within the realm of those in opposition to the government to have artistic freedom to set out collaboration in such terms.

This critique is further emphasised here;

> *Yet too often when the Government has spoken of partnership with the voluntary sector, it has regarded itself as the senior partner – setting the agenda and directing the relationship. In this relationship, the constraint question – of how much contribution the voluntary sector can make – becomes one about scale* (The Conservative Party, 2008, p.56).

By shaming Labour, the Conservatives use this Green Paper to indicate their intention to engage with the sector in a way that is less mired through administrative constraints. None of the text above mentions collaboration explicitly. However, as highlighted above, the message of the paper positions replication as important. Consequently, collaboration is inferred as part of an agenda for service delivery. In practice, one can assume that NPOs would need to work with each other to copy and develop practice or models for service delivery.

A final consideration in this section is the Charity Commission's paper of 2009, an introduction to collaboration and mergers. It is significant in a discursive sense because of its timing. Produced in 2009, it followed the financial crisis and indicates the need for formal collaborative relationships between NPOs in response to fiscal challenge. Though not a government document per se it draws information from the government to signpost NPOs.

> *In all collaborations charities should consider what would happen if one of the parties was suddenly unable to meet its obligations. It is important to consider whether the remaining Party or parties would be able to continue in the working arrangement. Should anything go wrong, issues of liability can have wider*

> *implications for the charities involved, with repercussions for their assets and reputation. For these reasons it is important to have a clear formal agreement proportionate to the potential risks* (The Charity Commission, 2009, p.8).

Here, concern does not focus on the needs of beneficiaries, rather it highlights the importance of protecting assets and reputation. In doing so it embodies the structural aspects of political power over ideas, specifically policy makers have the power to make decisions around financial priorities, therefore the idea of formal collaboration in the context of financial crisis points to the prospect of limited funding and the funding available being more closely aligned to policy priorities.

5.4.3. Ideological power in ideas; embedding collaboration

The final part of this section explores ideological power in ideas to highlight the ways in which the policy discourse embeds collaboration. This reflects assumptions based on historical relationships and ideological preferences related to the role of NPOs. Ideas such as transferring state assets or linking collaboration to high street brands constrains and assumes the forms of collaboration considered legitimate.

The ideological assumptions around devolved responsibility are clearly expressed in Labour's 2005 manifesto; *"Our third term will build upon our unprecedented programme of constitutional reform embedding a culture of devolved government at the centre of self government in communities"* (Labour, 2005, p.102). The analysis of previous eras shows how NPOs have been more overtly aligned with collaborative approaches (see sections 5.2 & 5.3) to transfer and deliver on policy ideas with beneficiaries. Therefore, although the text does not mention collaboration, the assumption of self-government aligned with the historical role that Labour have expected NPOs to play at a community level, appears viable and resonates with ideological power in ideas. This is further supported here:

> *The third sector has a unique ability to give a voice to the community and drive change, most powerfully where third sector organisations work together. We recognise that inclusive participative structures for third sector organisations are important in ensuring that the sector has a consistent, effective and accountable voice in local decision-making* (Labour, 2008, p.73).

Consequently, collaboration is underpinned by the assumed benefit of collective working between NPOs and their apparent potential to represent communities. This emphasises the needs, lacks and wants of beneficiaries with a sense that NPOs are best placed to represent the needs of beneficiaries consistent with the historical role of NPOs set out in Chapter Two. The ideological power of the party is set out here with funding allocated to those who collaborate to create independent communities.

> *We are keen to encourage other frontline workers to do community building. Independent multi purpose community led organisations can also play a vital role in empowering local people and we are establishing a £70m Communitybuilders scheme to help them become more sustainable* (Labour, 2008, p.3).

Communitybuilders embeds action not only as a metaphor of collaboration but also through the explicit allocation of resources. The metaphor orients power positions; NPOs as frontline workers contracted by the state through the scheme. The promise of funding chiming with the allocation of material resources to extend the ideological reach of the party. In turn this couches the capacity for policy ideas and agendas to be devolved through NPOs directing their role as a bridge between state and citizens to devolve policy ideas at a community level.

Policy discourse from Labour also continues to embed collaboration through the ongoing appeal to the common-sense notion that collaboration is an efficient way of organising;

> *Some parts of the sector will wish to play a greater role in the delivery of public services. This should be embraced, not only because it will better meet the diverse needs of individuals and communities, but because it also has the potential to deliver value for money and efficiency* (Labour, 2006, p.56).

The assumption that NPOs will want to play a greater role and that collaboration is a cost-effective form of organising is taken for granted and is congruent with ideological power in ideas in the sense it is not open to question or challenge. In contrast, the Conservative Party's preference and value of ideas is reflected in market-based strategies, framing collaboration as common sense. Embedded as a 'new approach' it associates

collaboration with the capacity to scale and replicate services using the analogy of recognisable high street brands to orient practice.

> *In the private sector, a successful local enterprise is both incentivised and enabled to expand because success brings financial rewards. To take a concrete example: when Starbucks discovered that it had developed a successful model of a coffee shop, it was inevitable that its cafes would be replicated quickly across the country. It was inevitable, not because of any state central planning, but because it would make a profit from each successful new outlet* (The Conservative Party, 2008, p.57).

Although the text does not mention collaboration outright, it points to the potential to replicate good practice in the non-profit sector. It is reminiscent of Labour's drive to scale and homogenise through collaboration of small NPOs with larger powerful NPOs. Therefore, the idea of expansion assumes market-like form of collaboration as a way of extending what is considered by policy makers as good practice in and amongst NPOs. The seeming simplicity attached to the text, coupled with a sense of familiarity, appeals to what can be considered viable, reasonable and actionable.

Figure 13 - Embedding NPO collaboration (2005 – 2010)

In summary, the era spanning 2005 - 2010 summarised above in Figure 13, reflects a time where collaboration is embedded in a multitude of ways. Significantly, relational power through ideas imbues meaning by creating a sense of shared purpose and devolving civic places and spaces. This is underpinned in political power over ideas where NPOs are

encouraged to collaborate through structural hierarchies and a sense of duty or by the promise of new approaches to delivering services. Finally, ideological power in ideas reflects historical relationships and assumptions about NPOs' capacity to work together to represent the voice of citizens and the apparent simplicity of market brands for collaborative approaches where good ideas are replicated.

5.5. Collaboration as empowerment (2010 – 2015)

There are fewer policy documents focusing on the role of NPOs is this era, reflecting a dwindling interest in the sector. As well as the Conservative and Labour manifestos, three other key documents are highlighted that underline the importance of NPOs in public policy. The first of these is the Compact of 2010, emphasising the ongoing importance of NPOs delivering welfare services. Related to this the Open Public Services White Paper (2011) signals further reform. Despite casting collaboration as empowerment, with NPOs considered a key part of the Big Society, documents such as the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act (2014) appeared to legislate and limit forms of collaboration that involved representing beneficiaries needs. As part of this apparently empowered society, the expectation in ideas suggests that NPOs should be concerned only with service delivery rather than working together to challenge policy.

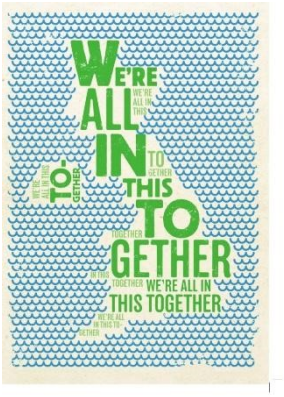
5.5.1. Relational power through ideas; collaboration as empowerment

The importance of relational power through ideas is particularly prevalent at the early start of the era, amplifying the aim of policy to further devolve state services by casting the idea of an empowered society. This represents power through ideas; it epitomises a good idea that offers mutual value, is adaptable, resonates with actors and supports agency. The concept of The Big Society is symbolised by pictures in the Conservative Manifesto of 2010 and distances the Party from Margaret Thatcher's infamous 1981 quote "*There is No Society*" (Thatcher, 1987).

The shift in the position of the Conservative Party's attitude toward NPOs and specifically to collaboration between NPOs is evident in their manifesto of 2010. Representing a pictorial meaning that resonates with relational power in ideas (see Chapter Four section

4.3.2 for a discussion on forms of discourse), a compelling image of the UK is embedded with words to indicate change and the power of collective action.

Figure 14 - Conservative Manifesto "We're all in this together picture" (Conservatives, 2010, p.vi)



The sense of shared responsibility is further infused in the text; *"We're all in this together"* (The Conservative Party, 2010, p. vi), is introduced through a series of questions followed by a notion of collaboration as a principle of public life:

> *How will we deal with the debt crisis unless we understand that we are all in this together? How will we raise responsible children unless every adult plays their part? How will we revitalise communities unless people stop asking 'who will fix this?' and start asking 'what can I do?' Britain will change for the better when we all elect to take part, to take responsibility – if we all come together. Collective strength will overpower our problems* (The Conservative Party, 2010, p.iii).

This progresses the idea that society is broken and that through collaboration challenges can be addressed to *"fix"* society whilst deflecting from the state's responsibility to address the root cause of austerity or need for fiscal constraint. The metaphor of a broken society further infuses this sentiment through the manifesto; "*Mend our broken society…Yes, together we can do anything*" (Conservative Party, 2010, p.37). Thus, by appealing to a sense of mutual effort the text poses the need to take a shared approach to dealing with complex problems. Although the idea is located at a broad societal level, it shapes action at an individual level whilst simultaneously reflecting the assumed virtue of collaboration.

The renewal of the Compact also chimes with relational power through ideas by further promoting the assumed benefits of shared responsibility.

> *We are all in this together. We need to draw on the skills and expertise of people across the country as we respond to the social, political and economic challenges Britain faces* (Coalition, 2010, p.1).

This frames a normative notion that collaboration matters through peer pressure and individual responsibility. Thus, the text promotes the ideas of empowered individuals whilst simultaneously increasing the expectation that collaboration within communities makes sense.

The Compact explicitly encourages volunteerism in community settings. Departing from Labour's overt focus on partnership, the ideas reflect relational power in ideas that appeals to a sense of agency and carries the potential to resonate with a multitude of actors.

> *We believe there is a huge appetite for people to get directly involved in the delivery of the services they use. For services that are provided for the benefit of local communities this is often the best way to decentralise power because it gives people the chance to make a difference in person, but through collective action rather than individual decision-making* (Coalition, 2011, p.26).

The orientation and emphasis of ideas aligned with the concept of the Big Society reflects relational power through ideas in the way that is adaptable with a focus on shared and individual agency - a call to collaboration. This raises a sense of expectation that NPO stakeholders -beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, trustees and funders - should be working more closely therefore enabling widespread interpretation about how society should work. Consequently, it is framed as a constructive idea that is able to diffuse widely through individuals and society, including collaboration amongst NPOs.

The agenda initiated by the previous Labour Government, where devolved services and spaces nudge NPOs towards collaboration, features in the Coalition's agenda. Their White Paper of 2011 concerned with *"how to deliver better public services with less money"* (p.2), expresses the need for individuals to step up their role in society by *"getting citizens more engaged, involved and responsible for the communities around them"* (Coalition,

2010, p.3). This agenda is part of an overt mission to cut costs, associated with devolved services and spaces. For community groups, the threat of closure of facilities and services catalyses the need for collaboration.

> *We will introduce new powers to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services* (Coalition, 2010, p.1).

Here, the text in context, adopts language associated with opportunity and competition underpinned with normative ideas of tightening the purse strings at a time of fiscal constraint. Therefore, by appealing to the responsibility of citizens and through ideas that resonate and require a response in order to continue to run services and spaces, the text alludes to the importance of collaboration.

The Labour Party not only highlights the potential of devolving spaces not only linked to welfare services but venues that had traditionally belonged in the realm of the private sector. In this example local pubs, having faced ongoing decline associated with the smoking ban, are presented as a location that could be transferred to and run by community members.

> *The local pub and social club are also hubs of community life. Too many pubs have closed that could have been sustained by local people. We will support pubs that have a viable future with a new fund for community ownership* (Labour 2010, p.52).

The example of pub ownership within society makes further links between welfare, community and social spaces. Consequently, community ownership is further normalised as a vehicle to develop impetus around the shared responsibility and mutual support one would associate with collaboration as a means of empowering communities and binding them together.

None of the examples above call on NPOs explicitly to collaborate to run pubs or social spaces or services. In response to these ideas however, it would seem that the ongoing devolution of welfare services alongside the message of an empowered society would lead to a stronger impetus for collaboration in NPOs. Indeed, where the spaces that might have supported beneficiaries or community spaces used by people in a community were under threat of closure, the expectation that NPOs might step in to support them

is likely to have encouraged connections and collaboration between NPOs. Therefore, by appealing to a sense of empowerment that resonates not only with NPOs but also with their stakeholders and an associated sense of opportunity in challenging times, the need to collaborate is unspoken, yet clear.

5.5.2. Political power over ideas; collaboration as empowerment

The notion of empowerment is less evident in political power over ideas. Whilst there is some indication that individual and collective action is important by emphasising the benefit of the Big Society, the operationalisation of Carstensen and Schmidt's concept sees the function of structural forces reinforcing political power over ideas to encourage collaboration. This is situated in texts that shame the quality of welfare services by subtly criticising those responsible for delivering services in a broad sense. Also, the Lobbying act, published towards the end of this era resonates with political power over ideas by exerting the dominance of the state, imposing the power to ignore the voice of NPOs and orienting collaboration towards service delivery rather than through attempts to challenge public policy. However, this inadvertently carries the possibility of empowering NPOs to collaborate via forms of activism that respond to attempts to silence the sector.

Figure 15 - Conservative Manifesto "The Big Society Picture" (Conservatives, 2010, p.36)

The ways in which artistic communication is used to impose or dominate in DI resonates with power over ideas. Pictures are especially notable in the Conservative Party's 2010 manifesto. As illustrated in the earlier section, the Coalition's Big Society and associated metaphor of a broken society, ignites collaboration as a collective response to mend society. In the picture below for example, the agenda is framed as positive action

attempting to strike a popular chord of empowerment, whilst shaming the Labour government.

The image hints that Labour's ideas were increasingly unwelcome and dominated the aims of devolved government. Therefore, by attempting to stress the difference in the Conservatives' proposed reforms in society, the Conservative Party's use of artistic image promotes an agenda for reform. The critique, exemplified in the image is spelt out clearly by shaming the notion of a dominant government, setting out an apparent alternative notion of a collaborative society;

> *A country is at its best when the bonds between people are strong and when the sense of national purpose is clear. Today the challenges facing Britain are immense. Our economy is overwhelmed by debt, our social fabric is frayed and our political system has betrayed the people. But these problems can be overcome if we pull together and work together. If we remember that we are all in this together. Some politicians say: 'give us your vote and we will sort out all your problems'. We say: real change comes not from government alone. Real change comes when the people are inspired and mobilised, when millions of us are fired up to play a part in the nation's future. Yes this is ambitious. Yes it is optimistic. But in the end all the Acts of Parliament, all the new measures, all the new policy initiatives, are just politicians' words without you and your involvement* (The Conservative Party, 2010, p.iii).

Here, the dominance of the Big Society agenda explicitly relates to the intent to cut public sector services, cueing responsibility for collaboration as a response to national debt. This indicates societal reform and the dominance of the policy makers to devolve responsibility for public debt at an individual level, pre-empting sweeping cuts to publicly funded support. Consequently, this dominates the discourse driving collaboration

through cuts to services, pointing to the potential for greater need for the services of NPOs.

The final text in this section highlighting political power over ideas is the Lobbying Act (2014). The document itself does not mention collaboration. The aim of the paper however was to challenge what some actors, such as Nick Hurd, had considered to be unwelcome interference from NPOs in political affairs (Lamb, 2014). The document therefore posed significant concern to NPOs that they were being effectively gagged or silenced (Morris, 2016). The document is dense and complex, reflecting the dominance associated with political ideas through a tone that limits conversation or consultation. The act sets out parameters and conditions around the role of NPOs,

> *To "engage in lobbying" means to make a communication within section 2(3) on behalf of another person or persons* (HM Government, 2014, Page 2).

and

> *(1) The production or publication of material which is made available to the public at large or any section of the public (in whatever form and by whatever means)*
> *(2) Canvassing, or market research seeking views or information from the public* (HM Government, 2014, p.61).

In doing so, the act links to political power over ideas in the way compulsory power imposes limits around collaboration. This may however have inadvertently fanned the flames of collaboration by creating a sense of mistrust about the intentions of the state, thereby empowering NPOs by driving collaboration as activism.

5.5.3. Ideological power in ideas; collaboration as empowerment

Ideological power in ideas is representative in the era through ideological approaches that seek to take further steps to reduce reliance on state-run welfare services. This approach suggests clear links about the role of individuals in society and relatedly assumptions about collaboration at a community level to fill gaps in services. This is typical of ideological power in ideas in the way that collaboration appears accepted and therefore specific mention of this recedes into the background. In other words, there is little direct mention of collaboration in policy documents. Highlighted in previous

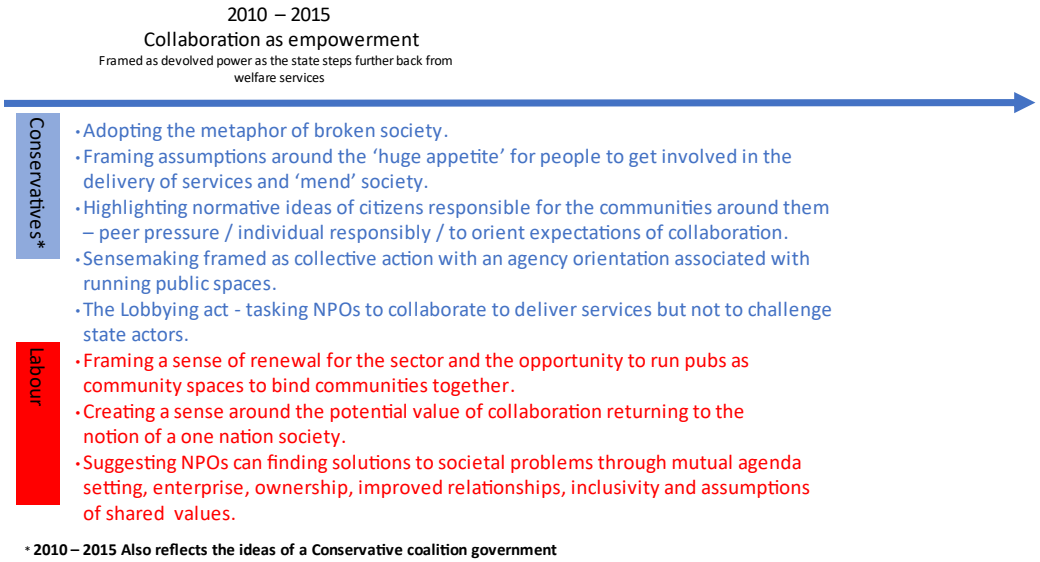
sections, the importance of community spaces underscores the potential for collaboration. In this sense many of the ideas in documents assume some form of collaborative activity that would be likely to involve or be led by NPOs. The text cited in the previous section refers to the importance of such spaces;

> *The local pub and social club are also hubs of community life. Too many pubs have closed that could have been sustained by local people. We will support pubs that have a viable future with a new fund for community ownership* (Labour, 2010, p.52).

As well as reflecting political power over ideas, this is also couched within ideological power in ideas. Through the notion of the pub as a social space, the text conveys an image that is arguably widely recognisable. This is further supported in the text by the promise of funding, demonstrating the institutional power of actors to support the ideas with material resources. As argued above the text does not mention NPOs per se, however, the embedded agenda and ongoing expectations of NPOs in previous eras, chimes with an unspoken anticipation that NPOs might play a role in their capacity to bring people together in communities. This therefore illustrates the nuanced way collaboration can recede into the background as an assumed form of action.

In addition to this, the Coalition's decision to revisit the Compact, apparently reinforces the importance of NPOs to the welfare agenda *"To ensure meaningful engagement and partnership with voluntary organisations"* (Coalition, 2010, p.3). This commitment effectively promotes the notion that collaboration between the state and sector is a positive move that will continue to be an important focus in policy direction. Finally, revisiting the Compact suggests that the Compact, and by association collaboration, is common sense and considered a successful feature of Labour's Partnership agenda.

Figure 16 - NPO Collaboration as empowerment (2010 – 2015)



As illustrated in above Figure 16, this era characterises collaboration as an overarching and somewhat assumed action situated within the policy casting a vision of an empowered society. The Conservatives approach this through the metaphor of a broken society appealing to a collective sense of responsibility. Conversely, Labour appeals to a sense of renewal locating familiar spaces such as pubs as a hub for collaboration. Here, power is devolved in such a way that individuals are directed to resolve their own problems thus reducing the need for welfare services. This is framed around the notion of a widespread enthusiasm to take individual responsibility as part of mutual support and action. Here, the directive towards NPOs is assumed and orients an expectation of collaboration as part of widespread collective action and responsibility for running public spaces. To some extent Labour's ideas also emphasise greater independence, in particular the devolution of spaces also pointing to the assumption that NPOs should collaborate. The appeal to renew society and the notion of a 'one nation' society also chimes with an ongoing sense that the party values a shared approach to solving societal problems.

Therefore, collaboration between NPOs is oriented as part of an apparent appeal to empower citizens and relatedly, NPOs, in two ways. Firstly, the expectation that individuals will play a greater role and respond to the call to volunteer framed by a sense of agency and action. Arguably, this creates a sense of anticipation around the potential role of collaboration as an important part of this 'new' agenda. Secondly, the devolution

of public spaces increases the need for other actors to operate venues traditionally located in the private sector, such as pubs. In summary, despite the overarching notion of the Big Society seemingly couching NPOs and citizens as empowered, the overall directive in the era comes from policy documents framing NPOs as delivery agents rather than important actors that can and should represent or act on the needs of their constituents. Hence, characterising collaboration as empowerment through problematic, is intended to surface and contrast what is overtly evident in the text, whilst simultaneously showing the discursive importance of what remains unarticulated.

5.6. Entrenched collaboration (2015 – 2019)

This final era explores how collaboration is entrenched within expectations that NPOs should respond to complex societal issues through ongoing ideas of connected communities and collective action. The documents considered comprise three rounds of policy manifestos as well as two papers (one Conservative and one Labour) focusing on NPOs as part of civil society.

5.6.1. Relational power through ideas; entrenching collaboration

Relational power in ideas continues to manifest through ideas that devolve both physical spaces and services to NPOs, thereby entrenching collaboration to fill perceived gaps in the delivery of services. What can be considered 'new' in documents are the details that highlight problems in society, directing collaboration. The features of societal problems in this era are more specific. Indeed, a range of complex problems, such as homelessness (Conservatives, 2015 and 2018) are cited, as is the notion that loneliness (Conservatives, 2018; Labour, 2017) is an issue NPOs should address. Within this, a further element of collaboration is set out that further diffuses levels of independence. Co-production or co-creation seek to draw NPOs together to work more closely with beneficiaries. Another new feature that orients collaboration is the potential of technology to overcome societal issues. The strategy situates technology as a remedy to overcome societal problems, such as loneliness. The following sections address how relational power through ideas persuades NPOs to collaborate in response to such issues.

Collaboration is entrenched through normative ideas that resonate with a sense of how NPOs should work and is related the principles of public life;

> *Our charities, mutuals, co-operatives and social enterprises are pioneering new models of production that enhance social value, promote financial inclusion, and give individuals and communities power and control* (Labour, 2015, p.21).

Labour appeals to the flexibility and dynamic nature of NPOs. The ambiguity around the idea of co-creation, allows for a shared interpretation of meaning around notions such as social value, financial inclusion, power and control. Over the course of the era, the party layer this idea emphasising the need to collaborate; *"A Labour government will create a more equal society for the many by working with communities, civil society and business to reduce loneliness"* (Labour, 2017, p.68). By encouraging organisations from different sectors to work together NPOs are persuaded by pointing to the potential for creating mutual value in addressing need.

The sentiment is highlighted again, promoting collaboration to shape services:

> *Labour civil society strategy: Based on the principles of co-production, this will involve giving service users the right to be actively involved in shaping those services directly accountable to service users. In many cases this will involve charities or campaign groups that can advocate for vulnerable services users who need more help to participate* (Labour, 2019, p.7).

The reference to co-production reflects relational power in ideas and entrenching action by persuading NPOs of the mutual value of collaboration. Relatedly, the text invites interpretation, allowing NPOs to consider the needs of their own context and how they might work with other organisations in the non-profit or public sector to advocate on behalf of beneficiaries.

The overarching emphasis on collaboration is reframed in a similar way by the Conservatives;

> *The future we want is one of collaboration and 'co-creation'[...] .In the past we have too often thought of these foundations as separate from each other. But when they work together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Government alone cannot solve the complex challenges facing society, such as loneliness, rough-sleeping, healthy ageing or online safety. Government can help to bring together*

the resources, policies and people who, between them, can do so (Conservatives, 2018, p.11-12).

Notably, the idea of collaboration illustrated above highlights the importance of NPOs in policy direction. Indeed, this illustrates the way that NPOs are persuaded to respond to needs, in some cases, needs that are arguably amplified by the direction to reduce welfare provision. Indeed, the extract above does not reflect any sense of addressing the root causes of issues such as rough sleeping, rather it focuses attention on other organisations assuming they can respond to overcome such challenges. The persuasive tone promotes collaboration as a good idea with a sense that this is a simple way to fix complex problems. This persuades that collective working matters to resolve issues, whilst overlooking how policy might have contributed to inequality. By involving NPOs and other organisations, the text appeals to the principles of NPOs to meet and respond to societal needs.

5.6.2. Political power over ideas; entrenched collaboration

Political power over ideas, resides in a criticism directed to NPOs for failing to address the root causes of problems in society; *"More widely, we will encourage local services to co-locate, so that they work together to shift from sticking plaster solutions to integrated early help"* (Labour, 2015, p.44). This controls the mission or agenda of NPO collaboration dominating by asserting the need to work more closely with others engaged in welfare service delivery, the need to adopt an integrated approach dominating and diluting the nuanced services that specialist NPOs might provide for example.

Related to the idea of a shared vision in society, political power over ideas in both the Conservative and Labour parties' civil society documents of 2018 and 2019 argues that NPOs can work more closely together. Here for example, the Conservative Party emphasise the need for NPOs to collaborate widely in order to create a shared vision:

> *The government is running the Place Based Social Action programme with Big Lottery Fund. The programme helps communities to collaborate with local private and public sector organisations to create a shared vision for the place they live and work in. The government wants this kind of collaboration to become commonplace* (Conservatives, 2018, p.13).

The role of NPOs collaborating together along with organisations from other sectors extends and diffuses policy agendas at a societal level. In the wider context of the document, this continues the aim of creating ever greater independence from state-run welfare provision. As discussed at other points in the chapter, the ongoing agenda carries with it the potential to dominate the aims and mission of NPOs.

The Labour Party's idea of a shared vision published one year later, also reflects political power over ideas, entrenching collaboration through parameters related to NPOs' activities;

> *We will give communities a bigger say by increasing representation from local charities, community organisations and social enterprises on local enterprise partnerships, requiring them to promote inclusive growth that tackles inequality and invests in people* (Labour, 2019a, p.5).

Here, collaboration locates NPOs as responsible for creating a more equal society. Once again, this highlights the way in which ideas, whilst seemingly making sense, create the potential to separate NPOs from their own aims. NPOs are led by an expectation that they can address not just the problems in society but also the underlying causes of issues. Consequently, NPOs' own mission is blurred.

5.6.3. Ideological power in ideas; entrenched collaboration

This final section exploring policy documents sees ideological power in ideas manifest in policy agendas. The ideas in the section demonstrate the enduring nature and hegemonic assumptions that underpin the need to collaborate in policy documents. Indeed, this reflects Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) sense of ideological power in ideas based on years of understanding between actors. From this perspective, the sense that NPOs should and must work together has become so expected and accepted, it becomes camouflaged within the text.

Some documents from this era demonstrate ideological power in ideas in the way that the structural and institutional positions locate policy actors as leaders who direct NPOs to incite collaboration. The sense of collective working in the Conservative Party's civil society strategy of 2018, sets out the importance of collaboration between a host of

organisations and individuals in society. It is made clear that policy makers lead the agenda with other organisations playing a supporting role; *"This Strategy is intended to help government strengthen the organisations, large and small, which hold our society together"* (Conservatives, 2018, p.10). The sense of bringing people together seeks to resonate with NPOs in ways that appear reasonable and are framed to gather appeal.

Here for example, NPO's are situated as the deliverer, expected to respond to policy aims.

> *The role of government – and the purpose at the heart of this Strategy – is to act as the convenor of the emerging coalition of people and organisations which, together, have the answers to the challenges of our times* (Conservatives, 2018, p.18).

In the document, responsibility for entrenched societal problems is deferred to NPOs and their constituents who are collectively tasked with addressing issues, potentially outside of their domain.

Interestingly, the text supports the nature of state leadership by stating how NPOs support state action, "We also heard that the government should build the evidence base of what works and promote improvement of civil society activities and services" (Conservatives, 2018, p.25). This serves to further situate the state as "convenor" limiting the need for state run service provision. Entrenched collaboration in this sense is not framed around interaction between organisations but to further the aim of an independent society able to respond to its own problems. Thus, through collaboration, structural hierarchy is less concerned with bottom-up interaction. Rather collaboration is entrenched in the assumption that NPOs will work together in the absence of state provision.

Finally, and especially representative of ideological power in ideas, the responsibilities suggested in some documents is reminiscent of the pre-Beveridge era where NPOs operated independently to address needs in the absence of state support (see section 2.2). However, as highlighted above, the reach of ideological power in ideas blends historical relationships within a new reality that directs NPO relationships with communities, beneficiaries and other forms of organisation. The Conservative Party's 2015 manifesto for example, draws on this to influence action,

> *We have always believed that churches, faith groups and other voluntary groups play an important and longstanding role in this country's social fabric, running foodbanks, helping the homeless, and tackling debt and addictions, such as alcoholism and gambling* (Conservatives Party, 2015, p.46).

Combined with a lack of structural support, fiscal constraints borne out of the austerity agenda, the idea draws on notions of philanthropy and charity reflecting the traditional role and expectations associated with NPOs. By emphasising this historic tradition, NPOs are assumed to be able to respond to wicked problems (see section 1.1). Collaboration is not mentioned in the text however, individual NPOs would be unlikely to have the resources or knowledge to tackle such issues in isolation.

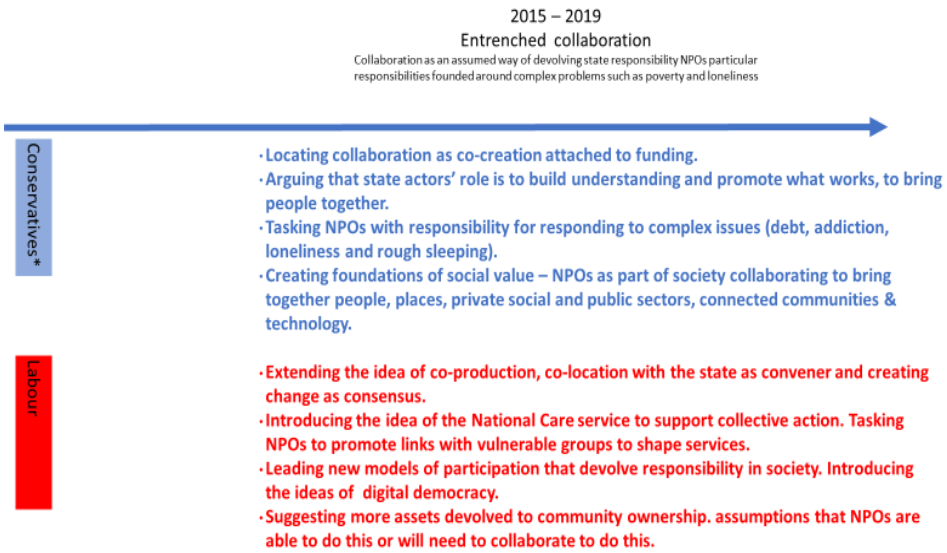
Whilst the rhetoric of partnership subsides over time, the ongoing assumption that collaboration should be widely adopted to address need and problems, prevails. Therefore. bringing communities together continues to be an entrenched idea. Indeed, the recent election manifesto demonstrated limited overt interest in NPOs, however the assumptions outlined above prevailed,

> *And we stand for those who give their time to help others – the charities, community groups and volunteers who already do so much to make our country a better place. We believe, in other words, that Britain is a great country – the greatest place on earth. Together, we can make it greater still* (Conservatives, 2019, p.25).

Highlighted at the start of this section, the text above is an example that illustrates how ideological power in ideas reflects inherent assumptions that entrench collaboration in policy documents. It reflects the essence of the institutional relationship set out in Chapter Two whilst concealing the motive to remove funded state services.

Through ideas that point to the ongoing need for NPOs to deliver services to respond to wicked problems, policy documents make little mention of collaboration. However, their strategies point to the expectation that NPOs need to increase their own skills and those of beneficiaries, alluding to the need to collaborate. Therefore, as shown in Figure 17 below, collaboration is entrenched in the way that social habits are ingrained in the sense that through working together, the needs of NPOs and their beneficiaries will be met as a sub agenda that removes the need for state welfare services.

Figure 17 - Entrenched NPO collaboration (2015 – 2019)



5.7. Chapter summary

By chronicling the evolving perspectives of the Conservative and Labour parties' ideas between 1997 - 2019, it is possible to distinguish how ideas of collaboration connect and depart between these two political parties. The Conservatives foreground a focus on NPO collaboration to achieve efficiency through contracts for example. However, in earlier Labour documents, notions of efficiency are absent as collaboration is catalysed between 1997-2001. From 2001 onwards, Labour's ideas reflect collaboration as a way of achieving efficiencies. In this vein, ideas reflect collaboration to create economies of scale and as such, mirror those of the Conservative party. The latter make clear their market preferences by couching this as replication associated with shared practice and knowledge transfer, borrowing ideas from the private sector and the example of well-known coffee shop chains. Other elements of similarity between political the two political parties construct collaboration around the need for NPOs to run physical spaces such as pubs and libraries. What remains distinct throughout in the context of collaboration, is the emphasis that Labour places on relationships in society associated with social justice. In sum, the Conservatives more readily seem to adopt a place of directing NPOs and

devolving services, the Labour Party more frequently do so by focusing on the potential of collaboration to connect vulnerable groups and marginalised communities.

In summary, close interrogation of the documents using the lens of relational, political and ideological power and ideas has revealed in granular detail the ways that policy documents frame the purpose of collaboration between NPOs. The constellation of ideas in each era reflect how collaboration is catalysed (1997-2001, elevated (2001-2005), embedded (2005-2010), cast as empowerment (2010-2015) then entrenched (2015-2019). By scrutinising documents through this lens, it illustrates the way relational power through ideas encourages collaboration. Political power over ideas has focused on how language in the text sets out the parameters around the construction of NPO collaboration. Ideological power in ideas illuminates the application of widely held societal beliefs in texts underpinned with assumptions about what can be considered viable or reasonable relative to collaboration at specific points in time. It demonstrates how policy documents shape meaning around devolved state responsibility for delivering services and relatedly assumptions that NPOs will deliver ever more services to meet complex needs. The next chapter adopts the approach of the framework to survey the ways in which NPOs' representative bodies respond to the ideas of collaboration. In doing so, Chapter Seven considers the vantage of NPOs through their own discursive ideas to illustrate the layered construction of collaboration in a complex environment and pay attention to the often-overlooked ideas of NPROs.

Chapter 6 NON-PROFIT REPRESENTATIVES' DOCUMENTS DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTING COLLABORATION

Having set out the historical construction of NPO collaboration in policy documents, this chapter turns to NPRO documents to undertake a similar task. The analysis illuminates their role in mediating and moderating NPO collaboration by scrutinising 12 documents from the ACEVO, NCIA and NCVO, comprising a combined 551 pages (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.3). The insights presented show how, through examples demonstrating relational, political and ideological power, NPROs persuade, resist or reflect assumptions through the construction of NPO collaboration. Consequently, the findings challenge the prevailing assumption that NPROs are broadly compliant and supportive of policy agendas. The findings below pertaining to distinguishing the role of different NPROS and in doing so, add a new dimension to the layered and multifaceted construction of NPO collaboration in documents.

As in the previous chapter, the analysis also contributes to the development of DI theory. However, the approach deviates somewhat. Here, the DI framework is applied to explore and disseminate characteristics associated with only one specific element of ideational power. Hence, the NCVO are viewed through the lens of relational power through ideas, the NCIA through the lens of political power over ideas and finally the ACEVO through the lens of ideological power in ideas. The rationale for this shift in the presentation of the findings was borne out of an initial analysis that mirrored the temporal approach taken in Chapter Five. This highlighted an apparent distinction between each NPRO, indicating tendencies that resonated with specific forms of power. Therefore, the decision was taken to present the analysis in this chapter by looking at each individual NPRO, exploring how their ideas epitomised ideational power through a specific lens. This is not to say that NPROs documents specifically resonated only with specific forms of ideational power. Indeed, the findings shown below highlight how certain ideas can be congruent with more than one form of ideational power. However, this afforded an alternative and an interesting application of the lens.

Subsequent sections show how, infused with a persuasive approach reminiscent of relational power in ideas, the NCVO epitomises the notion of mediating and moderators of collaboration. The ideas below show how they cautiously support and promote policy

priorities, whilst simultaneously refining them in ways that render them palatable to NPOs and beneficiaries. In contrast, the NCIA's documents frame an overt stance against collaboration. Their expression of political power over ideas constructs NPO collaboration through ideas that encourage activism and insurgency. Finally, the findings show how ideas in the ACEVO's documents consistently reflect neoliberal features associated with ideological power in ideas (see Figure 8 on page 108). In the ACEVO's documents, collaboration is aligned with the scope for NPOs to assume a greater role in welfare service delivery.

6.1. The NCVO constructing collaboration; relational power through ideas.

Of the three groups of representative organisations studied, the NCVO readily exemplifies relational power through ideas. The findings, taken from five NCVO documents (see Chapter Four, Table 9, for detail and rationale) show how their ideas mediate and moderate NPO collaboration through persuasion, an apparent appeal to the state and NPOs in equal measure. The findings highlight how the NCVO's approaches reflect ideational power constructing collaboration around potential opportunities, sector principles, beneficiary needs, funding, and leadership relative to collaboration. Table 16 below presents an example of the application of the DI framework, mapping how ideational power represents relational power through ideas constructing collaboration.

Table 16 - Example of analysis of the NCVO through the lens of Relational Power through ideas

Example of text constructing collaboration **(NCVO, 2005, p.60)**	Interpretive analysis in iteration with the DI framework.	*Application of the DI framework: how does the text resonate with r**elational power through** ideas constructing* **collaboration through persuasive means; facilitating / signalling the need for change in collaboration**?
Supporters of joining up should not think that everything should be lumped together in some sort of vast organisational amalgamation. ***Indeed, joining up starts from the premise that many players have different experiences and capacities and as such have something of value to bring to the table.*** ***The point is to get them to the table in a way that joint objectives can be pursued, and that allows collaboration to develop.***	Creates a case that collaboration is valuable and matters, through a sense of possibility. Collaboration does not have to create homogonous organisations. Emphasises the significance of all NPOs' contributions, no matter what size or specialism, that supports the notion of an imagined role for all. Stresses the potential for mutual value and learning Metaphorically invites collaboration through an imagined meeting, fostering the potential to consider the coalitions that might be formed. Creates a sense of adaptability linked to the organic evolution of an ambiguous shared strategy.	Persuade others to accept/ adopt ideas. Shows how ideas of collaboration can be adaptable. Illustrates the mutual value of the idea. Highlights the relevance of why collaboration matters. Builds a coalition with other organisations. Casts a sense of how things should work, the real or perceived knowledge of a given group.

The sections below reflect this approach to the analysis to explore how these ideas in the NCVO documents reflect relational power through ideas.

6.1.1. Collaboration as opportunity

The NCVOs ideas set out in the section below promote the value of collaboration. They equally raise questions about how the unique nature / independence of the sector might be diluted through collaboration. The NCVO document, *Voluntary Action; meeting the challenges of the 21st Century (*2005), situates relational power around the potential for NPOs to go further in delivering welfare services. Here, the scene is set, persuasive in extolling the potential of collaboration, quoting the anthropologist Margaret Mead; "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has*" (NCVO, 2005, p.1). Linked to the principles of NPOs, it resonates with relational power in ideas, creating a sense of shared purpose that chimes with a normative idea of the potential power of collective endeavour, setting the tone for NPOs to achieve mutual value and become a stronger force through collaboration.

The persuasive tone continues, framing collaborative relationships as a way of creating mutual value, foregrounding the importance of organisations' individuality and unique experience.

> *Supporters of joining up should not think that everything should be lumped together in some sort of vast organisational amalgamation. Indeed, joining up starts from the premise that many players have different experiences and capacities and as such have something of value to bring to the table. The point is to get them to the table in a way that joint objectives can be pursued, and that allows collaboration to develop* (NCVO, 2005, p.60).

By arguing that collaboration is valuable and matters, the NCVO document creates a sense of possibility. The focus on collaboration as a subject, allows the idea to diffuse and develop through language that highlights the value of mutual learning. Metaphorically, it invites collaboration through an imagined meeting, fostering the potential to consider the coalitions that might be formed. The idea emphasises the significance of all NPOs' capacity to contribute, regardless of size or specialism, that supports the notion of an imagined role for all. Further chiming with relational power through ideas, it creates a sense of adaptability linked to the conception of a shared strategy.

In a later document, *Open Public Services; experiences from the voluntary sector*, the NCVO respond to the Coalition government's *Open Public Services Paper* of 2010. This emphasises collaboration in the context of reciprocal exchange as a response to societal challenges:

> *That is the nature of the voluntary sector, a sea of differing views, exchanging ideas, collaboration par excellence; its diversity the very opposite of tyranny. We are back to Beveridge, who knew this, and those who are minded to discharge the golden rules of* ***public service - do no harm and make a difference - know*** **it too** (NCVO, 2012, p.3, **emphasis** in text).

Congruent with relational power through ideas, this draws attention to the principles of public service associated with the Beveridge Report of 1942, the NCVO inferring that the organisation and NPOs value collaboration and see it as a crucial part of the role of NPOs in relation to free exchange of ideas. The text indicates that collaboration works best when it enables reciprocal practice that welcomes diversity and difference, persuading by moderating the potential for policy agendas to dominate. It is also persuasive in the way it highlights the importance of an independent sector free to collaborate in response to societal issues through the application of the medical metaphor, "*do no harm" (2012, p.3*). Whilst it continues to support normative ideas of collaboration, this casts a sense of how the relationship between the state and sector should work, ensuring policy agendas do not create problems for NPOs or beneficiaries and that the state has a role in meeting societal needs.

6.1.2. Collaboration, independence and values

In 2004, the NCVO published a document that was subsequently republished in 2008. The republication of the document is in itself interesting, pointing to the importance of re-emphasising the messages therein. It debates the importance of the NPOs to all major UK political parties, specifically around collaboration and the potential for NPOs to lose their autonomy. The document tentatively encourages collaboration but also highlights the inherent tension between collaboration with other NPOs and the public / private sectors. The following sections apply the lens of relational power through ideas to show how the NCVO constructs ideas of collaboration around the importance of independence

whilst simultaneously highlighting opportunities to play a greater role in delivering services.

Relational power through ideas crystallises in text that sets out an appeal encouraging stakeholders to grapple with the idea of collaboration by considering its real or perceived effects. The text invites debate and reflection, challenging the notion that a loss of autonomy and independence is problematic. As such, it is persuasive in highlighting the potential for joint work as a way of achieving more. Initially, the document reflects a tentative concern around policy agendas;

> *Perhaps the real concern with greater engagement with other sectors is not losing real operational independence, but that greater partnership working, or contracting, or becoming more professionalised (or businesslike) will cause the sector to lose its ethos and values* (NCVO, 2004/2008, p.21).

Though the text in the document initially alludes to the potential for loss of identity, changing the character of the sector, it goes on to counter this idea. Referring to the Deakin report of 1996, the NCVO stress the importance, not only of independence but also of the accountability of NPOs;

> *Independence can equal irresponsibility: in some cases, checks and balances are needed. As Nicholas Deakin has rightly pointed out, we should not presume that independence trumps accountability* (NCVO, 2004/2008, p.21).

Critically, this is consistent with relational power through ideas by emphasising why collaboration matters as a way to underpin the principles and expectations of NPOs. Hence, it frames the underlying importance of the conditions around collaboration. This focuses on the importance of collaboration within a range of sectors to counter the possibility of negative effects associated with independence.

Later, the document locates a similar sentiment, encouraging NPOs to be more amenable towards policy agendas;

> *At the end of the day, decisions clearly taken to work collaboratively, or to compromise on certain issues in order to deliver on other of our objectives, is not evidence of a loss of independence in the sector. If anything, it is evidence of*

> *pragmatism and taking advantage of an environment where others, and particularly government, want to work with us* (NCVO, 2008, p.42).

In essence, the document layers ideas from the Deakin report (as discussed in section 2.5), persuading NPOs that collaboration with others is an important way to gain or retain public accountability, framing it as a condition of service delivery. In this, NPOs are invited to consider their capacity to achieve more by making the most of opportunities offered by the government. The tone is positive; the inference in language persuasive by asserting that any loss of identity or autonomy in NPOs can be overcome - or may be worth losing in order to play a more central role. Ideas in the extracts above are congruent with ideas in policy documents that catalyse and elevate the ideas of collaboration (see sections 5.2 & 5.3) highlighted in the previous chapter. The NCVO reflects a persuasive approach that encourages collaboration between NPOs as well as with other organisations by rationalising collaboration, mitigating concern about the prospective loss of independence. Nonetheless, other aspects of the NCVO's ideas demonstrate concern with the implications of collaboration by focusing on the needs and importance of beneficiaries. The next section turns to ideas in the NCVO documents that emphasise these stakeholders.

6.1.3. Promoting beneficiaries in collaboration

The needs of beneficiaries reflect an important facet of NCVO, as well as other NPRO documents. Here for example, the NCVO draw attention to these stakeholders in relation to the terms on which collaborative relationships are founded;

> *The question that remains unresolved is the precise terms on which the relationship will develop and the advantages and drawbacks to the partners and (more important) the individual citizens and groups on whose behalf the voluntary sector asserts its claim to operate* (NCVO, 2005, p.24).

This represents relational power through ideas by elevating the focus on beneficiary needs. By urging NPOs to consider their wider aims, they foreground this group of stakeholders, appealing to a sense that they should be at the centre of debate in partnership arrangements.

The idea is emphasised more explicitly below, here, questioning the extent to which local government or certain local organisations legitimately support the needs of minority groups;

> *Knowledge of the locality does not always imply a willingness to adapt practice to users' needs in sensitive ways. This is a particularly important issue, coming at a time when the need to reflect the diversity of the population at large and the wide range of interests reflected across the spectrum of voluntary action now taking place. The interests of minorities (of every kind) need to be reflected effectively in the policy dialogues now taking place and in the partnership arrangements put in place on the ground* (NCVO, 2005, p.31).

Hence, the text constructs collaboration through debate around partnerships. The language in the text is persuasive, encouraging a focus on NPOs and other stakeholders, specifically highlighting the needs to involve overlooked groups in partnership arrangements. This layers and extends policy ideas related to the importance of collaboration in ways that consider the needs of vulnerable groups (see for example sections 5.4.2 & 5.6.1). However, as well as challenging NPOs to consider minority groups, it also emphasises the state's role in taking into account the needs of such groups rather than situating sole responsibility with NPOs through their construction of collaboration.

6.1.4. Making use of assets for mutual value

Further to moulding ideas around beneficiaries' needs, the NCVO also constructs collaboration around the operation of physical and human assets. Prompting consideration of the value of sharing to enhance or retain services, the ideas pre-empt those that subsequently appear in policy documents (for example 5.6.1). In their document exploring future challenges and opportunities for the sector, the NCVO (2005) anticipates opportunities for collaborative approaches that involve sharing not only physical spaces, but also coming together in a strategic way to build coalitions.

> ***Working together and sharing resources***
>
> *And finally, given the overlap in objectives of many organisations, it is important to further explore and develop forms of mutual support, particularly if this enables*

sustainability for activities that may not be able to be otherwise viable. In fact, this is practical social capital in action!

Such activities could include:

Consortia of organisations sharing back office functions and jointly tendering and delivering. This is the model of many Italian social co-operatives who are enabled, through this approach to retain the benefits of small scale but economies of scale from coming together.

Sharing resources such as buildings (purchased as assets for example), or functions such as accountancy, or staff, or childcare facilities etc. (NCVO, 2005, p.192).

This poses the idea of mutual value through collaboration, a straightforward notion of a union of organisations working together and operating in the same space. Interestingly, the support and assumptions related to the idea seem to pre-empt the Labour Party's idea in 2006 to support collaboration, not only by sharing human skills and resources but also physical space too. It resonates with relational power in ideas in the way it invites organisations to imagine how and with whom they might form a consortium and for what shared or overlapping purpose. Though it facilitates the idea of mutual value, it fails to recognise the issues that collaborative consortia might experience and the dependencies they might create in terms of the cost and demands of managing physical space as well as delivering services. Hence, the idea that services overlap leaves open the opportunity for mergers, and relatedly the potential for certain aspects of service to diminish or disappear over time.

The importance of assets is highlighted by the NCVO again in 2019. Here, the text infers that services, support and space for community participation have been withdrawn.

Provide new spaces and opportunities for local activism and participation in the community. Thousands of community spaces are lost every year, from youth clubs to libraries, from pubs to playgrounds. Investment is needed to create the buildings and spaces that bring people together and build connections and community (NCVO, 2019).

The persuasive nature of the text stresses two themes. First, by highlighting the effects of cuts in terms of lost state supported services and provision (also resonating with political power over ideas). Second, by highlighting the importance of collaboration through *"connection"* and *"participation"* to build communities, it infers that reduced investment in services has limited NPOs and beneficiaries to inform the direction of policy. Thus, the element of persuasion brings to prominence the capacity of NPOs to build connections. As well as generating a sense of lost resource, there is also a pronounced focus on problems associated with a lack of investment. This is centred on the practicalities of the funding and investment needed to operate and distinguishes the importance of financial support needed to sustain services and relatedly collaboration. Hence, the ideas presented align with the Conservative and Labour civil society documents (addressed in section 5.6) in the sense that they construct collaboration as part of the wider role of NPOs. Equally they emphasise the responsibility of the state, providing the financial support needed to support services.

6.1.5. Funding and the conditions of collaboration

Though the extracts above show how ideas encourage change in terms of shared space and persuade of the need for funding of physical spaces, the issue of funding is considered to lead NPOs away from their organisational goals. As with issues of independence highlighted above in section 6.1.2, the NCVO raises the issue of mission drift in collaborative partnerships.

> *Similarly, the amount of time and energy committed to a major partnership project may mean that an organisation focuses on a limited number of its objectives, which it shares with its other partners, but leaves it little if any time and resources to devote to other aspects of its mission which do not form part of the partnership. From the point of view of the funder, this is not unreasonable: he who pays the piper calls the tune.*
>
> *The VCS wants to preserve its integrity and its independence, then organisations need to negotiate the terms and conditions of a contract and be prepared to walk away from funding or partnerships that do not help to meet their core purposes.*

> *The sector needs to remember that it does not have to dance to another person's tune* (NCVO, 2004/2008, p.32).

The text is infused with a sense of caution in the construction of collaboration, linked to the principle of public life and funders' expectations of NPOs. Although there is an element of resistance that can arguably be associated with political power over ideas, it is more readily representative of relational power through ideas via a warning that reflects the principles of public service related to the expectations of NPOs. This frames the conditions of collaboration through the use of the phrase *"he who pays the piper calls the tune"*, essentially warning NPOs that if they do collaborate to gain funding then their mission and time may be compromised. Equally, the use of emotive language around *integrity* and *independence* is persuasive in the way it endorses the potential to walk away from collaboration. Notably, the idea frames the importance of NPOs shaping the nature of collaborative ventures by asserting or being aware of their purpose.

In text taken from more recent documents, the NCVO highlights the issues associated with sub-contracting for private sector organisations.

> *Instances where voluntary organisations are acting as subcontractor to a private prime contractor are increasing. This requires careful risk management within the voluntary sector, as it deals with the nuances of working with new partners in a different sector. Research from New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) has shown that the voluntary sector enjoys better contractual relationships with other voluntary organisations than with the private and public sectors, indicating there is a potential clash of organisational cultures* (NCVO, 2012, p.44).

The presentation of the idea privileges relationships between NPOs, arguing that they are more likely to succeed as potential collaborators. This is persuasive by drawing attention to the potentially precarious situation NPOs may find themselves in with certain forms of collaboration. The idea is afforded legitimacy through support from a further organisation, New Philanthropy Capital, whose apparent concern with funding and contracting adds an element of kudos to the idea. As well as relational power through ideas, this also resonates with political power over ideas by demonstrating a level of resistance related to collaboration with the private sector through contract work. The text subtly signposts NPOs to collaborate with other NPOs to retain greater independence

and mitigate the possibility of interference from dominant or more powerful organisations.

6.1.6. The NCVO and collaboration as consortia

Extending the idea of collaboration amongst NPOs, the idea of consortia is encouraged as a way to create funding opportunities. In their document focusing on the factors that lead to success through collaborative consortia, the NCVO associate the development of these coalitions to the principles of community building and cost saving;

> *Working in consortia can help voluntary sector organisations win contracts and deliver better quality public services. They enable small, expert organisations that might otherwise be excluded from public service markets to compete for larger contracts and receive capacity building support. By bringing service providers together formally, consortia can also improve communities' experiences of services and create cost savings for commissioners* (NCVO, 2016, p.6).

Although the idea of consortia appears more business-like, it catalyses collaboration by emphasising and elevating the potential value of smaller organisations. Hence, relational power through ideas reflects the possibilities and adaptable nature of consortia. This is underpinned through the potential of financial sustainability married with the inference that services will benefit. As such, it mediates and moderates by framing the virtue of collaboration to NPOs, whilst simultaneously chiming with the notion of doing more for less, evident in policy documents (see section 5.6).

Furthering the value of the idea, the NCVO incorporates vignettes in their document. These small sections of text encourage collaboration by providing insight drawn from the experiences of those who have led or engaged in the practice of collaboration as consortia;

> *Engage, engage & engage, with public sector commissioners AND procurement to assist them to understand the potential of consortium models* (Consortium leader, NCVO, 2016, p. 13).

Consequently, the importance of consortia constructs the idea of collaboration as a way to create mutual values. The tone creates a sense that collaboration is an imperative part

of NPOs' existence, demonstrating to NPOs the assumed value they can add by building coalitions through consortia. The use of the vignette in itself is persuasive by highlighting the lived experiences of those who have successfully created contracted opportunities. Relational power through ideas normalises the importance of doing more with less, urging NPOs to divert efforts into marketing their services to other NPOs and commissioning bodies. Thus, the text ignites a sense of possibility through the construction of collaboration.

6.1.7. Policy development and leadership; creating mutual value through collaboration

As well as Consortia, the NCVO emphasises collaboration as consultancy, where leading actors from the non-profit sector work with the government to shape policy agendas. In this way the principles of engagement shape the expectations and implications of collaboration. This is presented as a positive approach to creating shared value for state and sector;

> *Voluntary and Community sector organisations are increasingly consulted on policy issues that will impact on them: staff and trustees have been invited onto advisory groups, steering groups and partnership boards; and many VCS staff have been seconded in to government to help develop policies* (NCVO, 2004 / 2008, p.11).

The text, taken from the NCVO's documents, demonstrates relational power through ideas through the notion of mutual value associated with the potential of collaboration relative to consultation and policy development. This is presented as an equitable exchange; however, a more detailed examination of the text reveals that NPOs are cast as advisors rather than leaders in developing policy. Moreover, this kind of collaboration assumes that representative NPOs have the confidence and power to work at policy level and influence policy development.

Despite potential issues of power and control in orienting collaboration, the NCVO couch responsibility for collaboration with NPOs;

> *As voluntary organisations take on new roles in partnerships, helping to identify problems and develop policy solutions, they need to accept a degree of shared responsibility for both the process and the outcome* (NCVO, 2004/2008, p.31).

The idea presented above encourages NPOs not to enter into collaborative arrangements lightly, reflecting the principles associated with working within policy agendas. This foregrounds NPOs' own role and responsibilities and is persuasive in framing the important role of NPOs in actively informing the relationship rather than being passive recipients who merely accept policy directives. This facilitates a more active role in collaboration yet assumes that those responsible for policy are equally willing to listen and respond to the input of the NPOs they work with.

Yet, in a document published a year later, concerns are raised about the co-option of leaders, highlighting the possibility of a loss of focus in pursuit of power;

> *Leaders with demonstrated charisma are also at perpetual risk of being co-opted: political parties at local level depend on being able to spot and recruit potential stars by offering them the poisoned bait of political office. Latterly the exponential growth of partnership structures offers many opportunities for able community leaders but also multiple distractions that may progressively take them away from their original roots. Participation in elaborate coordination exercises like Local Strategic Partnerships risks blunting their effectiveness* (NCVO, 2005, p.37).

Linked to the principles of NPO leadership, the text highlights the opportunities and pitfalls associated with collaboration at policy level. In particular, the pursuit of engaging at policy level is considered to be a potential threat to the legitimacy of leaders. The inference applies to NPROs themselves, emphasising the blurred boundary between collaborating with NPOs to support their aims and collaborating at a macro level to shape policy. At core, this embodies relational power through ideas by distinguishing the role of key leaders; encouraging them to consider whom they are representing and for what purpose. Arguably, the language implies that leaders in the sector are susceptible to collaborating in ways that minimise their concerns and impact in terms of a focus on beneficiaries.

6.1.8. Summarising the role of the NCVO

At their core, the NCVO's documents frequently echo the characteristics of relational power through ideas in the way they construct collaboration, arguably reconciling the needs of NPOs and beneficiaries with the agenda of the state. As such their texts frequently balance the challenges and opportunities associated with collaboration. In particular, they are persuasive in emphasising the scope to capitalise on shared values, shared space, and the shared responsibility of the state and sector. However, their ideas also construct collaboration around prompts related to the mission of NPOs as well as their unique nature marked standing to be diluted through collaboration. It also illustrates the fine line taken by representatives and leaders who collaborate to shape policy, highlighting the potential for problems to emerge where policy agendas override those of NPOs. The findings show how the NCVO's apparent support of collaboration diminishes over time as resources and support for the sector shrink. Relatedly, this casts the importance of the state's role in meeting societal needs.

In contrast to the NCVO's persuasive approach, the chapter next turns to the NCIA. Though they pursue similar issues to the NCVO, their text clearly represents political power over ideas. The NCIA documents are distinctive, challenging collaboration to deliver services in favour of collaborative activism.

6.2. The NCIA constructing collaboration; political power over ideas

The NCIA consisted of NPO members, scholars, and activists, who raised concern that NPOs were becoming more characterised by the private sector in favouring competition, emphasising efficiency gains and profit rather than focusing on beneficiaries (NCIA, 2015). Though all the representative bodies to some degree resist ideas of collaboration, the NCIA are distinct in the way they epitomise political power through ideas. The polarised perspective demonstrated through their documents overtly challenges the ideas of collaboration borne from an apparent concern that NPOs were losing their independence. The NCIA was a short-lived group, formed and operated over a five-year period between 2010-2015. Relevant documents from the NCIA are limited in quantity; only two, published in 2011 and 2013, are explored. Hence, the section is somewhat shorter than the preceding and following sections that focus on the NCVO and ACEVO. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the NCIA's ideas are informative and demonstrative of the

characteristics of political power over ideas, as demonstrated in the analytical example in below Table 17, adding a further dynamic to the response of representatives.

Table 17 - Example of analysis of the NCIA through the lens of Political Power over ideas

Example of text constructing collaboration (NCIA, 2013, p.28).	**Interpretive analysis in iteration with the DI framework.**	***Application of the DI framework; how does the text resonate with political power over ideas dominating, shaming and blaming; what does the text / elements of the document 'do' to reflect political power over ideas?***
Some subversive groups are building alliances with each other, for safety in numbers and for caucusing. *This was particularly evident amongst local voluntary services forced into consortia as part of contract tendering processes.* *In such cases, common principles and concerns can become a rallying call for activism and dissent – although examples also show how such consortia can become a home for division and internal conflict.*	Evokes a sense of a 'warning shot' or a 'call to arms' to NPOs about perceived deviant behaviour. Presents an overt challenge, arguing the propensity of collaboration to damage relationships and lead to infighting between NPOs. Shuns collaboration as consortia. Promotes a clear stance to limit trust of collaborative consortia. Reflects a clear line of battle. Uses powerful, emotive language that summons a tone of 'us' and 'them'.	Reflects on how institutional structures and access allow the promotion of certain ideas Employs shaming tactics that: Shows how a seemingly powerless organisation shames others. Suggests resistance by setting out alternative ideas.

The first document, *"For Insurgency; the Case against Partnership"* (2011) forms part of an academic paper published on the NCIA legacy website. It sets out an explicit argument campaigning against collaboration between NPOs, suggesting NPOs are passive and duped into colluding with policy agendas. The second *Here we stand; inquiry into local activism and dissent* (2013) reflects political power over ideas through a call to NPOs to engage in activism as a response to perceptions of injustice in society. The sections below show how ideas in the document support institutional challenge, arguing that NPOs should work together to resist policy ideas and influence change through collaboration.

6.2.1. The NCIA and collaboration in context

To appreciate and contextualise the ideas of the NCIA, it is useful to revisit state actors' ideas at this point in the section. Chapter Five (section 5.5) illustrated how NPOs were located in policy documents as key organisations to facilitate and catalyse collaborative action framed by the Big Society agenda. It highlighted the lobbying act as a means to quash collaboration between NPOs associated with campaigning against state actors. Also significant is the emergence of the austerity agenda and subsequent cuts to public services. The section above also showed the NCVO using the medical metaphor "*do no harm*" (NCVO, 2012, p.3), reminding stakeholders of an independent non-profit sector. Hence, it is possible to see aspects of layering between the ideas of the NCVO and the NCIA.

Notably, the NCIA ideas do not oppose collaboration per se. Indeed, the text here shows their support for collaboration as a form of activism to influence policy agendas; "*Much of this activism is collaborative, for example local groups in dialogue with statutory authorities in order to influence decision-making on their funding*" (NCIA, 2013, p.23). Hence, their ideas focus on NPOs, orienting a clear focus on their mission and role supporting beneficiaries. Crucially, in reflecting political power over ideas, collaboration is constructed as a way to challenge the structural issues that lead to societal needs and resistance as activism.

The group arose as a response to an apparent neoliberal ideology manifesting in the attitudes and principles of NPOs (NCIA, 2015). One of the papers explored, for example, is titled *"For Insurgency: the Case against Partnership*" (NCIA, 2011). The language of insurgency in itself reflects fighting talk - an overt attempt to control how NPOs approach collaboration. This diverts the idea of collaboration as a vehicle for organised activism, overtly challenging rather than passively reflecting policy priorities. The essence of the document sends an unambiguous message that is critical of collaboration between the state and sector;

> *Partnerships appear not to have delivered much by way of community empowerment, if by this we mean an authentic and effective political voice. As a community organisation in London put it, 'networking' is 'not-working'* (NCIA, 2011, p.1).

In direct contrast to ideas in policy documents that locate collaboration as a way of empowering NPOs as part of wider societal action, the extract points to collaboration as a means to draw NPOs closer to policy priorities. This text represents an argument that NPOs are not meaningful partners who can help inform policy agendas but are in partnership as service delivery agents only. Hence, ideational power manifests in the way this usurps the straightforward notion of collaboration, framing a lack of equity in collaboration and suggesting that relationships are not seen as a vehicle for structural change.

Undoubtedly, the NCIA is the most vociferous critic of state actors' attempts to embed collaboration, raising concern about the nature of collaboration and challenging the intent behind partnerships; *"There is a pervasive sense that instead of empowering communities, partnerships were often tokenistic, manipulative and even exclusionary"* (NCIA, 2011, p.1). The content of the text demonstrates the organisation's use of language that explicitly sets out to derail and challenge ideas of collaboration. As such, it reflects the negative connotations of partnership evoking a sense that collaboration is a gesture, rather than meaningful engagement; a way to dominate and exclude NPOs. The language negates the possibility that shared goals between the state and sector exist. In doing so, they draw attention to the drawbacks of collaboration, demonstrating clear resistance typified in political power over ideas.

Further examples illustrate the traits associated with political power over ideas through a reference to tactics apparently employed in the guise of collaboration that diminish trust and dismantle relationships between NPOs;

> *Yet, there is considerable evidence that pressures and compromises arising from gross power inequalities undermine the autonomy of voluntary groups in these relationships. The way some partnerships co-opt community groups into decisions about where the axe should fall is a glaring example* (NCIA, 2011, p.2).

In the text, the NCIA argues that through collaboration with the state, other sectors and NPOs, decisions have been made about who will or will not be eligible for funding. The NCIA frames this as subversive and damaging for NPOs, driving competition and limiting the organic forms of collaboration between organisations. Hence, the NCIA's text is strongly representative of political power over ideas in the way it is situated, shaming

more powerful actors for prompting competitive behaviours and encouraging NPOs to resist collaboration where it is tied to policy agendas.

6.2.2. The NCIA and collaboration as consortia

The idea of collaboration as consortia is also addressed by all three NPROs through emphasising the forms of power in different ways (see sections 6.1.4 & 6.3.1). The NCIA sees collaboration in this context as an overt attempt by which state actors affect and alter the nature of NPOs;

> *Some subversive groups are building alliances with each other, for safety in numbers and for caucusing. This was particularly evident amongst local voluntary services forced into consortia as part of contract tendering processes. In such cases, common principles and concerns can become a rallying call for activism and dissent – although examples also show how such consortia can become a home for division and internal conflict* (NCIA, 2013, p.28).

In the text, a clear line of battle is set. The use of powerful, emotive language summons a challenging tone of 'us' and 'them'. This tone of battle and resistance evokes a sense of a 'warning shot' or a 'call to arms' to NPOs about perceived deviant behaviour. The dominant focus of the message promotes a clear stance to limit trust of collaborative consortia. The idea presents an overt challenge, arguing the propensity of collaboration to damage relationships and lead to infighting between NPOs. Therefore, the NCIA's resistance is located in political power over ideas; shunning collaboration as consortia, and constructing alternative forms of collaboration between NPOs as a means of activism and dissent to challenge policy.

The demise of the NCIA perhaps suggests that the NCIA's attempts to frame collaboration around activism became overridden and the organisation defunct. A legacy website survives, one that details the aims, work and ideas of the group along with links to other organisations concerned with the independence of NPOs (NCIA, 2015). As such, their ideas stand to construct collaboration. In contrast to the NCIA, the chapter next considers the ACEVO who construct collaboration as a key strategy underpinned by the assumption that there should be a greater role for NPOs in welfare service delivery.

6.3. The ACEVO; constructing collaboration; ideological power in ideas

Of all three representative groups, over the period of this study, the ACEVO's documents especially demonstrate ideological power in ideas. Five documents explored in the sections below illustrate how ideas reflect a common-sense tone typified by this form of power, set out in the example in Table 18 on the following page. These ideas hark back to the early union of the state and sector through Fabianism described in Chapter Two (section 2.2). As well as historical assumptions, the sections below show how the ACEVO's documents chime with ideological power in ideas in the sense they align collaboration with neoliberal values of scale, efficacy and efficiency in their bid for NPOs to play a greater role in welfare delivery. The section comprises data extracted from five documents published between 2003 - 2019. The first, replacing the state, focuses on the potential for NPOs to play a greater role in delivering services. The documents also contain 'Free Society', published as an NPO manifesto ahead of the general election of 2015. The final document is a blog, written by Polly Neate, the CEO of Shelter, on behalf of the ACEVO. This takes a significant departure from ACEVO's well-trodden path expressing a desire for a prominent role for NPOs in service delivery through collaboration.

Table 18 - Example of analysis of the ACEVO through the lens of Ideological Power in ideas

Example of text constructing collaboration (ACEVO, 2006, p.7).	**Interpretive analysis in iteration with the DI framework.**	***Application of the DI framework how does the text resonate with ideological power in ideas hegemonic or historical assumptions about collaboration?***
Many of the advances in child care, mental health and disability services have been developed in sector organisations. *Harnessing the talent for networking, flexibility and different approaches and ideas is a core strength of the sector.*	Steeped in similar assumptions that emphasise the role of NPOs as an extension of the state. Reflecting the historical role played by NPOs as part of specialist provision. Asserts the sector's position as part of a wider institutional structure, Capitalising on the notion that NPOs have unique, specialist insight. Networking is located as a deep-rooted feature of the sector. Camouflages collaboration as an expected part of NPOs' character.	Indicate that ideas are based on historical relationships and understanding. Locates collaboration as an idea that is recognisable to both elites and the mass public. Assume what is considered viable or reasonable. Suggest that collaboration is assumed; an idea so acceptable it recedes into the background.

To set the scene, the following text illustrates the ACEVO's assumptions about working more closely with the state, *"A willingness to be collaborative and to work in partnership with Government is not lack of independence"* (ACEVO, 2006, p. 9). Therefore, unlike the NCVO who grapple with the link between collaboration and the nature of the sector, the text dismisses concerns around diminished independence. The sections below continue the analysis illustrating how this inference, congruent with the assumptive nature of ideological power in ideas, encapsulates ACEVO's approach to collaboration, overlooking issues in order to claim a bigger role for NPOs in welfare service delivery.

6.3.1. ACEVO and the hegemonic traits of neoliberalism in collaboration

The ACEVO's documents illustrate congruence with ideological power in ideas through the prevalence of an hegemonic market like language. This demonstrates assumptions that frame collaboration as viable and reasonable in the context of ideas of efficiency, quality, income and scale. The sentiment is perceptible in documents that argue for NPOs to play a greater role in delivering welfare services. Here, the text points to a consensus with the policy agenda of neoliberal values.

> *There has been a search for business solutions to social problems; social values of delivery based on equity or fairness are now joined by the objectives of efficiency, value for money and quality. Although a customer interface already exists between providers and users, services need to be better configured around the latter* (ACEVO, 2003, p. 24).

In terms of context setting, the construction of collaboration here reflects neoliberal market-based approaches to organising, prevalent from the 1980s onwards. Specifically, it elevates the significance of efficiency, value for money and quality, locating NPOs as providers and beneficiaries as consumers rather than stakeholders. As such, NPOs and beneficiaries are framed in a more passive and transactional way. Whilst the text does not address collaboration directly, the attitudes expressed towards service delivery are important, configuring these values in the context and expectations of NPOs.

Taken from the same document, the text below is more closely related to collaboration between NPOs and the public sector. It highlights the assumed benefits of cross sector relationships;

> *Growth in sector service delivery needs to be organic, building on specific local or national circumstances and preserving the strengths of both the public and the not for-profit sector. Partnership between the sectors will be vital in achieving the best service results* (ACEVO, 2003, p.6).

Again, the text couches hegemonic assumptions of neoliberalism through the notion of *'best service results'* emphasising the importance of impact. This combines collaboration across sectors with the supposition that it will automatically lead to improved services. The assumption overlooks the potential to dilute the quality of existing services, causing

mission drift associated with developing and sustaining relationships. This is presented as an unquestioning assumption that collaboration makes sense.

As explained in Chapter Two (section 2.5) neoliberal assumptions continued to play a fundamental role as part of Labour's agenda. Here, the ACEVO demonstrate their support for neoliberalism. The text below provides an example, conflating collaboration and competition with ideas of efficient and effective services;

> *A more diverse range of public, private and third sector providers are competing for service provision, or working in partnership to deliver services, for example with New Deal, Sure Start and mental health services. In many cases this has led to efficiency gains and improvements in the quality and accessibility of services* (ACEVO, 2003, p.23).

The idea of 'efficiency gains' is taken in the text as common sense, embedded in neoliberalism is unquestioning in the way it foregrounds collaboration, competition and efficiency as a positive force for organising. Further, collaboration and competition are framed as mutually constitutive; vehicles that work together to improve quality and accessibility for beneficiaries. At core, the merge of these ideas reflects ideological power in ideas by overlooking the potential tension they create. The text limits the possibility to challenge how values of trust and reciprocity, considered integral in collaborative relationships, might be inhibited in a competitive environment. This demonstrates how ideas overlap in ways that can create tension, where aspects of text carry assumptions that fail to address the propensity for problems at an organisational level.

In later documents published between 2014 and 2015, the ACEVO use more business-like terms and language that further demonstrate alignment with policy ideas and continue to argue for NPOs to play a bigger role in service delivery. In terms of collaboration, this sees action as 'strategy' to facilitate economies of 'scale' exemplified here;

> *What is often needed is something more strategic that will enable the sector to 'hit the ground running' often when new contracts come out* (ACEVO and Local Government, 2014, p.9)

and

> *The shift towards larger contracts ("aggregation"), propelled by the desire to create economies of scale and to harness savings from commissioning budgets* (ACEVO and Local Government, 2014, p.7).

The business-like language constructs collaboration not as a reciprocal and sharing activity to benefit NPOs and their beneficiaries, but rather as an approach considered variable and reasonable in light of the ongoing market preferences. Collaboration is mapped in the text as good sense in terms of an assumed capacity to create economies of scale. This reflects an appeal to those who make funding decisions and those engaged in action, framing it as a way to operate services efficiently through large contracts that orient and formalise collaboration. In this way, action allows policy priorities to diffuse through welfare services. Accordingly, collaboration framed in this way mitigates the focus on beneficiaries and NPOs' own agendas by favouring contractual obligations dictated at policy level.

Along with the propensity to utilise ideas that are associated with marketised preferences, the ACEVO infuses the notion of consortia with business-like language here;

> *Working as part of a consortia has a long history within the UK voluntary sector. Consortia exist on a spectrum from relatively loose and informal arrangements to more formalised and sometimes incorporated entities* (ACEVO and Local Government, 2014, p.8)

and here;

> *Big Society Capital should be tasked with or mandate an appropriate organisation to conduct research on the nature of Alliances and Consortia – and the conditions under which such alliances become investable with a view to wholesaling the market in these areas* (ACEVO, 2015, p.15).

In the text, consortia are treated as a way of creating efficiencies through scale, furthering the proximity of collaboration to neoliberal ideas. These ideas constrain action in the sense that they couch the importance of value for money at a time of fiscal challenge. Notably, this furthers the importance of efficiency, recognisable by elites and mass public therefore rendering it as common sense.

Collaboration as consortia is also embedded in ideas that aim to carve out a greater role for NPOs. This is a feature of the ACEVO's documents that resonates with ideological power in ideas in the way assumptions are made about the relative sense it makes as a response to austerity.

> *Consortium working is a way to harness the strengths of many great local organisations and give them leverage when working with commissioners and bidding for service opportunities* (ACEVO and Local Government, 2014, p.3).

Here, the idea reflects a way of extending power through collective action, carving out the potential to be more visible to and therefore able to access funding. Ideological power in ideas reflects structural positions (such as access to resources), directing collaboration by suggesting that NPOs are more fundable when working together.

Relational power through ideas underscores this by creating impetus to fuel action, an "*urgent context presented by a climate of financial austerity*" (ACEVO and Local Government, 2014, p.7). The notion of urgency propels action. In the texts, there is little sense that collaboration matters in its normative form, only that it enables an agenda of austerity, emphasising that NPOs need to respond by doing more with less income.

6.3.2. ACEVO and the historical association with ideological power in ideas

Displaying the historical traits of ideological power in ideas, the ACEVO focus their attention on the important role that NPOs traditionally played in extending state services. The case evolves through layered ideas that build and emphasise the perceived strengths of the sector, supporting the argument NPOs can play a greater role. In 2003, this is echoed in the assumption that NPOs are dynamic and flexible organisations;

> *Despite the rhetoric about local autonomy over delivery, many local managers in public bodies still complain that the centre wields too much control over relatively minor decisions. This affects local bodies' capacity to deliver public services in a locally responsive and bespoke manner. Because many third sector organisations operate in specific locations, often with multiple partners, they are able to be 'fleet of foot' in the way they assess local need and target services* (ACEVO, 2003, p.27).

The inference that NPOs frequently collaborate with "*multiple partners*" considers relationships to be assumed as normal and acceptable in such a way that they go unnoticed and unquestioned in the text. Ideological power in ideas therefore limits question and challenge as action is understood to be part of the inherent nature of NPOs; an assumed facet of NPOs' flexible and responsive approach.

The idea is evident again in a similar way in 2006;

> *Many of the advances in child care, mental health and disability services have been developed in sector organisations. Harnessing the talent for networking, flexibility and different approaches and ideas is a core strength of the sector* (ACEVO, 2006, p.7).

As well as being steeped in similar assumptions to the previous text, the language emphasises meaning in relation to NPOs as an extension of the state, reflecting the historical role played by NPOs as part of specialist provision. This asserts the sector's position as part of a wider institutional structure, capitalising on the notion that NPOs have unique, specialist insight. In this, as with the previous text, the idea of networking is located as a deep-rooted feature of the sector. Common with ideological power in ideas, this camouflages collaboration as an expected part of NPOs' character.

As well as assumptions that NPOs have pre - existing collaborative relationships, The ACEVO construct collaboration, by foregrounding consortia as a response to limited resources. The ACEVO's work also demonstrates ideological power in ideas through the assumption that NPOs should be a first resort to solving societal problems;

> *DCLG [The Department for Communities and Local Government] should extend its strategic partners programme to cover more of the third sector. They should initiate a Consortia First programme encouraging councils to work with groups of third sector organisations on complex issues of importance* (ACEVO, 2015, p.9).

In the text, the ACEVO makes the case that the government and local councils should do more to privilege NPOs collaborating in consortia. In part arguing that NPOs can play a more significant role, the text also presumes that NPOs can and want to do more to respond to complex social issues by being co-opted into policy agendas.

The ACEVO here reflect the hegemonic belief that collaboration makes sense;

> *There is a clear move towards collaboration. The next government must understand that this is a 'new normal' – and support it* (ACEVO, 2015, p.35).

Rooted in ACEVO's argument that NPOs can and should be a preferred partner in delivering services, is the ongoing belief that collaboration is a viable and reasonable course of action. As well as resonating with relational power through ideas in the sense that this is a 'new' direction, it is linked to ideological power in ideas in the way other forms of action are too extreme to consider. Moreover, it reflects an ongoing and historical understanding that collaboration continues to be a route forward in the relationship between the state and sector.

6.3.3. The ACEVO; the shifting relationship with the state and collaboration

Manifest in the ACEVO's documents are aspects of text that identify assumptions about collaborative relationships. These involve recognisable or historical ideas about relationships, rendering them as common sense. Ideas amplify assumptions about how collaboration should work in ways that are recognisable, layered on policy programmes supporting their viability. This is problematic in the way it limits discussion, by focusing on assumptions of what works. Collaboration relationships are framed as positive with integral in the pursuit of neoliberal ideas. Here, for example, the ACEVO highlights the assumed merit of relationships to improve services, carving the scope to extend the role of NPOs.

> *In joining the debate on improving public services we know it is essential the public, private and "third" sectors work in partnership. In particular we know that working with the public sector is crucial for success. A good working relationship between the public agency and not-for-profit body involved will assist public service improvements. Where there is active encouragement and support from Government agencies, local or health authorities, a productive operational relationship and mutual respect and trust, it is more likely services will flourish and add real value to communities and citizens. "Partnership", that much-abused word, is crucial. The work supporting the "Compact" between Government and the third*

> *sector is critical to the success of service delivery expansion. The conclusions of the cross cutting review offer help in the way forward. But they are, at this stage, largely unimplemented* (ACEVO, 2003, p.6).

This reflects all three forms of power and ideas in DI. Relational power is evident, persuading actors to collaborate more widely in support of the Compact, and political power over ideas, challenging policy and NPO actors to do more. Ideological power in ideas manifests in the assumption that action is acceptable and therefore not open for discussion or challenge. The use of language such as 'essential', 'critical' and 'crucial' indicates that in the absence of these relationships, service quality is inhibited. For NPOs, the tacit idea backgrounds the need to work more closely with the public sector to add value to their services, inferring the need to create stronger relationships. Therefore, the idea of collaboration is important but subtle, pervasive through the assumptions inherent in the text.

The ACEVO's 2015 manifesto, 'Free Society', further represents ideological power through ideas embedded in the assumed value of a collaborative relationship between the state and sector. However, the nature of the assumption adapts, reflecting the context of austerity and the associated effects of retrenched services. In this, the emphasis shifts from ideas of collaboration to add value to services by focusing on action as a way of responding to challenging societal needs.

> *Third sector organisations working with government and collaborating with each other at the local level deliver complex services meeting society's many complex need*. (ACEVO, 2015, p.22).

The text shows the changing focus of collaboration from one that emphasises enhanced services to the notion of a web of organisations acting and adapting together at a societal level to address problems. What is inherent in the text is the belief that NPOs provide a solution, working with policy agendas in response to needs and problems rather than eliminating them. What is so significant is the way the text situates collaboration as a natural response to address wicked problems; it communicates in a way that accepts and assumes rather than challenges the structural agendas that have led to a change in the emphasis around the purpose of collaboration.

The sections above explain how, through their texts, the ACEVO's ideas overarchingly characterise ideological power in ideas in the way that they are based on hegemonic assumptions about how collaboration works. The character of a blog written in 2019 however, reflects changing attitudes in the ACEVO. At this time, as set out in the previous chapter, policy priorities overlook NPOs, carrying an unspoken expectation based on historical assumptions that they would continue to collaborate in response to wicked problems. The ACEVO's blog is evidenced by a notable shift, orienting collaboration towards policy agendas and the way they direct NPOs in terms of working with others. The sections below demonstrate the shift through segments of the blog that illustrate this, exhibiting relational power in ideas to persuade NPOs to take a different approach when collaborating with state and beneficiaries.

Notably, following their protracted drive to convince the state that the sector could play a more prominent role through collaboration to create economies of scale, the ACEVO expresses concern about collaboration as a means to homogenise NPOs; they encourage NPOs to resist the lure of contracts. Rather, they construct collaboration by urging NPOs to be aware of their own agency in ways that are reminiscent of the now defunct NCIA. Further, and surprisingly given the alignment with state actors' ideas through most of the data drawn from documents, the ACEVO also resists and challenges the dominance of neoliberalism itself;

> *The fact that you have the chance to compete for funds doesn't mean you have to. The fact that you can reduce overheads by providing the same things over a large geographic area doesn't mean it's the best thing for everyone who needs support, or for every community they live in. One person's gap in the market is another's living and breathing organisation already filling that gap, albeit in a way that probably won't win a competitive tender* (ACEVO, 2019).

In some ways, the text suggests a sense that the ACEVO's ideas rest with state actors by demonstrating the dominance of competitive behaviour in order to secure funding, potentially by either adapting the mission or working in such a way to dominate other organisations' missions. However, it also attempts to resist collaboration in order to retain organisational identity and purpose. Certainly, the quote in its wider context reminds NPOs and state actors that NPOs do not have to listen or follow the path set out

by state actors. Indeed, this final element of the data demonstrates NPROs' ideational power through the construction of collaboration in this complex institutional setting.

The blog, written on behalf of the ACEVO by Polly Neate, the CEO of Shelter, makes an apparent appeal to NPOs. Though reflecting only one actor's opinion the publication on the ACEVO's website is notable, replacing the published Manifesto or larger documents from previous periods. In doing so, it invites NPOs to consider and reflect on the potential for large NPOs to dominate in collaboration;

> *Unless the future we want for the charity sector is a smaller number of very large, national charities, then it's time to take a hard look at the relationship between charities of all sizes, and the impact those relationships have on our sector* (ACEVO, 2019).

The idea sits in contrast with the ACEVO's historic assumptions that working at scale created more efficient and effective services. In effect, the text rejects neoliberal ideology, pointing to the importance of small and local NPOs. The use of emotive language invites introspection, framing the choice that NPOs have and also posing the question in such a way to make other organisations think about the potential consequences of homogenising the sector through collaboration. By emphasising the implications and the potential consequences for NPOs (and other stakeholders) unquestioningly follow the trajectory that has been set. Whilst not overtly commenting on collaboration, there is a clear sense that the nature and purpose of relationships between NPOs matters and that decisions are important in terms of their future role.

Further distanced from the ACEVO's traditional embrace of neoliberal ideology is a sense of concern expressed throughout the blog. This is notable in the persuasive way that it invites introspection and reflection;

> *Charities give expression to people's desire to help others, whether directly through employment or volunteering or indirectly through raising funds and awareness, campaigning, organising, activism. The single biggest threat to this role is the power of public sector contracts. But we, the charities who compete for those contracts, have given them that power and we can take at least some of it away if we choose* (ACEVO, 2019).

More indicative of ideological power in ideas, this sets out the historical role of NPOs, creating meaning by drawing attention to the notion of a helping and caring society and non-profit sector, separate from the state that eschews competition. The idea goes beyond recent history by addressing collaboration in the context of philanthropy in the pre-welfare era, effectively separating the spheres of state and sector. Further, political power in ideas carries elements of resistance by challenging the power of contracts that dictate how and for what purpose NPOs should collaborate. In effect, the blog raises awareness of the agency of NPOs, promoting independence from the state in favour of a different approach to services and collaborative relationships.

The blog continues by expressly highlighting a perspective on collaboration with policy representatives setting out a normative view cognisant of relational power through ideas. This emphasises how the relationship between state and sector should work;

> *And don't fear that commissioners will be made the enemy. They are not. But they are also not our primary customers as charities, despite the fact that they have power in the market when our beneficiaries do not. Commissioners should be partners in creating a system that responds to what people need and honours the values, culture and drive for change that our sector should embody* (ACEVO, Blog / no page, 2019).

Historically overlooked in the ACEVO's documents, the text echoes the character of relational power through ideas, promoting change and facilitating reflection about the structural issues that lead to complex needs. It does not rule out collaboration with the state and sector but highlights principles of equity, allowing NPOs to challenge at a local or national level by raising the potential to consider the wicked social problems. As in the previous text, this elevates the significance of relationships that challenge structure and hierarchy, indicative of a shift in the ACEVO's approach to collaboration. Thus, the blog sees the ACEVO distancing from their historic support of neoliberal ideas that conflate collaboration and competition in a bid to form greater power. This corresponds with the final era (2015 - 2019) where policy ideas saw collaboration as an assumed practice, camouflaged as expected, characterised in the study as entrenched. The ACEVO challenges this assumption by highlighting the importance of NPOs' own agency and activism in collaboration.

6.4. Chapter summary

This chapter has shown how NPROs characterise the forms of DI in the way they construct collaboration in NPOs through their documents. Typically, their ideas can be distinguished through the framework to show unique differences in their approach. This interrogation of documents has revealed how the NCVO persuade and grapple with collaboration, situating it as a means to do more, whilst casting an appeal about the importance of retaining an independent non-profit sector. The NCIA markedly represents political power over ideas, actively campaigning by urging NPOs to resist collaboration, considering it a vehicle to further retrenched services and render individuals responsible for their own welfare. Finally, the ACEVO, for the majority of the period reflected in the study, emphasises ideological power in ideas by framing collaboration in ways reminiscent of neoliberal attributes that favour efficient and effective welfare service delivery. The exploration has revealed the dynamic interplay of ideas from different representative groups as a reference point to highlight where ideas are aligned, both with policy actors and each other, and where they depart. Within this, nuanced and subtle differences have emerged, creating a mosaic that explains how NPROs themselves orient the nature and purpose of collaboration.

Though this chapter has not adopted the same temporal approach taken in chapter five, it is clear from the analysis that the way NPROs construct collaboration is layered and overlaps with policy ideas. The ACEVO for example, remain strong advocates of collaboration. As illustrated in many of the discursive extracts above, this dovetails with the state's retreat from welfare service delivery. In tandem, the ACEVO reflects ideas that foreground a clear and consistent ambition for a greater role in service delivery between 1997- 2015. As described above however, their ideas shift, coinciding with declining state funding for the sector and also possibly couched by the influence of a change in the leadership of the organisation in 2016. Both the NCIA and NCVO again remain broadly consistent in their approach throughout the time frame associated with the study. For the NCIA, this is likely associated with their raison d'être and the short-lived existence of the organisation. Separately, the NCVO continually attempts to balance the state's drive for NPO collaboration with the importance of retaining an independent sector. This notion consistently features as a discursive element in many of the ideas cited between

1997 - 2019. In sum, the findings and analysis in the chapter show that NPROs' ideas are more consistent in the way they orient collaboration over time.

A granular exploration of documents has therefore amplified the discursive approaches of representative organisations in challenging the dominant literature that considers them supportive or passive in their response to policy ideas of collaboration. The application of the framework created has revealed evidence of discursive characteristics that reflect relational, political and ideational forms of power and ideas. This supports new knowledge that indicates representatives are more than mere conduits of state ideas. The analysis of data, guided by the conceptual framework has revealed insight that extends understanding and the overarching dominance of literature that frames NPOs as supportive of collaboration (Macmillan, 2010; Alcock, 2014). Rather than assuming NPROs are instruments of the state who simply follow the will and conform to the direction set out in policy actors' documents, it shows a detailed trail and a range of differing perspectives that both support and challenge ideas of collaboration amongst NPOs. Indeed, the application of the conceptual framework created helps to challenge the notion of institutional environments as a means of moulding dupes; NPOs that continually replicate policy actors' will. Thus, the findings illustrate a more dynamic and nuanced role in orienting collaboration that the extent literature suggests.

Next, the thesis draws together insight from this chapter along with the previous methods and empirical chapters, returning to the research questions that have guided the study. I debate the way the framework has been developed to generate new knowledge about the use of DI as part of a discursive methodology. I explore how the explanations of organisational discourse evidenced through the empirical analysis show a temporal change in ideas of collaboration and consider the implications of these findings in terms of NPOs and their beneficiaries.

Chapter 7 DISCUSSION

In this chapter I explore the significance of the original contributions to knowledge relating to understanding of DI and the construction of collaboration in NPOs at a macro level. The aim of the research was to explain the discursive institutional construction of NPO collaboration in policy and NPRO documents. The study makes three interrelated contributions that respond to the scarcity of strong empirical work explaining the application of DI (Bell, 2002; Crespy, 2015), the evolution of discourses that frame NPO collaboration and the variable role of NPROs as mediators and moderators of collaboration (Gazley & Guo, 2020). The development of DI theory translates this strand of knowledge into a framework that can be practically applied to documents by other researchers to understand what ideational power does in a discursive sense. Critically, the contribution has advanced what is understood as the articulation of ideational power through detailed examples that show the way ideas are set out to persuade, dominate and reflect assumptions. The next contribution demonstrates how NPO collaboration is discursively and temporally constructed in national policy documents, adding temporality to extant scholarship. The final contribution reveals the role of NPROs showing the multifaceted and varied ways that they construct collaboration through their own documents. Collectively, the contributions have extended DI theory to show the dynamic way that policy and NPRO documents frame NPO collaboration by applying the framework.

The core insights and contributions discussed above respond to the research questions that were set out at the beginning and have guided this thesis:

- RQ 1: How can the concept of DI be empirically applied to understand the evolution of NPO collaboration?
- RQ 2: How is NPO collaboration constructed in policy documents over time and how does this change temporally?
- RQ 3: How do NPROs discursively construct collaboration in their own documents?

By developing answers to these questions, I address each of these contributions in detail in the sections below.

Playing a pivotal role in the thesis, the abstract nature of theory was encapsulated in the evolved concept of DI that proposed three abstract forms of ideational power 'through', 'over' and 'in' ideas (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Though interesting, the concept of DI had been poorly served in terms of empirical application. I have created a framework that delineates the concept, unpacking the descriptions that comprise each form of power and compiling the descriptions into a methodological framework in section 4.5, Table 12). The subsequent application of the framework has detailed how NPO collaboration is constructed, illuminating ideas that persuade, challenge, and reflect assumptions in documents. In this way, examples of the three forms of ideational power are rendered readily observable to surface their incremental effects rather than generalisable outcomes. Nuanced and detailed examples are highlighted that reflect agents' discourses of collaboration to frame meaning. I have provided a way to understand how ideas matter and explain how language, what is discursively framed in documents, constructs collaboration. Consequently, I have added empirical clarity making DI a workable model or framework that can be readily adapted and used by others interested in interrogating ideas that construct organisational phenomena.

The second section discusses how the framework was utilised to create temporal insight, detailing the incremental ideas that construct NPO collaboration at a macro level in policy documents. I have surfaced nuanced differences in the way that different organisations' documents frame collaboration to show the evolution of ideas. Significantly, I have shown how seemingly small shifts in ideas have layered between different organisations. In this way, the focus captures and reflects headline ideas or key agendas that construct collaboration such as Labour's Partnership or the Conservative's Big Society. However, it has added granular detail around how these ideas evolve for example by revealing the ongoing ideas that gradually devolve ever greater responsibility to deliver services as state support is retrenched. This enabled the study to present the layered construction of collaboration in documents over each election cycle. Therefore, the study surfaces the similarities and differences, evident through the busy and temporal exchange of ideas over generating an institutional story of ideas that constructs collaboration.

As well as adding temporality, I add unique dynamic, advancing understanding of the overlooked role that NPROs play constructing NPO collaboration. Some scholars have

argued that these groups are broadly supportive of policy ideas that encourage collaboration (Macmillan, 2010; Alcock, 2014). However, there was a dearth of empirical material that reflected the nuances of how these organisations support or seek to constrain ideas of collaboration. Here, each NPRO's documents were scrutinised in a different way, each through a specific lens of the DI framework to show their unique approach. These show that they do not merely reproduce ideas from policy, but explicitly construct in different ways. This dynamic portrayal has demonstrated vivid examples of their role, constructing NPO collaboration to persuade and challenge as well as reflecting ideological assumptions that frame collaborative relationships. Hence, the inclusion of NPRO's ideas supports a more dynamic view that complements the temporal analysis of policy documents in the study. This mattered, showing that NPROs play a much more dynamic role than has been previously suggested.

7.1. Creating new knowledge: empirically advancing DI theory

In the first contribution of the thesis, I have rendered Schmidt's abstract concept of DI (2008, 2011) empirically applicable, contributing to the development of knowledge by designing a conceptual framework. As detailed in Chapter Three, section 3.2, I made the three forms of power actionable in three ways. First, by delineating and framing what each of the three forms of power does in documents. Second, by applying language that clearly explains and characterises the three forms of power. Third, by mapping how the forms of power can be identified through documentary analysis. Despite claims that DI is concerned with hierarchical as well as grass roots change, theory tends to focus on the role of elites, ignoring how less powerful actors or organisations construct ideas. I have put the DI concept to work and demonstrated the distinctive ways that policy and NPRO documents construct NPO collaboration to persuade, challenge or reflect assumptions.

To recap, this strand of scholarship is built on the notion that ideas matter (Hajer, 1996; Beland & Cox, 2011). Though interesting and relevant in the way it argued that ideas are vehicles that persuade, challenge and reflect assumptions (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016), it failed to go far enough in supporting theoretical application. Schmidt's claims are often substantiated by generalised examples such as Margaret Thatcher's use of communicative discourse, accessible language that promoted the ideas of thrift and frugality in policy (Schmidt, 2002; 2011). In this way, the locus of DI made generalised

claims about the transformative nature of ideas (Schmidt, 2011) however Schmidt offered no empirical guidance on how the DI concept could be used to explore the evolution of ideas empirically. This stands in contrast to an apparent concern with the incremental aspects of change and a focus on the interactions that lead to change and stasis in institutional contexts "*paradigm -shift may serve nicely as a metaphor for radical ideational change, it offers little guidance as to how, why, or even when the shift takes place and it cannot account for incremental change*" (Schmidt, 2011). Despite her own critique it was difficult to find studies which explore how such detailed or nuanced adaptations in ideas occur. Nonetheless, the theory was compelling, lauded by some scholars who highlight the mouldable nature of ideas rooted in neoliberal ideology where they can adapt and reshape in the face of difficulty (Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013; Crespy, 2015).

The abstract nature of the theory was encapsulated in the evolved concept of DI (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Despite limited guidance, some scholars related their findings to the theory and forms of ideational power. Gillard (2016), for example, explored climate change policy, and Berkovich and Benoliel (2020) used critical discourse analysis to look at the semantic features in the forewords of documents that shape perceptions of teachers. Their work was useful in linking the findings to the theory presenting overarching insights around how the forms of ideational power construct perceptions and priorities in policy. Nonetheless, both studies concluded by generalising their findings rather than examining how the forms of ideational power manifest. More closely aligned with the work undertaken here was Coule and Bennett's (2018) analysis of the Wolfenden and Deakin reports, that explored the close relationship between change and stasis in ideas of volunteerism. Whilst not addressing the three unique forms of power highlighted by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016), Coule and Bennett's (2018) use of the lens supported my perspective by extracting and showing how ideas in the text influence change. This most closely demonstrated the potential of DI to explain the incremental effects of institutional discourse rather than generalisable outcomes of ideas.

By developing and practically applying the lens, I have responded to and resolved the problem highlighted by scholars such as Parsons (2007), Bell (2012) and Crespy (2015) who argued that there is little to guide researchers in how they might apply DI. In progressing the practical application of the DI concept, I have developed it as a workable

resource, or framework that can be readily adapted and used by researchers interested in interrogating ideas that relate to organisational phenomena. The framework, detailed in Chapter Four (4.5) illustrates how the abstract descriptions provided by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) have been interrogated and subsequently more clearly articulated. This has led them to become readily observable in text, creating a guide that facilitates incremental insight into how language sets out ideas in documents and therefore reflects ideational power. Through this endeavour, other scholars can show what the forms of ideational power 'do' in a discursive sense to construct phenomena such as collaboration.

From the premise that ideas matter (Hajer, 1995; Beland & Cox, 2011), my work has advanced the concept of DI by clarifying the three forms of ideational power proposed by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016). By progressing DI, creating a theoretical framework that can be empirically applied, I have responded to the limited focus on the incremental and interactive elements that illuminate what ideational power does in a discursive sense in documents. In doing so, I have been able to explain how NPO collaboration is constructed in national documents as a malleable idea that renders it a widely accepted organisational phenomena (Gazley & Guo, 2015, 2020).

Subsequently, by using the framework, the novel contribution of the thesis challenges the prevailing notion of collaboration as a linear process directed solely by powerful actors. As well as being distinctive in the way it has revealed the aspects of persuasion, domination and assumption that temporally frame policy ideas of collaboration, it has also been applied to reveal the powerful ways that NPROs construct collaboration. These organisations are typically framed in the literature as compliant with the policy agenda for collaboration, detached from those they represent (Bolduc, 1980; Guo & Musso, 2007; Buckingham et al., 2014). I have challenged this by showing a range of different approaches reflected in the way NPROs construct collaboration. By exploring NPROs' ideas in depth, I have generated a nuanced view going beyond the generalised claim that institutional ideas are shaped only by powerful institutional forces driven by elite actors, (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000; Craig et al., 2004; Bovaird & Downe, 2006). Therefore, subsequent sections show how the theory has been used not only to reveal the layered evolution of ideas, but also how seemingly less powerful actors such as NPROs contribute to the construction of NPO collaboration.

7.1.1. Advancing DI - using the framework to reveal the ideational power of NPROs

As set out above, it was important to extend the use of DI to highlight how actors considered to be less powerful in a macro context construct NPO collaboration. This has revealed new knowledge into the under-researched role of NPROs showing the differing approaches they employ to influence the agenda. As highlighted previously (Chapter Two, 2.7), extant literature (Macmillan, 2010; Alcock, 2014) tends to locate these groups as broadly supportive of NPO collaboration. My findings suggest that proposition is overly simplistic. In this way, in particular, the focus on the construction of NPROs documents has allowed me to be sensitive to these groups to illustrate how ideational power manifests through the unique ways that they construct collaboration. This has gone further than a linear cause-and-effect relationship in the construction of collaboration by showing the unique ways that different NPROs reflect ideational power.

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argue that discourse influences change that unsettle the boundaries of institutions. This study chimes with the ideas of Zilber (2002) who forwards the importance of translation, and Phillips Lawrence and Hardy (2004) who purport that meaning is constantly being negotiated to legitimise and delegitimise behaviours. This thesis has demonstrated this in the case of NPROs explaining how discursive approaches inform and work to destabilise the common sense or readily accepted notion of collaboration. The ideas of the NCIA, the NCVO and latterly the ACEVO, point to the important role played by these organisations who sit on the boundary of policy yet whose ideas are directed both at policy makers and NPROs. In this way the importance of the thesis rebalances the emphasis by addressing the discursive role played by NPROs in constructing collaboration. This creates a more multifaceted understanding than is evident in the literature.

The focus on different NPROs has facilitated insight to what Blau (1955) describes as institutional subsystems, the less formal structures that construct organisational practice. These groups reflect ideational power by setting out their own ideas, influencing the cluster of ideas that frame how, and for what purpose, collaboration might be enacted. This represents a wide range of organisations that have sought to construct collaboration, supporting and challenging the constraining effects of the institutional

context they operate in (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008). In this way, I argue that NPROs do not merely only perpetuate the same ideas evident in policy documents to construct collaboration. Though some organisations more than others construct collaboration in similar ways, the analysis of NPRO documents has revealed an important distinction in their construction of collaboration. It demonstrates that each individual NPRO constructs the nature and purpose of collaboration in markedly different ways to respond to policy agendas as well as entrenched problems.

The ACEVO for example, frequently emphasises the potential of collaboration as a means for NPOs to play a much greater role in service delivery. Conversely, NCVO ideas are more moderate, tempering the impetus to collaborate by highlighting the independent nature of NPOs. Taking a radical approach, the NCIA are critical of NPO collaboration in the context of welfare service delivery, instead configuring the meaning of collaboration as activism. In this way, the inclusion of NPROs has exemplified not only the ideational power of these apparently less powerful organisations, but also the disputes over meaning as they attempt to prompt change (Lynggaard, 2007) and create a situated and constructed web of meaning (Carstensen, 2011). Thus by examining the interplay of incremental ideas from profoundly different perspectives I have illustrated how ideas contend for recognition within this discursive institutional context.

I have illustrated the distinct approaches in the way each NPRO constructs collaboration. Through recursive engagement with documents, I used the framework to show not only the way NPROs' ideas frame the nature of collaboration, but also to establish how each individual representative group embodies the essence of the three different forms of ideational power. Jóhannesson (2010) argues that historical discursive analysis allows researchers the possibility to include reflections about before and after the research. In this sense, by undertaking a recursive exploration of text, supported by the framework, I was able to demonstrate unexpected insight. A further and unanticipated contribution to knowledge was demarcating the unique characteristics of the NPROs included in the study. This demonstrated how the three forms of power manifested in their organisational personality and relatedly how their fundamentally different approaches were apparent in the ideas they conveyed as they mediated and moderated ideas of collaboration. These organisations are arguably more stable than political parties, less prone to changes in leadership and direction linked to election cycles. Through the

interrogation of these more stable organisations' documents, it was therefore possible to demonstrate unanticipated facets and expressions of ideational power, illustrating how these manifest as specific ideational approaches in the way they construct collaboration. In other words, their distinct discursive tendencies set out to mediate and moderate through the construction of collaboration.

These are addressed in detail later in the chapter but in summary, I have illustrated the persuasive approach of the NCVO, resembling the descriptive elements of relational power through ideas. This shows how the NCVO documents mediate and moderate between policy makers and NPO organisations, straddling the relationship between the two. They urge policy makers to be mindful of NPOs' core mission as well as convincing NPOs that collaboration allows them to work in different ways. In contrast, the findings have demonstrated how the NCIA strongly resembles political power over ideas in the way they consistently adopt an activist stance that challenges and resists collaboration. Ostensibly, they positioned it as a vehicle to draw NPOs away from their purpose, seeing it as a means to further the state's agenda to remove responsibility for welfare services. Finally, it has shown how the ACEVO reflects ideological power in ideas, aligning with those emanating in policy documents, their texts reflecting assumptions associated with business-like language and notions of ideas of scale and efficiency.

In this way, the research departs from other longitudinal (Macmillan, 2011) and historical (Coule & Bennett, 2018) studies that focus on the relationship between change and continuity in the non-profit sector. By explicating the discursive character of NPROs vis-à-vis their construction of collaboration, I was able to go further than traditional literature that describes key policy or economic events as significant junctures that drive practice (Buckingham, 2009; Macmillan, 2010; Alcock, 2014). By zooming in and out through recursive analysis I have illuminated how different NPROs mirror differing forms of ideational power to construct collaboration in time and over time. Therefore, I have presented two ways to employ the frame. To generate temporal insight but also the discursive character of ideational power expressed by less powerful organisations. This affirms the assertion of DI scholars who argue that ideational power is relevant to actors and organisations operating at a grassroots level (Schmidt, 2009; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). First, my research has surfaced and mapped specific characteristics associated with the three forms of ideational power that generalise the organisational traits of the

ACEVO, NCIA and NCVO in relation to political and ideological power and ideas. Secondly, as with ideas reflected in national policy documents, I have detailed how these ideas shape action longitudinally (see Figure 9 andFigure 10).

Extending theory by creating and using the analytical framework, I have demonstrated how ideas of collaboration become salient. Significantly, I have built on extant literature (Milbourne, 2009; Buckingham, 2009; Carmel & Harlock, 2008) to show how policy actors attempt to dominate ideas of collaboration. By going beyond identifying and describing various ideas of collaboration that frame how NPOs are guided to act through documents, I have shown how they gain prominence, alter and disappear. Furthermore, the research illustrates changes over time, for example how policy actors' interest in the sector dwindles, with ideas of collaboration becoming so assumed and entrenched that they recede into the background. Thus, my research has shown that despite the dominance of policy ideas setting the trajectory for collaboration, NPROs also play an important role by challenging, modifying and resisting these ideas. This points to greater discursive strategies and interaction at a societal level, confronting the notion of collaboration as a common-sense approach to organising that is solely driven by the state.

Thus, through the creation and application of the framework it has been possible to recognise the place and importance of temporal discursive approaches to show the incremental development of ideas that indicate collaboration is not merely a self-replicating phenomenon. My research has traced and revealed the interplay of the less evident and multifaceted ideas from multiple organisations that collide, depart and adapt across time. These are detailed through the empirical Chapters Five and Six and build on the assertions of Hambleton and Howard (2003), Gazley and Brudney (2007) and Milbourne (2009) who argue that economic forces, dominated by policy agendas remain key factors in influencing collaboration. However, my work goes further and shows the discursive tactics from different organisations that create a mosaic of ideas. Some show that these bear on NPOs in ways that construct collaboration not only as a means to devolve policy agendas that set out to create independent citizens and subsequently shift the focus and mission of NPOs. Others however, contrast vividly with this demonstration of ideational power that ignites a wholly different construct of

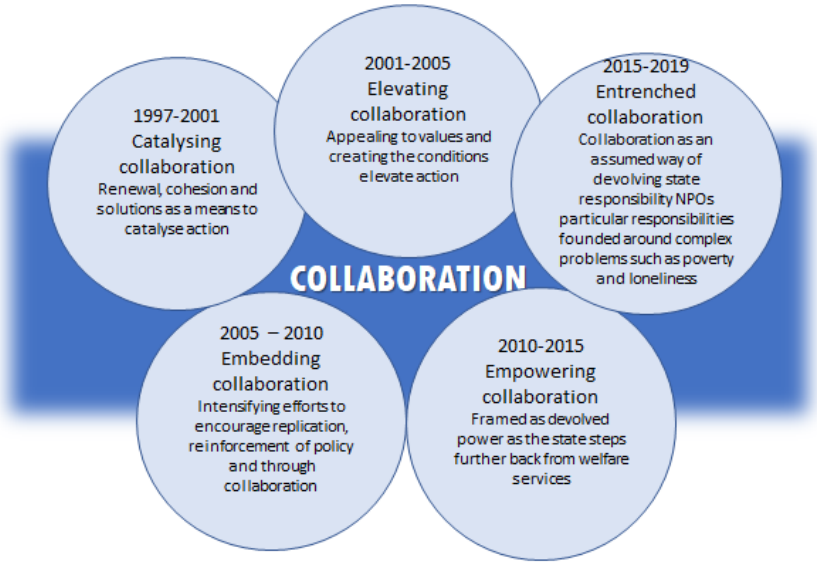
collaboration that reflects a call to activism that challenges the role of NPOs delivering services.

Essentially, through the design and application of the DI framework, I have moved knowledge beyond that of cause and effect in relation to NPO collaboration. The new and novel application of the lens has been crafted as a useful tool that can be readily adapted and employed in other research contexts. Subsequent sections discuss the findings generated from the application of the framework.

7.2. Creating new knowledge; the temporal construction of NPO collaboration in policy documents

The second contribution employed the framework to trace the temporal construction of collaboration in policy documents at a macro level. It responds to Gazley and Guo's (2020) assertion that scholars should move beyond 'what' and 'why' questions about collaboration to focus on 'how'. In this thesis I have shown how collaboration has been discursively embedded, playing close attention to what happens over time. This has extended the focus on the construction of collaboration over an extended period of time to reveal how the nature and purpose of collaboration evolves. Accordingly, the research has set out patterns that illustrate where ideas that frame action come from. The findings presented in Chapter Five presenting an overlapping series of ideas of collaboration that have shown how it is catalysed (1997-2001), embedded (2001-2005), elevated (2005-2010), cast as empowered (2010-2015) and more recently entrenched (2015-2019). Related to DI scholarship, this has demonstrated how policy agendas propose how problems should be tackled (Blyth, 2001) or legitimised (Cox, 2001) and by whom through collaboration. In this vein, analysis of national policy documents has shown the multifaceted ideas that foreground the assumption of NPOs as willing partners of the state and locate collaboration as a common-sense way of addressing entrenched societal problems.

Figure 18 - Summarising collaboration in policy documents



In Chapter Two, I summarised literature that presented collaboration as part of an assumed consensus (1997 - 2010), typified by joined up working supported by the promise of an equitable relationship (Craig et al., 2004). Later (2010 - 2019), collaboration is described as response to unmet need (2010 - 2019) exemplified by a decoupled state and sector (Macmillan, 2012) and policy actors' diminishing interest in NPOs (Rees & Mullins, 2016). The findings have pushed the boundaries of such literature by showing how longitudinal changes reflect elements of overlap and iteration. I discuss below how ideas evolve and layer focusing on key themes that emerged from the analysis. Moreover, they challenge the assumption that it is a widely accepted action that simply diffuses through isomorphic tendencies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) as NPOs mimic organisational traits of the private or public sector (Milbourne & Cushman, 2013). Rather, it highlights the importance of temporality (Macmillan, 2011), to show how collaboration is iteratively and cumulatively constructed through ideas in documents.

The findings build on scholarship arguing that NPOs become agents of the state, governable through collaboration (Carmel & Harlock, 2008) supported through the illusion of unity (Newman, 2001). From this premise, what is notably and consistently absent in policy documents across the eras, are ideas that situate NPOs as equal partners to shape strategies or as a critical partner, encouraged to challenge policy agendas. Though Labour ideas of collaboration dominate as collaboration is catalysed and

elevated, NPOs are still framed as junior partners playing a supportive role. This approach is iterated by the Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition, who seemingly empower NPOs through collaboration but only in the sense that are expected to play a bigger role in society. More readily in the findings, NPOs become framed as service delivery agents, anticipated to collaborate to deliver services linked to policy initiatives. This is illustrated through ideas that combine collaboration as a vehicle to secure the services of NPOs to help devolve the notion of an independent society. Related to this is the idea of providing community development services and responding to complex societal problems to groups framed as vulnerable or hard to reach.

Fundamentally, the ideas of collaboration set out in policy documents cumulatively frame collaboration in ways that couch NPOs service delivery agents. This defies the normative understanding of knowledge exchange and learning as part of an equitable relationship. Moreover, this sits at odds with the intentions evident in the Wolfenden and the Deakin reports that recognised and supported the value of NPOs reflecting societal needs as equitable partners in the development of policy (Coule & Bennett, 2016). From this, we can conclude that from a policy perspective, collaboration in NPOs is not seen as a means to guide policy by raising issues and lobbying on behalf of beneficiaries. Rather, it constructs collaboration to secure the services of NPOs to marshal and devolve policy ideas of societal independence.

7.2.1. Collaboration, contracts, compacts and consortia

The analysis surfaces hidden details of ideas linked to contracts that combine NPO collaboration with an increased capacity to deliver welfare. Here, data stresses how formal arrangements such as the Compacts of 1998 and 2010 and contracts, set structural boundaries around collaboration through policy documents. In terms of contracts, the Conservatives by creating a sense of competition, and Labour by emphasising service quality and standards through collaboration. Consequently, the findings explain how NPO collaboration is constructed in relation to contracts and compacts. These findings support the work of some scholars who argue that ideas of collaboration reflect both the Labour and Conservatives preoccupation with free markets and competition (Anheier, 2004; Lewis, 2005).

The findings showing ideas of collaboration wrapped up with contracts often demonstrated the sense that NPOs should create a common purpose, to reduce duplication, improve quality and latterly evolved into the need to do more with less. It has been argued that the tendency to mix messages through policy that conflate collaboration with competition (Buckingham, 2009; Macmillan, 2011) with consequences in limiting trust and organic partnerships amongst NPOs. These ideas resonate with concerns that NPO collaboration exacerbates issues of rivalry where multiple organisations are in competition for resources (Buckingham, 2009; Aiken & Harris, 2017). Constructing collaboration in this way, notions of efficacy and efficiency are presented as relatively straightforward. Yet, it is argued that such external attempts to construct relationships do not work well and in practice can be less effective than voluntary partnerships (Rees et al., 2012).

Buckingham's case study (2009) provides a relevant example of how funding, based on these values, led to fundamental changes in relationship and service provision. She illustrates how organisations who have previously collaborated in response to homelessness moved from collaborator to rival as funding for projects is reduced. Over time trust between organisations erodes as competition for funding becomes more prevalent. However, in the changing policy context described, NPOs demonstrated increased efficiency as they focused on quantitative rather than qualitative outcomes of service. This highlights how neoliberal values, prevalent in policy documents that direct the purpose of collaboration, lead to mission drift and a diluted service provision and problematic relationships amongst NPOs.

Following on from this point, it is argued that organisations involved in failed collaborative work tend to move on without considering or reflecting on why the relationship proved unsuccessful or failed to generate the learning anticipated (Milbourne, 2009). As Buckingham's (2009) case study presented above and as is argued by Gazley and Guo (2020), it may be that where NPOs are disbanded because of failed collaboration, they cease to exist and therefore reflecting on their practice is not an option. Nonetheless, the constant spill of policy ideas between 1997 - 2019 resonate with Steen et al., (2018, p.284) in the way they repeatedly highlight the potential "glittering effects" of collaboration that masks the reality of time consuming and risky practice (Mills et al., 2011).

As well as contracts, findings captured the nuanced ways that the Compacts of 1998 and 2010 as well as contracts were notable in shaping NPO collaboration. Carmel and Harlock (2008) posit that the Compact of 1998 created a governable network of NPOs. I support and extend the idea by incorporating the Compact of 2010, updated by the Coalition government. Taking this a step further, the findings have compared and contrasted the two versions of the Compact, highlighting the different emphasis of the two documents. In Labour's 1998 Compact, relational power through ideas and ideological power in ideas, catalyse collaboration by anticipating a '*different*' and '*better*' relationship between the state and sector and extending it through funding. By 2010 however, the refreshed Coalition government Compact chimes with relational power through ideas to diffuse empowered collaboration through the notion *'we are all in this together*'. This further couches assumptions of a strong relationship with meaningful partnerships that can respond to societal, political and economic challenges. NPOs are guided to collaborate in response to these (somewhat ambiguous) issues. In this context, the Compact frames the centrality of the role of NPOs to the sectors and therefore marks the importance of the sector. However, my research goes further, capturing how, through the Compact, collaboration devolves policy agendas at a wider societal level to further the creation of an independent society. This supports the work of those scholars who see policy initiatives as a mechanism to create an independent society (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2011; Eriksson, 2012; Coule & Bennett, 2016).

7.2.2. Collaboration to further a 'self-service society'

The synthesis of data has shown the cumulative policy ideas that construct collaboration to escalate an independent society. This was particularly evident as NPO collaboration became entrenched from 2015 onwards (5.6), reflected as relational, political and ideological power in ideas. The findings support the assertions of scholars such as Eriksson (2012) and Coule and Bennett (2016) who frame this as the construction of a self-service society removing the state's responsibility for services. In other words, the creation of a society able to respond to its own needs, independent of state supported welfare.

As highlighted, the Conservative's Civil Society Strategy (2018) and Labour's Civil Society paper (2019) rarely mention collaboration explicitly, yet the need for NPOs to work with

citizens and other organisations as part of a broad societal support system is evident throughout. I argue that in the wake of austerity and apparently limited funding, the notion of collaboration as co-production services is framed as a way to squeeze assets and do more with less as NPOs are encouraged to collaborate with service users (5.6.1). In this context, there is little acknowledgement that these ideas may have mixed benefits for collaborators (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Gazley & Guo, 2020) or prove problematic (Sancino & Jacklin-Jarvis, 2016). Despite such concerns, the policy documents construct meaning around collaboration through the impression of functional sharing communities. As well as the time and investment needed to address issues, such simplistic and imagined ideas of a shared society overlook potential issues of competition, dominant organisations, differing practice or cultural and beneficiary needs. Moreover, they fail to recognise how NPOs might tackle issues of finance, income skills and resources needed to run and operate community spaces and services.

Despite this, policy ideas, in particular through those outlined above, impress the expectation of collaboration as part of co-created communities. Pubs, for example, were framed by Labour (Chapter Five, section 5.5.1) as spaces to support community cohesion and NPOs. Similarly, the Conservatives pictorially situated NPOs working with citizens and the private and public sectors as part of their vision for Civil Society. These constructs especially aligned with ideological power in ideas; collaboration was so widely assumed it did not warrant mention and was effectively camouflaged through the text. As such, the research has shown that collaboration has been framed as an inherent part of NPOs' existence, working with multiple sectors to create independent citizens, running their own community spaces and resolving their own problems or issues. Importantly, the construction of collaboration in this sense negated the need for the state to take responsibility for operating space, place and welfare service projects.

7.3. Creating new knowledge: NPROs' discursive construction of collaboration

The third contribution has added a new dynamic to the construction of NPO collaboration by focusing on the often-overlooked role of NPROs. This responds to the argument that collaboration is constructed "on many levels though not studied on many levels" (Gazley, 2017, p.31). The findings have revealed how NPROs take different

approaches to persuade, challenge or support ideas of collaboration through their documents. The focus brings to prominence the significance of institutional subsystems (Blau, 1955), shining a light on the dynamic role of different NPROs influencing collaboration in an institutional environment that reflects a much more complex picture of these ideas of these understudied organisations.

Accordingly, this shows the capacity of the framework to provide insight into the use of ideational power, not only of elites, but of actors who support and seek to constrain the effects of institutional contexts that they are part of (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008; Schmidt, 2011; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). The sections below discuss how I have shown the ways that NPROs construct the meaning of collaboration and relatedly, the distinct ways they mediate and moderate ideas framing the purpose of collaboration. Next, I consider from whom and how NPROs seek to gain legitimacy based on who their ideas of collaboration act and stand for. In doing so, I explore the extent to which their ideas align with or depart from those in policy documents.

7.3.1. NPROs as mediators and moderators of collaboration

Previous studies underpinning the importance of NPROs as interlocutors (Carmel & Harlock, 2008, p. 159) or bricoleurs (Alcock, 2012, p.19) engaged in meaning-making on behalf of their constituents. Yet, they had been overlooked in terms of how they actually contribute to the meaning-making context in which collaboration occurs (Gray & Wood, 1991; Gazley & Guo, 2020). The emphasis on NPROs showed how these mediators' and moderators' ideas are layered and reinterpreted between or within policy and NPRO documents. The notion of shared space and function provides an example of such layering. It is the NCVO who, in 2004 first framed the potential for NPO collaboration to share resources in terms of back-office functions, shared buildings and consortia arrangements. Although this idea aligns with neoliberal attitudes, it arguably contributes towards the construction of meaning underlining the platform for devolved space and shared resources as a platform for collaboration to create efficiencies and scale. This is further iterated by the Conservative's notion of NPOs jointly running services, such as libraries, historically supported by the state and of Labour's idea of community run pubs. Thus, the research design, recursive approach, and application of the framework reveals

how ideas evolve temporally adding depth through curating different organisations' ideas in the thesis.

As previously highlighted, the recursive analysis of their documents revealed the striking way the three forms of power resonated with the distinct attitudes of each NPRO. The NCVO's characteristics align with relational power through ideas, the NCIA's political power over ideas and the ACEVO's ideological power in ideas. This surprising finding has proved a strength of the framework in that it allowed for interpretation around the manifestation of the unique approaches evident in the way each NPRO constructed collaboration. NPROs, such as the ACEVO and NCVO, are considered to be not entirely independent from the state (Coule & Bennett, 2018). It is clear that the forms of power that the ACEVO and NCVO are most readily associated with appeal to policy makers and reflect the potential of the sector, engaging with, and communicating ideas of collaboration. In the case of the NCVO, through means of persuasion and the ACEVO, by readily framing ideas with neoliberal values.

Unlike the ACEVO and NCVO, who mediate and moderate ideas of NPO collaboration between policy and their constituent NPOs, the NCIA were markedly outside of the jurisdiction of policy. Indeed, this was the raison d'être. Unsurprisingly then, their ideas do not mediate and moderate ideas of collaboration in the eyes of policy makers but instead they encourage NPO activism. They do not challenge the practice of collaboration per se, rather they frame it as an activity NPOs should undertake of their own volition. Specifically, they moderate the meaning of NPO collaboration by framing it as a way to challenge structural problems that lead to societal need and the subsequent imperative to collaborate. Hence, I argue that they resist, challenge and seek to constrain policy ideas by framing collaboration as an opportunity for NPOs to work together to challenge policy.

I have shown that NPROs are not cultural dupes, compliant with policy directives (Campbell, 1998, p.383; Lawrence et al., 2009; Suddaby, 2010) by illustrating how they overtly contest policy ideas, encouraging NPOs to respond to issues that create societal problems (Rochester, 2013; Milbourne & Murray, 2017; Ishkanian, 2019). NPO collaboration as a form of activism is linked to notions of campaigning and dissent. The NCIA challenges the notion that collaboration empowers communities to solve their own

problems. Their alternative stance frames collaboration as an opportunity to proactively oppose attempts to secure the compliance of NPOs. In this way, the NCIA's ideational power is reminiscent of unlikely collaborators coming together as part of the Occupy movement, who challenged the distribution of wealth in society (Ishkanian & Ali, 2018). These scholars illustrate how NPOs connect in order to challenge policy though argue that their relationships tend to be transactional and lack a long term or strategic focus. The inclusion of the NCIA in the study and the findings extend what is understood about the role of NPO collaboration in the context of activism.

As previously mentioned, the reflective interpretivist use of the framework was a strength, in revealing the unique attitudes of NPROs towards collaboration. In contrast, it could equally be argued that this was a limitation in terms of the overlapping nature of each form of ideational power. This was especially evident in ideas of the NCVO who of all three NPROs, most readily encapsulate the notion of mediating and moderating. In this sense they challenged the nature and purpose of collaboration (Gray & Wood, 1991; Gazley and Guo, 2020) as well as supporting the impetus for NPOs to play a greater role. The analysis has shown how they comment on and refine ideas about the purpose of NPO collaboration and highlight possible pitfalls. This underscores the role of NPROs as important organisations in their own right who temper the direction and intentions related to collaboration. Thus, the overarching sense of ideational power in the NCVOs documents is representative of relational power through ideas.

The mediating and moderating role of NPOs reflects a further example of the challenge of the DI framework and the overlapping nature of the three forms of power proposed by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016). The NCVO provides an example of such overlap. Their ideas of NPO collaboration are predominantly persuasive in nature. They work with and against policy agendas and take the same approach with NPOs. The findings clearly show how they refine meaning by urging policy makers to consider the importance of NPOs' mission or beneficiary needs. Simultaneously, they persuade NPOs of the importance of neoliberal values of efficacy and efficiency, using collaboration as a way to echo policy makers' preoccupation with this far-reaching ideology. Hence, their ideational power could arguably be associated with political power over ideas by creating a sense of resistance by not readily complying with policy ideas. Equally, by espousing neoliberal values to NPOs, the analysis linked strands of the NCVO's ideas to ideological power in

ideas. However, on balance their mediating and moderating role chimes with relational power in ideas as they see-sawed between these different groups of actors to persuade and nudge through their construction of collaboration.

7.3.2. NPROs, collaboration and legitimacy

Previous research has failed to consider the issue of legitimacy in the way NPROs construct collaboration. A surprising addition to knowledge has evolved not only by revealing the unique way that NPROs construct collaboration, but also by exploring the extent to which NPROs' ideas resonate with NPOs or policy ideas of collaboration. This area is given scant attention in the literature, suffice to say that such organisations cannot be considered wholly independent of the state (Coule & Bennett, 2018). The concern with legitimacy was set out in literature in Chapter Two where Bolduc (1980), whose study focuses on neighbourhood support groups in the USA, questions on whose behalf representative bodies act. The findings make clear the role of the NCVO who, across all policy eras, characterised collaboration by balancing ideas that supported policy agendas whilst simultaneously constraining them, bringing into focus the individual missions of NPOs and the needs of beneficiaries.

The analysis of the ACEVO's documents brings to light how they reflect political power in ideas as a dominant voice, consistently supporting policy ideas of collaboration, constantly arguing for a prominent role for NPOs between 2001 - 2017. Previous research has considered the role of NPOs and tactical mimicry (Teasdale & Dey, 2014, p.500) where organisations act as though they are in line with institutional expectations in order to secure funding. It is beyond the scope of this research to establish the basis on which the ACEVO overtly aligned their ideas with the policy agendas for funding or kudos. However, scholars argue that NPOs who have stronger ties with policy were often first in line to be awarded funding (Dey & Teasdale, 2016; Milbourne, 2009). This raises questions about the extent to which the ACEVO's support of policy ideas of collaboration were fuelled by them as compliant, professional partners (Alcock & Kendall, 2011; Rambul, 2013). However, as shown in the analysis of policy documents, in 2019, as funding and interest in the sector diminished, so did ACEVO's stance on collaboration. This was evident in Polly Neate's blog, arguing that NPOs did not need to follow state directives or pursue funding that demanded collaboration.

The analysis shows the NCIA's unswerving resistance to policy agendas of collaboration manifesting as political power over ideas. As well as showing the constraining ideas of collaboration, the analysis revealed the way they seek to gain legitimacy among NPOs by challenging policy. In this sense, their ideas failed to gain purchase, the group ceased to exist bar a legacy website, leaving their ideas in the public domain at the end of 2015. Milbourne and Murray (2017) have highlighted the propensity for smaller NPOs' ideas to be overlooked or ignored in collaborative relationships. Though focused at the organisational level, this provides some indication of the challenges faced by the NCIA in rejecting the assumption that NPOs should collaborate to deliver welfare in the absence of state provision. Although the findings drawn from the NCIA do not frame collaboration in the same context, we can draw comparisons around the size and scale of the NCIA vis-à-vis the ACEVO and NCVO. In this sense, it impresses the importance of this critical group and of smaller organisations shaping action through ideational power. As well as raising the important role this group played, it also shows how agents who despite having limited resources use ideational power as a way to gain legitimacy around a given perspective.

Collectively, the findings from NPRO documents bring together ideas from three different organisations to capture the markedly different ways each construct collaboration in their documents. This contribution to knowledge offers unique insight that sits in contrast to extant literature and challenges claims that NPO representatives are broadly welcoming of collaboration. The findings are contrary to those who suggest that NPOs (and by association NPROs) are organisational dupes (Campbell, 1998, p.383; Leca et al., 2009; Suddaby, 2010) that blindly follow the guidance of more powerful actors. Indeed, the research has demonstrated how these bodies' ideational power constructs collaboration in ways that adapt and challenge policy agendas. This is achieved by framing the importance of NPOs' mission as well as the beneficiaries that they support. Surprisingly, this is even reflected through the ideas of the ACEVO, who in 2019 reverse their staunch support of NPO collaboration. Hence, the findings demonstrate the variable, layered and overlapping ways that collaboration is constructed, supporting and constraining the direction of policy agendas.

In summary, it is worth quoting Jóhannesson (2010, p.253) at length. Here, he highlights the challenges faced by those who support or seek to constrain policy;

> *"If the government authorities are travelling a main road and they do not turn off to another route, then it may be easier for other travellers to follow that route. But the same is the case if the government wants to turn in a different direction; some of those who were supposed to follow the course may even miss the chance or decide that they do not care much about where the authorities travel. They may, when they have a chance, choose to go off into a direction different from that of the government-sponsored reform. They may, then, also decide to select a third route in order to come closer to the government proposals, or continue resisting the government directions."*

The analogy chimes with the three forms of ideational power developed and applied in this study that have demonstrated the construction of collaboration at a macro level. It has illustrated not one overarching idea of collaboration but an array of ideas as NPOROs mediate and moderate ideas of collaboration at a societal level. Referring to Jóhannesson's analogy, the longitudinal approach has shown the variable routes discursively progressed in documents reflecting NPOs ideational power in the ways their documents construct collaboration. This temporal construction of collaboration is summarised in Table 19 and Figure 19. Through the lens of ideological power in ideas, the ACEVO map collaboration in ways that reflect neoliberal values similar to those set out in policy documents. Through the lens of relational power through ideas, the NCVO both lend support and moderate policy driven collaboration between NPOs. Finally, the NCIA, reflecting political power over ideas, resist and challenge state driven initiatives, presenting activism as an alternative approach to NPO collaboration. By focusing on NPROs, the study has made the discursive elements of ideational power clearly visible and in doing so, has opened the black box of collaboration.

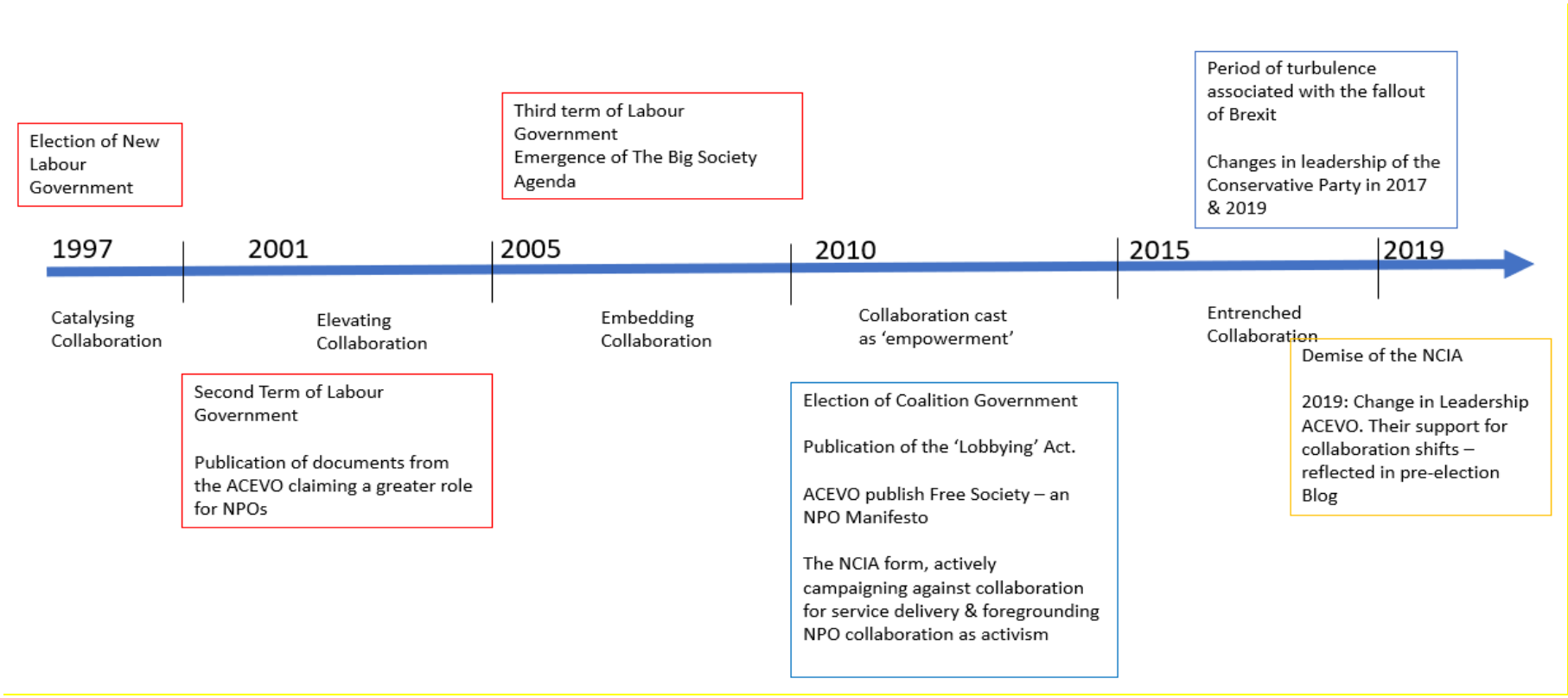
The final chapter of the thesis summarises the key contributions that have been made through this programme of study. It frames their impact, highlighting the meaning of the findings for scholars, policy makers and NPROs. Relatedly, it addresses the limitations of the research and avenues for future study. Finally, I also discuss reflexivity and learning, addressing how this has shaped the thesis.

Table 19 - Summarising the macro construction of NPO collaboration between 1997 - 2019

Political / societal context	Characterising collaboration	Publication of key policy documents	Publication of key NPRO documents
1997 Election of New Labour following landslide election results. Emergence of Labour's Partnership agenda.	**Catalysing collaboration** **1997 – 2001**	Building the future together, Labour's policies for partnership (The Labour Party, 1997) The Compact (1998)	Publication of the Deakin Report prior to 1996, reflected and cited in Labour's partnership agenda
2001 Second term of Labour Government	**Elevating collaboration** **2001 – 2005**	The role of the voluntary and community sector in service delivery; a cross cutting review (HM Treasury, 2002)	Replacing the state (The ACEVO, 2003) Voluntary Action; meeting the challenges of the 21st Century The NCVO, 2004)
2005 Third term of Labour Government. Change in party leadership mid-term The financial crisis	**Embedding collaboration** **2005 -2010**	The role of the voluntary and community sector in service delivery; a cross cutting review (The Cabinet Office, 2006) Stronger society, Voluntary actions in the 21st Century (The Conservative Party, 2008) Choosing to collaborate: Mergers and Collaboration (Charity Commission, 2009)	Choice and Voice (ACEVO, 2006) Standing apart, working together; a study of the myths and realities of voluntary sector independence (NCVO Published in 2004 & republished in 2008)
2010 Conservative/ Liberal coalition Government in the absence of a party majority. Emergence of the Big Society agenda and austerity	**Collaboration cast as empowerment** **2010 – 2015**	Building the Big Society (The Coalition Government, 2010) The Lobbying act (The Coalition Government, 2014)	The formation and documents of the NCIA (2010-2015) For insurgency; the case against partnership (NCIA, 2011) Here we stand; inquiry into local activism and dissent (NCIA, 2013) Open Public Services; experiences from the voluntary sector (NCVO, 2011)

2015 Election of David Cameron's Conservative Government (dissolved in 2017 following the Brexit vote) 2017 Election of Theresa May's Conservative Government. 2019 Election of Boris Johnson's Conservative Government	**Entrenched collaboration** **2015 – 2019**	The Conservatives' Civil Society Strategy: building a future that works for everyone (2018) From Paternalism to Participation Putting civil society at the heart of national renewal (Labour, 2019)	Free Society (The ACEVO, 2015) A review of the Voluntary Sector's Operating Environment; The Road Ahead (NCVO, 2019) Election Blog (ACEVO, 2019)

Figure 19 - Summarising the temporal construction of NPO collaboration



Chapter 8 CONCLUSION

This thesis brings together the findings that respond to the research questions that have guided the study as highlighted in section 7.1. Combined, they comprise three original contributions that reveal a constellation of ideas that illuminate how the meaning of NPO collaboration has been constructed over time to render it a widely accepted form of organising. This has been achieved through a practical example of the application of DI. DI has been poorly served as an empirical concept, in response, I have developed and utilised the DI model, elaborating the concept and extending its empirical application. This takes the concept of DI further, creating new insight into the dynamic way that policy makers and NPROs temporally construct collaboration. As well as interrogating and curating the detail of ideas, I have been able to surface the interplay of the organisations that construct the purpose of NPO collaboration (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2007). Elements of the study resonate with work that highlights the prevalence of neoliberal ideas that frame NPO collaboration as a way to create efficiency and efficacy in NPOs (Buckingham, 2009). However, my findings extend the literature by foregrounding their ideas in parallel with the ideas of NPROs.

8.1. DI - from theoretical prominence to empirical relevance

Despite its theoretical prominence, DI has been poorly served as an empirical concept. Although a limited number of studies utilise ideational power in making general claims about the theory, none show scholars how they can adapt the concept to study the evolution of ideas in detail. Moreover, extant work has not represented in granular detail how ideas compete between more or less powerful organisations showing how less powerful actors might demonstrate ideational power through their own ideas. Relatedly, there was little detail of how DI can demonstrate and signal change and statis over time through different forms of ideational power; persuasion (relational power through ideas), challenge (political power over ideas) or assumption (ideological power in ideas).

The first, and overarching contribution, argues that study has created conceptual coherence making the concept of DI empirically relevant by clarifying each of the different forms of power and ideas in DI proposed by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016). Previous studies such as Gillard's (2016) have employed the concept to explore the

outcomes of discourse rather than the nuances of ideas at play overtime. Moreover, such studies have done little to explicate how the concept can be used and adopted in different research contexts. The creation of the discursive framework has overcome issues of obscurity through a comprehensive approach that has delineated the abstract description of each form of power. By highlighting the key facets of each, tabulating them, and adapting them into a framework that generates questions about the construction of collaboration, I have rendered the forms of power discursively identifiable. From this I have subsequently demonstrated how this can be methodologically operationalised to guide a detailed analysis that engages with documents. Consequently, I have shown what power in, over and through ideas 'do' in a discursive sense to construct NPO collaboration.

In stark contrast to the extant DI literature that makes generalised claims with limited empirical support to clarify the way ideas reflect power, the creation and application of the framework offers examples of ideational power at work. The thesis demonstrates an ideational power struggle at play, showing how organisations seek legitimacy from the NPOS and the communities they support as well as policy makers. By creating and employing the framework to policy documents I have revealed and documented the ideas constructing collaboration over a twenty-two-year period, charting the layered pillars of meaning that construct collaboration. Using the framework as part of a recursive analysis has shown how ideas are set out historically. It has drawn together a series of ideas that construct the nature and purpose of NPO collaboration, in policy documents magnifying how they persuade (relational power through ideas), dominate (political power over ideas) and assume (ideological power in ideas). In sum, the mosaic of ideas curated through the analysis demonstrates how policy makers have framed the social obligations of NPOs through their discursive conceptions of NPO collaboration.

DI theory was adopted in part, because of the emphasis placed on less powerful agents (Crespy and Schmidt, 2014). By foregrounding how NPROs reflect ideational power the thesis has illustrated the important role they play in mediating and moderating the construction of NPO collaboration. The inclusion of the NCIA provides a clear example of an organisation with limited resource, public profile, or material power. Nonetheless it has shown the role such organisations play in overtly challenging powerful ideas. In the case of this thesis, the development of the DI framework has been integral in creating

insight that explains how less powerful organisations, such as NPROs, overtly resist collaboration. In essence, showing that NPROs are not organisational dupes that unquestioningly support collaboration. Rather it has illustrated the importance of the discursive role NPROs play in destabilising an unquestioning acceptance of collaboration.

By intentionally focusing on NPROs ideas, I have created a trail that illustrates a vivid picture of their ideas vis-à-vis the three distinct forms of ideational power. This has been achieved through a different approach in conjunction with the framework, looking at each NPO through a specific lens or form of power. As well as channelling deep insight into the ideational power of NPROs this also presented an alternative application of the theoretical lens. To look at distinct aspects of language use to reveal how ideational power is reflected through relational power through ideas, political power over ideas and ideological power in ideas.

In summary, the creation and application of the framework is an important and significant addition to the DI literature. This work has provided a means to render the three forms of ideational power identifiable and recognisable. The framework creates a way of looking at the construction of organisational phenomena in documents temporally and in fine detail by taking elements of the lens and magnifying how a given organisation reflects ideational power by persuading, challenging or supporting widespread assumption. Thus this contribution adds to and extends the DI literature. Moreover, through application it underpins the further two contributions of the thesis that address NPO collaboration evolving this prominent concept making it empirically relevant.

8.2. The temporal constitution of NPO collaboration in policy and NPRO documents

The second contribution used the DI framework to explain how collaboration between NPOs is chronologically constructed in policy documents as a common form of organising in an institutional context. Through a longitudinal approach, I have compiled a series of insights that trace and account for the evolution and adaptation of NPO collaboration. This has revealed how ideas are set out at a societal level to orient the nature and purpose of collaboration between NPOs, characterising the construction of collaboration over seven consecutive election cycles. In doing so the study shows how it is catalysed in 1997 through ideas of partnership and a more equitable society. Over time

however, policy documents couch NPO collaboration as an entrenched phenomenon, camouflaged through assumptions that consider NPOs collaborating to support and facilitate a self-serving civil society as the state devolves responsibility for welfare.

The third and final contribution has created new insight to show the granular focus range of policy documents constructing NPO collaboration. This adds a new dimension to literature by surfacing how three different NPRO's ideational power discursively constructs collaboration. The detailed analysis of NPROs challenges the notion of the third sector as a singular organisational entity by representing the unique ways each represents NPO collaboration. Rather than a reductionist approach that sees collaboration flowing in a linear way from the macro to the micro level, it illustrates a dynamic interplay of ideas that connect and collide between a range of NPROs and policy makers.

Previous research suggests that NPROs support the state agenda for collaboration as cultural dupes, passive and agreeable to public policy who broadly follow policy agendas (Campbell, 1998, p.383; Lawrence et al., 2009; Suddaby, 2010). Whilst this notion resonates with some groups, especially the ACEVO, the NCVO's documents portray them in a different light as they work with and against policy agendas to influence the role and purpose of collaborations. In further contrast to the extant literature in section 2.7, I explored the discursive role of the NCIA, a group who took an active role in resisting the ideas of NPO collaboration. Each of these organisations carried very specific characteristics of ideational power in the way they framed collaboration. The analysis has demonstrated how the NCVO displayed persuasive characteristics, the NCIA challenged policy and the ACEVO reflected hegemonic assumptions that collaboration afforded NPOs greater power and purpose. Given these findings, it was surprising that the ACEVO seemed to deviate from this in the publication of documents towards the end of the final era analysed in the study. In 2019, they made a radical departure from this hegemonic role reminding NPOs of the value of organic forms of collaboration rather than policy driven methods.

Collectively, the development of the framework as its application supports the work of scholars such as Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) and Macmillan (2011) interested in the way organisations influence others in institutional subsystems. Though the findings do

not explicitly claim that ideas in documents are taken or borrowed from others, it is possible to see how they surface and evolve periodically. The NCVO for example initially highlights the prospect of sharing back-office functions as a way to create efficiencies through collaboration. Over time both the Labour and Conservative parties present ideas of shared spaces - collaborative approaches to running community spaces and pubs. The NCIA's overt resistance stands in contrast with the approach taken by other NPOs until the latter part of the study where, as the state went further in devolving their responsibility for welfare, the AVEVO set out ideas that depart from their traditional stance supporting collaboration. Although the explicit sharing, borrowing and adaptation of ideas is not evident, the way they layer, appear and reappear over time is clear.

8.3. Reflections, reflexivity, the doctoral journey and NPO collaboration

It is argued by some that researchers interested in the sector can add value to their research through their reflexivity (Dean, 2017; Glassner, Gans & Hertz, 2003). In Chapter Four, I highlighted the importance of reflexivity as an important aspect of the decision-making process in research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hardy et al., 2004). The following section corresponds with this by summarising and synthesising some of the experiences that informed or comprised this process. Many of these were contained within notebooks kept through the research.

I joined this programme of doctoral study leaving behind my work in a small, local NPO. I came to the study having undertaken an MSc exploring informal learning networks in a community context. I was interested in collaboration, in part because of this research but mostly because towards the end of my time in the small NPO, I had been involved in establishing and working in more and more collaborative ventures. These were met with varying degrees of success. Hence, I was curious about the expanse of collaborative relationships despite an apparent lottery in terms of success or failure. At the time, my assumption was that this was linked to the financial crisis, though it is true to say that collaboration was a feature of many of the projects I engaged with prior to that. Whilst in the nascent stages of developing a research proposal for my PhD in conversations with a prospective supervisor, I became aware of my assumptions around the relationship between public policy and the growth in collaboration. This sense was built on headlines

and hearsay rather than on rigour and academic knowledge. This was the first nudge towards a study of how NPO collaboration is constructed at a macro level through public policy. This fuelled my curiosity and influenced the early development of my thesis.

As well as a growing interest in the relationship between public policy and NPO collaboration, I decided to incorporate the ideas of NPROs. As discussed in the methodology chapter (section 4.3.1), this was as a result of early formative feedback following presentations to peers at conferences and in supervision. As with the role of policy constructing collaboration, my understanding of the role of NPROs was limited. I had some insight into the role of the NCVO however, I had little knowledge of the work of ACEVO and NCIA. Therefore, by including these groups in the research, I was able to extend my knowledge and understanding of the range of NPROs supporting and contending policy ideas.

Another incident that played a significant role in shaping my journey was undertaking the Masters in Research programme for doctoral students at Sheffield Hallam Business School. This involved a discussion and work debating the notion of truth. In a subsequent discussion, one of my supervisors shared papers written by Schmidt (2008, 2010) focusing on the concept of DI. As I have mentioned through the thesis, the concept is abstract and dense. I realised soon after that the challenges I had in terms of my understanding were in part related to the conjecture and lack of empirical explanation or application of the concept.

As I developed my research proposal and plan, I was determined to use this lens to become a more rounded researcher in understanding how policy documents construct collaboration and simultaneously empirically adopt and adapt Schmidt's DI as a lens to create new knowledge. This path was challenging and involved many dead ends as I grappled with how I might utilise DI. In the spirit of inductive research, I recursively engaged with data and then literature in an attempt to bring the two together to create new knowledge. Over this time and as highlighted earlier in section 7.1, other researchers came to utilise the lens of DI but in ways that generalised findings vis-à-vis the evolved form of DI (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). It became more and more apparent that I needed to make sense of the concept in a way that it could be useful in my research. I needed to construct a way that unpacked the concept to illuminate incremental change

as well as flagging the role of less powerful organisations. Having grappled with approaches to discourse analysis, the state and DI, I determined that the descriptions of DI could form a framework and be used in much the same way that my early discursive approach had been. A subsequent highlight of the study was meeting with my supervisory team to present the framework I had developed to guide an iteration of data analysis. I recall walking away from this having received affirmative comments about the direction I was taking Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) work and feeling a real sense of development in the doctoral journey.

Finally, the methods I employed in undertaking documentary analysis were also unfamiliar to me. Nonetheless, I have been determined to use the opportunity to undertake research to extend my own knowledge and skill set. This has not been easy, nor has it been straightforward. Certainly, finding out that I am considered neurodiverse (in other words dyslexic) three years into the study made me question my suitability to focus on language and meaning through documentary analysis. Through the journey, as I have grappled with new concepts, methodologies and data, I have enhanced not only academic knowledge, but my own skill set. Relatedly, I have demonstrated my own ideational power through a dogged will to complete the project and challenge the discourse that prevailed in my early education, where I was told I would never amount to much after school. The aim of noting this is not meant to be self-indulgent, however as is common in PhD study, the personal learning gained from such a project runs as deep, if not deeper as the learning disseminated in the thesis. Moreover, it resonates with the importance of illuminating the ideas of those who might seem to have less power. These reflections summarise many years of study and capture a sense of the critical events that have shaped the thesis.

The final sections address the limitations of the study, future directions of study and consider how the research has answered the research questions. Finally, I respond to the research questions, summarising how the findings form contributions to knowledge.

8.4. Limitations of the study and future uses of the DI framework

The above sections have argued that gaps in the literature have been addressed by developing and utilising the DI framework to identify how the three forms of ideational power manifest in ideas of collaboration. I have revealed the multifaceted and nuanced

ideas that layer and overlap to open the black box of collaboration and explain how it is constructed in documents over time. The approach to understanding how policy and NPRO documents construct the idea of NPO collaboration has not been without its challenges or limitations. Though conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, when certain studies have been forced to rely on documentary sources to support empirical study, the decision to use documents as empirics in this instance was an explicit choice. As well as allowing me to extend my knowledge of research methods, it has also provided empirical insight to these dynamic and important characteristics that would otherwise have remained hidden. This has created a vivid and contrasting picture of the discursive perspectives that construct collaboration. Documents were chosen explicitly because of this, as important artefacts which construct ideas. It was through analysis of documents that it was possible to elucidate how ideas emerged, were suppressed and sustained to create a longitudinal understanding of how collaboration has historically been constructed.

As has been previously addressed (1.3), Gazley and Guo (2020) highlighted the tendency for some researchers to overlook the inherent conflicts associated with NPO collaboration. Given its broad focus on wide ranging forms of collaboration, both across the sector and between NPOs and other sectors, this may arguably create limitations. However, given the wide scope of partner relationships with other NPOs, as well as the private and public sectors, the decision to take such a broad approach was deemed important, a deliberate choice in the design of the research. It allowed the research to address and surface the diffusion of ideas that span different kinds of collaborative relationships. In doing so, the findings reflect the importance of ambiguity associated with collaboration (see section 1.3). This is a notable facet underpinning the coherence of collaboration in documents. Indeed, this allowed me to foreground the discursive elements of persuasion, dominance, challenge and assumption. Specifically related to relational power through ideas, it has facilitated insight into the ways that collaboration is open to local interpretation, pointing to how ideas can transcend practice across the boundaries of specific collaborative relationships. By adhering to a broad view of collaboration, the thesis has highlighted the interwoven nature and complexity of ideas. Essentially, this enabled the response to the research questions and supported the

contributions of the thesis, framing the temporal evolution of collaboration at a societal level.

Through using the framework, the challenge of distinguishing the three forms of ideational power became apparent despite not always being straightforward. Essentially, ideas could not always be clearly differentiated. In some instances, the forms of ideational power were easily recognisable, presenting ideas that were overtly persuasive or indicated resistance. In other cases, the text somewhat resonated or overlapped with more than one, and at times, all three forms of ideational power. This is highlighted through the study and is shown in the example of the analysis in Chapter Four, Table 12, where the text has been interpreted in different ways in association with the framework. In particular, it was difficult to disentangle political power over ideas and ideological power in ideas; both bore some similarities. Specifically, the notion of power in ideas reflecting on institutional structures that allow the promotion of certain ideas relative to ideological, structural and institutional power promotions that allow access to material resources. The NCIA's form of resistance provides a vivid example in the way their ideas reflected a left-wing ideology that favoured independence and eschewed neoliberal values of efficiency. This therefore linked it to political power over ideas by resisting policy ideas of collaboration whilst similarly evidencing deeply held assumptions of ideological power in ideas.

A similar approach was evident in The Conservatives' text that associates collaboration as the replication of services in Chapter Five, section 5.4.3, likening NPOs to well-known high street coffee shops. This reflected the persuasive characteristics of relational power through ideas presenting collaboration in a way that was highly recognisable. However, the text also reflected the Conservatives' preferences for business-like forms of organisation, resonant with ideological power in ideas. The interpretation offered here therefore does not seek to suggest a single definition of all three forms of ideational power but an interpretation that recognises that some ideas are more readily identifiable with certain forms of power and others may overlap somewhat. Therefore, I recommend that scholars using the framework in future studies are clear and transparent about how they interpret and characterise the ideas that construct organisational phenomena.

Despite these challenges and limitations, the study has nonetheless made significant strides in the empirical development of DI within a study of NPO collaboration. It has responded to calls to make the concept empirically useful given the dearth of published studies that apply the concept (Parsons, 2007; Bell, 2012; Crespy, 2015). It has refined the concept and gained further clarity around the evolution of accepted but problematic organisational practices such as collaboration. The research illuminates how, through language as ideas in documents, institutional practices can be interpreted, reinterpreted, negotiated, resisted and challenged. Thus, a more complex interplay than is presented in the literature around NPO collaboration had been previously revealed. The research has implications for a host of organisations emphasising the importance of documents as artefacts that demonstrate how ideational power matters. This creates scope for future research to understand how NPROs' legitimacy supports or constrains policy ideas and to generate a deeper understanding of ideas at play that inform meaning in relation to organisational phenomena.

By designing research with documents forming empirics for the study, I have established their value as a resource to investigate organisational phenomena in and over time, accessing and tracing ideas in a way that would have been otherwise impossible. Though drafted, edited and authored collectively, the documents therein have represented the ideas that reflect actors' collective institutional positions around, and attitude towards, collaboration. Though some of the documents were co-authored or involved other stakeholders, their inclusion has been strategic in so much that this legitimises the interest of certain political parties in certain contexts and at certain times.

In the thesis, documents have been interrogated in much the same way as interviews might be. Guided by the questions in the DI frame, documents have been probed to elicit rich data revealing how language constructs collaboration. Unquestionably, they facilitated access to a wide range of groups, providing insight into subtle and more evident shifts in the construction of collaboration. Documents are one site that reflect the construction and communication of ideas and were overtly chosen as important artefacts because of this. Given the historical dimension of the study, it would have been challenging to gain this level of insight or access without undertaking documentary analysis. In conjunction with the DI framework, this research shows that documents are not static but artefacts that can generate new insight by illustrating the unique

perspectives of organisations that construct collaboration in and over time. Through documents, it has been possible to compare and contrast a range of different perspectives that surface the ideas that construct collaboration. This supports an approach in ways that might have been mired by power dynamics or may not otherwise have been possible.

I have undertaken the research at a macro (societal) level. However, the research could have been extended through the inclusion of more documents reflecting the ideas that construct practice at a micro (organisational) level. Alternative approaches might have also involved further research at a meso (local) level. Had time allowed, it would have been insightful to explore a wider range of local or regional documents, to explain how they construct collaboration, adding a further dimension of understanding. Equally, the framework could be used to support inquiry into international approaches constructing NPO collaboration. Nonetheless, the contribution of the framework and development of DI theory constitutes a versatile and empirically useful tool to support those scholars concerned with research into the construction of ideas. It offers a useful template, framework and methodological approach that could be adapted by other researchers interested in the construction of organisational phenomena both in and over time.

Of particular note in this study is the element of time. The research has brought to light a more contemporary view of the construction of collaboration in policy and NPRO documents. I have discussed collaboration in the context of turbulence. At the time of the final iteration of data collection, it was impossible to imagine the subsequent crisis that would lead to ramifications throughout society through the effects of COVID-19. Like all organisations, NPOs have felt the effects that followed the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020. One possible consequence will be fewer NPOs. The NCVO Almanac (NCVO, 2021) points to slightly reduced numbers in 2018/2019 and anticipates a greater reduction in future surveys after a period of relative stability in NPO numbers. Further anticipated funding gaps are considered to threaten survival and have further implications for NPOs in the future (Kenley, 2020). In this context the notion of an independent civil society, exemplifying forms of community reciprocity, were reported in the early stages of lockdown (Harris, 2021). Harris argues that collaboration in this context was intensified reflecting organic exchanges that were not marred by competition. Arguably, the ripple effects of the pandemic are likely to have consequences

on the nature and purpose of NPO collaboration, layering further ideas in this unfolding landscape.

For NPROs this represents an important conjecture in the construction of NPO collaboration. In the face of a shrinking state with potentially fewer operating NPOs there is a vacuum creating the need for even greater collaboration. Given the findings that argue the state's gaze is less overtly concerned with NPOs there is scope for NPROs ideas of collaboration to be amplified. Their ideational power may have greater prominence as the state retreats from its explicit interest in the sector. Given the concern with problems in practice NPROs can capitalise on the opportunity to construct ideas that respond to local needs that contours to create the scope for organic and mutually supportive forms of NPO collaboration.

The development of DI presented in this research enables future studies to readily adopt and adapt the framework and empirically study how ideas construct the nature and purpose of other organisational phenomena. This could be achieved by adopting the methodology described in Chapter Four or by adapting it as a way to analyse interviews to explore areas of interest in relation to ideational power. In this way, the design and development of DI theory constitutes an adaptable and empirically useful framework to support those who are interested in exploring the construction of ideas. Therefore, the DI framework presents a way to gain an insight of the intricacies of ideas that construct institutionalised practices through this emerging field of study.

8.5. Concluding comments

In essence, this research has addressed a gap and makes an original contribution to knowledge in the DI literature, elaborating on Carstensen and Schmidt's (2016) three forms of ideational power to render theory empirically applicable. Using the evolved model of DI through the creation of a methodological framework, the study has revealed significant nuances in the way NPO collaboration has been constructed over time and by different policy makers and NPROs at a macro level. I have drawn on this framework to open the black box of collaboration by clearly demonstrating the complex range of organisations and ideas that layer to construct collaboration over a turbulent twenty-two-year period from 1997 - 2019. As well as demonstrating the association between ideational power in the ideas that construct NPO collaboration, it has also concentrated

on an area that has not been explored in literature; the way that NPROs construct collaboration through their own documents. This has identified hidden details that offer clues as to how such groups align with notions of legitimacy specifically in the ideas they represent and the interests that represent the extent to which NPROs in documents supporting or constraining policy discourses of NPO collaboration. As well as providing a sense of whose ideas they support, it also clearly shows their ideational power, challenging the notion that they are compliant dupes (Campbell, 1998, p.383; Lawrence et al., 2009; Suddaby, 2010). We can take from this vantage the complexity of relationships and the vast array of ideas that exist at a macro level. In turn, we can assume that this kind of interaction forms part of the interpretation and construction of collaboration at the meso or micro level, where organisations responsible for delivering services grapple with these ideas in an attempt to interpret them and construct their response.

The research concludes that DI can be utilised, informed by discursive approaches; a framework has rendered the concept empirically usable by delineating the descriptions of the forms of ideational power and utilising these to create a frame or model that can be adapted and applied by other researchers. Focusing on a period of unprecedented turbulence and change in the wider political system, the thesis has sought to explain how NPO collaboration has been constructed in policy and NPRO documents. In order to illuminate this, the conceptual lens of DI has been elaborated to create a workable model that has been empirically applied in this thesis and render a usable framework for scholars interested in how ideational power shapes the meaning of organisational phenomena. It is through the creation and application of the model that it has been possible to bring to prominence the construction of collaboration.

The study has illuminated how this organisational phenomenon is constructed temporally in policy and NPRO documents. It has also clarified the perceived but ambiguous role played by NPROs. To do this I have distinguished the approach of individual NPROs, highlighting how they demonstrate elements of ideational power in constructing NPO collaboration. This has departed from studies that frame policy makers as the architects of NPO collaboration by showing how different organisations' ideas layer and overlap to frame ideas of how collaboration should be enacted. The utility of these findings are manifold, drawing attention to the significance of their ideational

power and showing the lasting legacy of their ideas in contributing to perspectives and attitudes towards collaboration. This is pivotal in enhancing DI scholarship, challenging the dominant idea that organisational practices are self-replicating - associated with isomorphic tendencies. In response, the findings have documented the distinctive ways that NPROs contribute to the macro discursive institutional construction of collaboration through the evolved concept of DI.

This thesis has been written at a time when policy ideas that explicitly frame NPO collaboration as a central practice have faded. Nonetheless, the key role NPOs are expected to play remains evident in a society that some argue reflects the levels of inequality that first led to the conception of the welfare state (Thane, 2020). This brings us back to the expectation that NPOs continue to be expected to play a key role, collaborating to respond to complex societal needs in the face of fewer NPOs and a growing demand for services. Despite it being less evidently expected in documents after 2015, the last words in the thesis emphasise the continuing importance of NPO collaboration. It continues to be an expected organisational practice, considered a central function of NPOs as recently highlighted in an email from the NCVO in July 2021;

> *The pandemic has made us look at our work differently and realise that collaborative working is essential now - we need to work in partnership more and support each other in the sector more* (NCVO, 2021).

Indeed, a recent survey following the pandemic suggests that charities are engaged in more collaboration than ever in response to the perfect storm following protracted austerity and the recent COVID 19 pandemic (Larkham, 2021; Mahy, 2021). Essentially, the text taken from the email above summarises, reiterates and underlines the importance of the work undertaken in the thesis. NPO collaboration matters, and so do the multitude of ideas in the public realm that construct the meaning of practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A) An example illustrating the development of DI into a discursive framework

i. Highlighted sections which inform the DI framework within an extended citation of Carstensen and Schmidt's power through ideas

The understanding of ideational power as a capacity of actors to persuade other actors to accept and adopt their views of what to think and do through the use of ideational elements – here called power through ideas – is the most common approach to ideational power among discursive institutionalists. Persuasion is clearly central to this form of ideational power. Rather than viewing power as making someone do what they would otherwise not have done based on force, threats, institutional position, material resources, etc., the ideational power actors exert is based on their capacity to induce other actors to do something through reasoning or argument. It is not necessarily – or rather, it rarely is – a completely 'rational' process in the sense that the most powerful necessarily are the ones with the 'best' argument. Instead, the persuasiveness of an idea depends on both the cognitive and normative arguments that can be mustered in its support. Cognitive arguments depend for success on their ability to define the problems to be solved, and to propose adequate policy solutions to those problems (Schmidt 2006, p. 251; see also Campbell 2004; Mehta 2011). Power is clearly at play here, since affecting what is considered viable problem definitions and solutions through the use of ideational elements fundamentally frames the context which defines the range of possibilities for others. More specifically, according to Schmidt (2002: 219), to be persuasive in cognitive terms, policy ideas – and the discourses employed to defend them – should be able to demonstrate: first, the policy programme's relevance, by accurately identifying the problems the polity expects to be solved; second, the policy programme's applicability by showing how it will solve the problems it identifies; and third, the policy programme's seeming coherence, by making the concepts, norms, methods and instruments of the programme appear reasonably consistent and able to be applied without major contradiction. The emphasis here is on 'seeming coherence', since sometimes vagueness or ambiguity makes for discursive success, as different parties to the discussion can interpret the ideas differently (Schmidt 2006: 251). Neoliberalism is a case in point, since its very generality, adaptability and mutability is one of the reasons for its success (see Schmidt and Thatcher 2013: ch. 1). Normative arguments, by contrast, are not so much concerned with demonstrating the validity of an idea as its value. As such, they tend to make appeal to the norms and principles of public life, with persuasiveness dependent upon the extent to which they are able to demonstrate its appropriateness in terms of

the values of a given community, whether long-standing or newly emerging (Schmidt 2002: 213). Although some ideas and discourses are based only on technical and scientific (cognitive) arguments, to make these powerful in persuading the broader public and the organizations representing it, they still need to fulfil a normative function by providing a more generally accessible narrative about the causes of current problems and what needs to be done to remedy them that resonate with the public (Schmidt 2006: 251– 3). As noted by Widmaier et al. (2007: 755), 'the success of any elite group engaged in persuasion is often less related to their analytic skills than to the broad mass intuitions of the moment'. This means that mass expectations about how the economy should work – not just cognitively but normatively – set limits on the kinds of policy ideas that elite actors are able to persuade their constituents are necessary and/or appropriate. For example, even though one might expect neo-Keynesian cognitive arguments to persuade the public that more state spending in times of an economic downturn is the tried and true route to recovery from excessive deficits and debt, normative appeals based on neo- (or ordo-) liberal philosophical principles have in recent post-crisis times instead won the day, by invoking 'common sense' images of upstanding and righteous Schwabian housewives tightening their belts when their households are indebted. The agency-orientation of this understanding of ideational power distinguishes it from the structural theories of theoretical dominance or socialization mentioned above, since it emphasizes actors' ability to 'stand outside' and critically engage with the ideas they hold and promote. In this perspective, ideas are not thought of as internalized or 'contained' in the minds of actors, but instead as a resource – a toolkit and not a coherent system – that exists between and not inside the minds of actors, and the use of ideas thus demands some creativity and critical faculty of the actor (Carstensen 2011a), at times enabling him or her to 'buck the system' (Widmaier et al. 2007). That is, actors not only have 'background ideational abilities' that enable them to think beyond the (ideational) structures that constrain them even as they (re)construct them. They also have 'foreground discursive abilities' that enable them to communicate and deliberate about taking action collectively to change their institutions (Schmidt 2008). In this view, ideational power is not primarily about manipulating people into not recognizing their 'real interests' (Lukes 1974), but rather about persuading other agents about one's understanding of an issue based on available intersubjectively held ideas. What becomes important in this perspective is to have influence on what is considered 'common knowledge' (Culpepper 2008) among elite policy actors within a policy area and use this in a discourse connected to the public philosophy of the polity. In the process of persuasion, moreover, we need to distinguish between the policy sphere, in which policy actors (consisting of experts and advocacy networks, organized interests, civil servants and public officials) engage in a 'coordinative' discourse of ideational generation and contestation, and the political sphere, in which political actors (consisting of politicians, spin doctors, campaign managers, government spokespersons, party activists) engage in a 'communicative' discourse of translation, discussion, deliberation and, again, contestation with the public (including not just the general public but also informed publics of opinion-makers, the media, organized interests, community leaders and activists) (Schmidt 2002, 2006, 2008). Notably, while the co-ordinative discourse may very well remain a top –down process, the communicative discourse ensures power through ideas occurs not only from the top – down but also from the bottom –up. Power through ideas can have effects that matter for both stability and change in ideas and institutions, and may be exerted in both processes of revolutionary and evolutionary change. During more radical shifts in the ideas that govern a polity, the power that actors are able to

exert through ideas is, for example, central for contesting existing institutions and to build legitimacy around a competing set of ideas (Blyth 2002), both among e´lites and in the public (Schmidt 2002). Because the authority of a reigning paradigm is not automatically challenged by developments in material circumstances (Hall 1993) – such developments need to be interpreted as policy anomalies that undermine the authority of the paradigm (Blyth 2013) – citizens and elites alike have to be persuaded about the weaknesses of existing institutions, which makes power through ideas absolutely essential for effecting change. When ideational power is exerted through ideas, evolutionary change may also be the outcome. This may, for example, happen as policy actors seek to respond to critiques from competing coalitions and sustain the legitimacy of existing institutions; by accepting that new ideas and institutions are layered on top of the existing institutional set up; or, alternatively, that existing institutions are converted, i.e., they are reinterpreted or redirected by the adoption of new goals, functions, purposes or the incorporation of new groups (see also Streeck and Thelen 2005). However, whether the changes are radical or evolutionary in kind, to effect change at the level of a policy programme or a paradigm – or indeed in public philosophies – it is necessary to challenge actors' power over ideas, to which we now turn.

(Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016, pp. 323-326)

ii. Summarising key points from the description of power through ideas

- vagueness or ambiguity makes for discursive success, as different parties to the discussion can interpret the ideas differently
- persuasiveness dependent upon the extent to which they are able to demonstrate its appropriateness in terms of the values of a given community
- generally accessible narrative about the causes of current problems and what needs to be done to remedy them that resonate with the public
- This means that mass expectations about how the economy should work
- by invoking 'common sense' images
- The agency-orientation of this understanding
- it emphasizes actors' ability to 'stand outside' and critically engage with the ideas they hold and promote
- that enable them to communicate and deliberate about taking action collectively to change their institutions
- persuading other agents about one's understanding of an issue
- influence on what is considered 'common knowledge'
- power through ideas occurs not only from the top – down but also from the bottom –up. Power through ideas can have effects that matter for both stability and change

(Adapted from Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016, pp. 323-326)

iii. Progressing the keys points from the description of power through ideas

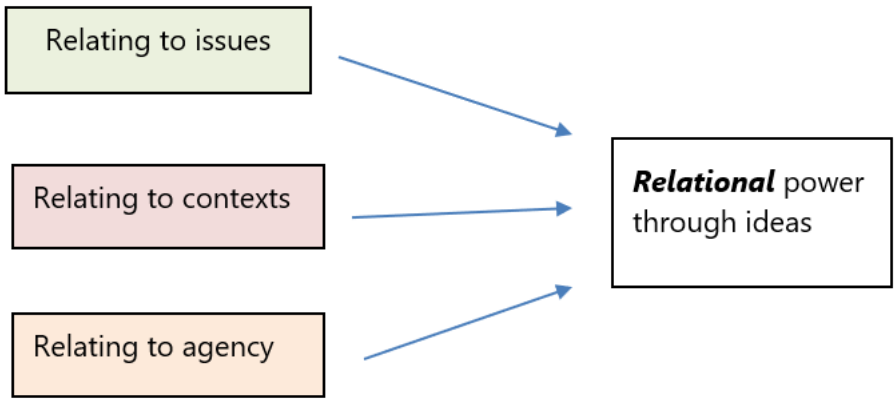
Table 20 - Relating the delineated descriptions of power through ideas to the discursive constructions of NPO collaboration

Description of power through ideas (taken from Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016, pp. 323-326)	**Contextualising the descriptions vis-à-vis NPO collaboration**	**The overarching themes of power through ideas**
The agency-orientation of this understanding.	Show how ideas of collaboration can be adaptable.	**Relating to issues**
Enable them to communicate and deliberate about taking action collectively to change their institutions.	Creates a sense of agency around collaboration.	
Invoking 'common sense' images.	Resonate with other actors (policy makers/NPOs/beneficiaries/wider public).	
Persuading other agents about one's understanding of an issue.	Promote / persuade that collaboration is a good idea in relation to given issues.	
Persuasiveness dependent upon the extent to which they are able to demonstrate its appropriateness in terms of the values of a given community.	Persuasive elements that encourage acceptance / adoption ideas.	**Relating to contexts**
Vagueness or ambiguity makes for discursive success, as different parties to the discussion can interpret the ideas differently.	Introduce NPO collaboration in a way that is vague and allows for local / contextual interpretation.	

This means mass expectations about how the economy should work.	Appeal to perceived knowledge of actors creating a sense of how things should work e.g. tightening the purse strings at times of fiscal constraint.	
Emphasises actors' ability to 'stand outside' and critically engage with the ideas they hold and promote.	Link ideas to the principles of NPOs.	
Influence on what is considered 'common knowledge'.	Illustrate the mutual value of collaboration to enhance its acceptability as common knowledge or a common response to organising.	**Relating to agency**
Generally accessible narrative about the causes of current problems and what needs to be done to remedy them that resonate with the public.	Set out how collaboration can solve problems.	
Engage in a 'coordinative' discourse of ideational generation and contestation…respond to critiques from competing coalitions and sustain the legitimacy of existing institutions.	Build potential coalitions of actors around evolving ideas of collaboration	

iv. Characterising the essence of power through ideas as *relational* power through ideas

Figure 20 - Characterising power through ideas as relational power through ideas



Appendix B) Discursive DI Framework

Table 21 - Framework empirically operationalising power and ideas in DI in the study

Relational power through ideas **Igniting, promoting and persuading; How do ideas in the text facilitate change in collaboration?**	***Political power over ideas*** **Dominating, shaming and blaming; How do ideas in the text indicate attempts to dominate collaboration?**	***Ideological power in ideas*** **Common-sense collaboration: How do ideas in the text demonstrate hegemonic or historical assumptions that influence collaboration?**
What does the document 'do' to? Show how ideas of collaboration can be adaptable. Create a sense of agency around collaboration. Resonate with other actors (Policy makers/NPOs/beneficiaries/wider public). Promote / persuade that collaboration as a good idea in relation to given issues. Reflect persuasive elements that encourage acceptance / adoption ideas. Introduce NPO collaboration in a way that is vague and allows for local / contextual interpretation Appeal to perceived knowledge of actors creating a sense of how things should work e.g. tightening the purse strings at times of fiscal constraint. Link ideas to the principles of NPOs. Illustrate the mutual value of collaboration to enhance its acceptability as common knowledge or a common response to organising. Set out how collaboration can solve problems. Build potential coalitions of actors around evolving ideas of collaboration	**What does the document 'do' to?** Point to actors' attempts to control or dominate the meaning of collaboration. Reflect on how institutional structures and access allow the promotion of certain idea of collaboration. Set parameters or conditions around collaboration. Impose ideas of collaboration. Challenge ideas of collaboration Show how relatively powerless organisations shame other actors. Resist ideas of collaboration.	**What does the document 'do' to?** Reflect ideas of collaboration based on historical relationships and understanding. Reflect hegemonic assumptions around collaboration. Suggest that collaboration is assumed; an idea so acceptable it recedes into the background. Assume what is considered viable or reasonable in ideas of collaboration. Ideas that reflect the evolutionary nature of collaboration. Locate collaboration as an idea that is recognisable to both elites and the mass public.

Appendix C) Applied example using the DI Framework

Table 22 - Example of the analysis through the lens of ideological power in ideas

Example of text constructing collaboration (ACEVO, 2006, p.7).	***Application of the DI framework how does the text resonate with ideological power in ideas hegemonic or historical assumptions about collaboration?***	**Interpretive analysis in iteration with the DI framework.**
Many of the advances in child care, mental health and disability services have been developed in sector organisations.	Indicate that ideas are based on historical relationships and understanding.	Steeped in similar assumptions that emphasise the role of NPOs as an extension of the state. Reflecting the historical role played by NPOs as part of specialist provision.
Harnessing the talent for networking, flexibility and different approaches and ideas is a core strength of the sector.	Locates collaboration as an idea that is recognisable to both elites and the mass public. Assumes what is considered viable or reasonable. Suggest that collaboration is assumed; an idea so acceptable it recedes into the background.	Asserts the sector's position as part of a wider institutional structure. Capitalising on the notion that NPOs have unique, specialist insight. Networking is located as a deep-rooted feature of the sector. Camouflages collaboration as an expected part of NPOs' character.

Appendix D) Ethical Approval

SBS-73

Sheffield Hallam University

RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST (SHUREC1)

This form is designed to help staff and postgraduate research students to complete an ethical scrutiny of proposed research. The SHU Research Ethics Policy should be consulted before completing the form.

Answering the questions below will help you decide whether your proposed research requires ethical review by a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). In cases of uncertainty, members of the FREC can be approached for advice.

Please note: staff based in University central departments should submit to the University Ethics Committee (SHUREC) for review and advice.

The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research and with the principal investigator for staff research projects.

Note that students and staff are responsible for making suitable arrangements for keeping data secure and, if relevant, for keeping the identity of participants anonymous. They are also responsible for following SHU guidelines about data encryption and research data management.

The form also enables the University and Faculty to keep a record confirming that research conducted has been subjected to ethical scrutiny.

- For postgraduate research student projects, the form should be completed by the student and counter-signed by the supervisor, and kept as a record showing that ethical scrutiny has occurred. Students should retain a copy for inclusion in their thesis, and staff should keep a copy in the student file.
- For staff research, the form should be completed and kept by the principal investigator.

Please note if it may be necessary to conduct a health and safety risk assessment for the proposed research. Further information can be obtained from the Faculty Safety Co-ordinator.

General Details

Name of principal investigator or postgraduate research student	Jo Watts
SHU email address	joanne.watts@shu.ac.uk
Name of supervisor (if applicable)	Tracey Coule
email address	t.m.coule@shu.ac.uk
Title of proposed research	Inter-organisational Collaboration among Nonprofit Organisations: Power and Ideas in Policy
Proposed start date	28.9.15
Proposed end date	28.9.18

Brief outline of research to include, rationale & aims (500 - 750 words).	This programme of study will explore how ideas of inter-organisational collaboration in nonprofit organisations (NPOs[1]) manifest within government policy. The economic environment and orientation towards NPOs raise questions around the nature of collaboration among NPOs within policy discourse. Drawing on power and ideas in discursive Institutionalism (DI) (Schmidt and Carstensen 2016), this study explores the role of power and proliferation in ideas of collaboration in policy. As scholars suggest that collaboration between NPOs is increasing, I will document a temporal picture to shine a light on adapting discourses of collaboration between three key political parties (The Conservative Party, The Labour Party and The Liberal Democrat Party) spanning political eras from the mid 1990s to the current incumbent Conservative administration. Turning to NPOs, I will review the intersecting public response from leading figures representing the sector to illuminate how NPO representative bodies respond, resist and challenge ideas of collaboration within policy discourse. Through the lens of emerging academic thinking around the role of power and ideas in discourse (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016), I will advance a scholarly conversation and understanding of policy rhetoric, the significance of power and ideas in policy discourse and the future implications for policy makers, practitioners and academics. The following questions will guide the research programme: 1. How is inter-organisational collaboration presented in policy over time? 1.1. What is the underpinning rationale for inter-organisational collaboration within policy and how does this change temporally? 1.2. What are the motivators and drivers for collaboration within policy discourses? 1.3. What are the implications for the dynamics and efficacy of collaboration? 2. How do representatives of non-profit organisations publically respond to such ideas and discourses of collaboration? The rational and aims in summary are to generate a temporal view of collaborations among NPOs in policy and seeking in seeking an intersecting view from the leading actors representing NPOs through documents widely available in the public arena. These documents include policy manifestos from the Conservative, Labour and liberal

[1] For the purpose of this research the term NPO applies to organisations that are formally structured, operate exclusively for a not for profit purpose and are independent of government.

	Democrat Parties between 1997 - 2015, green and white papers which will include The Labour Party's Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006) and the Conservative Party Green Paper (2008) A stronger society: Voluntary action in the 21st century. I have elected to research the public manifesto developed by the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVEO) who represent the views of leading charities. ACEVO developed a manifesto prior to the 2015 general election to represent the views of the sector, significantly in relation to this programme of study, the sector's ideas of collaboration (ACEVEO, 2014).
Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymisation, storage and disposal procedures if these are required (300 -750 words).	N/A – all data is drawn from publically available documents.
Will the research be conducted with partners & subcontractors?	**No** (If **YES**, outline how you will ensure that their ethical policies are consistent with university policy.)

1. Health Related Research involving the NHS or Social Care / Community Care or the Criminal Justice System or with research participants unable to provide informed consent

Question		**Yes/No**
1.	Does the research involve? • Patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care • Relatives/carers of patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care • Access to data, organs or other bodily material of past or present NHS patients • Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients • The recently dead in NHS premises • Prisoners or others within the criminal justice system recruited for health-related research* • Police, court officials, prisoners or others within the criminal justice system* • Participants who are unable to provide informed consent due to their incapacity even if the project is not health related	N/A
2.	Is this a research project as opposed to service evaluation or audit? *For NHS definitions please see the following website* http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/	

If you have answered **YES** to questions **1 & 2** then you **must** seek the appropriate external approvals from the NHS, Social Care or the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) under their independent Research Governance schemes. Further information is provided below.

NHS https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx

* Prison projects may also need National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Approval and Governor's Approval and may need Ministry of Justice approval. Further guidance at: http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/applying-for-approvals/national-offender-management-

service-noms/

NB FRECs provide Independent Scientific Review for NHS or SC research and initial scrutiny for ethics applications as required for university sponsorship of the research. Applicants can use the NHS proforma and submit this initially to their FREC.

2. Research with Human Participants

Question		Yes/No
1.	Does the research involve human participants? This includes surveys, questionnaires, observing behaviour etc.	No
Note	*If YES, then please answer questions 2 to 10*	
If NO, please go to Section 3		
2.	Will any of the participants be vulnerable?	
Note	*'Vulnerable' people include children and young people, people with learning disabilities, people who may be limited by age or sickness or disability, etc. See definition*	
3	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	
4	Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?	
5	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	
6	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	
7	Is there any reasonable and foreseeable risk of physical or emotional harm to any of the participants?	
Note	*Harm may be caused by distressing or intrusive interview questions, uncomfortable procedures involving the participant, invasion of privacy, topics relating to highly personal information, topics relating to illegal activity, etc.*	
8	Will anyone be taking part without giving their informed consent?	
9	Is it covert research?	
Note	*'Covert research' refers to research that is conducted without the knowledge of participants.*	
10	Will the research output allow identification of any individual who has not given their express consent to be identified?	

If you answered **YES only** to question **1,** you must complete the box below and submit the signed form to the FREC for registration and scrutiny.

Data Handling

Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymisation, storage and disposal procedures if these are required (300 -750 words).

N/A no data will be collected from human participants. All data is from publically available documentation.

If you have answered **YES** to any of the other questions you are **required** to submit a SHUREC2A (or 2B) to the FREC. If you answered **YES** to question **8** and participants cannot provide informed consent due to their incapacity you must obtain the appropriate approvals from the NHS research governance system.

3. Research in Organisations

Question		Yes/No
1	Will the research involve working with/within an organisation (e.g. school, business, charity, museum, government department, international agency, etc.)?	No
2	If you answered YES to question 1, do you have granted access to conduct the research? *If YES, students please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain safely.*	
3	If you answered NO to question 2, is it because: A. you have not yet asked B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access. *Note* *You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted access.*	

4. Research with Products and Artefacts

Question		Yes/No
1.	Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes, existing datasets or secure data?	Yes
2.	If you answered YES to question 1, are the materials you intend to use in the public domain?	Yes
Notes	*'In the public domain' does not mean the same thing as 'publicly accessible'.* – *Information which is 'in the public domain' is no longer protected by copyright (i.e. copyright has either expired or been waived) and can be used without permission.* – *Information which is 'publicly accessible' (e.g. TV broadcasts, websites, artworks, newspapers) is available for anyone to consult/view. It is still protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice. In UK law, copyright protection is automatic and does not require a copyright statement, although it is always good practice to provide one. It is necessary to check the terms and conditions of use to find out exactly how the material may be reused etc.* *If you answered YES to question 1, be aware that you may need to consider other ethics codes. For example, when conducting Internet research, consult the code of the Association of Internet Researchers; for educational research, consult the Code of Ethics of the British Educational Research Association.*	
3.	If you answered NO to question 2, do you have explicit permission to use these materials as data? *If YES, please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain permission.*	
4.	If you answered NO to question 3, is it because: A. you have not yet asked permission B. you have asked and not yet received and answer C. you have asked and been refused access. *Note* *You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted permission to use the specified material.*	**A/B/C**

Adherence to SHU policy and procedures

Personal statement	
I can confirm that: – I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures – I agree to abide by its principles.	
Student / Researcher/ Principal Investigator (as applicable)	
Name: Jo Watts	Date: 26th September 2016
Signature: Jo Wat [redacted]	
Supervisor or other person giving ethical sign-off	
I can confirm that completion of this form has not identified the need for ethical approval by the FREC or an NHS, Social Care or other external REC. The research will not commence until any approvals required under Sections 3 & 4 have been received.	
Name:	Date:
Signature: [redacted]	26/09/2016
Additional Signature if required:	
Name:	Date:
Signature:	

Please ensure the following are included with this form if applicable, tick box to indicate:

	Yes	No	N/A
Research proposal if prepared previously	x	☐	☐
Any recruitment materials (e.g. posters, letters, etc.)	☐	☐	x☐
Participant information sheet	☐	☐	x☐
Participant consent form	☐	☐	x☐
Details of measures to be used (e.g. questionnaires, etc.)	☐	☐	x☐
Outline interview schedule / focus group schedule	☐	☐	x☐
Debriefing materials	☐	☐	x☐
Health and Safety Project Safety Plan for Procedures	☐	☐	x☐
Data Management Plan*	x	☐	

If you have not already done so, please send a copy of your Data management Plan to rdm@shu.ac.uk It will be used to tailor support and make sure enough data storage will be available for your data.

Completed form to be sent to Relevant FREC. Contact details on the website.