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*Community ownership and governance of affordable housing: Perspectives on community land trusts.*

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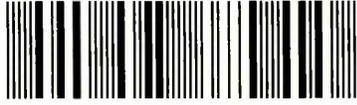
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# **Community ownership and governance of affordable housing: Perspectives on community land trusts**

**Thomas Moore**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

**November 2011**

# Abstract

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Theories of communitarianism have become increasingly important in understanding UK housing policy and regeneration practice, as governments promote active citizenship and community empowerment in the management and governance of housing. Community land trusts (CLTs) have been embraced by communities and governments as a potential vehicle for the delivery and management of affordable housing in locations where there is thought to be insufficient supply. Rather than rely on provision from state or private actors, CLTs directly undertake development in order to meet the local needs of their area.

This thesis studies how and why people form, or attempt to form, CLTs in England and Wales, contributing to an emerging body of academic work on CLTs at national and international levels. It draws upon theories of community (Etzioni, 1995a; Tam, 1998) and neighbourhood governance (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008) to illustrate the underlying rationales of CLTs and describe their negotiation within and between communities, financiers, and local and national governments.

The research finds that the intrinsic rationale for CLTs is the alteration of power relations that privilege the autonomy of a defined, constructed or imagined community in the governance of local housing, influencing its tenure type, use and occupation in line with the needs of a CLT's instigators and beneficiaries. However, the creation of a CLT, as a form of communitarian governance, is a relational and political process that involves positioning for resources and legitimacy within wider social, cultural and political contexts. This gives rise to a variety of organisational forms and outcomes that reshape our understandings of a CLT. It should be understood as an approach with diverse rationales and characteristics rather than a uniform model. The potential effectiveness and composition of CLTs is likely to depend on the linkages made with broader structural forces, indicating that agendas

of communitarianism and localism may be as dependent on the role and influence of external forces as they are on the active citizenship of local people.

# Acknowledgements

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I wish to acknowledge the assistance and support provided to me by several people during the PhD process, though it should be stated that all responsibility for the content of this thesis lies solely with the author.

First and foremost, this study would not have been possible without its participants who paid an interest in my research and gave up their time to take part. I would also like to thank Bob Paterson for allowing me access to the inner sanctum of the CLT world through employment at the University of Salford, a period of time which contributed to my thinking and personal development.

My Director of Studies, John Flint, offered academic insight, advice and encouragement throughout, particularly during the enjoyable yet frantic final months. This was complemented by the valuable recommendations and constructive critiques provided by my second supervisor, Peter Wells. Thanks are due to both for their supervisory role in guiding me from start to finish.

CRESR was a unique and enjoyable environment in which to undertake a PhD. In particular, Will Eadson and Mike Foden were a source of mutual support, reassurance and entertainment throughout the three years. Ellen Bennett and Alessia Ruggiero were always willing to exchange ideas and share problems over a cup of tea, while the fluctuations in confidence and cynicism that characterise the PhD process were usually negotiated over a drink with Mark Stevens.

Finally, I am particularly grateful for the support and inspiration given by my Grandfather Jerry Burns throughout my education.

# Table of Contents

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<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Conceptualising community governance.....</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1 The strength of communal ties .....	25
2.2 Communitarian politics: shifting from government to governance .....	35
2.3 Understanding Empowerment and Participation .....	48
<b>Chapter 3: Housing governance and the politics of community.....</b>	<b>61</b>
3.1 Governance, co-governance and housing.....	61
3.2 Collective action and housing .....	73
3.3 Rationales for neighbourhood governance .....	101
<b>Chapter 4: Methodology: a qualitative study of CLTs.....</b>	<b>109</b>
4.1 Selecting research strategies, methods and subjects.....	110
4.2 Out in the field: studying CLTs .....	127
4.3 Constructing a narrative: transcribing and analysing data .....	138

**Chapter 5: The rationales underpinning CLT formation .....148**

5.1 The motivations: "government inaction and market failure" .....149

5.2 Reviving local democracy and involving the community .....164

5.3 The potential role and influence of community .....173

5.4 The strategic response to the claims of CLTs .....176

**Chapter 6: The importance of land: acquisition and influence .....185**

6.1 Incentivising local landowners: local assurance over land use .....186

6.2 The politics of public asset transfer .....191

6.3 Taking it to the community: local referendums over land use .....203

6.4 Negotiation of communitarian civic rationales .....215

**Chapter 7: Dilemmas, compromise and trade-offs: financial arrangements for CLTs .....222**

7.1 The dilemmas and compromises in acquiring public subsidy .....226

7.2 Performing legitimacy and accessing local authority finance .....249

<b>Chapter 8: From experimentation to replication: the creation of a CLT sector .....</b>	<b>263</b>
8.1 Beyond the local: the growth of umbrella CLTs.....	265
8.2 Judging the value of umbrella CLTs.....	272
8.3 The process/outcome dualism and the influence of umbrellas .....	283
8.4 Representation and legitimacy at a national scale .....	294
<b>Chapter 9: Concluding Remarks.....</b>	<b>301</b>
9.1 Emerging themes and future prospects for CLTs.....	302
9.2 The research's implications for theory and policy .....	313
9.3 Reflections, limitations and pathways for research.....	328
<b>References .....</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>369</b>
Appendix 1: Legal definition of a community land trust.....	369
Appendix 2: CLT events attended 2008-2011 .....	371
Appendix 3: Fieldwork activities .....	374

Appendix 4: Interview guide used for people external to a CLT organisation.....377

Appendix 5: Interview guide used for people within a CLT organisation .....379

Appendix 6: Example CLT housing allocation policy .....381

Appendix 7: Umbrella CLTs in England and Wales.....387

**List of tables**

Table 1: A ladder of citizen participation.....50

Table 2: A revised ladder of citizen participation.....52

Table 3: Rationales for neighbourhood governance.....103

# Chapter 1: Introduction

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This thesis studies how and why some actors within particular local communities form, or seek to form, community land trusts (CLTs) to instigate social change in the ownership and governance of housing. An emphasis on community as an answer to societal issues is not novel. It has simultaneously existed as a central component of state policy agendas, an important and pragmatic alternative to governmental solutions, and as a device capable of articulating local opposition and resistance to dominant political discourse and hegemony. Theories of communitarianism have been strongly influential in political rationales and policy underpinning housing and regeneration. Yet, while the discourse around community ascribes many positive statements to its existence, the construct carries with it varied meanings and interpretations that shape the extent to which it is vital or marginal and filled with democratic potential or regulatory limitations (DeFilippis *et al.* 2010, p. 2).

These possibilities are especially pronounced in the field of housing with residential movements that actively involve people in the design, management and governance of housing now seen as common in the United Kingdom. Yet, while there is a long history of housing that is planned and controlled by its users (Handy *et al.*, 2011), a plethora of organisational forms, roles and possibilities for community can be found in this tradition. These range from co-operative housing entirely owned by its users and tenants, to social housing schemes where tenants are participants in governance rather than owners. As such community-led and controlled housing is best understood as a sector that is "diverse in terms of scale, management, organisational objectives, history and location" (Handy *et al.*, 2011, p. 16).

CLTs have emerged in recent years as a progression of this tradition. CLTs are structured as non-profit organisations, usually formed on a voluntary basis, and established to further the social and economic interests of a local community by acquiring and managing land in order to develop and own local housing (HM

Government, 2008). Described as a "largely theoretical model" (HM Treasury, 2006) by politicians as recently as 2006, CLTs have grown in prominence in the last five years to be identified not only as a potential vehicle for the delivery of affordable housing but also as an agent through which governmental agendas of localism and community empowerment can be channelled. Indeed, in 2010 CLTs were used as a case study by government to justify proposals to decentralise power and decision-making in planning policy to community level (Shapps, 2010b), while the coalition government's programme for action released soon after their election in 2010 promised to "create new trusts that will make it simpler for communities to provide homes for local people" (HM Government, 2010, p. 12). This support links into governmental commitments to devolve power downwards from the centre to the local level, reflecting communitarian views that embrace the neighbourhood as the primary site to engineer social change. Such standpoints can be found in the rhetoric that advocates CLTs as a form of autonomous organisation capable of producing favourable outcomes for its beneficiaries:

In essence, CLTs provide an opportunity to regenerate urban and rural communities from the bottom up. They build on local tacit knowledge of local community needs, engage local communities in developing innovative approaches and experiment with new forms of community governance in order to create genuinely sustainable solutions - in social, financial and environmental terms.

Bailey (2010, p. 50)

Yet while the language used to endorse CLTs speaks in such effusive terms, CLTs remain in their infancy in England and Wales and references made to their emergence and exact operation are often oblique. Goodchild (2010, p.22, my emphasis) refers to the "*proposed* Community Land Trust"; Handy *et al.* (2011, p. 13) refer to a "potential" but unproven and untested CLT model, and, despite their political sponsorship, the Conservative Party recently described CLTs as an

"existing, yet still largely experimental, way for local communities to work together" (Conservative Party, 2009, p. 23). This is indicative of a lack of awareness as to the extent and operations of CLTs. While Conaty (2011, p. 28) observed that there are over 140 CLTs engaged in developing housing in England, this figure conflicts with the observations of other sources. In January 2011 Triodos Bank (2011), a major charitable funder that has supported CLTs, stated that there are "just 13 Community Land Trusts in the UK, with a further six in the process of being established". While the figure of CLTs is higher than this, there is no comprehensive or reliable source that expressly states how many CLTs exist and the extent of their activity.<sup>1</sup> There is therefore a gap in our understanding of exactly how CLTs engage local communities and experiment with forms of community governance. The purpose of this thesis is to bring empirical evidence and theoretical understanding to these ambiguities, exploring how and why CLTs are formed to develop housing and the conditions under which these new forms of community governance are implemented. The research aimed to answer the following overarching research question:

*What is the purpose and function of CLTs as a form of housing governance in England and Wales?*

To do this, it is first necessary to lay the foundations of our understanding of CLTs. This chapter begins by considering the antecedents to CLTs in England and Wales by tracing their international origins in the USA and Scotland, before considering the housing trends and policy development that provided the genesis for this study. I then outline the structure of this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> The National CLT Network have an 'activity' map on their website - <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk> - though this does not provide a cumulative figure of CLT development (in terms of number of homes delivered or number of CLTs in existence) nor does it contain anything beyond basic information on many of the CLTs listed.

## The origins and evolution of CLTs

The label of "CLT" was first applied to organisations in the USA in the late 1960s, an outgrowth of the civil rights movement with the specific aim of providing marginalised populations with greater access to rights of land use and asset ownership (Davis, 2010). CLTs as they are understood in the USA today are predicated on their ability to offer affordable forms of housing, either through shared equity owner occupation or sub-market rental properties, to households on low to medium incomes. This is achieved by retaining the freehold of the land, aiming to ameliorate the impact of open market forces by attaching conditions to the occupation and resale of the housing that stands upon it with an emphasis on preserving its affordability for those on lower incomes (Diacon *et al.*, 2005). By retaining ownership of the land, and therefore a stake in the property that stands upon it, the CLT aims to ensure housing remains affordable and that it is not sold or developed except in a manner which the trust's members consider beneficial for the local community (Davis and Stokes, 2009). It is in this way that CLTs have become a mechanism to protect indigenous communities in rural and urban areas from a range of pressures including speculative private house building, gentrification and absentee landlordism, and are often found in urban neighbourhoods subject to modernising and gentrifying reforms (DeFilippis, 2004; Gray, 2008).

CLTs in the USA now number over 230 with over half of these formed since 2000. These CLTs have a historical reliance on voluntary endeavour and philanthropy (Sungu-Eryilmaz and Greenstein, 2007). In addition to acting as a mechanism to retain housing affordability, a key argument in favour of these CLTs is that their community-led structure places an emphasis on the democratic stewardship of assets, engaging local people in governing the use of properties and enhancing governance at the neighbourhood level (Diacon *et al.*, 2005, p. 3). This is exemplified by the American CLT's tripartite governance structure where board representation is split equally between CLT residents and owners, representatives from the wider community unconnected to the CLT, and local municipal officials that represent the

public interest (Davis and Stokes, 2009, p. 10). The aim is for CLTs to be guided by - and be accountable to - the people who reside within the physical, geographic boundaries in which a CLT operates, emphasising a strong attachment to place, locale and claims to community representation (Davis, 2010, p. 262).

The important relationship between community governance and connections to localities is also found in the way CLTs have formed in Scotland. Here, community land ownership has a long history dating back to a community buy-out of private land in 1908, though CLTs have been given recent impetus by legislation that makes explicit provision for their acquisition of land (Bryden and Geisler, 2007; 2010).<sup>2</sup> The fundamental drivers for CLTs in Scotland have related to historical patterns of concentrated private land ownership which divorced governing powers from the local area. CLTs were instigated as a response to socio-economic problems brought by private landowners who oversaw minimal investment in, and development of, the communities that occupied the land they owned, resulting in the decline of local areas (Satsangi, 2007; 2009). Community buy-outs of land via a CLT offered the opportunity for a resident-led governance model that allowed them the opportunity to control and direct the destiny of the local area in accordance with local knowledge and desires for community renewal. Here, community was a device that (re)asserted the rights of local people to lead and fully participate in the decision-making processes that affected their local area.

Community control, therefore, shaped a process of social change that placed the locus of power to local levels and, as in the USA, created CLTs that aim to accord greater weight to community influence over the management and production of their

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<sup>2</sup> In 1997 a dedicated Community Land Unit was created by the Scottish Government to provide technical assistance to CLTs and administered a dedicated Land Fund that provided funding from 2001 to 2006. Additionally, a Land Reform Act was introduced in 2003 that allowed CLTs a pre-emptive right to purchase land in their area when offered for sale on the open market. These developments are discussed further in Chapter 3.

locality. Hypothetically, this places CLTs as a community development strategy aimed not just at delivering housing that is affordable to the people that reside within this locality, but to promote neighbourhood stability, participation and elevate empowerment, though Gray (2008, p. 75) argues that there is a "dearth of empirical evidence" to support these claims.

Although English housing policy has a historical tradition of non-profit and philanthropic housing<sup>3</sup>, CLTs can be considered a phenomenon that is in its infancy. Its prominence in England can be traced to a publication published by the New Economics Foundation in 2003 that used the American experience of CLTs to offer them as an antidote to a crisis in the affordability of housing (Conaty *et al.*, 2003). In particular, CLTs were promoted as a mechanism that could be particularly effective in rural locations where low levels of affordability pose problems for rural households to access property at a cost within their means. These issues have been well versed in the literature over the past three decades (Shucksmith, 1981; 1990; Yarwood, 2002; Sturzaker, 2010; Satsangi *et al.*, 2010), with disparities between local incomes and house prices exacerbated by high demand for rural living that sees wealthy "adventitious purchasers" (Shucksmith, 1981) enter and outbid local households in rural markets. These issues are intensified by housing and planning policies that have failed to provide rural locations with their "fair share" of development, with housing targets planned at a regional level failing to filter down to the local level (Gallent, 2009). These issues were well documented by the Taylor Review of the rural economy, which argued that rural locations were at a crossroads with a choice between becoming "ever more exclusive enclaves for the wealthy and retired, or building the affordable homes to enable people who work in these communities to continue to live in them" (Taylor, 2008, p. 3).

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<sup>3</sup> Examples include almshouses, a type of charitable housing that has existed for centuries, along with the emergence of philanthropic housing societies and housing associations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

It is primarily within this context that CLTs have emerged, with Taylor (2008, p. 113) arguing that the community-led nature of CLTs can provide reassurance that any housing they develop will be used for the express purpose of benefiting local people and prioritising affordable housing to meet these needs, as opposed to the construction of private homes subject to the vagaries of the open market. A national demonstration programme was launched as a result of the report published by the New Economics Foundation in 2003 (Conaty *et al.*, 2003), with 16 interested community groups (equally split between rural and urban areas) participating in forming and developing CLTs. Seedcorn technical assistance for this was provided by charitable donors such as the Carnegie UK Trust and administered by an independent action research unit based at the University of Salford. The demonstration programme aimed to facilitate CLT access to land, finance and technical assistance that could remove legal barriers to their development. An evaluation in 2009 estimated the quantitative outcome of this programme to be the planning or development of approximately 150 CLT homes in rural locations (Aird, 2009), although the evaluation also identified a series of obstacles to their delivery:

CLTs are currently being established on an ad-hoc basis but a common ingredient is lay-led leadership by local people who are committed to making a difference in their community. To succeed, they need to be given practical support and encouraged to overcome the obstacles that, inevitably, will need to be negotiated along the way.

CFS (2008a, p.44)

Additionally, it was stated that the urban strand of the demonstration programme was still at an "early stage of investigation and experimentation" in contrast to the rural element where a number of CLTs were more fully-formed (CFS, 2008b, p. 3). As a

result, this research is primarily concerned with the rural dimension of CLT formation and organisation.<sup>4</sup>

The ad-hoc basis on which CLTs were being formed in this period was partly due to a series of definitional, financial and organisational problems in which CLTs were seen to be operating on the margins without sufficient practical support from local and national governments (CFS, 2008a; CFS, 2008b). "Absurdist, bureaucratic obstacles" (Aird, 2009, p. 24) were cited as being problematic for CLTs engaged in the national programme, often related to the language and definition of CLTs and the problems this posed in engaging stakeholders. These observations were supported by one of the few academic articles on CLTs in Britain (Paterson and Dunn, 2009), who focused on two community groups that were considering the formation of a CLT as an answer to the questions posed by an unaffordable and insufficient supply of housing. This research, though, was non-committal in observing the actual solutions of CLTs in practice and instead focused on the theoretical role they may play to "ensure local control and affordability in perpetuity" (Paterson and Dunn, 2009, p. 764).

There have been a number of important progressions in CLT policy since the national demonstration programme concluded. A legal definition of CLTs was inserted in the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008<sup>5</sup> as a consequence of the demonstration programme's recommendations. During this period, a specialist CLT Fund was established by charitable bodies to provide a source of start-up finance, assisting with organisational creation, technical assistance and business planning. Crucially, this was unable to provide sufficient finance to acquire or purchase land as the Scottish Land Fund did.

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<sup>4</sup> Though two urban CLTs did participate in the study and are featured in the analysis.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1.

Then, concurrent to changes at government level, CLTs began to receive greater recognition at a national level. Importantly, as a central element of the Conservative government's plans for a 'big society' - engaging communities in the governance of their local area by devolving power and responsibility - CLTs were identified as a vehicle through which agendas of localism and community empowerment could be channelled. In particular, CLTs were framed as an ideal type of organisation that could participate in the government's neighbourhood planning proposals that aim to empower local communities to take responsibility for the development of planning policy and decisions in their neighbourhood, responding to their apparent powerlessness:

Resistance from local communities to proposals for housing and economic development within their neighbourhoods is partly related to communities' lack of opportunity to influence the nature of that development. A top-down and target-driven approach has alienated communities and stimulated opposition to development.

CLG (2011a, p. 2)

Indeed, at the national CLT conference in 2010 the Housing Minister argued that "for the first time it will be communities, not central government, who decide what happens in their local area", though this was countered by the concurrent view that "CLTs are going to have to work within the same financial constraints as everyone else ... government funding is not the answer" (Shapps, 2010a).

### **The genesis of the research**

There are therefore still attendant questions as to how CLTs acquire these resources. The literature poses many possibilities, such as the transfer of land from local landowners or public authorities; the acquisition of loan finance or subsidy; and potential partnerships with housing developers or housing associations to actually

construct homes (CFS, 2008a; CFS, 2008b). What the literature has so far failed to explore in any detail are the conditions under which these disparate possibilities are realised and the dilemmas and negotiations that are faced during these processes. The lack of insight into these issues provided the genesis for this research. This research study was confirmed in the summer of 2008, the day after the legal definition of CLTs was inserted into the Housing & Regeneration Act, and began in September of that year.

While the chapters within the thesis are concerned with analysing the acquisition of resources by CLTs, there are deeper issues that underpin these. CLTs are not just a form of resident-led housing that can be easily categorised. CLTs are a form of citizen governance and, although housing development is often a central component and a precipitating factor in their formation, their activities and significance are far broader. For example, although CLTs were included in a legislative act that is concerned with housing and regeneration, the legal definition of CLTs does not mention housing once. Instead their distinguishing features, according to the Act, is the emphasis CLTs place on community leadership and ownership in their organisation and management and the preoccupation with ensuring community benefit and accountability as an outcome of their activity.

As such, though chapters in this thesis are structured around investigating the practicalities of CLT development, they are also concerned with theories of community that elevate the neighbourhood and its citizens to a preeminent level in engineering and delivering social change. This elevation is clearly evident in the advocacy literature that is published on CLTs, dating back to the perspective promoted by American CLTs whereby they act as a mechanism through which the legitimate interests and rights of an individual are "durably secured and equitably balanced" (Davis, 2010, p. 23) with the interests and rights of a community as represented via a CLT. Similar claims can be found in the English literature. One of the outputs from the national demonstration programme asserted that the potential of CLTs lies in:

connecting the process of physical change with the achievement of wellbeing outcomes in particular places, through the engagement of communities in the process, in individual and collective behaviour change, and retaining the intrinsic value of their assets for reinvestment in that place.

CFS (2008b, p. 2)

With reference to the main research question of the purpose and function of CLTs in housing governance, their role extends beyond the mere physical delivery of housing, though the lack of clarity as to the conditions and outcomes that CLTs operate and produce requires an interrogation of exactly what the role of community is and how their expressed attachment to place manifests in engineering social change in their local area.

To do this, Chapter 2 begins by analysing the communitarian theories of Etzioni (1995a) and Tam (1998), which are of particular interest due to their influence on UK political and governmental rationalities and housing and regeneration management and policy in the last two decades. The chapter explores the ideological weight placed on the potential of community in the governance of local neighbourhoods.

These theories are explored alongside the various uses of community as both the means of engineering social and behavioural change and the site for this to occur. The chapter also unpicks the notions of "empowerment, "participation" and "democracy" that are often suffixed to "community". Unravelling the construct of community illustrates the manifold definitions and manifestations it can bring, offering prospects for both communal emancipation and objectification by policymakers to justify state agendas.

This provides the theoretical framing for the study, which is further developed in Chapter 3 by interrogating the link between collective action in residential arenas and constructs of governance. The chapter explores definitions of community

governance and the varied possibilities its attachment to locality and community can hold. In particular, there are a number of tensions inherent to these processes that illustrate the need for an analytical approach that takes account of the underlying motivations for the genesis of CLT formation. A framework of rationales used by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) is presented and justified as the primary analytical tool alongside the theories of communitarianism described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 4 discusses the design and conduct of this research. It justifies the selection of qualitative research as the means to investigate CLTs and describes the process of obtaining a sample of participants and the implementation of research methods. The chapter reflects on the practicalities of researching the unsteady and evolving topic of CLTs during the project's time frame and discusses the relationship between the researcher, the topic, study participants and the practices of data collection and analysis. The aim is to be transparent about the research process and to provide an explicit account of how the procedures undertaken in this study may have influenced and constructed its findings.

With the theoretical framing of the research in mind, alongside the attendant uncertainty as to the practicalities of CLT development, the empirical chapters are framed around the following sub-questions:

- What are the motivations and perceived advantages held by CLTs for volunteers and strategic stakeholders?
- What are the enabling factors and tensions that occur during the process of land acquisition?
- How do the objectives of CLTs reconcile with the process and demands of obtaining finance from public and quasi-public stakeholders?
- What is the extent and importance of institutional support structures for local CLTs?

Chapter 5 seeks to understand why CLTs are initially formed and the relationships between their formation and local housing contexts and dynamics. This chapter explores the rationales presented by those involved and argues that these are linked to a structural change in housing governance that privileges not only constructs of affordability but also reconstitutes control over the use and occupation of housing in line with the voice of a defined, physical community. Here, the importance of community attachment, self-help and autonomy emerge as predominant features of CLT visions and rationales.

Chapter 6 - *The importance of land: acquisition and influence* - investigates the way CLTs have accessed or acquired the land necessary for their developments. It explores how public and private stakeholders have rationalised the release of land to CLTs at (usually) low cost. Where CLTs have been unsuccessful in accessing land, the question is posed as to why this is the case with particular reference to the challenges forms of community governance face in their operation. The chapter engages with issues of community representation and legitimacy and interrogates the way in which CLTs define the beneficiaries of their activities in relation to a reconfiguration of the use and occupation of local housing.

Chapter 7 explores the *Dilemmas, compromises and trade-offs* that occur as a CLT seeks to acquire finance from either a local authority or state-sponsored funding programmes. It explores how communitarian objectives relating to autonomy in local control and governance of housing can be negotiated and reconfigured from the top-down. This results in hybrid organisational arrangements for CLTs which should be understood as a product of two-way facilitation as opposed to solely communitarian endeavour or top-down dictat. Here, an understanding of CLTs is advanced by identifying their relationship to, and influence by, wider social, economic and political forces.

Chapter 8 is titled *From experimentation to replication: the creation of a CLT sector*. and explores the evolution of the institutional landscape in which CLTs have

operated from the national demonstration programme in 2006 to 2011. This identifies that CLTs differ in their organisational form, arguing that the operation and practice of 'being a CLT' differs according to its reasons for formation, the reception and negotiation of these among key actors, and its access to critical human and economic resources. It finds that forms of development, assistance and legitimacy differ according to these geographical contingencies and advances a key argument of this thesis that CLTs should not be understood as a uniform model of development. Rather, it is an approach that denotes an idealised form of social relations and particular objectives which will be subject to negotiation and reconfiguration, as opposed to operating as a uniform model with universal characteristics. It is, therefore a relational and politicised process as opposed to one that is guided solely by its ideological roots.

The final concluding chapter describes and develops the main findings of the research, which relate not only to the diverse nature of the CLT sector and the hybrid organisational forms it produces, but also to the extent to which the attempts of a CLT to realign aspatial forms of ownership and governance are successful within its larger social, political and economic environments. The political and theoretical implications of the research are discussed, the limitations of the thesis are highlighted and pathways for much needed further research are proposed, recognising that one intended contribution of this study has been to provide a basis for future enquiry.

# Chapter 2: Conceptualising community governance

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The concept of 'community' is regularly critiqued for its apparently vague and elusive nature, a lack of specific meaning and confusion due to its wide ranging application, use and diverse connotations (Day, 2006; Somerville, 2011a, p. 1). Communities can be defined by specific tastes, interests, identities and geographies, they can describe particular networks of social and political organisation and they can operate at local, national and international levels. Community is frequently used and objectified by politicians and policymakers in political strategies, yet strands of community development practice can place as much emphasis on opposing state institutions as on working with them (Kenny, 2011, p. i16).

These ambiguities make a succinct definition and understanding of community difficult to pin down and lead to contestation as to the desirability of placing it at the heart of social research: "all too often 'community' signifies something vague and ill-defined, an excuse for not thinking hard enough about what exactly it is that people do have in common" (Day, 2006, p. 2). Yet, following Fremeaux's (2005, p. 265) view that community is "one of the most important yet ill-defined concepts in social sciences", it is precisely the fact that the concept is complex, multi-faceted and contested that makes it an important object of research enquiry. As Day (2006) highlights, the study of community holds promise for social research, though the elasticity of the concept's meanings and connotations make it "a highly problematic term, alluring in its promise but to be approached with extreme care" (Day, 2006, p. 2).

With this in mind, it is necessary to delineate exactly what is meant by 'community' at the outset of any enquiry which places it as a central concept. The first section of this chapter looks at approaches which see 'community' as a desirable quality of social

life, a taken for granted reality that requires restoration. The second section advances this through the lens of the communitarianism of Etzioni (1995a) and Tam (1998), who emphasise the importance of social ties, shared values and common interest in the creation of a healthy society. This links to the third section exploring the concepts of citizen participation and active citizenship in processes of governance and community development. These are underpinned by a narrative of change in the relationship between the state and communities in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century until the present day. During this period there has been an increased emphasis on the empowerment of communities through state action and encouragement, reflective of both the perception that processes of empowerment are essential to the renewal and sustainability of neighbourhoods and to the increased interest in enabling governance rather than top-down government.

It is for this reason that the chapter has a focus on the work of Etzioni and Tam. Their work, emphasising the role of communities in devolved processes of government, has had particular emphasis on international housing and social policies, particularly under the New Labour administration in the UK. Their work advocates both a change in relationship between the state and community, and an alteration of relations within communities where strong communal ties, self-governance and mutual action are to be promoted. Autonomous forms of collective action and organisation at the neighbourhood level are seen as essential to a democratic society and as an antidote to multifaceted social and economic problems, with the state providing encouragement for local actors to meet their own needs. In the context of CLTs, the communitarian action that underpins their development is thought to challenge the problems faced by local areas, while governments are keen for this type of activity to flourish autonomously in local communities.

Yet, while community action holds prospects for empowerment and improved social outcomes, as the chapter will describe there are several critiques of the communitarian paradigm. These relate to key aspects of community including the dynamics of power, dissent, contention and the co-option and institutionalisation of

community organisation at local, regional and national levels. In this context communitarianism provides a useful theoretical background to the study, with its avocation of active citizenship and self-government at the local level that is encouraged by the state holding explanatory power for both the formulation of local communal organisation and for the rationales for community empowerment and governance held by state actors.

By tracing the historical antecedents and modern advocates of communitarianism the chapter aims to present a theoretical background to the study of CLTs as a form of community organisation and communal action at the neighbourhood level. It discusses related literature on the shift from a top-down 'government' to an enabling 'governance', linking this shift to the prevalence of communitarian thought and action in the design of housing and social policies, and discussing the supporting arguments in favour and critiques of new forms of citizen engagement and democratic organisation.

## **2.1 The strength of communal ties**

Historically one of the most influential theoretical contributions in considering the strength and desirability of collective ties in the context of societal change has been the work of Ferdinand Tonnies (1887) and his conceptualisation of two different patterns of social organisation: *gemeinschaft* ('community') and *gesellschaft* ('association' or 'society'). These ideal types distinguish ties to a locality and the people within it marked by longevity and loyalty, from short-term relations emphasising individual rationality and independence.

*Gemeinschaft* relations are based on kinship, loyalty and co-ordinated action orientated towards a common good, while *gesellschaft* refers to arrangements where individual rationality predominates: "human *gesellschaft* is conceived as mere coexistence of people independent of each other" (Tonnies, 1887, p. 34). *Gemeinschaft* marks close knit relations between interdependent members of a

community, placing a strong emphasis on the desirability and value of this. It is expounded in Nisbet's (1967, p. 47) belief that the concept of community denotes "all forms of relationship which are characterised by a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion and continuity in time".

Nisbet and Tonnies' understanding of community sees it as not merely a descriptive term of social organisation but as a desirable form of social relations: to be part of a community is to be part of socially and morally cohesive forms of relationships where individuals cooperate for a common good. As Noddings (1996, p. 245) states: "community is an important social good - perhaps the very foundation of moral life". To talk of "bad gemeinschaft" - bad community - "violates the meaning of the word": it is by definition a positive condition of existence (Tonnies, 1887, p. 34). Gesellschaft is opposed to this and considered an arena in which individuals are atomised rational actors, and are engaged in weak social relations within the market and political arenas where the priority is to further individual ends rather than contribute towards a communal good. It is a condition differentiated from gemeinschaft due to its movement from communal belonging to individual autonomy where social bonds, kinship and loyalty to both family and locality begin to be neglected. Gemeinschaft is understood as all kinds of social co-existence where people are united for better or worse, whereas gesellschaft is a "strange country" where these ties are forgotten and individual priorities predominate (Tonnies, 1887, p. 33).

Here, community automatically equates to close knit and desirable social and geographical relationships, while individuals in gesellschaft are engaged in "essentially boundaryless, contractual relationships; the ties between them are merely convenient" (Day, 2006, p. 6). Although Tonnies was most concerned with the abstract properties of gemeinschaft and gesellschaft and the difference between these broad patterns of social organisation - in his work they did not necessarily denote concrete social entities - he clearly notes that the spatial context of the village or town are the settings where close knit ties are formed and preserved, while the

industrial shift to urban life and 'society' rather than 'community' was to lead to a decline in this communality and defined the shift to *gesellschaft*. Therefore, smaller localities are seen to encourage greater social cohesion and belonging among its members, as opposed to the perceived anonymity and short-term rationality of mass society.

For Tonnies, industrial change had begun to erode the *gemeinschaft* - and therefore 'community' as the ideal and predominant type of social organisation: "elements of life in the *Gemeinschaft*, as the only real form of life, persist within the *Gesellschaft*, although lingering and decaying" (Tonnies, 1887, p. 227). As this quotation illustrates, the idea of community as a particularised and positive form of social organisation was perceived to be incompatible with industrialised urban life. Furthermore, it assumes that a web of interdependence, mutual obligation and reciprocity emerges as a *fait accompli* within a small locality. While this may come under threat from the transition to an industrialised and (allegedly) individualised society, 'community' is perceived to naturally flow and thrive when individuals are engaged in interdependent relationships at the micro level. This provides the moral grounding individuals need to live their lives to the full.

Smith (2002, p. 109) describes this standpoint as one where community is seen to be "a static, bounded cultural space of being where personal meanings are produced, cohesive cultural values are articulated, and traditional ways of life are enunciated and lived". The theoretical contribution made by Tonnies had clear resonance with the 20<sup>th</sup> Century concern with communitarian political agendas that bemoaned the decline of traditional community life and saw the tight social bonds and mutual regard it was seen to generate as requiring restoration:

Throughout twentieth-century America, as the transition to *gesellschaft* evolved, even its champions realized that it was not the unmitigated blessing they had expected. Although it was true that those who moved from villages and small towns into urban centers often shed tight social relations and strong

community bonds, the result for many was isolation, lack of caring for one another, and exposure to rowdiness and crime.

Etzioni (1995a, p. 117)

These concerns were echoed in Putnam's work on social capital (1993; 1995; 2000) which contended that a decline in features of social organisation such as social networks, common norms and trust - those markers of social capital - had eroded the willingness of individuals to cooperate and engage in civic endeavour for mutual benefit (Putnam 1995, p. 66). Social capital was seen to yield substantial social and economic benefits including lower crime, reduced anti-social behaviour, enhanced economic development and a more effective government (Stolle, 2003, p. 19).

For Putnam, growth in citizen distrust of government in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century - a state of "democratic disarray" - was linked to the decline of social capital and civic engagement in voluntary organisations and community activities (Putnam, 1995, p. 77). He argued that associational activity between citizens in voluntary societies creates social capital and generalised norms of reciprocity, trust and mutual obligation, creating similar webs of interdependence described by Tonnies. As such decline in the extent to which people participated in these activities paralleled a reduction in the political engagement of citizens, questioning both the extent to which people were connected to government and whether they are willing to cooperate for a communal good (Putnam, 2000). In short, social capital is seen as an essential underpinning of a democratic government whose quality and effectiveness is linked to strong traditions of political engagement within populations. From this, Putnam's body of work has advocated investigation as to how social connectedness among communities - and therefore civic engagement and civic trust - can be restored and contribute to an improved system of government (Putnam, 1995, p. 77). Here we see community both as an abstract social quality in itself, in the sense of the interlinked networks of mutual dependence and reciprocity, and as the geographical site and

entity where the normative standards of community life are created and sustained to improve the operation of government.

This thesis has been disputed by many. Levi (1996) and Stolle (2003) questioned the extent to which participation in voluntary organisations necessarily leads to engagement in the political system, not least due to the possibility that those involved in voluntary networks may be deliberately operating outside the formal political sphere in an oppositional manner. Concerns over the production and maintenance of social capital also relate to the potentially exclusive nature of trust and association, creating boundaries between those who share the norms that social capital is composed of - who are typically those already well connected with existing access to resources - and those that lack strong community ties and are excluded from civic participation (Foley and Edwards, 1999; Ostrom, 2001).

Nevertheless, Putnam's concern for this perceived decline in community life and responsibility has been shared by many, particularly those subscribing to communitarian political thought. In particular, Etzioni (1995a; 1997a) and Tam (1998) bemoan the loss of civic engagement and trust among individuals and argue for a new political agenda that encourages the revival of social webs in which people are attached to one another through crisscrossing relationships of mutual dependence rather than leading atomistic lives (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 123).

However, the task of restoring community life extends beyond the mere restoration of tight knit social bonds to the reaffirmation a moral culture in communities: "there is a need not just to revitalise civil society, but the more urgent and difficult task is to remoralize civil society" (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 96). For Etzioni (1997a, p. 142) the benefits of close knit community life are not restricted to a reinvigoration of civil society which in turn can improve the operation of the state, rather community is seen as the primary mechanism of maintaining social order and moral standards, making governmental authorities work less as a provider and more as an enabler and facilitator (as will be described in the following sections). Communitarianism

represents an attempt to redraw the political map and suggests a "third social philosophy" that leapfrogs the traditional divide between left-wing and right-wing political standpoints, eschewing an emphasis on either individual autonomy or authoritarian dictat in favour of a balance between individual rights and social responsibilities to a common good (Etzioni, 1995b, p. 91). The aim is to build among communities "a profound commitment to moral order that is basically voluntary, and to a social order that is well balanced with socially secured autonomy" (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 257).

Although this presents an ideal of balancing individual rights with moral responsibilities, the communitarian literature leaves little doubt that, much like the earlier work of Tonnies, a perceived shift from the romantic notion of community life to a society based on individual autonomy has weakened citizen commitment to fulfil reciprocal and mutual duties that constitute 'good citizenship' (Etzioni, 1995a, p. 3). Etzioni (1995a, p. 161) bemoans the existence of "too many rights, too few responsibilities" and the post-war decline of community life is depicted as precipitating a weakening of values of hard work, thrift and compliance with informal rules of social conduct, creating a "rising sense of entitlement and a growing tendency to shirk social responsibilities" (Etzioni, 1997a, pp. 64-65). In short, society is allegedly based on a "celebration of the self" (Etzioni, 1995a, p.25) and the communitarian paradigm seeks to remedy the "cancerous effects on community life" this individualistic outlook has created (Tam, 1998, p. 3), with a definite view that the decline of community life and the normative values of reciprocity and mutuality it provided breeds a society lacking social virtue and morality (Etzioni, 1995a, pp. 24-25). While communitarians aim to balance rights and responsibilities, there is little doubt that the primary concern is that more responsibility and prescribed ties to community are required rather than the creation of new rights that promote individual liberty (Heron, 2001).

## **The moral voice of community**

An emphasis of communitarianism is, therefore, on reining in the autonomy of individuals and encouraging greater commitment to imagined shared values of mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence in the name of social cooperation (Etzioni, 1995a, p. 7). The solution to "the absence of order, regulation and normative guidance" is to allow a degree of 'bounded autonomy' for individuals and subgroups, permitting a range of "legitimate options" for individuals to lead their lives within an affirmed normative framework that encourages responsibilities to community life (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 71).

Autonomy is to be bounded in accordance with a set of shared community values that compose a normative framework to guide communities. Etzioni (1997a, pp. 199-211) describes a set of core values relating to: inclusive democratic processes, individual loyalty to both one's community and the wider community at large, socially responsible behaviour, respect for (and responsibility to) other people and commitment to ongoing moral dialogue within the community that debates which values are to be shared and judges their normative value. Tam (1998, pp. 13-15) sees the existence of common values relating to the value of love, wisdom, justice and fulfilment as providing a clear basis for defining the mutual responsibilities people hold to each other. So for Tam, the value of justice is defined by the rather prosaic motto: 'do as you would be done by' in order to uphold reciprocal relationships, while principles of open exchange through 'co-operative enquiry' and a reformation of power relations should ensure that all citizens are able to contribute to the identification of specific values on which community life will be anchored. The idea of co-operative enquiry is based on the idea that claims to truth are only valid if consensus is reached by all those in the community:

The communitarian principle of co-operative enquiry requires that any claim to truth may be judged to be valid only if informed participants deliberating together under conditions of co-operative enquiry would accept that claim.

Tam (1998, p. 13)

Etzioni's moral dialogues refer to debate over the "normative standing of one suggested course as compared to another" (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 102) and involve reaching consensus over the shared values of community. However, while consensus provides empirical legitimacy - in terms of what people *think* is legitimate - the substantive content of this consensus is not imbued with sufficient accountability (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 241). For Etzioni, in searching for the substantive legitimacy required, there is a limited core of select 'higher order' values which act as a reference point for any consensus based on their obvious normativity: "certain concepts present themselves to us as morally compelling in and of themselves" (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 241). These are self-evident truths that speak directly to all human beings, often shaped by traditions (Etzioni, 2011, p. 116), and provide a reference point for the values and principles communitarian order abides by. As an example, Etzioni (2011, p. 117) describes how telling the truth is self-evidently morally superior to lying, except in "extreme situations where the lie serves others and not oneself", using the protection of the vulnerable from discrimination as an illustration. These morally compelling values are self-evidently right, beyond contestation and provide the normative framework for communitarian living.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, for the communitarian movement, the 'golden rule' by which all values should adhere is to: "Respect and uphold society's moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy" (Etzioni, 1997a, p. xviii).

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<sup>6</sup> This argument will be critiqued in the following sections.

The upholding of this moral order is to be done by drawing upon the community itself. A major function of communities and the apparent qualities that emerge from the interdependent and close knit social relations that characterise them is to reinforce the character and conduct of individuals, a technique achieved through the 'moral voice' of community built into these relationships in accordance with values that ought to be shared by all. Communities share these common sets of values and reaffirm them by encouraging members to abide by these values, while censuring those that behave in a manner that violates them (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 123). Those who breach normative standards of socially responsible conduct are to suffer informal social sanctions channelled through the community's moral voice and "daily, routine social underwriting of morality" (Etzioni, 1995a, p. 35). Community becomes defined as the arena in which shared meanings, sentimental attachments and interpersonal networks of recognition and reciprocity are established, and to object to these values and the moral voice that sustains them through informal censure is to oppose the social glue that quintessentially underpins the social and moral order of a communitarian society (Etzioni, 1995a, p. 36).

The communitarian vision then is one that envisages a strengthening of the social order through the moral voice of community rather than solely law and order. Etzioni (1997a, p. 139) argues that social conduct should be regulated by reliance on the moral voice rather than through laws, giving primacy to the shared moral values that members affirm and arguing for a reduction in the involvement of government:

In effect, the more a society relies on the government per se, the more *both* the moral order and autonomy are diminished, the less communitarian the society becomes. The more a society relies on members' convictions that their community has established a legitimate and just order, and the more they conduct themselves voluntarily in line with the order's values because they themselves subscribe to them, the more communitarian the society.

Etzioni (1997a, p. 140, original emphasis)

The virtue of the communitarian society is therefore perceived to be its ability to "persuade errant members to change their ways" (Etzioni, 1997b, p. 72) through voluntary conviction as opposed to state-led coercion. The idea is not simply to revitalise civil society but for it to provide a moral culture that enhances social order while significantly reducing the need for state intervention in social behaviour (Etzioni, 2000, p. 15). Once established, this moral voice is "highly incorporated into daily life" working through informal censure and encouragement between individuals and groups to not only adhere to behaviour that reflects shared values but to avoid behaviour that offends or violates the moral culture of community (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 124). It is these webs of interdependence and encouragement at the micro level that promote 'community' as both the site and tool of effective governing. As Etzioni describes, a laissez-faire nation state of government appears to leave people to their own devices as opposed to the way community continually reinforces normative standards of character and behaviour and as such encourages the self-government of individuals and groups:

The incontestable fact about human nature is that the good and virtuous character of those who have acquired it tends to degrade. If left to their own devices, going through the routine of life, individuals gradually lose much of their commitment to values - unless these are continuously reinforced.

Etzioni (1997a, p. 187)

Therefore of critical importance for communitarians is the reformation of government to accord more weight to the role of community in the way society is governed. Communitarian politics requires the development of citizens who participate in co-operative enquiries that determine a wide range of issues, who recognise shared common values and accept the social and behavioural responsibilities these imply, and who actively support the transformation of power relations for a common good (Tam, 1998, p. 8). Tam places much emphasis on transforming power relations, recommending decentralised units of communitarian governance as a remedy to a

remote centralised government that breeds feelings of alienation and powerlessness and fails to recognise civic pride as a key incentive for governance. Despite grounding this in language of economic inequality (and as a corollary the inequality in power and influence this is seen to bring for particular groups), central to the communitarian politics of Etzioni and Tam is the idea of individual responsibility for socially acceptable behaviour within the nest of community:

Central to the communitarian message is the notion of responsibility. How individuals behave affects the well-being of others. No citizen of an inclusive community can be allowed to entertain the delusion that responsibility cannot be properly ascribed in the world in which we live ... there are no grounds for denying that each individual is responsible for his or her behaviour and its effect on others.

Tam (1998, p. 121)

The task for communitarian politics is therefore to recast citizens as responsible members of moral communities, achieving a technique of governing that operates through individual subscription to moral values. This is to be done by diminishing the role of the state and increasing the role of community through decentralised forms of community empowerment and participation that can build forms of citizenship that build and sustain self-governing communities.

## **2.2 Communitarian politics: shifting from government to governance**

This emphasis on communitarian responsibility gained popular political currency towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Although New Labour's reinvention of government through collective action in the community was posed as a remedy to the preceding culture of Conservative market rationality and individualism (Driver and Martell, 1997), the Conservative governments that predated New Labour had also utilised ideas of 'community' and the role of the active citizen in governing

processes. Kearns (1995) noted the passing of welfare responsibility from state to individual citizens in the early 1990s, compelling people to 'get active' on the basis of their personal morality and the prospect of the approbation of others. This combination of personal effort and moral judgement by fellow citizens "facilitated the linking of active citizenship to the longer-term project of reforming, curtailing and cheapening the welfare state" (Kearns, 1995, p. 157) - in other words it was a key political process and tool for reforming government.

In this sense the political project of 'community' implemented by New Labour (a topic discussed extensively by Jordan, 2011) continued the reshaping of governing processes. Giddens (1998, p. 65) applied the motto "no rights without responsibilities" to his influential 'third way' politics, emphasising a communitarian perspective that any expansion of individual rights ought to be accompanied by a parallel rise in communal obligation, a view also invoked by Tony Blair (1998, p. 4) in arguing that the rights individuals enjoy should also reflect the duties of citizenship. The imperative for individual and mutual responsibility illustrated the influence of Etzioni's communitarianism upon New Labour and continued the shift described by Kearns (1995), where state-led rights-based approaches to welfare were reduced in favour of a more mixed economy of welfare where devolved management, individual choice and collective action channelled through civil society would promote citizen responsibility and active citizenship (Driver and Martell, 1997, p. 33). As the following sections describe <sup>7</sup>, community becomes not only the geographical site of governance but a technique where norms of individual and collective action are promoted to encourage self-governance of the social sphere.

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<sup>7</sup> This is not intended to be an exhaustive review of New Labour's approach to community. Rather, it is a review of the concept of community using some examples from their approach to illustrate the growth of the 'rights and responsibilities' community agenda.

## Community as a terrain of governance

A crucial element of these ideas is that much less emphasis is given to the state's role as an active welfare agent, and instead citizen involvement in community-level structures is seen as the most appropriate method for achieving desired goals (Heron and Dwyer, 1999, p. 95). Leading from the communitarian agenda of rights and responsibilities, this is also based on the belief that centralised nation states have become too distanced from the communities they serve (Taylor, 2007). The role of the state and the idea of representative democracy upon which its sovereignty rests is problematised by the scale and complexity of modern-day society. The state is seen as unable to respond to the policy problems the complexity of society poses and unable to meet and support localised values, interests and problems, breeding feelings of citizen alienation from political structure and a decline in the legitimacy of representative democracy and the institutions it creates<sup>8</sup> (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2001, p. 501; Newman, 2005, p. 119). From a communitarian perspective the issue has been the retention of too much centralised control by governments that legislate on such a large scale that the complexities of their governing minimise public understanding and exclude grassroots participation and influence, breeding citizens who are merely passive in receiving government rather than active in its creation and operation (Tam, 1998, p. 154).

Communitarian advocates have argued for alternative forms of political governance as a remedy to this, shifting decision-making from the centre to decentralised structures at a local level that allow citizens to participate in decisions that affect them as "equal and responsible members of a shared community" (Tam, 1998, p. 154). Local people should have the power to decide how their own communities are governed and civic pride should be recognised as a key incentive alongside market individualism, the idea being that this will then incentivise all members of a

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<sup>8</sup> This subject is returned to in the following section.

community to participate in determining and resolving local issues if their deliberations are accorded sufficient political value (Tam, 1998, p. 154-156). This aims to enlarge the idea of civic participation beyond the traditional electoral procedures of representative democracy and into Tam's conception of a co-operative enquiry where all citizens are able to participate in decision-making over specific issues at an equal and decentralised level (Tam, 1998; Magnette, 2003, p. 144).

The idea, then, is not solely to draw government closer to the people it serves but to create engaged citizens who are active in the self-government of themselves and their community through civic participation. New Labour's approach to community leant heavily on this idea, often referring to "neighbourhood renewal" or "civil renewal" (SEU, 2001; Blunkett, 2003) to denote efforts aimed at increasing civic participation and responsibility. The idea of active citizenship became part of this, the facilitation of which was thought to create:

strong, empowered and active communities, in which people increasingly do things for themselves and the state acts to facilitate, support and enable citizens to lead self-determined and fulfilled lives.

Blunkett (2003, p. 43)

This continued a promotion of active citizenship, locating local people as the solution to local problems, that Amin (2005) terms a shift from a culture of top-down universal policies available to all towards an enabling frame of provision for bottom-up and locally negotiated priorities. Programmes centred on neighbourhood renewal aimed to shift influence and opportunities to the local level, setting and prioritising the neighbourhood as the most appropriate place to tackle issues of social exclusion (as

opposed to the level of city or town) and allowing greater influence for active communities to influence policies and governance arrangements that affect them.<sup>9</sup>

These ideas were taken further in the *Communities in Control* white paper, promoting an extensive programme of community empowerment and motivated by a commitment to the creation of self-governing communities:

There are no limits to the capacity of the British people for self-government, given the right platforms, mechanisms and incentives. Empowering citizens and communities is an urgent task for us all.

CLG (2008, p. 129)

This proposed a raft of reforms aimed at allowing communities to gain greater power through mechanisms that allow them to hold politicians to account, to influence decisions made on their behalf, and to participate in the operation and ownership of local services (CLG, 2008a). As Somerville (2011a, p. 97) describes, the image conveyed in the white paper was one of an active, empowered citizen who volunteers in the community, who is prepared to assume responsibility for local services and political issues and who is engaged and influential in policy decisions. As later sections will describe, similar platforms for communitarian governance have manifest in other areas of social life and policy, with their operation in the field of housing of particular interest to this thesis.

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<sup>9</sup> Yet the paradox of this agenda is that programs such as the New Deal for Communities, an area-based initiative that exemplified the neighbourhood approach, have been critiqued by some for being undermined by national policy demands and targets that contradict neighbourhood-focused agendas (Lawless, 2007; Wallace, 2010). Indeed, Wallace's (2010, p. 816) analysis argued that one NDC case area offered "little more than an opportunity to participate in circumscribed and myopic projects of quasi-empowerment" as local decisions were constrained and usurped by central dictat and priorities.

Essentially, the idea of community as a new terrain of governance illustrates how the state is no longer required or able to answer all of society's needs; instead individuals and localities are expected to assume responsibility for their own well-being through processes of empowerment (Rose, 1999, p. 142). It is in this way that community becomes not only a space of government but a technique through which citizens are governed not by centralised control but by using mechanisms that promote individual responsibility, community empowerment and mutual adherence to norms of behaviour.

### **The self-governing community**

Nikolas Rose's work on political power beyond the state (Rose and Miller, 1992) and the "death of the social" (Rose, 1996) is important to consider in reviewing these arguments. Community is not simply the territory of government but a means of governing where collective relations are reconstituted in ways that reduce the salience of 'the social' - the unitary domain of the traditional nation state and welfare system - in favour of the community and its networks of allegiance and mutual obligation to family, neighbourhood and locality (Rose, 1996, p. 330). Community is not primarily a geographical space but also a field in which ethics and responsibility are embedded into the social relations that occur within it (Rose, 2001, p. 7). The ties, bonds, forces and affiliations of community are, much as communitarian scholars describe, to be celebrated, nurtured and instrumentalised to produce a form of self-government with desirable consequences for both individual and community (Rose, 1996, p. 335). The terrain of community and the high probability of repeated interaction between its members mean that people have a strong incentive to act in socially responsible and beneficial ways to avoid breaking the obligations attached to citizenship (Somerville, 2005, p. 122). Therefore, the regulation of individual conduct in line with the moral voice of community becomes a method of maintaining order at community-level (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 139; Rose, 2000a, p. 1409).

This does not imply a deletion of the state's role in society; instead it denotes a shift from government's position as an active welfare provider and agent to an enabling role where active citizens are encouraged to support themselves:

We need to avoid thinking in terms of a simple succession in which one style of government supersedes and effaces its predecessor. Rather, we can see a complexification, the opening up of new lines of power and truth, the invention and hybridization of techniques. But nevertheless, the ideal of the 'social state' gives way to that of the 'enabling state'.

Rose (1999, p.142)

The ideal of the 'enabling state' described here needs to be placed in context. It is closely linked to the New Public Management (NPM) system of organising the public sector that took hold through the 1990s, a method of economic organisation that emphasised greater cost efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector which was to be remodelled on private sector and business-like values (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994). In particular, lines of power and governance were to be diffused and improvements in public service delivery secured by the return of public services to citizens by creating more choice and more power for the citizen (as seen in John Major's *Citizen's Charter* - see Cooper, 1993). This was to be achieved by securing better access to information, providing more scope to influence change in the management and delivery of public services and by reconstructing formerly bureaucratised provision into quasi-markets of services consumer by active and empowered (by choice) citizens (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Flint, 2003, p. 613).

Parallel to this, the diffusion of public service delivery was to encourage participatory and democratic programs that activate citizens to act in their own self-governance and self-interest (Cruikshank, 1999). Citizens are encouraged to aspire to autonomy, to interpret welfare provision and sufficiency as a matter of individual responsibility, and to shape life through acts of choice and consumption that become the hallmarks

of citizenship (Rose, 1996). The citizenship of an individual is analysed by their ability to self-govern, and failure to act politically, to participate in individual empowerment and self-governance is to disengage with the social obligations of 'responsible citizenship' (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 95).

An example of this is found in the housing literature where governmental emphasis on homeownership as a preferred form of tenure simultaneously constructs the homeowner as a model, self-sufficient and self-governing individual while linking alternative tenure choices (such as social renting) as deviant forms of housing consumption undertaken by flawed consumers lacking in autonomy and unable to exercise choice (Flint and Rowlands, 2003). Thus, programmes of empowerment and self-help both promote and encourage autonomy and seek to alter or shape (rather than control or force) the actions of citizens towards this goal (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 3). Empowerment is therefore seen to be "both voluntary and coercive" (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 48) in providing both opportunities for self-government and self-help, and encouragement for citizens to engage with this by constructing model forms of citizenship for them to aspire to.

Governmental strategies of community empowerment fall under this umbrella of opening up new lines of power and organisations of government. The foreword to New Labour's *Communities in Control* white paper spoke of providing the "right support, guidance and advice" to unlock the "huge, largely latent, capacity for self-government and self-organisation" within communities (CLG, 2008a, p. iii). For Rose (1996), strategies offering the guidance and advice that the previous quotation speaks of require scrutiny for the way they redefine methods of governing. While communities that have previously been under the tutelage of the social state are to be empowered and set free to find their own destiny through self-organisation and determination, at the same time this involves citizens being made responsible for their own welfare and government. So while empowerment may be grounded in governmental discourses of handing 'power to the people', with power comes responsibility:

Empowerment, with all its emphasis on strengthening the capacity of the individual to play the role of actor in his or her own life, has come to encompass a range of interventions to transmit, under tutelage, certain professionally ratified mental, ethical and practical techniques for active self-management.

Rose (1996, p. 348)

For Rose the empowerment of communities denotes the transmission of active subjective capacities pertaining to self-management that build a moral code of individual responsibility and community obligation by which citizens are encouraged to shape their lives (Rose, 1996, p. 347). These capacities become the means of distinguishing between moral, responsible members of a community and those non-active citizens lacking the skills required for self-management (Rose, 2000b, p. 331). As such empowerment involves a "double movement of autonomization and responsabilisation" where the ties and associations within communities are used to engender individual and mutual self-government (Rose, 2000a, p. 1400).

The shift of power and control to community does not therefore mean that the state has withdrawn from social life, but rather that it assumes a more nuanced role where these practices of government are seen as "deliberate attempts to shape people's behaviour in conjunction with certain objectives" (Lee, 2010, p. 114) which are to be achieved not through direct intervention but via the implication of self-regulation and obligation within governmental aims (Flint, 2003, p. 612-613). This self-regulation is to be achieved within a framework of 'bounded autonomy' (Etzioni, 1995a) which is "built on a moral dominant discourse shaped by government ... of what constitutes required, appropriate and 'correct' behaviour" (Flint, 2006, p. 20).

Following sections will link more thoroughly the concepts of community discussed here and the way they are enacted in the governance of housing, but at this point it is worth illustrating the rise of the community governance described above in social

housing provision. Flint (2003) describes how tenant empowerment programmes offer residents of social housing greater opportunities to participate in the governance of their homes and community. Clapham and Kintrea (1994) and McKee (2007) document the opportunities afforded by community ownership<sup>10</sup> and tenant management of social housing, rescaling the governance of housing in order to empower tenants. The emancipatory prospects for devolved and rescaled forms of housing ownership are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, yet within this context it is important to note the 'ethopolitics' of the reshaped relationship between social housing providers and residents as described by Flint (2003). Tenant behaviour is reshaped, moving from identities of alleged flawed dependency on bureaucratic decision-making to enhanced agency where tenants act as rational consumers 'empowered' to hold landlords to account, exercise choice and actively improve their standard of living. This enhanced agency ran concurrently to an agenda of responsabilisation channelled through contractual arrangements detailing behavioural duties towards families, the geographical community and the upkeep of property.<sup>11</sup>

Elsewhere, McKee and Cooper's (2008) Foucauldian analysis of tenant participation in Glasgow found that programmes of empowerment hold both regulatory and liberatory possibilities, as active citizens who behave 'responsibly' and get involved are contrasted with those 'problematic' individuals who opt out of participation processes and become constructed as apathetic, alienated and excluded. The use of

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<sup>10</sup> The phrase 'community ownership' describes the majority control or ownership of housing stock by its residents. Popular examples include housing co-operatives and community-based housing associations that have formed to manage social housing.

<sup>11</sup> One example of such contractual arrangements is the use of 'Good Neighbour' agreements by social housing providers. These explicitly iterate normative standards of behaviour expected by tenants in order to "promote positive behaviour and reinforce community values" (CLG, 2006). Tenants are obliged to abide by the agreements and refrain from the 'nuisance behaviour' they prohibit, creating a contractual relationship whereby tenancy is no longer framed merely in terms of the maintenance of individual conduct but reframed in communal terms that expand the behaviour and obligations required by tenants.

community as a technique of governing becomes a process of framing the conduct of citizens in relation to their contribution - or lack thereof - towards the 'strength' of the wider community which itself becomes a crucible of behavioural and moral scrutiny (Wallace, 2010, p. 809). Citizens are encouraged to 'do the right thing' - that is, to meet the conditions of citizenship that encourage self-government and responsibility for meeting their own needs, with potentially punitive punishments for those who opt out of the process (for example withdrawal of welfare provision for unsuccessful jobseekers) (Heron, 2001). Adherence to the behavioural obligations demanded by the community is of paramount importance in discourses of morally responsible communities and has become one of the key targets of academic critiques for the potential effects the imposition of such obligations could have on different groups. This furthers an understanding of governmental projects that are constructed around community deliberation and decision-making: they are not necessarily constituted or presented neutrally and are instead influenced by the objectives and economic imperatives that underpin and influence governmental decision-making.<sup>12</sup>

The communitarian vision of a co-operative enquiry in which all participate to contribute to the community's normative framework can be critiqued both for failing to reconcile differences in power and for producing the authoritarian framework of governing that communitarians, such as Tam's (1998, p. 154) rejection of centralised authoritarian states, actually claim to avoid. Central to the communitarian argument is that governing through community is done by reliance on the voluntary conviction of members to align their behaviour with the image of a communitarian society, with the moral voice of community acting as both an encouragement to behave in

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<sup>12</sup> A good example of this is stock transfer of social housing from council ownership to housing associations. McCormack's (2009, p. 401) case study described the paradox of stock transfer that can only go ahead if approved on the basis of a ballot of tenants, yet in reality tenants were given little choice at all if they wished their homes to be maintained to a high standard. The council presented a 'bleak alternative' to transfer, one typified by reduced investment in housing maintenance (due to a need to reduce public expenditure) as opposed to a transfer that would inject greater finance into improving housing standards for tenants.

accordance with certain values and as a censure when these obligations are violated (Etzioni, 1995a, p. 38). Etzioni insists that this is not done through coercive means and that "if a person does not accede to the community's moral urgings, nobody will make that person 'behave'" (Etzioni, 1995a, p.38).

However, as Robinson (2008, p. 20) points out, communitarianism centres on identifying valued forms of community, designing policies to promote and protect such communities where they already exist and to reconfigure forms that stray away from the ideal of community. To argue that social pressure of this kind is not coercive would be to question the abilities held by a self-governing community, as if communities are to rely on moral pressures to maintain social order, they can only do so if these pressures have some degree of coercive effect in reconfiguring the behaviour of potential dissidents (Levitas, 2005, p. 95). 'Community' can construct essentialist categories of difference - the included and excluded, the responsible and irresponsible, the deserving and the undeserving - and to appeal to a homogenous common culture is to obscure the divisions, exclusions and inequalities that pervade community life (Cain and Yuval-Davis, 1990, p. 22).

The shared values that define this common culture, for example the value of justice put forward by Henry Tam and those values that Etzioni argues are self-evidently moral, are contested in themselves. Philpott (2011) points out the manner in which the subjectivity of these values questions their basis for providing a normative framework for communities - what is deemed fair and just to one group of people could easily preclude others - and that to assume that people are inclined to treat each other as equals within this framework is to avoid the complexities of everyday life.

This is problematised not just because of the potential exclusion of those who fail to conform to the idealised construct of community but due to the neglect of power inequalities among community members. Levitas (2005, p. 95) questions which members in the community will have the power to impose normative values and

standards and highlights the difficulties of ensuring just, equitable and accountable outcomes through informal community ties. Elias and Scotson's (1965) work on the members that were designated as 'insiders and outsiders' of community life highlighted the process of exclusion of outsider groups, where strong associative ties between those who had lived in a community the longest were used as a means to stigmatise and marginalise the 'outsiders' - those that had moved in last with weaker and less established social relations. These configurations became a means not only to create an idealised positive image of the established group in the community but as a way of conferring negative human attributes to "members of a group which they considered collectively as different from, and as inferior to, their own group" (Elias and Scotson, 1965, p. xx).

Jordan (2011, p. 50) also explores the possible inequalities in power, arguing that policies aimed at governing through community are actually more orientated towards reinforcing images of active entrepreneurial individuals rather than building community solidarity. These usurped ideas of providing equality of opportunity as the rhetoric around devolving power and influence to communities may suggest, and instead assisting abler and more ambitious individuals to differentiate themselves from communities where community membership and belonging - defined by individual self-responsibility and self-management - was lacking. There is, therefore, a need to be alive to the variable outcomes policies aimed at 'empowering' communities can create, considering who is empowered and at the expense of whom. As Allen (2003, p. 5) puts it, power (and the associated concept of empowerment) is not a neutral tool for associational collective action that facilitates mutual aims and interests, but it is also an instrumental vehicle through which power can be held over others and used to obtain leverage at the expense of others. Expanding this, the communitarian vision of associational power between citizens should be understood not only as having the potential for mutual action in the name of community empowerment but also for the possibility of others gaining leverage over those that fail to conform to the valued form of community life.

This section has provided an introduction to the potential application of communitarian ideology to everyday life. Through the decentralised units of governance endorsed by Etzioni and Tam, communities become both the site and mechanism through which individual and communal self-government is harnessed. While the section has concluded with an analysis of the regulatory possibilities of community, those that may exist through the potential stigmatisation or exacerbation of inequalities of those that sit outside a valued construct of community, the following section advances to discuss varied understandings of the way community empowerment and participation can operate. This follows Rocha's (1997) understanding that, while it is necessary to question the purpose of who is being empowered and why, not all types of power are experienced as the actualisation of influence or force and may hold out the prospect for mutual action towards improved conditions for less powerful citizens.

## **2.3 Understanding Empowerment and Participation**

The concept of community empowerment, often premised on strengthening community ties and building collective influence, is one that has been open to regular contestation in the academy. As Section 2.2 argued, it is vital to gain an understanding as to who is empowered and for what purpose, yet empowerment often remains "mired in romantic notions of neighbourliness" (Colenutt and Cutten, 1994, p. 241) and used indiscriminately with a positive meaning "uncritically assumed to be universal" (Rocha, 1997, p. 31). This section aims to further an understanding of the varied definitions of empowerment and its prospects, providing the context for a thorough exploration of the creation and facilitation of new forms of community governance.

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation<sup>13</sup> in neighbourhood renewal programs provides a useful introduction to the variable possibilities held by the empowerment of people to participate in public life.

In Arnstein's eyes, citizen participation is a process through which power relations are, to variable degrees, altered between those who hold power in determining the operation of public policies and those excluded from participating in these processes:

It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded by the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future ... In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant

social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society.

Arnstein (1969, p. 216)

The dynamics of citizen participation as conceptualised by Arnstein (1969) are shown in Table 1.

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<sup>13</sup> While Arnstein's work obviously precedes much of the literature already discussed in this chapter, it provides a valuable introduction to this discussion of empowerment and participation for the contestation, debate and alternatives it has generated and its continued use in the social science literature (Burns *et al.*, 1994; Cornwall, 2008; Hall and Hickman, 2011).

Table 1: A ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969)

8	Citizen Control	Degrees of citizen power
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Degrees of tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	Nonparticipation
2	Therapy	
1	Manipulation	

Citizen participation in social reform is seen as "the cornerstone of a democracy - a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 215) and is actualised by the powerful, though its exact implementation is experienced differently dependent on the extent to which power relations are redefined. There are "significant gradations of citizen participation" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). The eight rungs and three levels of Arnstein's ladder describe how the involvement of citizens at one end of the spectrum is defined by levels of 'nonparticipation' that are contrived by those with power as a substitute or illusion for genuine shifts in influence. Those in power 'educate' or 'cure' participants and manipulate them to behave in a certain way in line with particular objectives. Above this, the rungs relating to consultation and placation are understood as tokenistic forms of community involvement: citizens are allowed an advisory role in the

operation of policies that affect them but there is no requirement for their views to be heeded: there is the right to participate but not the right to decide. Finally, at the top of Arnstein's ladder sits those instances where citizens can enter into partnerships or arrangements that allow scope for significant decision-making or full managerial power.

Arnstein is unequivocal in arguing for higher degrees of citizen participation, arguing that the top rungs represent a more adequate way of representing the opinion of local communities than traditional forms of representative democracy and that disadvantaged communities require further scope for influencing local decisions because reliance on traditional forms of government to end their disadvantage and powerlessness has failed" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 224).<sup>14</sup> There are, however, a number of limitations with Arnstein's ladder. Each rung on the ladder is not necessarily equidistant with higher degrees of citizen participation becoming progressively more difficult to obtain (Burns *et al.*, 1994), while each rung designates degrees of power that could encompass disparate experiences among citizens. For example, the context in which consultation and debate between government and community takes place may vary as will the suitability of consultation being allowed to fully alter the course of political decision-making.

Burns *et al.* (1994) expanded Arnstein's ladder of participation and aimed to provide a more nuanced understanding by distinguishing between different forms of control at the top (independent, entrusted and delegated) to more cynical forms of 'selling' citizen participation and empowerment that aim to safeguard or manipulate relationships of power between the powerful and the powerless. However, the main issue with the work of both Arnstein (1969) and Burns *et al.* (1994) is the assumption

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Arnstein's work related partly (though not exclusively) to black and ethnic minority communities in 1960s America; a period of history where these communities suffered significant social and economic disadvantage in society. Her faith in greater citizen voice and control and corresponding distrust of government should therefore be contextualised by this.

that to progress to the top of the ladder, moving from a state of manipulation and coercion at the bottom to independent citizen control at the top, is both eminently possible and desirable.

*Table 2: A revised table of citizen participation (Burns et al., 1994).*

<b>CITIZEN CONTROL</b>	6. Genuine consultation
12. Independent control	5. High quality information
11. Entrusted control	<b>CITIZEN NON-PARTICIPATION</b>
<b>CITIZEN PARTICIPATION</b>	4. Customer care
10. Delegated control	3. Poor information
9. Partnership	2. Cynical consultation
8. Limited decentralised decision-making	1. Civic hype
7. Effective advisory boards	

Western democracies are typically structured on systems of representative government where political elites are elected to represent citizens and the acquisition of significant citizen power in these environments is not easily achieved (Stoker, 2010, p. 58). Somerville (2011b, p. 421) details the rise of elitism and professionalisation in political life, leading to weakening citizen attachment to political parties and, as a corollary, a lack of willingness to participate in exerting influence on governmental decision-making perceived to be the domain of 'those who know best'. People have become disenfranchised and unwilling to be involved in decision-

making at either a local or national level (Fox, 2009) and tensions may exist between the triangulation of efforts to encourage citizen participation, the extent to which citizens wish to be involved in this, and the extent to which elected governments are willing to cede control (Somerville, 2011b, p. 421). Hall and Hickman's (2011) analysis of resident participation in French housing regeneration illustrates both the reluctance of residents to assume high degrees of influence in decision making, preferring instead a consultative role rather than substituting the work of professionals, and the way in which these professionals were in any case orientated towards designating circumscribed 'types' of participation than ceding total control. The belief that to progress to the top of the ladder and assume independent citizen control is both straightforwardly possible and desirable is an "erroneous normative assumption" (Hall and Hickman, 2011, p. 835).

Furthermore, the endorsement of greater citizen control appears to assume a "single, indivisible public" speaking as one, when instead it could be argued that there is a "plurality of publics" each speaking with different voices that reflect variable conditions and concerns (Somerville, 2011b, p. 419).

The task for democracy, therefore, is to aggregate the many voices that make up this plurality in such a way that decisions can be made that take account of these voices equally and are regarded as authoritative by all those likely to be affected by them (Somerville, 2011b, p. 425). Traditional forms of representative democracy are increasingly seen as lacking legitimacy due to disaffection with political decisions, domination of elites in shaping and representing public opinion and decline in electoral and party political citizen participation, leading Somerville to discuss four approaches to deepening democracy and participation in order to improve the

influence of public opinion and mitigate the problems with representative democracy<sup>15</sup> (Somerville, 2011b, p. 422):

- **Participatory democracy:** This goes beyond representative democracy by creating and supporting participatory mechanisms of citizen engagement, which in turn are built upon and support communitarian views of the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. Political power should be devolved to citizens individually and collectively so they can work directly with elected officials in making a significant difference to the way policy is implemented.
- **Civil society and associative democracy:** The concern with this approach is with how an independent civil society - a voluntary sector of self-governing associations - holds government to account rather than how it directly participates in processes of co-governance. Participation in public life, but not directly in governmental decision-making, is the essential ingredient for an autonomous public opinion which allows citizens methods of holding the state to account. This provides a defence against the formation and dominance of elite opinions, for example 'big business' or 'big government', and allows a "bubbling up of opinion from the grassroots" (Somerville, 2011b, p. 426). As Hirst (1994, p. 20) describes, associative democracy aims to correct the "little capacity [citizens have] to redirect a failing bureaucracy toward meeting their needs".
- **Deliberative democracy:** Deliberation, in the sense of public reasoning to come to collective decisions, deepens democracy by ensuring that government actions and inactions are actually determined by, and not just

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<sup>15</sup> Somerville's work is presented here for its comparative value between different approaches to democratic renewal, providing further evidence of how community involvement may be valued for a particular form of authenticity and legitimacy in decision-making. It is important to note that this partly draws on the work of others, in particular the work on associative democracy by Hirst (1994; 2002) and Amin (1996).

responsive to, the conclusions of the public. The emphasis is on an informal public sphere, transmitted through a range of techniques including protest, petitions, lobbying and public meetings, which are translated into policy proposals and arguments for the formal political sphere. It is akin to John Dryzek's (2005) popular vision of deliberative democracy that is constituted by a public sphere that is semi detached from a power-sharing state. Rather than going beyond representative democracy, it is a means of strengthening it by achieving a more informed and inclusive expression of public opinion, though it is dependent on the commitment of political parties to "empowering the disempowered" (Somerville, 2011b, p. 428).

- ***Enhanced representative democracy***: This advances the limitations of participatory democracy, namely the danger of failing to secure representative public opinion, by proposing the creation of deliberative public forums with elected representatives to represent different interests and stakeholders. These forums could improve the articulation and aggregation of public opinion, working alongside traditional elected governmental authorities to inform decision making that reflects the will of the people.

These four approaches are broadly aimed at creating and supporting autonomous political spaces for the opinions and concerns of less powerful citizens to gain greater traction in decisions that affect them (Somerville, 2011b, p. 431). It is argued that non-electoral citizen representation can improve the operation of government, as the 'untaintedness' of community representation in relation to state-led institutions and procedures allows them to represent the authentic grassroots views of those interests that are "marginalised or excluded under the present structure or operation of electoral politics" (Saward, 2009, p. 19). Essentially, community involvement can provide an authentic form of democratic decision-making as it provides a bottom-up (as opposed to top-down) approach that is more responsive to the needs, concerns

and local knowledge of citizens, and acts as an antidote to the disenchantment felt with representative democracy:<sup>16</sup>

Civil society appears here as a space, defined by its 'otherness' to both state and market, and as such can readily be filled by different kinds of politics. This space is therefore imagined in contradictory ways: as empty (of politics) yet full (of values, norms and community belongings). Its promise, then, rests on its apolitical, yet 'authentic' character.

Newman and Mahony (2007, p. 57)

There is, though, a broad consensus in the literature that civic participation is a 'messy business' (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004) with the complexities of its meaning and precise purpose posing many challenges to its effectiveness (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004).

If we are to understand community as a concept that can simultaneously be used to describe groups of people tied by identity, place, interest and aspiration, it follows that these definitional problems pose challenges for initiatives that place an emphasis on greater individual and collective participation and representation: communities are not homogenous masses and their members do not have the same beliefs or needs (Smith, 2008, p. 147). The question of who speaks on behalf of a community is not easily reconciled and, as Somerville (2011b, p. 430) points out,

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<sup>16</sup> Co-operative housing is a useful example here. In 2009 the Commission for Co-Operative Housing released a report under the title of *Bringing Democracy Home*, making the case for an expansion of the co-operative sector based on "the importance of community" and encouraging a realignment of the housing sector to "help facilitate ordinary people and communities to take control ... the UK co-operative movement is a powerful part of our national democracy" (Bliss, 2009, p. 7).

mere 'untaintedness' from the state is not enough to claim community representation, as to be embedded in the authentic views of the grassroots is to be tainted by the particular views, interests and priorities that this environment nurtures. As such this is merely a different and an additional form of particularised expertise and knowledge.

These issues are exacerbated by the demands of participation in determining or operating governmental decision-making or policies. Opportunities for community involvement, particularly in articulating and implementing their interests, are often impeded by professionalised structures that oblige participants to invest high levels of skill and time (Fung and Wright, 2001; Robinson *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2008). As such those who participate in civic action tend to be those with higher levels of social capital, education and stable and secure living conditions, as well as the time to devote to such activities (Reed and Selbee, 2001; Skidmore *et al.*, 2006; Mohan, 2011): a 'civic core' of empowered and engaged individuals that tend to provide the bulk of civic participation (Wells *et al.*, 2011, p. 93).

Therefore, efforts to deepen democracy and increase citizen participation will depend not only on the willingness of those in power to involve the powerless, but also on the ability and engagement of those deemed to require greater empowerment in decisions that affect them. The idea of full independent citizen control of local decisions, which parallels with the communitarian vision of breeding decentralised forms of citizen participation that are active rather than passive in the way they are governed (Tam, 1998, p. 154), is therefore one likely to take hold mainly in areas where a civic core is evident, community ties are strong and representatives are able to effectively determine and articulate locally-based interests and priorities.

Even where a civic core is strong, the extent of community involvement may be contingent on the political will at local and national levels. Governmental emphasis on public participation has been dismissed as 'government by focus group' by critics

who argue that participation usually amounts to encounters with "officially defined structures and approved forms of involvement" that short circuit rather than enhance the groundswell of public opinion (Lowe, 1997, p. 153; Newman and Mahony, 2007, p. 54). The view described above that civil society is empty of political meaning and influence may therefore be an illusion; instead civic participation becomes aligned with state aims, charged with service delivery and morphs into a strategy of governing the social at a distance, as per the work of Rose (1996) and on communitarianism described in the previous section (Newman and Mahony, 2007, p. 61).

Paradoxically, such instances can also give rise to alternative forms of civic action that aim to resist these governmental techniques. Shapely (2011) documents how neighbourhood groups emerged spontaneously in the 1960s as a response to perceived deficiencies in local authority planning policies. Planning had long been seen as a domain where extensive community participation and consultation was seen as unnecessary and wasteful by a centralising planning system, and therefore any forms of participatory democracy actually involved educating the public into the planning process, avoiding conflict and securing consent for governmental policies: a technique that controlled and diminished the power of public opinion rather than broadening forms of urban governance:

Citizens were, apparently, being invited to participate actively in the creation of public policy. Promoting consultative democracy would, theoretically, encourage greater involvement and enhance citizenship. But generating publicity in practice still meant telling people what was going to happen. It involved holding exhibitions and public meetings, but it did not necessarily mean active participation whereby people's views were sought and absorbed into the decision-making process.

Shapely (2011, p. 79)

Resident action groups involved in community action formed as a reaction to the lack of voice provided by traditional participation policies, articulating the concerns of residents alienated from the policy-making process and setting out to challenge the assumption that residents would give passive consent to local authority policy decisions rather than to gain and share power over a period of time. Shapely (2011, p. 81) argues this was particularly evident in oppositional activity against slum clearances in the 1960s and 1970s, with community action groups emerging to adequately reflect and transmit public opinion.

We can see in this instance that community activity can emerge as an oppositional activity fighting against state and market forces that threaten the interests of the local neighbourhood. Collective action is a means through which individuals can defend or achieve a valued form of living (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2006). Yet, in line with the literature review of communitarianism, the key dilemma for research on forms of collective action to confront is precisely *what* is being defended and for *whom*.

If collective action is the means through which the values, norms and notions of community belonging are determined and transmitted, placing community as an influential stakeholder in the governance of society (Etzioni, 1997a, p. 141), it is also necessary to interrogate the underpinning rationales, analyses and stakes that this collective action reflects. In line with DeFilippis *et al.* (2006), a platform from which to advance such enquiry is to view community as neither a romantic 'social good' (Tonnies, 1887; Etzioni 1995a) nor as a regulatory mechanism for governing the social (Rose, 1996), but as an imagined product of both their larger and external contexts and the practices, organisations and relations that take place within them. Communities may emerge as vital arenas for social change and important mechanisms for challenging the weight of elite governmental thinking dominated, yet the potential problems of power relations and oppression within communities can make community in and of itself a dubious goal (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2006, p. 685).

## Conclusion

The preceding discussions have sought to highlight and unravel understandings of 'community' - particularly those that have influenced recent governments - its potential definitions and manifestations and the fault lines within these. Communities can be simultaneously defined as a site for social change, a desirable form of organising social relationships, a strategy through which citizens can be governed, a technique of collective resistance and a vehicle through which grassroots public opinion can be expressed. They can reflect communities of shared interest, place, concern or behaviour and offer both liberatory and regulatory possibilities. The following chapter provides an analysis of how spaces for community influence are practically institutionalised, looking particularly at the reformation of housing governance that extends responsibility for decision-making and management to the level of community. Levitas (2000) argues that research that unpicks these issues necessarily involves:

A critical orientation to notions of 'community' and to all forms of 'we-speak' asking what differences or conflicts of interest or experience are suborned within the assertion of collectivity.

Levitas (2000, p. 192)

The analysis of the emergence of community governance in housing therefore leads into a framework for analysis that allows room to critically explore what the interests are that underpin collective action expressed through a CLT and furthermore the rationales that affect the ways in which (and the extent to which) its complexities are negotiated among and within the broader range of actors and processes community governance demands.

# Chapter 3: Housing governance and the politics of community

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This chapter seeks to further examine the realm of community governance to explore the relationship of collective action to the governance of housing. It begins by providing some clarity as to our understanding of what governance entails, particularly when it is expanded to the level of the neighbourhood. This provides the backdrop to our understandings of how community governance in housing can be instigated and how it is negotiated among public and private stakeholders. An account of relevant literature that has explored CLTs in other countries is provided, arguing the research published to date on developments in the United States and Scotland has failed to engage with the politics of community woven into the formation, development and existence of CLTs as a form of housing provision and governance.

This links to the core theme of this thesis: namely how and why communities come together from the 'bottom up' to attempt the implementation of new tenurial and organisational arrangements in order to meet the needs of a defined locality, and the negotiations and challenges that are undertaken to facilitate new forms of housing governance.

## **3.1 Governance, co-governance and housing**

The enlargement of civic participation discussed in the previous chapter, whether it be through encouraging people to fulfil certain social responsibilities in accordance with a valued form of living or through efforts to extend democratic power to wider populations, is indicative of what many term the shift from centrally controlled government to dispersed processes of governance. Although the concept of

governance is disputed for being 'slippery' (Pierre and Peters, 2000, p. 7) and has been critiqued for its lack of a universally accepted and understood definition (Jordan *et al.* (2005, p. 478), the term has gained popular currency in describing the drive towards the involvement of institutions and actors that are drawn from, but also beyond, elected nation state governments:

Contrary to the classic form of 'government', contemporary governance is not imprisoned in closed institutions and is not the province of professional politicians. Though rarely defined with precision, it refers to patterns of decision-making taking place in a larger set of institutions, with a broader range of actors and processes.

Magnette (2003, p. 144)

Processes of governance are premised on their capacity to cover the widest possible range of institutions and relationships in the procedures of governing (Pierre and Peters, 2000, p. 1). The boundaries and responsibilities for influence and decision-making become blurred between actors and the potential for governance through self-governing networks of actors is recognised as an effective strategy as opposed to merely through the central command, power and authority of government (Stoker, 1998, p. 18). As the efforts to deepen democracy and encourage communitarian-minded behaviour reveal, the level of the neighbourhood becomes the site where community engagement and participation in political life can be harnessed through dispersed governance, as opposed to citizens merely participating in electoral processes. Based on the view that centralised government is no longer capable of governing effectively at a local level without the cooperation and participation of its citizenry, governance involves the creation of new institutional spaces and decision-making opportunities in which previously excluded parts of the population can influence and challenge policy formulation and delivery (Taylor, 2007, p. 297-298).

This narrative conceptualises civic involvement in governance as an activity formulated and defined by the state. Much in line with Taylor's description, Somerville (2005, p. 121) sees community-based governance as the process through which the activities of government are democratised and as a necessary condition for the democratic legitimacy of representative democracy. The efforts to 'deepen democracy' described at the end of the previous chapter are a means towards making the decisions that emerge from these processes work more fairly in favour of citizens: they aim to enhance rather than undermine elected government (Somerville, 2011b, p. 421).

Governance is therefore said to be embedded into governmental structures and takes place 'in the shadow of hierarchy' (Scharpf, 1994, p. 40). Yet, Somerville (2005, p. 120) points out that community governance can also be understood as a process of decision-making that takes place on a scale that is both appropriate for the demands of, and regarded as legitimate by, identifiable communities.

This suggests a key role for those to be empowered with the ability to shape and affect policy decisions, suggesting that the power of government and the scale at which governance is to be implemented is subject to negotiation and influence from actors at community level. Collective action in governance processes could be to defend, oppose or achieve a particular policy or mode of governing rather than to legitimise its existing formulation (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2006). This is not to suggest that the role of government is significantly curtailed nor that practices of empowerment fall outside their gaze. Indeed efforts to deepen democracy still represent a space where power is exercised in some form to a particular end and this is highlighted by the definitional problems and debate surrounding who and what 'community' may be composed of or seeking to achieve. Rather, as the analysis of literature and research on CLTs internationally presented later in the thesis will illustrate, it is important to note that collective action will not always emanate from, or be aligned with, governmental structures and the objectives they are orientated towards.

The multiple possibilities offered by new governance spaces are to be realised through techniques of co-governance in spaces autonomous from conventional political systems and structures:

The new governance spaces that are opened up as a result of these reconfigurations enable 'performing citizens' to become directly involved in the co-production of particular policy outcomes that matter to them, their contributions to specific policy projects combining to generate a system of co-governance. Co-governance may be enacted through networks created either by the state for the purpose of improved system effectiveness or by citizens themselves operating outside conventional political systems and structures.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p. 55)

The networks through which co-governance may be enacted are differentiated as "invited spaces" and "popular spaces" by Cornwall (2004), distinguishing between opportunities where the involvement of the powerless is contingent on being offered a chance to participate by the powerful under defined boundaries of engagement and 'popular' autonomous forms of action through which citizens create their own opportunities and terms for engagement (Cornwall, 2002). Invited spaces can bring a wider network of non-state actors into policymaking, though the decision as to who is permitted to participate and under what terms lies with those already holding power and may be used to legitimise governmental priorities rather than reconcile differences in inequities and status (Cornwall, 2002, p. 24). Popular spaces, however, can be created and claimed by less powerful actors and emerge as a result of popular mobilisation around issue-based concerns or as a way for like-minded people to join together in common pursuits: they are arenas in which "people join

together, often with others like them, in collective action, self-help initiatives or everyday sociality" (Cornwall, 2004, p. 76).<sup>17</sup>

While these are not static concepts and it is acknowledged that spaces created with one purpose may be used by those who engage in them for something completely different (Cornwall, 2004, p. 81), the key point is that popular spaces are to be distinguished from invited spaces as their creation permits a bottom-up constitution of the "rules of the game" as opposed to community involvement being configured in line with governmental strategies and objectives.

The role of community as both the geographical site and collective means of transmitting citizen participation may in different ways depend on the constitution of the spaces for community governance. The institutional framework of government can develop the structures and possibilities of engagement, while these can be simultaneously accepted, negotiated or undermined via dispersed forms of governance at the local level:

External 'higher-level' institutional constraints structure the range of possibilities for developing new rules and are expressed through legislation, policy frameworks, resource regimes and the regulation of 'standards'. At the same time, locally specific institutions either reinforce or undermine institutional 'templates' circulating in the wider environment.

Lowndes (2001, p. 1965)

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that although useful in describing some of the prospects for mutual action, these activities listed by Cornwall are different in both their purpose and value. Furthermore, the notion that 'everyday sociality' is intrinsically or necessarily linked to citizen participation or involvement in the public realm is contradicted by some of the literature questioning Putnam's social capital thesis described in the previous chapter (Levi, 1996; Stolle, 2003).

Therefore the process of structuring and embedding community involvement into governance is key as its acceptance or negotiation gives rise to varied outcomes. In other words, rather than assuming the role of community governance to be one of invited participation with pre-configured rules of engagement, the widening of opportunities for collective action can emerge both as a result of and in opposition to the state-led legislation, policy frameworks and resource regimes that structure policy formulation and objectives. Thus, the 'institutional differentiation' that occurs as patterns of decision-making and responsibility for governance become delinked from bureaucratic hierarchies, giving rise to a greater variety of institutions and institutional arrangements for local governance (Lowndes, 2001, p. 1961).

Housing has become a key terrain for this, particularly in the context of the demunicipalisation of council housing which gave rise to a new mixed economy of provision typified by an enabling role for the state as opposed to one focused on providing material resources and direct management. Social housing has moved away from a singular model of traditional hierarchal organisation channelled through local government towards combined forms of governance and co-ordination that draw not only on hierarchy but on market and network principles too, reflecting policies of modernisation elsewhere in the public sector (Mullins *et al.*, 2001).

This change was precipitated both by governmental support for the housing association sector, demonstrated by the injection of significant state funds in the 1970s aimed at creating a 'third arm' of housing policy that could challenge the hegemony of local authority rented housing (McDermont, 2010, p. 37), and by the diversification of tenure and management of council housing from the 1980s onwards. Housing became progressively delinked from local authorities, with the right to buy taking significant proportions of rented housing into owner occupation (King, 2010) and stock transfer offering changes both in who manages social

housing and opportunities for tenants to actively influence their choice of landlord.<sup>18</sup> Stock transfer involved the transfer of housing stock into the ownership of housing associations seen as more capable of innovating in the investment and management of property (through their ability to raise private finance), while this was also grounded in providing a platform for an improved range of opportunities for tenants to influence the management of their homes and therefore provide a more responsive landlord service to tenants (Malpass and Mullins, 2002). Stock transfers have typically involved balloting tenants affected by the proposal to alter their landlord and, if it goes ahead, reserving places on the governing body of the housing stock to assist with governance decisions over investment, rent levels and tenancy conditions. McCormack posits that on face value stock transfers have offered:

a site of active citizenship, with tenants in effect determining the future provision of a key welfare service in their area ... tenants in stock transfer areas can not only vote on a major area of public service, but also help to develop its shape, and participate in its governance.

McCormack (2009, p. 393)

Yet, these spaces of invited participation (Cornwall, 2002) for communities - expressed via tenant involvement - are characterised by multiple tensions and competing narratives. Lowndes and Sullivan argue that the creation of these new governance spaces is inherently unstable due to the potential variety of desires and expectations of these processes:

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<sup>18</sup> Although the way social housing is funded is not the focus of this analysis, it should also be noted that the decoupling of social housing from local authorities was also seen as desirable for reducing public sector expenditure and allowing private finance to be invested into improving the quantity and quality of housing stock (Whitehead, 1999; McDermond, 2010, p. 41).

the instability of 'new governance' means that any strategies employed by the state will be subject to challenge and contestation and their attempted application will generate new sources of agency for citizens to act on their own terms.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p. 55)

The challenge, contestation and need to acknowledge the varied possibilities for community governance have been exemplified within stock transfer processes. Reflecting on the initial experiences, Clapham and Kintrea (1994) were critical of the large-scale nature of stock transfer to housing associations in England, particularly in comparison to the experience in Scotland where transferred stock was dispersed into small units of management via community ownership co-operatives or community-based housing associations. These served to provide greater scope for resident involvement and influence, providing more positive outcomes for tenants in terms of satisfaction and choice than larger landlords would provide (Clapham and Kintrea, 1994). These tensions over size have been found elsewhere in the housing association sector. Mullins (1999) spoke of the paradox between housing associations 'sensitively serving the needs of society' on one hand, based on their traditional image of being locally based and accountable to their communities, and on the other increasing their size through merger activity on the basis of business logics such as economies of scale (see McDermont, 2010 for a detailed account of this).

More recent research has concentrated on the extent to which stock transfer processes truly represent devolution of power to community level. McCormack (2009) has been highly critical of stock transfer ballots, arguing that the participation of tenants is influenced by dominant narratives that reinforce existing relations of power. McCormack argues that oppositional behaviour to transfer processes is submerged by the imposition of landlord perspectives and manipulation of already-

subsidiary tenant voices in governance processes in order to achieve the desired ends of existing governmental structures:

A local authority is ostensibly working in 'partnership' with its tenants to reform a key welfare service, whilst at the same time ... oppressing its tenants, principally through its attempts at suppressing critical consciousness [of tenants].

McCormack (2009, p. 408)

This concurs with other analyses of stock transfer that see it as a process of privatisation aimed less at encouraging citizen choice and local democracy and more at widening the scope for private profit-making, generating a series of anti-transfer movements (Mullins and Pawson, 2009). Indeed, the concept has been described as "more akin to voice than choice" (Mullins and Pawson, 2009, p. 94) as tenants are usually faced with prescribed options between a specified new landlord or remaining with local authority control rather than acting as the source for shaping the entire structure, with financial incentives or disincentives prominent in the framing of decisions.<sup>19</sup>

McKee's analysis of stock transfer in Glasgow also illustrates the complexities of creating new opportunities for communities to become involved in local governance structures, particularly when faced by the pragmatic realities of the constitution of these spaces. Stock transfer in Glasgow was to involve two stages: the transfer of ownership to a citywide housing association, who devolved the day-to-day management of the housing to a citywide<sup>2</sup> network of small-scale and community-

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<sup>19</sup> The experience of stock transfer in Glasgow demonstrates this, where additional financial inducements relating to the elimination of debt were provided to encourage a 'yes' vote. Daly *et al* (2005) contrasted this with a "no" vote in Birmingham where suspicion over the eventual outcomes a change in landlord would bring led tenants to reject stock transfer in a ballot.

controlled local housing organisations (LHOs) that would be governed at a micro-level; and then the eventual 'second stage transfer' of these properties into full community ownership of the LHOs (McKee, 2007). In practice, however, the aim of achieving full community ownership of the properties has been impeded by the cost of doing so and a range of organisational barriers as to how best to practically manage the housing stock, with some stakeholders desiring a revised governance model consisting of fewer and larger organisations in the name of cost efficiency (McKee, 2009). Similarly, McKee (2008, p. 194) observes the "contradictory co-existence of decentred and centralising modes of governance" whereby the local knowledge and capacity for action of communities is mobilised in the governance of housing, yet the scope for this to have significant influence is circumscribed by wider policy contexts in which the state shapes the parameters of local control, for example over the allocation of housing in the local area.

The concept of community ownership is problematised further by the complexities of ownership itself. Legal ownership confers exclusive or absolute rights over the things that are owned - in the case of CLTs this is land and housing - and, within the wider socio-political rules and legislation, allows full rights of use, income and decision-making as to its function. It takes on different forms and to be an owner is complex due to the variety of ideas and practices to which it refers. It may be individual ownership of property, private ownership of business, state ownership or, as may be the case in the housing sector, ownership by an intermediary within civil society. Different forms of ownership can therefore denote a variety of relationships between individuals in respect of the mechanisms for the acquisition, transfer and distribution of ownership in society (Gamble and Kelly, 1996, p. 72).

Housing is a good example of this. It is widely acknowledged that individual private ownership of property is something that confers and transmits an expression of the personal identity, autonomy and social position held by the owner (Gurney, 1999; McKee, 2011b). In particular, private homeownership has been elevated to, and normalised as, the tenure of choice with governmental acts seeking to encourage

owner-occupation while at the same time reducing the social housing stock (King, 2010), based partly on the modernisation of the public sector (and associated reduction in expenditure) but also on the basis that the ownership of one's home is thought to create a range of tangible and intangible socio-economic benefits as summarised below by David Boaz and endorsed by the findings of others (Munro, 2007; King, 2010, p. 6):

People have known for a long time that individuals take better care of things they own ... Just as homeownership creates responsible homeowners, widespread ownership of other assets creates responsible citizens. People who are owners feel more dignity, more pride, and more confidence. They have a stronger stake, not just in their own property, but in their community and their society.

Boaz (2011, p. 263)

Premised on providing people with a stake in their community and neighbourhood, governmental promotion of this type of ownership aimed to build responsible citizens built around moral norms of consumption that denote self-sufficiency rather than dependency and responsibility for one's welfare. Governmental emphasis on homeownership and its associated benefits is thought to construct alternative tenure choices, particularly social renting, as a deviant choice of consumption undertaken by flawed consumers lacking the self-responsibility and financial stake in the community that owner occupiers are thought to hold<sup>20</sup> (Flint and Rowlands, 2003; McKee, 2011b). This illustrates that the ownership of an asset and the discourses that surround it do not operate merely in a vacuum; they are instead both a product of and constitutive of relationships between individuals, communities and the state.

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<sup>20</sup> McKee's (2011b) work on low-cost homeownership challenges these constructions, arguing that the recipients of governmental promotion to become homeowners challenge and reject these stereotypes.

These discourses are indicative of the communitarian discourses that place individuals in a social context where their responsibilities to community are to be fulfilled. Alongside this, forms of community ownership that are instigated on terms lying outside the structures of 'invited participation' - those instances where new sources of collective agency are generated for communities to pursue mutual interests - may seek the sovereign rights and powers that ownership can confer.<sup>21</sup> This is often premised on the view that smaller units of housing governance are able to extend the powers of ownership to a greater proportion of local populations, tapping into their attachment to place rather than their intrinsic financial stake in a neighbourhood (Rowlands, 2011). Yet if ownership extends full rights of use, of income and of decision-making within the nest of the wider society and economy, it is important to disentangle the aims and potential scope of community ownership and its relationship to these wider social, political and economic contexts if we are to understand what it is that legal ownership of land and housing may confer to a CLT and the implications for its wider community.

Alongside this, the centre-local tensions in localised housing governance described by McKee (2008) illustrate the need for an analytical approach that takes into account the fact that community ownership of housing takes place within a wider policy environment rather than in a vacuum. Simply assuming that community ownership translates into full unencumbered local control is insufficient, instead it must take into account the aims and process through which this is negotiated and the terms under which it is achieved. As Lowndes and Wilson describe, it is important to assess the process of involving communities in the design of governing institutions rather than assuming the 'content' - their involvement - inevitably leads to significant alterations in power, influence and autonomy:

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<sup>21</sup> For example, Satsangi (2009) argues that community ownership via a CLT in Scotland was instigated by a desire for communities to take control of their own destiny, itself driven by unhappiness with the impact of existing feudal ownership and the power that conferred to a single individual. Satsangi and Murray (2011) also detail the role of WALTERTON & ELGIN Community Homes, a community based housing association that took control of their social housing stock in order to ward off privatisation.

t]he prospects for 'organising from below' (and 'from above') are likely to depend as much upon the *process* as upon the *content* of institutional design.

Lowndes and Wilson (2001, p. 645, original emphasis)

Furthermore, given the multiple understandings of the construct of 'community' and the varied possibilities these hold, the question of exactly who and what the 'community' is composed of, and more specifically, the rationales that underpin the apparent need for collective action require scrutiny. This is particularly the case when community involvement is instigated on terms lying outside the structures of 'invited participation'; those instances when new sources of agency are generated for communities to pursue mutual interests. If ownership is premised on the pursuit and acquisition of certain powers, it is important to explore the genesis of this collective action and inclination to directly participate in local housing governance. The following section furthers our understanding of how these decentred modes of community governance in housing may emerge and the ends they are orientated towards, laying the foundations for the framework that landscapes the research into CLTs in England and Wales.

### **3.2 Collective action and housing**

Davis (1991) argues the genesis for collective action at the neighbourhood level arises from the identification of common interests that may at any time require defending, promoting or achieving. Davis argues that communities of place need to be understood by the way they act collectively on the basis of local interests:

Place-bound 'communities' *do* act - sometimes out of a common interest in improving local safety, services, or amenity; sometimes out of a special interest in protecting local property values; sometimes because not to act is to acquiesce in the community's own destruction.

Davis (1991, p. 6, original emphasis)

There are numerous examples of this within the literature. McKenzie (1994) notes the rise of common-interest housing in the United States that has flourished in an era of reduced faith in government and reliance on market logic. Targeted at those unhappy with existing governance arrangements, common-interest developments offer the opportunity for people to join planned communities by buying a property subject to adherence with rules, regulations and covenants relating to the use of the property, the idea being that this will protect valued forms of community life (McKenzie, 1994; 2003). These are run by private governments, or homeowners' associations, which are run by residents to enforce deed restrictions. Similar projects have emerged in the UK - gated communities - as part of a 'splintering urbanism' that extends and reinforces the segregation of social groups (Atkinson and Flint, 2004), while on a larger scale some municipalities have engaged in secession movements in the United States have reacted against globalised forces and attempted to rescale urban governance in order to claim and enhance independence and democratic governance within the city as well as provide and benefit from place-bound public services (Boudreau and Keil, 2001). These examples illustrate how place-bound communities can act on the basis of common interest and, as will be described later in this section, how collective action and ownership can hold reactive possibilities as well as progressive prospects.

With individuals engaged in collective action on the basis of shared interests, it is necessary to assess why groups form or fail to form, why they mobilise or fail to mobilise, and how they cooperate and conflict, with the aim of explaining the formation, mobilisation and conflict of community groups by identifying and defining

the interests rooted in their locality (Davis, 1991, p. 15-16). Davis' analysis of disadvantaged urban social movements in the United States, including some of the earliest CLTs, rooted itself very much on the side of Cornwall's 'invited spaces': those created and defined by collective action that may aim to oppose or influence traditional forms of governing. It explored the 'housing consciousness' of communities that undertook collective action provoked by threatened or unstable property interests in a locality,<sup>22</sup> with different levels of collective consciousness resulting in the creation of different types of community-influenced housing organisation (Davis, 1991, p. 85).

Although we may expect collective action in 1980s urban United States to differ from that of 21<sup>st</sup> Century rural England (the predominant geographical focus of this research), the three broad forms of consciousness presented by Davis provide a useful conceptualisation of how the formation of community groups may be precipitated by housing issues and the ends to which they may be orientated towards. While a summary is provided of each, of critical interest and importance here is the 'radical' form of community mobilisation which is based on collective action orientated towards reforming institutional arrangements that are perceived to be inadequate and insufficient in meeting the interests and needs of a locality.

### **Housing consciousness in the community**

- ***Collective consciousness***: This level of consciousness involves collective acknowledgement that individuals in a community are similarly situated and affected by the condition of the local neighbourhood. It follows Somerville (2011a, p. 186) in perceiving property interest to be closely related to notions

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<sup>22</sup> For example, Davis (1991) describes the formation of a CLT (and other forms of co-operative housing organisation) that formed as a response to threats such as gentrification and aimed to preserve low-income housing under threat from property development.

of community by virtue of shared attachments and concern for the mutual geographical space in which housing is located. There is no effort to shape or challenge market and state forces external to the neighbourhood, and instead where collective activity exists it is aimed at engaging in activities that will marginally improve the property and place in which members have a common stake (Davis, 1991, p. 86). The type of housing organisation that emerges from this may be a form of neighbourhood improvement association aimed at restoring and rehabilitating local housing<sup>23</sup> (Davis, 1991, p. 86), or neighbourhood watch schemes that mobilise voluntary action to tackle social problems of crime and behaviour in a neighbourhood.

- **Conflict consciousness:** Collective action provoked by a conflict consciousness tends to focus on activities that politically defend or promote one group's property interests in the face of attack or threat by another group (Davis, 1991, p. 83). Housing organisations that are formed on the basis of this tend to organise in an oppositional and confrontational manner, engaging in activities that protest, disrupt, restrain or block the actions of an antagonist. Examples of this could include opposition to unwanted development in a neighbourhood, rent strikes (such as the ones organised against profiteering landlords in Glasgow in 1915) and anti-stock transfer campaigns organised by tenants of council housing to fight the sale of their homes (Mooney and Poole, 2005, p. 29). While these involved the mobilisation of community around a shared identity and interest, the aim is typically to defend and oppose particular policies or actions rather than to engage in the creation of alternative community-led organisations led by more radical housing groups. Conflict consciousness is therefore more orientated towards exerting influence rather than obtaining long-term power and leverage.

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<sup>23</sup> A good example of this type of organisation in England would be self-help housing groups; groups of local people that bring empty properties back into use by renovating them on a voluntary basis (BSHF, 2011; Mullins *et al.*, 2011).

- **Radical consciousness:** More radical housing organisations, those engaged in the formation of alternative institutional structures, are likely to be spawned by a perception that existing property relations are inherently inadequate, inequitable, and/or illegitimate as they restrict or fail to meet the aspirations of a given population. This type of consciousness argues for a reorganisation of the structures and rules governing the possession and use of domestic property in order to secure the well-being of a particular group, and is therefore based on securing new powers and advantages on behalf of this collective. Radical groups are usually founded on the belief that to secure these new advantages a new structure of property relations must be introduced that allows the implementation of new forms of tenurial and functional arrangements of housing. These allow new conceptions of the way housing is managed and the purpose it serves to emerge and permit a change of "the rules of the game under which domestic property is owned and used" (Davis, 1991, p. 88). In short, the collective action of a neighbourhood in this instance would permit a greater devolution of power and control to the local level and allow the group to implement a new set of organisational arrangements on their terms.

This may typically involve particularised views on the nature of the control and function of housing. Examples of this may be the co-operative movement, with its emphasis on democratic management and accountability, or squatting as a reaction to deprivation or as a political statement against a housing system failing to meet particular needs:

Radical consciousness becomes even more likely if, at the same time that people are becoming convinced that the current system of property relations is no longer 'delivering the goods', an interest group discovers or develops a new conception of property and place - that is, an alternative system of ideas, beliefs, and expectations that explain and justify a new set of tenurial and

functional relations. This counter-ideology says what is 'wrong' with the institutional arrangements under which people currently control and use domestic property. Furthermore, it says what kinds of control people *ought* to exercise, and what new functions property *ought* to serve.

Davis (1991, p. 269, original emphasis)

All three levels of consciousness are aimed at mobilising people around a common identity, interest, aim or experience which is intrinsically linked and rooted in interests that are endemic to a particular locality. They reflect particularised views about the role of communities, the role of the state and how best to achieve particular outcomes for that area. So, as Birchall (1988, p. 51) describes, small-scale independent housing co-operatives owned and managed by residents are preferable to local authority housing provision because "they underpin local democracy with a tangible constituency of independent associations, which cannot be reduced to the 'municipal tutelage' of the local state". This follows a long-held tradition in the co-operative sector whereby co-operative forms of housing are distinguished by their adherence to particular values and principles relating to independent and democratic member control.<sup>24</sup>

The essential characteristic of a co-operative is that it is a democratic organisation engaged in the market place, providing goods and services. It is nevertheless based on people, not on capital or government direction. In its

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<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that the extent to which these values and principles are preserved over time is questioned in the literature. While Rowlands (2009) notes the effectiveness of housing co-operatives and their grounding in mutualism, he also notes that the 'rules of the game' that structure housing provision - finance, professional knowledge, skills and expertise, and political support - have often left the sector susceptible to change. The history of co-operative housing is punctuated by demutualisation and privatisation as a result of these factors. Birchall (1992, p. 11) summarised these problems: "[co-operative housing] will always slip into a form of owner-occupation or landlordism, succumbing to the wider social forces which sustain these dominant tenures".

essence, it can never escape, even if it wanted to, the capacity of members to exercise control whenever they wish to do so.

McPherson (1994), quoted in Bliss (2009)

Co-operatives are categorised by Davis as a form of radical consciousness, often basing their operation on limited equity models of ownership or affordable rents, as well as on principles reflecting an independence from the state and organisational autonomy that encourages extensive resident and community involvement in housing management rather than merely top-down managerialist control (Davis, 1991). A wide array of literature has contended that community-owned housing can provide more equitable economic arrangements for housing by ensuring affordability as well as providing a management service that is better placed to respond to the needs of residents. Community-owned housing is also thought to provide them with greater opportunities to influence their environment and instil greater attachments to the local neighbourhood through the small-scale 'sensitive service' offered through community ownership (Clapham and Kintrea, 1994; Conaty *et al.*, 2003; Rowlands, 2009; Satsangi and Murray, 2011). Rowlands summarises this view:

Even clearer is the positive benefit of localism in the delivery and governance of housing and neighbourhood services. Locally based housing co-ops and mutual organisations are more responsive to their consumers needs than some other housing organisations ... The main message which emerges is one where locally focused and neighbourhood-based organisations can offer a distinct advantage in meeting the needs and demands of the communities that they serve.

Rowlands (2011, p. 252)

These studies, which describe the positive effects of community ownership, are grounded in extensive empirical work, often emerging from comparative studies with

other housing providers and assessing multiple contexts in which they operate.<sup>25</sup> However, while improved outcomes may be achieved through this form of grassroots communitarianism, it is important to acknowledge that the new forms of community-led housing organisations that fall under the umbrella of Davis' 'radical consciousness' are provoked by interests and perceptions of who and how housing is controlled, in addition to the function it should serve. As such, if structures of housing management and governance are to be reorganised to serve the interests and well-being of a particular group (Davis, 1991, p. 84) or the needs and demands that Rowlands (2011) speaks of, it follows that the interests of those involved in community-led action require identification and analysis if we are to understand the subject's purpose and value. This reminds us that, in line with Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) simply assuming that a badge of 'community' or 'neighbourhood' on governance results in similar outcomes is risky. Instead, communities do not exist in "isolated capsules" and are instead intertwined with neighbouring communities of both place and interest who may be impacted by new arrangements for local governance (Lichfield, 2011, p. 28). Flint (2006b, p. 183) uses the example of social landlords providing alternative public services to benefit their own communities (such as policing), which while benefiting one community may serve a two tier public policing service between local areas with and without this extra service.

## **CLTs in the United States and Scotland**

This section looks at research conducted on CLTs in the United States and Scotland. This is justified on the basis that, as the introduction to this thesis describes, community land ownership via what we know as a 'CLT' has not only developed to a

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<sup>25</sup> For example, Satsangi and Murray (2011) finds that, in comparison to areas with similar demographics, residents of a community-based housing association in London have higher rates of tenant satisfaction, a stronger sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, and feel much more able to influence decisions affecting their local area. This led to the hypothesis that: "collective ownership is associated with measureable benefits to life quality" (Satsangi and Murray, 2011, p. 6).

greater extent than in other Western countries, but the limited academic research on CLTs has primarily focused on the contexts of these two nations.<sup>26</sup>

As discussed, Davis (1991, p. 269) locates the genesis of community-led action in the failure of existing institutional arrangements to fulfil the expectations and interests of those instigating new forms of neighbourhood governance. This dissatisfaction with (and opposition to) existing arrangements can create new community-led structures that reflect desires and beliefs as to the most appropriate use, governance and purpose of housing in a local area. The collision between the different interests and priorities of neoliberal local governments and inner-city urban communities led to the instigation of many CLTs in the United States, where a CLT was created as a response to the perceived threat municipal priorities posed to that community's roots in the area:

In many a neighbourhood like the West End of Cincinnati, the main impetus for starting a CLT was to protect the community *against* municipal priorities, projects, or plans. The same people who played the lead role in organising a CLT had spent years fighting city hall before the CLT appeared ... Opposition to local government has remained a motivating factor in many low-income communities ... where CLTs have continued to be erected as an institutional barrier against market pressures made worse by the actions or indifference of city hall.

Davis (2010, p. 35, original emphasis)

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<sup>26</sup> CLTs have also been considered as a way of securing land rights for the urban poor in Sub-Saharan Africa, as documented by Bassett (2005), though the different economic and cultural context limits the relevance of this research to CLTs in England. Furthermore, as Bassett's work describes, the CLT model was rejected as a viable model due to legal complexities.

The organisational structure of the CLT was seen as a way of allowing a neighbourhood to implement a new set of tenurial and functional relations that permit an alteration in the way in which domestic property is owned and used (Davis, 1991, p. 88). Taking low-income housing and the land sat beneath it into community ownership provided an organisational structure that could defend the land and property rights of the community served by a CLT from the threat of displacement posed by market pressures. As such, American CLTs placed a strong emphasis on holding land in trust, treating it as a communal resource through which community interests could be protected, rather than as a commodity designed for individual possession, with the CLT providing a non-profit ownership of land on behalf of a particular community for the present and future (Gray, 2008; Davis, 2010).

Therefore, stemming from threats such as the displacement of communities and the unaffordability of housing, the CLT serves as a vehicle for the empowerment of communities defined by their relation to place (Davis, 2010, p. 38). New organisational arrangements were implemented to encourage the "active voice of residents" in directing and governing the CLT's affairs (Davis, 2010, p. 38) and new structures of tenure were formed to ensure 'permanent affordability' of the CLT's homes by limiting the equity gains of residents to subsidise future house prices (Davis and Demetrowitz, 2003; Davis and Stokes, 2009). The original purpose of the CLT's formation in the US was to provide a structure for owning housing that balanced the rights of the individual with the interests of the wider community, but to do so in a way that provided a "comprehensive approach to community development and community empowerment" (Davis and Jacobus, 2010, p. 537). As the quotation below describes, the purpose is not solely to develop non-profit housing but to protect the interests and assets of the local community:

Nothing makes a CLT a better developer than any other nonprofit or for-profit entity that has municipal support to produce affordable housing or other community facilities. Instead, the model's real strength lies in protecting a municipality's investment and a community's assets, and in preserving access

to land and housing for people of modest means. It is in the period *after* a project is developed that a CLT makes its most durable and distinctive contribution to a community's well-being.

Davis and Jacobus (2010, p. 538, original emphasis)

Mirroring the claims of "untaintedness" described by Saward (2009), CLTs claim to represent the authentic views and interests of a local community which are channelled through ownership of land and housing. As Warren and McKee (2011, p. 19) describe, the ownership of land can confer forms of economic, social and political power, allowing those landowners to have certain degrees of influence on how and for what purpose land is used. Therefore, a CLT owning land has the ability to effect significant measures over the use and resale of the housing that stands upon it.

While the initial impetus for the CLT sector in the United States may have been to provide an alternative institutional set-up for the ownership of land, allowing for greater community influence in local governance, more recent developments in the last decade have not been solely cast in opposition to the work of government. Davis and Jacobus (2010, p. 535) argue that the relationship between CLTs and their local governments has shifted from "adversarial to collaborative", often involving the provision of state funds to create or expand the work of a CLT. Yet, despite this, the limited literature on these partnerships largely speaks of CLTs facing a challenge in persuading government to 'let go' in the local governance of these affairs, with a need to preserve the identity and community base of the organisation. While the advantages of financial subsidies and planning permissions may be linked to these partnerships, Davis and Jacobus (2010, p. 538) argue that this also equates to a "major change in what it means to be a CLT". In other words, becoming too closely aligned with government may threaten the communitarian ideal of self-governance and the predominance of community priorities and interests that champions of CLTs see as the model's watermark.

Similar beliefs have underpinned the growth of CLTs in Scotland. Land ownership in Scotland has been historically dominated by private feudal landowners who possess significant control over the direction and welfare of local communities as an indirect consequence of their ownership. Satsangi, (2007, p. 42) describes the case of the island of Gigha, where the decision of the individual owner of the island not to invest in housing stock or allow new development saw a decline in housing standards and minimal business and economic activity to provide employment opportunities. Similar scenarios have been witnessed elsewhere in Scotland, with community land reform given added impetus by the Scottish Government's Land Reform Act (2003) that introduced a community right to buy private land, provided a CLT organisational structure was created to oversee, own and manage these processes.

As Warren and McKee (2011, p. 27) put it, this legislation has put landowners on notice that the "needs and aspirations of local people can no longer be ignored". The motivations for forming a CLT were driven by dual aims of establishing new patterns of land ownership free from the jurisdiction of speculative and absentee landlords - based on a collective desire for the community to direct their own destiny through control of local governance - and by a simple belief that community ownership would be the most effective means of safeguarding local socio-economic sustainability and producing outcomes that greater reflect community priorities (Warren and McKee, 2011, p. 20).

The desire for new institutional arrangements as an instigating factor for Scottish CLTs was documented by Satsangi (2007; 2009) whose work described the shift in power relations brought about by changes in land ownership, moving from a system of feudal decision-making and control to a "pluralistic structure that allows for full member participation in decision-making" (Satsangi, 2007, p. 43). Chiming with the communitarian ideal of a decision-making process that allows all to participate and influence in decisions that affect them (Tam, 1998), the CLT on the island of Gigha has been led by a management board selected by all residents of the island through a democratic process, creating a resident-led governance model that in itself reflects

the long history of community ownership in Scotland (Bryden and Geisler, 2007; McKee, 2011a). This model was seen as best suited to achieve the aspirations and defend the interests of the local community, with the CLT rehabilitating existing housing, constructing new properties and extensively engaging local residents in the design and planning stages (Satsangi, 2007).<sup>27</sup>

The new spaces for community governance in this instance were created as a reaction to the market forces perceived to have failed communities in the past. Namely, that private landownership excluded community interest and influence and failed to meet local aspirations as to how their locality should be governed. Community ownership was therefore a strategy not only to facilitate local development but a method of safeguarding the long-term interests of the local public (Warren and McKee, 2011, p. 21). In Scotland, the bottom-up drive towards creating structures of community governance by forming a CLT was primarily antagonistic towards speculative private landownership and the threat this posed to the interests of the local community, while the state was seen as a collaborative partner rather than an opponent as in the United States. As Bryden and Geisler (2010, p. 489) observe: "Scotland's land reform is simultaneously top-down (state authorized and assisted) and bottom-up (privileging communities)." While there is significant scope for communities to create new institutional structures that facilitate alterations in the use and purpose of local land and housing, this is authorised and assisted by state-led legislation that offers communities the right to purchase land.

Furthermore, the creation of a Community Land Unit by the Scottish Government played a key role in providing expert advice and - for a limited time - funding to provide a context in which community land ownership could thrive. This has been described by Warren and McKee (2011, p. 35) as a new 'middle ground' of

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<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the case of Gigha has been described as both the worst case scenario, in terms of the previous landowner's behaviour, and as an example of community land ownership at the 'extreme end' of success which may not be indicative of the wider experience (Warren and McKee, 2011).

governance, providing a different perception to the formulation of spaces for community governance whose parameters are shaped *either* by the community or the state. Instead, new multi-stakeholder partnerships are formed to create "a creatively expanding 'middle ground' in which new models of ownership and management are being explored".

The land reform legislation in Scotland has been praised for being both "vital tools for community empowerment and enterprise" and "a long overdue land reform with explicit provisions for community-based acquisition of land" (Bryden and Geisler, 2010, p. 486). Yet, in some quarters the creation of these new governance spaces has been critiqued for offering forms of quasi-empowerment that fail to either offer genuine opportunities for empowering community self-governance or reconcile the dynamics of power inherent to any construct of 'community' (Wightman, 2009; MacLeod *et al.*, 2010; Warren and McKee, 2011).

Warren and McKee (2011, p. 27) argued that the introduction of a community right to buy was not as radical as it first appeared. Instead land reform was based on "unexceptional and popular ideas of community empowerment as a means of reaping political capital" which failed to reconcile the problematic definitions of community and the demands this 'middle ground' of governance placed on volunteers (see also MacLeod *et al.*, 2010). Concerns over the bureaucratic and resource-intensive process undertaken by communities purchasing land echoed similar criticisms over rural governance structures. MacKinnon (2002) highlighted that the effect of endogenous community-led governance of local services can be circumscribed by the need to demonstrate accountability to the plethora of public, private and community stakeholders involved. In the context of Scottish land reform, Wightman (2009) argues that the "time-consuming and impenetrable process of micromanagement by officialdom" has diminished both the radical intent and potential of land reform in favour of community ownership, resulting in low community take-up of the community buyout legislation (MacLeod *et al.*, 2010).

## The facilitation of community organisation

These outcomes suggest that there may be different rationales held by stakeholders in the implementation of new structures and relationships for the governance of local land, and that there may be contrasting expectations as to their outcome. Berner and Phillips (2005, p. 18) describe that there may be three underlying rationales for forms of community self-help:

- as an end in itself, where the freedom for individuals and communities to make meaningful and autonomous choices is a precondition for wellbeing and development;
- as a means of improving service delivery which involves local people in the design and production of facilities and services;
- as a means of increasing efficiency and cutting costs on behalf of the state, mobilising the contributions of community to plug gaps in service provision and delivery.

All three rationales make an assumption over the ability of communities to demonstrate “tremendous entrepreneurial potential” (Berner and Phillips, 2005, p. 18) in leading community initiatives. The question attached to this assumption is the extent to which the perceived latent energy and demand for control within communities is facilitated and realised or blocked and untapped, which may be answered by the way community governance is implemented. The idea and scope of using community as both a site and means of governing the locale and implementing services is one that is open to definitional contestation:

What is immediately clear is that the idea of neighbourhood is highly charged, able to generate considerable debate about its definition and constitution as well as its potential contribution to the achievement of policy goals.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p. 56)

There is much debate over the definition and constitution of community organisation. Archer and Vanderhoven (2010) note that it is difficult to apply fixed definitions to concepts of community self-help, as the label is attached to groups that are engaged and consulted in decision-making and to others that are leading the delivery of services and are not reliant on the labour, skills and knowledge of third parties. Similarly, Teasdale's (2012a, p. 99) work on social enterprise argues that there are a "bewildering array of definitions and explanations for the emergence of social enterprise". The label of social enterprise had initially been used as a way of promoting socially-minded cooperative models of trading enterprise, with its profits used for social purposes and the badge of being a social enterprise attached to community groups, only for its meaning to be expanded as actors in other circles (such as professional and larger organisations) adopted its language to compete for resources. Summarising this, Teasdale states that:

Social enterprise is a fluid and contested concept constructed by different actors promoting different discourses connected to different organisational forms and drawing upon different academic theories.

Teasdale (2012a), p. 99)

Along with the issues of definition, the constitution of community organisation is affected by the rationales that are adopted by different stakeholders and the resources they invest. While allowing communities greater control and influence may involve the state stepping back, Archer and Vanderhoven (2010, p. 11) argue that this is not a cost-neutral solution to social problems and instead requires significant input and support from third parties if community initiatives are to flourish. Returning to the rationales described by Berner and Phillips (2005), if community contributions are to plug gaps in service delivery and provision where public and private stakeholders have withdrawn, there remains a need for "stable, long-term, targeted financial and technical support" to facilitate these initiatives (Berner and Phillips, 2005, p. 20).

Although community contributions can be important in challenging and sometimes replacing inadequate top-down or private solutions to local problems, their mobilisation faces significant challenges, as highlighted by the experiences of the community right to buy. Financial and technical difficulties were seen to stunt the potential of community ownership of land (Macleod *et al.*, 2010). Berner and Phillips (2005), p. 18) argue that these challenges can arise in strategies of community empowerment because of strong assumptions about the skills and capacities of communities and intervening support agencies. Archer and Vanderhoven (2010, p. 4) share this view. They posit that the underlying arguments in favour of community participation in or leadership of service delivery and local governance differ due to the preconceptions and assumptions different stakeholders carry based on their experience:

Self-help groups often push for a change that is based on their lived experience of a problem. This is frequently at odds with the analysis and actions of those delivering the related public service, who have a different relationship to the problem. This can put professionals and self-help groups in opposition. The result is that groups fail to get the support and resources they need, and the state fails to harness groups' energy and experience – to the detriment of services and service users.

Archer and Vanderhoven (2010, p. 4)

For Archer and Vanderhoven, it is the reconciliation of these different perspectives that can articulate the possibilities and limitations of community-led initiatives, with a particular emphasis on fostering closer working relationships between communities and the professionals in public and private sectors that may hold power. They suggest a role for intermediary organisations, often referred to as capacity-builders or umbrella organisations, which can mediate between professionals and communities by bridging the lived experience of local communities with the professional experience and expectations of public bodies (Archer and

Vanderhoven, 2010). These intermediaries should hold technical knowledge and skill as well as a commitment to creating the conditions in which substantive community participation, influence and control can be realised.

In particular, they identify three key functions of intermediary bodies: to identify circumstances where communities can provide particular benefits in the delivery of local services; to mediate between the state and communities and balance their sometimes contrasting pressures and priorities; and to assess the support and resource needs of community groups (Archer and Vanderhoven, 2010).

In essence, their role is to assist in creating the 'middle ground' of governance between communities and the state in a similar fashion to the Community Land Unit that provided expert advice and support to communities in Scotland. They are seen as important as communities often lack the technical expertise and economic resources to address local issues and can exist as independent entities or within existing organisations. The value of their role has been highlighted not only in the case of CLTs in Scotland, where the resource-intensive process of land reform stunted the potential for community ownership (Macleod *et al.*, 2010), but in other fields of community organisation and ownership such as self-help housing (BSHF, 2011), community energy schemes (Walker, 2008) and the ownership of community amenities and facilities (Aiken *et al.*, 2008).

There is, however, no uniform model for intermediaries. As Aiken *et al* (2008) describe, forms of community ownership that have often been facilitated by umbrella organisations or capacity builders can be diverse in their origin and ambition. The term 'intermediary' is used to point towards certain roles and tasks undertaken, such as the provision of technical advice and support, rather than a set job description or role. Their role is likely to be dependent on different contexts, localities and orientations within communities, precisely because different rationales may be underpinning the local context for community action. Returning to the three rationales described by Berner and Phillips (2005), it is likely that different

intermediation and support would need to be provided for communities assuming full responsibility for decision-making rather than perhaps being engaged and consulted in state-led agendas. Furthermore, the role of capacity building and intermediation is embedded with wider socio-economic systems that can help or hinder their implementation. Berner and Phillips highlight this in relation to community governance of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Most notably, the community self-help paradigm needs to be refined by a recognition that the poor cannot be self-sufficient in escaping poverty, that 'communities' are systems of conflict as well as cooperation, and that the social, political and economic macro-structure cannot be side-stepped.

Berner and Phillips (2005, p. 20)

There is, then, considerable debate surrounding the potential for community contributions to local governance and ownership of assets. In particular, the different ways this is rationalised, defined and constructed by and between stakeholders including communities, the state and potential third parties such as intermediary bodies highlights the importance of scrutinising the rationales and expectations of particular types of community governance. Furthermore, even forms of community organisation that are adversarial and challenging to existing paradigms cannot be divorced from the social, political and economic macro-structures that demand technical expertise, economic resources and a system of cooperation within and between communities and governments.

### **Organisational dilemmas and isomorphism**

There is considerable debate as to how voluntary and community organisations are defined, constructed and institutionalised within existing tiers of governance. The participation of communities in public life can be valued in different ways as the rationales presented by Berner and Phillips (2005) illustrated, ranging from the

empowerment of communities as an end in itself to a situation where their efforts are valued in relation to contributions to service delivery and provision.

These definitional issues exist throughout the voluntary and community sector, also referred to as the third sector, as it encompasses a range of different types of organisations and providers. Indeed, though these terms are used interchangeably to refer to a wide range of organisations, Alcock (2012, p. 212) states that “defining the third sector is intrinsically problematic” as the organisations and activities it encompasses “do not necessarily see themselves as part of a single entity.” This can include small-scale community groups which form in relation to their lived experience of a problem and large-scale organisations that may be contracted by government to deliver specific services. (Kendall, 2009). This difference is in part a product of the promotion of a top-down government to an enabling governance in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with the state increasingly seeing communities as major partners in the reform and delivery of social policies and welfare provision. Successive governments actively pursued the idea of community organisations being involved in the design and delivery of policies and services, with new forms of citizen and community engagement seen as essential to democratic government (Taylor, 2012).

Taylor (2012, p. 20) argues that the involvement of communities moved from being a ‘community movement’, typified by informal networks that shared collective but distinctive organisational identities in political and/or cultural conflicts and formed to meet niche needs, to a mainstreamed ‘community sector’ where community engagement was built into decision-making structures and was often actioned, funded and monitored by government bodies. This brought with it a clear organisational infrastructure for voluntary and community organisations, with lobbying groups and national membership bodies formed to champion the needs of their members and becoming major points of reference for the development of government policies that promoted and mainstreamed community empowerment.

While in many respects welcoming this as it gave communities and their representatives political recognition, resources and a place, Taylor (2012, p. 15) also warns of a “counter-narrative that told of the co-option by the state of community resources and energies, endangering the distinctiveness and independence of the community voice.”

McDermont (2010) and Purkis (2012) apply this counter-narrative to housing associations, describing the paradox between their original formations as local voluntary societies served to sensitively meet niche housing need, to their increasing role as “mass contractors for delivering mainstream government-funded services” (Purkis, 2012, p. 93). This refers to the increase in funding they received from government in the 1990s, as housing grants traditionally given to local authorities were diverted to housing associations alongside the stock transfer of housing and growth in private finance which increased the size of housing associations. Purkis argues that this changed the dynamic of the relationship between housing associations and the state, as their independence became circumscribed by their partial reliance on government who dictate rules and regulations over grant use, fix rent levels and control the Housing Benefit regime that makes up two thirds of housing association income (Purkis, 2012, p. 95). In this sense, housing associations have a “highly qualified kind of ‘independence’” that limits their ability to independently determine priorities and creates a more dependent relationship between associations and the state (Purkis, 2012, p. 96).

In other parts of the community sector, critical commentary and research has focused on the professionalisation of collective action, with skills, standards and accountability required by governments, regulators and funders for community engagement to thrive (Berner and Phillips, 2005; Archer and Vanderhoven, 2010; Flinders and Moon, 2011; Taylor, 2012). Archer and Vanderhoven’s (2010) analysis of the role of intermediary bodies in supporting community self-help argued that communities can be wary of and resistant to discourses of professionalisation and the activity monitoring of third parties, as they prioritise particular ideological values

related to democracy, social justice, independence and accountability to their local community and service users.

The extent to which this is possible is contested in the literature. Flinders and Moon (2011, p. 661) argue that government-designed programmes of community empowerment are “trapped and limited to some extent by its implementation within the confines of a centralized parliamentary state” that demands accountability and conformity within existing structures of political and ministerial governance. Others argue that agendas of community empowerment in processes of governance can standardise practice, where the ‘rules of engagement’ are set by the state, and is likely to favour ‘expert citizens’ that are engaged with professional discourses and vocations, leaving communities lacking these resources on the margins of power (Bang, 2005; Taylor, 2012).

Other theoretical positions have supported these arguments. A strand of organisational theory focuses on the institutional isomorphism of organisations, addressing the structuration of the organisational fields in which they operate. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that organisational fields tend to become more structured and more homogenous in their approach, culture and outputs in order to attract resources and recognition. In short, institutional isomorphism posits that organisations in the same field (or ‘sector’) will over time adopt similar operational practices to competitors within the same or similar fields. This occurs from the efforts of individual organisations to “deal rationally with uncertainty and constraint in their field”, which leads to “homogeneity in structure, culture, and output” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 147) due to isomorphic pressures.

DiMaggio and Powell’s work contends that there are three overlapping types of isomorphism that organisations experience: coercive, mimetic and normative.

Coercive isomorphism involves organisations being encouraged or required to adopt particular characteristics by more powerful actors. This can result from both formal

and informal pressures that are exerted on organisations by those upon which they may be dependent on (for example through funding) and by cultural expectations as to organisational purpose and behaviour (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 150). Mimetic isomorphism is grounded in the recognition that not all organisational behaviour and structure derives from coercive forces; instead organisations may opt to model themselves on those who are successful in their field. Mimetic processes can occur when “organisational technologies are poorly understood, when goals are ambiguous, or when the environment creates symbolic uncertainty” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 151). Normative isomorphism is associated with organisations that adhere to dominant forms in a field. In particular DiMaggio and Powell link normative pressures with professionalization, where organisations are encouraged to develop internal hierarchies of status, centre and periphery to realise their goals.

These isomorphic pressures can overlap and are likely to emerge in organisational fields that require what DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 151) term “direct authority relationships” that impose clearly defined responsibility and managerial authority on organisations. They also acknowledge that this can create tensions within organisations, particularly for neighbourhood and community organisations that may be driven to collectivist and egalitarian forms of governance:

The need to lodge responsibility and managerial authority at least ceremonially in a formally defined role in order to interact with hierarchal organisations is a constant obstacle to the maintenance of egalitarian or collectivist organisational forms.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 151)

Isomorphic pressures, particularly of the coercive type where organisations are directly encouraged to act in a certain way, can help us understand the wariness of and resistance to the professionalisation of community organisations highlighted in the research discussed above (Bang, 2005; Archer and Vanderhoven, 2010; Taylor,

2012). Taylor (2012, p. 22) points out that, similar to theories of resource dependency, coercive isomorphism can illustrate the significant influence government funding has on the community sector, with substantial sums being invested under particular terms and conditions over the management and use of funding.

Other research has also highlighted the effect isomorphic pressures can have on organisational behaviour. In particular, Mullins (1999) describes the tensions evident within the non-profit housing sector, focusing on the merger activity of housing associations into large group structures perceived to be more economically efficient by delivering economies of scale and facilitating greater access to specialist skills and resources. While such activity may enhance the organisational effectiveness of housing associations in economic terms, Mullins argues that merger activity highlighted increasing mimetic isomorphism with the for-profit private sector which focuses on procuring cost advantages and economic efficiencies. This change to organisational behaviour was seen to “undermine some of the unique selling points of the non-profit sector such as localism, accountability and voluntarism” (Mullins, 1999, p. 350) and alter the “style of operation and its relationship with local communities and service users” (Mullins, 1999, p. 361). In short, isomorphic pressures that change organisational behaviour can lead to tensions in the purpose and mission of organisations in the broad spectrum of the voluntary and community sector.

Similar processes have been observed elsewhere. Teasdale’s work on social enterprise has highlighted the isomorphic tendencies in this field, where social enterprises may be initiated to trade in order to meet social objectives but gradually reshaped as they adapt to the realities of a neoliberal system that may favour dominant market logics and cost efficiencies. In particular, his work on social enterprises engaged in the homelessness field has shown that there are tensions in their work as they try to balance both social and commercial considerations. Looking at social enterprises that are formed to help homeless people into employment,

Teasdale (2012b) found that isomorphic pressures were important factors in pushing these organisations towards dominant market logics, mimicking the practices of the private sector.

In particular, while their social mission was to assist homeless people into employment, the practicalities of an outcome based model where state funding was provided according to performance meant that there existed a tendency to 'cream off' those who were easiest to place in employment rather than those with different levels of social need. Teasdale (2012b, p. 13) concluded that "to survive as enterprises they will need to mimic the behaviour of private firms in their industries", questioning the extent to which competing social and commercial goals can be successfully reconciled within a wider system that valorises dominant market logics.

### **CLTs and the politics of community**

As Shaw (2008, p. 34) argues, the opposing discourses, constructions and expectations of community governance - 'the politics of community' - articulate the concept's possibilities and limitations. As such, it is necessary to recognise that communities can not only be vital arenas for social change precipitated by bottom-up collective action, but can also be constrained in their capacities to host such efforts or limited by the constitution of the spaces in which this action operates. There is furthermore at any time the potential for key stakeholders in these processes, whether it is "the powerful or the powerless", to accept, reject, manipulate or negotiate the formulation and operation of community governance (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2006).

We can see these processes with the emergence of CLTs in the United States and Scotland. Initially formed as a bulwark to protect communal interests against market pressures and a perceived adversarial local government, the role of American CLTs has been renegotiated with local governments becoming partners in both the funding and governance of the organisations, recognising its practical ability to develop

housing as opposed to its orientation towards community development and empowerment via collective ownership. In Scotland, the emergence of CLTs has been subject to both top-down and bottom-up negotiation as to their role in managing land and the extent to which legislation should facilitate this.

However, the literature on the emergence of CLTs in these two countries has failed to directly engage with the 'politics of community' described by Shaw (2008). If we are to understand CLTs, as Davis (1991) describes, as an institutional structure that creates a new form of tenurial and functional relationships capable of protecting the interests of a community, then it follows that competing definitions, conceptions and negotiations of 'community' require examination. As Gray (2008) notes in her review of American CLTs - one of a handful of academic articles that explore the subject - there is a multitude of documents extolling the virtues of CLTs but a dearth of critical investigation and empirical evidence of the challenges faced by these organisations in their formation and operation. If the most effective role of a CLT, as a form of community ownership, is not as a developer of housing but as an institutional protection of a community's assets and interests (Davis and Jacobus, 2010, p. 538), an analysis of what these assets and interests are is required if we are to understand what the offer a CLT makes is.

Davis (2010, p. 38) argues that CLTs can act as a geographically-rooted "bulwark" that empowers and defends the interests of a community defined in relation to place, broadly mirroring Kintrea *et al's* (2010) definition of territoriality:

Territoriality is a social system through which control is claimed over a defined space and defended against others ... Place attachment provides access to a community of neighbours through social networks and, in turn, it can reinforce a sense of common identity, particularly through shared experiences or a common culture or lifestyle.

Kintrea *et al.* (2010, p. 449)

The use of territoriality across a defined geographic space includes and excludes according to location of residence and the common identities, lifestyles and interests collective action may seek to reinforce (Yarwood and Edwards, 1995, p. 457). While much of the literature surrounding CLTs is grounded in a discourse of progressive politics and emancipation, with CLTs forming to capture land value for local community benefit (Diacon *et al.*, 2005, p. 4), the communitarian ideal of socially cohesive relations generated through shared property and locality interests has been notably critiqued within the context of gated communities and common interest developments in the United States (McKenzie, 1994; 2011; Atkinson and Flint, 2004). Gated communities are residential areas that are fenced or walled-off from their surroundings, usually built by developers and marketed on the attractiveness of the sense of neighbourhood identification and community belonging they can offer residents: they guarantee a community of people with shared identities and lifestyles for residents, as well as a mechanism of social control in response to fears of crime (Blandy, 2007).

Rather than merely meeting the desires of residents, Atkinson and Flint (2004) reject the representation of gated communities as a communitarian ideal that lacks wider social repercussions. Instead, they are conceptualised as an attempt by other social groups to insulate against perceived risks, unwanted encounters and as a mechanism which enables these risks to be managed by elite social groups. Although not instigated and developed by residents themselves, the development of gated residential areas offers a form of communal living that, rather than enhancing collective efficacy and self-governance, actually engenders a privatised form of cohesion that is based both on a determination of residents to withdraw from spatial interaction and also to exclude 'outsiders' that threaten the particular lifestyle and culture of residents with the gated realm (Atkinson and Flint, 2004; Blandy and Lister, 2005; Blandy, 2007). It is a form of territoriality which, as in Kintrea *et al.*'s (2010) definition, allows a community of interest and status to claim control over a defined space and defend this against external threats, while sharing a common space characterised by homogeneous interests. This creates a wider "club realm" between the private and public realms, with affluent consumers making their own

private arrangements to provide "club goods" such as security, exclusivity and the maintenance of property (Atkinson *et al.*, 2005)

These critiques are not unique to the concept of gated communities - Sturzaker (2010) documents the reactive role played by parish councils in rural housing development, where housing is allocated according to local need in an effort to preserve the stylised image of a 'rural idyll' that demands the presence of certain types of people - locals who understand the behavioural expectations of rural life - and the exclusion of others who fail to conform to this ideal. This has led to criticisms of policies that allocate housing according to local connection which will require consideration in any analysis of CLTs. Rogers (1985) criticised local needs policies for the way in which insiders and outsiders are explicitly delineated, a criticism endorsed by Sturzaker's analysis of rural housing:

it appears that in some cases, the local connections policy is acting in an exclusionary, and hence indirectly discriminatory, way. Some powerful residents of villages are using power, through the parish council, to protect their rural enclave from outsiders.

Sturzaker (2010, p. 1014)

The claim here is not that CLTs, with their territorial focus and identification with locally-specific interests, necessarily represent a form of inward-facing community aimed at excluding 'outsiders' and outside interests; more that this is one of a plethora of potentialities for forms of community governance of the public realm. Much depends on the rationales and incentives for forming a CLT as an alternative provider of local housing, who is included and excluded from these purposes and the interests endemic to that locality that the CLT is formed to represent. Crucially, the way in which these interests and priorities interact with those of other forms of governance (such as local or central government) will impact on the outcomes the protection or pursuit of local interests produce.

### 3.3 Rationales for neighbourhood governance

The review of communitarian theory and the literature surrounding community empowerment and participation in civic affairs illustrates that there are infinite possibilities and outcomes when 'community' is used as a construct to in some way contribute to the effectiveness of public governance. There are numerous conceptions of the term as Mayo (1994) observes:

It is not just that the term has been used ambiguously, it has been contested, fought over and appropriated for different uses and interests to justify different politics, policies and practices.

Mayo (1994, p. 48)

The separation forms of community governance have from public and private institutions has been seen to legitimise its operation by virtue of its 'untaintedness' (Saward, 2009), a concept particularly evident within the emergence of CLTs in the United States and Scotland. Davis' (1991) conception of CLTs as a form of housing organisation that seeks to implement a new set of tenurial and organisational arrangements in order to prioritise and preserve the needs and interests of a defined geographic community highlights this, as their emergence is based on the perception that existing institutional arrangements are insufficient and inadequate. The reaction to patterns of private landownership in Scotland may also be indicative of this.

Yet the literature that exists on these forms of land ownership has so far failed to engage with the politics and questions that forms of community governance provoke: the reasons for its emergence, its definition and scope and the practicalities and challenges in its implementation and sustainment. A suitable framework for analysing these issues is provided by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008), acting as a heuristic device to answer the research questions. First, the framework below provides the glue between the literature that has been explored in this chapter and

the one that has preceded it, and the research questions that shape the presentation of the empirical analysis later in this thesis.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) present four rationales that may underpin governance at the level of the neighbourhood or community. They can be seen as an attempt to "bring conceptual order to messy realities" (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008, p. 63), reflecting similar debates around the fractured and disparate ideologies that underpin civil society and the community sector (Kendall, 2009).<sup>28</sup> Each rationale may give way to variation within and between institutional arrangements for community governance by identifying distinctive motivations and choices for its formation and facilitation.

The four rationales are civic, social, political and economic. They are each underpinned by different objectives, facilitated by different democratic devices, and have different citizen and leadership roles in the design of neighbourhood governance according to its purpose. These rationales are presented in Table 3 overleaf.

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<sup>28</sup> Kendall (2009) identified unfolding ideological differentiation emerging within the third sector, reflecting discourses based on a quasi-market consumerist ideology, a state-led civil revivalist discourse as a mechanism towards promoting civil order, and a community-focused democratic renewal discourse that focuses on group action and community empowerment.

*Table 3: Rationales for neighbourhood governance framework (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008)*

	<b>Neighbourhood empowerment</b>	<b>Neighbourhood partnership</b>	<b>Neighbourhood government</b>	<b>Neighbourhood management</b>
<b>Primary rationale</b>	Civic	Social	Political	Economic
<b>Key objectives</b>	Active citizens and cohesive communities	Citizen well-being and regeneration	Responsive and accountable decision making	More effective local service delivery
<b>Democratic device</b>	Participatory democracy	Stakeholder democracy	Representative democracy	Market democracy
<b>Citizen role</b>	Citizen: voice	Partner: loyalty	Elector: vote	Consumer: choice
<b>Leadership role</b>	Animateur, enabler	Broker, chair	Councillor, mini-mayor	Entrepreneur, director
<b>Institutional forms</b>	Forums, Co-production	Service board, mini-LSP	Town councils, area committees	Contracts, charters

While each rationale and ideal type that emerges from its implementation share key characteristics of governance, namely that the boundaries and responsibilities of governing become blurred as more institutions and actors are drawn into governing from beyond government, differences arise in the way this is institutionalised.

The civic rationale, leading to a form of neighbourhood empowerment, aims to create units of governance based on extensive citizen participation in the co-production of policy. Self-governance is encouraged as the neighbourhood is turned to as the site where shared values, beliefs and goals are developed through communal ties, which are used to address collective social problems. It is a form of communitarian endeavour in which citizens perceive a relation between their own interests and the opportunity to influence the public realm, and accordingly invest in civic relationships marked by participation and high degrees of communal loyalty and attachment. By encouraging this self-governance, the way policy is made, exercised and experienced is improved through processes of co-production.

The form of community governance that emerges when a social rationale is prevalent is one of partnership. The neighbourhood is a focal point for a citizen-centred approach to governance, though the participation of communities is not an end in itself as per the civic rationale. There is emphasis on the potential bottom-up influence has for adding value to and facilitating the delivery of public services. Under this rationale, community groups are not self-governing but are instead partners and stakeholders with policymakers. The creation of holistic and joined-up approaches to local policymaking is done via collaboration between citizens, government and other public and private stakeholders. The tailoring of services to local needs identified by communities is an important but not dominant outcome and consideration.

The political rationale encourages modes of neighbourhood government, though this is avowedly under the terms and conditions set by existing hierarchies of representative democracy. The intention is not to reform or overthrow processes of

governance but more to demonstrate accountability and provide a responsive service to existing work. Examples of institutional forms of this within the field of housing may be tenant participation schemes that allow housing organisations to provide a more accountable service. Decision and policy making is informed and influenced by the direct experience of citizens.

Finally, the economic rationale is used to create a system of neighbourhood management. The emphasis is entirely on making efficient and effective use of available resources. Community empowerment is not an independent outcome under this type, instead it is linked to discourses around individual choice and consumerist behaviour that allow entrepreneurial citizens and organisations to influence and contribute to service delivery. This is to be delivered through institutionalised contracts and charters between service delivery agents and the state or relevant funding bodies.

There are some issues to consider in applying this framework to CLTs. First, as Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p. 72) confess, it has a heavy emphasis on state-led forms of neighbourhood governance - those 'invited spaces' of participation that Cornwall (2002) describes that are defined and created by government. As has been described, CLTs fall outside of these parameters and the trajectory of the CLT sector in England has until recently operated on the margins of government and instead faced a challenge in becoming embedded into institutional structures. Reflecting on the CLT pilot demonstration programme in 2006, Aird (2010) argued:

At that time, there were only one or two recognised community land trusts in the entire country and they were virtually unknown among government officials ... CLTs have [now] built up such momentum that politicians have been forced to sit up and take notice.

Aird (2010, p. 449)

While this to some extent overstates the contribution of CLTs to the national housing stock, it does tally with the emerging institutional framework of the CLT sector propped up by political support that led to a legal definition of CLTs being inserted into the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008. The policy landscape that CLTs operate in has changed significantly from 2006 to 2011 as a result. This does not limit the framework's usefulness as it still allows for a consideration and assessment of the way reconfigured forms of housing governance interact with governmental objectives, particularly in considering the reasons why new spaces of governance may be created by and for community groups. As Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p. 72) describe, new forms of governance also offer the possibility of citizens deciding for themselves how to contribute to governing and how this should be configured within new 'governance spaces' that may be outside those of government. The framework of rationales allow for an exploration not only of why people have formed a CLT and what the civic interest is for doing so, but to investigate how this is received and negotiated by public and private stakeholders and the institutional forms that are proliferated as a result.

The second and linked issue is that not all the rationales described in the framework will be of use. In particular, the economic rationale is one that is heavily reliant on being instigated by and in line with governmental objectives. The primary motivation for forming a CLT is unlikely to emerge from a burning bottom-up desire to run or operate a governmental contract or service, while the experience of CLTs in the United States and Scotland tells us that governmental involvement in CLTs is likely to result in legislation that facilitates rather than manipulates the activities of CLTs, or as in the United States, CLTs may be adopted as partners in the development of housing programmes.

What the framework does allow for is an analysis of the contextual variation that affects the formation, operation and potential of community governance. Applying the same framework to the regeneration of urban neighbourhoods, (Durose and Lowndes, 2010) found significant contestation and application of rationales between

local authorities and community level actors. Local authorities tended to be inherently ambiguous about the potential of institutional forms bred by civic rationales, possibly due to the challenge that the creation of self-governing communities may pose to their traditional role, while at the neighbourhood level civic rationales expressed the collective aspirations and political agency of a small locally-rooted unit of governance (Durose and Lowndes, 2010, p. 355). There are also challenges to neighbourhood governance that Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) describe, relating to the capacity, competence, diversity and equity of new governance structures. As described below, it is posited that a series of trade-offs may have to be made if structures of community governance are to be created.

- **Capacity:** Neighbourhood governance is likely to mean that citizens are able to influence a smaller number of issues at a localised level: is there a trade-off between the extent and potential of participation and the scope of control?
- **Competence:** Neighbourhoods may find it difficult to recruit a sufficient number of participants for community-led governance, and furthermore there may be a lower calibre to draw upon given the small pool of people willing to become involved: is there a trade-off between the accessibility and effectiveness community governance is thought to provide and the competence of the participants?
- **Diversity:** In comparison with larger units, the localised focus of neighbourhoods may lead to single issue and interest groups dominating, with participation depending on homogeneity rather than difference or pluralism. Is there a trade-off between improving decision-making and policymaking at a local level and the potential for powerful groups to dominate?
- **Equity:** Neighbourhood governance suggests greater local differentiation in the localised processes of co-governance and encourages communities to draw upon their internal resources. If resources of human, social and

economic capital are low, what is the fate of these communities? Is there a trade-off between facilitating the opportunity for local choice and the equity of these processes?

This chapter has concerned itself with framing the study theoretically. It has analysed constructs of community governance, differentiating between those that are formed from the top-down and bottom-up, and reviewed the background literature on the relationship between housing and processes of community. This highlighted a need for an analytical approach and organising device which connects theory to practice. The framework provided by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) provides this connection, linking theories of communitarianism and community governance with a method of analysis that takes account of the varied rationales, dilemmas and trade-offs that may exist in different circumstances and from different positions.

# Chapter 4: Methodology: a qualitative study of CLTs

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This chapter provides a critical reflective account of the methods deployed in this research. The lack of a substantial history of research on CLTs posed issues for the research design not only in identifying what to study within the topic in question but also how to study it. With only a few small-scale case studies to draw upon in the academic literature, I was presented with a largely unexplored field in which to design an empirical study into CLTs. In the context of the theoretical linkages made in the previous chapter, a qualitative research agenda was selected to answer the research questions. While useful in exploring depth, context and meaning, the qualitative tradition has often been critiqued for its lack of transparency, rigour and subjective nature in processes of data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

In this chapter I aim to address these concerns by explaining how this research has been conducted, detailing the procedures undertaken to collect data and the rationales that underpinned these decisions. By illuminating these decisions I aim to explain exactly how I have generated the findings presented in the empirical chapters that follow, providing a justification for the methods used to collect data. The chapter also provides a reflective commentary on my relation to the research topic and its participants, and the ways in which these relations may have influenced my interpretation and presentation of the data.

I begin by offering a justification for following the qualitative research tradition, including a description of the methods employed and the process of generating a sample. In doing so, I uncover some of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of data that this research has generated. I then discuss how fieldwork was conducted, with reference to the politics of gaining access to research participants,

the process of implementing data collection methods and the relations that were struck between the researcher and the researched. Finally, I reflect on the process of data transcription and analysis before offering some reflections on the research process as a whole. Consideration of these issues aims to acknowledge that the procedures undertaken to acquire and construct knowledge in qualitative research projects are intrinsically linked to how the data and findings that follow are interpreted and presented.

## **4.1 Selecting research strategies, methods and subjects**

### **The rationale for qualitative research**

Before reflecting on the practicalities of organising and conducting fieldwork, as well as the process of analysing the data that this study has produced, there is a need to reflect upon and justify the choice of qualitative research as the primary means of exploration.

The main intention of this study was to thoroughly explore the role of CLTs in housing development and management in England. The language commonly used to promote CLTs frames them as an organisation with legitimate claims to be representative of their geographic community, claiming ownership and use of land for people within a defined space (Davis, 2010). Grounded in theories and debates as to the purpose and value of community governance, this study has been designed to interrogate the individual and organisational rationales underpinning the emergence of CLTs. It interrogates why and how CLTs have emerged and for what purpose, seeking to identify not only the commonalities between different CLTs but also the divergence in both their acquisition of resources and their relation to existing structures of housing provision and systems of democratic organisation.

My study, therefore, aimed to capture what Alcock and Scott (2005, p. 2) describe as the “differentiated detail and dynamic of social life at organisational, group and

individual levels". Qualitative research lends itself to such an approach. It is focused on the context, interpretation and meanings conveyed by individual actors and how these complexities affect behaviours, as opposed to a quantitative approach which seeks numerical data from which generalisations can be found to explain the rules of the social world (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Blaikie, 2000). While an alternative approach to studying CLTs may have involved the accumulation of quantitative data as to the model's cost efficiency and numerical contribution to housing stock, the tradition of qualitative research encourages investigation into "why?" and "how?" questions as opposed to "what?" (Marshall, 1996, p. 522), thus enabling a study of the subtleties and negotiations of the underlying rationales and strategies that have led to the recent growth of CLTs. In studying these issues, a qualitative approach allows for the dynamics of time and context to be explored, as well as investigation into the unknown hidden variables that may be masked by quantitative data.

Qualitative research, with its focus on examining the unfolding of events over time and emphasis on "pluralism, understanding, contextualism [and] personal experience" (Greene, 2000, p. 984), seemed the most appropriate approach given the evolving world in which CLTs were operating at the outset of this study. As this thesis describes, CLTs were not understood as a model with consistent and stable characteristics. Even within the CLT sector their reasons for formation were not always clearly defined, they did not acquire resources in the same manner and did not strike the same relationships between their individual CLT and external stakeholders. The task of this research was to investigate how and why the structure and dynamics of these organisations differs and to explore the dilemmas and compromises faced by those involved in creating and facilitating CLTs. Therefore, a qualitative research project in the vein that Miles and Huberman (1994) describe seemed the most suitable research strategy to pursue:

A source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts ... one can preserve chronological flow, see

precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 1)

### **Research methods: Semi-structured interviews**

The semi-structured interview is a popular choice of qualitative research method. Unlike other methods such as participant observation and documentary analysis, the qualitative interview enables the researcher to directly question interviewees as to the meanings and interpretations they attach to the social interaction in which they have been involved (Blaikie, 2000, p. 234).

It is, of course, possible to question interviewees directly under quantitative traditions, for example through the administration of structured questionnaires with predefined answers. Here, the emphasis is on the standardised measurement of key concepts and the reliability of this data, whereas the qualitative tradition encourages an approach that is flexible and responsive to the answers respondents provide as opposed to being pre-formulated (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Semi-structured interviews encourage a dialogue between the researcher and the researched, probing new topics in response to the answers that are given and placing less emphasis on the standardisation of the interview:

The researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees

Bryman (2004, p. 321)

However, a certain amount of arrangement does exist to the semi-structured interview. An interview guide<sup>29</sup> is formulated in order to list the topics and questions that the conversation should cover, though leading off into tangents is to be encouraged. Indeed, the “conversational partnerships” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 93) that are struck between the interviewer and the participant can elicit informal views and contradictory opinions that may not emerge in the formalised settings and interactions of everyday life or the official documentation used to describe a topic.

Conversely, the flip side to this is, of course that the interview is removed from its natural setting and the social situations in which participants operate (Blaikie, 2000, p. 234). However, the extent to which this was a problem in selecting semi-structured interviews as my preferred research method was limited in this specific research context. Blaikie’s critique seems more orientated towards the use of qualitative methods to directly observe human behaviour rather than to elicit the opinions and complexities that underpin the chronological unfolding of events and relationships.

That is not to say that this method is without its practical problems. By their nature research projects such as this, conducted by an individual within a set time frame and on a limited budget, focus on small-scale cases, settings and individual accounts. The challenge is to generate findings that have resonance and implications beyond the immediate arena in addition to their explanatory power of the local context. Additionally, in the interview setting the qualitative researcher and the participant place a degree of faith in each other. From the perspective of the researcher, they ask the participant to provide open and honest information from their perspective, even though the possibility exists for the truth to be deliberately distorted or evasive answers to be given (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 218). From the standpoint of the research participant who provides such answers, they are placing

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<sup>29</sup> The interview guides used for this research are provided in the appendices. A loose guide was designed for interviews according to the position of my participants, with bespoke probe questions devised prior to each interview.

faith in the researcher to represent their perspective correctly, respect requests for anonymity or confidentiality, and ensure that the data is used for only the purposes stated when their participation was agreed. There is therefore a delicate relationship formed between researchers and those who participate with several dilemmas thrown up through the formation and evolution of the study. It is to these issues that the later sections of this chapter attend.

### **Research methods: documentary analysis**

One way of overcoming the flaws of a research method is to supplement its use with different methods that can complement the data collection process. As Denzin (2009, p. 297) argues, the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, allowing researchers who mix their approach to achieve the benefits of each while overcoming some of their deficiencies.

I elected to undertake a limited amount of documentary analysis to supplement my interview data. The emphasis is placed not on documents produced at the request of the researcher but instead on primary sources of data that exist regardless of whether the research is ongoing or not. They record or relate to some aspect of the social world and can assist in understanding the chronological flow of events and social interactions (Bryman, 2004, p. 381). Documentary analysis as a method differs from the practice of literature reviewing as the material it generates can be used to supplement findings and support the arguments of the research.

Two main strategies were used to identify relevant documentation. Firstly, I accessed documents such as seminar reports, evaluations or presentations that were publicly available through the official CLT website.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, I either

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<sup>30</sup> This website can be found at: <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk>. It is managed by the National CLT Network and provides information as to the nature of CLTs in England and Wales, publications and resources used to inform and educate key actors in CLT processes.

researched independently or was directed towards publicly available documents published by local and national governments. Secondly, I included a request for further documentation or sources of information at the conclusion of each interview. This elicited few responses, though one interviewee sent me an internal history and evaluation of a previous development that the CLT had undertaken. This document was not freely available in the public domain but the participant was happy for its content to be used to cross-reference and supplement the account he had provided in an interview. Another interviewee responded by sending me a raft of electronic files including long-term business plans, budgets and architect visualisations of their proposed development.

While pertinent to the wider context and critical to his CLT, not all of this information necessarily possessed the qualities or explanatory power I was seeking with reference to my research questions. To overcome such concerns, as quoted in Bryman (2004), John Scott (1990) poses four criteria assessing the worth of documentary research relating to the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning conveyed by the document.

In terms of authenticity, all the documents were of what Bryman (2004, p. 381) describes as “unquestionable origin”. They were either provided directly by respondents as representations of their reality and therefore endorsed by them, or ‘sponsored’ by the official CLT website that makes these documents freely available to all. Similarly, the credibility of the evidence in terms of distortion and bias did not provoke any major concerns. Indeed, when conducting documentary analysis such evidence can be interesting precisely because of the biases that they reveal: the danger may only be posed by the extent to which the meaning they convey is a true depiction of reality (Bryman, 2004, p. 387).

It is with these issues that the criteria related to representativeness and meaning are concerned, questioning both whether the evidence is representative and typical of its kind and whether the meaning it conveys is clear, comprehensible and above all

placed in context. The danger of using seminar reports and particularly presentations is that they are removed from the context in which they are given. Seminar reports may include quotations from a speech rather than the whole text and narrative itself, while the use of presentations can be scrutinised as it is divorced from the presenter's speech and reliant on its electronic composition. Analysis of these may overextend the artistic licence of the researcher in interpreting and analysing the information. I was therefore extremely selective about the material used from these resources and the extent to which I represented them as a true depiction of reality. In the end, just one reference to presentation material has been made in my analysis and only then because it was written as a whole sentence from which the meaning could easily be grasped. Similarly, although I attended the seminars in question and consider the material I have used to be representative of the context it was placed in, I have used the material sparingly. This has primarily been to reinforce rather than shape the arguments of the thesis, for example by adding some chronological flow to events that occurred outside the time frame of my interviews or to provide comparison with primary data generated from my interviews.

In sum, the documents that were used were as follows:

- An unpublished internal review provided by Holy Island CLT.
- Affordable housing statements and reports from local authorities (North Wales).
- A fully-authored narrative of the relationship between a CLT and a housing association, available from the CLT website (Kelly, 2011).
- A presentation given to the national CLT conference 2011 (Graham, 2011).
- A transcribed question and answer session between a CLT and its local community, coordinated and provided by a local interest group.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This question and answer session was transcribed and uploaded to the village interest group's website. An interviewee provided me with the document but it is anonymised here for the purpose of confidentiality.

- A parish council annual report, which has been anonymised for the purposes of confidentiality.
- A local press cutting reflecting on the outcome of a local referendum. This is anonymised for the same reasons as the question and answer session.
- Hansard reports documenting the proceedings of debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords. This publicly available source has been used to provide the perspective of politicians that have made public pronouncement as to the role and purpose of CLTs.

### **Identification of research participants**

Having justified the reasons for using a qualitative research methodology, it is necessary to consider how and why the people who participated in my interviewing fieldwork were selected. The data collected during any research process, along with the analysis and findings that emerge as a consequence, are intrinsically linked to the decisions made at the outset of the study as to the kind of data to be collected and who, how and why these sources are identified and selected (Blaikie, 2000, p. 183). Furthermore, conducting qualitative research is a dialogical process. Qualitative researchers form relationships to the topic and people under study and these relationships - alongside the procedures undertaken to contact participants and elicit their accounts - can influence the findings that are produced (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 663). Justifying the identification of participants and reflecting upon the connections that have been formed can therefore help overcome the critiques of qualitative research that question the role of the researcher, the influence of their personal subjectivities and the transparency of the research procedures and ultimately the data they generate.

In terms of identifying potential participants, I took a decision early in the study to immerse myself in the field of CLTs as quickly as possible, attending several

practitioner seminars and conferences from September 2008 onwards.<sup>32</sup> As a small-scale and emerging social arena with few structures of formal representation beyond the local context, there were no obvious databases with a list of CLTs and their contacts, unlike for example the National Housing Federation's publicly available database of housing associations. As such attending these events, which were usually residential and attended by a relatively small number of people,<sup>33</sup> provided not only a forum to learn the key debates and complexities of CLTs but also a significant opportunity to contact and build relationships with those involved in their formation and development.

I was also keen to avoid the perception of what England (1994, p. 84) describes as "parachut[ing] into the field with empty heads ... ready to record the 'facts'". During this study I was aged 22-25, a relatively young age for a researcher and significantly younger than the vast majority of people involved with CLTs.<sup>34</sup> I was also residing in a large Northern city geographically distant from the rural villages in which CLTs were mainly based. This distance gave me a heightened awareness of the way I would be perceived by CLT representatives, especially having encountered a message for researchers such as myself on the website of one CLT:

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix 2 for a list of these events.

<sup>33</sup> The events were usually attended by between 30 and 50 people, though this number would include several representatives from a single CLT or merely people with an interest in the subject,

<sup>34</sup> Other issues of our personal circumstances can establish rapport and affect interactions due to common backgrounds. Cultural markers and identities relating to gender, social class, accent and occupation can dictate whether close relations are established with research subjects. For example, one interviewee had previously lived in Sheffield and our conversation began with a laidback discussion as to the recent regeneration of the city centre and areas of the city in which we had both resided. Ellis (2005) provides an interesting account of how these issues affected her research into rural community development in Wales.

We're sorry, but we cannot provide ready-written theses or projects for anyone - sixth formers or idealists!

Stonesfield Community Trust website (undated)

I was keen to avoid perceptions of being a distant, detached researcher with only an instrumental interest in CLTs and aimed to establish some common ground with those who would participate in the study. Qualitative research is characterised by interpersonal relationships between the researcher and the researched with the flow of knowledge dependent on the successful negotiation of these interactions. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 12) argue that if researchers are to elicit open and honest accounts from their subjects over a long period of time, they are unlikely to achieve that openness by being closed, disengaged and removed from the topic and persons of study. Attendance at these events, though by no means designed as a source of fieldwork, went some way to overcoming these concerns and opening the gate to the world of CLTs. For example, by the second event I was on first name terms with some fellow attendees and able to show an interest in the particularities of their local context, helping to not only identify potential participants but to advance my early theoretical ideas in relation to the work of CLTs at these events.

To further engage with the topic, I also conducted a scoping interview in November 2008 with a senior figure at an umbrella CLT. This, alongside attending the regular events, helped me gain a greater understanding of the variance that exists among CLT structures and their acquisition of resources, especially given the limited literature on the subject. For example, I quickly learnt that Satsangi's (2009, p. 260) observation that CLTs in England and Wales are "based more on community acquisition of local authority land than on that of private land" was not necessarily true and that extensive efforts were underway to locate and acquire land from a variety of sources including land in local private ownership. While this may seem a minor practical point, awareness that a variety of stakeholders could be involved in the acquisition of land would feed into the design of interview guides and sampling strategies.

During any research plan, no matter how well conceived or intended, unanticipated challenges that pose ethical and methodological questions can be thrown up through engagement with participants, subjects or fellow researchers (Iphofen, 2011, p. 443). This study was no different in that by September 2009, having established a familiarity with research participants and common ground with many of the key protagonists in developing CLTs, I was offered temporary employment to promote and research CLTs with Community Finance Solutions (a policy and research unit responsible for facilitating CLT development in England and Wales). Having begun on the periphery of the CLT sector, this position placed me very suddenly 'inside' the field of CLTs. This post involved assuming responsibility for promoting CLTs to policymakers, devising and researching strategies to raise awareness of their role as an affordable housing provider, and providing advice and assistance to CLT volunteers. Clearly, this raised some dilemmas in relation to the dual roles I was fulfilling: promoter of (and advisor to) CLTs on one hand, and critical researcher and commentator on the other. Section 4.2 discusses the ways this may have impacted upon the research process and relationships with participants. Practically, this role lent itself to a productive sampling strategy and facilitated a channel through which key protagonists could be easily identified as fieldwork progressed.

### **Sampling participants: recruitment strategies and sample compositions**

A purposive sampling approach was taken, a process whereby the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are intrinsically relevant to the topic and most capable to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2004, p. 333). While this is a common approach in qualitative research, I also applied two more distinct sampling methods in order to access participants.

One tactic was to pursue an approach of theoretical sampling. Emerging from the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) on grounded theory, this approach contends that the selection of research participants should be governed by the extent to which they

maximise theoretical development as opposed to being concerned with representativeness of populations. Respondents are initially selected on the basis of their relationship to the research questions and further interviewees are identified strategically by the researcher in order to confirm or refute the emergent theoretical focus and hypothesis (Arber, 1993, p. 74). The role of the researcher is to "go to places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 201). The approach is iterative, moving backwards and forwards between data collection and reflection until 'theoretical saturation' has been reached: the moment when new findings and insights are no longer being revealed by participants (Arber, 1993, p. 75).

The knowledge and contacts garnered from the CLT seminars and conferences I had attended, along with my position at Community Finance Solutions, lent itself well to such a strategy. One of the first forms of fieldwork I conducted was with the main CLT engaged in accessing funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (the national funding agency of social housing in England), selected on the basis that I knew they were further advanced into negotiations than their counterparts and could therefore provide greater detail as to the challenges and criticisms levelled at the HCA by CLT practitioners.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, in attempting to find out the enabling factors and fault lines in the efforts CLTs make to access land, I was able to sample strategically using the basic facts I had learnt at the CLT events; for example which CLTs had acquired land via private means and which were seeking to use local authority land. This was an ongoing process and adopting this approach led me to conduct two interviews in December 2010 as new data came to light regarding a CLT that had held a referendum over local land use. Although this was actually after the main fieldwork had been concluded, the discovery of these circumstances at a CLT seminar offered an

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<sup>35</sup> These criticisms are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8.

opportunity to develop both the practical and theoretical analyses of how CLTs deliberate over land use with their wider community and the competing definitions and interpretations of the role played by community-based organisations. I decided to conduct these two interviews as the final stage in my fieldwork, responding to the shifting landscape and evolving operations of CLTs which necessitated this sort of dynamic sampling approach to the research in order to capture the most pertinent theoretical data possible.

The second tactic was to use a method of snowball sampling in order to overcome some concerns I held over the effectiveness of theoretical sampling alone. Although I was coming into contact with the key actors in CLT formation through my position at Community Finance Solutions, I was conscious that my sample could be accused of being selected on the basis of mere convenience and accessibility, a common critique of theoretical sampling (Bryman, 2004, p. 100). I was also concerned that the number of respondents willing to participate could be exhausted very quickly. The CLT National Demonstration Programme that ran from 2006-2008 had provided 16 CLTs for me to initially contact along with those that I encountered through my attendance at CLT events and employment (with significant overlap between the two). Of the 16 CLTs featured in the National Demonstration Programme, ten either failed to respond to my e-mails (which in many cases was the only means of contact available) or replied to explain that they did not wish or feel capable of participating in the study, showing the limitations of relying solely on external secondary data sources and/or individual knowledge as recruitment methods.

In addition to this, many of the CLTs and stakeholders that I was coming into contact with through my employment with Community Finance Solutions were at the very early stages of formation, often seeking basic advice and legal and technical information with no preconceived ideas or rationales that extended beyond an initial

interest.<sup>36</sup> This situation was exemplified when I received an unsolicited e-mail at work from a planning officer in a local authority area with a formative group of CLTs. I had already identified this person (or someone with similar responsibility in that local authority area) as a potential interviewee for my future fieldwork, only for these plans to be pre-empted and challenged as the e-mail asked me what CLTs were, how they operate and are managed, and how the dynamics between communities and strategic stakeholders are arranged in other areas: essentially the very questions I intended to ask him. As an emerging and novel approach to affordable housing development and community empowerment, the identification of participants on the basis of my own connections and knowledge was therefore likely to be limited.

There were therefore only limited opportunities to identify interviewees beyond the small core of people interviewed between November 2009 and March 2010.<sup>37</sup> Snowball sampling offers the opportunity to broaden the field of enquiry when the ability to identify respondents is limited. Essentially, it is reliant on the study's existing sample frame as it involves asking participants whether they know anyone with the characteristics of interest, who are then interviewed in turn and asked the same question until theoretical saturation is in reach (Arber, 1993, p. 74). I made a point of concluding each interview with a more informal question as to whether interviewees knew of anyone else within their local context that would be able to offer an interesting perspective on CLTs, as well as proactively responding to the introduction of key actors by respondents during the course of my interview with them (such as landowners or the role of specific individuals within local authorities).

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<sup>36</sup> Indeed, my employment often brought me into greater contact with those who were extremely new to the concept of CLTs and seeking advice as to the model's potential, characteristics and use, as opposed to those that were 'fully formed', closer to completing development and therefore best placed to answer the research questions.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 3 for the full list of interviewees.

The strategy's reliance on the goodwill of respondents poses obvious problems. It is reliant not only on their cooperation but targets only those involved in a connected network of individuals, leaving itself open to accusations of bias and the possible creation of an unrepresentative sample of those who may be indirectly affected by or involved with CLTs. Asking interviewees whether they can recommend someone who would contribute additional insights is also a process that lends itself to the subjectivities of individuals who may have negative perceptions of the role played by others involved with local CLT development. When asked whether he could recommend someone from local or national government able to comment on the development of a local CLT, one respondent commented:

I don't think it would be worth speaking to them because they'll give you a typical civil servant view, you won't get an honest viewpoint like you will off me. Too positive a picture will be painted and the barriers I've spoken to you about today won't be mentioned.

When I probed further, the respondent failed to identify a particular individual and I eventually used my own initiative to contact an affordable housing officer at the relevant local authority. Despite these drawbacks, sampling in this way was successful in identifying further participants, particularly those occupying strategic positions such as rural housing enablers<sup>38</sup> and officers within local authorities. Combined with my commitment to locating sources of data that could offer insights into different circumstances and relationships, snowball sampling seemed to provide an effective fit with theoretical sampling and resulted in an intensive period of

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<sup>38</sup> A rural housing enabler is an individual employed to raise awareness of the need for rural housing and to work with stakeholders - communities, local authorities, landowners and planning authorities - to enable the development of rural housing. Posts are usually funded by local councils, often cutting across geographical areas, though they operate at arms-length. They are therefore seen to be an independent party when discussing housing issues.

fieldwork between April and June 2010. The eventual sample was composed of 30 interviews.

This sample was, however, limited in its composition. The nature of CLTs and their varying stages of development meant that it was not always possible to study each local context in the same manner. To illustrate, the relevant person within local authorities who felt able to comment on CLTs ranged from being located within community strategy departments to housing and planning departments, each approaching the topic from a different background. While efforts were made to triangulate as many different data points as possible, in some instances diverse perspectives and positions were difficult to identify and/or recruit to participate in the study.

The sample also failed to cover some potential rationales and hypotheses that fell outside the umbrella of CLTs and the people actively involved in their facilitation. As an example, a significant gap in analysing the role of rural CLTs in local governance over housing is the absence of interviews with parish council representatives, particularly in light of the literature documenting their role and influence in decision-making over local housing developments (Yarwood, 2002; Sturzaker, 2010). As a result it is most accurate to describe this study as one that examines the dual issues of a CLT's claims to prominence in local housing governance and its reception by strategic stakeholders, as opposed to one that frames how these claims and this role plays out on an intra-community basis.

The emergent and changing nature of the CLT sector itself made it a difficult subject to study. At the outset of the study CLTs had only just been inserted into legislation and recognised by policymakers, but by its conclusion in 2011 they had been endorsed by an array of policymakers and their numbers had greatly increased. Theoretical sampling helped combat this to some extent, emphasising an iterative and ongoing research process, but the time and resources available to me necessarily limited the extent to which I could fully explore many emerging concepts.

For example, the provision of professional support and expertise by umbrella CLTs and housing associations was a phenomenon gaining increasing importance as fieldwork drew to a close. These issues are documented in the thesis but a wider variety of representatives would have been included in the sample had the study commenced at a later date.

Finally, the voice of CLTs is afforded significant weight in this thesis, a consequence of the sample being heavily weighted towards those actively involved in CLTs. This was partly because many potential stakeholders related but external to the direct facilitation to CLTs were reluctant to provide insight or comment on them due to a rudimentary understanding of their structures. If the study were to have begun and concluded later, it is possible that these people would have been more willing and able to participate as the CLT sector expanded. Furthermore, the extent to which the CLTs that participated in the study are representative of the present and future climate of CLTs could be questioned, largely due to the increased prominence and institutional support that is now available and documented in the analysis that follows. There is also a reliance on data from rural CLTs, something that is reflective of the greater development made in these locations in contrast to those in urban areas (Aird, 2010). Two urban CLTs were explored towards the end of fieldwork as their situations came to light but unfortunately the way their objectives were received and negotiated either by local authorities, community representatives and stakeholders or by financiers could not be explored due to time constraints. There is therefore a gap in the sample related to urban CLTs and, as a consequence, a limitation to their role and contribution made to the arguments in this thesis.

This section has aimed to justify the selection of qualitative research and the sampling strategies within this. In reflecting upon these issues I have aimed to acknowledge that the knowledge produced by qualitative research is "partial, provisional and perspectival" (Mauthner and Doucest, 2003, p. 416). It is contingent on the decisions taken by the researcher and its findings can be influenced not only

by the way in which data is sought but also by the relationships formed between the researcher and the researched. It is to this subject that Section 4.2 turns.

## **4.2 Out in the field: studying CLTs**

The fieldwork was conducted between October 2009 and December 2010, with a particularly intensive period undertaken between March and July 2010 (documented in appendix 3). In total 30 interviews were undertaken. While the data I use in this thesis is drawn only from the interviews I conducted and the documentary analysis that complements it, in this section I aim to reflect on the "social and intellectual baggage" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 14) I brought to fieldwork as a result of my personal involvement with the topic of study. Fieldwork was conducted concurrently to my period of employment promoting and working on CLTs and this had an inevitable effect on my ability to gain access to research participants and the field relations that were struck as a result.

### **Gaining access and conducting interviews**

While generating a sample was ultimately successful for the purposes of this research, the process of gaining access to potential participants was not without its problems. These are common challenges faced in social research: participants may be concerned as to the intended use and dissemination of the information they provide, they may stipulate certain requirements on their involvement (for example, assurance of anonymity) and fundamentally they may not wish to provide sensitive information or opinions to a stranger (Hornsby-Smith, 1993).

One method of overcoming these concerns is to form access relationships with gatekeepers; those individuals who are well connected to the research topic and area of study and with whom researchers strike a relationship. Contact with these people should be constituted as an ongoing relationship rather than a one-off event and their importance in validating the role of the researcher in the eyes of others

should not be underestimated (Denscombe, 2007, p. 72). The relationships I had formed by initially attending CLT events and through my later employment working on their development helped facilitate the recruitment of participants along with the snowball sampling strategy. When I asked my first group of participants whether they were able to recommend contacts that could provide me with alternative viewpoints, most were willing to assist and would either provide names and contact details or act as a conduit between myself and the person they were recommending by contacting them on my behalf. Gatekeepers were usually happy to provide this informal sponsorship of my study on the basis that they were familiar with me and my intentions (having met me either through employment or at CLT events).

Some contacts were also keen to participate for instrumental reasons. One person initially suggested that their individual CLT could form the entire basis of my study and, misinterpreting my intentions effectively asked me to undertake a comprehensive economic analysis of how their model was to be structured. Another CLT volunteer sent me an effusive e-mail expressing his happiness that research would be undertaken that would "bring the barriers that are put in our way to light". The latter comment can also be traced to my employment working on CLTs and is illustrative of the multi-faceted role I was performing: promoter and campaigner on one hand and a neutral observer and objective researcher on the other. Having been introduced to me through my employment with Community Finance Solutions, this volunteer seemed to see my research as a piece of work that could lobby for obstructions to CLT development to be removed.

The period of fieldwork conducted between September and November 2009 involved field trips to the local areas in which CLTs were based. These were arranged mainly by telephone conversations with gatekeepers who were asked if they could help identify a suitable and secure venue for the interview. These ranged from the offices of local authorities and housing associations to village halls and a staff room at a local voluntary-run museum. Due to the remote locations of many rural CLTs, ranging from the North East to the South West, these trips were usually residential

and involved an intensive period of two or three days interviewing key protagonists. Consent to record interviews was sought and granted in all cases, while I also introduced each interview by repeating the objectives of the research, the use of the data that would be recorded and by offering anonymity and confidentiality to respondents.

One of these trips involved conducting four interviews over two days as I sought to make the most of my time in a location that was difficult to visit. Although there may be benefits to such an intensive approach, not least deep engagement with the topic, in hindsight the pace of this fieldwork posed practical challenges. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 110) recommend that researchers build in 'buffer time' between the scheduling of interviews. This can aid not just the researcher's mindset, as interviewing involves high levels of interaction and concentration over extended periods of time, but also the research itself as periodic breaks allow for consideration and revision of the research design, set of questions and theoretical development based on the answers of other related interviewees

While still valid and useful data, I certainly felt that the value of these time limited and intensive trips away could have been improved had more time been available for reflection and iteration of the research design. When I began transcribing and analysing these interviews at a later date, I realised that I had failed to probe or address some key issues, especially in relation to themes that were cross-cutting across the interviews that had been conducted on the same trip. This was partly a product of my own inexperience and confidence as a student embarking on my first substantive piece of primary research, but also due to the exhaustive demands placed on my time and concentration during these trips. For example, questions could have been phrased differently or new topics introduced in order to cross-reference and corroborate important issues if there had been more time and space for reflection and analysis between interviews. This was a tactic that aided the research process from March 2010 onwards when telephone interviewing was introduced.

Telephone interviewing yielded several practical and theoretical benefits. Practically, it quickly became apparent that field trips to multiple rural CLTs were not going to be financially possible. With a research budget of £750 per annum, the cost of the aforementioned field trips spiralled into three figures each as the remote location of CLTs demanded costly travel expenses and sometimes residential stays. By November 2009 I was in the formative days of fieldwork and still grappling with the complexities of conducting qualitative research and the topic itself, yet according to my budgetary constraints I was approximately halfway to concluding what could be realistically achieved in terms of field trips. Clearly, a more cost effective approach would be required if I wished to conduct interviews with a substantial number of CLTs.

The benefit for my theoretical development offered by telephone interviewing was the reduced turnaround time between conducting the interview and translating it into meaningful data that could then be interrogated. Rather than conducting an intensive period of fieldwork over a small number of days, which typically involved travelling long distances and returning with a large amount of data to transcribe and analyse, I was able to dedicate particular days and portions of my time to individual interviews. Dependent on other commitments, I would often schedule an interview for the morning and begin its transcription that afternoon, allowing a process of research design and analysis that was much more responsive to emerging topics and theoretical development than my previous efforts.

This proved to be a productive strategy and the first set of people interviewed in this way were people that I had previously met and formed a relationship with, though as my sample snowballed my relationship with interviewees began to change. Access to interviewees was now not done on a face-to-face basis but via telephone or, more commonly, e-mail. My preference was to e-mail participants where possible as it allowed me to clearly and concisely articulate the nature of the research and attach a sample interview guide so that respondents could easily ascertain the nature of the research, but while in the past the outcome of this would be a face-to-face interview

the process was now one of arranging a convenient time to talk over the telephone. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004, p. 115) cast doubt on the viability of this approach as visual familiarity can help strike relationships and rapport during the interview process, something which telephone interviewing can never accomplish if the two parties have never met. The problem becomes less one of the researcher being an unknown face asking for potentially sensitive information and more one of becoming an 'invisible voice' that seeks information and does not establish the same reciprocal personal relationship that meeting someone in person can provide. This, however, did not appear to pose any significant problems in recruiting individuals, bar the occasional failure of a participant to respond to requests for their participation, a challenge common to sample recruitment no matter what the interview method is.

One area where telephone interviewing pales in comparison to meeting people in person is its lack of subconscious visual aids and clues that can impact upon data quality. When speaking face-to-face, respondents will often respond with verbal cues - hesitations, sighs, facial expressions - that can signal their comfort or confidence with the answer they are giving, while these physical responses can also indicate whether the researcher should ask a follow-up question or probe the subject in more depth. Alongside these aids, when conducting fieldwork in person I had been able to demonstrate my interest in the CLT and its local area by asking questions about the physical environment we found ourselves in. One participant showed me around a local museum on the way to the interview venue to show me an image of the local area before their housing development had been completed, while another had brought along a local architect to give me a tour of the CLT's construction site. These trips all helped establish a previously non-existent rapport and placed the relationship between the participants and myself at ease, as well as familiarising myself with the background and tenets of their scheme. One effect of this was that the discourse of the interview was more fluent than I had anticipated, becoming less rigid and reliant on the interviewer introducing and maintaining dialogue and instead allowing the participant to do the majority of the talking and lead discussion in line with the semi-structured interview guide.

An initial concern with telephone interviews was that this fluency may be lost. Having described my research clearly in an e-mail and provided a list of the questions I wished to ask, there were instances where respondents became reliant on the order of the questions and would provide rigid responses to each question. The process was contingent on me asking the questions which would in turn garner a sometimes inflexible response that barely scratched the surface of the research questions.

This became less of a problem as I became more comfortable and experienced with interviewing. I developed better lines of questioning by developing bespoke probe questions prior to each interview depending on my relationship with the interviewee (the extent to which their circumstances were already known to me). Probe questions encourage the interviewee to provide specific examples, evidence or scenarios of events as well as encouraging elaboration and clarifying ambiguities (Fielding, 1993, p. 144). A common issue was to explore the relationship between the purpose and advantage of community-led organisations and the provision of affordable housing, so when many respondents stated with no ambiguity that their aim was to "develop housing that is more affordable" my probe questions would turn to the subjects of how they may define affordable, for whom the housing should be provided and what the advantage was of a voluntary group providing affordable housing in comparison to another provider. This would usually elicit more in-depth and colourful accounts of the perceived benefits of a CLT, though sometimes greater inquisition was required (as described in more depth in the following sub-section).

Furthermore, when interviewing over the telephone I sometimes felt more capable of reacting spontaneously to issues raised by the interviewee. In particular, one telephone interviewee led the conversation and provided a grand narrative of his involvement with a local CLT that lasted for approximately 30 minutes with very few questions being asked. During this time I was sat at a desk and able to make extensive notes of which questions I had been unable to ask and topics I wished to probe further in the interview without disturbing his narrative. While it is possible to do this during a face-to-face interview, I found that note taking would sometimes

disturb an interviewee's monologue or make them feel uncomfortable. In one instance an interviewee stopped talking and asked me outright what it was that I was writing so extensively. I explained that it was nothing incriminating and merely some issues that I wished to follow up, but the flow of her argument was lost and the interview restarted with me asking another question and potentially valuable data lost.

There is, therefore, no reason why telephone interviewing should impact significantly on the quality of data in comparison to interviewing in person. Rather, all methods of qualitative data collection are themselves fraught with several challenges posed by the predispositions of the parties involved and the visual and oral signals that each express. These issues contribute to the messy, non-linear and rarely ordered nature of qualitative research in practice; the intimacy it involves and the interpersonal relationships that are struck will always pose many dilemmas related to data quality and data use (Ellis, 2005).

### **The role of the researcher: supporter or detractor?**

One dilemma I faced was the extent to which my close involvement with the topic under study would determine the configuration of my interviews. I was conscious I had to adopt an impartial stance during interviews, making it clear that I was acting as a researcher in my own right<sup>39</sup> rather than for the organisation that had employed me to promote CLTs. I was also keen to try and preserve my interviews as an area of critical space, to suspend my own postulations and assumptions of the subject and encourage interviewees to open up and give their personal interpretations and accounts. This conduct is commonly referred to as bracketing (Holloway, 1997, p.

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<sup>39</sup> Although researching independently, I did of course hold an institutional affiliation to Sheffield Hallam University as my place of study. I was therefore also keen to try and distinguish between my respective roles as CLT promoter and graduate researcher to try and avoid confusion as to which institution I was directly or indirectly representing.

29) and is designed to ensure the researcher is at least conscious that their knowledge, interests and prejudices have the potential to direct the responses given by interviewees if they become too overt.

The extent to which this is possible may be questioned; we do not plan, design and conduct social research projects without some sort of interest or idea of what it is we want to explore (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Yet, bracketing is at least one of the many facets of the "reflexive turn" in qualitative research. Researchers are encouraged to continually reflect on the way knowledge is created and scrutinise the external influences and contingencies that may affect these constructions, including the role of their own knowledge, assumptions and biographies (Mauthner and Doucest, 2003). In this sub-section and the one that follows my aim is to unpack my own positionality and the way this may have directly or indirectly manipulated the processes of data collection and analysis. While I reflect on the impact my own perceptions and expectations may have influenced the research in the section that follows, here I focus on the researcher's powerlessness in bracketing the perceptions and expectations research subjects have of both the researcher and the research itself, particularly when the personal identity and biography of the researcher is well known.

As an insider to the world of CLTs, my interviewees could be crudely divided into two groups of people: those who knew me and those who did not, of which there was roughly an even split. The former category were usually people I had originally met at the CLT seminars at the outset of my research and had become further known to them through employment at Community Finance Solutions. Both groups of people performed a mix of roles, including not just CLT representatives but those from local authorities or other strategic backgrounds. It was my role as a campaigner and supporter of CLTs that became predominant in their eyes, even if they themselves were external to the formation and operation of a CLT. I often felt as if I was seen as someone working alongside CLTs towards a common goal, which from one perspective I was as a paid employee, but on the other I was seeking to maintain

impartiality and neutrality as much as I could when conducting my research. As the study progressed, interviews with people I had already met would often begin with relaxed and friendly conversations about issues that were inconsequential to the research as a result of the commonalities struck through my employment. With the second group of interviewees – those who had never met me and did not know me – I revealed my background in explaining that I had been employed to work on CLTs but stressed that I was aiming to speak with them as an independent observer of CLT events as opposed to someone promoting the CLT concept.

It was easier to maintain this critical space with the latter group. That is not to say that interviews with people that were known to me were of no use; more that some of this group of people had particular expectations of what my research should be which required subtle research management. Some saw me as a supporter and campaigner and as a person who could utilise my (in their eyes) secondary position as a PhD researcher to get inside influential circles such as policymakers. One member of a CLT in particular saw my research as an opportunity to gain access to people within national government in a way that he couldn't:

I would be very interested if you could use your PhD to see these people, to speak to these people, because you can get and push the view whereas people like me are seen as advocates.

My response to this was to try and temper such expectations, usually by downplaying both the impact my research could possibly hold – not many PhD theses are likely to be read by the government's Housing Minister - and the extent to which I would actually be able to arrange interviews with people as influential and socially distant as government ministers. This type of scenario is illustrative of England's (1994, p. 249) argument that researchers cannot conveniently hide their personal biographies behind their professional research process, as it is often the personal relationships struck in qualitative research that gain access to the material. I often supplicated potential research participants by accentuating my commonality

with them in order to smoothly arrange interviews, for example by mentioning a person that was a mutual contact or by introducing myself in relation to a common experience (*"This is Tom Moore, we met over coffee at last month's CLT conference in Chester"*).

It is then perhaps no surprise that some people may have held these expectations, yet the extent to which I continued to stress these commonalities throughout the interview varied according to the answers I was given. Wengraf (2001) distinguishes between 'soft' and 'hard' interview strategies. The former strategy involves a line of questioning that seeks to build narration, often through questions that elicit a grand tour of the subject with a series of probe questions to add colour to the participant's account. My interview guide was usually designed on this basis in order to introduce topics and open up discussion. Often, however, I found myself leaning towards a harder interview strategy whereby a question is in a way that poses alternative scenarios or contradictions in relation to the respondent's account. While respecting the confidentiality of other participants and attempting to avoid leading participants, I would sometimes juxtapose the interviewee's account in reference to this material by beginning a sentence with "One alternative point of view could be that allocating housing purely according to local connection may not be the most effective strategy; what do you think of this?"

The tendency towards hard interviewing strategies would usually be a spontaneous decision, sometimes borne out of frustration at linear narrations that failed to offer much insight into the placement of CLTs either locally or within wider social, political and economic contexts. These scenarios were much more common with people I knew who seemed to assume that I shared their knowledge and view of the CLT world, whereas the participants with whom I had no previous relationship were often more nuanced in their accounts. For example, throughout one interview my respondent repeatedly bemoaned that the wider CLT sector was suffering from "mission creep" and had become "indistinguishable from the values underpinning it that went before" without ever detailing what these values were or meant, often

finishing sentences with phrases such as “you know what I mean” presumably in reference to my assumed level of knowledge.

Eventually, my response was to provide a counter-argument that the values I recognised as inherent to CLTs – of being formed and led by volunteers in a local area – were still evident and that I didn’t necessarily recognise the “mission creep” he mentioned. This stimulated discussion as to the values upon which the respondent had based his efforts in forming a CLT: a structure that emphasised “social value rather than economic value” and one that orientated towards “good community governance and responsibility over representative democracy”.

This harder line explicated the values he had previously mentioned and provided valuable perspective on CLTs that extended into the wider theoretical framework, though this reflexive interviewing strategy was also as problematic on occasions as it was successful. In particular, I was conscious of the need to balance the quest for a good quote with a fair and impartial line of questioning, reminding myself that I was a qualitative researcher rather than a “tabloid journalist” (Ellis, 2005, p. 30). A legitimate criticism of introducing these counter-scenarios could be that they are designed to incite reactions from participants and represent a research tactic that leads the respondent and opens the door for them to provide a specific response. Additionally, posing these counter arguments to people who saw me as a supporter of CLTs occasionally shifted the role of interrogator to the respondent who would question the origin of this argument and whether it was my own opinion. During one interview the respondent became unreceptive to my line of questioning and tried to instigate debate as he had interpreted my introduction of a counter argument as a direct dispute of his point of view. In these instances a tactful response was necessary, perhaps relating my point to a line of argument mentioned as a barrier to CLTs at a public event or to a piece of publicly available work. This was important not only to smooth the interview process but to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of alternative data sources that may have expressed similar points of view to my counter arguments.

While the dual role I have discussed in this sub-section is perhaps related more to the purpose and eventual use of the data this research generates as opposed to its quality, these challenges ultimately validate the views of Marshall and Rossman (1989, p. 21) that, although presented as pristine and logical, qualitative research is typically “confusing, messy, intensely frustrating and fundamentally non-linear”. The textbook approach may describe a process that moves from the definition of research questions, to identifying and recruiting participants, to conducting interviews and analysing data in a seamless arrangement, but the reality of this study has been different.

This was partly due to the unfolding local and political situations in which the majority of CLTs, and therefore my study, were engaged in, but equally it was related to my immersion in the topic of study. This raised practical dilemmas not just in relation to my data collection but as to how I transformed this data from interesting information to meaningful academic conclusions. Bryman (2004, p. 411) warns against the practice of acting as a “mere mouthpiece” for research subjects by simply reporting what they said and did, a practice that can occur when a researcher is concerned that their interpretations may “contaminate their subjects’ words and behaviours”. It was easy for me to relate to this possibility due to my immersion in the topic and the expectations others had of my research, yet the move from qualitative data collection to analysis is significant as it is when the process of interpretation and theorising occurs. I was therefore conscious of the need to demarcate the boundaries between my role as a promoter of CLTs and my independence as a researcher, and of the academic obligation to translate the richness of my empirical data into findings with theoretical and intellectual import.

### **4.3 Constructing a narrative: transcribing and analysing data**

Data analysis is the stage of the study where research work begins to acquire significance, as the array of empirical data is coded into meaningful themes and broader explanations of the phenomena under study can be produced (Bryman,

2004, p. 410). It is, though, a practice and art of interpretation led by the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 909) and it is therefore important to justify and explain the analytical procedures I undertook to reach the cross-cutting themes described in the empirical findings of this research.

In writing this thesis I have been confronted with the challenge of making sense of over 50 hours of recorded material collected during my fieldwork phases. While this sounds like a significant task, in reality the analysis and interpretation of data has not merely been a pragmatic step that is undertaken after fieldwork has taken place but before putting pen to paper, and has instead been an ongoing process embedded into the study since my first interview was completed. I began to grapple with my data from the formative days of my study, reflecting on the quality and pertinence of the material that was emerging and amending my strategies of data collection accordingly. This responsive approach was particularly useful early in the study when I shifted from intensive interviewing periods that were divorced from data transcription and analysis, to an approach that built in periods of time for me to identify and consider themes that may cut across interviews.

All participants agreed to be recorded and all interviews were transcribed in full, bar two that were unintelligible when the recording was played back due to the acoustics of the room used for interviewing. In these instances I was reliant upon the handwritten notes I had made during and after the interview, and in one case decided to conduct a second interview with one of the participants in order to explore further issues. I found that transcribing data as soon as possible after interviews was a useful tactic in establishing my familiarity with the data, acting as a continuation of the engagement and “conversational partnerships” struck with participants (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 121). It also enabled me to identify cross-cutting themes that could be introduced or explored in more depth in future interviews. Transcription and the initial analysis of data did not occur in a vacuum from data collection itself; instead it was an inductive approach whereby the analysis and collection of data overlapped and fed into each other.

Having transcribed interviews, I typically began analysing data by coding portions of text and quotes to categories related to the research questions. Coding is the “process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 61). This was done electronically, usually using tabulations for each broad category with different columns for rudimentary themes and subjects within these. For example, under the category “financial arrangements” I had “access to public subsidy” as a theme to which various portions of text were coded, while other categories were created to classify data related to subjects such as allocation policies, perspectives on local and national government facilitation, and the role of planning authorities. I also created categories for loose theoretical references, for example “desires for CLT autonomy”, “degrees of empowerment” and categories for each rationale for community governance provided by Lowndes and Sullivan’s (2008) framework, each of which relates loosely to some of the theoretical propositions outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.

This provided a way into exploring the data I had generated, making it more manageable and as more interviews were conducted, transcribed and analysed I was able begin to compare and contrast the accounts provided by different participants. Coding was an iterative process that involved adding, dropping and renaming categories as fieldwork progressed, producing more nuanced categories as extra data revealed itself to sharpen initial observations. This progression also involved returning to the interviews conducted at the outset of fieldwork in line with the evolution of my coding. Importantly, this task did not just identify patterns and similarities between interviews but it also identified convergence between themes within existing categories. As an example, when coding under the headings of “planning”, “relations with local authorities” and “financial arrangements”, I regularly detected dissatisfaction with strategic stakeholders in each of these disciplines among CLT representatives.

This highlights a key aspect of the coding process. At the beginning of data analysis, codes were quite descriptive, for example with reference to ‘enabling factors’ and

'barriers'. As data amassed over time, these codes became more interpretive as my understanding of and familiarity with the context in which CLTs were operating in developed. This involved moving away from simply coding a portion of text from a transcript and citing it as a 'barrier', towards an interpretation of why that may be the case related to the theoretical literature that influenced the pathway of the research. For example, it became clear that the barriers stakeholders were citing may relate to perceptions of the competency, capacity and effectiveness of forms of community-led organisation that required regulation and accountability, which in turn influence the institutionalisation of CLTs and the types of organisations that are created. As such, coding elucidated themes that not only stated that community development may be incompatible with the requirements or usual methods of working of external stakeholders, but considered why this might be the case in relation to the theoretical analysis that framed the study.

While a useful tactic in breaking down a vast amount of data, coding is not without its pitfalls. Strauss and Corbin (1998) warn that the richness of much qualitative data can be lost as researchers come to their analysis stage "wearing blinders" and with a baggage of assumptions, experience and immersion in the literature that limits their perspective.

Reflecting on this, it is certainly possible that my own immersion in the field could have brought my personal assumptions and knowledge to the fore when coding. Indeed, it is these assumptions upon which the choice of theoretical sampling was based, as the researcher uses their knowledge to identify participants in relation to events and places of particular interest to the subject. When it comes to coding data the researcher's familiarity with the interview, participant or situation can place an expectation in their mind as to the type of material they should be looking for. While acknowledging there is a selective element in deciding what to code and in relation to which theoretical propositions, I was conscious of returning to my data on multiple occasions, often reading through transcripts in their entirety several times in order to try and capture all the relevant insights that were there. Furthermore the evolution of

my coding strategy involved revising or discarding topics and themes, a process that was responsive to my growing familiarity with the data and alert to the need for a transparent outlook as to the varied ways of interpreting and understanding the vast amount of data I had gathered.

These ongoing processes were also aimed at addressing the problem of dividing portions of text from their context. When coding data, the researcher is essentially looking for several bitesize chunks that hold explanatory power for the research questions, yet qualitative interviews are not always configured in such a manner. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 231) note that interviewees often provide their answers in the form of narration or story designed to make a point that either cannot or will not be made by them in a direct way. Clearly using chunks of text and quotes that paint a picture of their argument is problematic where this occurs, as it removes them from the context of narration. While some interviewees provided small narratives of particular scenarios, for example a meeting with a funding agency, only one participant elected to provide a grand narrative of his involvement with CLTs from start to finish. This account was given chronologically and primarily related to a vote that had occurred over the plans of the local CLT. Recognising my preoccupation with composing themes built around the comparison of segmented text from different interviews, I analysed this interviewee's narrative alongside accounts from the same circumstance (i.e. those involved with the same CLT) in order to maintain a sense and knowledge of the context in which it was based. This also links to the issue of interpretation by the researcher.

As described, coding also involves a significant element of interpretation by the researcher. It moves from being descriptive of the issues raised in interviews to one that interprets transcripts in relation to emerging categories and themes. While this is done in relation to the theoretical literature used to frame the research, I was conscious of not imposing personal assumptions and theoretical interpretations on my data, but to look at how this data could support or question the theoretical literature and interpretive propositions that emerged. It was therefore a two-way

process where the theoretical background and assumptions I brought to data analysis were also scrutinised in terms of their validity and worth to the material. This process was also done in tandem with my attendance at several CLT practitioner seminars and events which enabled me to reflect on the interpretations I was making in relation to my understanding of processes on the ground.

## **Ethical considerations**

The care around the use of data in the analytical process was also borne out of a desire to avoid misrepresenting the words of individuals. Qualitative research is mired in ethical dilemmas relating to the interpretation and accurate representation of the data it generates (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Furthermore, in researching an area subject to unfolding debates and negotiations between stakeholders concurrent to the study, as opposed to studying historical events, there was added political sensitivity in analysing and disseminating this data. This sub-section addresses the underlying ethical procedures of this research. While ethical implications of research are commonly assumed to relate to research involving intrusion in areas of personal privacy, ethnographic methods of observation, and the study of vulnerable populations, for any study to be fully transparent to its participants it must make clear the implications of their collection and use of data and establish a "climate of trust" (Israel and Hay, 2006, p. 3) between the researcher and participants.

When approaching participants to seek their involvement in the research, I was seeking not only their fundamental agreement to take part but to obtain their informed consent. To obtain informed consent, the social researcher is required to articulate the subject and purpose of the research, the expectations of participants and how the data is to be used and disseminated. The purpose of obtaining informed consent is to address "relationships with research participants, sponsors, funders, covert research, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality" (Hornsby-Smith, 1993, p. 63). I attempted to achieve this throughout the course of interview relationships with participants. First, when initially approaching them I sought to clearly articulate the

focus of the research, the reason for approaching them and how I had identified them as a potential participant. I also attached an interview schedule to indicate the precise issues I hoped to explore. Second, at the outset of every interview (both in person and over the telephone) I sought permission to record the conversation. Finally, it was made clear to participants that I was undertaking a doctorate and that the purpose of gathering data was to contribute to the research itself.

With this in mind, participants were offered anonymity and confidentiality in the interview process. Only one interviewee expressly stated he did not wish for his name to be attached to anything he said, though others would often slip in phrases such as “you’d better not quote me on that actually” or “is this going to be made public anytime soon?” after discussing what they thought to be sensitive issues. The world of CLTs is a small one at a national level, let alone on an intra-community or intra-organisation basis, and participants were in these instances concerned about saying anything incriminating that could threaten their plans for development. As these were sometimes ambiguous statements and it was not always clear which parts of the transcript they were referring to, I felt it was important to allow participants to comment on the transcript of interviews. This was e-mailed to participants after the interview and in circumstances where I felt there may be concern or sensitivity over excerpts of the text I would specifically refer to this part of the text and ask if I was able to use the material. The standard response to this was for me to be granted permission to use the material provided it was referenced under a pseudonym, though some individuals also replied to say they did not wish me to use specific excerpts at all.

The use of pseudonyms is by no means a failsafe tactic as the particular circumstances by which CLTs have obtained land or secured funding will be known to those involved with their development. In many cases they have also been reported in local and national press and, as the subsequent findings argue, each CLT is relatively unique in itself as its organisational structure and development is reflective of particular local circumstances. However, for the purposes of discretion

and respecting the wishes of some of my participants, I have taken care to hide the identities of many of the people and places in this study. Presenting the data in this way presents challenges in itself, with the potential loss of context being most critical in relation to the arguments that are made. In particular, I have anonymised the identities of stakeholders in Wales, for example by referring to a local authority in North Wales simply as "North Wales Local Authority". This was a personal decision taken to avoid the creation of possible future conflict: CLT development in Wales had stalled and some of the interview data was highly critical of the role individual stakeholders had played in this. Furthermore, the purpose of CLTs in these areas was still being defined and debated during the study and I felt that, while very useful to the research, presentation of which participants said what could create unnecessary political sensitivity were it to find its way into the public domain.

Additionally, a scenario involving intra-community contestation is presented in the analysis chapters. Here, a CLT is presented as a "Village CLT in the South West", with an interest group that is integral to the findings is described as a "Village Interest Group". One interviewee had specifically requested anonymity, but his views are presented alongside others within the community. Therefore, to identify even one participant in this situation would have led to easy identification of them all, including the person who had requested to be anonymised.

All transcripts and audio files were stored electronically and were password-protected in order to avoid inappropriate access to (and misuse of) the data.

In addition to the ethical procedures that I considered during the course of fieldwork, I felt it important to feed back the findings of the research to participants at its conclusion. This was particularly the case as participants were not given the opportunity to comment on the final use of the data in the thesis. A research briefing paper was written and circulated to participants in spring 2012. This outlined the key findings of the research, linking them to existing policy and practice that CLTs are concerned with. A presentation was also given to the elected board of the National

CLT Network, a membership-based practitioner organisation formed to represent CLTs at a national level.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to make explicit the decisions and procedures undertaken during the design, implementation and analysis of my research.

It began by justifying the selection of qualitative research as the primary means of investigating CLTs, arguing that the unfolding landscape of the CLT sector necessitated an approach that was sensitive to time, context and individual perspective in assessing the conditions under which particular events led to particular outcomes. Semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were the methods used to undertake the study with a combination of theoretical and snowball sampling used to generate a sample of participants.

Conducting research into CLTs during this time frame was not without its complexities. The context in which CLTs were operating was evolving and the majority of participants were positioning their CLTs to acquire resources and be seen as legitimate community representatives and providers of local housing. As such, many respondents had expectations of what the research may bring, particularly due to my prior involvement with the CLT sector in other aspects of my life. Adjoined to the expectations of those who did take part was the issue of those who didn't. The composition of the sample is disparate and heavily weighted towards the voice of CLT representatives. This was due in part to the emergent nature of CLTs and the research itself; in many instances potential participants viewed me as holding the requisite knowledge to answer their own questions on CLTs, which were sometimes precisely the issues I was trying to explore.

There are therefore some methodological imperfections with this study, though its strength has been its responsiveness to the changing social and political climate in

which CLTs are placed. Far from following the logical research path that effortlessly glides from a research question and review of the literature, to research design, data collection and analysis, my own process of knowledge production has been one of complexity and ambiguity. Data sources have been sometimes difficult to identify, while those who have participated have sometimes seen me not only as an 'insider' but also as someone who can give something back to their mission, raising several dilemmas as to the analysis and use of material.

However, in many senses the non-linear nature of the methodological approach presented here remains best suited to understanding the unsteady terrain within which the topic has been placed during this period. Much like the process of studying them, CLTs have been riddled with complexities and ambiguities with the clear demarcations presented in the literature as to their purpose and function often overlapping and colliding with wider structural forces. The flexible and responsive nature of qualitative research is what allows us to explore why and how these complexities exist and are tackled within their local contexts, allowing an approach to sampling and fieldwork that is as dynamic as the topic of CLTs itself.

# Chapter 5: The rationales underpinning CLT formation

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As the introduction of this thesis suggested, CLTs are premised on their ability to increase the supply of affordable housing in areas where this is lacking due to a combination of high house prices and the tensions between high demand and low supply. However, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the processes that may or may not achieve this, a shortage of information as to what constitutes local housing need as defined by CLTs and little investigation into the manner in which the devolution of authority and decision-making to CLTs will play out.

The empirical chapters of this thesis aim to unpick these issues, beginning with an investigation into the underlying rationales that lead to the formation and development of CLTs. In order to investigate these, this chapter focuses on the creation of CLTs in rural and urban locations and the engagement of strategic stakeholders, illuminating their fundamental reasons for forming and engaging with a CLT. It is argued that communitarian values relating to the value of locally identified need, local knowledge and local community governance and democracy are influential factors. The formation of CLTs is based on giving communities a greater say in how housing is decided, provided and governed at a local level.

To illustrate this, the chapter is split into three main sections. The first of these focuses on the motivations and drivers for CLTs. This uncovers the 'push' factors that have provoked individuals to form a CLT, and the 'pull' factors that attract them to doing so. In short, it finds that disillusionment with the implementation of government housing and planning policies have been a key factor in the instigation of CLTs, who respond by seeking to localise decision-making and governance of housing. This often manifests as a form of local organisation that is thought to provide a competitive advantage over other forms of provision because of a CLT's

local knowledge and capacity to effect local change. It argues that CLTs are premised on their ability to protect local needs over and above external influence, based on a constellation of significant community influence, independence and the fostering of civic relationships built on community consensus.

The final section considers the strategic response to CLTs from elected officials, gaining an insight into the potential role and influence of community. Here it is argued that the examples of Cornwall and High Bickington show local authority support for the role of CLTs, though community consensus is not assumed to be a panacea nor an end in itself. The chapter then concludes by discussing the implications of the adoption of rationales are underpinned by communitarian philosophies. Here, the supremacy of community in identifying and meeting the needs of its members is emphasised due to its proximity and ability to build consensus.

## **5.1 The motivations: "government inaction and market failure"**

The rise of community land ownership schemes in rural Scotland has been led by an instrumental motivation of reversing traditional patterns of private feudal land tenure. This system was perceived to confer too much power over land use decisions to private owners to the detriment of a geographic community (Satsangi, 2007). In England and Wales, the initial drivers appear to have focused more on land valuation than patterns of land ownership, and more specifically the impact land values have on housing supply and affordability. Large (2009) argues that while contemporary CLT developments take their lead from philosophical ideals of community land ownership, tangible socio-economic factors are key instigating factors:

The starting point is the preservation of land for the benefit of the community in which it is situated. However, the overwhelming weight of the impetus behind the contemporary movement lies in the housing crisis and the lack of affordable housing for working people and those on low incomes. The context

is government inaction in the face of massive housing market failure and inequity. So forward thinking neighbourhoods, villages and towns decide to provide housing themselves.

Large (2009, p. 195)

The two dimensions of market failure and the lack of corrective government action described by Large were commonly cited by research participants as push factors for CLT start-ups. Of particular concern was the failure to ensure a steady supply of affordable housing, especially since the sale of council housing through the right to buy:

Rural development in Thatcher's day with the introduction of the right to buy meant that a lot of villages ended up with no affordable housing in them and affordable housing was limited anyway, a lot of homes that would have been affordable have been sold as second homes.

Chief Executive, Housing Association, North East

The housing association represented by this interviewee was partnering with Holy Island CLT, based on the island of Lindisfarne. The right to buy had changed the status of a proportion of the local housing stock in the community, from sub-market rental properties to ones that were now available on the open market. As a popular tourist destination and designated area of outstanding natural beauty, this led to inflated house prices as a result of high demand. Of the 11 council homes in the community, nine had been sold in this way:

In the early 1990s we felt the way we were going, a community of 150-160 people, we fell into the same category of most rural areas now where homes come up for sale and they go to city people who want a second home or holiday home, and they're paying higher prices than local people could afford.

The council housing had stopped being built. There was, I think, 15<sup>40</sup> council houses but when the Conservatives went and said "well you can buy your council house", well they did, and now there's only two which belong to the new housing association that took over in April this year [2009].

Chair, Holy Island CLT

The general perception was that the original council housing stock had performed a social function in the community, guaranteeing affordable allocation of housing to people in housing need and ensuring a demographic balance was maintained in a high value area popular with seasonal visitors. Policy that allowed the use of these properties to be determined by free market forces through the right to buy was seen to favour those with the financial capabilities to purchase their home on the open market and disadvantage local households seeking affordable rental accommodation. Therefore, the free market may have been functioning in a way seen to fail local households:

We do a lot of rural housing. We try to put back housing that in a way shouldn't have been sold and hold it in perpetuity, so in that way you're holding housing there that should be available. I think that the government policy in terms of affordability in the rural areas is not particularly good, the Taylor report highlights that, something has to be done.

Chief Executive, Housing Association, North East

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<sup>40</sup> There is a discrepancy between the figure quoted by the interviewee and the figure described in the paragraph that precedes this quotation. The latter - available in an internal review provided to me by the CLT - was gleaned from official publicly available data.

It's a wider political view in that ultimately most government policy drives people towards home ownership. That's the key isn't it, for decades we've driven home ownership as the answer to prove you're getting on in society, you're getting on the ladder, so I think ultimately probably right to buy was more better than worse but it's had some really bad effects like here.

CLT support worker, Holy Island CLT

According to an internal review provided to me by the CLT, no home had been purchased by someone born in the community since 1995 and second home ownership was estimated to account for 55 per cent of the local housing stock. During my field visit to the CLT I heard several anecdotes as to the escalating ratio between property values and local incomes.

The internal review summarised the "bad effects" the CLT support worker spoke of:

In 1993, high house prices, restricted housing stock and low seasonal incomes combined to paint a very sorry picture for residents wishing to buy or rent a home on the island. It was this desperate need for affordable rented accommodation which acted as the catalyst leading to the creation of the trust.

Holy Island CLT Internal Review (2005)

This accommodation was needed to rebalance the island's demographics which were thought to be imbalanced by a high number of second homes populated by retired occupants that made seasonal use of their properties:

When we set off we hoped for younger families [to stay] because we felt the population was ageing a bit because people were coming here to retire, we

felt that unless we did something on our own we're gonna lose the young people from the island.

Chair, Holy Island CLT

The idea of local people independently and positively attempting to address this housing issue partly originated from the inability of local authorities to meet the local needs. This inability was created not only by the right to buy and the accompanying diminishment in council housing stock, but also through the redefined role local authorities played in housing, moving from direct provision and development to a strategic enabling role by the end of the 1990s (Ginsburg, 2005).<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, it had been felt that the time, expertise, funding and economies of scale (or lack thereof) involved in developing small-scale rural housing had dissuaded housing associations from developing rental housing. As such the CLT began to see the remedial action needed to restore population demographics as its responsibility:

I think if I were to talk about the CLT, it's emerged because of a lack of a local authority offer at the time. They were finding that a lot of the affordable housing had been sold, so to retain younger people and families and the school, their view was they needed to create more affordable housing. They worked with the local authority to try and facilitate that but it didn't happen so they decided they would do it on their own.

Chief Executive, Housing Association, North East

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<sup>41</sup> It should also be noted that local authorities were unable to reinvest the money generated by the sale of council housing under the right to buy into housing stock; instead it could only be used to redeem debts.

It is possible to identify the push factors of housing policies thought to disadvantage low income households and government inaction in the formation of the Holy Island CLT, though clearly the ability of local government to act was constrained by financial circumstances and their reduced involvement in housing delivery. There were also pull factors emerging as a consequence of the community's situation. Firstly, rental housing which could be protected from the market and held in perpetuity was seen as key to meeting the needs of local residents and key workers. Secondly, the CLT sought to exercise some influence over the allocation of these properties and meet the needs of a specific clientele. These points were illustrated by stakeholders in interviews:

There needed to be a very sharply focused lettings policy that was specific to encouraging existing families and young families with children et cetera, that was where the target needed to be and that's the way it has been followed.

CLT support worker, North East

We've got it so the houses cannot be sold. That's a key thing as well, that these houses belong to the community and cannot be sold, and we felt that was important because what was the point in doing all this work if the tenants had the right to acquire or right to buy them.

Chair, Holy Island CLT

The CLT adopted the view that they were there primarily to meet the needs of a specific local population in response to the push factors outlined above. The sentiments expressed by the Holy Island CLT were common to CLTs in other rural areas:

Most of the areas where we work are already highly gentrified where there is very little at all on the open market. If you look around here, if there's anything

at all and you're very lucky you might find something for £350-400,000. A total lack of things on the market, or if they are on the market they're incredibly expensive. The social housing stock has virtually disappeared.

Director, Cornwall CLT

The CLT was originally formed purely for affordable housing, aiming to meet need unmet by others such as housing associations and councils. The CLT did not see these bodies as able or likely to deliver for the local area.

Board member, Lands End Peninsula CLT

The main motivation for forming a CLT? Well, government weren't doing anything. Local government just aren't empowered to do it, so we thought we'd do it ourselves if you like. Civil society can do it and social enterprise.

CLT volunteer, South West A

In a village in the South West, a CLT was reported to have formed as a result of a local housing needs survey led by the parish council. A relatively high demand for affordable housing was identified in the village for sections of the population who, as in the North East, were otherwise unable to access the type of local housing on offer:

It's a village of large and expensive houses. As soon as a small bungalow comes on the market it's snapped up by a developer and turned into a four or five bedroom house.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

We took note of quite a lot of response that, perhaps not in terms of numbers but in terms of volume and sincerity that the affordable housing people wanted for the youngsters was rent. So that immediately swung us to moving onto the rental side with shared ownership as an option than the other way round. We also made the point that it was open to anyone; for example if a family had split up, leaving someone - typically a wife and children - in hard straits, then the idea of affordable housing would include people like that as well, not just trying to stop [young] people leaving the village.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

The instigators of this CLT also felt existing policies and routes to achieving new housing developments were unlikely to yield any resolution to the problem. A transcribed question and answer session<sup>42</sup> between the CLT and members of the village community revealed pessimism with regard existing policies:

*Community member:* Lack of a Village Design Statement<sup>43</sup> seems to be at the root of the problem. This would be a mechanism to provide a holistic approach to issues in the village, and would allow everyone to express a view.

*CLT response:* An interesting point but in view of the National Housing Plan/Edict/Target, which lists villages such as ours as non-viable for future development, we doubt it would be able to produce anything very productive.

Village Interest Group (2011)

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<sup>42</sup> This question and answer session was transcribed and uploaded to the village interest group's website. An interviewee provided me with the document but it is anonymised here for the purpose of confidentiality.

<sup>43</sup> A Village Design Statement is a community-led planning initiative designed to provide a tool for local planning authorities to consider community desires in their decisions. They are often instigated by parish councils with the express purpose of allowing community members to express their views.

These narratives bear a similarity to the problems described by Shucksmith (2007) and Gallent (2009): existing policies aimed at creating socially and environmentally sustainable communities may mark peripheral rural villages as "inherently unsustainable" due to their remote location (Gallent, 2009, p. 264), concentrating housing in towns and cities and discouraging rural investment. This led Gallent (2009, p. 264) to conclude: "These villages have therefore become ... the parts of the countryside where existing housing policies seemingly cannot reach".

Out-migration of residents - and particularly young people - from the local area as a result of pressures caused by high property values and a deterioration of local services were evident in rural Wales,<sup>44</sup> provoking interest in the potential use of the CLT model:

CLTs have been seen as a breakthrough in trying to get through this feeling of, you could say animosity really, between communities and authorities because they can't see a way through the problems that they face from small and low incomes, the high house prices, the inevitability of local people and young people leaving the area because there wasn't any potential living in the community and no work as well. Lots of issues like that highlighted the need for a CLT.

Rural Housing Enabler, North Wales

The further west you go you become even more remote, you've got the Welsh speaking communities and then you've got a lot of locals. There is support for

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<sup>44</sup> As described in the methodology chapter, Welsh stakeholders are anonymised here (and in later chapters) due to the ongoing nature of CLT development in these areas and the potential the data may hold for creating sensitivities.

CLTs there and because there's been no affordable housing delivery they're willing to try anything.

#### Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

In these instances part of the concern held by a CLT is the presence of a certain segment of the population, often linked by local connection, and the way in which the availability and affordability of housing has challenged this population's ability to live in rural areas. These are not new concerns: the nub of Mark Shucksmith's prescient work *No Homes for Locals?* (1981) was that low income rural households were being systematically excluded from the countryside by inadequate housing and planning policies that looked unfavourably on rural housing development. As such it should not be of great surprise that the rural CLTs discussed here can be interpreted as a response to the effects such policies have had on housing supply, affordability and allocation.

#### Urban CLTs

Although the triggers for starting urban CLTs inevitably differed from their rural counterparts, for example regarding the concerns and claims to land use, the motivation of altering the use of housing to benefit a specific segment of the population remained prevalent. Of the two urban CLTs that directly participated in this study, Headingley CLT was orientated towards the management and change of the local population. The second urban CLT featured in the study is discussed later in the chapter.

The Director of Headingley CLT was intrinsically involved in its initial formation. While the affordability of housing was a motivating factor, the principle aim of their activity was to rebalance the local demographics of the area:

Like every big city, we have a shortage of affordable housing so there is the general motivation of restoring affordable housing, but there is also the more specific motivation of rebalancing the community, attempting to bring some of these student houses back into family occupation.

Director, Headingley CLT

The area in which the CLT emerged was a particularly popular area of residence for the city's student population. The instigators of Headingley CLT perceived their area to be suffering from studentification, a term coined to identify the process and product of concentrated student settlements in university towns and cities. Studentification has been described as follows:

The substitution of a local community by a student community. Here, 'substitute' means displacement of one community, and replacement by another, 'community' means a group of people with a common ground and continuity through time, 'local community' means one whose ground is their locality, and 'student community' means one with a vocational ground.

National HMO Lobby (2008, p. 8)

The concern in Headingley was the effect a transient student population had on local services and the existing community. The CLT Director reflected these concerns bemoaning the effect the instability and transiency of the local population had on the social configuration of the neighbourhood:

In order to have any sort of community you need a stable population. When you have a high percentage of students you get an increasingly destabilised population. At the moment it is a bit like a ghost town, there's a street round the corner from us with 54 houses, 51 of which are student houses, and they're all empty now. The street is completely dead. You get that all through

the summer and also at Christmas and Easter. It's particularly depressing at Christmas because you expect places to be lit up, you expect to walk down the street and see little Christmas trees in the window and things like that. If you go down our street at Christmas most houses are in complete darkness because they're just empty.

Director, Headingley CLT

In addition to these effects on community spirit, the transience of the student population was also thought to create local economic pressures. An argument akin to that of rural complaints around second home ownership supported the case in Headingley :

It strikes me that in principle our situation is quite similar to rural honey pots which are vulnerable to houses being bought up as second homes. We argue that basically student homes are second homes. Students go home at Christmas and Easter and in the summer, and in the term time they're, as it were, camping out in houses in Headingley .

It affects all sorts of other things, especially the local economy, local schools and as a result of the flight of families one local school in particular was closing down. At the same time the shops were under pressure because they lose a year-round market. Basically the market for shops in our area collapses when the students move out because there's just nobody here.

Director, Headingley CLT

To remedy this apparent lack of community cohesion and its negative impact on local businesses and residents, the Headingley CLT sought to alter the use of existing properties. Student landlords were perceived to exercise greater financial muscle in the property market than those seeking property for family occupation and,

combined with a lack of social housing, Headingley's property market was seen to disadvantage those sustaining a mortgage on normal household incomes:

If you can stuff half a dozen students into a three-bed semi, which isn't very difficult if you're an unscrupulous landlord, the rate of return you can get on that means you can sustain a much higher loan than if you're a simple straightforward family. There's very little social housing in Headingley and everything else is extremely expensive.

Director, Headingley CLT

With this in mind the CLT's strategy aims to assist those seen to be disadvantaged in local access to housing by changing the use of existing property rather than building new properties:

Primarily what we're thinking of all the time is not new build, which is what differentiates us from most CLTs. The issue in is not a shortage of properties, in actual fact it's a densely developed area. The problem is who the properties belong to and how they're used. Our priority is not so much building new stuff as getting hold of existing stuff and turning it back into family occupation.

Director, Headingley CLT

This strategy involved two courses of action:

- The CLT leasing properties from local residents or people that have moved away from the area and letting them onto families rather than to students. The CLT effectively operates as a conduit between people who wish to lease their property. At the time of the study Headingley had struck three agreements with property owners and leased these to three families.

- The CLT raising funds and purchasing properties on the open market in order to utilise them as either affordable rental homes or shared ownership properties. The CLT would retain an equity stake in the property in order to retain influence over its use. At the time of the study Headingley CLT had yet to achieve this aim.

Ultimately the creation of the CLT vehicle in Headingley was influenced by the current use of the properties, the way this moulded the local population and the impact this had on the local community, rather than a primary or sole concern of affordability. The reasons for creating the CLT, essentially relating to the impact a transient or seasonal population has on a local area, bear similarities to the refrains of inequity in access to housing, residualised services and poor community cohesion outlined in rural areas. This became evident when interviewing the Director of Headingley CLT, as discussion deviated away from traditional ideals of community ownership in comparison to other interviews I had conducted. Although the Director was strongly supportive of the principles of community ownership, co-operativism and local community action when questioned, these were not the principle drivers of the Headingley CLT, as illustrated by the following exchange:

*Researcher:* So to what extent is community ownership actually one of the drivers of your project, or is it just the only possible way to achieve your strategy?

*Director:* The latter really. We're in a situation where the indigenous community, if you like, are being pushed out by people who move in just for a seasonal part of the time. One way of defending ourselves against that is for the community to become owners of the properties.

In this instance, then, community ownership appears to be a means to an end and a practical response to a local problem identified by the CLT, with the potential for the CLT structure to be used as a mechanism of defence against external pressures.

This is resonant with the radical housing consciousness described by Davis (1991), where the CLT acts as a method of defending particular interests of an indigenous geographic community, and emerges as the dominant theme of this chapter so far. CLTs originate partly as a form of social protectionism against government policies and market forces perceived to have disadvantaged local people in accessing housing and, as a corollary, had a debilitating effect on the functioning of a community.

Communities unhappy with existing government policies and the way these manifest may form a CLT to remedy the problems, which may specifically relate to the ability of a certain segment of a local population to access housing. Taking control of the situation through the vehicle of a CLT is seen as a potential solution in the absence of alternative provision or political action. Community control is seen as a way of achieving what are believed to be more democratic and just outcomes in the field of housing, but there are not necessarily overt desires to empower citizens through co-operative ownership and use of land. Instead it appears that CLTs are used as a tool that reaffirms the supremacy of community influence and identification of the local need.

This position was summarised by a strategic stakeholder who requested anonymity:

What is important to communities? Why do they really set up a CLT? Not for the utopian idea of co-operative ownership and control but instead to achieve affordable housing and other things in a way that gives a community significant influence over three things: design, tenure and allocations.

But despite the evidence presented so far, it would be disingenuous to say that there are no CLTs that see value in community ownership beyond a rudimentary exercise of influence over the key issues described by the stakeholder. CLTs are in some instances aimed at positioning their organisations as more effective and better

placed to identify the needs of their local community than the work of traditional forms of provision and understandings of democracy.

## 5.2 Reviving local democracy and involving the community

### High Bickington CLT

High Bickington, a village in Devon with a population of around 700, formed a CLT in response to the problem of "local young people ... being forced out of their community because there's nothing for them" as described by the Chairperson of the CLT. As such, the CLT model became a vehicle for protecting a specific localised interest:

*We wanted to set up an organisation that would protect the interests of local people ... our thinking locally was that we wanted to be able to provide facilities that would sustain our village and community, but also that we wanted to take local control. Particularly around affordable housing, it was about having housing that was ours in perpetuity.*

Chair, High Bickington CLT (my emphasis)

The italicised passages of this quote are intended to illustrate the importance of community control to the CLT in High Bickington. Local control was seen as the most effective mechanism for local village interests to be protected:

We've got about a third of the households in the village involved in the membership [of the CLT] in one way or another. That again was saying "we wanted local control", not for any power base basis, but just as it was right from our point of view that we find a way of sustaining the village in terms of

the sustainability agenda, in terms of how we protect our services, pubs et cetera.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

This identifies the local interests the CLT is seeking to protect as similar to the issues highlighted by other CLTs: the common rural problems of ageing and declining populations, housing unaffordable to local people and the residualisation of local services. The scheme at High Bickington aimed to reverse the apparent decline with an extensive scheme involving the development of affordable and market housing, workspaces for local businesses, a new school and a community energy scheme.

The aim was to achieve this through local leadership and community control and a high rate of local resident membership was perceived as essential to the CLT's potential. Membership of the CLT was available for the nominal sum of £1 and the CLT's legal structure provided regular opportunities for members to become involved in the organisation's governance, for example through the election of a management board:

The whole thing was [about] how can we involve the maximum number of people in the community in holding onto this [affordable housing] and one difference between us and other CLTs is that we went for the membership model on the basis that the board would be elected by the membership.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

Their structure was then contrasted with a local community organisation in order to illustrate the CLT's philosophy:

I think one has to try and get the whole community involved in some way and it may be you can only involve them by keeping them informed. Local

membership is key. Our neighbouring parish took the view that they didn't want anyone else involved so they've got a company limited by guarantee which just has six members and that's the board. I think that's wrong because that says "we're the important people and the rest of you don't really matter". It says "we'll do to you" rather than "we'll do with you" ... a successful CLT will be those who work with and alongside the local community, those who work with rather than do to.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

The principles of local control adopted in High Bickington combined with a commitment to co-operative enquiry also bear several similarities to the perceptions that communitarian endeavour should be encouraged and prioritised at a local level. The community should adopt mutual responsibility for the management of the local area while local priorities should be identified by consensus, and decision making over these taken according to the understanding and priorities of the local population. Broadly speaking, community governance is preferred to traditional forms of representative democracy higher up the political order (Tam, 1998, p. 13-17). The local potential of this is especially highlighted by the following quote:

I always feel that every community has a lot of capacity in it, what angers me personally is the professionals who talk about 'building capacity' as opposed to 'releasing capacity'. To me it's about releasing capacity, it's about enabling people to recognise they do have the skill and they can do it ... we had a group of experienced people and you get people coming along from local authorities who have absolutely no idea but try to tell us how to do it.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

Justified by the capacity perceived to exist in the community, along with the commitment to building a co-operative consensus in the village over the CLT's plans,

community governance located at a local level is deemed to be as effective as representative forms of democracy (if not more so). This mirrors the civic rationale for neighbourhood governance discussed in the analytical framework. The community should be able to exercise voice and choice over how they operate and how their objectives are realised; civic relationships are fostered through high levels of community involvement and participation and the CLT's close proximity to their village makes it easier to identify and resolve collective social problems.

However, it should be acknowledged that despite the assertion that community governance is preferred to structures of representative democracy, the High Bickington scheme actually grew from consultations with and between relevant local bodies such as the parish, district and county councils, all of which are traditional forms of representative democracy elected by local people. As such it could be argued that the local control provided by community governance and the participatory democracy it wishes to encourage is only possible with support and advocacy provided by more traditional democratic governing structures. The intricacies of some aspects of this relationship will be examined later in this thesis, but as the following example illustrates the High Bickington case was not alone in attempting to create a local body that could be a more appropriate representation of community needs.

### **East London CLT**

The East London CLT emerged from a campaign orchestrated by London Citizens, the capital city's branch of the community organising body Citizens UK, whose mission is to:

build the power of communities who work together for the common good. Its focus is the development of leadership within our social institutions, and within our local communities. In accordance with this, our affordable housing

campaign ... is one that agitates for social reform and seeks to create circumstances conducive to community-led developments across the city.

Citizens UK (2011)

In order to understand the type of social reform that the affordable housing campaign (and the broader work of the organisation) seeks to create, it is vital to note the philosophical approach taken by Citizens UK. The organisation is rooted in the philosophy of Saul Alinsky, the figurehead of a particular type of community development. Alinsky (1969, p. 22) argued that "only through the achievement and constructive use of power can people better themselves". As such, community-based social reform should be achieved under conditions characterised by shifts in who holds power, typically from the state to the community.

The methods of reform they adopt have these ideals at their heart. Bunyan (2010) and Little (2011) both document how independence and autonomy from the state is at the core of the approach, which is summarised as follows:

Citizens UK works on 'Alinskyan' principles. The method is very specific: creating a 'power organisation' made up of other groups. Most commonly, these member groups are faith organisations - churches, mosques or synagogues. But community groups, schools and trade union branches can also be members.

The method is confrontational and political ... Though groups negotiate and compromise, separation and independence are cherished. There is no collaboration with other voluntary and community organisations. The idea is

not to run services, or to get local people to take them over, but to challenge those in the corporate and public sectors that deliver the services.<sup>45</sup>

Little, 2011

The idea of independence and autonomy from the state was therefore at the nub of the affordable housing campaign led by Citizens UK and led to the creation of an independent CLT. This differentiated itself from both the private market and social rental sector on the basis that the independence and autonomy provided by the CLT would provide individual and community benefits precipitated by a shift in power:

These things only work if they're set up in opposition to something ... if we think "oh this is a good idea" and roll them out en masse that they become 'government land trusts' ... the key benefit of them for me is the degree of ownership that they can bring to people on low incomes, living in more affordable housing and the difference that will make to the aspirations of people, and if you lose that and it's just another government model...

Housing Organiser, London Citizens

Although independence was cherished, the group were not necessarily against the concept of social housing or seeking to prevent further council housing being built. The organiser described the CLT proposals as a "complementary measure which is not intended to replace or reduce the numbers of council housing getting built" and argued that the economics of the model represented a form of "pragmatic socialism"

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<sup>45</sup> The end of this quote, where the control of services by local people is not a desired aim, may seem contradictory to the creation of a CLT. However, the quote is actually a description of the broader Citizens UK campaign and philosophy. London Citizens helped set up the East London CLT as a result of its campaign and the two organisations are now divorced and have an arms-length relationship. While not having a direct role in the CLT's management, London Citizens continue to promote its interests and the virtues of a CLT.

which could manipulate the market to achieve permanently affordable housing. Furthermore, the quotation highlights the desire to extend and confer the rights and powers of ownership to low-income households, grounded in similar rhetoric to the belief that homeownership can bring stakeholding benefits and provide autonomy and aspiration to people. The quotes below are intended to illustrate this, describing the interviewee's perception of the Burlington CLT in Vermont, America (one of the largest and longest-running CLTs in North America) and the potential usefulness of the CLT model in the English housing market.

There was the economic pragmatism of the whole thing. They run commercial premises where it suits them, I said to them "do you ever sell houses if you think you could do more good with the land if you took the value out of it and plough it into a different area" - they said "yep, absolutely, we've done that before". So it started on the back of benevolent, progressive thought and still stays very very true to that, but yet it's combined with this American understanding of the market and complete clever playing of it.

Housing Organiser, London Citizens

We needed a mechanism that we could build around, one that would negate once and for all the great gap and dichotomy that has arisen between depressed council estates and the free market that so few can reach.

Housing Organiser, London Citizens

The content of the second quote presented here was itself partly provoked by the lack of social housing being built and the intensive need for shelter in East London. The CLT was to be based in Tower Hamlets, a part of East London which had 24.5 per cent of its households on the local authority social housing waiting list in 2010:

the second highest rate in England (CLG, 2011b).<sup>46</sup> Therefore the CLT organised itself around the issue of local housing supply characterised by an approach that held true to the values of Citizens UK.

This particularly came to the fore as the CLT liaised with the Greater London Authority in response to a Mayoral promise made by Boris Johnson to facilitate a CLT in London by 2011. The location of the CLT was debated between the two parties:

The Mayor's housing advisor is very keen to do it on an estate regeneration project because he thinks the community is already defined that way; you've got a community you can work with, which is far from our idea of community really. It's just people who happen to live next door to each other a lot of the time and not an organised community in a sense.

Housing Organiser, London Citizens

In this view, CLTs should not just be facilitated and located anywhere, they should instead be a product of community effort to create an independent institution characterised by particular values. This is supported by the following quotes which highlight the centrality of community influence and independence if CLTs are developed in this context. In particular CLTs are differentiated from other forms of provision on the basis that they offer greater autonomy for communities to gain power and use it to improve their standing:

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<sup>46</sup> Using local authority waiting lists as an individual measure of housing need and/or demand can be problematic as local housing associations may operate their own lists for the housing they manage. However, the significantly high number of local households on the waiting list in Tower Hamlets in comparison to the rest of England provides an indicative idea of need and/or demand for social housing.

The amount of money that's been into estates through the New Deal<sup>47</sup> is just nobody's business. I can't even remember how much now but it's just not done anything for it because it's not got the sense of it being earned by people and owned by them and that's the absolute crucial thing as we move forward. And that's why it's nonsense when Boris [Johnson, Mayor of London at the time] says they're looking at sites up in the Gateway or in North London or on the outskirts. Well, 'why are you looking there?' and who's asked them to get in touch with them? Unless somebody comes to you about it, it's a waste of time.

I think they see CLTs as something they can - I'd say "inflict" and they'd say "help place" in certain parts - but if it's going to be about community ownership it's got to be about a sense of ownership being earned and built by local people as well, so it's a struggle to persuade them of the virtues and ability of those groups of people.

Housing Organiser, London Citizens

The community's desire for change - and their autonomy to achieve this - marks the London Citizens approach, with the emphasis on their independence and ability to make decisions on their terms at the forefront of their development. In the cases of both London and High Bickington, communities should be able to exercise voice and choice in their developments in order to realise both practical outcomes and subtle

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<sup>47</sup> The interviewee's opinion of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme highlights the tensions in assessing the value of resident involvement in area-based initiatives. NDC was a state-funded area-based initiative programme that aimed to regenerate disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Wallace (2010) argued that NDC failed to have a positive effect, while Lawless *et al.* (2010, p. 269) took the view that increasing resident involvement in NDC was positively associated with a range of outcomes, including perceptions that the area had improved as a result of NDC activity, and feelings of being "part of the community". Therefore the interviewee's view here should not be taken as a matter of fact and more as a subjective opinion on how community development should be facilitated.

individual and community benefits such as a sense of citizen ownership, aspiration and power. We can relate this rationalisation of CLTs back to the foundations of the American CLT movement whereby the effort a community places in forming a CLT is as much an accomplishment as the physical housing development the effort creates:

we can best measure the success of newly formed CLTs not in terms of total acreage or total housing units but in terms of the constructive community activity being generated. Without this sort of activity - and the sense of community that goes with it - no amount of institutional change can solve our problems. The open and democratic structure of the CLT is thus a centrally important feature of the model. A community land trust cannot succeed as something created merely *for* a community. It must represent an effort *of* and *by* the community.

Institute for Community Economics (1982, p. 256, original emphasis)

### **5.3 The potential role and influence of community**

At the beginning of section 5.1 it was noted that CLTs may form in the face of "market failure and government inaction" (Large, 2009, p. 195). This leads to CLTs forming to take local control and influence of the production and management of their locality.

The instigators of the CLTs described so far all had in common the local value that should be attached to their efforts (both in partnership with and on behalf of the community, which makes CLTs better placed to meet needs) and the desirability of the end product they would deliver. Large makes the case for community engagement through CLTs as they offer a vehicle through which people can see tangible outcomes emerge from their efforts and engagement:

The more people see a direct connection between their efforts and the community benefits they value, such as more affordable homes, safer neighbourhoods, better community facilities, more jobs and a better environment, the more they will be likely to engage - especially if they see a direct connection between their efforts and the results.

Large (2009, p. 27)

This idea invokes the civic rationale described by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008): citizens will identify a relationship between their own self-interest - or as Large puts it the "community benefits they value" - and wider public policy developments, and invest their time and participation accordingly. This theme has been evident throughout the analysis which has identified the desires CLTs hold in providing housing for a particular portion of the population, which is usually those local to the CLT's area of operation. This is justified on the basis that the CLT is closest to the housing problems in their area and is therefore best placed to create the necessary solutions. Rory Stewart, Conservative MP for Penrith and the Border, described the apparent advantage CLTs hold over traditional providers:

Why, if someone comes to Cumbria, can they see in Crosby Ravensworth<sup>48</sup> a better affordable housing project built by a community than would have been built by the county council on its own? It is because those projects are different from those done by the state ... in the degree of knowledge, in scale and in their relationship to the risk to the vulnerable. These are projects in which communities have a competitive advantage over the state because local knowledge matters in those projects. The people who live there know about the place and they care about it. They come up with creative solutions,

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<sup>48</sup> It should be noted that the CLT in this village did not participate in this study. The quotation here is for illustrative purposes as to the potential purpose and function of CLTs more generally.

street by street, on where to place a school, on how much housing to allow and on who will live in the affordable houses and where they will be located.

Stewart (HC-Deb 2010-11)

This argument contends that local knowledge matters in affordable housing projects because they are best placed to identify the local risk posed to vulnerable populations, how much housing there should be in a local area and crucially who should live in the housing. These were all prevalent issues for the CLTs described in the previous section and were the instigating factors for the engagement of communities in housing: to summarise, the community benefits that are valued relate to the quantity and allocation of local housing.

Furthermore, Stewart's view of CLTs indicates not only the adoption of a civic rationale in encouraging community members to invest in issues that matter to them, but also introduces elements of the social rationale in identifying the potential community involvement has for adding value to conventional forms of housing decision-making and delivery. The idea is akin to that of rationales for localisation in general: the more influence and autonomy that exists at a local level, the more accurate and socially just policies will be (Purcell, 2006).

The discussion above has identified that CLTs themselves are often likely to adopt a similar position to that of Stewart, claiming to offer a more effective form of housing delivery for local communities in their local area. However, opportunities and constraints for community-based governance are as dependent on the institutional design of this involvement as they are upon the involvement of communities. In other words, the relationships that community-based actors and organisations have with local governing bodies may be crucial in more comprehensively understanding the localised processes CLTs are engaged with in attempting to deliver housing. These relationships will be explored in detail later in the thesis. First, to aid this

understanding, the following section considers the way in which CLTs may be rationalised by strategic stakeholders within local authorities.

#### **5.4 The strategic response to the claims of CLTs**

In Cornwall, where CLTs had formed in response to the traditional pressures on rural housing such as insufficient supply, high demand and high house prices that dwarf local incomes, the unitary local authority was keen to support local CLT development. In particular the spatially-specific strategies adopted by individual village CLTs were thought to offer a more effective identification and perception of need due to their proximity to local circumstances:

[CLTs] are relatively unique in themselves. Yes, they have a common legal structure but you'll not find two alike. But that's the point of localism, isn't it? They should reflect local circumstances; they may reflect the views of local well-wishers, people trying to make a difference. So in a way it would be disappointing if they were all identikit, that's not the point and we should always call them local community land trusts with a big emphasis on the local. And then they can be fine-tuned and adapted, responding to a perception of local needs which is closer than we may have at that planning level.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

The official's advocacy of CLTs was premised on the sentiment that Rory Stewart MP expressed in the previous section: engaging local communities in identifying the local circumstances and action required could be beneficial to local authorities due to a CLT's proximity to the issues. The benefit of this in the council's eyes was two-fold. Firstly, although they were keen to ensure correct and appropriate governance - that is, that the CLT is set up to be non-discriminatory - the principle benefit of CLTs was

their ability to link the needs and knowledge of a defined community to the delivery of housing within their boundaries:

The other side to it is sort of fine tuning the site more to local needs. You have to be slightly wary that CLTs don't get colonised, so they're getting the articles [of association] with an anti-colonisation clause: i.e. the company cannot be suddenly taken over by the folk who live in the houses. But principally when you're designing and specifying the development in terms of tenure mix and housing, you ensure there's fine grained local knowledge about the needs of that local community.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

This "anti-colonisation clause" referred to relates to the governance measures taken to ensure the CLT remained charitable. Essentially the council was keen to make sure that residents of CLT homes could not simply take over the running of the CLT and completely eliminate external influence, instead maintaining it as an organisation that is operated by a wider community rather than solely its residents. The concern related to the diversity of the organisation and whether single interest groups - the residents - could usurp that of the wider community and dominate the organisation. In this view the CLT is not intended to become a self-governing mechanism, instead it is intended to facilitate a degree of community influence rather than overt resident control. This was partly aided by the introduction of a 'constitutional custodian', a topic returned to later when discussing the role and influence of umbrella CLT bodies.

Secondly, the council believed that the impact of the CLT's activity and localised notion of need would ensure that the wider community would be more forthcoming to a housing development. This would help overcome localised resistance to housing developments often found in rural areas (also identified by Shucksmith, 1990; Milbourne, 1997).

The second thing - and this sounds a bit altruistic but it's also hard nosed - is that it's also much more embedded in the local community. So when it comes to local planning issues and whatever ... there is the acceptance that it's a good thing amongst the majority. It's understood why they are doing it, it's been promoted as coming from the community, it's not been imposed on them and generally people do see it as a good thing.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

The council's rationalisation of CLTs stems from a perception that they provide a more responsive form of housing that is consistent with the local community's needs and understanding of housing need. In High Bickington, where the CLT had amassed a high membership rate among their local community, the county council were very much aligned to the localist approach that CLTs pursued. In particular, the social rationale of neighbourhood governance emphasising a holistic citizen-centred partnership approach was invoked as one interviewee described what he saw as the advantages of a CLT:

They are of course a community-led body, they're rooted in the communities they originate from, they're protecting local community facilities for generations to come.

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

However, while there was latent support for the philosophical elements of a CLT, pertaining to local influence, autonomy and protection of local interests, the council were also of the mind that attention should not deviate from the practicalities of delivering a CLT scheme. For example, the Community Strategy Officer identified an interesting dichotomy between the communitarian need for a representative organisation rooted in the community and the practical need for skills and expertise.

*Researcher:* One thing that strikes me about High Bickington is the very high membership rates. I can see why that might appeal to the council. Would you have found it difficult to support a CLT which didn't have such high membership?

*Interviewee:* I'm not so sure. We have relationships with numerous third sector organisations which aren't necessarily very high on member numbers, but where so long as they have the strength and capacity to deliver something that we're interested in being a partner with them on, then we'd be quite prepared to be in partnership. I don't think that membership numbers per se is the most critical thing.

This issue was explored further, raising a dilemma faced by many CLTs. There is a need for particular skills and expertise that are often found outside the local area, but this has to be balanced with seeking local legitimacy by involving the community as much as possible:

For an outfit like a CLT, if they have a very high membership rate like the High Bickington one does, then it reinforces its sense of endorsement by local people and that would strengthen our willingness to engage with it. So it's a help but I wouldn't think it's the only factor. You can have a high volume membership but a rubbish organisation, so you've got to make sure it's got the right balance of the right skills, the right people and the right community involvement. Our councillors have liked that [the high membership rate] because it gives it some legitimacy, it's not just a few people speaking on behalf of the local populous, it's very well rooted in the community and in the parish council.

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

The widespread support for the High Bickington model (illustrated by the high membership rate) appealed to local governing bodies in that it legitimised the CLT's proposals at a community level. However this was not the sole determining factor and high levels of community involvement were required to translate into organisational competence, rather than community involvement being a persuasive tool in itself. Again, the social rationale of partnership rather than civic self-governance and the emphasis on bottom-up influence facilitating rather than usurping housing delivery comes to the fore:

We've been a very critical friend as well; we haven't just got into bed with them willy-nilly. We've had a very careful approach to it because of the public money and the accountability that goes with that.

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

Nevertheless, the inclusive approach to participation within their community and the high membership rate this helped generate persuaded the local authority of the CLT's value and purpose. A balance had to be struck between community involvement and the danger of a minority speaking on behalf of the local population, in other words at the outset the locally-specific strategy of the CLT held potential both for positive outcomes in terms of participation and effectiveness, and also for the less desirable outcome of a minority claiming to speak on behalf of the 'community'.

Yet, while these issues appear resolvable in the relationships between CLTs and strategic stakeholders, what this chapter has not yet explored is how the legitimacy the claims CLTs make to community voice, representation and power are contested within local areas. The attempts by CLTs to remould the populations and configurations of their local areas may be received and negotiated in a variety of ways according to the rationales, organisational forms and strategies in which they are pursued. The following chapters address these issues in the context of the

attempts CLTs make to acquire land and finance and the structural support that may underpin their development at wider geographic scales.

## **Conclusion**

The intention of this chapter was to identify the rationales underpinning the formation of CLTs and to explore the prevalence of communitarian values in their emergence. In doing so the chapter aimed to uncover attitudes towards how housing should be decided upon, provided and governed at a local level.

CLTs have generally emerged in response to the failure of existing housing and planning policies to cater for particular parts of the population. In rural locations this related to the flight of young people from rural areas due to a lack of affordable housing. However, there is a subtle difference in the language used to justify CLTs as housing affordability per se was not the single trigger for their formation. Instead the inability of local people to access existing housing provoked concern with a CLT formed as a vehicle to correct this perceived disadvantage. The case of Headingley illustrated how the presence of a particular segment of the population may be important to an urban CLT, with the CLT's efforts primarily concerned with ensuring housing can be used for family occupation and a population with perceived greater attachment to the local community demonstrated through permanent residency.

In this sense we can begin to see the civic and social rationales emerge from the analytical framework. The civic rationale, where citizens identify a relationship between their interests and wider public policy developments and invest time and influence accordingly - is appropriate to describing the way CLTs have emerged in response to the effects of existing policies. This also links us to the proponents of communitarianism who argue that governance at a local level needs to be harnessed as a remedy to the powerlessness and alienation citizens feel as a result of their inability to exercise influence over policies that affect them (Taylor, 1998, p. 47). We can clearly identify this philosophy among the CLTs described here, who position

themselves as being most capable of effectively identifying the specific needs of their local community.

Additionally the social rationale, emphasising the potential community involvement has for improving services, takes us back to considering processes of community. Community participation was at the heart of approaches such as those in High Bickington and East London, bearing similarities to the communitarian perception of community as the place where personal proximity, locality and personal responsibility for society can be pulled together to generate consensus over community governance (Delanty, 2010, p. 69). Taken together, the adoption of these rationales can be linked to a central theme of communitarianism: the supremacy of community in identifying the most effective way to structure their local area:

the theme of communitarians is the supremacy of community, where members, through active engagement, create a direct democracy that is united around shared core values - considered to be indistinguishable from facts - thereby constraining authoritarianism, nurturing mutuality and promoting a more egalitarian society.

Dixon *et al.* (2005, p. 14)

If we relate this to CLTs, we might see that the consensus that unites a CLT consists of the provision of housing to a specific group of people, for example those with a local connection to the area. However in any form of localised community governance it is imperative to avoid falling into what Purcell (2006, p. 1921) describes as "the local trap"; that is the assumption that there is something inherently positive about devolving governance to the local scale:

it is dangerous to make any assumption about any scale. Scales are not independent entities with pre-given characteristics. Instead, they are socially constructed strategies to achieve particular ends. Therefore, any scale or scalar strategy can result in any outcome. Localisation can lead to a more

democratic city, or a less democratic one. All depends on the agenda of those empowered by a given scalar strategy.

Purcell (2006, p. 1921)

Therefore a CLT's operation at the local scale should not be seen as inevitably resulting in a set of democratically-determined socially just outcomes, though it may hold out this possibility dependent on the objectives underpinning it and the process through which these are realised. As Parvin (2009, p. 355) suggests, "what is right or wrong may not always be consistent with what the *local community thinks* is right or wrong" (original emphasis). Rather than make any assumptions as to the inherent value of scale, academic scrutiny needs to be alive to the fact that, as Purcell describes, locally-specific methods of governance are socially constructed means to achieve particular ends. The legitimacy and effectiveness of CLTs will therefore in part depend on their agendas, strategies and interactions with those stakeholders affected by their operation both within and beyond the local area.

A useful distinction on which to conclude is provided by Delanty (2010, p. 70). Delanty argues that communitarianism focuses on the conflict between community and society, a picture that we can identify in the emergence of CLTs acting against the perceived inequity that government policies have created. However Delanty argues that this focus means that enquiry into conflict *within* and *between* communities becomes marginalised by advocates of a stringently local approach who focus on the conflict between community and external pressures. This does not negate the possibility of CLTs making an effective contribution to, as Dixon (2005) put it, nurturing and promoting mutuality and egalitarianism, but equally it highlights that the implementation of community as a process of housing delivery may be subject to competing outlooks and interests:

This is a key theme in the following chapters. As the Affordable Housing Officer in Cornwall commented, each CLT is likely to be unique reflecting local circumstances.

The following chapter aims to explore the development of CLTs with regards to their acquisition of land, finance and governance of housing, and will further explore how the adoption of particular rationales and values may shape the CLT sector in England and Wales.

# Chapter 6: The importance of land: acquisition and influence

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The previous chapter described the underlying rationales and aims of CLTs, which were related to the effects of perceived government and market failure in local housing provision. However, it only touched briefly on the role of land use and planning policies that constrain the use of land for housing. Considering these issues is crucial not only to considering how and why a CLT may have formed, but also to understanding the enabling factors and constraints that landscape the current CLT sector. As Johnston (2009, p. 1) describes, "the primary focus of community land trusts is to acquire, own and never sell, and steward land for particular social purposes". It is therefore logical to assess precisely how CLTs acquire land and investigate the purposes for which it is to be used, particularly in light of the questions raised in the previous chapter's conclusion relating to the role and exercise of community influence over self-defined social purposes.

Aird (2009, p.11) argued that CLTs in rural areas have emerged "against a backdrop of few employment opportunities, low incomes and a planning system biased against development". The constraints of the planning system in both rural and urban areas has been well documented in recent years by a range of academics and government commissioned research reports (Barker 2004; Quirk, 2007; Davies *et al.*, 2009; Gallent 2009; Satsangi *et al.*, 2010). A unifying observation of all these studies is that a fundamental issue affecting housing supply is the failure of the planning system to release a sufficient supply of land. Barker's (2004, p.11) observation that "it is clear that more greenfield and brownfield land will be needed if an adequate supply of houses is to be delivered" summarises this issue well. This restriction of land for housing development has paralleled a rising demand for housing, contributing to the impact an undersupply and high demand of housing has on high property and land values (Taylor, 2008).

As such, a key issue for all CLTs is where the land necessary for their creation is to come from and how its purchase is to be funded (Diacon *et al.*, 2005, p. 33). Three mechanisms have been proposed to bring forward more land both for affordable housing development and CLT ownership: the introduction of incentives for landowners to bring forward more land for affordable housing (CLG, 2009a), the transfer of surplus public sector land into community ownership (Quirk, 2007) and the introduction of local community referendums that determine the use of local land over and above local planning authorities (CLG, 2010).

Each of these has relevance to CLTs in explaining how some have advanced their developments quicker than others and the following section will discuss each mechanism in turn. In doing so the prevalence of certain attitudes and inter-organisational relationships will help explain how the underlying rationales of CLTs may be negotiated within and between communities and stakeholders in strategic positions.

## **6.1 Incentivising local landowners: local assurance over land use**

One of the main impediments to affordable housing delivery has been the reluctance of local landowners to sell land for development. The Taylor Review (2008, p. 107) identified two key concerns held by landowners in rural areas. Firstly, landowners hold onto land due to the 'hope value' that it will be granted planning permission for market housing and increase in economic value. Secondly, landowners may hold residual fears as to the future use of their land after selling it, in particular due to the danger that land sold for affordable housing at low value will be later sold on the open market and allow someone else to reap substantial financial benefits.

Several studies have found that landowners may release land for affordable housing if they could retain control over who lives in the homes or retain a long-term financial stake in the development (Flint *et al.*, 2009; RICS, undated), leading to English government guidance suggesting mechanisms be put in place to allow landowners to

nominate family members or employees to live in the homes via a referral system (CLG, 2009a). Furthermore Flint *et al.* (2009, p. 32) found that local opposition to affordable housing often recedes when a landowner with local connections is actively involved in the process, indicating a crucial role for landowners not only in potentially releasing land for affordable housing at low values but in assuaging the concerns of local populations.

In some quarters CLTs have been recommended as a potential vehicle through which landowners can have their concerns over future use eased due to the covenants placed on homes that restrict their occupancy and future value (Taylor, 2008). The St Minver CLT in Cornwall is commonly used as an exemplar for this and has been subject to much media coverage due to the nature of the scheme (BBC, 2010; Birch, 2011).

The CLT was instigated by a local builder and a local landowner eager to see local families and employees able to live in the village affected by high rates of second home ownership (43 per cent of the housing stock according to anecdotal evidence) and high property prices that, according to the landowner, had earned the village the nickname "Millionaire's Row". The landowner sold land for the development of 12 affordable homes for £120,000 (in comparison to the recent sale of similar land nearby for £950,000; Birch, 2011). Throughout the two interviews I conducted with the landowner, he emphasised how the potential to help people with local links to the area in the housing market was at the root of his economic altruism, while continually emphasising the way in which the CLT structure and covenants applied to the homes ensured they would always "belong" to the CLT, rather than having resale restrictions removed.

These motivations were at the heart of the landowner's decision to sell the land for affordable housing, and it was suggested that its use for affordable housing would not have been possible if it were not for the CLT's perceived ability to protect use of

the homes. This is supplemented by the following quotes from the Affordable Housing Officer from the local council that supported the scheme:

We did see what they [the CLT] were doing as potentially additional to other work ... they were freeing up some land which otherwise might not have come forward. I think we felt that it was addressing a particular small subset of affordable housing market which isn't easily dealt with or delivered.

Where the CLT helped with land particularly is that it sort of 'double banks' it to keep it affordable in perpetuity, so rather than simply relying on planning agreements the fact its effectively vested in the local community means that there's this ongoing supervision of the land. I think that can be quite important to farmers or whoever when asked to sell land, as the big worry they have is they've sold the family silver and someone's going to be laughing at them in 20 years time as it's leaked to open market use.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

The "small subset of the market" referred to in the first instance indicates the difficulty of delivering affordable housing in villages where land is costly and scarce and where traditional developers are unlikely to develop due to both the expense and inability to achieve economies of scale. As such the CLT's efforts and the qualitative "supervision of the land" (as referred to in the second quote above) were perceived to address these difficulties. These efforts were seen to tackle the problem of land availability for local residential development and the creation of affordable housing with covenants attached upon it was viewed as a long-term measure to preserve the affordability of housing in the village:

Our interest was in ensuring all [applicants] needed affordable housing, all were eligible, but that this is built for 100 years and that time and time again it'll be the revolving door of affordable housing. I'm sure people here don't see

it like that, they will be thinking 'this is my lifetime home now' ... [but] unless there's a vast change of economics in this country, housing will always be very very expensive there. It's not just for them.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall County Council

It is clear the idea of permanently affordable housing, a tagline often attached to the potential of CLTs and referred to by practitioners in the previous chapter, was of great appeal to the council.

Combined with the council's view that CLTs may embed acceptance of the need for housing development into the community, it is clear that the localised operation of a CLT was seen as a vehicle for unlocking land for affordable housing that may not otherwise become available. In this sense the CLT's closeness to local issues and "competitive advantage" (to return to Stewart's quote in the previous chapter) over other forms of provision is acknowledged. This persuaded the then District Council<sup>49</sup> to provide a £544,000 interest-free loan to the CLT to help fund the land purchase, a source of money that was critical to their progress.

A CLT in the village of East Portlemouth in Devon was created as a result of a local landowner's willingness to gift the CLT four existing cottages and a piece of land on which a further six homes were built. The landowner had inherited four cottages and maintained them as low cost rental properties, but became increasingly concerned as she aged that the cottages would be sold to the open market on her death. As the quotation below illustrates, the landowner felt tied to the community and keen to assist local families:

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<sup>49</sup> North Cornwall District Council (NCDC) provided St Minver CLT with the financial support described in 2007 and 2008. On 1 April 2009 Cornwall's district councils, including NCDC, were abolished and the county's administration became the responsibility of the unitary authority Cornwall Council. The Affordable Housing Officer quoted here worked for NCDC pre-April 2009 and Cornwall Council afterwards.

Though I spent my working life living elsewhere, [the village] for the past 70 years been my home and I returned regularly to my parents house and later to the house I inherited. I have a deep affection for the place. It has always saddened me how few of my contemporaries with whom I grew up have been able to do the same. Village families have moved away, forced out by the ever increasing rise in house prices and lack of affordable accommodation.

Founder, quoted in Waterhouse Housing for East Portlemouth Ltd (2008, p. 4).

This affection for the local community links us to the importance within communities of "affective bonds as counterweight to centrifugal forces that seek to disperse communities" (Etzioni, 1995a, p. 156). Within the cases of both St Minver CLT and East Portlemouth we can detect the presence of communitarian rationales linked to the attachment to place and responsibility local landowners hold to their local community, particularly as a reaction to external market forces. In the case of East Portlemouth the landowner reached the conclusion that "in order to protect the cottages not only for the existing tenants but for the future I needed to gift them to the village in the form of a trust" (Waterhouse Housing for East Portlemouth Ltd, 2008, p. 4). In this sense the CLT appeared to offer a vehicle through which the ability of local people to live in the village could be protected, a motivation clearly expressed in the CLT's application for planning permission:

The Trust is designed not only to ensure that the cottages are maintained as low cost accommodation for local people, but that the village, via the trustees, control who is housed with reference to local connection/work and the contribution such people bring/give to the village.

Waterhouse Housing for East Portlemouth (2008, p. 7)

This validates the finding of the previous chapter that CLTs are often explicitly orientated towards providing a vehicle through which local influence and control can

be expressed over local housing allocations. Pertinently, the quotation above also emphasises the importance of the role prospective incomers to the village will play in their local community. It may be obvious how local employment will influence the contribution people give to the village, but the use of local connection as an explicit criterion indicates that certain people may be deemed to make some form of subjective contribution simply by virtue of 'being local', perhaps through permanent residency and attachment to the area.

This supports the finding that the low-cost transfer of land from local landowners to CLTs draws upon idyllic perceptions of community as the site where "shared meanings, sentimental attachments, and interpersonal networks of recognition and reciprocity ... are slowly established among the proximate inhabitants of a common territory" (Davis, 1991, p. 12). The network of reciprocity, in this instance, is between the CLT and the landowner in matching the concerns of local landowners that relate to future use of their land, along with their sentimental attachment to a locality, with the objectives of a local CLT, which utilises this symmetry to deliver resale-restricted housing for local people.

These instances show that there is scope for CLTs to incentivise some local landowners to bring forward land for affordable housing development. The second method of obtaining land that this chapter focuses on is the possibility for asset transfer from the public sector into CLT ownership. Whether or not the concerns and aims of public sector landowners involved in asset transfer match the objectives of a CLT in a similar way to landowners is the topic of the following section.

## **6.2 The politics of public asset transfer**

The transfer of public assets into community ownership has increased in recent years, a rise that can partly be attributed to the Quirk Review published in 2007. The review provided a series of recommendations for transferring assets to community-led bodies (including, but not limited to, CLTs) and directly influenced the formation

of an Asset Transfer Unit (ATU) led by the Development Trusts Association (SQW, 2010). The release of Quirk's recommendations in 2007 ran parallel to a period of growth for CLTs marked by the national CLT demonstration programme (2006-2008) and the introduction of the dedicated CLT Fund created by charitable investors, so it is of little surprise that asset transfer was of increasing interest during my fieldwork given the difficulties an increasing number of CLTs faced in accessing land for development.

Of the CLTs featured in this study, the main example of asset transfer involved a partnership between High Bickington CLT and Devon County Council. Rather than the traditional approach of a CLT approaching a council for assistance, in this instance the CLT emerged as a result of extensive local consultation over the use of an unused piece of farmland:

We didn't start off by saying "we want to do this with the land, let's see who's out there to achieve that ambition"; we said "do the community have a view about how it can be used for their sustainable future?" so it evolved from there. It's been ten years [of] partnership working of which the CLT has only been in existence for 3-4 years of that.

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

The council wanted to do a pilot scheme on how they might dispose of the farm in a way that was better for the local community. Their previous policy had always been to – when a farm became available – put it on the market and take the highest bidder ... effectively the community lose out all round because proceeds went into the council's central capital pot and was spent wherever [in the region], and the [local] community lost the asset they had for hundreds of years.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

The consultation had begun with the parish council, which decided that although it supported the potential for community-led development it did not wish to undertake development itself, leading to the formation of an independent working group and the eventual constitution of the CLT in 2004. Having devised proposals for a large-scale scheme involving the development of affordable and market housing, workspace, community facilities and woodland, in 2010 the land for development was conveyed to the CLT for the initial sum of £1, with the full land value of £750,000 to be paid upon completion of the scheme. This method of transfer was praised by interviewees from both the CLT and the council for its economic pragmatism: rather than having to raise the sum in advance, the price of the land could be paid as the CLT began to generate some revenue through the completed homes and workspace. Clearly this required the council to place a degree of trust in the CLT's operations but supporting local initiatives in their area was seen as something that the council should be doing in the context of government rhetoric around community empowerment, notwithstanding the need to act as a "critical friend" in ensuring the CLT would be capable of delivering:

All the philosophical elements that underpin a CLT's *raison d'être*, if you like, are very much in line with the way in which our council should be supporting communities to take local responsibility and support their leadership. I suppose it fits in philosophically as well as a practical vehicle for the project delivery.

We're not saying that it should be done everywhere, we're saying where an opportunity that arises that fits with our priorities and our philosophy and way of working, here's one vehicle for delivering it.

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

Therefore a critical factor in acquiring public land was the alignment of the CLT's objectives with the strategic priorities and philosophies of the public sector

landowner. However despite this partnership between the CLT and county council, transfer of land was significantly delayed due to problems gaining planning permission. An outline planning application had been placed in 2003 and approved by the local planning authority but 'called in' for public inquiry by the Government Office for South West and eventually rejected in 2006 on the basis that it did not meet national priorities. There was obvious frustration at this delay and the way in which centralised decision-making appeared to overrule local democracy:

We had the parish council that was part of the whole thing and saying "yes, we're up for this", the district council as the local planning body who looked at it long and hard ... but thought that it merited approval. The county council was fully supportive and we had people from right across the board - bishops, ministers, God knows - involved in conversations giving it support, and then a single planning inspector kicks it out having taken 8-9 months to get to government office to appoint the person, then another 12 months as they went through a long-winded process of investigation.

It just seemed like an incredibly protracted process to reach a decision that everyone else that has some form of democratic legitimacy in the area were supportive of, and then they rejected it!

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

When the planning applications went in there were very very few objections and all the ones were either from people who live within 50 yards of the development – so you understand their position as they don't want something built on their doorstep – or from a neighbouring parish council who didn't want any extra traffic going through their village. At the point when we put this latest application in the planners said to us that they would have expected over 200 letters of objection and they had a total of 19 which actually emanated from six people. I think that says it all really.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

At the micro level of the community the breadth of the CLT's network of connections was evident, encompassing the traditional hierarchies of democratic legitimacy along with a dispersed network of latent support within the local population (evidenced by the CLT's high rates of membership). Yet, there appeared to be frustration in the way the communitarian ideal of a participatory local democracy in conjunction with representative forms was constrained by centralised decision-making. The "latest application" referred to in the latter quote references the resubmission for planning permission that was eventually granted in 2010, allowing the acquisition of land to be completed. The experience of the CLT's struggle to gain planning permission has partly influenced the English government's plans to devolve land use planning decisions to community level, a process considered in Section 6.3. With reference to the potential for acquiring land, it appears that the council's philosophical commitment to supporting local community ownership and enterprise was influential in facilitating this, leading to a beneficial economic arrangement allowing the CLT to progress. Indeed, as the Chair of the CLT commented, without this arrangement the CLT's plans would have struggled to progress:

They've [the council] been very supportive and the ultimate support has been that they are transferring the land for the housing for nil cost initially on the basis that we'll pay them back with the income from the development, so they've actually enabled us to do it. If we'd had to raise the money for the land first we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we're going to achieve.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

However, it should not be assumed that this commitment and alignment of a council's priorities and a CLT's objectives is easy to achieve. The High Bickington case is but one among many and it is interesting to contrast the development of CLTs in Wales, where the public transfer or subsidisation of assets has been a recurrent theme subject to different tensions and negotiation.

North Wales Local Authority had identified CLTs as a potential mechanism through which affordable housing delivery could be increased. A 2007-2011 Affordable Housing Delivery Statement provided to me for the research explicitly stated this support, with the caveat that CLTs were seen as a complementary measure to existing forms of provision:

North Wales Local Authority acknowledges that Community Land Trusts (CLT) can play a part in providing affordable homes in their communities in those circumstances where the CLT option is the most appropriate to deliver affordable homes. It is important however that from a strategic housing perspective that any CLTs do not dilute the impact and role of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Any CLT's activities should therefore be focused on new provision in locations where RSLs are currently not operating through either the inability to access suitable sites or lack of funding.

North Wales Local Authority (2009)

In May 2010 CLTs were again briefly mentioned in a Council progress report:

The Affordable Housing Officer continues collaborating and offering guidance to community groups who want to establish and implement the Community Land Trust model of providing affordable housing on sites in the Council's ownership.

North Wales Local Authority (2010)

CLTs in this area were clearly at an early stage as indicated in this statement, though the opportunity for asset transfer had clearly been identified. The council had a history of releasing land in its ownership for affordable housing development, reporting in the same progress report that £360,000 had been indirectly invested into development via the disposal of land for less than open market value to housing

associations throughout the county (North Wales Local Authority, 2010). Therefore, bearing in mind these statements, it was somewhat of a surprise during fieldwork to encounter concern with CLTs "having their eye" on obtaining public land:

If the view is that with the public purse tightening you need to get best value out of land ... I think from our perspective they [the local authority's estates department] found it difficult to justify why you would potentially release land for nil value when you know you could sell it on the open market and make a bit of money there, or develop similar products yourself.

Affordable Housing Officer, North Wales Local Authority

When probed further, the opportunity for asset transfer was hindered not only by the economic value of land and pressure from the council's estates department, but also by the wider issue of who the council's work assists. Unlike in the South West of England, where councils were unperturbed by the possible perception of giving preferential treatment to an area, North Wales's council seemed to be wary of assisting one CLT group with access to land in case CLT development "mushroomed" around the county:

There was a concern initially when we started receiving requests to be helping and releasing land for these groups that we would be displaying a preference to certain areas and that groups within other neighbouring parishes would latch onto this ... the concern then [would be] that land trusts would be popping up like mushrooms all over the county ... if you're going to go forward with these type of schemes in North Wales [it is important that] you don't just concentrate on certain areas, that the remit of such a group may be to cover quite a broader area in its constitution, maybe to convey that it doesn't favour just one small locality.

Affordable Housing Officer, North Wales Local Authority

The end of this quote introduces a degree of trepidation at the CLT's locally-specific remit. As the previous chapter demonstrated, CLTs are often premised on the basis that localised community governance should be positioned to make decisions over how housing should be decided upon, provided and governed at a local level. Although the county's rural housing enabler argued that CLTs were seen from the community-level as a mechanism of overcoming animosity between local authorities and communities (quoted in section 6.1), he also identified scepticism among local strategic stakeholders (such as local authorities and housing associations) at how CLTs may operate on this premise:

I think there is a tendency that - it's not mistrust as such - but scepticism regarding what their [CLT's] real incentive is to do this. In some communities there is a more biased feeling towards helping those who are slightly better off ... [so] there is a tendency to be aware of what's the agenda behind these ideas and the CLT is something that people are feeling a bit cautious of helping too much in developing.

Rural Housing Enabler, North Wales

Joining the dots between the rural housing enabler's comments and existing literature, Flint *et al.*'s (2009) review of barriers to delivering affordable housing in Wales found several concerns in rural communities related to interrelated issues of a stigmatisation of affordable housing and its allocation to non-locals. The rural housing enabler expressed the opinion that previous experience of housing association allocations to people without a connection to a community had previously caused problems in one of the areas where CLT interest had been located:

When I started working with the CLT they were quite reticent to encourage working with a housing association due to the fact that they had slightly bad experiences with tenants who had no connection with a certain community and they had brought some problems which had increased over

the years. So it was slightly seen that the CLT was seen as something as an alternative to housing associations because of that feeling, but since then CLTs haven't really taken off because of various problems in getting land, the fact that transfer of public-owned land hasn't been that well received.

#### Rural Housing Enabler, North Wales

The study by Flint *et al.* (2009, p. v) also found that affordable housing was mainly facilitated when it was "explicitly linked to the sustainability of local communities and the protection of services and facilities, and in some areas, the Welsh language". While the validity of the need to protect local services and facilities is not under question, there was clearly suspicion among interviewees that the CLT model could be used as a vehicle to differentiate precisely who these services were for: i.e. the locally-based or geographically linked "slightly better off" who may be perceived as more deserving of assistance than those outside the immediate locality. It was for these reasons that, as the rural housing enabler describes above, the transfer of public-owned land was not well received.

This feeling was endorsed by the council's Affordable Housing Officer, who expressed a concern that the potential for locally-specific strategies to focus too tightly on a "certain type of clientele" meant that public land transfer may not be the fairest course of action for a local authority to engage in. Indeed, a further view from the rural housing enabler that "people would like to have houses built for *specific types of people*" (my emphasis) was a predominant concern as illustrated further in the quotations below:

A lot of the scepticism comes from that fact that these people are seeking to secure local authority land for a nominal value and that the whole thing is being developed for the purpose of a potentially tight knit community and potentially within very tight allocation criteria as well ... I think locally here in terms of the groups who are developing, they do seem to be very much

tailored to the needs of a certain type of clientele, you know, people who are really local.

Affordable Housing Officer, North Wales Local Authority

The models that have been shown to authorities; there's a feeling that it's a slightly, possibly elitist, type of development in that people would like to have houses built for specific types of people.

Rural Housing Enabler, North Wales

This analysis brings forward a concern at the way CLTs could manifest. An aim of allocating housing to people possessing particular characteristics via the adjudication of the CLT - in this case being "slightly better off" - holds obvious potential for excluding those who do not meet or possess those qualities. The council's reluctance to release land for groups holding these objectives led to the aforementioned groups disbanding or adopting new organisational forms and ways of working during fieldwork. While the opportunity for asset transfer in Devon had been harnessed by a social rationale adopted by the council emphasising a citizen-centred partnership approach to "protecting local community facilities for generations to come" (in the words of the Community Strategy Officer quoted in the previous chapter), the developments in North Wales were tempered by the question of exactly who affordable housing would be "protected" for. This was illustrated in the council's affordable housing statement referenced above, emphasising that CLTs should not dilute the impact of housing associations, and endorsed by both interviewees who described the preference for providing housing through more conventional and trusted models:

It's a situation where CLTs in my neck of the woods are finding it difficult to try and persuade people that the way forward is through a CLT and not through conventional models like housing associations or private developers.

People have been more used to the model of the housing associations developing and the fact you've got a small group of local people coming together ... I think it's important you understand this from the perspective of models using public sector property ... public sector land that we've sold for less than best value to housing associations over the past 5-6 years [has been accepted because] ... we know that the housing associations have their duties [with] regulation governed by the [Welsh] Assembly, so I think they are a more tried and tested and *trusted* (my emphasis) model.

Affordable Housing Officer, North Wales Local Authority

The word "trusted" is emphasised in the latter quote as, though not explicitly stated, it is possible to identify some concern at the development of CLTs and the motivations, aims and desired ends of those behind them, especially in comparison to traditional forms of provision. As the rural housing enabler commented earlier in this section, the incentive for communities to form and develop CLTs was questioned and the extent to which it could be considered altruistic was obviously under scrutiny.

While the idea that community can be a scene for conflict as much as for co-operation is not new (Taylor, 1992, p. 2; DeFilippis *et al.*, 2006), this is a particularly interesting finding of this research given the English government's plans to introduce a community right to build (CRTB). The CRTB proposes that communities should be permitted to develop their own housing schemes through a CLT without gaining planning permission from local authorities provided they secure more than 50 per cent of a vote in a community referendum (CLG, 2010). Speaking at the 2010 national CLT conference, the government's minister for housing Grant Shapps explained the fundamental principles for introducing the CRTB:

For the first time it will be communities, not central Government, who decide what happens in their local area. We want local people to decide what happens in their community ... I want communities to have the freedom to decide on the type and quantity of housing without external restrictions imposed by a centralised planning system. The English villages that captivate the world's imagination were largely built at a time before a planning system existed. They were built by local people to meet their needs. I want to unlock the passions and drive of communities. I want to free them to realise their vision.

Shapps (2010b)

This permits communities the freedom to decide on the type of housing that is provided, who it should be allocated to according to "their vision"<sup>50</sup> and is based on a premise that government intervention has stunted the drive and desires of communities. Indeed, much of the talk at various CLT conferences and events attended during the fieldwork related to the influence the case of High Bickington had had on the CRTB plans, where a centralised planning system had apparently threatened to override local democracy and impede the CLT's access to public land through asset transfer.

Yet, although placed in a different national context and concerned with the basic transfer of public land rather than the granting of planning permission itself, the case of North Wales highlights that the drive and vision of communities seeking to form CLTs may not easily translate into outcomes that meet the strategic responsibilities of elected tiers of government. While the concerns and objectives of a local authority and CLT matched up in High Bickington, partly due to the weight of community support and consensus that facilitated the willingness to support asset transfer, in

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<sup>50</sup> Notwithstanding accountability to funders and regulators, this will be discussed in the following chapter.

North Wales the access to land was constrained by the divergent aims and objectives of the respective parties. This reminds us that, despite the utopian ideals described by Grant Shapps, community involvement alone does not automatically translate into improved policymaking or housing delivery. It is instead subject to a range of different interpretations of the way CLTs may be utilised to particular ends contingent on local circumstances and rationales.

### **6.3 Taking it to the community: local referendums over land use**

The third proposal to bring forward land for CLTs discussed here is the CRTB's idea that land use can be decided by community consensus determined through a local referendum. Interestingly, though the CRTB is presented as a novel approach, there is a precedent for local community referendums over development issues. Operated through parish councils, parish polls have been legislated for since powers for their instigation were granted in the Local Government Act 1972 (HM Government, 1972). Parish polls require a minimum of ten people at a parish council meeting to call for a poll on any local issue. Although the result is non-binding, they provide a mechanism for local people to democratically express their view over a particular local issue (for example, local development or use of parish resources). Having become aware of the plans for the CRTB in early 2010, a village CLT in the South West instigated a parish poll over whether or not the CLT should build affordable housing on a piece of land owned by the parish council, providing a useful example of how CLTs may organise and negotiate over local referendums.

Like many of its counterparts described in this thesis, this CLT<sup>51</sup> had identified a beneficial financial arrangement over a piece of local land, negotiating with the parish council to acquire it for a nominal sum. Early communications with the local

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<sup>51</sup> Participants in this part of the study (and in later chapters) are anonymised at the request of an interviewee.

planning authority indicated they were content for property to be built on the land and, as the CLT's development plans progressed, a public meeting was held to ascertain local opinion:

We'd talked to the planners along the way, getting close to getting planning permission, we felt that we really ought to let the village know what we're doing and get the village behind us. So we had a big meeting, 98 people turned up, it was a good meeting. We outlined our full proposals, there were a lot of objections but we had another plot at the far end of the land, so we said 'what about this?' There was a big vote in favour of that, we got a big majority.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

While this indicates a degree of community consensus achieved through negotiation, opposition was then exercised at a subsequent parish council meeting as the plans developed:

We [then] went along to the parish council meeting and told them what we were intending doing ... and there were people in the audience who stood up and trotted out all sorts of things like "we don't want the riff raff from Birmingham coming here" and "why should we subsidise people to make big profits on houses when we've had to struggle to get ours" and all sorts of ignorant questions started coming out ... it did highlight an awful lot of ignorance as to what affordable intermediate housing meant.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

The prevalence of community concern was also articulated by an interviewee from a local voluntary group in the village, particularly with regards to the ambiguity of the relative term "affordable housing":

I think this is an issue of transparency. The simple answer is that the CLT have never made clear, it was not defined, what affordable housing really was meaning. In other words, this loose term affordable housing was all that was being thrown around.

Office Holder, Village Interest Group

These concerns were reflected in a series of questions gathered from the community by a village interest group, acting as a conduit between the local community and the CLT. While many of the community's questions related to common concerns as to the impact housing will have on local infrastructure (for example car parking) and the physical environment, others quoted below illustrate that articulating a community's vision with regards to the development and allocation of housing is subject to a host of views and interpretations as to who should benefit, especially when the development is led by others in the community:

I fear the secretive attitude of the CLT.

Consultation on such an important matter for the village has been rushed, and the speed is cause for concern and sufficient to challenge and further question the CLT.

Why are there no options using private land? Perhaps because the proposal doesn't make sound economic sense and only works if we the parishioners agree to give up our rights to our land without compensation.

I am bemused at the whole idea of public funds being used to tinker with market economics and for the benefit of quite a small minority.

I fear there are many cans of worms being opened up here which could cause decades of friction within the village if the development is rushed into being.

Can the houses be sublet? Who is permitted to occupy? Just [local] residents or anybody? What safeguards are there to prevent them being occupied by problem families who could damage our village life and security?

Village Interest Group (2011)<sup>52</sup>

With reference to these concerns, the Chair of the interest group commented that "there was a fair amount of consternation around [but] equally there was a view held by a lot of people that the CLT should proceed as voted for [at the initial public meeting]". It was this divide in public opinion that led to the decision to hold a parish poll.

The poll posed the question: "*Are you in favour of the CLT progressing the development of affordable housing on the site in the grass keep field north of the community garden?*" to which 127 voted in favour and 148 against. From the CLT's perspective, "ignorance as to what affordable intermediate housing meant" was to blame for this outcome and the result was influenced by the mobilisation of an oppositional campaign:

There was a group which started up, didn't publicise themselves, but conducted a whispering campaign. There were two or three people who made it clear their business whenever talking to their neighbours, to say how terrible they thought the affordable housing was and that we shouldn't have it in the village. There was a whispering campaign going on which we didn't know

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<sup>52</sup> This question and answer session was transcribed and uploaded to the village interest group's website. An interviewee provided me with the document but it is anonymised here for the purpose of confidentiality.

about. That was again part of the reason why we lost the parish poll ... You're always going to get a "no". Anyone who is not sure is going to vote "no".

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

Based on this description, the CLT found it difficult to counteract opposition to both their plans for development and traditional perceptions as to what affordable housing equated to. As if to illustrate the tensions and competing interpretations of the legitimacy and fairness of the poll, a similar attitude towards its organisation was described to me from the opposing viewpoint:

If it's an election equivalent, for every vote in favour there's going to be an element against it, but how would a "no" vote be mobilised? Because the CLT are well and truly mobilised along with members of the parish council, but how do individuals pull together a "no" election campaign at short notice? Unlike the CLT who have been thinking about this for months.

Office Holder, Village Interest Group

The Chair was quite adamant that the "no" vote was, in his view, the correct and just result of the poll, but even despite this the experience of the poll cast doubt on the potential for the CRTB to generate an accepted consensus:

In terms of these referendums, there's got to be an even playing field and that certainly wasn't an even playing field in terms of having a parish poll.

Office Holder, Village Interest Group

The organisational power of the CLT was therefore perceived to be of benefit in organising and campaigning for the local vote over the potential use of the land for

affordable housing, even though the result of the vote eventually went against the CLT's plans. As a consequence, a CLT board member stated that the parish council withdrew the offer of land due to the weight of the community vote, even though the parish council themselves remained supportive, as illustrated in the parish council's annual report published a year after the vote:

Probably the single most worrying obstacle to the sustainability of our community is the lack of a balanced housing stock ... We are fortunate to have the Community Land Trust, which has been working hard to provide affordable housing for the community ... We must show our appreciation for their efforts.

Village Parish Council (2011)

The exact nature of the housing stock in the village, and pertinently its allocation and value, was the subject of contestation during the poll and the diverging views that are evident here illustrate exactly why community-led housing should not be cast as a process that will effortlessly glide to utopian and harmonious outcomes. The ambiguity over what the development and definition of affordable housing would mean in practice was palpable, both in the concerns of some of the village's residents and in the interview with the Chair of the village interest group.

In particular, the transfer of publicly-owned land for a nominal fee was perceived as a subsidy helping a small minority, especially within the intermediate housing market:

There is a particular view within this parish as to why we should be subsidising houses when ... individuals with an income of up to £50,000 can apply for 'affordable housing'. That's where the cynicism now kicks in. They [the CLT] were then talking about not letting people with income over £28,000 [apply]. That's still slightly above the national average. Although it won't get

you a property here that easily, if they can't get one then what about the individuals lower down on £15-17,000?

Office Holder, Village Interest Group

The reference to why "we" should subsidise property indicates a communal claim to land, despite it being in the parish council's ownership, a view picked up on by the CLT in their response to the village's concerns:

The "parishioners" as such have no rights to the land; it belongs to the parish council and the objective of providing affordable housing is to ensure that the community as a whole benefits by maintaining the vitality of the village ... I hope the day never comes when the majority stops aiding the minorities.

Village CLT in the South West

However, as the Chair picked up on, the definition of who the "minorities" are is contested and his personal view was that intermediate housing targeted at middle-income households was not an adequate way of meeting the needs of the local area:

[The CLT's initial objectives] aligned totally with my view on supporting those at the less resourced end of the spectrum, but the other thing that struck me was how on earth does that mean [they're] only prepared to go for intermediate housing. I was told that if someone wants to organise social housing for the community they can do it themselves, they're not interested.

Office Holder, Village Interest Group

However, when probed on this the contrasting opinions on the type of housing that should be provided became less polarised. A housing needs survey conducted for

the village had identified housing need for both intermediate and social rented housing. Social rented housing is traditionally provided by housing associations and local authorities who often allocate housing according to social and economic need and family circumstances in addition to local connection. When questioned whether the Office Holder of the local interest group would prefer the CLT to place greater emphasis on these traditional understandings of need, defined aspatially as opposed to in relation to locality, a conflicting view came to the fore that revealed an emphasis on meeting need defined purely by geography rather than economics was of greater importance:

This is an important point that balances out to some degree the concerns of the parish council and the CLT in terms of keeping it tight for the community. If one of the large national housing trusts or even one of the more local housing trusts seeks to build social housing here and then en masse, the biggest concern is miscreants are brought in from the city, to cause mayhem in the village then that is not the best use of village land.

Therefore the issue of social housing, and the definition of who has the greatest need within the district, is a big one and a sensitive one and one that could ultimately have me saying that the need should be for the parish alone. I believe social housing should be particularly focused on the needs of the particular community and if they've identified 16 units are needed [we should] just build 8 that can be easily filled within the community and not by those with a greater need with the points totting up system. I say that because family connections are very important.

Office Holder, Village Interest Group

There are clearly different interpretations as to what constitutes the "best use of village land", which led to the community vote going against the CLT's plans and, as discussed, the parish council withdrawing the offer of land. This finding raises

pertinent issues relating not only to the potential outcomes held by the CRTB but also to the transfer of public land into community ownership for the purpose of developing housing. The type, value and allocation of local housing are strongly contested issues as borne out by the emotive quotations above and community consensus over how housing should be provided and governed locally is not easy to generate. This illustrates the assertion of Davis (1991, p. 5) that territorially based collective action does not necessarily involve a single neighbourhood group united around a shared interest. Instead there may be multiple interests conveyed by multiple interest groups interacting conflictually rather than cooperatively.

This conflict can generate uncertainty as to the best use of local assets and the accountability of locally-elected authorities such as the parish council in this instance. They are accountable to their local electorate and their willingness to transfer land may be affected by the dominant narratives and opinions within the local community whether they align with strategic priorities or not, as evidenced by the parish council's concurrent withdrawal of land to, but continued support for, the CLT. Reflecting on the result of the poll and the subsequent withdrawal of the parish council's offer of cheap land, a CLT board member identified a tinge of regret at taking the issue to a community vote:

There are three or four people on our board who say we ought to treat this whole thing just like a developer who comes in, sees a bit of land and just puts in planning permission, full stop, and ignores everyone else ... I suppose in today's terms - 'big society'-wise - we tend to feel it would be nice if we had everyone behind us. But there is a strong feeling on our board we should just go ahead, get the land - blow it - go ahead and do it.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

It should be stated that this has not happened at the time of writing (October 2011) and that the CLT is exploring the potential of developing on an alternative piece of

local land. However, not only does the hint of regret at taking the issue to a community vote cast doubt on the lasting value of attempting to generate consensus through local referendums, but the strength of feeling within the village that this analysis has described could entrench attitudes towards local development. Based on this qualitative evidence, one future scenario for localities unable to generate consensus through the CRTB may be to attempt to gain planning permission via conventional means, ignoring the result of a poll that may or may not have gone in their favour.

If the CRTB is to allow local people to meet their needs, unlock the drive of communities and free them to realise their vision (Shapps, 2010b), then it appears that reliance on communities to co-operate and reach decisions by consensus may be blighted by different understandings of, and motivations for, community-led action. Within this, localisation of decision-making, often assumed to link to mutuality and egalitarianism (Dixon *et al.*, 2005, p. 14), does not necessarily result in inherently democratic outcomes. We can see this in the final quotation from the Chair of the village interest group, where the responsibility and priority of the community's activity is not only focused on who it will help - i.e. those with a local connection - but on those who it should not and will not help. Despite the opposition to the CLT's aim of building intermediate housing, the primary concern of the community seemed to be the retention of local community control over allocations. This led to the conclusion that:

If I knew enough about it all so that I was well aware that you could not run a CLT to do anything other than provide intermediate housing because the social housing could only be handled by national bodies or the district council, and would certainly mean in the village that those undesirables from other parts of the county came into it, then I'd well and truly be behind the CLT with its current form and objective.

Office Holder, Village Interest Group

Therefore, despite the opposition to the CLT and conflicts within the community over the process of the parish poll, the CLT's aim to provide a form of housing that would be subject to local control over occupancy was deemed to be preferable to any lower value accommodation that may be subject to outside influence and external pressures. The importance of local connection in defining housing need outweighed any other concern. These concerns were in fact also backed up by the CLT. After losing the community vote, a CLT board member stated their desire to continue to find a way to meet the local housing need identified in the housing needs survey due to their concerns over how housing is provided and governed by external agencies.

We're concerned if the need's not met from within the community it would be met by an external agency. That could mean losing not only our ability to decide who would occupy the properties but also the pride that comes from doing it ourselves and, ultimately, the considerable financial benefit that will flow to the community from unencumbered rental income.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West, cited in local press<sup>53</sup>

This case validates the construction of rationales for CLT development described in the previous chapter: CLTs are a vehicle through which communities can begin to exercise choice over how housing should be provided and who it should assist. The civic rationale provided by Lowndes and Sullivan's (2008) framework provide an explanatory tool for this: communities involved in neighbourhood governance can develop shared values, beliefs and goals which can be mobilised to address the identified collective social problems, exercising voice and choice over decisions that affect them. In this case, while the parish poll may have debated the validity of the 'voice' - i.e. whether a CLT is the appropriate mechanism to deliver - there appeared

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<sup>53</sup> This quotation is taken from a local press cutting that reflected on the outcome of the parish poll.

to be little discrepancy between the common 'choice' of the community; that is the creation and preservation of land and housing for local people.

We can trace these concerns back to the concerns over the CLT's use of land. Some village residents were concerned at the perceived threat housing development would pose to their "village security" and a particular way of life, while others were particularly wary of the proposed homes being allocated to people without a connection to the village. Despite the conflicts between village members and the CLT, they were united around the need to control the allocation of housing for local people. The analysis evokes Elias and Scotson's (1965) seminal work on the "established and outsiders", where an established group in a community (established by virtue of its generational and local attachment, generating a source of collective power) experience the influx (or potential influx in this case) of 'outsiders' as a threat to an established way of life. This causes the established to close ranks against the outsiders, thus preserving what they felt to be of high value, protecting their identity as a group and asserting local power against outside influences.

Here, the CLT was seen by people in the community both as a threat to an established way of life (by those wary of who the homes would be allocated to), and as a route towards asserting the rights of local people in housing governance above outside influence. The power provided to communities here is evident and questions the desirability of devolving decisions over land use to community level. The claims of CLTs – and the ideology of the CRTB policy described at the outset of the chapter – are orientated towards shifting the locus of power in housing provision in order to prioritise the local needs as defined by the community. By definition this excludes the 'outsiders' - the non-local - and as such the desirability of this could be debated for its impact on particular social groups that fall outside the population a CLT is set up to serve: namely those with no local connection to an area and a differential collective power compared to those within an established community.

## 6.4 Negotiation of communitarian civic rationales

If the argument is that the emphasis on local control and management over and above external influence equates to a civic rationale, it could be questioned whether or not this is actually any different from the priorities of other CLTs featured so far in this thesis. Has the analysis above created a 'straw man' of logic by overstating or misrepresenting the subject's position (Pirie, 2006, p. 156)? After all, the ability of CLTs to help retain and boost particular parts of the population was a common theme in the model's rationalisation discussed in Chapter 6.

Indeed, when compared with the rationales held by other CLTs described in Chapter 5, on face value there may not appear to be much difference. All unite around the common value of local control and by their very nature subscribe to the communitarian view that "enabling people to participate openly and directly in making the decisions that govern their lives" (Etzioni, 1995a, p. 142) holds regenerative potential for their local area.

This chapter began by demonstrating the way in which CLTs may help tackle constraints upon the supply of land by aligning their objectives with the communitarian concerns of local landowners. The provision of resale restricted housing for people with a local connection appealed to the attachment landowners held to their local area and thwarted concerns that the land would be leaked to the open market. The ability of CLTs to seemingly protect community facilities through local control was also a key factor in harnessing the potential for asset transfer in High Bickington, allowing their local authority to meet philosophical commitments to community empowerment and provide critical economic support to the CLT. In these instances, the structure and underlying aim of a CLT has provided the opportunity for people to invest in civic relationships marked by participation in their local community (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008), a process communitarian philosophy sees as imperative to reforming the relationship between individuals, communities and the state:

The more opportunities we provide ... to allow people to apply their civic commitment, the more powerful it will grow to be, and the more the moral and social order will be carried by the community rather than the state.

Etzioni (1995a, p. 160)

Interpreting this process in the context of CLTs, the emphasis of CLTs is not necessarily on community usurping the state in carrying out the "moral and social order" per se, but also in gaining a degree of control and influence over local housing over and above housing associations, market forces and traditional conceptions of housing need, all of which may in some instances be interpreted as conflicting with CLT desires for local autonomy. This was certainly evident in the village CLT in the South West, where despite conflicts within the community there were common agreements as to the need for local control through a CLT rather than an external agency such as a housing association. Similar desires for local control over housing allocations were also identified in North Wales, partly influenced by previous experiences of housing association allocation policies which had placed tenants with no local connection into communities and led to problems in community relations.

Yet, the extent of these desires is not evident in every area where a CLT has emerged. In some areas stating that CLTs are entirely focused on local control and protection from external influence would be to ignore the local circumstances that frame and assist their development. For instance, the desire to provide local needs housing for the benefit of a clearly defined section of the community in High Bickington can be tempered by the CLT's proposal to build adjacent housing to sell on the open market and cross-subsidise the affordable homes and community facilities. As the CLT described in a submission to the Affordable Rural Housing Commission in 2005, the aim was to complement and supplement existing provision:

Our housing survey identifies many needs which would not be identified through a local authority waiting list: people in work with average or below

average wages; couples living at home; single people; people securing employment in the village but without accommodation ... we aim both to supplement affordable housing provision and to meet needs that social housing would not be able to respond to but which are critical for the economic life and vitality of our community.

High Bickington CLT (2005)

Therefore while there may have been a powerful commitment to participatory democracy and the weight this should carry in comparison to elected forms of governance (as described in the previous chapter), there was a clear acknowledgement that CLTs do not operate in isolation from existing structures of housing provision and local governance. Indeed, the tentative argument presented in that section - that participatory democracy may only be possible with the support and advocacy of more traditional tiers of representative democracy - appears to be validated by the analysis in this chapter whereby the council's commitment to supporting the CLT provided access to land on beneficial terms. Furthermore, as the following chapter will illustrate, many CLTs have engaged with housing associations in joint developments, funding arrangements and knowledge transfer, illustrating that positioning CLTs merely as a reaction to the perceived inadequacy of the operation of housing associations would be far too simplistic. Instead, a CLT's desire for local control and influence over how housing is decided upon, provided and governed may be conveyed through different forms and developments and varied working relationships. These may reaffirm the supremacy of community in influencing decision making on housing but they do not necessarily dismiss external forces and interests.

If anything it is these working relationships that have influenced the development of the CLTs described in this chapter. While in Wales there appeared to be a degree of divergence between the incentives and objectives of CLTs and the priorities of local councils in ensuring fair and correct governance to all sections of the population, the

adoption of social rationales described by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008), typified by partnership and joined-up approaches to delivery, emphasis the importance of beneficial arrangements. While the CLT structure and its objectives incentivised the local landowner in St Minver to bring forward land for development, of critical importance to realising this was the local council's conveyance of a £544,000 interest-free loan to help the CLT purchase the land. Without this it is obvious that the CLT would have found it much more difficult to capitalise on the attachment held to the local area held by the landowner and his associated willingness to release land for local needs housing.

This was assisted not just by the local authority's realisation that localised accountability was needed - and provided by the CLT to the landowner through their commitment to holding the land in trust and restricting access to homes - but that community involvement had the potential to add value to their operation. As typified by the social rationale for neighbourhood governance, collaboration and partnership was needed to tailor services to local needs in an area where traditional ways of working would be difficult to effect:

Local authorities are not omnipotent. They don't have exclusive rights to common sense, far from it. What's got to be understood is what a partnership is. It's about both parties giving up control relative to what they would in order to get a greater whole out of it, and recognise it's not us telling them what to do and them telling you what the wicked council ought to give to them. It's about coming together and recognising that you give up authority relative to what you might normally want, but you get something greater out of it.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

Similar rationales were described in the relationship between High Bickington and Devon County Council where ties between local institutions appeared to facilitate the scheme's local acceptance and development. So while the councils in the South

West of England were happy to strike beneficial arrangements for land transfer and put forward money for land purchase respectively, CLT development is inevitably more difficult to achieve in areas where these rationales were rejected or the CLT's desire for civic commitment override the potential for compromise or development of partnerships. This was highlighted by the difficulties faced in striking beneficial arrangements for the transfer of public land in Wales.

These working relationships have been harnessed where a synergy has existed between the priorities and operation of local authorities and the CLT's concerns and objectives. For example, in Cornwall the council recognised the validity of the CLT's concerns for affordable housing in St Minver and assisted accordingly. Where there are different understandings and conceptions of what community consensus and control can and should do or influence, CLTs may not prosper. This suggests that the communitarian conception of co-operative enquiry and deliberation is not as effective as it is portrayed either by theorists (Tam, 1998, p. 17) or by policymakers in the creation of the CRTB (Shapps, 2010b). Henry Tam succinctly describes the ideal behind co-operative enquiry in that universal 'truths' do not exist as independent commonly understood facts; they are instead products of human consensus:

The communitarian principle of cooperative enquiry requires that any claim to truth be judged to be valid only if informed participants deliberating together under conditions of cooperative enquiry would accept that claim ... The objectivity of claims to the truth can only be secured through open communication between people engaged in a common enquiry.

Tam (1998, p. 17)

It is through this process of generating consensus that shared beliefs, values and decisions are generated. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, in the context of CLTs these may sometimes relate to the primacy of local community control over

access to housing at the expense of others. Therefore the consensus in the poll held in the South West was that affordable housing should only be built if correct safeguards are put in place to prevent specific types of people from accessing it. It is in this way that CLTs may be rationalised in a context other than the utopian community-led picture painted in their advocacy and literature.

## **Conclusion**

At a political level we can see that CLTs and the proposed CRTB process designed to facilitate them are endorsed as a mechanism which frees communities to realise their vision as to how housing should be decided, provided and governed at a local level:

People power is all about giving autonomy to individuals and trusting that with this responsibility the right decision will be made for the benefit of the community. We do not see local people shunning the chance to get involved in shaping their community when it is in their interests to do so and it is clearly explained to them why they should seize the moment.

CLG (2010, p. 4)

The parallel with the civic rationale outlined by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) is stark: communities will invest time and participation accordingly when they identify a relationship between their self (or, as a group, collective) interests and opportunities to shape or influence public policy. Advocacy of CLTs and the CRTB is based on a firm belief that people power can successfully plan and shape development and realise a common vision, yet as aspects of this chapter have demonstrated the "right decision" may not always be compatible with traditional understandings of economic equity and fairness as these definitions are inherently contested at a local level.

The question of exactly what is equal and fair is subject to interpretations of who should be assisted by community activism and under what terms. Some of the objectives described in this analysis have highlighted desires to delineate precisely who should (and pertinently who should not) benefit from local community influence, with community-led action seen as a route to self-governing these issues in a vacuum from external influence, though these issues are by no means applicable to all CLTs.

CLTs clearly do not operate in a vacuum and instead influence from external stakeholders such as local authorities involved in asset transfer can be critical to advancing schemes. Where genuine partnerships are created to realise the mutual self-interest of communities and local authorities, such as the transfer of land into community ownership at beneficial economic rates, CLTs seem to prosper. Where there is a greater emphasis on increasing self-governance at the expense of external influence and/or particular segments of the population, the acquisition of land through processes such as asset transfer will be more difficult to achieve.

Furthermore, the idea that community consensus can be easily generated over a common vision fails to address the competing interests and priorities that are inherent to creating new systems of co-governance where people may seek to leverage power over others. Rather than existing in a unique self-governing space, CLTs are subject not only to the interests of others in the community but also to the intertwined issues of acquiring finance for their project, associated regulatory procedures and the ability to exercise free choice over who homes are allocated to. As the following chapter's analysis of these issues will affirm, the ability of CLTs to progress their schemes and meet their objectives depends as much on the provision and acquisition of certain resources as it does on desires for local control and autonomy.

# Chapter 7: Dilemmas, compromise and trade-offs: financial arrangements for CLTs

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Under community governance, the community functions as the largest 'stakeholder' in the decision-making process. Other stakeholders could include those providing public and private goods and services to the community and stakeholders at other levels of governance ... to whom the community is accountable.

Somerville (2005, p. 120)

Somerville argues that community governance does not operate in isolation to stakeholders at other levels of governance, even where the community or its representational form such as a CLT aims to function as the largest stakeholder in the decision-making process. Given some of the issues raised in the previous chapter related to the interaction between CLTs and external agencies such as local authorities, this provides a useful introduction to this chapter's focus on the role of external financial stakeholders, their relationship to the formation and facilitation of CLTs, and how CLTs are legitimised in the eyes of funders as a potential housing provider.

The quotation also provides a useful bridge between the preceding chapter and the analysis that follows. So far this thesis has identified the way in which CLTs have formed on the basis of a desire to facilitate the provision of housing, meet need and become key stakeholders in decision-making processes over local housing. These desires for degrees of local control and influence have been supplemented in some

areas by a desire for autonomy seen as integral to ensuring the CLT is the primary decision-maker over the provision and governance of local housing. As the previous chapter illustrated, this communitarian emphasis has in some instances involved claims to carrying out civic commitment over and above housing associations, market forces and traditional conceptions of housing need, all of which were seen as potential threats to CLT control and locally-bounded objectives. It is in this way that community governance attempts to redefine and redraw the perceptions of what constitutes an appropriate area for local influence to be exercised, often conflicting with or reinterpreting traditionally recognised boundaries of governance such as the area of a local authority's jurisdiction (Somerville, 2005, p. 120).

Yet, as Somerville's description of community governance states, these aims do not operate in a vacuum removed from stakeholders to whom the community is accountable. Depending on its organisation and context, a CLT may be accountable to a host of stakeholders: its local area, funding bodies, regulators, tiers of local and national government, private and voluntary sector societies and potential partnering organisations. The focus here is on the accountability CLTs hold to potential funders, namely national housing funding agencies and local government. Housing providers are typically accountable to, and require legitimisation from, these stakeholders due to the former's concern that public subsidy is used effectively and efficiently and the latter's strategic responsibility to ensure an adequate supply of housing and meet housing need across their area of governance (Clapham and Satsangi, 1992). The need for legitimisation of a CLT's objectives in housing provision is especially pronounced due to their self-positioning as representatives of their local community. As Connelly (2011) describes, the extent to which these claims are accepted as valid by external stakeholders can be integral to the success or failure of community-led organisations:

they claim to be legitimate representatives of their communities, able to speak for them in other arenas and spend public money in line with the community's priorities ... [Therefore] the effectiveness of community-led

regeneration to some extent rests on the ability of new governance structures to establish legitimacy in the eyes of 'their' communities and of other actors in the wider policy and practical processes within which they are embedded.

Connelly (2011, p. 929-930)

In line with this, the focus of this chapter is on exploring the way in which CLTs aim to spend public finance in line with their priorities. Public finance refers here to that which is provided either by state-sponsored funders of affordable housing development or by local authorities. Finance is a key area of enquiry as a CLT's efforts can depend on successful acquisition of financial resources, as seen in the previous chapter whereby the access to land for the CLTs in question was dependent on the creation of beneficial financial arrangements through asset transfer or low-cost sale.

### **How CLTs are financed**

First, it is necessary to briefly describe how CLTs may be funded and to justify why the chapter focuses on public money in particular. CLTs generally require funding for three stages of the formation and development of their organisation and scheme:

- *Stage 1:* Start-up and pre-development finance to assist with company incorporation, fees for expert advice and costs for obtaining planning permission.
- *Stage 2:* Land purchase
- *Stage 3:* Development capital

The creation of a specialist CLT Fund in 2008 by charitable and ethical banks and investors provided a source of small-scale finance to assist CLTs with the first stage of funding. The latter two stages have typically been funded by local authority grants

and loans, public subsidy or long-term loan finance from charitable sources. Private funding of CLTs through mainstream banks is rare due to high interest rate.

The following sections describe the way in which CLT development has been negotiated between CLTs and their funders, investigating the way CLTs are legitimised by external stakeholders who may hold competing objectives or priorities. Of particular importance to this is the debate over how the process of forming and developing a CLT should influence the end outcome, developing arguments in the previous chapter over the primacy of local control and importance of autonomy.

It is for this reason that charitable finance is not explored in great depth. CLTs that have accepted long-term charitable and ethical loan finance to fund land purchase and/or housing construction have done so from charitable and ethical lenders who expressly support and aim to advance agendas of charity, community organisation and social enterprise.<sup>54</sup> As such, although CLTs may be financially accountable to these organisations, this is unlikely to tell us much about the processes of legitimisation undertaken by CLTs. However, as Section 7.2 demonstrates, charitable regulation is a relevant and important issue, as the conformity of a CLT to charitable regulation has contributed to the willingness of local authorities to provide finance.

The chapter argues that financial relationships that have guided or influenced CLTs do not constitute total acceptance of a CLT's purpose of ensuring they are the primary decision-maker over local housing provision, allocation and governance, but nor do they necessarily act as a mechanism of oppressive control aimed at thwarting these ambitions of local governance. Legitimacy is gained by conformity to identifiable sources of trustworthiness, such as charitable regulation, and through

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<sup>54</sup> As a point of clarification, charitable and ethical banks such as Charity Bank and Triodos do not solely finance charities; rather they finance non-profit organisations with 'social' objectives.

compromise of objectives and/or partnership with organisations such as housing associations. If public funding is dependent on such criteria, it is argued that it is in this way that finance can direct the behaviour of CLTs. The way finance may influence CLTs in the allocation of the homes they develop is discussed. It is argued that the primary objective of CLTs - to create a 'local security of tenure' for the community it wishes to serve - is subject to a degree of framing and permittance of how this is delivered by the state and its agencies through access to funding and associated regulations. The development of CLTs can therefore be understood not just as an ideological process, but as a relational and politicised process that involves positioning and compromising for resources.

### **7.1 The dilemmas and compromises in acquiring public subsidy**

Financing low-cost housing that is not to be sold on the open market has been a perennial challenge for any provider specialising in this provision, with a need for financial subsidy often created by the gap between the costs of development and what lower income households can afford (McDermont, 2010, p. 19). This situation has been especially exacerbated for CLTs due to their embryonic nature, lack of track record and position of relative organisational distance from conventional structures of housing provision and associated funding. As one CLT support worker put it, "CLTs are cash poor but resource hungry" which implied a financial need not only to fund housing development but to help access human resources such as technical skills and expertise. The ability of a CLT to unlock sources of finance has been one of the fundamental factors affecting their ability to gain local control and governance of housing.

Yet, as McDermont's (2010, p.19) analysis of housing associations illustrated, money can govern at a distance by creating relationships between funder and recipient which may direct or influence the use of that money and consequently a CLT's objectives. It became apparent during this study that CLTs were - generally speaking - wary of these governing relationships and the way in which the use of public

subsidy may be directed in ways that diverge from the CLT's philosophy. This was reflected by a press article featuring a prominent CLT activist in 2008:

Government money usually comes with strings attached. It's what happened to housing associations. They used to be community-led, but have been taken over by government regulation. That could happen to land trusts too. We need to define the boundaries between government and civic society carefully.

CLT activist, quoted in Donovan (2008)

In reality this view exaggerates the impact of government regulation and overlooks the role private finance has had on shaping the housing association sector's change from being a group of voluntary-led organisations based on philanthropy to a sector of "social businesses" where the lines between profit-making and not-for-profit are blurred (McDermont, 2010, p. 127). In particular, a reliance on private finance to raise development capital has created a relationship of dependency for housing associations who could be seen to be as accountable to the needs of private funders as to tenants, for example ensuring regular payment of rent and an elimination of "risky tenants" that threaten this (McDermont, 2004, p. 871). Nevertheless, it demonstrates the desire to carefully delineate the responsibilities of government and civic society - expressed through the vehicle of CLTs - in order to ensure that the priorities of the latter are predominant in the provision of local housing. The perception that public subsidy could create unwanted governing relationships between the state and its agencies and CLTs was acutely expressed in an article authored by a CLT practitioner:

The major strengths and unique selling points of the CLT model are independence and an ability to tailor housing to meet specific local needs ... We should think carefully, however, about what we are asking when we call for CLTs to be given public housing grants. The unique features of the CLT

model could be threatened if government moves to regulate CLTs and to merge them into the conventional social housing sector.

Aird (2010, p. 461)

This highlights the desire for local control and autonomy to be held by CLTs, particularly with regards to independence in decision-making in order to pursue the objective of tailoring the allocation of housing to, first and foremost, the needs of the CLT's local population. This was echoed by other CLT practitioners when the topic of finance arose during the study. While many CLT practitioners and volunteers took a pragmatic view that public subsidy constituted "free money" (in that it would not have to be repaid, thus allowing greater financial security to the CLT), others followed the view that acceptance of subsidy could blur the community-led process and primacy perceived to be the CLT's competitive advantage in housing provision:

It remains a challenge not to take the 'Queen's Shilling'. Our original vision was to unleash the potential of private citizens to provide social goods without having to have support of the state ... The ideal position is to achieve our aims without social housing grant. As a movement we need to leave the emphasis on HCA behind a bit. The model should be self-financing with the help of other subsidy so that [the equation is]  $CLT = Land + Public Support + charitable \text{ or } private \text{ funding}$ .

CLT Technical Advisor, quoted in Ward (2009)

The perception that strings would be attached to the receipt of public subsidy indicated a desire to stay true to a community-led ethos of self-help outside the mainstream of government provision. This position does fail to acknowledge the possibility that strings could be attached to private and charitable finance, but it furthers the argument that the key concern of many CLTs is their ability to carry out activity that demonstrates their attachment to place occurs over and above state

concerns. Although private and charitable loan finance would attach strings to CLTs through, for example, the need to repay long-term debt, they were not seen as colliding with an aim of creating a vehicle for communities to act outside conventional political systems, structures and priorities, as opposed to being enacted through networks formulated by the state for particular targets.

This was backed up by one interviewee who, as a strong advocate of ensuring CLTs were led by community-defined processes, argued for the need to avoid becoming "just another government model" based on a perception that this would collide with the CLT's ability to identify and meet local needs. This was echoed by a CLT technical advisor who spoke of the fundamental philosophy of CLTs being that they represent a structure for locally-defined problems and solutions: they represent local communities rather than acting as "agents for government". In this sense, the independence of CLTs was seen as paramount and becoming "just one of a range of housing providers that need to be controlled" (CLT technical advisor, quoted in Ward, 2009) was seen as a potential threat to this. It was, therefore, not only a concern that CLT ambitions could be directed by financial relationships per se, it was a concern of being directed by financial relationships that would convey the priorities of other forms of governance (such as state-sponsored national funding programmes). As the response Community Finance Solutions made to the consultation held by Communities and Local Government put it:

any practical support provided by government should have a 'light touch' ... by definition the aims of a CLT are defined by local needs and while they contribute to several national policy priorities, they should not be used to deliver regional or national agendas or targets.

CFS (2008c, p.7)

The preservation of independence described here can best be understood as obtaining a state of separation from regional structures in order to ensure the

primacy of locally-defined and community-led objectives. Essentially, CLTs should work for local people. Alongside this existed a pragmatic concern related to the application of existing legislation to CLT homes. Rental housing funded with public subsidy provided by the HCA becomes subject to the Right to Acquire which allows tenants a legal right to buy the home they are renting from registered providers of social housing. Homes developed on rural exception sites are exempt from these requirements, which can be of benefit for CLTs in attempting to assume local control over housing. However, as one of the fundamental missions of a CLT is to hold assets in perpetuity for the benefit of a defined community, the fear of the CLT's assets becoming subject to the right to acquire was seen as a deterrent to accepting subsidy for those acquiring land not designated as an exception site. It can be argued therefore that becoming subject to existing legal and regulatory procedures was seen as a threat to both the philosophical foundations and practical ambitions of CLTs.

Nevertheless the need to finance schemes meant that accessing subsidy from the HCA was not problematised by all practitioners, particularly for those CLTs exempt from the right to acquire due to development of shared ownership products or on rural exception sites. Indeed, CLT attempts to access subsidy predate the existence of the HCA and instead date back to its predecessor the Housing Corporation. The majority of fieldwork was conducted after the dissolution of the Housing Corporation, but it is worth providing a brief summary of their involvement with CLTs. Firstly, this summary illustrates the divide that has existed between the ambitions and capabilities of CLTs and those of the Corporation, and secondly it explains how differing standards, priorities and expectations of this funding relationship were overcome. This describes the evolution of the relationship between the body responsible for funding affordable housing development in England and CLTs, and provides an indication of how it may develop in the future.

This description is contextualised chronologically.<sup>55</sup> It takes the period from 2008-09 as its starting point, based on the author's view that the legal definition of a CLT during this period alongside a state-led consultation on how to support the model's development provided an impetus to the sector. Despite this impetus, relationships between CLTs and the Housing Corporation/HCA were strained due to a perceived lack of public legitimisation of the CLT concept. The period of 2009-10 follows as this is when a CLT was first granted subsidy from the HCA. This section charts the development of relations between the HCA and CLTs, highlighting the emphasis played on a role for housing associations to facilitate the process of funding CLTs. Finally, the period from 2010-11 describes how the role for housing associations may be formalised in future funding arrangements between the HCA and CLTs and discusses how this may be negotiated between stakeholders in the process.

### **2008-2009: funding negotiations**

The emerging CLT sector was in a state of flux during this period (coinciding with the beginning of the research study). CLTs had been legally defined in July's Housing & Regeneration Act 2008, leading Communities and Local Government (CLG) to launch a consultation in October on how they may support the development of CLTs. Added to the transitory state of the wider housing finance sector due to the impending dissolution of the Housing Corporation, as new providers CLTs found their efforts to gain subsidy thwarted due to a lack of knowledge and awareness among external stakeholders as to their place in the housing sector. As a representative from the Housing Corporation commented at a seminar in January 2009:

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<sup>55</sup> Although this sub-section is intended to chronologically describe the evolution of this relationship, the material used is often drawn from different periods of time in order to either reflect on or reinforce the relevant arguments.

The Housing Corporation ... did not deliver investment in CLTs. The bureaucracy and rules relating to CLTs are not yet sorted out, or even who should own CLT policy within the organisation. For instance they could sit in the new investments and partnerships division, the policy division or the finance and renewal division.

Housing Corporation Policy Officer, quoted in Ward (2009)

This apparent confusion trickled down to CLTs attempting to gain subsidy, as reflected by CLT practitioners interviewed at the time. Speaking in November 2008, the director of Cornwall CLT expressed his frustration at a bid for subsidy being turned down due to a perceived lack of understanding:

The rejection letter we had basically had nothing to do with value for money, it was saying they hadn't actually worked out a system for dealing with CLTs from an administrative point of view.

I think support is building but the issue is whether it's in a concrete way and if they're going to do it. It's been two and a half years now and they've been talking but we haven't seen anything:

Director, Cornwall CLT

The perception that CLTs were yet to be understood within the administrative and regulatory systems of the Corporation was a view shared among many practitioners and stakeholders. In Cornwall a local authority officer speaking in September 2009 shared the umbrella CLT's frustration at the apparent state of confusion:

*Interviewee:* As you may know the HCA<sup>56</sup> have not covered themselves in glory. They talk a good deal and actually do nothing. You'll have heard that ad nauseum!

*Researcher:* Have you got anything more to say about their involvement?

*Interviewee:* Only that the local authority has filled the void ... only that we've been lobbying for them to get their act together. Anyone who pretends these were an initiative of central government is fooling themselves. They weren't. It's been the local councils who've picked this up as an idea.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

"Filling the void" referred primarily to the council's provision of interest-free loans which aided land purchase among CLTs and was vital in easing the financial pressures they commonly face (this is discussed in more depth in the following section). The perception of inertia was partly attributed to the consultation held by CLG. Some interviewees working on CLTs rather pessimistically feared that the consultation may represent "delaying tactics" and a reluctance to facilitate CLTs, while the Housing Corporation officer above attributed their inability to fund CLTs to the consultation "stalling things ... [we] need to consult CLG on policies but CLG say they are still analysing consultation responses" (quoted in Ward, 2009).

In particular, the CLG consultation was concerned with the regulatory regime that would be implemented for CLTs and how their use of public funds could be monitored and considered transparent. The paper proposed that CLTs providing

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<sup>56</sup> Although the interviewee refers to the HCA, this passage refers to both the funding regime of September 2009 (when the interview took place) and the HCA, and to previous efforts to gain subsidy via the Housing Corporation before its dissolution in December 2008.

rental accommodation using subsidy would be required to register as a formal housing provider with the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) via the process used by housing associations:

The [Housing and Regeneration] Act requires that if the HCA proposes to provide financial assistance for low cost rental accommodation, it must ensure that the landlord is a provider registered with the TSA ... Therefore CLTs wishing to provide low cost rental accommodation, with financial assistance from the HCA, would need to be registered with the TSA and be subject to the regulation regime.

CLG (2008b, p. 12)

This would mean a CLT becoming an accredited housing provider (a pre-requisite of qualifying for subsidy for rental housing), yet many practitioner responses to the CLG consultation viewed the process of registration to be overbearing and too demanding for volunteers to undertake. This was summarised by the Development Trusts Association's response.

Though the detail of the proposed registration process is not yet clear, the consultation document does not identify what support CLTs might receive to undertake the process of registration or recognise the substantial burden this would represent to what are essentially volunteer-driven delivery vehicles. Indeed, the emphasis on a regulatory regime similar to that of RSLs is likely to undermine and deter future community-owned housing developments.

Development Trusts Association (2008, p. 12)

This accusation was repeated by many participants in the study with a widespread perception that CLTs were not seen as legitimate by those in authority. Although independence was cherished by CLTs, they acknowledged that receiving subsidy

would make their financial situation much easier, though as the quotation from Community Finance Solutions in the previous chapter described, the CLT sector demanded this would be "light touch" and proportionate to their capacity, aims and objectives rather than those of funders, regulators or governments. In this way the desired autonomy would be preserved. As the quotation below describes, the objective of the CLT sector was to carve out a new space for governing that would no longer be seen as an exception to mainstream affordable housing provision, and instead community-led and orientated housing provision, defined by and for the community, would be seen as the norm:

The Government will not be able to fulfil an enabling role in relation to CLTs if they continue to be represented by government and its agencies as exceptional, and thus potentially more difficult, risky or expensive. We are keen to see CLTs placed in the mainstream of housing providers working with central and local government and their agencies and partners.

CFS (2008c, p. 15)

This perception of government and "their agencies and partners" (such as the HCA) was summarised by a leading CLT advocate in a press article in 2009. The inability to access funding and the desire to regulate CLTs by the same standards as conventional providers was thought to undermine the potential for community-led localised development.

By being heavily regulated and seen as difficult to proportionately incorporate into funding regimes, CLTs felt they were represented as exceptional, risky and expensive with their actions therefore not seen as legitimate by those with the finance to enable CLT development:

Citizens are frequently met with condescension, suspicion and irritation at their presumption in wanting to meddle in the production of their homes.

These residents are conveniently depersonalised and disempowered with the catch-all label of "communities".

Hill (2009)

### **2009-2010: the first subsidy is granted**

In April 2009 Holy Island CLT became the first CLT to be granted subsidy by the HCA. The process they undertook to access subsidy was to provide an example of some of the frustrations described above while concurrently providing a potential template for future CLT development. Given the context described previously, if CLTs did not wish to register with the TSA, they were encouraged to bid for funding in conjunction with a housing association (CLG, 2008b, p. 12).

Encouraging CLTs to partner with the housing association sector was based on two reasons: its expertise in facilitating and completing funding processes, and its track record as the main provider of social housing in England.

Firstly, expertise was seen as a necessary component of any partnership. CLTs were required to complete a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) in order to access funding. The technicalities of completing this questionnaire, alongside the periodic progress reports required by the HCA during the construction of homes, were the primary reason why accessing subsidy was interpreted to be demanding of small scale voluntary organisations such as CLTs. Holy Island CLT partnered with a local housing association to assist in accessing subsidy and help fulfil these tasks, which were viewed as particularly stringent:

You have the HCA's systems which I have to say are not easy even as ourselves working with them day to day. We fill in the PQQ form to get these houses, then it goes onto an Information Management System and it gets logged all way through - housing quality indicators et cetera - it's got a whole

lot of things which are terminology which would faze people thinking "what on earth is that?" And [the PQQ is] a form of 250 pages ... that's ludicrous, you're almost signing your life away to do three or four homes.

Chief Executive, Housing Association, North East

This critique essentially argues that the model of accessing funding does not take adequate account of the capacity and expertise of applicants, nor does it take a proportionate approach to risk. That CLTs found a professionalised process difficult to navigate should be of little surprise as the HCA's affordable homes programme is one more designed for housing association providers whose size and resource (both human and financial) can have more in common with multi-million pound business than many voluntary organisations (McDermont, 2010, p. 127).

As described above, the administrative systems for embryonic organisations such as CLTs were still being negotiated during this period of time and the partnership arrangements were seen as a pragmatic way of allowing CLTs to access subsidy, while simultaneously providing the HCA with confidence in delivery. The PQQ itself contains a section on the financial viability of the applicant based on their previous track record of delivering and managing housing developments on time and on budget. A guide produced for CLTs seeking to access HCA grant published in 2009 stated that:

Given their formative nature (and therefore limited financial track-record), prequalification of CLTs is conditional on receipt of a letter of intent from a suitable guarantor that a Performance Guarantee or Bond will be provided ... For CLTs, we suggest the Performance Guarantee could be provided by the partner RSL.

Cotton, quoted in Brettell (2009, Appendix B of the document)

The inclusion of a performance guarantee was the second mechanism for encouraging the partnership between CLTs and housing associations. As Brettell (2009, p.5) describes, the performance guarantee places an obligation on the housing association to ensure the scheme is delivered and obliges them to step in and complete the development in full if the CLT were to fail to deliver. The housing association involved in the North East partnership were willing to accept this performance guarantee, largely because the CLT had already proven they had a track record.<sup>57</sup>

For them [the HCA] risk is a big element and of course it's risky to stand guarantor for someone you don't know, but having said that the North East situation was quite unique. They'd built seven of their own properties; they had already managed [rental housing], so in a way they fitted the criteria really well. Our board had met them and their view was that they'd done it once, got a clear indication that they'd be absolutely fine and there's nothing particularly risky so we will go through that process. But that won't be the same for every CLT and I don't think that's quite been spelt out to the trusts.

Chief Executive, Housing Association, North East

Despite the housing association's willingness to fulfil this part of the bargain, it was not accepted that this was the most appropriate course of action, only that it was the most pragmatic in order to achieve the desired outcome. In interviews Holy Island CLT volunteers described their history of developing and managing their first housing scheme since 1999 and viewed the partnership merely as a pragmatic way to accessing a critical source of finance, describing the housing association as "more of an agent than a partner". They fulfilled complex tasks in assisting with the

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<sup>57</sup> Holy Island CLT had a track record of housing development, yet due to changes in legal structure was unable to satisfy the requirements of the PQQ, hence the need for a housing association partnership.

bureaucracy of the PQQ and have since provided a useful housing management service while allowing the CLT to maintain independent control over the organisation's finance and housing allocations, but there was a definite feeling among volunteers that they should not be dependent on the housing association's involvement. The common call was for a simplified process proportionate to the number of houses being built (four homes in the case of this particular scheme) which could allow communities to do it themselves. Returning to the end of the previous section, the view that CLTs required stringent monitoring and control characterised the grant process, suggesting a lack of trust or legitimacy in the eyes of external stakeholders:

And it's a bit cheeky to expect the RSLs to do that when in fact the HCA are saying "these people are perfectly capable of building this as a CLT" then to attach some sort of quasi-view that someone else has to stand guarantor is a bit odd to say the least.

Chief Executive, Housing Association, North East

There were several concerns over these arrangements among volunteers of many other CLTs. With regard to finding a partner, there was a concern that this was simply setting CLTs up to fail. As new organisations with no track record, they would be unlikely to access subsidy individually, but multiple CLTs expressed anxiety in interviews conducted in 2009 that local housing associations were concerned about CLTs "treading on their toes", thus acting as a possible deterrent to partnerships. This was acknowledged by the director of Cornwall CLT who, even though his organisation had found a suitable partner, passed comment on a mutual wariness between CLTs and housing associations at a recent event we had both attended:

*Researcher:* I noticed at the seminar, if I interpreted it correctly, that a few people are wary of housing association involvement.

*Interviewee:* Oh they are. I think it's very much a separate sector. Some housing associations think CLTs could be a threat [and] scoop up some of the resources they're after. I think there's an awful lot of mistrust of housing associations [from communities] over the shared ownership part ... I think there's an element of distrust because they're so expensive.

This "distrust" can be traced back to analysis elsewhere in this thesis, where a motivating factor for the formation of CLTs was the perceived inadequacy of local housing provision. There was clear concern over having to find a suitable partner for CLTs; not only because of the perceived competition between two organisations potentially seeking the same resources, but also due to a potential threat to the CLT's independence. A member for Holy Island CLT reflected on their relationship with a housing association at the 2011 national CLT conference:

Other community trusts may not have the same knowledge, track record and experience as HICLT so the risk is that they may defer to the RSL in any proposals. RSLs often want to do what they 'usually do' - which might not always match with what the community want to do - so any group needs to take the time to set out and be clear about their priorities for any proposals - along with the terms for the partnership at an early stage.

Kelly (2011)

The main value of the partnership to the CLT was the assistance with complex documentation and the obvious access to grant as a consequence. The need for this assistance was evident among many other CLTs, as illustrated by this volunteer's experience of the technical nature of accessing housing finance:

Dealing [with the HCA] has been very much at the end of the telephone with no help or advice really at all. Their bureaucracy and forms are of a nature that when I first saw them I nearly gave up, I thought if this is the only way we

can get money I'm going to give up, I don't understand them. It was so - still is - complicated and lengthy. The explanatory notes are full of abbreviations; I haven't a clue what they're talking about. I am still of a mind that I'd love to do without them but I don't think you can.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

The last sentence of this quotation exemplifies the value of the partnership struck by Holy Island CLT: they needed the housing association to act as the gatekeeper in unlocking a critical source of finance, though equally as important to the CLT was that this would be done on their terms and without major compromise in the CLT's independence. As a response to the CLG consultation described, ensuring the primacy and independence of the CLT in any partnership was deemed to be essential, rather than being merely incorporated as subsidiaries of existing provision:

Local people will not readily give up their time to be just a minor component of existing public provision. They want to be valued equally with other agencies as investors in their communities.

Development Trusts Association (2008, p. 4)

The following section describes how this experience has begun to influence the potential for more CLTs to access subsidy from the HCA.

### **2010-11: future support for CLTs**

Fieldwork for this study had been concluded by this point, but it is worth distinguishing this time period from the previous section due to the acquisition of HCA funds by an increasing number of CLTs since this period. Although the temporal boundaries of the study meant it was difficult to explore these in any depth, it is possible to draw on both the plans put in place by the HCA for their future

interaction with CLTs and some of the research data to provide an insight into the impact of public subsidy on CLT objectives and structures and processes to achieve them.

One of the main outcomes from the Holy Island process was the need for a simplification of the application process. From the perspective of CLTs, the technicalities involving completion of a lengthy PQQ and the requirements for periodic progress monitoring were deemed to be out of proportion with the scale and risk of the size of CLT developments. Furthermore, the need for an organisation to stand as a guarantor was perceived by some to breed an attitude that CLTs required surveillance and could not be trusted. As one volunteer commented:

I think the system has to loosen up and that there has to be an acceptance that communities have the capacity to help themselves given that they are allowed to do so. One of the downsides for modern government is that they want to control everything and its one reason why I've been very reluctant to get involved with HCA at all. Not because we don't need their money but because I'm wary of the controls that will be put on as a result.

Chair, High Bickington CLT

Yet, others acknowledged that such attitudes were always likely to exist given the small-scale specialist nature of an emerging organisation such as a CLT. Using the word "boutique" to denote this specialism, one CLT board member echoed the view that public subsidy would be a last resort due to general rules and regulations relating to design and use of finance, but equally acknowledged the validity of these:

I think philosophically, we would like to keep that as a final option or as a small part of our funding because - I hesitate to use the word boutique in connection with our schemes, but at the moment they clearly are boutique schemes and there's always a risk that you fall foul of general rules and

regulations that bodies like the HCA would bring into play, and quite rightly so, they're dealing with public money after all.

Board member, Foundation East CLT

A common refrain among CLT representatives, from volunteers to technical support workers, was the need for the HCA to develop an investment model aligned with the structure and philosophy of CLTs. The release of the HCA's Affordable Homes Programme for 2011-2015 gave specific advice to CLTs seeking subsidy. As "small specialist organisations" CLTs were advised they "may find it beneficial to partner with existing consortia or investment partnerships to benefit from shared expertise in development" (HCA, 2011a, p. 30), providing explicit encouragement to partnership arrangements akin to those described above. This encouragement is also provided to housing associations based on a perception strongly aligned with the philosophy of CLTs: that community involvement is able to improve reflections of local need:

Providers are particularly encouraged to include smaller, rural, specialist and community based organisations in consortia arrangements, either at the outset or during the course of the contract so that proposals will better reflect local need.

HCA (2011a, p. 29)

Alongside this, CLTs are permitted to put forward independent proposals provided they register with the TSA, with an acknowledgement that qualification for subsidy with the HCA is required to be more proportionate to the scale and nature of CLTs (though at the time of writing it is unclear what this entails in practice):

we will seek to ensure that our approach to qualification is proportionate, and the TSA will seek to take a proportionate approach to Registration. We will also take account of the scale of the funding required, and degree of risk

in a project, in agreeing contractual arrangements where an allocation [of funding] is agreed.

HCA (2011b, p. 5)

The emphasis on consortia arrangements between housing associations and CLTs provokes an interesting path for future enquiry. As described in the previous analysis chapters, the value of a CLT in the eyes of those behind their formation is their organisational independence and autonomy in determining local priorities. Many of the "first generation" of CLTs saw their role as creating distinct forms of governance outside existing provision which were deemed to be more valuable than other professionalised providers precisely because of their independence and commitment to *their* community. This long-term commitment to the priorities of a local area was seen to distinguish CLT provision from that of housing associations, yet the two are now expected to join forces if CLTs wish to acquire public subsidy:

With this shift towards housing associations my worry is whether they see those long-term benefits or whether they see it as a short-term project. It seems to me that the first generation [of CLTs] were all formed by groups of idealists who wanted to develop affordable housing, and saw that there was a long-term benefit that perhaps we could regenerate that money for other community uses.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

As the beginning of this section suggested, a common concern has been that community-led activity may be submerged by external priorities given weight by governing relationships that may collide with local autonomy for CLTs. Therefore, of particular interest in future research will be the extent to which community-led activity and the involvement of housing associations is negotiated by CLTs seeking to preserve autonomy, especially given the views of a Holy Island CLT volunteer who

warned of the risk of CLTs deferring<sup>13</sup> to housing associations in consortia arrangements. This is also juxtaposed with the assumption that housing associations will be willing to assume a facilitative role in enabling CLTs to access subsidy. The housing association involved with the Holy Island CLT spoke of their role as a rural housing specialist and qualitative reputational benefits from helping the CLT, but the wider caution that seemed to characterise the relationship between the two sectors in the 2008-09 period suggests that the potential for such relationships will be varied according to local and organisational circumstance.

While a common theme from the research has been the perceived supremacy of community in identifying and meeting local needs, it is also clear that many CLTs acknowledge that their ambitions do not exist in a vacuum, and are instead embedded in wider processes that demand particular knowledge and skills. As the following quotes describe, a CLT in Cumbria formed to meet housing need on the basis that they could provide a greater local emphasis than housing associations could offer, while acknowledging that the CLT would not possess the necessary technical expertise to practically meet this need. While a housing association could provide this expertise, of clear importance and value appears to be the need to ensure a degree of separation in order to uphold the CLT's purpose and values:

Lyvennet Community Trust grew out of a community plan and subsequent housing needs survey which led to the setting up of an affordable housing group. The group looked into housing association affordable housing and community land trust housing eventually coming down in favour of the greater local emphasis offered through a CLT.

Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (2011)

The community view is that **direct local stewardship** via [Lyvennet] CLT with **expert support** from a housing association is the right option, removing all doubt that the scheme will **work for local people**.

Graham (2011, original emphasis)

Analysing this through the lens of Lowndes and Sullivan's (2008) framework, we can interpret the encouragement provided to both CLTs and housing associations to join forces as akin to general aspirations for neighbourhood partnerships. Joining-up organisations delivering local services via a community-centred approach is thought to yield a greater outcome, bringing together key providers and decision makers (and their respective priorities) through a collective process (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008, p. 65). This is the social rationale in practice, yet this also involves a community-level acceptance of the challenges faced by neighbourhood governance and the trade-offs that may be required to achieve the desired outcomes. Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p. 68) describe how smaller units and levels of community governance inevitably involve a smaller pool of citizens to draw upon, impacting upon their capacity and competence in mobilising and fulfilling particular powers and responsibilities. In some of the instances described above, we can see a trade-off between preserving local accessibility to the community and accessing the technocratic skills and expertise from a housing association that were required to meet local housing need.

The shift towards partnerships between CLTs and housing associations was still developing at the time of writing and while recent informal discussion at a seminar in November 2010<sup>58</sup> indicated a concern that CLT involvement could be seen as "tokenistic", others saw value in filling the gap in CLT expertise. However, CLTs need to be understood within their geographical context and their relationship to a

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<sup>58</sup> The author attended a rural CLT practitioner seminar in Cornwall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2010. Informal discussions were held during a session updating CLT volunteers on HCA funding provision.

housing association and other stakeholders will be contingent not only on their locality but also on what a CLT wishes to achieve. While some will be keen to strike partnerships with housing associations in order to unlock access to funding, expertise and possible long-term services such as property management (while retaining elements of community control), others will wish to remain independent.

This raises the dualism of the *process* of forming a CLT versus the *outcome* of a CLT's activities. Much of the early literature on CLTs in North America argued that the value of CLTs should be measured not in concrete quantitative terms according to how many homes they build, but rather in terms of the community engagement, participation and activity generated through the process of forming a CLT (Institute for Community Economics, 1982, p. 256). While the CLT in the North East accepted that the need for public subsidy was too great to turn down and consequently entered into a partnership with the housing association (though community control over decision-making was retained), this was not the case everywhere. The CLT volunteer quoted below clearly felt that achieving an outcome of affordable housing was not enough. In this example, CLTs should have a wider scope in building and embedding locally-defined values, and forcing CLTs into partnerships simply to achieve housing outcomes had the potential to undermine the value of communities 'doing it for themselves':

I don't think they get that [idea of building community] and see it as a financial and affordability mechanism, rather than a community-building, value-building vehicle for participatory local democracy and good governance.

CLT volunteer, South West A

In this interviewee's eyes, CLTs should be a route to building the self-governing communities described in the analytical framework - the manifestation of the civic rationale - (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008) and this can be interpreted in relation to the communitarian belief that:

integral to the social order of all societies are at least some processes that mobilize some of their members' time, assets, energies and loyalties to the *service of one or more common purposes*.

Etzioni (1997a, p. 3, original emphasis)

It is the mobilisation of these communitarian energies and loyalties via a CLT (and the "good governance" that it is assumed to bring) that services the common purpose of providing affordable housing and other amenities to the local population. As the same interviewee described, the consequence of moving away from the community-defined *process* of delivering this common purpose may be to become submerged into existing systems and forms of provision:

I felt there is a general lack of critical evaluation looking at the basic principles and values behind CLTs and that's one of the weaknesses of the movement here. It's what I call mission creep: you lose sight of your original mission and values and it becomes indistinguishable from what's happening already.

CLT volunteer, South West A

The reason for this perceived "mission creep" could be pragmatic concern over the capacity and competence of the organisation and ways to fill this gap, but as the analysis so far has argued, the mission and values of the CLT 'model' are malleable rather than uniform. The common purpose that community members devote their time and energies to may not be consistent with the purposes of existing institutions and tiers of governance. For example, national funding bodies will legitimately be required to regulate the use of the public funds they distribute to some degree, and will require pragmatic solutions to try and meet their own objectives in ensuring appropriate use of public funds, as well as attempting to support those in receipt of those funds. While procedures designed for professionalised housing associations may be difficult for CLT volunteers to complete, a national funder of housing

development will require certainty of delivery and economies of scale, particularly given recent budget cuts to the HCA's affordable homes development programme (Lloyd, 2010a).

The analysis presented in this section shows the way in which access to housing finance can guide or direct the behaviour of organisations such as CLTs, creating distinctive organisational relations that can affect the desired mode of community governance. Therefore, in aiming to become the primary decision maker over the provision and governance of local housing, the success of CLTs is dependent not just on gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the local community through claims to local expertise and loyalty. Instead their effectiveness may also rest on their ability to embed their activities within existing governance structures and practical processes, such as those related to the acquisition of financial resources.

## **7.2 Performing legitimacy and accessing local authority finance**

As parts of the previous discussion described, some CLT practitioners held the objective of meeting their organisation's aims without public subsidy, aiming to circumvent conditions of use or bureaucracy that may act as a barrier to CLT volunteers. This was also built on an acknowledgement that the conditions of the housing finance sector, with probable reductions in the availability of HCA subsidy from 2011 onwards, meant that the CLT sector may need to find alternative sources of finance rather than competing with housing associations for a finite amount of subsidy. Temporary finance from local authorities was identified as a potential funding stream for CLTs and seen as a way of supplementing other sources of finance, though as the following analysis demonstrates these methods of financing locally-specific initiatives are accountable to wider political and financial environments.

A key theme of the findings presented so far has been the manner in which CLTs may seek to redraw the lines of local governance through new understandings of the

appropriate geographic scale for governing and allocating housing. This has been shown by the strong emphasis on CLT autonomy to exercise local control and was explicitly illustrated by the localised definition of community and the appropriate geographic use of resources described by the Chair of High Bickington CLTT in section 6.2 of the previous chapter. This runs parallel to the view expressed by the response to the public CLT consultation exercise made by Community Finance Solutions (described earlier in this chapter), whereby the constitution and objectives of a CLT should be defined by local needs and not used to deliver regional targets, making the case for more localised governance as opposed to the traditional district or countywide priorities of local authorities. Paradoxically, despite the notion that CLTs should not deliver the regional priorities of local authorities, they have been seen as a key source of finance for CLTs.

However, as demonstrated by the politics involved in transferring land from public to community ownership, the devolution of resources to communities may not always coalesce with a local authority's ambitions. This may be due to the need to extract maximum capital receipts from assets such as land (as opposed to providing them to communities at low cost) or it may be influenced by a belief that localising control of housing to voluntary communities is not necessarily the most desirable course of action.

Of particular concern to some local authority stakeholders was the possible perception of giving preferential treatment to a tightly-knit group of people, and it was for this reason that support for CLTs had stagnated:

A lot of it is down to the fact it's a new concept which hasn't really taken off the ground to date ... I think it's such a new model here, I'm not sure whether any of these CLTs have actually gone forward to develop any housing units to date and the fact they were purely based on housing, the CLTs didn't have a wider business plan to incorporate other community-type projects and I think

people might be a bit wary and sceptical really of the aims and objectives. Will they just be 'homes for the boys' and nothing else?

Affordable Housing Officer, North Wales Local Authority

The combination of CLTs being a new community-led concept whose exact operation and purpose was unclear and their objective of providing locally-specific housing raised the issue of transparency, with particular regard to the allocation process. From the perspective of a local authority receiving requests for financial and technical assistance, assurance over the aims and objectives of CLTs and their appropriateness to local contexts was critical:

There are elements of judgement; there might be something purporting to be a CLT formed by folk marginally in need of housing thinking this is a model where we can say "come on council, you gave them lots of money give us some". We shouldn't assume every CLT will be [benevolent in their form] and there is this element of judgement and discretion that it's about a genuine partnership [between the CLT and the local authority].

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

Taking these quotes together, it becomes clear that one of the main barriers for local authorities in dialogue with CLTs has been a CLT's lack of an established track record and reputation. While CLTs may claim to offer an innovative approach to housing provision which may yield long-term financial and social benefits through the presence of a locally-rooted and permanently based community, for local authorities it is precisely the alternative scope of the approach and its collision with existing structures of governance that may deter their assistance. Referring to the CLT in St Minver, this local authority officer described how a CLT's conformity to existing regulatory procedures could help the local authority negotiate this potential conflict:

The CLT structure provides proper articles, charitable objects, gives you that much more confidence as well. So they are a registered charity and you've got the Charity Commission regulating in the background somewhere. Most of these groups are impecunious when they start off with no assets or background or track record so you can't say "here's half a mill do what you want with it" and we'd find it much more difficult to support it and measure the acceptable risk if there wasn't this legal format.

So we've got a duty to address housing need and they've got a duty to do whatever it says in their articles. If they've got charitable objects they will not be sort of vicious or unpleasant in any of that.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

Obtaining charitable status was therefore seen as a badge of trustworthiness. The rules of charitable status mean that the extent to which a trustee or director of an organisation can extract personal benefit is legally restricted, while the organisation must demonstrate they are acting for public benefit in order to obtain this status. Using evidence such as housing needs surveys and ratios between local house prices and local incomes, CLTs have been able to gain charitable status through objectives such as: *"the provision of affordable housing to relieve financial hardship in the area"* (National CLT Network, 2011a). The fact that a group of individuals had formed an organisation to assist other people in the area, as opposed to forming a self-help group, persuaded a council to release substantial funds to assist the development at St Minver: a £5,000 grant to assist in obtaining charitable status, and a £544,000 interest-free loan to help with land purchase, associated fees and provide working capital. As the Affordable Housing Officer put it:

Going into that [charitable] structure makes it a lot safer and acceptable to local authorities ... It would be highly unlikely to give it to a group of self-selected self-builders who formed up themselves.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

The issue of who benefits from the CLT's work - essentially, who the homes will eventually be allocated to - is clearly a challenging one for local authorities and extends beyond merely concern at individual self-help and selection. Local authorities possess strategic responsibilities for housing based on analysis of local needs and conditions. Generally speaking the limited resources of local authorities are focused on meeting the needs of disadvantaged people in poor or overcrowded housing conditions, along with meeting statutory responsibilities to assist in housing the homeless. As one interviewee (anonymised) put it, "the local authority waiting list is not necessarily for the local people that we target", indicating that the purpose that the CLT was built upon would not be met by the local authority. Instead, the same person said that "CLTs should represent local people, explain [to local people] why housing is required, who it is intended for - the local community - and how it will be protected for their benefit". The interviewee explained that the benefit the housing would bring would be to ameliorate the decline of rural services and facilities.

Although these are common reasons cited for the formation of a CLT, this example illustrates the way in which housing need can be interpreted in different ways: local connection and affinity, rather than economic situation, becomes the primary basis on which access to local housing is legitimised. Housing need is officially defined in planning policy as:

The quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance.

CLG (2011c, p. 27)

Planning policy also allows for housing built on rural exception sites to be allocated according to local connection, with an acknowledgement that rural areas are seen as an exceptional case due to the rural housing crisis of low supply and high demand which lead to an insufficient quantity of housing for those in housing need as understood above (Shucksmith, 1990; Taylor, 2008). However, the policy also contends that the needs of a local community are in some way related to the connection incoming households hold to the local area, rather than merely the affordability of housing:

Rural exception sites should only be used for affordable housing in perpetuity. A Rural Exception Site policy should seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, whilst also ensuring that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed, inclusive communities.

CLG (2011c, p. 12)

This contention is also reflected in CLT allocation policies. Appendix 6 shows a typical CLT allocation policy. The first set of criteria for accessing homes show that financial circumstance is the first determining factor. The inability to afford a home in the private sector must be complemented by the ability to afford a CLT home that will usually be sold or let at intermediate market rates: cheaper than the private sector but more expensive than social housing. The suitability of this type of provision is itself a contested issue. The last chapter described opposition to a CLT "tinkering with market economics to benefit a small minority" by using land values to build subsidised housing. Conversely, in other areas it was felt that intermediate market housing was unlikely to meet the greatest economic housing need in a local area, as described by a rural housing enabler who spoke of a CLT that had "ground to a standstill" due to division over the type of need being met:

A number of residents came to me saying the CLT, all about low cost houses to buy for local people, it's not catering for people in most need, it's catering for an intermediate product. They felt that the CLT already had the names of the people who were already likely to buy the properties with those in most need in the community - not just the village but the community council area - those in most need could not afford to access those properties.

#### Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

The response to this aspect of the allocation process illuminates the variability and geographical contingency of CLTs. Indeed, it could be argued that rather than understanding CLTs as a model of affordable housing, it should instead be regarded as an *approach* reflecting the varied level of contestation over each CLT's constitution and objectives. The response from the rural housing enabler also furthers our understanding of the way in which CLTs may be formed on the basis of catering for a specific locality, circumventing traditionally defined geographic boundaries such as those of local authorities and parish or community councils.

Once the economic validity of housing need is established, the deciding criteria in allocations place greater emphasis on the applicant's local connection to the locality in question. The example allocation policy shows how this is accorded greater priority than the local authority points system, creating a locally-specific and contingent conception of housing need. This is of intrinsic importance to understanding the motivations underpinning many CLTs. As the quotation below illustrates, CLTs are not solely rationalised by politicians in relation to their potential to increase local housing supply, particularly in rural areas, but also to ensure that that particular locality can influence who that housing is for. This is a key and distinguishing feature of CLTs:

In one of my villages - Buckland Newton<sup>59</sup> - a group is trying to set up a community land trust. A group of people inside the village are trying to promote something that will look after the interests of young people living there. If somebody had come from the outside ... and descended on them from Dorchester, the headquarters of the district council, which is not very far away, and said, "Thou shalt have eight extra houses here", all hell would have broken loose. I know exactly what the letters would have looked like ... whereas this way around, it is the villagers' initiative.

Letwin (*HC-Deb 2006-2007*)

The perceived advantage of a CLT, therefore, is its ability to ensure perpetual allocation and availability of local property for local people. While CLTs may be formed on the basis of the protectionism from market forces described in previous chapters, where a lack of housing affordability and the lack of a population in permanent local residence were problematised, underpinning this for many CLTs will be a desire to maintain control of housing at a micro level:

Exception sites rely on landowners giving up land and many communities are sceptical about working with housing associations as they see that they lose control and rural houses will be let to "outsiders". Setting up a CLT keeps local control and gets over this issue!

Teignbridge District Council (2010)

In the same way as tenants of social housing have been historically granted security of tenure of their homes, the allocation of CLT properties can best be understood as

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<sup>59</sup> It should be noted that the CLT in this village did not participate in this study. The quotation here is for illustrative purposes as to the potential purpose and function of CLTs more generally.

providing a *local security of tenure* through which CLTs create local connection as a key determining factor in legitimising access to affordable housing. The creation of this local security of tenure is described in the quotation below. The volunteer in question was connected to a CLT attempting to build homes on a parcel of land subject to legislation such as the right to acquire and leasehold enfranchisement.<sup>60</sup> While these land use rules could potentially affect the affordability of homes due to the removal of price restrictions, of equally principle concern was their removal from being subject to a local security of tenure. Furthermore, this CLT had found their plans thwarted at certain points in time due to a perceived failure of local and national government to accept the validity of community-led and implemented housing development and allocation:

Just generally people would like to see their children being able to live in the area they're brought up in and if they see people from outside coming in over their own people from that community they would be concerned, I think. That's why I think when they realise it the CLT will be bothered by this affordability mechanism whereby the CLT homes cease to be affordable to local people.

They thought we were getting homes for our chums and senior civil servants thought we were potential bad news, you know, risk management. We had a bit of support from the council before they realised we were serious about doing something.

CLT volunteer, South West A

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<sup>60</sup> Leasehold enfranchisement provides a legal right for leaseholders of shared ownership homes to purchase the freehold of the land on which their home is built, therefore 'staircasing' from shared ownership to full owner occupancy (CLG, 2009b).

To return to Connelly's (2011, p. 929-930) view outlined at the beginning of this chapter, this helps us understand the way in which the effectiveness of community-led governance rests to some extent on their ability to establish legitimacy in the eyes of the wider political and practical processes within which they are embedded. This may not have been accomplished by those CLTs referred to by stakeholders in Wales, where concerns that allocation processes were influenced by a mantra of "homes for the boys", while in St Minver the Affordable Housing Officer stated that a group of "self-selected self-builders" would not have benefited from the financial support offered by the local council. Once convinced of the organisation's legitimacy through their legal structure and constituted aims and objectives, the council were willing to release financial support and enable the development:

Our job is to get them to sit within policy, to sit within and interact and do it in a way that is acceptable and enables you to have confidence, but it's not a way of telling them what to do because you do that and you're missing the point.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

"To sit within policy" described the way in which the CLT would be able to take advantage of the local connection policies afforded by the rural exception site they were building on, while to do it in an acceptable way referred to the allocation policies. As the council official describes below, the CLT was able to establish legitimacy in the eyes of the council in that they were not aiming to choose precisely which people lived there (within the boundaries of the local connection criteria):

The danger is that when they're adopting these local policies they need to do it blind. They need to do it early on, swearing they've no-one specific in mind and they must be ethical and non-discriminatory ... Just from going through that with CLTs here, we've found that 18 months before it started the penny dropped so many times with folk during the discussions you had. While it

started off as "we want to help these people", by the time you got round to it in the allocations policy they were virtually telling us "it needs to be blind".

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

Local authority support was also secured due to the pragmatics of obtaining mortgages for CLT properties. When probed on the operation of local connection policies, the official from Cornwall explained that the section 106 agreement within planning permission would ensure that the properties could not only be occupied by those from within the village:

The CLT can adopt criteria inside the boundaries of the 106 which can be more locally tuned. We would expect them to open it up to the parish and the adjoining parishes; if they don't say that, they don't get finance and mortgages because they haven't got a big enough catchment area and institutions won't lend to them.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

This provides us with another illustration of how money can guide or direct the operation of CLTs. The cascade mechanism, where priority is given to a particular area initially but extended out if demand is not met, was deemed a suitable way of allowing CLTs the local flexibility they desired. A CLT's willingness to consider and include this was also seen as assurance that they did not have specific individuals lined up to fill their properties as described above. In Cornwall the St Minver CLT had unlocked a parcel of land that may not have otherwise become available for housing development and was seen to meet a housing need that may not have otherwise been fulfilled. The council's provision of finance was based on the perception that this would not have been possible to meet through other providers and contingent on the legitimacy of the CLT's objectives in meeting a genuine local economic need:

It's about providing housing for those in need of housing, it's not about giving people presents. So while it's charitable it's not necessarily about charitable giving to individuals, it's about providing housing which people can come into on the right terms.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

There was, therefore, an acknowledgement of the potential for CLTs to play a role in providing local housing for local people, but that legitimacy of this role was dependent on their interplay with wider structures of accountability that could convey legitimacy to the local authority, such as legal and charitable structures and agreement to the potential of wider allocation of housing.

## **Conclusion**

Previous chapters have identified that CLTs may attempt to redraw the boundaries for the governance of local housing, identifying local control and autonomy in deciding how housing is provided and occupied at a local level. This civic commitment is used to legitimise CLTs to their local communities, arguing that the control of local housing provides area-specific benefits.

This chapter has validated these arguments, from the attempts of CLTs to circumvent government money perceived to submerge and affect community-led activity, to the emphasis on local connection in formal allocation policies. It has been argued that the fundamental aim of CLTs is to create a local security of tenure for the housing under their jurisdiction.

However, CLTs should not be solely understood as a mechanism which uses civic commitments to exercise "voice and choice" in local governance (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008). As this chapter has demonstrated, these attempts and commitments are malleable and subject to negotiation due to the need of CLTs to establish

legitimacy in the wider political and practical environments in which their activity is necessarily embedded. After all, without financial support their efforts may flounder, as shown by the dormant CLTs referred to by some of the strategic stakeholders. Although CLTs seek to retain independence to uphold their purpose and values, many have (and will) adopt consortia arrangements with housing associations in order to access public subsidy. This finance can be the difference between a CLT pursuing its objectives or not and the requirements of the HCA to have a performance guarantee provided by a housing association demonstrates how legitimacy is achieved through negotiation and compromise of different tensions and priorities.

Similarly, local authorities were willing to release vital resources such as land and finance provided CLTs could conform to existing structures that mark legitimacy. Here charitable status was seen as a badge of repute, while the demands of mortgage lenders were perceived to help ensure allocation policies that prioritise local connection paid respect to a local authority's wider area of governance. Therefore the adoption of civic rationales that privilege the right of a community to exercise local control and autonomy in the governance of local housing is necessarily contingent on the facilitation and permittance of this by stakeholders embedded within wider financial and governing environments.

Rather than creating autonomous self-governing communities as per Lowndes and Sullivan's civic rationale, in practice CLTs are dependent on this external facilitation and may need to compromise on certain ambitions, for example the involvement of a housing association or the agreement to extend the allocation of housing beyond those in the local area. Therefore rather than distinguishing between Cornwall's (2004) "invited spaces" - created and defined by the state to engage communities in governance - and "popular spaces" created and defined by citizens, it is more appropriate to view CLTs as occupying a third 'space' between top-down involvement on the terms of the state and bottom-up community autonomy. Within this space CLTs may instigate and create a structure capable of exercising local

control over housing, but this is also tempered by a critical need for human and capital resources.

This then raises the question of whether there is a necessary trade-off in CLT ambitions between the desired level of control and autonomy and the need for the resources that advance their development. This returns us to the question of whether the community-led *process* of CLTs should be privileged over the *outcome* of their efforts which may or may not support their aims to create a local security of tenure for its community dependent on the wider context. It is to this issue that the following and final chapter of data analysis returns through an examination of the role structural representation of CLTs plays in their development, and the impact this has on the day-to-day development, management and governance of local housing.

# Chapter 8: From experimentation to replication: the creation of a CLT sector

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The smaller a unit of governance, the smaller the pool of citizens from which representatives and leaders can be recruited. The range of skills and experience is also likely to be less; this may impact upon the capacity of citizens to mobilize campaigns and to hold representatives to account.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p. 68)

The competence of the organisations involved in neighbourhood-level governance is an enduring challenge for those involved with CLTs, as is a CLT's ability to recruit volunteers and their potential to instigate requisite influence and change in policy to meet their objectives. These themes have been identified in the difficulties local CLT actors have faced in pulling together the human resources required to access the land and finance necessary to realise their ambitions.

While faced by these practical problems, an important influence on CLTs has been their perceived inability to adequately influence the practices of local and national stakeholders to create a sympathetic policy environment. The National CLT Demonstration Programme's evaluation identified that individual CLTs dispersed in areas around the country faced common problems that could be resolved through co-ordinated political change:

There is still a need to mainstream certain aspects of support - in particular to create a nationally recognised body to represent CLTs, influence policy and lobby on their behalf.

Aird (2009, p. 2)

To remedy both the practical problems at a local level and the lack of a national voice, a network of structural representation has been built to shape the policy environment in which CLTs operate.

Firstly, umbrella CLTs have been created across the country to assist CLT groups with practical problems. Typically operating over a county (or multiple counties), umbrellas have the remit of increasing local CLT activity by supporting volunteers, resolving practical problems and creating greater local structural representation of the CLT approach to local housing provision.

Secondly, a national lobbying body structured on similar terms and with similar objectives to organisations such as the National Housing Federation has been created. The remit of the National CLT Network is to lobby on behalf of CLTs and instigate political change to create a beneficial policy environment for CLTs at a local level.

This chapter is concerned with the growth of this structural support and the influence it has on shaping the activity of local CLTs. It begins by exploring the concept of umbrella CLTs. It focuses primarily on their connection with external stakeholders and local CLTs and the type of assistance they provide, rather than solely on the organisational structure of the umbrella. The findings suggest that CLTs should be understood as a diverse and complex set of approaches to local housing governance rather than a uniform model. Forms of assistance and legitimacy differ from area to area and analysis of this contributes to our understanding of the geographical contingencies attached to CLT development.

The chapter continues by examining the role of the National CLT Network. As this body was formed and launched during the final stages of the study, it is difficult to make an effective judgement on its value to local CLTs, umbrella CLTs and external stakeholders. Rather than the organisation itself, the focus here is primarily on the Network's first major campaign to influence policy on behalf of CLTs in seeking their exemption from leasehold enfranchisement of homes. It is argued that the Network's campaign can be interpreted as an attempt to impose a form of legal legitimacy to a CLT's activities, paving the way for local influence to assume primacy over the type and allocation of local housing provision.

## **8.1 Beyond the local: the growth of umbrella CLTs**

While enabling support for CLTs has been subject to a relational exercise whereby their acquisition of resources has been negotiated and politicised by funders and local authorities, of equal concern has been the ability of a voluntary-led CLT to actually fulfil their objective of providing local housing. It was for this reason that a performance guarantee was required by the Homes & Communities Agency prior to giving CLTs public subsidy, and assurance over organisational competence was equally important to local authorities, as illustrated in the partnership between Devon Council and High Bickington CLT:

There was opportunism to this particular community as we had the opportunity of land and the opportunity to do something with it and we've made it happen. I mentioned right at the beginning [of the interview] there were three places.<sup>61</sup> Two of those didn't work in the other part of the county;

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<sup>61</sup> The Council had provided initial support and encouragement to three communities interested in forms of community asset ownership and participation in decision-making. As described, two of these were unsuccessful due to human resource constraints.

they didn't get past the earlier hurdles because there wasn't the energy or the opportunity within the community to make things happen.

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

The "energy" in the community was used to denote the human resources of CLTs. A common theme that emerged from the fieldwork was the importance of having a local champion who could drive the CLT forward, reflecting the barriers faced by community organisations in pulling together volunteers with the requisite technical skills. Local authorities in two of the counties where CLTs had made greater progress than elsewhere highlighted the vitality of having local leadership which could in turn further the CLT's ambitions.<sup>62</sup>

I think they've been fortunate in having the Chair there. He's an experienced [and now retired] local government officer, he's a bright bloke, he's committed, he's a serious operator. I think if you were in a community where you didn't have that kind of strength of local leadership it would really struggle. I think not every community is fortunate enough to have that range of skills and that kind of commitment available to them. I guess that's a different kind of barrier; it's not a systemic barrier, it's more a question of "have communities got the resources in people to drive that kind of work forward?"

Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council

The group were tenacious to the point of, not being annoying because you respected what they were doing, but they didn't want to take "no" [as an

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<sup>62</sup> These problems are not unique to CLTs; reliance on a small number of individuals and shortfalls in requisite knowledge and skills are common problems faced by voluntary and community organisations. For example, Amin (2009, p. 35) noted that social enterprises rely on the "ingenuity, contacts and sheer hard work of dedicated individuals" upon whom the "burden of expectation" can weigh heavy.

answer in discussions over funding]. There was a fair amount of capacity there, there was a builder, there was a retired accountant, there were people with nous. The Chair is a born negotiator, he's a typical farmer so he was used to dealing with sub contractors and things, he'd be ok [in managing the CLT].

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

The attributes identified as important to the management of a CLT are very clearly related to particular professions. In the first instance, the skills brought by knowledge and experience of local government processes were identified as being key personal attributes, while the composition of the board described in the second quote indicates the need for technical professional skills such as construction and accountancy that usually require extensive experience and training.

Elsewhere, stakeholders held the perception that CLTs were not a viable option due to the lack of these particular skills, along with problems in ensuring a long-term voluntary commitment to CLTs:

Ultimately a CLT needs drive from the community itself. It shouldn't be third parties driving it along. I can advise and open doors for people but the drive needs to come from the community, that's what I genuinely believe. I still promote CLTs but when I say "you have to see the vision and it's a long-term vision and the drive has to come from the community", they seem to be quite hesitant then and think about what it actually means. It's not an overnight success.

Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

This describes the problems in getting volunteers to make a long-term commitment, a temporal constraint related to the lengthy process of forming, developing and managing a CLT, a theme echoed elsewhere:

If you start off with a community group who's actually started ... there is the time lag that's between actually starting off and the enthusiasm there was at the beginning, they've gone through the stages of setting up a legitimate company or organisation, of getting the model practically in place, getting a potential land owner and mortgage lender. Lots of things like that have to be put in place and then there is a feeling that the whole process is such a long-winded process and so cumbersome, so many hoops and hurdles have been put in place ... That's the barrier I think, that individuals within the group face, and obviously they're doing this from a voluntary perspective so it's quite a tall order for them to carry on doing this from year to year and no real major benefits coming out in the foreseeable future.

Rural Housing Enabler, North Wales

Many of these stages were seen to require particular expertise, for instance creating an incorporated company requires the adoption of legally accepted company rules and an understanding of how this affects the organisation's directors (for example financial liability in the event of organisational failure or constraints on the type of organisational activity a legal form permits). This need for professional expertise was problematic not only for those forming CLTs but also for existing networks of community support such as rural housing enablers whose expertise lay elsewhere:

I can sell the idea to communities, which I do, but if I've got no-one to call on for expertise then it makes things difficult. It's these barriers and lack of progress and support starts to wane for anything.

Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

This confirms the findings of the National CLT Demonstration Programme evaluation, which considered that the requirements of funders, regulators and government placed bureaucratic obstacles to CLT volunteers with sometimes limited professional expertise (Aird, 2009, p. 20). A potential remedy to this has been the creation of professionalised umbrella CLTs operating at wider sub-regions, with the specific remit of increasing CLT activity by providing practical support to volunteers and giving greater prominence and representation to CLTs in engagement with stakeholders.

As Appendix 7 shows, there were eight umbrellas in existence during this study, each emerging at different points in time between 2004 and 2011 and funded by a variety of sources with variable outcomes emerging from their formation. Of these, four participated in the study.

Umbrellas typically employ a single member of staff with responsibility for fulfilling four key (and overlapping) roles in supporting CLT volunteers:

- **Advisor** - A key purpose of the umbrella CLT is to provide independent and expert technical advice and support for voluntary-led CLTs.
- **Campaigner** - The umbrella CLT engages in lobbying local and national government and funders for improved policies and support for the CLT concept.
- **Enabler** - This role is based on the premise that umbrella CLTs have the requisite skills, knowledge and expertise to negotiate the technicalities of CLT development.
- **Negotiator** - The umbrella CLT is deemed to develop and possess the ability and authority to act as a conduit between locally-rooted CLTs and the tiers of funding, regulation and government they are required to engage with, helping negotiate beneficial outcomes for both parties.

These can be described as brokerage functions and are typically fulfilled by all umbrellas. There is, however, a key difference in the long-term approach adopted by each umbrella CLT. Some of the bodies described in Appendix 7 have focused on providing time-limited brokerage services, while others aim to provide an 'all in one' service (a phrase commonly used by research participants) where, in addition to the brokerage provided to communities, the umbrella aims to develop and manage housing in its own right. Therefore, some umbrellas were formed with a remit of acting as a catalyst to community-led solutions within a specific time frame, and others were formed with a long-term strategic purpose of asset holding and organisational development in addition to their brokerage functions.

The motivation for the selection of a particular organisational approach varied. In Cornwall, the 'all in one' CLT was formed not only to provide advice to local CLT groups but to "create a new intermediate market of affordable housing for sale" (Director, Cornwall CLT). This was therefore a response not only to the human resource barriers faced by volunteers, but also to local housing market conditions. The umbrella CLT initially formed from a funding partnership involving charitable funders and a local housing association that had identified a local requirement for this type of housing:

They [the umbrella] don't just help the local volunteers, they were also formed to provide local intermediate housing for sale, sometimes on a shared ownership basis. We got involved as we do rural housing for rent, we're well respected for our rental housing, but we don't have the capacity to develop products for sale. So it responded to a need.

Director, Cornwall Rural Housing Association

The asset-holding approach was therefore a pragmatic response to local housing need. Other umbrellas, such as the support service offered in the North East, were

specifically focused on injecting housing expertise into communities. The umbrella's project officer cited the emergence of her organisation as a response to a gap in local development processes. Local rural housing enablers had been able to work out the location of housing need but were less skilled in how to solve it. Therefore, recognising the existence of local communities wishing to meet this need themselves, the purpose was to:

Inject housing related development expertise to enable replication through networks and knowledge gained independent of infrastructure organisations ... The task was to expand third sector networks into housing development, planning and finance as this was an area of weakness.

CLT Support worker, North East

The intention was not to create an entity in itself to meet housing need, but to assist CLTs in working through processes to solve need by creating partnership networks with organisations such as housing associations and development trusts. As the Officer quoted above went on to describe, this was based on the perceived importance of empowering communities with the requisite skills and knowledge to further their development:

The intention of umbrella CLTs should be to breathe life into communities, to empower them with the skills and networks they could then use as a commodity. The intention was for the project to act as a catalyst for new delivery solutions rather than to be an entity in itself. This is based on empowering, breathing life into organisations, and on a realisation that income generation was best focused on supporting the sustainability of the individual organisations themselves.

CLT support worker, North East

The value of creating third sector networks of support that could outlive the umbrella was thought to avoid leaving communities "high and dry" as the support worker put it. If the umbrella was to be dissolved or scaled back, the activity undertaken by local CLTs would not suffer as a consequence.

Unlike the 'all in one' umbrellas, these time-limited brokerage organisations do not assume a key role in creating the intermediate housing market through developing their own homes, rather their remit is merely to guide communities through the technical process and facilitate networks.

Having identified the reasoning behind these types of umbrella CLT, the following sections chart the perceived advantages and fault lines of this structural support, looking from the bottom up at community-level and from the top down at the level of governing, funding and regulating stakeholders.

## **8.2 Judging the value of umbrella CLTs**

The umbrella CLTs that participated in this study had only recently formed when fieldwork was undertaken, making it somewhat difficult to judge the overall value of their operation (especially when combined with the slow burning emergence of CLTs). Furthermore, it appeared that some CLTs purporting to operate on an umbrella countywide basis were not perceived that way by others. When asked about the 'all in one' umbrella CLT operating in their county, one CLT indicated that it was more focused on acting as an individual CLT than on assisting volunteers:

We initially thought having the county in their title meant they were in the position of swapping a lot of information between different organisations within the county and all the rest of it [referring to umbrella support functions]. No - they have only been involved in their own development ... so although they helped us by giving us a few draft legal documents which we have used, and that was helpful, but that's as far as it goes. Other villages have actually rung

up and asked what we're doing; they're looking at us to perform the role we thought the umbrella was doing.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

The umbrella in question held a particular ideological commitment to the concept of community-led control and local autonomy and the potential for this to be facilitated throughout the county, but in addition to this commitment it appeared there needed to be a critical mass of people desiring this assistance. This was described in the exchange that followed the above quotation:

*Researcher:* I was always led to believe they were operating as an umbrella body like we've seen elsewhere.

*Interviewee:* No, they're not like that at all. They ought to be, but there aren't enough CLTs going around here for them to co-ordinate.

Board member, Village CLT in the South West

In addition to this confusion over the exact activities of an umbrella, judging the value of umbrella CLTs in areas where development of CLT homes had yet to get underway proved problematic. The recipients of umbrella support did not always fit neatly into being an incorporated CLT with a clear mission and defined relationship with wider stakeholders. In some cases they were individuals or groups who had attended public meetings or consultations over potentially forming a CLT, often with vague ideas as to what they wished to potentially achieve, as opposed to individuals or groups seeking particular forms of skill and expertise in development. This was especially pronounced in the case of one 'all in one' umbrella which appeared to

disband during the study, making it difficult to contact recipients of support and ascertain the value they attached to umbrella support.<sup>63</sup>

The number of homes any CLT has built may provide a quantitative assessment of the value attached to their local operations. This particular umbrella had failed to develop its own homes and nor had it assisted local communities in its area to do so. Yet, this disbanding of the organisation was not necessarily due to the type of service it offered, whether it was a long-term asset holding approach or a short-term brokerage service, and was juxtaposed by a body with similar structures and aims elsewhere deemed to be successful among CLT practitioners. Furthermore, reliance on the number of houses built as an indicator of value does not unpick the contestations and deliberations inherent to local claims to power and autonomy and their relationship to local, regional and national institutions and networks of governance. In short, it does not tell us *why* they failed to build homes.

Therefore, the purpose of the following analysis is not to judge whether an 'all in one' umbrella service is in any way better or more effective than those merely offering community brokerage and support. Aside from the aim of asset holding and the way advice to CLT volunteers is funded (both discussed in the sections that follow), there is a common approach of promoting and advancing the role played by local communities in housing provision and governance, and this commonality is the main focus of the following sections. As such, the analysis of the introduction of structural support for CLTs that follows brings to light further debates about the capabilities, legitimacy and geographical contingency of local CLT control and decision-making processes.

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<sup>63</sup> Land for People's funding expired in 2011 and personal correspondence with the National CLT Network in July 2011 indicated that the organisation had disbanded due to non-renewal of funding. Efforts were made to verify this with Land for People's staff and the Welsh Assembly Government, but neither responded to the request for information.

## **Umbrellas' relationships with local CLTs**

Aside from their long-term objectives, the other major difference in the approach of umbrellas is how their advice is funded. Unlike brokerage services, usually funded by particular grants or resources that are bound by their time-limited existence, umbrellas seeking to develop a permanent organisation require an ongoing source of funding. As the quotation below describes, this is often done through charging fees for technical expertise and development:

Introductory advice and informal guidance is provided at no cost, as Foundation East is sensitive to the financial constraints of embryonic community organisations. As projects develop, consultancy fees are charged for more technical expertise and professional development services and these fees help to sustain the charitable work of Foundation East. Fees are agreed in advance on a case-by-case basis and grants may be available to cover them.

Foundation East CLT (2011)

The fees for this service were usually covered by the charitable CLT Fund and were not usually charged until the development was close to becoming a reality and required technical development skills. Advice was provided informally as the feasibility of CLT schemes was being established, something deemed critical to CLT development due to the initial uncertainty over whether a new CLT would be able to access the financial, land and human resources required to progress schemes. Charging fees up front was seen as something that would have become part of the problem rather than the solution.

One of the main advantages of an umbrella CLT identified by research participants was in identifying the initial risk and uncertainty over CLT development, helping community volunteers to examine the feasibility of their plans. One CLT in the North

East received an offer of low-cost land transfer from the local district council. Keen to pursue their objective of providing rental housing for local needs, the CLT accepted the offer of land but found their ability to both obtain funding and develop homes successfully was limited due to difficulties and inexperience in housing and organisational development. As the project officer of the local umbrella described:

A feasibility study convinced the organisation that community-led development was not advisable given the mainstream development options and that really the organisation was on a hiding to nothing pursuing community ownership and stewardship.

CLT support worker, North East

This identified two problematic aspects which the umbrella CLT helped local CLTs to identify. First, the idea of community ownership and stewardship required long-term commitment to the development and management of CLT homes, demanding particular expertise and experience. The project officer described how the CLT had engaged with an architect who had never designed affordable housing before. This was of critical importance as the architect designed homes for the CLT of a value that would exceed the incomes of the community the CLT wished to serve and would not qualify as the affordable housing required by the land's planning covenant, leading to a waste of time and financial resources (through the payment of the architect's fees). The introduction of the umbrella CLT was seen to combat this naivety and identify the feasibility of the CLT's future involvement in processes of professional procurement and management of the technicalities of housing development.

Second, alteration and uncertainty in the CLT's management structures problematised the idea of long-term community management of the organisation. As described at the outset of this chapter, a common barrier for community organisations is both the quality (in terms of relevant expertise) and quantity of

potential community representatives. This was revealed by ongoing changes in directorship and denial of funding due to insufficient skill in business planning. The lack of skill also influenced the quantity of willing volunteers, as two parish councillors who had sat on the board of the CLT resigned due to both potential conflicts of interest between the CLT and council, and their reluctance to engage in, and assume responsibility for, complex financial planning:

The CLT has a lot of money tied up in it and I'm uncomfortable sorting through the paperwork and accounting properly, I don't always have the time and you need to dedicate a lot of time to go through it all.

Former board member, CLT in the North East

They've had changes in directors and had quite a struggle to get themselves off the ground, and now they're off the ground they realise the only nest egg they've got is the land transferred to them and they can't get any money to build on it ... Their business plan was rejected by funders as it wasn't strong enough.

Chief Executive, Housing Association, North East

This led to the creation of a partnership with a local housing association identified by the umbrella, whereby the CLT would lease the land to the association (retaining the freehold and thus a stake in the land use), allowing them to develop and manage homes for local needs housing.

The value of the umbrella CLT was, therefore, its advisory role in identifying and informing the risks inherent to CLT ownership, in particular with regards to the long-term management of the CLT and its homes, and its ability to enable wider partnerships. For example, providing rental housing demands an everyday commitment to rent collection and housing maintenance, alongside long-term

accountabilities to funders (through servicing loans) and legalities (for example, completing annual financial returns to regulators). Umbrella CLTs were aware of these demands and saw their role as vital in ensuring local volunteers would take these into account in their plans:

I don't think we speak enough about governance at any of our events, but then that's probably because we're so keen to get examples off the ground. You've got to think about the long-term governance issues.

Director, Cornwall CLT

This was deemed to be one of the most valuable services offered by the umbrella, with local volunteers suggesting that their support had been one of the critical factors in enabling them to take their plans forward. One CLT was keen to create a local farm to grow and sell produce in addition to developing housing, and as such needed to be legally set up for a broad remit that allowed for a degree of commercial trading:

The process of forming a CLT is daunting ... It'd have been a much longer process [without the umbrella's support] and we'd have been more likely to give up because of the time and we're all volunteers. Not only do you now know exactly *where* to begin, but you don't even have the *sense* of where to begin (emphasis verbally expressed in interview).

We'd have probably found the support through the internet eventually but it'd have been a much longer process. The umbrella has enabled us to access grants and been there to suggest how it's been done elsewhere. I think we paid for a three day consultancy fee but they're there if we need them, we've probably had ten times that support.

Board member, Lands End Peninsula CLT

The assistance with technical legal incorporation was a common theme in interviews with volunteers and umbrella staff, in particular with obtaining charitable status which was universally described by CLT volunteers as a daunting and stringent process demanding patience, time, commitment and skills. These findings illustrate the importance professional expertise plays in facilitating community volunteers and demonstrate that community development and ownership of assets does not operate in a vacuum removed from the demands and commitments faced by organisations in other sectors. CLTs are instead often reliant on external facilitation to enable their long-term objectives.

### **Acting as a constitutional custodian**

A key finding in the previous chapters was that financial support from local authorities often depended on assurance that the objectives of a CLT would not be directly self-serving or exclusionary. Conformance to charitable regulation by St Minver CLT was seen as a badge of trustworthiness and reassured North Cornwall District Council.

These arrangements were supported by the concept of a 'constitutional custodian', a body independent from the CLT represented on its board. The purpose of the constitutional custodian is to provide guarantees at a local level that the equity or financial interest held by CLTs would be used for community benefit and prevent a misuse of power, for example to avoid the organisation being formed to benefit a small minority. This was equally critical to unlocking local authority support as all amendments to a CLT's objectives and structure would require approval from the constitutional custodian:

You can have the parish council or district council as your constitutional custodian, or you could have perhaps the umbrella CLT as the constitutional custodian. If you have you must make sure your group isn't hijacked by an interest group of some sort, so safeguarding against accusations of an

undemocratic or unsustainable group, because I think we need to be able to tick all these particular boxes to make sure we don't have an excuse for people to utilise and prevent set-up.

Director, Cornwall CLT

The need for this was echoed by the Council, reaffirming their need for CLTs to conform to existing and recognised structures of legitimacy to access local authority support:

One of the key things for CLTs is going into that structure makes it a lot safer and acceptable to local authorities, so we gave them a considerable loan and a huge interest free loan and, yeah, that legal structure gave us much more comfort and reassurance.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

The presence of a constitutional custodian was therefore deemed to confer a degree of authenticity to the governance of the CLT, but of particular interest is the issue of who performs the role. Having a parish, town or district council as a CLT's constitutional custodian can be interpreted as an attempt to attach a degree of democratic legitimacy<sup>64</sup> to CLTs, providing a route through which the wider public interest could be authentically represented in a CLT's operations. This was validated by the Affordable Housing Officer in Cornwall who clearly stated that their support for CLTs was based on a pragmatic attempt to deliver housing rather than overtly

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<sup>64</sup> It is worth pointing out that, as Pearce and Ellwood (2002, p. 37) describe, using parish councils as a measure of the strength of local democracy is contested due to variable turnouts in elections and a lack of interest in standing for election among local residents. Nevertheless they were clearly seen to be a valued consulate by the local authority in this instance.

encourage new forms of community governance, hence the need for a constitutional custodian:

*Researcher:* Do CLTs fit into your wider priorities of community involvement and engagement, these wider agendas of empowerment?

*Interviewee:* Not to the extent of the parish council. That would be the primary route. We haven't promoted these, the driver hasn't been the participation and engagement and capacity building agenda, the driver has been affordable housing. We gleefully see the other aspects, to get unintended consequences, which are hopefully beneficial.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

However, while parish and district councils retain this accountability to their electorate, and are therefore seen as providing a democratic buffer to CLTs claiming - but perhaps unable to practically demonstrate - accountability to their local communities, the legitimacy conferred by an umbrella CLT is less clear.

In the case of Cornwall, a view held by a local housing association board member was that their support of the umbrella CLT was important in attaching a "reputational credibility" to the umbrella's operation, though this was not picked up on by the council official.

Of more critical concern was the role the umbrella could play in facilitating groups and, as a constitutional custodian, stepping in if the local CLT were to disband, reflecting more general concerns about the long-term ability and commitment of volunteers:

And Cornwall [CLT], that's a different animal as that's a carrier for smaller ones ... it's a mechanism to facilitate things and nurture other groups, to step

in if other groups fail or lose interest, and to keep things operating while they're forming.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

The value of the umbrella CLT here is not only its assistance to groups - the facilitative and nurturing role described in the quotation - but its ability to step in and assume responsibility for the development of local CLTs that may falter over the course of time. This was related to an acknowledgement of the time consuming demands faced by CLT volunteers and the likelihood that changes in management and directorship could quickly occur due to a change in circumstances. These concerns are similar to those that provoked the resignation of volunteers of a CLT in the previous section. Indeed, few CLTs in the study had given much thought to the long-term succession of directors and governance issues, with most reliant on a handful of individuals.

Acting as an 'all in one' asset-holding CLT enabled the Cornwall umbrella to perform the role of a custodian in this way. Having paid staff and a long-term commitment to development (as expressed through organisational objectives and business planning) appeared to give legitimacy to their activities and act as the distinguishing factor between volunteers whose commitment may waver or be hindered. Therefore, the perceived robustness of the 'all in one' umbrella CLT, conveyed through its long-term approach, provided reassurance to local authorities who were content for umbrellas to act as a constitutional custodian. The legitimacy here is not necessarily found in the CLT as a unique body but in the surrounding infrastructure denoting links and adherence to professional support or democratic norms and accountability found in local councils, a form of normative isomorphism described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

However, as the following section argues, the local legitimacy and viability of this approach needs to be scrutinised. Operating an apparently professionalised

structure through employment of paid staff and the adoption of long-term objectives does not universally translate into successful practical outcomes nor does it automatically create accepted structures of local governance between local CLTs, umbrella CLTs and local authorities.

### **8.3 The process/outcome dualism and the influence of umbrellas**

Chapter 5 explored the motivations and rationales that have underpinned the emergence of CLTs, and found overt claims to local control and influence in the decision-making of local housing governance to be intrinsic to their formation. In the eyes of CLT volunteers, it is their community-based activism and associated commitment and closeness to the local population that provides local legitimacy to their activities. Yet, as the Cornwall Council Affordable Housing Officer highlighted, the operation of umbrella CLTs at a wider sub-regional level brings a new perspective on the appropriate basis of a CLT's localism agenda:

It is a means to an end, and yes it is a CLT, but if the community's the whole of Cornwall it's not quite the localism agenda in the same way.

Affordable Housing Officer, Cornwall Council

This referred to the asset-holding approach of the umbrella rather than the assistance and constitutional support it provided to local CLTs, the "means to an end" being Cornwall CLT's provision of intermediate housing (under the auspices of being a "CLT") without active community instigation. The approach adopted by the umbrella in developing its own properties "where a CLT is yet to form" (Director, Cornwall CLT) was a pragmatic response to identified need. The emphasis was less on the community building seen in the brokerage services provided to existing CLT groups elsewhere in the county, and more on the delivery of housing in towns and villages where a need for intermediate housing had been identified through housing needs surveys. The umbrella CLT would develop the housing itself, dispose of it

through a resale-restricted mechanism and charge a ground rent of £150 per year to occupants. This was charged in order to boost the financial resources of the organisation and cross-subsidise their ability to provide extensive support and assistance to the volunteers of embryonic local CLTs.

The Director of Cornwall CLT was keen to stress that the umbrella only develops assets where community support is evident - "we only work where we're wanted" - and extensive consultation with parish councils was common, but in reality it could be argued that this asset-holding approach is in fact little different from that of a housing association. It is based on the work of professionals with expertise in planning and development rather than the voluntary-led arrangements thought to be typical of the CLT sector. Though the outcome of increasing local housing supply may be the same, the process of achieving this clearly differs.

The scope of the study did not extend to an investigation of the views of non-CLT actors in areas where umbrellas had developed, but the fact that this approach exists and has successfully developed housing emphasises that understanding the role, scope and operation of a CLT is complex and does not necessarily mean the same thing in each sub-region. This diversity reaffirms the argument that CLTs should be understood as a malleable approach rather than a singular model to be rolled out.

This is particularly evident when examining the case of a Welsh 'all in one' umbrella CLT. Funded by government grants, the objectives of this umbrella were similar to its counterpart in Cornwall with a full-time project officer employed to fulfil the remit of promoting and expanding CLT development across a wider geographic area - in this case across the country of Wales. Unlike Cornwall CLT, formed directly out of a funding partnership between a local housing association and charitable funders aimed at meeting a perceived housing need, Land for People in Wales formed from a group of people with an interest in the topic of community land ownership:

We visited another CLT in 2004 and got together a group of interested people to set up Land for People as an [initially] unincorporated organisation.

Director, Land for People

Land for People then eventually obtained grants from the Welsh Assembly Government to employ a director charged with fulfilling the role of an umbrella CLT and developing links with communities wishing to develop affordable housing:

There was a feeling a few years ago that Land for People was the way that people wanted to see CLTs develop. They had the model, they had the way forward and I think there was a feeling that Land for People might be the CLT for all CLTs if you understand me. That they would be willing to take on any CLT groups to deliver housing for them and people would have the management of the CLT.

Rural Housing Enabler, North Wales

Certainly the concept [of an umbrella CLT] is a good one and that's the way forward. I think the Welsh Assembly have provided grant funding towards Land for People and you'd have to make sure they're operating on an all-Wales basis and not giving preferential time and support to schemes within their locality.

Affordable Housing Officer, North Wales Local Authority

The first quotation suggests a hands-on role for the umbrella, directly assisting communities with the technical delivery of housing while CLT volunteers retained control. This is typical of the relationship between umbrella CLTs and the recipients of their help, while the second quotation describes the proposed geographical scope of the umbrella's activities. This differs slightly from the structures in England as it

aimed to operate on a nationwide basis rather than county-specific.<sup>65</sup> Yet, despite the views of the Affordable Housing Officer, this structure was problematised by other research participants on the basis that it was not seen to have met the aspirations of the local CLTs the umbrella was set up to serve:

There was a slight feeling really among some CLTs that, yes it'd be great to have someone who can be employed to do the work as a project manager and administrator, but the feeling was that they wanted to see more empowerment to a local level and not releasing that empowerment to a national level. There was a feeling like that with Land for People. There's a lot to be said about empowering communities to do things themselves but you've got to have the right people, the right infrastructure and the right model to show people this is how it's done. It just hasn't worked the way it could have worked you know.

Rural Housing Enabler, North Wales

This raises questions about the appropriate locus of empowerment for CLTs and questions the very purpose of the umbrella body. The umbrella's wide geographical scope was perceived to be at odds with, and removed from, the local emphasis of the communities seeking to form CLTs, a sentiment echoed elsewhere in Wales:

My colleagues were talking about the [local] CLT and said they would be willing to get involved with doing housing needs surveys and things, but then Land for People came in and said they'd do it. They're not even based in Wales, they're based in Oswestry, they're so far removed whereas the other two rural housing enablers actually live and work with these

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<sup>65</sup> Notwithstanding, of course, that Wales has a considerably smaller population than England.

communities at all times. If anything we are more expert. When we're there to help the CLT, why have Land for People come parachuting in to take over when I know what will happen, they'll walk away again when the going gets tough.

Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

This reveals a perception that Land for People was geographically remote from the communities they serve and asserts that this remoteness equates to an insufficient bank of expertise, returning us to the idea that local attachment and bonds to a community make those within it best placed to identify what is needed. It also highlights an apparent collision between the roles of rural housing enablers and umbrella CLTs. From the perspective of the rural housing enabler, the umbrella body had focused on promoting the concept of CLTs to communities and providing encouragement to form them without providing or putting in place networks of necessary technical expertise. In other words, the focus had been on describing *what* a CLT might achieve, rather than *how* such outcomes might be achieved.

They go in and sell the idea, get people on board and when the going gets tough they're not there to help them. I can sell the concept but then you need the expertise to come in when the going does get tough ... I think the approach from Land for People was wrong; they dip into communities, they sell the concept and make it sound brilliant, but there's not a reality check. Then they walk away and leave the communities to themselves. I think there's been a big failing in their approach. They tend to dip in and out of communities and they make it sound actually rosier than it is. They say "this is what we can do for the community" and then they leave the community to their own devices and then all of a sudden support for the idea wanes.

Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

Therefore, the alleged geographic remoteness of the umbrella was perceived to lead to a lack of understanding of the requirements of the community being encouraged to form the CLT. This lack of technical support for communities interested in forming CLTs was deemed to be a particular flaw. The umbrella CLT's director described his organisation's offer to communities as an advisory and enabling one, with the main success deemed to be support provided to CLTs when undergoing complex processes of legal incorporation, but the Director equally acknowledged that:

We do not have the skills to provide them with robust, expert advice on business planning and the templates provided by other CLTs [to assist with this] are too complicated for me to understand.

Director, Land for People

Yet, it was these attributes that were required on the ground and they were the skills local CLTs were looking for the umbrella CLT to provide. In March 2011, an offer of land transfer from the Mid-Wales local authority to a local CLT was withdrawn on the grounds that the CLT could not present an effective long-term business plan to the council:

It became increasingly clear that, as a standalone organisation, the CLT lacked the expertise and the resources to make a convincing business plan for the purposes of demonstrating the affordability of housing in perpetuity ... Council representatives advised that they felt unable to recommend the transfer of the serviced plots to the CLT as it had not met the criteria previously laid down by Board.

Mid-Wales Local Authority (2011)

The failure to provide the tangible technical support required to translate the rhetoric behind CLTs into practical outcomes was thought to have limited the development of

CLTs in this area. The following quotations illustrate this. First, the lack of, and need for, technical expertise to provide momentum to community-led schemes is acknowledged:

There is support for CLTs and because there's been no affordable housing delivery they're willing to try anything, but nothing seems to be getting off the ground at all ... Sometimes you feel that infrastructure isn't in place from the outset. In more rural areas you're down to your local community councillors, some professional individuals who could offer expertise, but the sparsity of community in rural areas means there isn't any momentum to take it forward, you've got less of that mixture of people who can deliver and move things forward you know.

Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

Second, despite the acknowledgement of support for CLTs, the rural housing enabler argued that the local communities that had held an interest in CLTs were motivated by more pragmatic outcomes than the utopian vision of community ownership. Here he describes a community group that had been involved in forming a CLT but struggled to advance beyond the embryonic stages due to the lack of technical expertise, before turning to a local housing association for development:

I don't think they are bothered by it [community ownership of housing] to put it bluntly. It just happens to be that housing associations have been the management organisations, building and managing houses, but the communities are pretty supportive of them because they've engaged with the designs and they're even welcome to monitor the allocations process. There's so much transparency. Housing associations didn't have a good reputation but I think that's starting to turn around ... they're loving it, they can't wait for those houses and they're not worried if it's a housing association, they've just got six houses and I've never known a community like it. They're so

supportive, the whole community, it's a representative process and it just happens to be a housing association involved.

Rural Housing Enabler, Mid-Wales

These findings develop two key themes. The professional skill and expertise appears to be the determining factor in whether an umbrella CLT is accepted as an appropriate stakeholder and facilitator in local governance. As the Director of Land for People acknowledged, in some areas their human resources were lacking and as such they were unable to provide the momentum local communities desired, leading to a disconnect between the umbrella body and the local CLT:

We attempted to formalise the relationship with one CLT by asking them to consider a draft contract, but they did not want to do this ... [they are] the only CLT we have tried to enter into a formal arrangement with but refused to pay anything.

Director, Land for People

Additionally, it questions the ideal of community ownership and its centrality to the motivations of individual CLTs. It is clear that the CLT concept attracts the interests of communities for different reasons. For some in earlier chapters the process of community building within a CLT has been central, seeing it not just as a mechanism to deliver housing but as a way to unite the community around a shared agenda and common vision. However, in the instances described here by stakeholders working alongside community groups, the utopian vision of community ownership and stewardship of local housing was not deemed to be important. Rather, practical outcomes and significant community influence over the local design and allocation of housing were thought to be critical factors, not any ideological commitment to the value of community ownership. Indeed, these agendas promoted by the umbrella

body became questioned due to perceptions of geographical remoteness and a perceived inability to understand the need for ongoing support of local volunteers.

One of the fundamental questions raised at the end of the previous chapter was whether there is a necessary trade-off between the ambitions of CLTs and their need for crucial human and economic resources. Should the community-led process of forming a CLT be privileged over the eventual outcome, recognising community activism and entrepreneurship as a legitimate activities and end goals in their own right? The cases described in this chapter so far demonstrate such trade-offs that can occur if practical outcomes are to be delivered.

In the case of one CLT, there was a relinquishment of their initial aim of community ownership based on the feasibility study and advice from the umbrella CLT. The acknowledgement that the human resources of the organisation were lacking and unable to unlock access to the necessary funding persuaded them to enter into a partnership with a local housing association. In this sense the umbrella CLT helped facilitate a network of third sector support which allowed the CLT to retain the freehold of the land and a stake in its future use.

In the case of Cornwall CLT, no overarching trade-offs were paramount, though this was partly due to the local authority's willingness to support local CLTs that had the benefit of a constitutional custodian. This was perceived to legitimise the organisational governance of local CLTs. Cornwall CLT was also responsible for developing its own properties, a process which can be interpreted as a trade-off between an umbrella's objectives in supporting CLT ambitions and their objective not only to meet identified housing need elsewhere but to generate critical resources. The finance obtained from annual ground rents on their properties was seen as a necessary source of finance to help support their long-term objectives and provide assistance to CLT volunteers elsewhere.

In Wales the idyllic idea of a community-led process to achieve mutual ownership of property was not paramount to the local ambitions. Instead the tangible outcome of affordable housing delivery was prioritised as long as it was open to community influence in its delivery. As such, the disconnection between the umbrella CLT's operation and the recipients of its support led to communities moving away from the idea of community ownership towards a more conventional method of delivery via a housing association. The fact the community did not own the properties outright did not matter; the tangible delivery of housing for local needs was the fundamental goal.

This reaffirms the understanding developed at the end of the previous chapter: CLTs can be understood not as a uniform model but an approach to housing development that stresses the importance of community influence, not necessarily ownership, and relies on some form of institutional structure or partnership to facilitate the objective of providing affordable housing to meet local needs. This may be through a community building process that prioritises communitarian endeavour and creates a fully-formed independent CLT, or it may be through a partnership with a local housing association that undertakes technical development while prioritising the local knowledge and expertise a community is perceived to hold in identifying its needs. The crucial and unifying issue therefore is about where the locus of power sits in influencing how, where and for whom local housing is developed, rather than an ideological commitment to community ownership. It is an approach that may see housing development that provides *responsiveness* to a community's needs, as opposed to *responsibility* for meeting them. A CLT's ownership of property may be a route to achieving this power, but it is not the only mechanism through which community influence is exercised.

Nor are these claims to local power and influence unreservedly accepted by gatekeepers to resources such as finance and land. As one of the key stakeholders in local governance, local authorities are reliant on institutional safeguards to try and ensure the power of CLTs is expressed as fairly and accountably as possible.

Community activism alone is not seen as a legitimate method of influence and the following issues often need to be addressed:

- The perceived competence of organisations is important if key resources are to be unlocked, as seen by the transfer of land at High Bickington, where the local authority was assured of the CLT's abilities by the Chair, and conversely in the case of the CLT where the offer of land was withdrawn.
- The validity of a CLT's objectives requires diligence, which can be assured by the use of a constitutional custodian, attaching perceived norms of democratic and/or professional legitimacy.
- The long-term ability and commitment of the CLT to fulfil their objectives is crucial, hence the need for guarantors of their developments and assurance over long-term business planning.

If these criteria are met, critical support for CLTs to assume an integral role in influencing local housing provision may be unlocked. Whether this role is fulfilled through community ownership or influence, the foundations of this are built on a unifying belief that:

Localism is about reducing the role of central and local government in decisions that need to be taken at the most locally appropriate spatial level, because levels of government have insufficient knowledge or no justifiable locus to make a competent decision.

Hill (2011)

However, even where CLTs, local authorities, funders and regulators unite around the apparent need to provide housing that prioritises local needs, as the following section discusses, potential legal impediments to this provision remain.

## 8.4 Representation and legitimacy at a national scale

Alongside the growth of umbrella CLTs, a National CLT Network was formed in September 2010 to represent CLTs in England, lobby on their behalf and influence policy, with the aim of putting in place the conditions that will allow the number of CLTs to grow. At the time of writing the Network was only just a year old and it is therefore too early to make a judgement as to its role in (and position on) the arguments outlined by this thesis, not least because fieldwork for the study was conducted prior to the Network's formation. Nevertheless, the Network has made an early political move in lobbying for policy to be changed to support the ability of CLTs to offer a form of housing provision that can prioritise local needs in its allocation. This section describes the launch of this move and how it may help CLTs to meet their objectives.

A frequent claim by advocates of CLTs is that their ability to hold housing and other assets in trust brings community benefit (National CLT Network, 2011a). As this thesis has explored, this involves the primacy of a CLT in deciding, providing and governing housing for locally-defined objectives and benefits, based on the ideal that the locus of power in decision-making should be devolved to the lowest possible level.

The claims to providing local benefit were seen to be of key value in embedding acceptance of housing development in local communities and in unlocking land that may not otherwise become available for this purpose. For example, a CLT's attachment to a local area and commitment to meeting the needs of its residents was a valuable tool in persuading local landowners in St Minver and East Portlemouth to sell land at low cost on the condition that it would be used for affordable housing allocated to local households.

A CLT's ability to do this has been enhanced in rural areas by the use of rural exception sites for development. They have been a useful tool for CLTs due to their

low value and the occupancy constraints they are subject to: as exception sites can only be used to house local people, the fundamental objectives of a CLT developing on an exception site cannot be overtly contested.

In other areas, legalities over land use have been perceived as a hindrance to the purpose of CLTs. Homes built on land outside 'protected areas'<sup>66</sup> are subject to leasehold enfranchisement which allows leaseholders of shared ownership properties to purchase the freehold of the land on which their home is built, therefore taking it into individual ownership and potentially onto the open market should the resident ever sell. This is commonly referred to as "staircasing" (CLG, 2009b).

It is clear how this conflicts with a CLT's desire to provide housing that prioritises local needs in perpetuity: if a home is allocated according to local need but is subject to a future legality that conflicts with this policy and allows change of use, the CLT has no legal foundation on which to apply restrictions on its future use. If leaseholders are not permitted to staircase, the CLT retains a stake in the use and occupation of that home.

Everything would be a lot simpler if we didn't have to worry about leasehold enfranchisement, we could just have a simple lease and the CLT would either be the freeholder or leaseholder and the person would be subletting, so it'd make the whole control method simpler if we didn't have to worry about leasehold enfranchisement.

Director, Cornwall CLT

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<sup>66</sup> Protected areas are typically rural locations with a population below 3,000. They are designated under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and restrictions on the right of residents to purchase the freehold of their shared ownership property are enforced in order to retain affordable housing (CLG, 2009b).

The subject of leasehold enfranchisement was also problematised in the previous chapter where a CLT volunteer was concerned about a CLT's homes being seen merely as an affordability mechanism which fails to give due priority to community building and the needs of local people. Responding to these concerns, in May 2011 a campaign titled '*Give CLTs the right to hold on to their land*' was launched by the National CLT Network, based on the fear that homes subject to leasehold enfranchisement would:

cease to be permanently affordable for the community the CLT has been set up to serve ... We want the land to stay in the hands of the community so that it can continue to have a social purpose and help those in housing need.

National CLT Network (2011c)

The campaign sought to include an amendment to the 2011 Localism Bill that would provide CLTs in all areas with a discretionary right to exempt homes built on land owned by a CLT from leasehold enfranchisement. In line with the primacy CLTs wish to assume in local decision-making, the proposed amendment would provide greater legal power for CLTs to meet their objectives of imposing a local security of tenure and measures of affordability on their homes. The quotation below, taken from a publicly available briefing note created to inform the Greater London Authority of the proposals, illustrates the discretion this would provide to communities and the elevated role bodies such as CLTs may seek to assume in the way local housing is allocated:

The philosophy of localism suggests that, in future, it should be entirely up to communities to take a view about their particular housing needs, and whether or not to protect affordable housing supply through exemption from leasehold enfranchisement. Communities should be able to make that choice for themselves ... CLTs are a legally defined body, with wide responsibilities for the well-being of their community. They are an appropriate medium for taking

the decision on behalf of and with the people who are the beneficiaries of the trust.

Hill (2011)

It is clear that the creation of this exemption would boost the power of CLTs to assert their claims to power in local housing provision to a greater degree, and in doing so provide a wider example of the way in which agendas of localism may allow communities themselves to define the appropriate levels and boundaries of decision-making which may or may not fit into existing structures and understandings. Although early in its development, this also shows how the National CLT Network may use its expertise and national voice in identifying and campaigning for legalities that can shape the CLT sector, particularly as local volunteers may not have had the capabilities to connect with national policymakers as individual organisations. As the quotation above describes, this in itself is based on the notion of 'community' as the site for collective action, consensus building and responsibility for local decision-making.

Yet, while the geographic community is obviously the site for CLT action, consensus over their social purpose and a community's particular housing needs is often contested and complex. A key argument of this thesis has been that CLTs adopt civic rationales where the involvement of communities in local governance is related to the delivery and facilitation of housing outcomes that are highly valued by local people. Rather than the utopian idea of community ownership and mutual responsibility, CLTs are incentivised to form by the opportunity to address pragmatic concerns over who local housing is allocated to and the process undertaken to decide this. The focus is on the immediate locality and consensus over local policy outcomes is fundamentally linked to influencing the type and allocation of properties in order to provide a new mode of legitimacy for those seeking to access affordable housing, one which is based primarily on familial or occupational connection to an area rather than solely economic or social need.

While mechanisms such as rural exception sites and key worker allocation policies predate CLTs in operating on this basis, handing responsibility for deciding on the type and allocation of housing to communities can itself be contested due to its key focus on the immediate neighbourhood or locality, sometimes failing to placate external stakeholders with wider geographic responsibilities wary of perceived self-defined social purposes. The legitimacy of CLTs to assume these responsibilities is itself complex. CLTs legitimise their activities to the local community by virtue of their affective attachment and closeness to the area, but are required to include performance guarantors or constitutional custodians by funders in order to attach professional or democratic legitimacy to the organisation. In these situations community activism alone is not deemed to be a legitimising activity to stakeholders, rather it is one of a multitude of processes that need to be undertaken if CLTs are to be accepted as a credible provider of housing.

It could therefore be argued that the attempt to extend exemption from leasehold enfranchisement is a tactical move to attach legal legitimacy to the role of CLTs in local housing governance. By limiting the ability of a CLT resident to dispose of their home on the open market, the CLT will be able to enforce restrictions over the resale of the home by retaining its freehold and thus a stake in its use. The National CLT Network and its activities are therefore likely to be influential in shaping the locally-defined spaces for community governance of housing, using changes in legalities to support the role communities perform in meeting their objectives. Within the framework of Etzioni's communitarianism (1995a; 1997), this can be understood as a process of contextualising the importance of community by framing the values it affirms within a higher order of legitimacy, imbuing it with a degree of accountability:

In search of a principled way to determine which values are properly accounted for, I join with those who hold that if a community (by democratic process or other forms of consensus building) reaches closure, the values endorsed or implied have been imbued with a measure of legitimacy but not sufficient accountability. I further argue that if these values also comport with

the societal values (often enshrined in the constitution or other such laws), this fact enhances the standing of the chosen values.

Etzioni (1997a, p. 241)

While Etzioni was typically concerned with issues relating to the rights and responsibilities of citizens, we can interpret the campaign to exempt CLTs from leasehold enfranchisement as a process which attempts to embed the right of CLTs to enforce resale restrictions on their homes and from that the ability to secure the highly valued local security of tenure in perpetuity.

## **Conclusion**

Whether this is a desirable outcome or not is geographically contingent. As has been described, CLTs are diverse, complex and reflective of local circumstances rather than a singular model that can be understood and judged solely in relation to their development value.

What can be highlighted is that consensus over CLTs' social purposes is not always easy to generate, nor is it likely to have wide-ranging benefits beyond an immediate locality. Prioritising local needs in housing allocation by definition excludes particular groups, which itself may be perceived to have undesirable impacts on those lacking the local connection and not qualifying for the community's assistance. Allowing communities to develop "shared visions" and "make the right decision for their community" (CLG, 2010) within localism agendas may sometimes fail to reconcile differences in power, competence, capacity and representativeness inherent to community governance.

These issues have been prevalent throughout the data analysis. In this chapter in particular, the ability of CLTs to assume responsibility for local decision-making has been questioned. Umbrella CLTs have assumed a role here in assisting CLTs and

shaping the activities and mode of operation. For example, issues of competence were addressed by umbrellas or support workers in the North East and Cornwall. In the North East the umbrella's facilitation of a partnership network addressed shortfalls in the skill and knowledge of a limited number of volunteers, though the case of Land for People highlights that the role of umbrella CLTs operating at a wider geographical level is not universally accepted based on perceptions of remoteness and lack of understanding of a community's needs, as well as a disconnection between the service offered by the umbrella and the type of service desired at community level.

Despite this instance, it is clear that umbrella CLTs are likely to continue to play a greater role in facilitating CLT development due to the number that have recently formed. The creation of this structural support in the sub-regions alongside national political support is likely to attach greater professional and legal legitimacy to the concept of CLTs, playing a key role in shaping a policy environment that supports the locally-specific agendas adopted by CLTs within the wider context of political restructuring emphasising agendas of localism. The organisations that emerge under this context are likely to be diverse in their structure and aims based on the argument of this thesis that a CLT is not a unique model of development that acts as a panacea to shortages of housing supply, and is instead a particular approach and strategy to achieving particular ends, namely the primacy of communities in the governance and allocation of local affordable housing.

# Chapter 9: Concluding Remarks

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By constructing a narrative of CLT development from reasons for formation to the acquisition of the resources needed for their plans to become reality, this thesis has attempted to document a period of change for CLTs. As the introduction to this thesis described, CLTs in England and Wales have yet to be fully explored academically, which has been advantageous for this research in so much as it can in one respect claim to be novel. The contribution this study makes to knowledge is, however, more nuanced than straightforwardly reporting the results of an empirical investigation.

First, the research has been conducted from 2008 – 2011, a time of significant change for CLTs and the social, economic and political environments in which they operate. In answering the overarching research question “*what is the purpose and function of CLTs as a form of housing governance in England and Wales?*” the thesis has attempted to document this change by exploring the rationales and acquisition of resources by CLTs in these countries. Within this, it has explored the dilemmas and compromises faced not only by CLTs but by those stakeholders to whom CLTs must demonstrate professionalism and legitimacy. The time frame of this research has made the exploration of these issues particularly interesting as the CLT sector has evolved from being locally rooted, dispersed and reliant on grassroots communitarianism, to one represented at national and sub-regional scales. The contribution this thesis makes is therefore to shed light on how and why this evolution has occurred.

Second, there is increasing governmental advocacy of the role of communities in the ownership and operation of housing and other local amenities, as well as their centrality to decision-making in policy arenas such as housing and planning. This continues the ideological commitment to community empowerment and active citizenship made by previous governments. The current push towards localism, reformed planning processes and ideas of mutualism in housing provision and wider

concepts of 'big society' make CLTs an interesting example of these politicised processes. This research has identified various potential outcomes of and challenges to the current localism agenda with particular regard to the differential abilities and power relations inherent to collective action in arenas that typically demand professional skills and time.

A number of themes underpin these contributions. This chapter is divided into three sections that aim to summarise the key findings of this thesis thematically, drawing on the content of all four empirical chapters to answer not only the questions that they were structured around but to provide some observations and conclusions as to the purpose and function of CLTs in England and Wales. Section 9.1 summarises these themes; 9.2 discusses the theoretical and policy implications of these findings; and 9.3 reflects on the strengths and limitations of this thesis and proposes important pathways for future research. These suggestions acknowledge that this study represents the beginning of rather than the conclusion to academic scrutiny of the practices and organisation of the CLT sector.

## **9.1 Emerging themes and future prospects for CLTs**

This research aimed to explore the differences, conflicts of interest and experiences that occur through assertions of collective action, aspiration and interest, investigating not only how and why CLTs have emerged but the dilemmas and compromises that are faced and negotiated in their development (Levitas, 2000, p. 192). Given the varied understandings and interpretations of the purpose of community governance, the aim was to apply a critical approach to CLTs and investigate the negotiation of the interests and complexities inherent to an emerging form of community-owned and community-governed housing in England and Wales. The product of this approach was four empirical chapters intended to chart the narrative of CLT development from initial motivation and inception through to the acquisition of critical resources and interactions with networks of professional support and expertise.

There are a number of cross-cutting themes that emerge from the findings of this research. This section discusses the purpose of community ownership in the context of CLTs, the local legitimacy of the CLT sector and the strategic legitimacy to which CLTs are beholden, with a view to the practical and critical implications these hold for theory and policy.

### **The purpose of community ownership**

It is well established that the right of ownership confers certain entitlements and privileges upon the owners; in particular it grants a degree of power in decision-making over the function and use of what it is that is owned. This is relevant in the context of CLTs as the intrinsic rationale of and for CLTs is that they alter the power relations conferred by the ownership of land and property. The alteration of these relations aims to privilege the voice of a defined, constructed or imagined community in the governance of local housing, with particular reference to the exercise of influence over the type and use of local property.

In theory, CLT ownership is a vehicle through which this voice can be expressed and a medium for exercising citizen influence and authority over local housing. The realisation of this power, and consequently the ability to achieve the particular outcomes desired by a CLT, are the main motivations for the formation of CLTs. They are formed principally in order to better represent and reflect local opinion in the delivery and management of housing. In line with Davis' (1991, p. 230) view of inner-city American CLTs, their instigation is orientated towards "a structural change in the ownership and control of domestic property". The reasons why this should be required are addressed later in this section.

This structural change is premised on altering the arrangements for housing allocations in accordance with a CLT's vision for the renewal and future of their local community. This defines who should occupy and benefit from local housing, typically

marked by economic circumstances, local connection and contribution to community life through permanent residency.

The allocation of housing according to local connection is already a common practice in rural housing provision; indeed legislation allowing for the rural exception sites that some CLTs have used to develop their housing would not allow anything other than a combination of local and economic need to determine who occupies housing built on them. Therefore, the contention here is not that allocating housing according to local need is an approach that is intrinsically marked by exclusivity; it is instead one that places heavy value on a relational-based approach to defining and overcoming housing need. This is especially the case in the context of some of the rural areas where supply and demand push property values increasingly higher and beyond local incomes, with concurrent detrimental effects for community life and spirit observed as a result of this. Consequently, aspatial forms of prioritising people in housing allocations are scrutinised by communities that may embrace alternative mechanisms to realign this, such as a CLT.

However, using local connection as the primary proxy for housing need may be a blunt instrument that has obvious implications for those seeking housing outside these parameters. It is a fundamental realigning of the rationales and bureaucratic processes, premised on 'priority need' according to economic and family circumstance that have governed the access to and allocation of subsidised housing in the UK. Allowing this realignment to be instigated by local communities may hold progressive possibilities in remedying a lack of existing provision in the face of land speculation, low supply and high property prices, but it may also oversimplify our understanding of housing need should be defined. Allocating housing and judging need simply in relation to local connection can build on, and result in, a nuanced form of territoriality that can lead to the exclusion of non-local and 'risky' social groups who fail to share a communal attachment to a spatial area.

At its most extreme, as seen in debates over who benefits from land use in Chapter 7, community-led and implemented local needs policies can be based on constructed distinctions between locals and non-locals, insiders and outsiders, that are premised on the envisaged potential contributions and non-contributions each provides to a community. Here, an interesting comparison can be made with Flint's (2009) study of European migrants to the UK and the problematisation of the behaviours of non-indigenous populations. These, Flint (2009, p. 133) argues, are premised on imaginative geographies that characterise 'outsider groups' as diverging from the behaviours and valued forms of community life desired by the 'insider group'.<sup>67</sup> The allocation of housing according to local and familial connection in these cases is a bulwark against non-local occupation of property, exemplified by one research participant who saw the potential of a CLT as a method through which locally acceptable forms of housing development and allocation could be constructed on the basis of these imagined geographies rather than merely affordability. This was to be done by building only the number of homes that could be filled according to local need rather than a greater number to be allocated on the basis of economic need or other forms of social need drawn from outside the local area.

Looking beyond the 'pull' of prioritising local connection in housing allocation, the governance of which may be an attraction for embryonic CLTs, this geographic rescaling of housing governance also involves push factors that motivate those engaged in developing CLTs to instigate collective action. In these instances, CLTs can be seen as a reaction to fundamental changes to local housing stock. Examples include the impact of the right to buy, seen to remove a vital source of affordable housing, the impact of studentification on urban neighbourhoods and huge disparities between incomes and house prices in both rural and urban areas. Here, structural alteration of the ownership and control of domestic property is less about

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<sup>67</sup> Flint's work here takes reference from Elias and Scotson's (1965) work on the insider and outsider groups of community life in Leicestershire.

the primacy of communities in housing governance and more to do with correcting the perceived inability of public, private and third sector stakeholders to resolve these issues. The need for a form of housing governance that takes greater account of local need may be an important factor but the problematisation of 'outsider groups' is not always overtly found. Instead local socio-economic forces and the neglect of these by traditional forms of authority and provision provide the basis for a strategy of community ownership aimed at benefiting local people disadvantaged by low incomes, high property prices and insufficient local housing supply.

A CLT is therefore a device which intends to remove doubt that housing will be provided and governed according to constructed community desires. It aims to work for local people and adheres to the communitarian philosophy of localising and demarcating the boundaries for responsibility and decision-making that furthers local aims:

Every community ought to be expected to do the best it can to take care of its own. Society, as a community of communities, should encourage the moral expectation that attending to welfare is the responsibility of the local community.

Etzioni (1995a, p. 146)

Communitarian efforts expressed through a CLT are extended towards creating and meeting an expectation that the governance of local housing and its occupation is structured on their terms, including a definition of which populations constitute 'their own'. In some instances it will be aimed at assuming greater responsibility for local housing; in others simply towards ensuring that housing outcomes are at least more responsive to local wishes.

The purpose of CLT ownership is not simply aimed at delivering new housing, nor is it necessarily grounded in the ideas of mutuality, protection from land speculation or

of providing a more economically equitable housing system (though these ideals do sometimes exist). It is a form of housing delivery intrinsically linked to place attachment, close local connections and ties and shared collective aspirations. CLTs are a response to (and differentiated from) forms of provision perceived to have ignored and failed to meet local aspirations as to how local housing is governed and allocated, and are deemed to be more valuable by their instigators than other providers due to their local commitment.

The task for governments (locally and nationally), financiers and regulators is to ensure that this form of territorial housing governance on behalf of local people is balanced between its progressive possibilities in facilitating the opportunity for CLTs to deliver affordable housing and exercise choice as to who lives there, and its potential for excluding those who fail to conform to the membership criteria and/or values of the defined or imagined community that CLTs aim to serve. The reconciliation (or otherwise) of these ends of the spectrum is at the heart of understanding how CLTs will operate and capitalise on the opportunities generated by the context of an increased role for community action in the decision-making, delivery and management of planning for local housing. The extent to which CLTs are seen both as legitimate representatives of their community and legitimate providers of housing that conform with the requirements of funders, landowners and government will affect the extent to which the role of CLTs expands in the future.

### **The local legitimacy of CLTs**

The “community” in the context of CLTs is synonymous with place and spatial boundaries in terms of who is best placed to decide over and provide local housing, as well as determining the criteria by which individuals are judged to be most suitable to benefit from a CLT’s work. Furthermore the work of CLTs is not intended to necessarily overlap or coalesce with that of other communities; it is a body whose boundaries of operation and interest are clearly demarcated.

Though this strong attachment to place is how CLTs legitimise themselves to local communities, the legitimacy attached to who decides over local housing provision and who benefits from it can be contested within and between geographic communities rather than merely between structures of community representation and external organisations. CLTs are characterised by themselves and by MPs in government as holding a comparative advantage in contrast to public or quasi-public providers of housing due to their "untaintedness" from national or regional priorities and their ability to represent the local opinion of their communities (see Seward, 2009). These perspectives link back to longer policy traditions in the field of housing, including the promotion of tenant participation, stock transfer, resident engagement in regeneration and co-operativism, as well as to governmental rhetoric dating back to the emphasis placed on active citizenship and empowerment by successive governments from the 1980s onwards.

What this ideological point of view fails to reconcile is that simply assuming a CLT is untouched from 'tainted' opinions and forms of knowledge is to ignore the fractured multiplicity of interests, relationships and identities within communities. The legitimacy of a CLT should not be understood just by being set in opposition to the state or against large housing associations perceived to struggle in balancing their accountability to private finance with their service to residents and communities. Instead, legitimacy itself is something that can be contested on an intra-community basis and, as the example of the CLTs in Chapter 6 showed, is often linked to how housing is provided and managed, and to whom it is allocated.

The potential contestation and splintering of opinion over a CLT's legitimacy may be contingent on and affected by variable levels of power organisation and relationships that can leverage power over competing interest groups. Association with democratically elected bodies such as parish councils was thought to privilege a CLT in organising a parish poll to decide on the local use of land, while competing against this the CLT's representatives felt that the negative outcome of the poll was a consequence of ignorance, insufficient knowledge of the subject and informal

networks of citizen association as opposed to an accepted product and outcome of local deliberation. The development of a CLT here was therefore not merely grounded in an ideological stance related to the apparently apolitical nature of a CLT, but rather a relational and political process involving the positioning for resources and splintering of legitimacy in response to this.

Therefore, while CLT advocates may see the approach as being untainted by the norms and values held by other providers that are thought to negatively affect local communities, they are not untainted by the concept of interest. The representation and defence of one set of interests defined by place is set against another set of interests, priorities or opinions that threaten a CLT's aims and desires. These may be related to concerns commonly expressed by CLT representatives, such as the impact of private capital, land speculation or second home ownership, but they also hold the concurrent possibility for being defined solely in relation to spatial connection, commitment to a local area and citizen-defined contribution to a community. Rather than assume they represent the opinion of the 'authentic grassroots', I argue that CLTs simply articulate the interests of a particular strand of localised opinion which is itself open to challenge, debate and contestation by others who may claim similar legitimacy. Even where local consensus is generated, CLTs still represent a portion of grassroots interest that may simultaneously include and exclude either on the basis of spatial connection, or on the extent to which local people are involved in the relational and politicised processes that facilitate CLTs.

The local legitimacy of a CLT is therefore premised on its civic commitment to an area - the civic rationale of Lowndes and Sullivan's framework - and its ability to represent, articulate and defend the interests of a local area. Rather, this thesis found that these interests are not solely or universally articulated in relation to the existence or lack of affordable housing, they are instead intertwined with and contingent on associations with a bounded spatial area. Within this, intra-community contestation as to the type of housing that is provided and who occupies it shows that the "untaintedness" of a CLT is not enough to ensure it effortlessly glides to

successful delivery or produces a legitimate communitarian consensus that is accepted by all.

### **The strategic legitimacy and emerging CLT sector**

There are numerous tensions between conceptualising CLTs as a body untainted by interests that conflict with local priorities and the actual trajectory of the CLT sector. A number of CLTs in this study were committed to principles of local participatory democracy and followed the ideal of the American Institute for Community Economics (1982, p. 256) in seeing a CLT as a product of the effort of and by a geographic community as opposed to being created for or on behalf of local people and their interests. It holds that the process of creating a CLT is intrinsically linked to the extent to which the outcome is valued by and beneficial for the intended beneficiaries; that CLTs essentially need to avoid, as one urban CLT put it in Chapter 6, "just another government model" in order to uphold local interests and benefits. This view echoed a call from the National CLT Demonstration Programme in 2009 for "more support to enable CLTs to operate, without detracting from their core principle, which is about creating a sense of collective power and trust among communities" (Aird, 2009, p. 6).

Yet, this rationale for instigating CLTs, premised strongly on an ideologically 'pure' form of community empowerment and local autonomy, has been riddled by contradiction and compromise evidenced throughout this research. While CLTs were initially reluctant to pursue or accept state-sponsored sources of funding and prioritised their independence - their 'untaintedness' - their efforts to implement a new set of tenurial arrangements that privilege local communities has been necessarily contingent on the compromise and framing of this by those with the wherewithal to facilitate CLT development. This was fundamentally related to whether or not CLTs had the practical skills, strength and capacity to meet their objectives along with concerns as to the extent of resident control.

CLTs were encouraged to "sit within policy in a way that is acceptable" by a local authority officer in Cornwall. Issues such as the blind selection of residents, the extension of catchment areas from which residents would be drawn and badgemarks of accountability such as legal and charitable structures all conveyed legitimacy to a local authority and persuaded them to release finance. Alongside this, CLTs in this area were required to have a constitutional custodian, a professional or democratically elected body through which constitutional changes would have to be passed, represented on their board in order to safeguard the aims and objectives of the organisation.

The requirement to ensure that CLTs were acting legitimately and in general accordance with local authority objectives, along with community-level need for human resources, created an emerging role for umbrella CLTs operating at wider geographic scales. Umbrella CLTs provided crucial assistance in supporting CLTs and brokering support from local authorities by conferring a degree of professional legitimacy to a CLT's aims. In this sense, legitimacy can be seen as a political resource which CLTs were able to mobilise in their favour, providing further weight to the argument that their development is not facilitated only by an ideological stance but by a relational and political process that emphasises universal professional norms and values.

The key finding here is that CLTs do not simply 'do it themselves'.<sup>68</sup> they were often reliant on external facilitation, support and brokerage. This is not to undermine the effort and spirit of volunteerism that underpinned many of the CLTs featured in this study, but typically CLTs were reliant on forms of professional expertise and

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<sup>68</sup> In 2008 a publication named *'Then We Will Do It Ourselves'* was launched at the National CLT conference with an accompanying press release that described it as a demonstration of "what is possible when the ingenuity and hard work of local communities is matched by a progressive approach from local authorities and funders."

knowledge, the existence of which within a CLT's operation were critical to unlocking the land and finance required for their development.

These findings are important to note as they show the key role of intermediary organisations highlighted by Archer and Vanderhoven (2010) in Chapter 3. Umbrella CLTs can be classed as intermediaries as they hold perform many of the functions described by Archer and Vanderhoven, including mediation between the state and communities, and active assessment and provision of the necessary support and resource needs of CLT groups. The intermediary role performed by many umbrella CLTs has been a key factor in delivering CLT homes in areas such as Cornwall. The combination of their capability to provide technical support and expertise and commitment to community empowerment and mediation with stakeholders makes umbrella CLTs important actors in the formation, progression and delivery of CLTs.

However, simply forming an umbrella CLT will not on its own be a panacea to the problems faced by communities. Other examples in this thesis have highlighted tensions in this intermediation role, as in some circumstances umbrellas were not seen as key actors as they were not able to provide the professional skills and support required by communities. Based on these findings, it is possible to identify three key attributes of umbrella CLTs, which have resonance for intermediary organisations elsewhere in the community self-help sector:

- They should be capable of providing the technical support and expertise required by local communities, such as organisational expertise, advice on legal incorporation and business planning.
- They should have a commitment to community empowerment while ensuring they complement rather than duplicate or compete with the work of other intermediary partners or organisations (such as rural housing enablers).

- They must establish strong and lasting relationships with the communities they serve, and be established at an appropriate geographical level that connects local voluntary action with key resources and networks beyond the local area.

The requirement for technical expertise was clear even when CLTs were independently-led, with one local authority indicating that the professional background of volunteers was a crucial resource for the CLT to draw upon. It was further evidenced as CLTs entered into partnerships with specialist housing associations, reflecting the Homes and Communities Agency's need to monitor and guarantee performance of funding recipients. While accepted by CLTs, this was not necessarily seen as the most appropriate course of action, only the most pragmatic in order to achieve community influence and control over local housing.

The CLT sector is therefore not only characterised by grassroots organisations reliant on the activism and efforts of volunteers. Instead the specialist knowledge and professional expertise of those involved in housing development comes to the fore in order to broker, support and facilitate the development of locally-rooted CLTs committed to citizen-led housing governance. This therefore represents a limited form of active citizenship which delineates participation to those with the requisite skills. In other words, it is not even open to all in a spatially defined area and is instead contingent on either possessing the requisite skills or positioning to receive these resources from specialist bodies. The implications for theories and political developments grounded in discourses of self-sufficient communities and communitarian-minded behaviour are considered in the next section.

## **9.2 The research's implications for theory and policy**

This thesis has drawn upon theories of community in order to explain the instigation and development of CLTs, focusing in particular on the communitarianism of Etzioni

(1995a; 1997a) and Tam (1998). These were selected on the basis of their attempts to provide a grand narrative of the active role communities could and should play in their self-governance. In short, they argue for more weight to be accorded to community as both the site and tool for government, a tone that has influenced and characterised the approach to community of successive political administrations. Associated with this, the rationales for neighbourhood governance described by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) provided a way of conceptualising how the civic rationale - the way in which CLTs are formed in order to exercise greater voice in the governance of housing - is received and negotiated by external actors and stakeholders that are involved with CLTs. In particular, the support or otherwise given to CLTs helps explain how dispersed forms of community governance aimed at harnessing the localised collective power and trust described in the previous section are shaped by their interactions with public, quasi-public and private tiers and forces of governance and decision-making.

### **Communitarian spaces for neighbourhood governance**

Whatever the eventual institutional form or method of facilitation a CLT undertakes – for example a partnership with a housing association or the receipt of professional support and sponsorship from external partners - a central theme is the communitarian belief in the supremacy of community in identifying the most appropriate ways to decide, provide and govern local housing. These efforts pit community against external forces that threaten these abilities and promote a form of governance that produces outcomes perceived to be more locally egalitarian and of greater local value. These outcomes are intended to be a product of community spirit, local entrepreneurialism and above all community influence. In communitarian terms this involves a rescaling of governance that depends less on the mandate of representative governments or state-sponsored instruments and more on the enlargement of informal civic spheres that allow citizens to define, participate in and make decisions over an array of apparently local issues.

These efforts are heavily reliant on the image of an active, empowered and capable citizen who has the capacity for self-governance and self-determination portrayed by successive governments (CLG, 2008a; Cameron, 2010). Involvement in a CLT demands time, professional skills and knowledge and an ability to balance a commitment to protecting the interests of a CLT's intended beneficiaries with the requirements and accountabilities of accessing land, finance and philosophical support from local authorities. The 'performing citizens' that aim to produce policy outcomes that matter to them by acting outside conventional political systems and structures are those that are likely to instigate the civic rationale (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008, p. 55), yet this analysis has shown that CLTs should not be understood only as a product of civic endeavour and community self-help. The constitution of the civic spheres created to allow CLTs to represent and protect local interests are as contingent on the social rationales emphasising partnership, professional behaviour and accountability as they are on permitting communities to define the governance of housing solely on their terms.

In this context tensions emerge between competing and alternative discourses of what a CLT is for. The specialist knowledge and need to demonstrate accountability to local authorities and funders led to many CLTs adopting a pragmatic approach that relied less on volunteerism and more on partnerships to fill the gaps in capacity and competence that Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) can be found in forms of neighbourhood governance. Yet by others this was seen to threaten the communitarian governance that CLTs are thought to provide as described by a CLT volunteer in the South West:

It's what I call mission creep: you lose sight of your original mission and values and it becomes indistinguishable from what's happening already.

### **The impact of isomorphism**

In the quotation above, the perceived "mission creep" of CLTs had been found in their organisational structure which, in this interviewee's eyes, had moved away from

rationalising CLTs in relation to their civic commitment and more in terms of a standardised model of delivery indistinguishable from other providers. These tensions had emerged from the need for specialist knowledge in delivery and accountability to other organisations, which lead to the creation of partnerships between CLTs and organisations including housing associations, independent umbrella CLTs and local authorities. These partnerships have been seen to direct the organisational structure and behaviour of CLTs, for example the requirement for professional skills has led to delivery partnerships between CLTs and housing associations. Elsewhere CLTs were required to have a constitutional custodian to help unlock key resources.

These findings have resonance with the processes of isomorphism described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), who suggest that organisational fields become more structured and similar over time as they respond to isomorphic pressures. In particular, the concept of coercive isomorphism, where organisations are pressured both formally and informally to adopt particular characteristics according to expectations over purpose and behaviour, has resonance with CLT attempts to access public subsidy. The organisational structure and behaviour of the CLTs that were successful in obtaining subsidy was altered in line with the expectations of the Homes and Communities Agency, who required CLTs to partner with housing associations perceived to be more established and better regulated.

This also links to strands of normative isomorphism, where organisations are faced with pressures to adhere to dominant norms in a particular field. The continued requirements for a professionalised model of CLT operations, as shown by the growth of umbrella CLTs and need to ensure that CLTs are organisationally competent, highlights another isomorphic pressure on the CLT sector. Indeed, the structural growth of the sector, with sub-regional umbrella bodies and a national membership organisation formed in recent years in a similar fashion to similar sectors (such as that of housing associations), shows an emergence of hierarchies of responsibility and managerial authority, which DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 151)

highlight as an indicator of both mimetic and normative isomorphism. This is also exemplified by the constitutional custodians in some areas that may eventually assume responsibility for 'safeguarding' the purpose and mission of a CLT.

While recognising the importance of these requirements, findings on the structural growth of the CLT sector show that the impact of isomorphic pressures on organisational behaviour is not always effective. The case of an unsuccessful umbrella CLT shows that the imposition of professional practices and norms by more powerful actors needs to remain connected to the local level, as these pressures can be contested and negotiated by CLTs dependent on the benefits such behaviour brings. As this thesis has described, the CLT sector is still at an early stage of development and evolved through the course of this study. As such, further research into the isomorphic pressures faced by CLTs and other community organisations, and the way in which these direct their organisational structure and behaviour over time will be important. In particular, the extent to which CLTs balance the technicalities of meeting their aims of housing development with a commitment to processes of volunteerism and empowerment will be of particular interest in understanding the impact of isomorphic pressures and change.

There is therefore a debate to be had both within CLTs themselves and between CLTs and those stakeholders with the means to facilitate their development as to the most appropriate locus of empowerment, management and governance of the housing produced by a CLT's efforts. For many the ideal of community ownership and an active and entrepreneurial form of housing organisation was willingly compromised in order to achieve and ensure a form of affordable housing delivery in the area. For others, the attachment a CLT holds to its geographic area and its ability to ensure that these local interests and priorities are prevalent in the day-to-day operation is what distinguishes a CLT's housing from a housing provider operating across or managed from wider geographies.

According greater weight to 'community' in housing governance is therefore something that does not occur or operate in a vacuum removed from the wider structures of finance, housing development and management that demand specialist knowledge. Rather than the utopian ideal of community self-help inherent to the formation of CLTs, their development also depends on a wide variety of organisations - for example local authorities, funders, housing associations and umbrella CLTs - and the negotiation of both their influence and the weight of 'community' upon the outcomes that are produced. As such CLTs should not be conceptualised as a uniform model that undertakes and produces a standard set of procedures and outcomes based on community-led participation and deliberation; it is instead a diverse and complex approach subject to contextual variation and different sets of social and organisational relations.

Even if these spaces for communitarian governance are contingent on many different factors - human capital, finance, philosophical support from stakeholders - common amongst all CLTs is their orientation towards promoting specific interests and objectives as to who should benefit from local housing. The process may differ but the desired outcome is usually the same: people that benefit from the new tenorial arrangements implemented by CLTs ought to share their attachments to place, residence and communal wellbeing as opposed to having greater ability to compete in the marketplace or receiving preferential treatment from external organisations on conditions other than connection to place.

The extent to which this is a desirable strategy should be a priority for future research into this area. As the following section describes, there are several practical benefits that CLTs may bring dependent on local circumstances and a logical consequence of determining which groups should be prioritised in housing allocations is that statements are made about whose needs should not enjoy similar levels of priority. However, as seen by some of the examples and concerns by stakeholders held in this study, using local connection as a proxy for housing need is a blunt instrument that may permit providers to select a certain type of person to live

in the community. This may hold bright prospects in terms of resisting gentrifying forces in some areas. In others they may be premised on the imagined geographies and cultural distinctions that mark the 'insiders' of a community with the 'outsiders' that are deemed to diverge from existing members of a community in terms of their cultural values, behaviour and contribution to a desired form of community life.

The key finding here concurs with the notable critiques of communitarian activity and argue that CLTs, just like other forms of collective self-governance, should be theorised in relation to the differential power relations and social and cultural factors that reliance on strategies of community may bring (Elias and Scotson, 1965; Levitas, 2000; 2005). The claims made by communities to challenge the prevailing political and economic social orders by altering the allocations and economics of local housing markets are not removed from the wider economic structural forces and social relationships that society is based upon. To argue otherwise is to frame CLTs and other forms of communitarian governance in a particular ideological stance that masks the relational approach and politicised process in which their development has been grounded, as well as the impact the broader political economy has in shaping both the potential and actual magnitude of community governance.

Therefore what much of the literature advocating communitarian governance and CLTs miss is that movements of bottom-up community and localism are not in themselves able to effect the significant shift in power and influence it is claimed, and instead this is dependent on the identification and acquisition of the resources demanded by wider macro forces and the alignment of their objectives with prevailing economic and political structures, as opposed to their substantial overhaul. Therefore, the extent to which CLTs are able to articulate alternative institutional forms of governance at the neighbourhood level is likely to be diverse both geographically and institutionally in terms of the relationships that are struck with wider society. As the comments that follow will detail, these findings bring forward

the need for a critical yet balanced approach to future studies of the role, purpose and potential of CLTs and other forms of collective action within agendas of localism.

### **Delivering affordable housing or local housing?**

This thesis has been primarily concerned with charting the process of forming and attempting to develop a CLT, and the tensions and negotiations that are inherent to these processes, rather than the practical outcomes that have been delivered. This is reflective of the fact that the vast majority of CLTs were still grappling with the challenges documented here throughout the processes of research design and implementation: how to access land, how to acquire finance and how to balance securing local needs and ties with the need for upward accountability and professional requirements. There is therefore scope for a future audit of the exact contribution CLTs have made in their local areas both in terms of quantity of housing built and the levels of affordability they have secured, and the social consequences of this, though we are able to draw some tentative observations from the CLTs that have featured in this study.

In some rural areas CLTs have been particularly effective in negotiating the release of land that would have not otherwise been made available for housing development, largely due to their objectives for local land use matching the concerns of landowners as to the groups that benefit and attempt to profit from its use. A CLT's commitment to meeting local needs and restricting the sale of housing for private profit was a key factor in unlocking this land. This scenario was evident in St Minver where the CLT acquired land for £120,000 to build 12 homes to be sold at low cost to those with strong local connections. Valued at £287,500 and £335,000 on the open market, these homes were sold for £90,000 and £105,000 with future resales restricted to the same percentage of market value. The implication is that CLTs can make a practical contribution towards tackling what Satsangi *et al.* (2010, p. 190) refer to as the "islands of wealth" in gentrified village locations created by insufficient land supply, high house prices and low rural incomes. As more CLTs are formed

there will be a space for analysing the levels of affordability CLTs offer in comparison to local incomes and alternative provision on offer, as well as methods of land acquisition, particularly where land is not available as a rural exception site.

Yet, it should be noted that delivering affordable housing was not the sole trigger for CLT formation. Instead, CLTs perceive their role as a deliverer of *local housing* (that is affordable and accessible to a specified group) rather than *affordable housing* (that is affordable in relation to wider geographies, incomes and market forces). They are a niche provider aiming to meet immediate local needs. As such, they are unlikely to come forward and fill gaps in affordable housing provision unless there is a clearly identified local need; as the Taylor Report argued they are aimed towards "specific arrangements [that are] responsive to the needs of particular areas" (Taylor, 2008, p. 114). This stance was further endorsed in a Devon County Council press release promoting CLTs shortly before the conclusion of the study. It argued that:

This is all about local solutions to address local need ... which can enable smaller, appropriately sized schemes to come forward and so better reflect the historic flavour of Devon's rural communities and villages where the problem [of local people being unable to access housing] is so acute.

Devon County Council (2011)

Therefore, CLTs in rural areas are unlikely to be a universal panacea to problems of affordable housing delivery, they are expressly intended to be small scale and to meet need that is clearly defined in relation to locality. This is accepted by policymakers and indeed implied by some stakeholders in Chapters 6 and 8 to be a factor that unlocked their support: that CLTs were only undertaking developments on a small geographic scale was unlikely to have a major effect on altering forms of community governance beyond the arena of housing. The situation is less clear in urban areas due to the smaller number and slower progress of CLTs in this area, though some tentative propositions are offered in Section 9.3.

## **Future trajectories for the CLT sector**

This thesis has charted the variance that exists within the emerging CLT sector, ranging from the typecast of a locally-rooted CLT led by a spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy to the increasingly professionalised support structures and partnerships at local, sub-regional and national levels. These structures aim to realise what charitable funders involved with CLTs have described as "real prospect[s] for the Community Land Trust sector to grow and prosper" and they aim to "create something much bigger and much more sustainable" in terms of the sector's size and impact (Carnegie UK Trust, 2011). The professional knowledge and expertise provided more widely by umbrella CLTs and housing associations has made a significant contribution to many of the CLTs featured in this study, whether it be through assisting with tasks that demand specialist knowledge or providing a qualitative legitimisation of a CLT's objectives and future performance to stakeholders such as local authorities and the Homes & Communities Agency.

It is clear that the CLT sector is one of significant diversity, a point emphasised by the umbrella CLTs that develop and manage housing on their own terms. While producing the same outcome as CLTs – affordable housing that is allocated according to local connection - umbrellas are led by individuals with specialised backgrounds in housing development and in this sense perhaps have more in common with small housing associations than voluntary-led CLTs. While the contribution this type of support work has made to the facilitation of CLTs has been significant in many areas, this research has also uncovered tensions within this professionalisation that are seen to threaten both the communitarian-led governance some CLTs are committed to and the appropriate scale on which housing should be planned and governed. These views are context-specific and variable but this in itself furthers the argument that a CLT should not be understood as a singular model that will be replicated in the same way across the country.

The role housing associations perform has also been documented here, though greater attention could and should have been paid to their perspectives on what involvement with CLTs give to their organisations as opposed to merely the assistance they provide to CLTs. As this study concluded, a report titled *Trust and Association* was released by the National CLT Network in order to promote the significance of partnerships between CLTs and housing associations. This argued that there was a "natural fit between the two" (National CLT Network, 2011b, p. 1) and these partnerships could be "the best of both worlds" and realise a variety of mutual benefits related to accessing funding, land and appealing to demands and needs of local communities that may otherwise oppose affordable housing development.

This thesis has begun to document these benefits from the perspective of CLTs with the provision of specialist knowledge and performance guarantees helping facilitate their access to subsidy. From the perspective of housing associations, we could begin to theorise their involvement as being a progression of their branding as being "in business for neighbourhoods" (McDermont, 2010). This strategy aimed to assert the housing association sector's independence from the state, emphasise their role as the champion of community needs and priorities and identify with the rhetoric and practice of 'community' that in many ways mirrors the rationalisation of CLTs (McDermont, 2004). Involvement and partnership with CLTs at a local level may therefore serve to be an extension of housing associations' current practices and attempts to position themselves as independent supporters and champions of residents and communities, though it has been identified elsewhere in the thesis that many CLTs have disputed the local operation of housing associations in their community. The rise of housing association involvement is therefore one way of facilitating and delivering CLT objectives but it is far from the only one and may be subject to contestation and negotiation at local levels.

Yet there is clear coalescence between the two sectors at a national level. The National CLT Network was launched in September 2010 part-funded and hosted by

(but legally independent of) the National Housing Federation (NHF). The future objective is for the National CLT Network to become financially self-sufficient and independent within two years, breaking off from the NHF. This relationship may not be as complex as one may think; the CLT Network is governed by an independent board and has its own methods of income generation, but it will be interesting to note how the relationship between the two bodies evolves and sustains in future years, particularly given the increasing prominence and potential placed on partnerships between housing associations and CLTs by strategic stakeholders.

In this context, the local relationships between CLTs and housing associations will be especially interesting to assess given concerns over funding future housing development. Financial challenges are likely to be as influential as any other factor in shaping the trajectory of the CLT sector. This has already been seen by the need for CLTs to meet the demands and specialisms of housing development and management (with accountability and legitimacy with funders being key), but equally CLTs will not be immune from the macro-economic forces that have made finance and affordable credit difficult to access for any housing developer.<sup>69</sup> This is again indicative of the difficulties in grappling with the demands and accountabilities inherent to wider structural forces faced by CLTs and alternative forms of communitarian governance and organisation. CLTs have so far funded their acquisition of land and development on a piecemeal basis, negotiating the release of land on favourable economic terms and temporary loan finance from local authorities to help supplement this, alongside the acquisition of subsidy. Given these challenges and the reduction of available finance, the encouragement provided by the HCA for consortia arrangements between housing associations and community-led housing providers (including CLTs, housing co-operatives, co-housing and other community

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<sup>69</sup> For example, In July 2011 Inside Housing reported that the ability of housing associations to build was "being eroded by the need to borrow more money for development following cuts in government grant from a national average of £60,000 per home in the 2008/11 [Homes & Communities Agency funding] programme to £25,000 from 2011/15".

organisations) may be particularly influential in directing the future organisational arrangements of the CLT sector.

Finally, the National CLT Network has been formed to provide a strategic unity for local CLTs, lobbying on their behalf and securing favourable economic and political arrangements to harness development at local and sub-regional levels. This has so far largely involved representing rural CLT groups but over the course of this study I have found increasing variation and divergence in the rationales CLTs put forward for their formation and the organisational arrangements that are institutionalised. These are a result of the efforts and negotiations invested by CLTs and the various stakeholders that they are beholden to through land, finance and support arrangements, while these arrangements may be accepted, negotiated or disputed by CLTs depending on the level of their desire for organisational autonomy. The CLT sector is one that meets local niche demand, expresses locally-specific priorities and is motivated by a variety of values that do not necessarily coalesce around the fundamental provision of affordable housing. Furthermore, if the urban CLT portion of the sector is to take off then there will be significantly different challenges faced and prioritised across the Network's membership according to variable local contexts. The challenge for any form of national representation will therefore be to represent and articulate the fractured, diverse and hybrid views and objectives that emerge from the formation of CLTs embedded in a variety of contexts and with a variety of aims and priorities, a task that is likely to carry considerable weight in steering the future prospects for the CLT sector.

### **Political agendas: localism and community 'rights'**

While it would be an exaggeration to say that CLTs have been used as a political bargaining chip, this research has been conducted and authored during a period in which the role of civic action and localism has been promoted with political enthusiasm. Contemporary developments include the publication of the government's Localism Bill, offering communities the 'right to build' - the chance to

hold local referendums to decide planning decisions and the 'right to reclaim land' – an opportunity to demand the disposal of public land for community use (Shapps, 2010b).

At the time of writing it is unclear how the latter will play out, though the former is quite simple in its premise. Community groups such as a CLT are encouraged to hold a local referendum over their plans to build housing (or other amenities) with community consensus determining the planning decision. The outcome of the referendum will be determined by a simple majority vote. This is part of a wider reform of planning policy, moving away from strategic planning of housing delivery at a regional level to the micro level of the neighbourhood and sub-region. This is framed as a mechanism to return power and decision-making from the perceived bureaucracy of the public sector to local communities seen as best equipped to identify and meet local housing need, as described by the Housing Minister at the 2010 National CLT Conference:

I now want to widen opportunities for communities to shape what happens next ... I want communities to have the freedom to decide on the type and quantity of housing without external restrictions imposed by a centralised planning system.

Shapps (2010b)

Although the community right to build has yet to receive royal assent at the time of writing and become fully legislated, the findings presented here have raised two key implications for the practical delivery of these opportunities. First, it has been demonstrated that CLTs have faced significant practical difficulties in planning and shaping their housing and that these have often been resolved by umbrella CLTs reliant on charitable funding. Practical and professional skills are often demanded and the competence of organisations to fulfil the requisite tasks in day-to-day tasks, obtaining funding and obtaining planning permission has sometimes been contested

by external stakeholders. This suggests that even where CLTs form, their delivery will be fragmented and piecemeal. At the same conference, the Housing Minister Grant Shapps commented that:

Community based housing bodies like CLTs are going to have to work within the same financial constraints as everyone else.

Shapps (2010a)

Although this primarily related to funding the physical development of homes, CLTs often work within human resource constraints as well as financial. Research participants in this study often called for an English equivalent of the Scottish Land Fund administered by a specialised Community Land Unit, though there currently appears to be no plan to provide this institutional infrastructure that was found to be critical in facilitating community land ownership in Scotland (Macleod *et al.*, 2010). With these constraints in mind, CLT development either through the right to build or conventional planning routes is unlikely to be an overall panacea to issues of local housing supply.

Second, a section of this thesis described a CLT that held a parish poll to decide over their local housing development. The result of the poll went against the CLT's plans, stifling their intention to take advantage of cheap land on offer from the parish council and failing to generate the harmonious deliberation over the type and quantity of housing that CLTs are sometimes envisaged as bringing. Future enquiry will be concerned with investigating whether the experiences of the single case study presented here are exhibited elsewhere; whether the referendum process becomes a charter for NIMBYs to block development (as described by Lloyd, 2010b) and the

extent to which poll results not only deliver affordable housing but truly represent the wishes of a community.<sup>70</sup>

### **9.3 Reflections, limitations and pathways for research**

#### **Data issues**

As reflected upon in the methodology chapter, one of the limitations of this research has been the recruitment and participation of viewpoints from a wide range of all those affected by a CLT's operation. The changing environment in which CLTs were operating partly contributed to this. When recruiting potential interviewees during 2009 the concept of a CLT appeared alien to many stakeholders external to CLT processes, with most following the view that it was a largely theoretical model to which they were currently ambivalent. The subsequent promotion of CLTs by government officials along with the burgeoning 'big society' agenda helped change this, as did the creation of the National CLT Network and an increase in the number of umbrella CLTs that promote the concept of a CLT. Even if CLTs still make a very modest and localised contribution to housing at the time of writing, the concept is without doubt more widely promoted and known than it was when this study began. As such, if this study had operated from 2011-2014 as opposed to 2008-2011, a wider pool of knowledgeable and engaged research participants may have been easier to identify and recruit. This opens pathways for future research, for example charting the role, purpose and value of the relationships between the National CLT

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<sup>70</sup> For example, Duffy et al (2008) analysed neighbourhood elections in the New Deals for Communities area-based urban regeneration programme in England. These found that those with more qualifications, greater roots in the community and better social relations were more likely to vote in elections that were only participated in by a minority. Similar research into voting patterns in community referendums undertaken via the community right to build will be of interest here, along with analysis of the planning, campaigning and undertaking of the vote itself.

Network and the NHF, and looking more deeply at the social, legal and technical arrangements between housing associations and CLTs.

The framework of rationales for neighbourhood governance has been useful in identifying the tensions that can occur between CLTs initially committed to notions of untaintedness, independence and autonomy and the social rationales adopted by strategic stakeholders that seek professionalised and accountable organisational behaviour from CLTs. However, it is a very narrow heuristic device that has merely opened the door to the flows of power that occur within and between communities, organisations of representation and stakeholders within local authorities and funders. A number of issues arise from this.

Firstly, the framework did not (and could not due to the number of participants) take account of how these rationales were received by housing associations. Although their role has to some extent been documented, there would be space for analysing the help that housing associations offer to CLTs who in many respects could be perceived as competitors for scarce resources in providing housing. This could be considered in relation to whether they perceive CLTs as a method of improving their own forms of housing management and delivery and whether it is an effort to (re)legitimise their role as being 'in business' for and on behalf of communities.

Secondly, the usefulness of the framework as a critical analytical tool has been limited. Although the primary rationales it describes have been useful in describing the roots of CLTs, for example the civic rationale characterised by active citizenship and empowerment, it has been less useful in clarifying the institutional forms that emerge from each rationale and the ideal type of neighbourhood governance they are perceived to produce. As an illustration of this, the findings presented here suggest that the key objectives that Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) argue underpin different forms of neighbourhood empowerment, partnership, government and management are not distinct from each other in the design of local governance. CLTs may be formed and facilitated on the basis of civic rationales built on the active citizenship and empowerment of local communities, but their institutionalisation into

local governance may be contingent upon their response to the isomorphic pressures imposed by tiers of representative democracy and their arms-length bodies such as the Homes and Communities Agency. Indeed, these could even be linked to the objectives of the political rationale that demand responsiveness and accountability to existing structures of representative governance.

Therefore, the framework fails to unpick the tensions between participative and representative forms of democracy, and the leadership roles that facilitate processes of neighbourhood governance. Rationales and the outcomes they produce are malleable rather than static as presented in the framework, and the objectives, roles and institutional forms are created by stakeholders with different rationales for and interpretations of the role and purpose played by communities in processes of governance. It also fails to take account of the important dimensions of community governance identified in parts of this thesis, including the power dynamics within and between communities and the contestation of who and what purpose the work undertaken by CLTs serves.

It does, however, act as an organising tool which allows us to differentiate between the different rationalisations of CLTs and other forms of community governance. Further research as the CLT sector develops may enable the creation of a new framework that acknowledges these developments and weaves together the enabling factors, opportunities and challenges faced by CLTs, their partners and the powerful actors (including the local and national state, and funding bodies) that they are required to be accountable to.

Related to this, one of the key contentions made by this thesis is that, beyond being a form of community-led or influenced housing development, a CLT should not be understood as being a uniform model that is rationalised or orientated to the same ends. The manifestation of and reasons for community control expressed via the formation and development of a CLT are likely to differ from place to place in relation to local circumstances. Future research agendas may explore the manifestation of CLTs in urban areas where, as in the US, community groups have begun to form in order to resist or engineer change in economically unequal housing markets,

responding to issues such as escalating house values, gentrification and housing demolition. Here, we might find that enabling access to housing in relation to affordability rather than local connection is the defining objective of a CLT. An emerging body of work in the US has begun to go further than this, theorising a CLT's aim to hold land in trust as part of an "anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist politics" (Dixon, forthcoming, 2012) that operates on behalf of the poor and working class and attempts to democratise wealth and power (Alperovitz, 2011). These possibilities for CLTs have also been discussed in relation to 'right to the city' social movements that aim to engender rights-based land use approaches for low income urban populations marginalised by neoliberal urbanism (Haas, 2011). These movements are driven towards conceiving the use of land and property in a way that draws less upon capital exchange values and more upon use values that claim rights of use and occupation for marginalised populations (Purcell, 2003).

### **Future research and concluding remarks**

The extent to which the possibilities described above can be realised by CLTs should not be overstated given the weight of macro-economic forces and accountability to prevailing institutions and institutional relations that existing CLTs have needed to demonstrate in order to advance their aims.<sup>71</sup> Nor is the intention to claim that CLTs in urban areas in England and Wales are necessarily orientated towards similarly ambitious ends as the American work suggests. Rather, 'community' is constructed and utilised for a variety of means and ends. This thesis has begun to document some of them but this occurred during a period of transition and change for what can now be recognised as a CLT sector and as such has

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<sup>71</sup> Indeed, there is literature to suggest that the ambitious aims of articulating forms of alternative politics and alternative economic futures is severely limited and requires national political support. Fainstein and Fainstein (1985, p. 204) argued that: "Urban social movements in themselves can do little to affect the forces that are restructuring the American economy ... their capabilities of doing so awaits the formation of a collective consciousness that identifies their common situation".

arguably raised more questions than answers in relation to the future prospects for CLTs. In addition to the pathways already mentioned, future research should aim to definitively interrogate:

- The quantitative contribution CLTs make to affordable housing stocks and the levels of affordability offered.
- The varied geographies of CLT development, the scales of development and the legal forms and partnerships used to facilitate this.
- The allocation of CLT housing and the decision-making procedures and negotiations undertaken.
- The extent to which CLTs are financially and organisationally self-sufficient over time.

Further exploration of these topics will help deal with the task of theorising how the business of community and its multiplicity of prospects are managed and negotiated as more CLTs are formed and build housing. Additionally, one area this thesis has failed to explore is the involvement of CLTs in wider activities of community building such as the development of additional community amenities and participation in other arenas of governance such as neighbourhood forums and parish councils. The manner in which CLTs respond to – and capitalise on – the opportunities currently afforded by a shrinking role for the state and increased space for civic action will have broader implications for understanding the manifestation of localism agendas. Moreover, the way these opportunities are realised will tell us much about whether the strategies underpinning CLTs offer prospects for a democratising and locally just way of delivering and governing housing or whether the utopian idea of communal action is constrained by the competing interpretations, ideologies and potentially exclusionary aspirations identified in parts of this thesis.

While the research questions of this thesis were framed around describing how CLTs are formed and acquire the land, finance and human resources to progress their schemes, the findings of this research offer some deeper understandings of CLTs and communitarian theory more generally that extend beyond these practicalities.

First, the ideological weight and influence of community is itself not enough to articulate and design alternative futures for the governance of local communities, and more specifically local housing. The ability of communitarian forms of neighbourhood governance to challenge state and market forces within the context of national and global economies is curtailed by the existence and requirements of existing economic systems (for example, the acquisition of credit and performance guarantee linked to subsidy). While the idea that communities may be able to exercise greater democratic influence and control over their welfare through ownership is not dismissed, the scope for mechanisms of localism and community governance to truly respond to land and housing markets is contingent on its permittance and facilitation by wider structural forces and institutions. It is therefore a relational exercise and political process that involves competing for resources and legitimacy within wider cultural and political contexts. This holds obvious implications within the context of the current government's ideological commitment to pushing power and decision-making downwards in a climate of economic austerity.

Second, the research has shed light on the diverse nature of the CLT sector. CLTs are diverse in their organisational structures, objectives and the way they acquire resources and form partnerships to pursue their aims. A CLT is not a singular organisational model to be understood in the same way across geographies nor that can act as a panacea to wider shortages of housing supply. Instead, it is a particular strategy aimed at achieving localised ambitions related to the type and allocation of housing. These strategies may be achieved in a variety of organisational manners, whether through partnership with a housing association, CLTs acting on an autonomous basis, or through housing being delivered by an umbrella CLT. The contribution of the thesis, therefore, is to fill a gap in our understanding of CLTs by providing a nuanced reflection as to the varied roles and functions performed by the organisations that have formed to create a National CLT Network.

Finally, the research set out to explore the instigating factors and objectives held by those who form CLTs on a voluntary basis. CLTs are commonly referred to as a

model of housing organisation that is orientated towards providing more affordable housing. This may be an underlying objective of those within the CLT sector, but this research has argued that our understanding of this needs to extend beyond merely linking CLTs with the provision of affordable housing. Instead, the CLT approach is one that aims to alter the power relations conferred by the ownership of land and property in order to then seek a structural change in the way local housing is controlled and allocated. Of principal concern is that local CLTs are formed first and foremost to represent the interests and concerns of their defined community, which relate not only to the affordability of a home but to who it is occupied by, aiming to sensitively meet the needs and demands of local people. The contribution this research makes is to highlight that not only does this take a variety of forms and occur under different conditions, but that neither instigating nor benefiting from a CLT is open to all. A local CLT is instead an organisation that seeks to realign a spatial forms of ownership and governance on behalf of and in line with the needs of its instigators and beneficiaries, as opposed to creating linkages that extend beyond local identity and attachment.

These findings are not intended to delegitimise the potential CLTs hold for engineering social change in their local area. Indeed, this thesis has been unable to fully explore many issues that would define this (such as the extent and nature of development, and the terms under which it is offered) due to the emergent nature and growth of CLTs during the study's time frame. It is instead to acknowledge that communitarian rationales offer us a view of the world that is bound by place, but that this view and its potential for change can be partial and limited. There are therefore constraints as to community's potential achievements in participating in public life, working towards locally-defined forms of social justice and in delivering affordable housing. The disparate nature of this means that community may be an agent for neighbourhood renewal and development, but it does not deresponsibilise the state and the ideal of a self-governing and self-sufficient community does not occur in vacuums removed from the effects and demands of wider structural forces. Nor is this ideal open to all due to the significant demands community-based efforts place on their participants. There are important linkages to be made within and between

agendas of localism and the wider forces of the state and neoliberal economy. These may be the focus of future research, acknowledging that the growth of CLTs may be as much a product of – and contingent on – its alignment with larger social, political and economic environments as they are on the attempts of people to improve local housing outcomes.

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# Appendices

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## **Appendix 1: Legal definition of a community land trust**

(2) "community land trust" means a body corporate which satisfies the conditions below.

(3) In those conditions "local community" means the individuals who live or work, or want to live or work, in a specified area.

(4) Condition 1 is that the body is established for the express purpose of furthering the social, economic and environmental interests of a local community by acquiring and managing land and other assets in order -

(a) to provide a benefit to the local community, and

(b) to ensure that the assets are not sold or developed except in a manner which the trust's members think benefits the local community.

(5) Condition 2 is that the body is established under arrangements which are expressly designed to ensure that -

(a) any profits from its activities will be used to benefit the local community (otherwise than by being paid directly to members),

(b) individuals who live or work in the specified area have the opportunity to become members of the trust (whether or not others can also become members), and

Y

(c) the members of the trust control it.

Y

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## **Appendix 2: CLT events attended 2008-2011**

### **29-30 September 2008: Rural CLT practitioner seminar**

This event was held in Chester, attended by approximately 30-40 CLT volunteers and strategic stakeholders. The purpose was to provide updates on CLT policy development and allow CLTs to share and debate their enabling factors and barriers.

### **8-9 January 2009: Rural CLT practitioner seminar**

This event was held in Gloucestershire and was similar in size and format to the preceding seminar.

### **30 June 2009: National CLT conference**

This was a conventional conference held in London aimed at promoting CLTs to stakeholders at national and sub-regional levels. It was attended by a diverse crowd including policymakers, local authority representatives and CLTs.

### **11-12 November 2009: Rural CLT practitioner seminar**

This event was held in Chester and was similar in size and format to the preceding seminars aimed at rural CLT practitioners. My attendance at this event was partly linked to my employment at Community Finance Solutions.

### **11 March 2010: CLT practitioner training and support event (part one)**

This was held at the University of Salford and my attendance was linked to my employment. The purpose was to educate CLTs as to the legal, technical and organisational issues they may encounter in their formation and development.

### **24 March 2010: CLT practitioner training and support event (part two)**

This was held at the University of Salford and my attendance was linked to my employment. The purpose of the event was to follow on from part one of the training and support event series.

### **21-22 April 2010: Rural CLT practitioner seminar**

This event was again held in Chester and was attended by 30-40 CLT volunteers and strategic stakeholders such as rural housing enablers. I played an active role in the event's organisation through my employment at Community Finance Solutions.

### **5 May 2010: CLT support workers meeting**

This was held in Gloucestershire and the purpose of the meeting was for professional CLT support workers and advocates to meet and share learning experiences.

### **29 June 2010: National CLT conference**

This was held in London and had the same purpose as the previous year's event. The National CLT Network was launched at this event and the Housing Minister Grant Shapps also launched the community right to build proposals.

### **3-4 November 2010: Rural CLT practitioner seminar**

This event was held in Cornwall. The purpose of the event was similar to preceding seminars, though was also explicitly marketed to new and upcoming CLTs. Although my employment with Community Finance Solutions had ceased by this point, I was

invited to lead an introductory workshop on the fundamental mechanics and organisational features of CLTs.

### Appendix 3: Fieldwork activities

<b>Date</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Organisation/strategic background</b>	<b>Method</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> November 2008	Director	Cornwall CLT	Semi-structured interview
30 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	Affordable Housing Officer	Cornwall Council	Semi-structured interview
30 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	Board member	St Minver CLT, Cornwall	Semi-structured interview
30 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	Resident	St Minver CLT, Cornwall	Semi-structured interview
1 <sup>st</sup> October 2009	Landowner/board member	St Minver CLT, Cornwall	Semi-structured interview
14 <sup>th</sup> October 2009	Chair	Holy Island CLT	Semi-structured interview
14 <sup>th</sup> October 2009	CLT support worker	North East	Semi-structured interview
16 <sup>th</sup> November 2009	Chief Executive	Housing association, North East	Semi-structured interview
2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2010	CLT support worker	Somerset & Dorset	Semi-structured interview
30 <sup>th</sup> March 2010	Chair	High Bickington CLT	Semi-structured telephone interview
9 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	Director	Cornwall CLT	Semi-structured telephone interview

14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	Community Strategy Officer	Devon County Council	Semi-structured telephone interview
15 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	Board member	Foundation East CLT	Semi-structured telephone interview
16 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	Director	Cornwall Rural Housing Association	Semi-structured interview
23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2010	CLT support worker	Land for People, Wales	Semi-structured interview
28 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	Affordable Housing Officer	North Wales Local Authority	Semi-structured telephone interview
29 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	Rural Housing Enabler	North Wales	Semi-structured telephone interview
20 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	Board member	Cornwall Rural Housing Association	Semi-structured interview
20 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	Chair	St Minver CLT, Cornwall	Semi-structured telephone interview
26 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	Board member	Board member, Lands End Peninsula CLT, Cornwall	Semi-structured telephone interview
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2010	Board member	St Just in Roseland CLT, Cornwall	Semi-structured telephone interview
13 <sup>th</sup> June 2010	Director	Land for People umbrella CLT	Semi-structured interview
15 <sup>th</sup> June 2010	Board member	St Ewe Affordable Homes Ltd, Cornwall	Semi-structured telephone interview

30 <sup>th</sup> July 2010	Housing Organiser	Citizens UK	Semi-structured telephone interview
30 <sup>th</sup> July 2010	Rural Housing Enabler	Mid-Wales	Semi-structured telephone interview
4 <sup>th</sup> August 2010	Director	Headingley CLT	Semi-structured telephone interview
11 <sup>th</sup> August 2010	Former board member	CLT in the North East	Semi-structured interview
7 <sup>th</sup> October 2010	CLT volunteer	South West A	Semi-structured telephone interview
8 <sup>th</sup> December 2010	Board member	Village CLT in the South West	Semi-structured telephone interview
10 <sup>th</sup> December 2010	Chair	Village interest group (linked to Village CLT in the South West)	Semi-structured telephone interview

**Appendix 4: Interview guide used for people external to a CLT organisation**

**CRESR**



**Centre for Regional Economic  
and Social Research**

**Community Land Trust Research: Indicative Topic Guide**

**Contact:** Tom Moore, [tom.moore@student.shu.ac.uk](mailto:tom.moore@student.shu.ac.uk), Tel: 079 265 244 30.

1. Tell me about the background of you and your organisation's involvement with CLTs.
2. Why have you become involved with the Community Land Trust model in particular?
3. What is the wider context of your organisation's role and partnerships with community organisations such as CLTs?
4. How has the CLT model related to your organisation's existing policies or agendas?
5. Community Land Trusts may be designed to meet specific local needs. How has this been received both in the wider geographical community and by neighbouring parishes?

6. What has been the relationship between the CLT and the local planning system?

7. What have been the barriers faced by Community Land Trusts?

8. What have been the barriers faced by your organisation in supporting a Community Land Trust?

9. What could be done to improve the process of developing a Community Land Trust?

**Appendix 5: Interview guide used for people within a CLT organisation**

**CRESR**



**Centre for Regional Economic  
and Social Research**

**Community Land Trust Research: Indicative Topic Guide**

**Contact:** Tom Moore, [tom.moore@student.shu.ac.uk](mailto:tom.moore@student.shu.ac.uk), Tel: 079 265 244 30.

1. What is the background and history of your CLT?

2. What are the main motivations behind forming a CLT in your area?

*(Research note: probes may include affordable housing development, community empowerment, and community ownership and control.)*

3. What is the context of your local area in terms of local community action and development? How does this impact/relate to the CLT?

4. What have been the most crucial enabling factors for your CLT's development to date?

5. Conversely, what have been the key obstacles faced by your CLT?
6. How is "community defined" in your area? (*Research note: probe regarding emphasis on CLT relationship to local area and method of housing allocation*).
7. What distinct issues are faced in accessing finance?
8. How has the CLT accessed land? What have been the issues and obstacles related to this?
9. What have been the CLT's relationships with statutory authorities such as local councils and other government agencies?
10. What effect if any has the recent development of government policy and advocacy of CLTs had?

**Appendix 6: Example CLT housing allocation policy (adapted from <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/step-by-step-guide/who-will-you-house/allocation-policy>)**

## ***High Bickington Community Property Trust***

# **HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY**

High Bickington Community Property Trust (HBCPT) has been established to assist in promoting and supporting economic and social life in High Bickington and the surrounding parishes. It holds interests in affordable housing, commercial property to rent and community facilities because it believes that without them the community will find it much harder to grow and thrive.

### **HBCPT's local needs homes**

Property prices in High Bickington are beyond the means of most local people unless they have existing capital to invest. HBCPT's aim is to provide housing at a price that can be afforded. In particular it wishes to make it possible for those with employment or employment opportunities in the area to live close to their place of work so that job vacancies can be filled, the community can function effectively and local young people can be given an opportunity to remain in the area should they wish to do so.

These homes are intended to appear as little different from houses purchased on the open market: except that they are more affordable. Following the allocation of all newly built homes properties will become available from time to time when the existing residents decide to move. This policy describes how HBCPT will decide to whom properties that become available should be offered.

The starting point for the allocation of one of the Little Bickington Farm properties is that the applicant(s) must be able to meet the following 'Local Needs Housing' requirements. These apply to both Rented (i.e. Tenancy Plus) and Equity Share properties.

- a) A minimum continuous residence by a prospective owner or occupier of five years in the Parish (**Note 1**) immediately prior to the offer date; or
- b) Residence by a prospective owner or occupier in the Parish (**Note 1**) for five years within the ten years preceding the offer date; or
- c) Where one or both parents or guardians of a prospective owner or occupier have resided in the Parish (**Note 1**) for a minimum period of ten years prior to the offer date; or
- d) Where a prospective owner or occupier has had continuous employment in the Parish (**Note 1**) for the past five years prior to the Offer Date; or
- e) A person able to demonstrate key worker (**Note 2**) status

**Note 1** Priority for affordable housing will be given to applicants who meet any of the requirements in a) to e) if they can demonstrate their current or previous residence in the parish of High Bickington. If the number of such applicants is less than the number of available affordable homes, then applications will be considered from those who meet criteria 1 - 3 inclusive below and any one or more of criteria 4 - 6 below.

**Note 2** A key worker must meet the criteria set in the approved Torridge District Council Key Worker policy. At 25 March 2010 this policy was not yet available.

## **HBCPT criteria**

In addition to the above criteria HBCPT will, when considering applicants who want to be considered for one of the homes in which HBCPT holds an interest, take account of the following eight criteria:

### ***The first three criteria must be met in all cases***

1. Inability to afford outright purchase  
Only those whose household income and capital are insufficient to buy the home they need on the open market will be considered.
  
2. Ability to afford an HBCPT home  
The Equity Purchase homes will be made available at between 40% and 80% of value. The Tenancy Plus homes will be let at rents agreed at the outset and reviewed annually.  
HBCPT will require proof of household income and capital so that the outgoings to which a resident would be committed are related appropriately to their means.
  
3. Family size accords with the home available  
Because of the high demand, in general applicants will only be considered for homes that meet their family need e.g. a family with one child may only be allocated a 2-bedroom home. Account will nevertheless be taken of expected changes and of factors such as visiting relatives or former partners or care needs.

***The final five criteria will be used where necessary to decide the order of priority between more than one 'qualified' applicant:***

4. Additional Local Criteria  
Those with a dependent relative or with non-dependent relatives who could assist with childcare or similar needs, or who have previously lived in High Bickington, or who can demonstrate a connection with High Bickington, or who have children at school in High Bickington. .
  
5. Local employment  
Existing employment or a written offer of employment in any of 'Qualifying Parish Areas' (as defined in 6. Local Residence below). Those without employment or an offer of employment but who can show that they have good prospects of securing a job will also be considered.
  
6. Local residence  
Already living in one of the remaining 'Qualifying Parish Areas' i.e. Atherington (covering part of Umberleigh), Yarnscombe, St. Giles in the Wood, Roborough, Ashreigney, Burrington, Chittlehampton (covering part of Umberleigh) and Chittlehamholt, but in housing which is inadequate for the needs of the household e.g. sharing with parents or other households; in a low cost or rented home which is too small or unaffordable for household; or in unsatisfactory or insecure accommodation. The closeness to High Bickington will be a factor where there is more than one applicant.
  
7. Moving from one property to another  
Those moving from one HBCPT property to another will receive additional priority.
  
8. Length of wait  
Those who have applied to be considered and who have been waiting longest will receive higher priority if all other factors are the same.

### **Deciding priority**

HBCPT will maintain a list of applicants in order of the date of application. When a home becomes available, contact will be made with all those who meet the prescribed criteria as outlined above. HBCPT will also place local advertisements so that all who might wish to apply have the chance to do so. Those who wish to be considered will be asked to update their details and offered the opportunity to view plans of the property or to visit the property if already built and available for viewing. Those who remain interested in the property will then be asked to advise the HBCPT within 5 days of their visit or at most 10 days of being offered the opportunity to visit.

Taking account of criteria **4 – 8**, HBCPT will then offer the property to the applicant who in HBCPT's sole discretion:

- A. Meets the 'Local Needs Housing' requirements as set out in a) to e) previously.
- B. Meets the HBCPT criteria **1 – 3**; and
- C. Justifies receiving greatest priority under criteria **4 – 8**.

In broad terms HBCPT regards criteria **4 – 8** in order of decreasing importance. For example, a high priority under criterion **4** or **5** would be seen as more important than criterion **8**; but if there were equal weight under criterion **4**, criterion **8** would then become the deciding factor. However the HBCPT reserves the right to assess the weight of circumstances under each of all the criteria from **4** to **8** and to recognise particular individual circumstances.

### **Liaison with Torridge District Council**

HBCPT will work closely with Torridge District Council, which has statutory responsibility for the well being of the local community. HBCPT will inform Torridge District Council of all offers of housing made. Applicants should be aware that within

High Bickington and adjacent parishes, Devon and Cornwall Housing Association and other social landlords may also have housing available at affordable rents or under a shared ownership scheme.

### **Equal Opportunities Policy**

No person or group of persons applying for accommodation will be treated less favourably than any other person because of their age, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, physical disability, race, religion or sexual orientation.

### **Right of Appeal**

Decisions on applications will be made on behalf of HBCPT by its Housing Committee. The Committee may require an interview with the applicant to confirm that the criteria set out in this policy have been met. If an applicant feels that the decision made about their application is unfair, they may submit an appeal, in writing, to HBCPT's Company Secretary. The appeal will then be heard, within 15 working days, by a Panel of at least three HBCPT Board Members who have not been involved in the earlier decision making process. The decision of the appeal panel will be binding on all parties.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed by HBCPT from time to time to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of those in housing need in an efficient, fair and transparent way.

## Appendix 7: Umbrella CLTs in England and Wales

Name	Context	Funding <sup>72</sup>	CLTs assisted and outcomes (if known and clear)
Land for People (operating throughout Wales)	Brokerage umbrella, operating from 2004 but disbanded in 2011.	Welsh Assembly Government grants and structural funding programmes.	Provided advice to multiple CLTs, no housing appear to have been directly delivered.
Gloucestershire Land for People	All in one formed in 2006	Charitable grants	Provided advice to multiple CLTs; ongoing attempts to deliver housing itself.
Federation of North East Development Trusts	Operated 2006-08, brokerage service formed within existing DT network.	District council funding and existing organisational funding via DT network	Provided extensive brokerage for CLTs and partners
Cornwall CLT	Formed 2007 – present in partnership with Cornwall Rural Housing Association	Charitable grants, housing association help and aim of being self-sufficient	Aim to deliver 180 CLT homes by 2014 by supporting local CLTs.

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<sup>72</sup> This refers to the funding of an organisation's incorporation and staff, as opposed to funding development and construction of CLT homes.

Cumbria Rural Housing Trust	Formed 2008 within an existing affordable housing trust. Brokerage service.	District councils, charitable finance, structural funding programmes.	12 CLTs assisted, 90 units of housing in the pipeline.
Somerset, Dorset & Devon CLT.	Formed 2010 through partnership of two community/social finance organisations. Brokerage service.	DCLG Empowerment Fund two-year funding, 2010 – 2012.	Ongoing and in the early stage of formation during the study.
Foundation East CLT	All in one umbrella formed within existing microfinance organisation.	Host organisation funding.	Ongoing.
Wiltshire CLT	Formed in 2011 as an independent subsidiary of a local housing association.	Host organisation funding.	Ongoing.

NB: A variety of sources were used to gain this information. Some information was collected through primary research in fieldwork, supplemented by secondary data such as the National CLT Demonstration Programme evaluation (Aird, 2009).