

# Forging New Governance through Localism

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the formal introduction of Localism in the South West county of Cornwall, UK. Using data taken from three distinct areas of the county, this work critically analyses strategies of Localism, where it takes place, who is involved and how it is performed. This research is contextualised within an era of localism, advocating the devolution of political governance with the aim to produce sustainable democratic communities.

Changes to local government in 2009 saw Cornwall Council restructure from a two-tiered to a unitary local authority. The previous six district councils and one county council were dissolved and instead, Cornwall was divided into nineteen Community Network Areas with one centralised council. These Areas were provided with dedicated Localism officers, administrative and public service facilities and given the remit to employ the ethos of Localism to everyday interaction between the local authority and citizenry. This introduction of a formal style of conducting Localism followed the then Labour Party's design for a *Third Way*; for revolutionising governance to make it increasingly civic-focused and for devolving local decision-making in the hands of communities.

The findings of the thesis conclude that Localism has been a largely top-down endeavour by government and as such, widespread bottom-up governance has not been able to emerge through governmental structures. Local resistance to these structures, and the rigid frameworks and targets introduced by Localism, have meant that parts of Localism appear and disappear at certain moments. The ideological vision for Localism has therefore been interrupted, however it is through localism with a small 'l', historically part of the day-to-day operations of those at the heart of civic engagement, such as town and parish councils, which has emerged as pivotal in on-going local governing opportunities.

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## **Author's Declaration**

The work contained in this thesis is the sole effort of the author. The views expressed are those of the author, not of the College or the University.



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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

*Local decision-making should be less constrained by central government, and also more accountable to local people. [The Labour Party] will place on councils a new duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. They should work in partnership with local people, local business and local voluntary organisations.*

Labour Party Manifesto (1997).

*The size, scope and role of government in Britain has reached a point where it is now inhibiting, not advancing, the progressive aims of reducing poverty, fighting inequality and increasing general well-being... We need a thoughtful re-imagination of the role, as well as the size of the state... actively helping to create the big society; directly agitating for, catalysing and galvanising social renewal.*

David Cameron, Hugo Young Lecture (December 2009).

Contemporary governance in the United Kingdom espouses the concept of *localism*: the idea that communities and individuals should take on a greater role for governing their area; that decisions affecting communities should be taken by those who live there; and that government should devolve power to create greater civic autonomy. Taking elements from the concepts of communitarianism (a focus on communities and individuals) and neoliberalism (deregulation, privatisation and increasing the role of the private sector), the characteristics of localism, that of a focus on the role of communities and citizens in governing, have been woven into the policy fabric of both the Labour Party and current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government. During their time in office from 1997 to 2010, Labour heralded the ideas of localism as a pathway to a 'new' mode of governance, one which would change the face of British politics and society, allowing greater egalitarianism, shared responsibility between the state and society and local accountability. Localism fast became integrated into policy practice

and became a touchstone for modern Labour governance, adopting a capital 'L' and becoming a key part of party manifestos, government reorganisation and approaches to civic renewal.

Under Labour, the structure and working of local government was overhauled to adapt to central government targets of embedding Localism into policy and practice. An era of regionalism began where the geography of the United Kingdom changed rapidly to accommodate increased local autonomy. The individual and community were thrust to the fore of the governing process and Localism became a key strategy through which the government sought to revitalise British society, economy and politics. Labour's ideas for extending governance to prioritise the local has been developed once more to produce the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government's Big Society. The concept of the Big Society is, thus, nothing new; it in fact follows many of Labour's ideas for citizen-led governance and reflects Third Way ideologies. Big Society has a material foundation in Labour policies but has also been influenced greatly by the work of Michael Oakeshott ('*On Being Conservative*', 1956). In addition, literatures by prominent political scholars such as Jesse Norman (*The Big Society*, 2010) and Phillip Blond (*Red Tory*, 2010) have explored the introduction of radical communitarian to traditional Conservative ideologies, which in turn support the localist aspect to Big Society and other citizenship based policy ideas such as the *National Citizens Service* ([www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com), April 2010) for sixteen year old youths to undertake community work, and plans for volunteering in the community in the *Giving White Paper* (2011). Big Society again represents a further shift in the ideology and political rhetoric of government agendas and a reiteration of governmentalised frameworks for local governance. However, and again in congruence with Localism, Big Society appears to carry with it an established *Agenda*, but one which, so far, rests upon ideological goals without the support and efficacy of an engaged UK citizenry.

The key aim of this thesis is to make a contribution to the literature on governance through investigating the complexity of the political geography involved in Localism using Cornwall, England, as a case study. I explore throughout this thesis how Localism has been developed in Cornwall, drawing data from specific study areas across the county, to uncover a tension between top-down and bottom-up governance and to examine governmental mechanisms and rationalities for deploying community-led governing agendas. The ideology of Localism places the ‘local’ at the centre of decision-making and advocates for bottom-up governing. Yet ‘formal’ Localism with a capital ‘L’, as I will describe in more detail later, has been accompanied by an up-scaling of local governance and as a governmental construct, contains structures, targets and mandates for implementing Localism which are imposed from central government at ‘the top’. In this chapter I present a historiography of Localism and discuss its presence in modern UK governance. I then present in more detail the aims for this thesis and provide an outline of the later chapters which present empirical data analysing Localism in Cornwall. I begin here by discussing the emergence and development of governing through Localism.

### **The Emergence of Localism**

Localism has not simply arrived; instead it has been carefully crafted from shifts in political ideologies, social and economic idealisations, a layering of thought and practice and a decoupling of the state, prompting the devolution of power and remit away from central government. Devolution is crucial to Localism and the work of successive UK governments has created divisions between state and society, regions and counties, state actions and reactions, have nurtured its development. Labour’s *Third Way* emphasised the ‘localisation’ of the UK with a focus, as echoed in party discourse,

on communitarianism: an understanding of the links between the individual and society and how crucial both are to political life. A middle ground alternative to Keynesian mixed economic solutions and Thatcherite privatisation, the philosophies of the *Third Way* saw Labour regionalise the UK, as seen in the devolution of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Through regionalism, the role of central government changed from that of controlling and commanding the citizenry, to governing at a distance and enabling local governments and communities to self-govern. However, the extent to which government does in fact remain at a distance is a moot point, perhaps more so with the formal introduction of Localism, as I will demonstrate throughout this thesis.

Labour sought to re-define governance and allow ‘the local’ to assume greater control. The word ‘governance’ has been widely used across academic disciplines, yet there is no commonly held definition. Rhodes (1996) provides us with six interpretations, Hirst (2000) offers five and van Kersbergen and van Waarden (2004), nine (see also Jordan *et al*, 2005). The vast number of definitions available makes it important that I outline here a working definition of governance, as it pertains to Localism, to be used in this thesis. The definition I provide follows Bevir and Rhodes (2003) in that governance is a *mode of government*: how governing practices, and government itself, are re-conceptualised to speak to the devolution of power and civic autonomy in political processes. I use this definition to tease apart governance: to explore the extent to which government changes, in practice, policy and discourse, in response to Localism; to examine how communities and citizens react to opportunities for greater engagement in governing; and evaluate how government, governance and Localism are transformed, absorbed or impact upon people, places and spaces.

I also use the term ‘community’ a great deal in this thesis and as a notoriously difficult concept to define, it is important here that I provide a working definition for

what this means in relation to this research.<sup>1</sup> Communities are primarily social constructs. However, electoral boundaries (wards), regions, districts and counties politically define a community. ‘Community’ then has to be thought of as a construct of both social and political forces. These forces bind people and places together using a fixity of sameness and separateness to distinguish from others through difference. Building on Rose’s (2000) definition of community, I define it as “a group of people with shared values, the basis of which is politically, geographically or culturally defined” (see also Minar and Greer, 2007; Massey, 2005; Mouffe, 2000; Curry, 2010).

Modern governance has become complex and what has emerged is a matrix of actors, linked together in relational networks, all operating at different scales, upon different issues and operating across different space-times. Governing in today’s political climate now also contends with both hard (e.g. roads, schools and hospitals) and soft-wiring challenges. So-called ‘soft’ challenges include the promotion of healthy lifestyles, information and guides on citizenship and indeed Localism itself. According to Stoker (2004), these ‘soft’ challenges are even more complex than the ‘hard’.

In championing the local, government agendas and frameworks to change the face of local governance were legitimised. Yet in establishing frameworks, a paradox to local governing emerged as central government attempted to incite bottom-up governing through implementing top-down mandates. Amongst the critics of Labour’s approach, Grimble (2003:2) notes that Labour allowed “Localism [to be] led from the centre and lack definition and consistency”. This criticism is echoed by Beecham (2003:3) who focuses upon Labour’s manner of “bypass[ing] local government and local democracy”

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<sup>1</sup> It is not the work of this thesis to focus on the problems of defining ‘community’.

which then allowed an antithetical “re-centralisation of power at national government level” (Coaffee and Johnston, 2005:173).

Throughout the 1970s, the management of the economy was focused, by the then Conservative Thatcher government, on privatisation in local services, industry and business. These processes of economic and state reform, now characteristic of the era, established national societies and state economies which challenged the scales at which policy, strategy and political projects took place (see Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

Under the later Labour Blair and Brown Labour governments a number of political, social and economic projects and experiments were also conducted which reformed government, transformed urban areas, altered the scale and structure of governance, and established new roles and powers for participant actors. These ideas underpinned what was latterly termed as ‘Localism’ which was presented as part of New Labour’s *Third Way* (Peck *et al*, 2009; Swyngedouw *et al*, 2002).

### **The Third Way**

The election of Tony Blair’s Labour Party in 1997 introduced Third Way ideology. To some, the Third Way was a response to the complex challenge of governing a highly differentiated state. As an ideology, it possessed very clear priorities, primarily in recognising the role of the community in addressing social and economic problems within the state. Third Way modernisation called for local authorities and communities to engage in partnership working, for new rights and responsibilities to be introduced to citizens, and for regionalism and devolution to establish “new territories for governance” (Woods *et al*, 2008:6; Jones and MacLeod, 2004).

Through the Third Way, the Labour Party attempted to create yet another shift from Keynesianism and what was known as the ‘Old Left’, and a move away from Thatcher’s ‘New Right’, to introduce “an open, competitive and successful economy with a just, decent and humane society” (Leggett, 2000:1). The Third Way represented a middle ground and an opportunity “to create the dialogic spaces in which the solutions to problems can be found on a context-dependent basis” (ibid:21; see also Giddens 1994). Reflecting this sentiment, the 1997 Labour Party Manifesto stated that the Party fundamentally “reject[s] the isolationism and ‘go-it-alone’ policies of the extremes of right or left” (www.labour-party.org.uk) in favour of a communitarian outlook aiming to involve and engage stakeholders and the community in decision and policy making. This early commitment to *the local* signified a reframing of governance to focus more deeply on communities and individuals. To achieve this, and diverge from the previous Conservative government’s social and economic traditions, this ‘new’ Labour Party sought to create a “generative politics... ‘bottom-up’ decision-making and a dialogic democracy based on trust earned through dialogue” (Leggett, 2000:25; following Giddens 1994).

From the inception of *New Labour* under Tony Blair in 1996/1997, the Party began to project very clear messages to the electorate which emphasised communitarianism, decentralisation, civic responsibility and co-operative state-society working. Labour’s 1997 Election Manifesto demonstrated Labour’s commitment to this ideology as the Party set about reshaping governance and creating strategic policies which would allow a focus on family, community and social responsibility. However, in striving to meet these goals, “tension [arose] between different rhetorical strands in Labour’s discourse, and was riddled with internal contradictions” (Woods, 2008:6).

Governing through communities formed a large part of Labour’s dominant discourse, using words such as ‘responsibility’, ‘partnership working’ and

‘decentralisation’ to transmute government’s goals and new role for citizens. This *new* type of governing intended to provide for communities a sense of empowerment, of self-importance and of the vision for a self-directed future. For example, on wide ranging goals in national health policy, Labour stated:

...we will not return to the top-down management of the 1970s. So we will keep the planning and provision of healthcare separate, but put planning on a longer-term, *decentralised and more co-operative basis*. (www.labour-party.org.uk, emphasis added).

In election literature Labour stated time and again that the Party “is committed to the democratic renewal of our country through *decentralisation*” (ibid, own emphasis). Similarly on crime, the Party said it believed in “*personal responsibility*” (ibid, own emphasis), and on welfare reform sought greater “*consultation and partnership with the people*” (ibid, own emphasis). These core messages of decentralisation, responsibility and state-society partnerships were again reiterated in Labour’s *Ten Commitments* that were to be upheld in the first five years of government. These commitments surrounded families and the community: “We will help build strong families and strong communities, and lay the foundations of a modern welfare state in pensions and community care” (www.labour-party.org.uk).

Underpinning the commitments was Tony Blair’s vision for “a value-driven, moral project” (Leggett, 2000:23) with values such as “equal worth, opportunity for all, responsibility and community” (Blair, 1998:3) driving progress. This ‘moral project’ sought the “rebuilding [of] cohesive communities” (ibid) through embedding learning and practices of civic responsibility to achieve the vision of “a strong and fair society...

[and] to succeed in the task of reform” (ibid). This moral project was Localism and with it came the reframing of British society to set boundaries and regulations, and ensure that progress was made at similar rates and in similar ways. To Labour, this communitarian approach to social reform exercised “individual freedoms within communal responsibilities” (Leggett, 2000:23). What was created was in fact a social contract detailing civic rights and moreover, civic responsibilities (Giddens, 1998).

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

In 2002 at the annual Labour Party Conference, Tony Blair spoke of his vision for government as an enabler; able to empower communities and individuals to reach their full potential. He said that there needed to be a change in culture away from entitlement and benefits, and towards rights and responsibilities. This was to be achieved, so the Labour Party envisaged, through reforming government, public services, healthcare, crime and punishment and society by creating frameworks for community responsibility and opportunities to run and coordinate local services. Blair noted in a column for *The Observer* in 2002:

I sensed increasingly that the task for the centre-Left was not to replace crude individualism with an overbearing paternalistic state. It was to rebuild a strong civic society where rights and duties go hand in hand” (column for the *Observer*, November, 2002, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)).

In order to rebuild civic society the Labour government introduced a number of policies and regulatory frameworks designed to engage the citizen, to encourage them to

actively participate in local governing, and ensure that communities and individuals played their part.<sup>2</sup> Alan Milburn, MP for Darlington and leader of Labour's 2005 general election campaign, noted in a speech to launch Labour's 'new direction' for policy that one of Labour's biggest challenges was to "fulfil the desire people have for greater control in their lives" (www.progressonline.org.uk, September 2006). Labour pitched their approach to social and economic reform through Localism as a response to this 'desire'. During the same speech, Milburn said he'd witnessed a gap in society, a declining sense of shared community, and that giving people fair life chances and a real stake in society could help mend these ills. For Labour, this was to be done by:

...Liberating the potential of each individual as an individual. By enabling people, regardless of wealth or status, to take greater control over their lives by recognising that it is power that needs to be more fairly shared in our society" (ibid).

As an important shift in the relationship between state and society, the idea of rights and responsibilities was woven into Labour policy and frameworks as a strategic mode of engaging citizens in policy and decision-making. These agendas formed large parts of many Labour policies and thinking designed to regenerate the state-society relationship, encourage greater civic control of communities and societies, and shift

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<sup>2</sup> See for example 'Rethinking service delivery', Volumes 1, 2 and 3 (2004) which provided guidance on improvements to be made in local government service delivery strategies, including introducing public partnerships; *The Future of Local Government: Developing a 10 Year Vision* (2004) which aimed to better connect services and institutions, allow local councils to take on a clearer local democratic leadership role, encourage local authorities to lead local partnerships and ensure stakeholders are involved in meeting local needs and priorities and enabling communities to lead themselves through the enhancement of social capital and becoming engaged in local decision-making; *Key findings summary: new Localism - citizen engagement, neighbourhoods and public services: evidence from local government* (2005) which detailed The Local and Regional Government Research Unit's (LRGRU) review 'new Localism' through active participation by citizens in local democracy and decision making. The focus was on service delivery and decision making and results showed that, for example, citizen engagement increased public perceptions of, and understanding in, local government and a sense that they could make a difference.

power from the state to the individual. Labour therefore intended to grant the community the ‘right’ to take control of their local area, so long as they also took on responsibilities such as helping steer government policy, organising or participating in local referenda, and engaging with government and their own community to help replace or reform failing local services. In order to access these rights and responsibilities the community was being drawn into a social contract with government.

### **Social Contracts and Changing Relationships**

Labour’s concept of the ‘social contract’ emerged fully in early 2006 as the Party began to restructure state service and funding provisions (see Rousseau in Cole, 2008; Locke in Rawls, 1971). The Blair Government drew up plans to impose a social contract between citizens and the state in many areas such as healthcare and policing to outline what individuals must do in order to receive good quality services from government. The government’s ambition at the time was to advance the *rights and responsibilities* agenda to ensure that the citizen and the state both achieved certain aims. Illustrations of this social contract were provided by government stating that it might be prudent for parents to become more involved in their child’s homework in return for robust state-funded education, or that certain NHS operations would be given if the patient signed a contract to agree to eat healthily and exercise regularly.

This social contract was not intended to be a single prescriptive diktat, instead aspects were woven into government policy, speeches, mandates, the budget, targets and agendas. This articulation again reinforced the change in relationship between state and society that Labour asked, and required, in order to fulfil its Third Way approach to social and economic change in the UK (such as creating a more strategic and smaller state) (Newman and Clarke, 2009).

Blair's focus on the community and social cohesion was evident from his early days in the Labour Party as Shadow Home Secretary in 1992. His disdain for lawlessness and the impact this had on communities in his constituency drove his desire to reform Britain's societies. Blair noted that it was necessary to "revive the spirit of community" and quoting Martin Luther King, advocated not for a paternalistic state, but for a strong civic society based on rights and duties as "laws restrain the heartless; they cannot change the heart" (Tony Blair, column in the *Observer*, November, 2002, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)). This was, in a sense, the inception of Labour's Localism agenda and one that would discursively change the shape of policy-making but ensure that a strong central state would remain intact.

Local governance, under Blair, advocated for two key changes to the way in which communities operate. First, the voluntary sector would take on a larger role in participation and delivery of local services and the creation of schemes such as *Timebank* where people volunteered for local organisations and charities (see Wolfenden, *The Future of Voluntary Organisations*, 1978, for ideals and practices of volunteering). Second, regeneration programmes would be directed and carried out by local residents and citizenship taught as part of the national curriculum in schools. Through his visions for Localism, Blair recognised that informal friendships and networks between citizens and families "best protect communities and build a strong society" (Tony Blair, column in the *Observer*, November, 2002, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)).

### **Towards a Localism Agenda**

The focus of the philosophies of the Labour Party, and the influences of the Third Way on Labour's communitarian approach to policy-making, meant that 'the local' became the site where central government believed it could begin to create

change, set targets and forge a new mode of governing. What Labour created was a *Localism Agenda* designed to enable powers of deliberation to be accessible to communities through a process of double-devolution: a restructuring of local government to provide increased autonomy in governing local issues, which would then provide increased participatory opportunities for citizens to engage with a newly empowered local authority. The Agenda gave Localism its capital ‘L’ and dispensed ideas for local participation, engagement, control and influence over services. It called for local development to be tailored to communities, promoted cuts in bureaucracy and waste and meant a reduction in spending on local services. The Localism Agenda therefore promised a great deal.

However, what appeared to be absent from the Agenda were frameworks for enacting these pledges. The Agenda uses the dominant discourse of Localism: of local power, increased citizen autonomy and of a retraction of central government. For example, the 2007 publication *Labour, Leadership and Locality* by Labour’s related institution, the Local Government Association<sup>3</sup>, reads:

This decentralist, localist strand has always been present in socialist thought, from the earliest days of the Labour Party itself. Labour is the party of localism, both in theory and practice... Labour [stresses] the central importance of economic success and prosperity that all residents have the opportunity, through work and skills, to share. [We] emphasise the essential feature of progressive politics, in planning for the future to meet collective community needs. [We] point both to greater pluralism with important partners, and to further devolution beyond the town hall. In our modern-day

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<sup>3</sup> The Local Government Association (LGA) is a Labour Party-related institution and therefore its agenda does not follow that of the Labour Party exactly. However, for the purpose of emphasising the dominant rhetoric at the time on civic governance, I have used a quotation directly from an LGA publication which I feel reflects Labour’s ideas on local governing.

economy and society, these are important principles and must be a priority for Labour... (2007:2-3).

Throughout Labour's time at Downing Street, a number of initiatives were launched to reform, for example, employment, partnerships and local government reform.<sup>4</sup> Yet these relied upon citizen efficacy and support from local authorities and stakeholders to be effective. Reports from the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI) show that despite Labour's initiatives to prioritise the local, regulations and targets imposed on these opportunities served to centralise local service provision ([www.cesi.org.uk](http://www.cesi.org.uk)). John Healey MP, Labour's Minister for Local Government, said of these reform measures in 2007:

Serious questions hang over Whitehall... Can it allow decisions that properly belong at the local level to be made there? Can it trust local democracy to work? ...Quite simply, there are no direct levers in Whitehall connected to every locality... that Labour leaders do share common values and beliefs but their 'local' is different, according to their area (in *Labour, Leadership and Locality*, LGA, 2007:5).

What Labour had imposed was, then, an agenda, by definition a set of goals for devolving powers of governing to communities and citizens but not a framework for how to achieve true local influence in governing as that relies upon the efficacy, desire, will and participation of active citizens.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For example *The Flexible New Deal*, *Future Jobs Fund* and *City Strategy Pathfinders* schemes designed to reform the sector and give more control to citizens.

<sup>5</sup> *Localis*, the *New Local Government Network* and the *Local Government Information Unit* were also critical of Labour's Localism Agenda and attempts to increase civic involvement in governing, see [www.cesi.org.uk](http://www.cesi.org.uk).

A Localism Agenda brought with it a number of localisation measures, not least to enable tying local authorities and communities into partnership with central government to meet strategic goals. Regionalism and the development of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Multi Area Agreements (MAAs) were the key ways in which the Labour government sought to embed Localism. MAAs were established between central government and clusters of local authorities to encourage greater local input into state strategies for employment, housing, skills and transport. From these MAAs, pilots for *City Regions* were developed in Greater Manchester and Leeds in 2009, designed to enable local government greater strategic powers and flexibilities in regeneration, economic development, service delivery and infrastructure to the area. MAAs ensured that large clusters of local authorities worked together to reduce government waste, thereby save the state money and pass responsibility for governance to these clusters. One of the largest schemes for Localism was the 2006 Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) *City Strategy*. The *City Strategy* focused on local authorities and convened fifteen pathfinder partnerships with a view to the local authorities establishing a network of businesses, public bodies and the voluntary and community sector to tackle unemployment. The partnerships were encouraged to co-ordinate with member institutions and create flexible solutions to unemployment in their local area. This scheme aimed to transfer the burden of unemployment to local authority partnerships, thereby freeing up the state and diverting funding to other issues.

These frameworks for greater local control over governing also allowed central government to achieve some of its financial aims: to cut expenditure and manpower through realigning responsibility to local areas. A reorganisation of the state liberated governing burdens and can be seen in *The Scotland Act (1998)* granting devolution and the creation of a Scottish Government and the transfer of powers in devolved matters, and *The Government of Wales Act (1998)* also granting devolution and the creation of a

Welsh Assembly with powers to make secondary legislation for Wales. In creating devolved states, the UK Parliament was able to reduce its policy focus, expenditure and relative concerns, whilst being seen to support local autonomy and governance.

Decoupling the state, regionalisation and double-devolution represented key materialisations of Third Way ideology. A seemingly shrinking central state actually allowed government to become increasingly powerful through the regulatory and statutory frameworks which were imposed to achieve such gains. Through policies and agendas, local responsibility, devolved powers for communities and local governments appeared to become the focus of Labour's policies. For example, local governments were mandated to create community strategies through the publication of *'Preparing Community Strategies: Government Guidance to Local Authorities'* (DCLG, 2001). The Paper asked local authorities to create strategies for local economic, social and environmental regeneration and improvement alongside local communities. Similarly, *'Guidance on Enhancing Public Participation'* (DETR, 2002) and *Civil Renewal: A New Agenda* (Blunkett, 2003), also recommended to local governments and citizens how to achieve civil renewal through active citizenship and adhering to central government's strategic frameworks. Publications such as *Take part: the national framework for active learning for active citizenship* (DCLG, 2006), *Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building* (DCLG, 2004), and *Vibrant Local Leadership* (DCLG, 2005) were published soon after to tell local authorities how representative and responsive local leadership should be fostered in Britain's societies to create stronger local leadership.

In 2006, the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* was published providing frameworks, goals and incentives for local authorities to exercise greater discretion in governing if they reorganised to fully integrate Localism into their day-to-day working. *Strong and Prosperous Communities* was a landmark publication which

redesigned the remit and structure of local authorities. The Paper asked local governments to think strategically about what their local area needed, find alternative ways to deliver local services, and create improved channels for local participation and engagement in local decision-making and priority setting.<sup>6</sup> Looking at the discourse in the White Paper, the Labour central government rhetoric emphasised the role of the citizenry in governing, of the role of communities in development and finding solutions to problems, and of the role of the individual in decision-making. At this time, ‘Localism’ by name was not commonplace but a reliance on a dominant rhetoric of communitarianism was. Significantly, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* set the criteria for the reorganisation of local government. The White Paper began:

Citizens and communities know what they want from public services, and what needs to be done to improve the places where they live. We want to use these strengths to drive up service standards and foster a sense of community and civic pride. This White Paper sets out new responsibilities for local authorities to give local citizens and communities a greater say over their lives. Local citizens will... have more opportunities to get involved. We propose new powers for citizens and their local councillors. [Endowing local government and communities with increased responsibilities] underlines our confidence in local government, in those who deliver our public services and in local communities. Working together, we can continue to improve public services and the quality of life in our communities (*Strong and Prosperous Communities*, 2006:5).

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<sup>6</sup> Further policies, frameworks and research under Labour (1997-2006, DCLG): ‘Comprehensive Performance Assessment for District Authorities’ and ‘Announcement on District Councils’ (November 2003) which, given by then deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, introduced new freedoms and flexibilities for District Councils, ‘Rethinking Service Delivery, Volume Five: Making the Partnership a Success’ (2004) which provided guidance for local authorities in managing partnerships between the public and private sectors, and the community, *Enhancing Public Participation in Local Government* (2004).

The later publication of the White Paper *Communities in Control* (2008), published two years later, echoed the ideas for engaging the citizenry, and particularly individuals, in governance, stating:

... self-government and self-organisation [...] should be the hallmark of the modern state: devolved, decentralised, with power diffused throughout our society. That people should have the maximum influence, control and ownership over the decisions, forces and agencies which shape their lives and environments is the essence of democracy (2008:iii).

The discourse used in both White Papers exercised a powerful rhetoric emphasising ‘new powers for citizens’ and calling upon the ‘genius of local people’. This energy, consistent with New Labour’s ideals, reflected a political *requirement* for local participation to compensate for the failings of privatisation and deregulation during the Thatcher era (1979-1990), to react to the shortcomings of globalisation in producing equality and choice, to enable the state to reduce costs and deploy innovative *new* models of governing. The first task, presented in the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (DCLG, 2006), was to change the structure of local government:

These invitations meet the commitments in the Local Government White Paper to invite:

- a) local authorities in shire areas to make proposals for unitary local government; and

b) partnerships of a county council and all the district councils in the county area to pioneer as pathfinders new models of two-tier working. The

Government has made these commitments because:

i) it has concluded that local government in two-tier areas faces additional challenges that can make it harder to achieve that strong leadership and clear accountability which communities need. There are risks of confusion, duplication and inefficiency between tiers, and particular challenges of capacity for small districts;

ii) Government considers there is the potential to go further. In short, the Government believes that the status quo is not an option in two-tier areas if councils are to achieve the outcomes for place shaping and service delivery that communities expect, and deliver substantial efficiency improvements;

iii) [Government] accepts that in a number of areas where there is a broad cross section of support for this, these reforms should now involve a move to unitary local government; and

iv) [Government] also recognises that in the majority of county areas reforms will now take the form of developing innovative new models of two-tier working as described in the White Paper. This process is to be assisted by pathfinder partnerships of a county council and all the district councils in the county, committed to pioneering radical change (Invitation to Local Government, accompanying *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, DCLG, 2006:5).

This White Paper changed the way local authorities operated in England through affording them greater autonomy and the opportunity to devolve power and responsibilities to local communities. However, the White Paper also introduced new regulatory frameworks, new criteria and goals for local government progress and new guidelines for local authorities and citizens to follow. This represents what Gardener (in

Woods, 2008:169) has called an “ongoing shift in the ‘governmentality’ of Western liberal democracies” and another example of discursive illusions for state gain.

## **Rural Geopolitical Research Agendas**

In this study I examine Localism over space; that is, how Localism as a government approach to governing has the capacity to change and adapt according to geography. I follow a geopolitical tradition seen in studies by Dittmer and Grey (2010), Dodds (2004; 2011) and Flint (2011), who investigate the effects of space on politics, policy or political ideology. In this study I look to merge geopolitics and rural studies, as this investigation explores how Localism is adapted and adapts and affects spaces in the largely rural county of Cornwall.<sup>7</sup> This research informs geopolitical thought in showing how Localism impacts and is impacted by geographies of place. I do this by presenting participant data reflecting lived-experience to provide suggestions for political and policy-based learning on the strategic-behavioural implementation of localist practices.

A strand of rural studies, seen in the work undertaken by Peck and Tickell (2002), Cloke *et al* (2000) and Woods (2005), has come to focus on changes in the relationship between government and society as a result of political projects which promote greater local engagement and participation in governance. Contemporary local government reorganisation, beginning in the 1970s under Margaret Thatcher and continued by the Labour government in 2009 under Gordon Brown, have integrated ideas of communitarianism seen in Localism, and now the Big Society<sup>8</sup>, into everyday

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<sup>7</sup> This investigation is not specifically a rural study as the results obtained do not provide information that can be attributed explicitly to rural areas. Rather, this work examines Localism a county which happens to be largely rural.

<sup>8</sup> The Conservative neology of ‘Big Society’ follows, and builds upon, many of the central themes of Localism, as will be discussed later. However, Big Society has come under increased criticism from

approaches to governing. In embedding these ideas what has emerged is a challenge to the “existing spatial division of power” (Woods, 2005:45-46). To entrench Localism as **the** mode of governing, new spaces of participation have been developed, a new geography of decision-making has had to emerge and within this, an increasing reliance on the efficacy of the citizen to assume greater accountability and responsibility for governing. This effect is seen in both Labour’s Localism and the Conservative’s Big Society. The shape of governance in the UK has therefore been changed by ideas on how the individual and community could play a greater role in governance, and in order to achieve this, central government has altered the dynamics of power.

In inviting communities and individuals into governing processes, Localism and Big Society have pluralised the decision-making process. The increased number of those engaged in governing has brought a simultaneous escalation of rules and regulations to order and control this further activity. As a result, there is now a greater politicisation of governance which can be seen to be amplified in rural areas because of, for example, sparse populations (Woods, 2005). Embedding measures for local governance in these areas has posed a challenge to government as a mobilised and often difficult to access rural community necessitates tailored approaches to governing. Empirical studies exploring how governing strategies are tailored to, and are structured, and how tensions between top-down and bottom-up governance emerge and are mediated, have yet to be conducted and it is this gap in the field, specifically, which I address through this research.<sup>9</sup> I focus this study on Cornwall, a largely rural county taking the shape of a peninsula to the South West of England. With a population of

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politicians, public figures and commentators for an apparent governmental abdication of responsibility. As a contemporary mode of governing, and a Conservative ‘buzzword’, Big Society has fallen from favour and at the time of writing appears to retain little currency.

<sup>9</sup> There are a number of other gaps in the literature, such as the effects on new schemes of governing after a restructuring of local government to unitary authority status, and how newly created unitary authorities affect the planning and implementation of Localism. However, I have chosen to focus my enquiry upon Localism in Cornwall as a mode of casting a wider net on local governance.

around 500,000 residing in an area of 1,400 square miles, the county is made up of fertile and infertile upland and pastoral farmland, moorland, small towns and villages, and a striking coastline, with 213 town and parish councils, some of the poorest areas within the European Union and a transient seasonal population. Cornwall's local authority underwent a re-design in 2009 switching from a two-tiered to a unitary authority and disbanding its District Councils to form a singular authority. This re-design was structured to embed greater community governing under Localism through dividing the county into Community Network Areas with dedicated Network Managers to orchestrate Localism in action (see Figure 1.0 showing Cornwall separated into districts before April 2009, and Figure 1.1 showing the demarcated Network Areas following transition to a unitary authority). In focusing this research on Cornwall, I am able to provide case studies exhibiting how geography is affected by, and has itself affected, the implementation of Localism as a new mode of governing in the county. I explore the changing nature of power as a result of increased local governance, the empowerment of residents and communities through Localism, and the strategies and performance of a new form of local governance (Giddens, 1984; Dewey, 1916; 1966; Foucault, 1991).

The Districts of Cornwall before Transition to a Unitary Authority

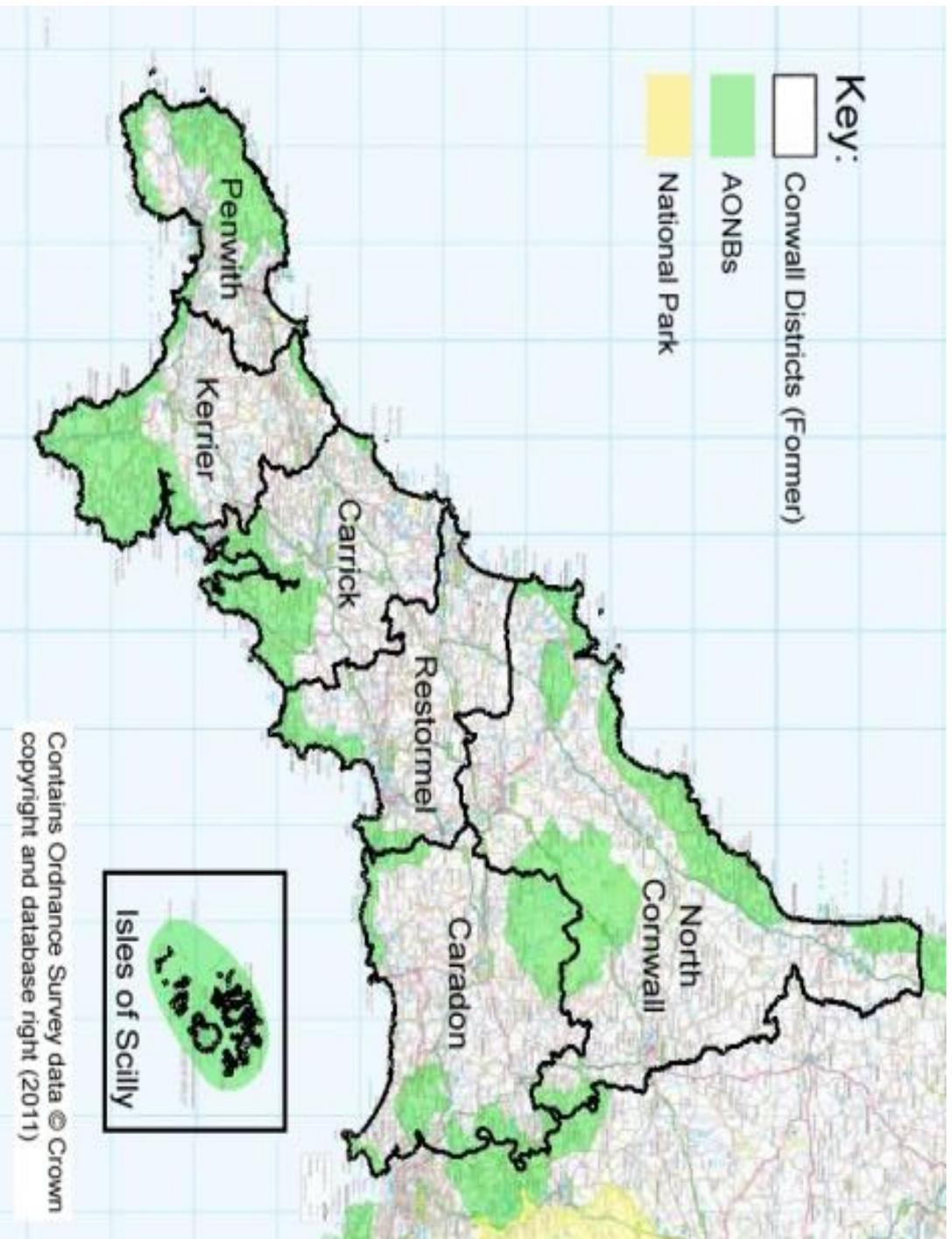
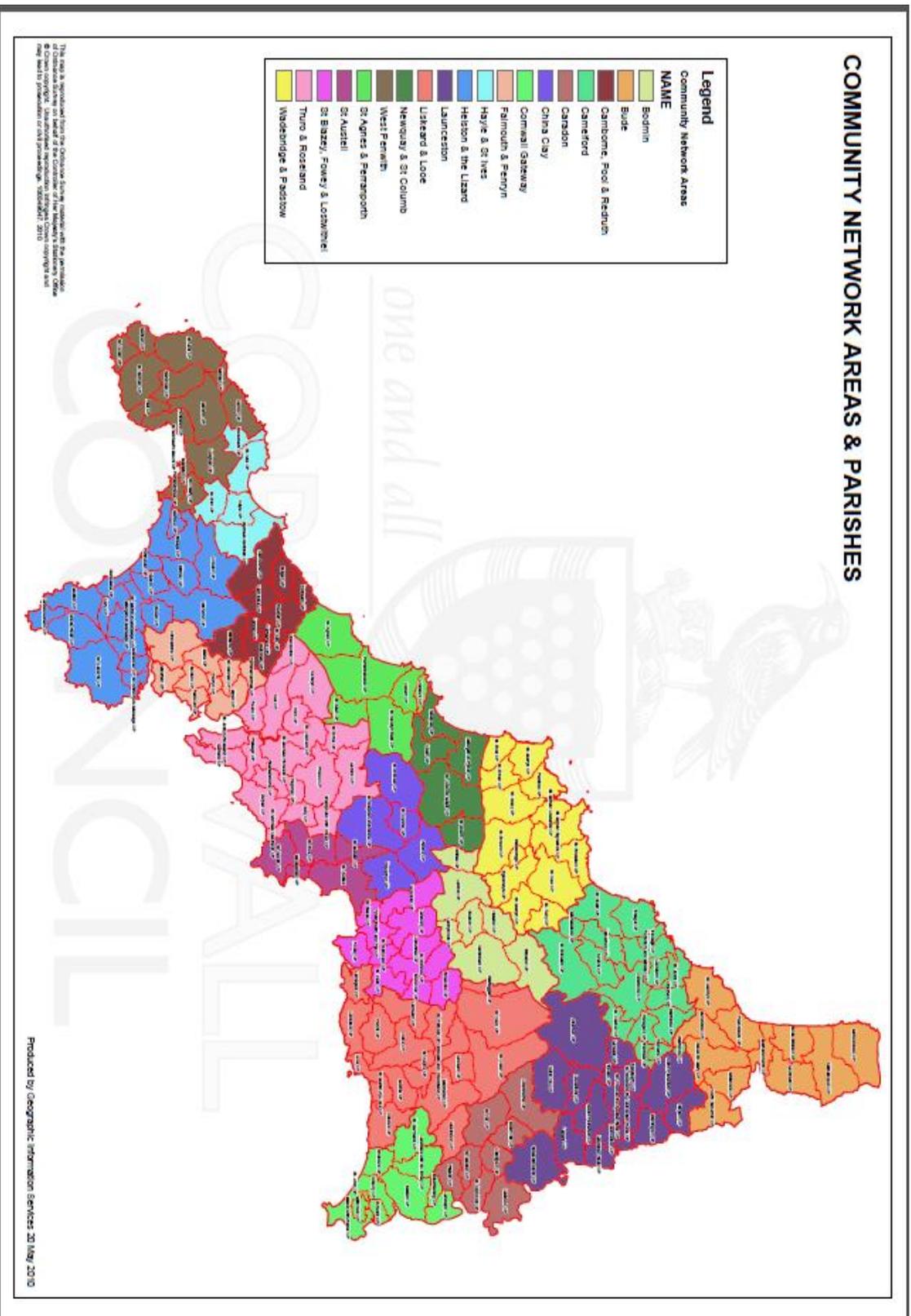


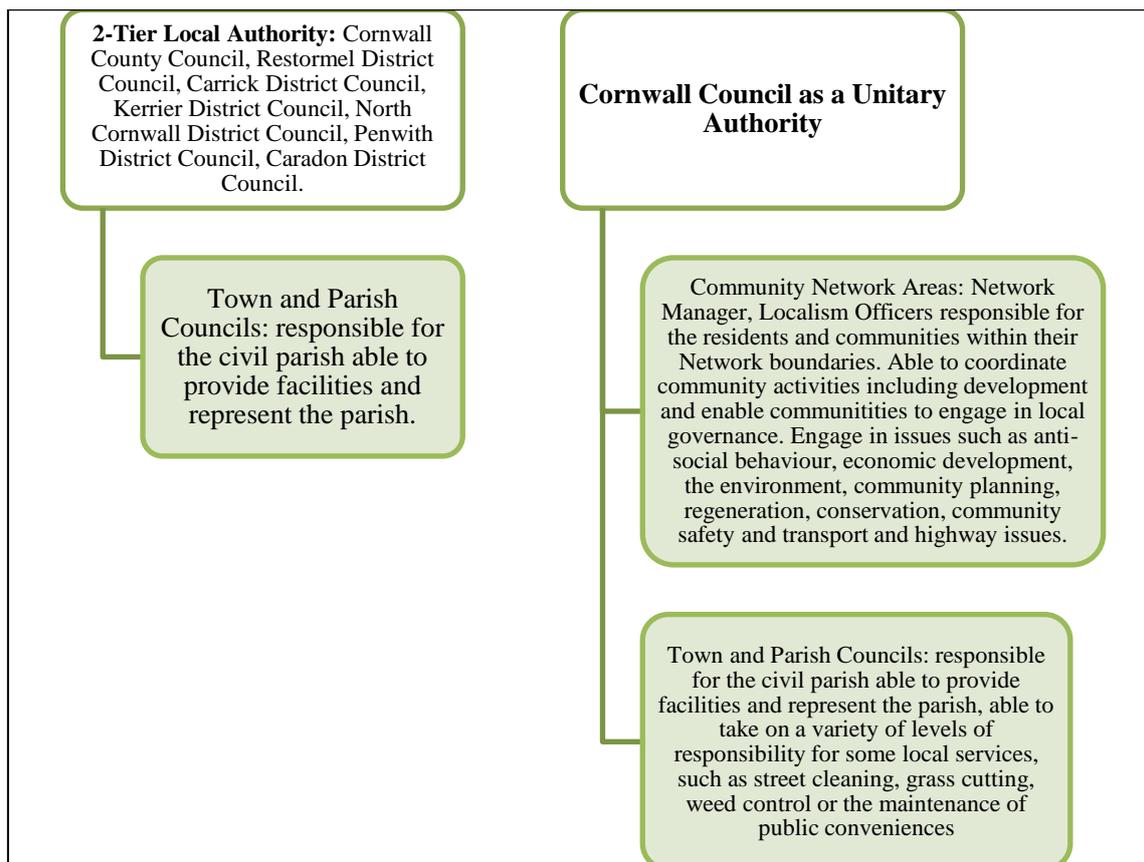
Figure 1.0

**The Community Network Areas of Cornwall after Transition to a Unitary Authority**



**Figure 1.1**

## Tiers of Government: 2-Tier Local Authority and Unitary Authority



**Figure 1.2**

## Community Network Area Appointments in Cornwall

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Community Network Manager</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•engage local communities in improving local services;</li> <li>•identify, agree and deliver local priorities;</li> <li>•enable local councillors to have more influence on service delivery; and</li> <li>•enable communities to make choices about the way in which services are delivered in their areas.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Community regeneration officers, partnership managers and town centre managers</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•community officers who will support engagement and help develop and implement projects.</li> <li>•community officers who will support engagement and help develop and implement projects.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Support Officers</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•officers who provide administrative support for councillors and others involved in localism.</li> </ul>  |

Source: [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk), Localism Staff Pages

**Figure 1.3**

## **Analysing Localism**

The analysis of Localism that I present in this thesis brings in a number of key concepts and theoretical registers of power, devolution, scale and the rationality of governing. I use Foucault's (1991; 1994) concept of governmentality to explore changes in government and civic behaviour and rationale in and through Localism. I investigate why UK government has placed an emphasis on the philosophy of local engagement and participation in governing and the power interplays between those engaged in Localism: different tiers of government, communities, citizens and local stakeholders. Throughout this thesis I assess Localism as a *mode* of governing, both practical and theoretical, and whether, as largely a top-down endeavour, it can be considered a method to forge a new form of bottom-up governance in the UK.

This research builds upon ideas presented by Jones *et al* (2010), Pykett *et al* (2011), Edwards *et al* (2001), Goodwin *et al* (2005), Cloke *et al* (2000) and Coaffee and Johnston (2005), amongst many others, who suggest that government approaches to embedding greater local governance increases complexity in governing. This complexity has unintended consequences in creating tensions between top-down and bottom-up governance. In addition, it appears that governing grows ever-more centralised and rigid as a result of government mandates for localised governing and unable to localise, or adapt to particular geographies. I therefore explore an irony in Localism: although Localism rhetoric advocates greater devolution of power and autonomy away from government, in practice, increased regulation in the deployment of new structures for local governing derail that which Localism seeks to achieve.

Throughout this investigation I pay close attention to the spatial politics at work in Localism. This politics appears to regulate power, revealing the dominance, at times, of localism with a small 'l': a historically and socio-spatial specific type of local

governing developed in and by communities without the auspices of central government structures.

In this thesis I focus on three specific areas of inquiry: the structure, scale and performative aspects of Localism. Using data collected from around Cornwall, I analyse the *moments* in which Localism separates from its core philosophy and becomes fractured. These breakages disrupt what I will call the ‘circle of Localism’ (see Figure 2.0), affecting the three critical points on which I focus: Localism as a strategy of central and local government; the scales at which governance and decision-making take place in Localism; and how Localism is performed. I use these three investigative areas to form the empirical chapters (chapters four, five and six) of this thesis.

## **Aims**

Following the spatial turn in governance studies, in this thesis I assess critically Localism as a contemporary mode of governance. The purpose of this study is:

- To uncover how Localism as a strategy in England is formulated.
- To investigate how Localism develops and is translated across government tiers, down to communities and individuals.
- To explore how Localism is practiced by government and communities (who is involved, how, who formulates strategy, how aims are achieved); and most importantly;
- To tease apart tensions between top-down and bottom-up governance through Localism.

Within the context of these purposes, the objectives for this thesis are:

- To contextualise theoretical concepts of governance and power and relate these to the role of Localism and Big Society in modern governing.
- To explore the role of geography in local government's strategies for embedding Localism in the county of Cornwall.
- To investigate changes to the institution of governance as a result of governmental adherence to Localism and Big Society in policy and practice.
- To draw conclusions of the effectiveness of Localism in:
  - a) Harnessing community and individual participation and engagement
  - b) Engaging members of communities in local projects
  - c) Empowering the lowest tiers of local government in town and parish councils
  - d) Devolving responsibility to allow communities to assume greater responsibility of their areas and their futures
- To explore empirically Localism 'in action' as part of a newly restructured local government designed to improve local engagement and participation in governing.
- To evaluate the development of Localism in Local and central government policy, rhetoric and action over a period of three years.

In addition, this research has three process objectives:

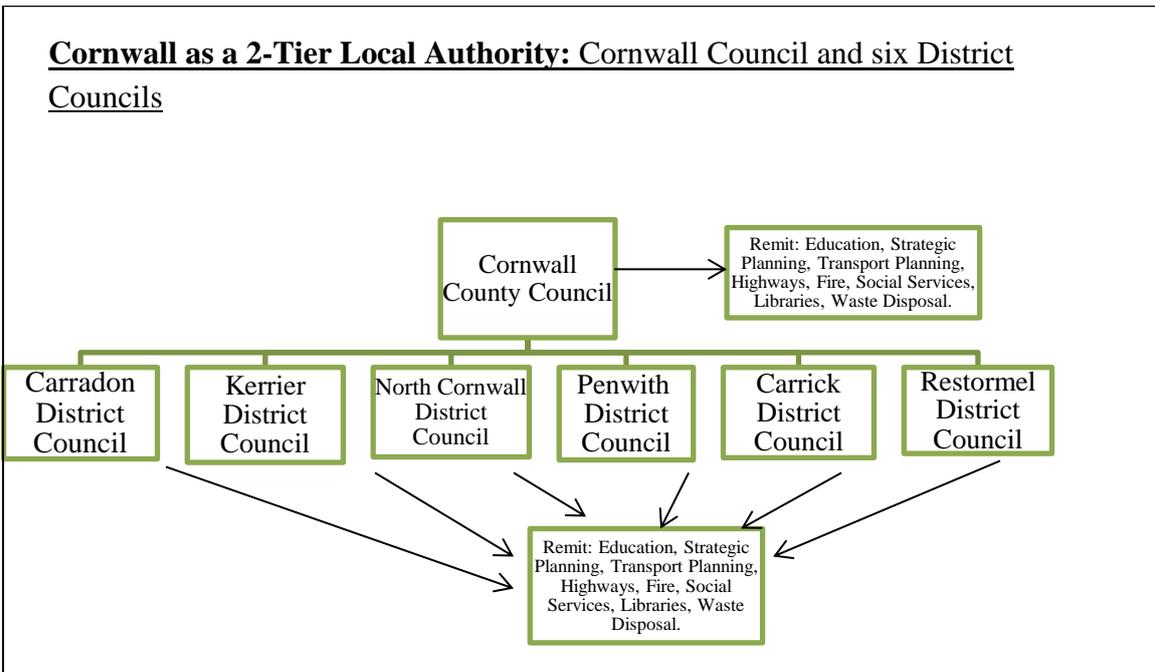
- To inform existing bodies of theoretical knowledge in providing contemporary investigation into Localism in Cornwall across contrasting areas.
- To provide an understanding of Localism in Cornwall.
- To assess the effectiveness of changes to the structure of governing under a unitary local government (see Figures 1.3, and 1.4).

Throughout this investigation I look in detail at how Localism has been formulated by central government, how it is transformed as it passes down to local authorities, town and parish councils, communities and individuals, and how Localism is performed ‘on the ground’.

## **Thesis Structure**

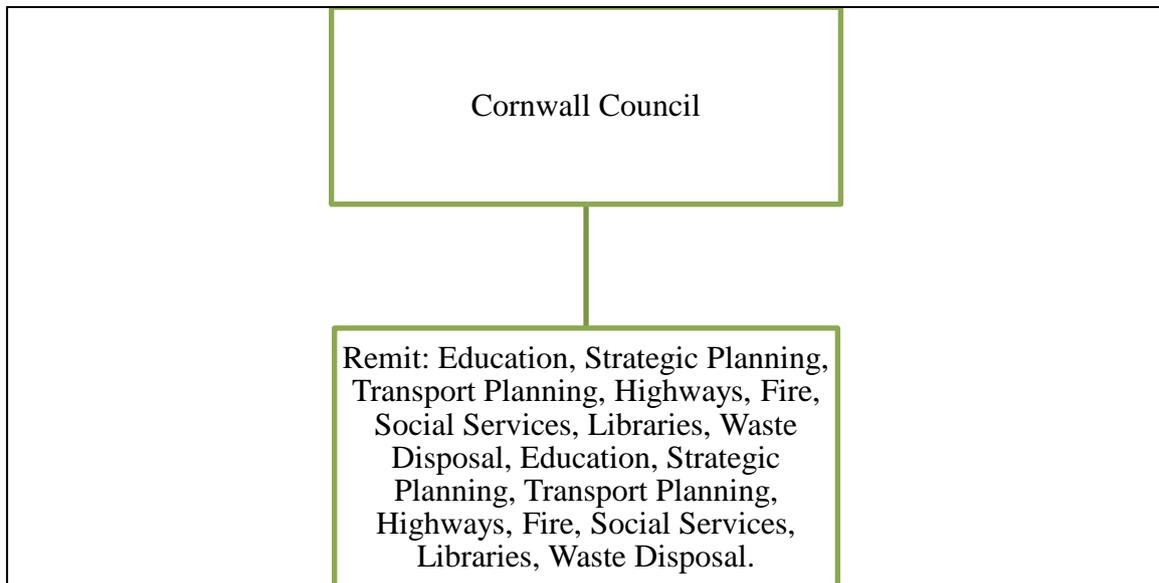
This thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter one has provided an introduction and background to Localism situating this work in a contemporary socio-political context. In this chapter I have described the formulation of Localism and how it emerged from the Labour Party’s Modernisation Agenda as a political policy and practice. This chapter has illustrated how Localism informed Labour’s *Third Way* philosophy integral to the re-formulation of local government in 2009 and the embedding of Localism in everyday local authority operations. In particular, this chapter has explored at the rights and responsibilities which Localism and Big Society have set out for communities and individuals. I have also examined social contracts created to bind government and citizens, assign certain roles and expectations, and “build a strong society” (Tony Blair, column in the *Observer*, November, 2002, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)).

Chapter two explores the current literature in the fields of study relevant to this research. The works of Woods *et al* (2006), Peck and Tickell (2002), Harvey (2005), Jessop *et al* (2003), Jones *et al*, (2010), to name a few, are brought together to investigate current thinking from the fields of human geography, policy studies, social studies and geopolitics.



**Figure 1.4**

**Cornwall Council as a Unitary Local Authority**



**Figure 1.5**

Chapter two is separated into three main sections representing the three core study areas outlined above: strategy, scale and the performance of Localism. I present

Giddens' (1984) and Dewey's (1916; 1966) conceptualisations of power, Paasi's (2004) views on scale, Bourdieu's (2000) *habitus*, and Foucault's (1991) governmentality as theoretical foundations of this research. Chapter three provides, in detail, the methodological approach I have taken for this study (Ravn, 1987; Steier, 1991). The methods I present here allowed me as the researcher to use participant's lived experience to examine the tensions and development of Localism in Cornwall. I detail in this chapter my reflexivity and positionality in the field of study, my data collection through case studies and the methods I used to obtain data from participants. This chapter shows how I analysed my data and provides a detailed account of my ethics of research and research ethics pertinent to this study.

Chapter four is the first of the three empirical chapters of this thesis. This chapter examines the strategy of and for Localism and investigates Localism as a framework for local governance. I explore the dominant discourse of Localism and how it has been conveyed as a philosophy and practice culminating in a proposed Localism Agenda for Cornwall. In this chapter I also show how centre-to-local relations are established to form a hierarchy of actors which enable a top-down to Localism to develop. Reflecting an apparent irony in Localism, I argue in this chapter that there appears to be no tangible framework for bottom-up local governance to emerge, and thus it can be described as more of an agenda based upon a dominant rhetoric. I present the idea here that Localism might therefore be seen as a pragmatic endeavour, reliant upon geometries of control exercised in the hierarchy of actors (Massey, 2005). It is this hierarchy that I examine in more detail in chapter five where I explore the scales at which decisions are made in Localism. This chapter continues investigation into the spatial turn in geographical studies and explores the development of a *politics of scale* (Whitehead, 2003; Brenner, 1999). I describe how government forms scales placing actors into bounded and 'fixed' categorisations (Harvey, 1996). This behaviour attempts

to create a fixidity in scalar relations ensuring policy and strategies are implemented in a top-down manner. In this chapter I show how, despite top-down designs for Localism becoming dominant, bottom-up reaction from local councillors and town and parish councils subverts governmental scales. Negotiations between these actors at the local scale fracture scalar relations and create new 'sub-scales', seeking to enact new politics of scales (Whitehead, 2003; Martin, 1999). It is here that we see bottom-up Localism in action: of the response of communities to governmental structures of local governance and of historical ways in which town and parish councils have effectively engaged residents without the need for formal Localism.

The final empirical chapter of this thesis examines how Localism is performed. Using Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality I explore behavioural economics through choice architecture in Participatory Budgeting in Cornwall. I use here the concept of libertarian paternalism to discuss the effects of governmental intervention, or a governmentalisation of Localism practices, in Cornwall (Painter, 2008, 2010; Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). Using the empirical evidence shown in this chapter I bring together the themes explored in chapters four and five to discuss the emergence of a centre-local network of governing, of a lack of strategy in implementing Localism, and of the scales at which governing is performed. In this chapter I exhibit in more detail the tensions between top-down and bottom-up governance through Localism using an empirical example of participatory budgeting in Cornwall. I posit that through the exercise of libertarian paternalism, governing through ineffective participatory publics is achieved when Localism is heavily guided and structured by government. In this particular example, it is the community organisation that, in the eyes of local residents, meets their needs, rather than the local authority.

The concluding chapter of this thesis brings together the key points of inquiry from all three empirical chapters and provides a discussion of the complexity of the

political geography involved and lessons learnt from the implementation of Localism in Cornwall. This chapter presents emerging trends of the research returning to questions addressed in earlier chapters. It also provides a discussion of this study in relation to the current wider debate on Big Society, social responsibility and autonomy and suggests areas for further research in the field.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the parameters of this study, stated the aims of this research and shown how Localism has emerged to be a cornerstone of modern governing in the UK. I have discussed here key governmental desires of focusing on the local, on social responsibility and of the importance for local participation and engagement in local governance. We can see that Localism has emerged out of a layering effect of economic and social ideology, thought and practice, which is reliant on regulatory frameworks to ensure state goals. The articulations of Labour's Localism and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Big Society reflect key ideological aspirations for social, economic, and justice reform in the UK. These, however, seem to rest upon assumptions of volunteerism, active citizenship and social responsibility. What can be suggested is that a Localism Agenda has been developed but one that is focused on ideology and discursive means of transmuting key messages to local authorities and communities. What is not evident is how to enact Localism; solid *practical* modes of implementation to allow it to be flexible enough to suit each locality and be accessible to local authorities and citizens. It is therefore the balance between introducing Localism, using top-down mandates and structures, and allowing bottom-up governance to emerge through engagement that I address in this work. I use the empirical data to explore the challenges of community and individual accessibility to Localism and its

flexibility in being adaptable to different locales. To examine these challenges in more detail, in the next chapter I present an overview of the extant literature and theoretical conceptualisations of the strategies for Localism, the scale at which Localism takes place and how it is performed at the local level.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Theoretical Literature Review**

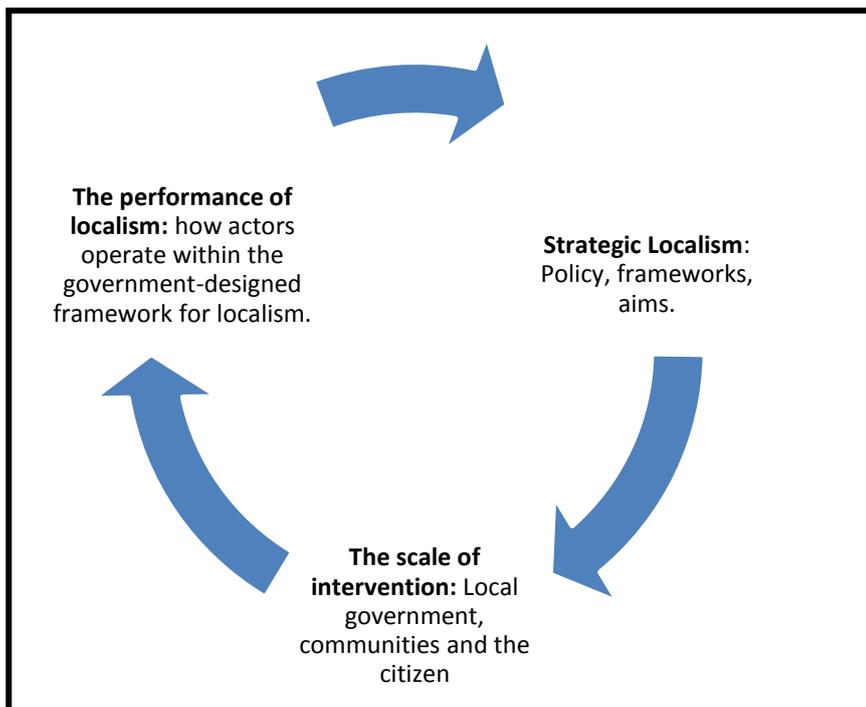
#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter has provided an introduction to Localism in modern governing and discussed the remit of this study. This chapter discusses the existing literature on Localism, highlighting the theoretical, strategic and practical modes through which it has been envisaged and is performed. This chapter is separated into three composite parts to interrogate governing through Localism: first, how Localism at a strategic level has been envisioned and articulated by central government; second, an examination of the scalar set of relationships involved in Localism and the scale(s) at which Localism appears and disappears; and third, how Localism is performed (see Massey, 2005; Peck and Tickell, 2002; MacLeod, 2001; Napoli, 2001; Stoker, 2005; Hirst, 2000; Raco, 2009).

The literature on Localism is varied and to tease apart its nuances readings solely from the discipline of human geography are not broad or deep enough to explore, for example, issues of top-down and bottom-up governing, power relationships and the significance of people, place and geography in governance, highlighted in the previous chapter. The theoretical registers I present in this chapter reflect the interdisciplinary nature of Localism as I tie together writings and research from the fields of human geography, political science, policy studies, anthropology, social studies and psychology. It is necessary to draw these seemingly diverse literatures together because of the complexity of Localism; the practical, theoretical, psychological and political ways in which government attempts to change the culture of governance in the UK.

The literature represents what can be seen as a circle of Localism (see Figure 2.0): the development of strategic frameworks, how these are imposed at different scales and how actors perform their 'role' in Localism. The completion of this circle would result in Localism being fully enacted, that is: government engagement strategies convene an active citizenry and publics are formed; these publics engage in local governance processes; and outcomes are enacted following guidelines provided by government.

### The Circle of Localism



**Figure 2.0**

However, if there are interruptions in the formation of strategy, the scale at which decisions are made or in the performance of Localism, this circle is not complete. I examine moments of interruption in this thesis at each point in the circle and I begin here with a discussion of Localism at the strategic level according to the existing

literature. I discuss how governmental policy discourse has framed ideas of the citizen and community being at the centre of governing and the development of 'Localism' as a way of characterising this approach. I look at how relationships are forged between government and citizens through Localism, how it is 'sold' to communities and individuals, and how hierarchical networks of governing are formed seeking to convene active and engaged publics. I then move on to discuss how Localism is scaled and at which scale(s) decision-making occurs to explore the presence of localism, with a small 'l': the historic, place-specific practices of town and parish councils to engage residents in local decision-making. I examine the role of people and geography in local governing and how through a governmentally mandated Localism and an imposed, dominant politics of scale, historic and localised politics of scales rise up to counter-balance governmental measures (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). Finally, I provide an examination of the performance of Localism; how government engineers citizen engagement, the mechanisms and rationales government uses to attempt to practice Localism, and the power of the local in asserting their own localism.

### **Strategic Localism:**

#### **Networked Relations**

A great deal has been written about the *idea* of Localism; all it envisages and claims to be able to provide. Those such as Lowndes (2001), Harvey (2005), Peck and Tickell (2002) and Jessop *et al* (2003) have provided a wealth of academic literature on Localism presents different understandings of the idealisations of devolved community power, and how this has come to dominate governmental discourse as a result of Labour's Modernisation Agenda. What is evident across the literature on Localism, both academic and governmental, is that government has placed a reliance on the ideological

foundations of a Localism Agenda than upon a practical strategic framework to embed greater community governing: Localism is presented more as an agenda or initiative. What are apparently lacking are clear structures and methods of implementation and operation. Further, Localism is presented by government as a blank canvas able to provide local government and communities with opportunities to design their own approach to civic governance. What emerges from the literature is that paradoxically, there is a certain rigidity to Localism. The discursive framing by government prevents Localism from being flexible enough to allow communities to take charge.

The intricacies of modern governance have introduced increasingly complex decision-making and a growing number of stakeholder actors involved in the process. In the literature, Localism is portrayed as the UK central government's mode of confronting the difficulties of modern governance by focusing on and enhancing local action and knowledge through *networked governance*. It is through Strategic Partnerships that government aims to create "Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities" (DCLG, 2006:12). Partnerships thus tie actors into a cohesive network, linking actors together and opening lines of communication. However, these lines are not simply modes through which interaction can occur, they also enable government to govern at a distance.

Networks have emerged as a mode of aligning the multiplicity of actors engaged in decision-making. Klijn and Koppenjan (2007), Lowndes (2001) and Wilcox (1994) argue that the use of hierarchical networks, as strategic modes of governmental control, challenges the core philosophy of Localism by serving as a method to centralise governmental power and control. Governance, for Labour, meant a multi-stakeholder participative arena (Wilcox, 1994) with the central idea that the "citizen [is in] control of the process" (Baker *et al*, 2010:574). Following this philosophy, increased drives for participation in political decision-making in the UK have led to the emergence of a

stakeholder society. Carroll (1993:60) posits that a stakeholder is “any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of the organisation”. In modern governing, it is therefore those “...with a ‘stake’ in a particular process or context [who] are brought together [by government] in managed ways to deliberate on key issues of mutual relevance” (Baker *et al*, 2010:576).

Multiparty governance and joint working have become commonplace, particularly in the field of planning. The *Skeffington Report*, published in 1969, was one of the first governmental reports to highlight the importance of the role of the public as stakeholders in decision-making. Since 1969 the UK central government has made efforts to involve more actors in the policy process, ranging from the community to businesses and international organisations. The idea of Localism and how it is articulated by government is an example of attempts to engage pragmatically with a multi-stakeholder arena.

However, this form of pragmatism has been criticised by Glasson and Marshall (2007) and Healey (1997), citing that drives to increase actor participation convolutes the decision-making process (see also Morphet, 2005). Baker *et al* (2010:574) refute this assertion and instead suggest that stakeholder engagement reflects the practice of policymaking in a post-modernist arena “...of spatial strategy making around the sharing of knowledge, community participation, and negotiation” (see also Murray, 2009). Despite the difficulty of engaging increased numbers of actors in decision-making, Labour’s entire Modernisation Agenda (1997-2010; see also Healey, 1998) is a manifestation of this post-modern “complex multiparty governance” (Baker *et al*, 2010:576). Healey (1998:7) argues that this is because government has recognised the public consciousness that “...people... have a ‘stake’ in a place and ... seek a way to demand recognition of their stake”. As a result, a labyrinth of co-existing networks

engaging these stakeholders has emerged, tying actors into centre-local relations (Wills, 2001).

Klijn and Skelcher (2007:587) define networks as “relationships... that [are] the articulation, resolution and realisation of public values in society”. Pierre and Peters (2000, in *ibid*:587) expand on this understanding, stating that they are “new systems for public policy deliberation, decision and implementation”. If actors are tied into an associative network, their interests can be translated and there emerges a possibility for the exchange of “power and authority” (Murdoch, 2005:74). Power, according to Foucault (1982), can then flow between interconnected actors, vertically and horizontally, with the aid of certain materials which “establish[...] and maintain[...] ordered lines of conduct at a distance” (*ibid*:74; Wills, 2001).

It is the flow of power through these lines that can then determine behaviour. Power flows from the centre outwards to align actors into composite parts of a strategic network. As Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) argue, because government structures the format and framework of Localism, any network of actors, created by and through the ordered lines of Localism, are endowed with an inherent hierarchy of scalar relations. Looking at the strategic recommendations and guidance passed by government into law for Localism, there are particular protocols, or lines of conduct, in place to ensure that certain mandates will be fulfilled: for example, the creation of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and the encouragement of citizens to become “local leaders” (*Strong and Prosperous Communities*, 2006:13; see Figure 2.1; see Klijn and Skelcher, 2007; Lowndes, 2001; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003).

It can be suggested that there is, then, a certain degree of governmental control over the creation of a network of actors in Localism. In tying central government, local government, regional bodies, funding bodies and organisations, communities and

individuals together, government can be seen to be managing actors using Localism as a tool to bind subjects together. The extent to which power flows freely both vertically and horizontally, and is diffused between actors, is therefore called into question (see Cloke *et al*, 2000; Lowndes, 2001; Cloke *et al*, 2000).

Klijn and Skelcher (2007), Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) and Cloke *et al* (2000) posit that relations between actors are steered largely from the top down. A hierarchy of scaled relations then emerges, one which is rigid and controlling and creates an uneven flow of power and influence. These uneven power relations ensure that government remains in ultimate control of the processes of governance. I now examine in more detail the reality of shifting power.

### Hierarchical Networked Relations in Localism.

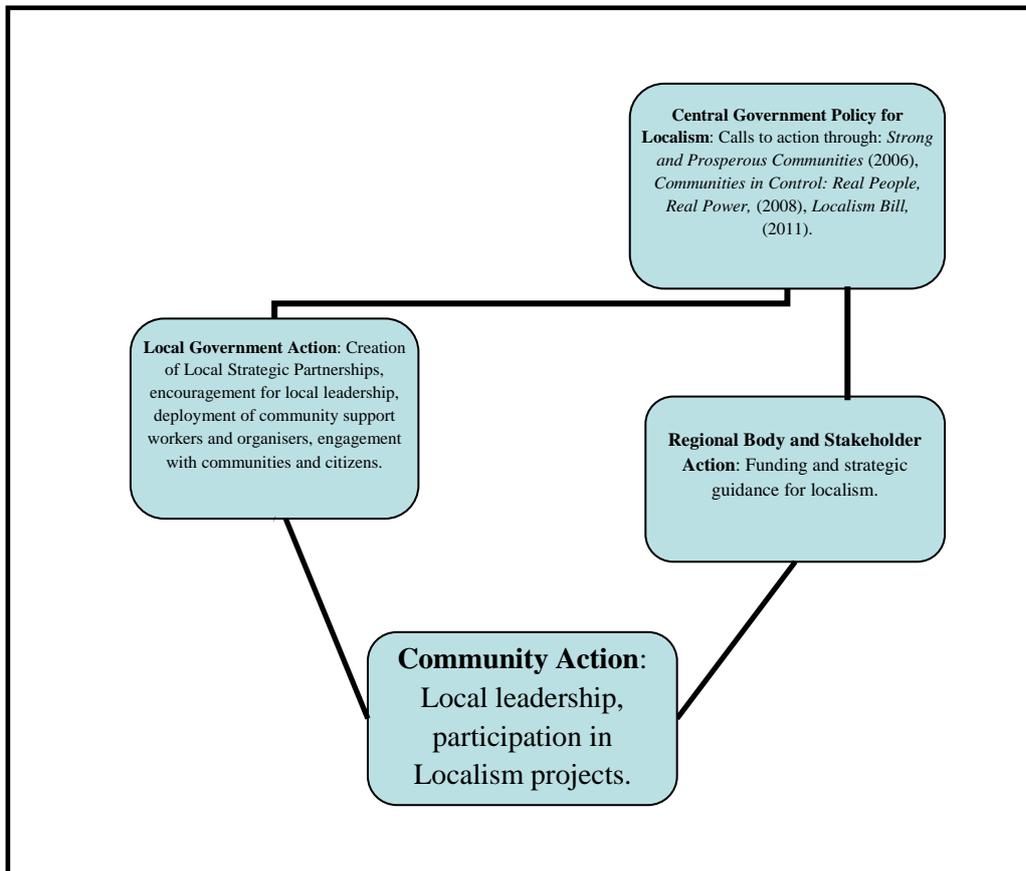


Figure 2.1

## Shifting Power

In *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (DCLG, 2006), the Labour central government at the time presented an influential discourse on the transfer of power to communities under Localism. For example, through Localism the government intended “to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives” (2006:4). Further, the government stated that “...[i]t is now time to show our confidence in local government, local communities and other local public service providers by giving them more freedom and powers to bring about the changes they want to see” (2006:5). This commitment to the diffusion and sharing of power between tiers of government, stakeholders and communities defined the idea of Localism. However, the theoretical literature on power in and through governing provides a critical view of the reality of power-sharing.

I look here, firstly, to conceptions of power as presented by Giddens (1984), Dewey (1916; 1966) and Foucault (1991) as the basis of a discussion on the changing nature of power. Anthony Giddens provides for the social sciences a profound view on power as a social construct where the human is the “active subject” (Layder, 1997:164). He notes that power is in a constant state of becoming, it is never in its total form but is a “dialectic of control” (ibid:166-169). For Giddens, power is relational and held by many parties. It is transferred from group to group, party to party, or individual to individual, through changes in power balances to “shift [the] balance of resources, altering the overall distribution of power” (Giddens, 1984:32). Giddens’ ideas of power mirror many conceptualisations of one of his theoretical predecessors, John Dewey. Dewey’s definition of power is the “effective means of operation; ability or capacity to execute... it means nothing but the sum of conditions available for bringing the desirable end into existence” (Dewey, 1916:24 in Hildreth, 2009:786). For Dewey, power is therefore the “capacity to execute desired ends... [which] suggests

intentionality and emphasises ‘power to’ rather than ‘power over’” (Hildreth, 2009:786). Dewey thus saw power as a positive force where it could provide the means to achieve and accomplish.

As a pragmatist, Dewey views power in three key ways. First, it is exercised with a purpose in mind, for example a political goal. Second, it is expedient, it is exercised differently dependent on situation, cause and need. Third, it is provisional, there are no guarantees to its use and different situations change the use or misuse of power (Allen, 2011). For Dewey, power can therefore be considered as *power to*, or the *empowerment of*, not simply *power over*. Dewey asserted that through new, experimental forms of democratic engagement, *power to* can emerge, empowering all actors in a networked relationship and allowing some semblance of autonomy, as is called for through contemporary ideas of Localism and the Big Society (North, 2011). Through this research I challenge Dewey’s concept of *power to* and ask whether it is a reality in Localism as a new form of democratic engagement: is it possible to transfer power to the local without imposing *power over*? As I will show in the empirical chapters later in this thesis, *power over* remains a consistent theme in governmental attempts to devolve power to local communities through Localism. I present the implications of this as an interruption to the circle of Localism. Viewed as an interruption, we can therefore begin to understand the structure of community governance through Localism as one with the capacity to be steered, or governmentalised, by government, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Giddens’ and Dewey’s conceptualisations of power parallels well with conceptualisations of modern governance where power is to be dispersed, shifted, and balanced between actors. These ideas emphasise the importance of power relations, a concept also central to Foucault's understandings of power. However, Foucault’s later work focused not on the shifting loci of power, but more on its ability to normalise

using methods of control. One of these methods, Foucault contends, is that of discourse and discursive formation (see for example Murdoch, 2005; O'Farrell, 2005). Foucault's emphasis on discursive rules, and latterly interrelationships and connections between "bodies of knowledge and non-discursive practices", ([www.michel-foucault.com](http://www.michel-foucault.com)), explore power relations in and through discourse; particularly the outcomes, or practices they produce. Foucault was thus able to examine how "relations of power link together discursive and material resources" (Eldon *et al*, 2001:101).

In exploring these links, Foucault also examined how power can be shifted through democratic engagement. For Dewey this would result in a *power to* scenario. For example, in Localism, central government intended to provide opportunities for citizens to be central actors in local governance: "[e]veryone has a role to play in creating strong, safe and prosperous communities" (DCLG, 2006:13). Taking these understandings of the location of power, how it is constructed and shifted discursively by government, Giddens', Dewey's and Foucault's notions of power aid in exploring how discourse is used to frame Localism. Curry (2009) and Leach and Wilson's (2002) work on the effects of discourse on the practice of governance show that despite framing desired outcomes using political ideals, egalitarian modes of governance are not achieved. Using these studies as a starting point, I build on this assertion to determine whether, through the discursive framing of Localism, egalitarian modes of governing are established to shift power to local communities and individuals.

This discussion of Localism as a strategy reflects its pragmatic nature as a strategic response of government seeking to ease the burden of modern governing. The literature brought together in this section shows that Localism could perhaps be described as an *initiative* rather than a practical framework for local governance. Government drives for evenness in Localism can be seen to have ironically centralised power, influence and decision-making through its very exercise. It appears, therefore,

that Localism is being framed as a top-down measure to inciting local governance and it is this which problematises the ideology of Localism itself. It is where strategy is devised and by whom that I turn to explore in more detail. It appears that those engaged in framing Localism exercise influence over which actors are included and excluded, and who wields power. I turn here to examine the scale(s) of Localism; where, how and by who strategic and practical decisions on Localism are made.

### **The Role of Scale in Localism**

I discuss here what the literature tells us about the scalar set of relationships within Localism and at which scale(s) Localism is strategised and performed. The concept of the existence of a politics of scale is of particular significance in this discussion as it is this politics which provides the environment for decision-making. A politics of scale shapes social and policy-making practice, it determines the flow of power and the scales at which Localism is able to appear and disappear (Sheppard, 2002; Paasi, 2003; Harvey, 1996 and MacLeod, 2001).

I begin here with a definition of scale: Paasi (2004:536) argues that scale is a social and political construct which “challenges the interpretations of region and place”. Scale is not static, it is instead made and remade in “structured and institutionalised complex ways [of] de/reterritorialising practices and discourses” (ibid:542). Scale is also historically contingent; it is made in accordance with political, economic and social practices and therefore needs to be considered in context (see also Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003 and Harvey, 1996). Scale, and the reorganisation of scale by Labour I discuss in this section, needs to be seen as a contextual exploration of social practices, discourses, “multiple power relations - and the scalar geometry of these relations” (Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003:901).

As discussed in the previous section, the strategic government agenda for Localism, and the centre-local relations initiated by government to enact it, have created a hierarchical set of scaled relationships. These relationships span from central government down to the citizen in the community. The way in which Localism has been articulated by government presupposes that certain processes should be enacted at different scales. For example, central government asks that at a local government scale officers should use local knowledge of need and priority to discern where and how communities can engage in Localism (see DCLG, 2006, 2008). Further, at a community scale, central government stipulates that citizens will become involved in local decision-making and priority setting for their area (ibid). The idea that decisions should be made “...at the spatial scale closer to people’s felt sense of identity” (Stoker, 2004:125) underpins the strategic idealisation of Localism. However as will be shown in this section, the scale at which Localism emerges is more complex as the local scale emerges to be a powerful force in counterbalancing top-down Localism.

Historically, as has already been discussed, governmental reform has tended to signify deconstruction, privatisation and broader efficiency gains. Yet under the Labour Party in the UK, an increased insistence on spatial restructuring through local authority reorganisation began to put an emphasis on changing the scale at which governance is performed. Clarke (2009:487) notes that this new type of governance initiated a set of challenges for Labour, mainly in how to develop new, local, “political-economic spaces”. To try to overcome these challenges, Labour set about redesigning spaces of engagement and re-framing governance as a re-scaling of decision-making which focuses on local citizens and communities. Labour began by encouraging community governing partnerships to “unleash the presumed innovative capacities of local economies” (Clarke, 2009:497; Morgan 2007; Paasi, 2004).

Labour thus began to overtly alter the scale(s) at which governance is practised, however, this led to what Lefebvre (1979:289) calls a “generalised explosion of spaces”. Labour’s “rearrange[ment] and reterritorialis[ation]” (Brenner, 2000:361) of space meant that government could set the rules for new scalar relationships and determine how and where Localism would appear and reappear within these scales. Using the idea posited earlier in this chapter, and following Latour’s (1987) concepts of centralisation and decentralisation, Labour’s modes for decentralisation actually ignited a wave of centralisation. Attempts to reorganise space and redefine the norms and structures of governing blurred the boundaries of scale. With less defined roles and remits, government became central to co-ordinating governance, power and decision-making and introduced a *politics of scale*.

The changes Labour intended for the re-scaling of local government (proposed in *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, 2006, to enable the development of unitary or two-tier pathfinder authorities) created new inter-scalar relationships through the establishment of a top-down politics of scale for Localism. This politics, according to Brenner (2001:599) operates as “the production, reconfiguration or contestation of some aspect of social-spatial organisation within a relatively bounded geographic area”. This politics defines characteristics, the position and the influence of actors, and places them onto particular rungs on the governing hierarchy. For Localism, the introduction of a politics of scale served as a political “technology of bounding” (Paasi, 2004:538). This, in turn, politicised the governing hierarchy and created scales of interaction to determine the actions between and among scales (Brenner, 2001). The politics of scale introduced brought with it materials and discourses that sought to keep actors ‘in their place’, contrary to the philosophy of Localism which calls for mobility and fluidity for all actors in the governing process.

The *Garbage Can Model* of decision-making, as posited by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) describes how a politics of scale affects governing in Localism. The *Garbage Can Model* speaks to the weaknesses in a scale of decision-making. It emphasises how the continuous re-making of space invites a blurring of boundaries between governmentally imposed scales, yet how these spaces are crucial to embedding Localism. Moreover, the *Garbage Can Model* emphasises *sub-scales*, as newly created spaces for decision-making: for example impromptu conversations between actors on the street, in corridors and meeting rooms. Decisions that are made here are outside governmentally defined scales but are just as important and capable of de-railing any scalar hierarchy imposed by government through Localism. The *Garbage Can Model* shows how, in practice, the scale at which decision-making occurs cannot always be predicted or pre-determined (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). According to the Model, decision-making in Localism needs to be considered as a result of relations between actors, balances of power, co-operation, dissent and at times, unpredictable and non-conformist (re)action. Lefebvre (1996:71) termed this process “implosion-explosion”, to reflect how the scale at which decisions are made, and the actors involved, changes frequently. It is this continual flux which accentuated unevenness. This then creates “interwoven scalar contours of [an] uneven mesh” (ibid:369) of behaviour and action (MacLeod and Jones, 2001; Agnew, 1987; Paasi, 2004).

*New* governance, as promised through Localism, suggests the emergence of “egalitarianism, democracy and socially just forms of society” (Brenner, 2000:376). However in the literature on decision-making, it is evident that through a politics of scale there are certain restrictions on who makes decisions, when, and on which issues. The *Garbage Can Model* suggests that there are in fact other means of decision-making, those which are local, more spontaneous and engages actors who are directly involved or invested in their outcome. I interrogate in this thesis the different, and at times

competing, politics of scale at work through Localism and how, in practice, this impacts on local governance. In particular I look at the emergence of sub-scales as the local resists and attempts to counter balance a dominant top-down politics, and the politics of scales these new realms develop. I show throughout this investigation that the more central government attempts to hold on to the power of governing through top-down attempts to embed Localism, the greater the response from citizens to subvert governmental agendas. I now discuss this idea in more detail using the theoretical construct of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to explore governmental strategic mentality in Localism.

### **Changing the Habitus**

As is evident from the introductory chapters, Localism is a mode through which central government aims to change the culture of governing. Essentially Localism is an initiative for behavioural intervention as it requires civic participation, stakeholder co-operation and government support for the devolution of power. It can be posited here therefore that Localism aims to change civic *habitus*. Bourdieu's (2000) concept of *habitus* brought together his ideas on symbolic power: how culture, action and social structures are related and how human (re)action, thought and behaviour are directed by symbolic power itself (see Flint and Rowlands, 2003; Dovey, 2002). For Bourdieu, *habitus* embodies the individual's *accepted* understanding of the world constructed by politics, economics, the environment, society and symbols. Bourdieu asserts that "social reproduction through society" (Flint and Rowlands, 2003:214), or values, beliefs and behaviour, are acquired and learned as a result of interaction with, and interpretation of, the environment. As *habitus* is socially constructed, it embodies "individual[...] systems

of social norms, understandings and patterns of behaviour... ensuring that individuals are more disposed to act in some ways than others” (Bourdieu, 2000 in *ibid*:214).

Bourdieu developed these ideas into the fields of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993). He identified this *field* as the environment of social interaction and influence where actors and resources, or capital, reside. For Bourdieu, it is the field which creates rules and norms to dictate capital.<sup>10</sup> Yet this field can be created by dominant actors and authorities who then determine how capital is used and distributed. Through rules and norms, this field decides governing *rationales* and governing *mechanisms*. Capital is then acquired for those who constructed the field and is exercised by their “subjects of governance” (Flint and Rowlands, 2003:215; Foucault, 1991; 2004). In controlling this accumulation, distribution and use of capital, a framework is built “in which government mentalities [are able to] construct and act on populations” (*ibid*:215; see also Foucault, 1991).

The rules of the field establish the *grammars of living*; governmentally acceptable and expected civic behaviour (Rose, 1999), transmuted, regulated and managed in part through dominant discourse (Foucault, 1991; Flint and Rowlands, 2003). Localism can be considered a field of cultural production, one created by central government to alter the way in which decision-making occurs in communities. The discourse which sets the rules, norms, regulation and management for Localism is one of partnership working with government, joint state-society decision-making, deployment of finances for local improvement and development, devolved decision-making, governmental empowerment and enfranchisement of citizens<sup>11</sup>, and a diffusion of responsibility and accountability (see for example in *Strong and Prosperous*

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<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu identified capital as cultural, economic, symbolic and social and called these the basic forms of power of government (Bourdieu, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> The concepts of empowerment and enfranchisement of citizens will be discussed in more detail in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

*Communities*, 2006; *Real People, Real Power: Communities in Control*, 2008, *The Localism Bill*, 2011; for critique of governmental practices see for example Lowndes and Wilson, 2001; Jones *et al*, 2010; Lemke, 2001; Dean, 2007; Lawn, 2006; Raco, 2009).

Using Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Localism provides the environment to re-shape values, beliefs and behaviour in society through providing new a role for citizens and attempting to reformulate *sense of self*. I posit here that reshaping the habitus is a mode through which government can retain some control over governance (i.e. have certain actors make decisions on certain issues) while appearing to govern the local level at a distance (Flint and Rowlands, 2003). It cannot be overlooked that Localism itself is defined by the habitus of policy-makers and, very importantly, it is here that the fundamental governing mentalities of Localism initially develop. This habitus is defined by the political environment, one concerned with meeting targets and agendas, with cost-saving, with national and international relations, with wider economic, social and political concerns, all the while not wishing to diminish the authority and power of government. With this idea of Localism as a mode of changing the habitus, I look now to the restructuring of the UK through regionalism as a manner of accessing 'the local' and embedding Localism (Foucault, 1991).

## **Regionalism**

Labour's rescaling of governance through Localism redefined 'the local' itself. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Labour's devolution agenda led to the formulation of the 'region' in the UK as a product of political-economic processes. According to Scott (1998:11), regions are "the basic framework for new kinds of social community and for new approaches to practical issues of citizenship and democracy".

These ideas are reflected in Hirst's (1990) assertions of associative democracy of political mobilisation and the creation of territorial government (in MacLeod, 2001). The de- and re- territorialisation seen under Labour in granting Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland their respective Parliaments and Assemblies, and the regionalisation of England in the 1990s, re-cast the British region as a space for "economic planning and political governance" (ibid:805; see also Keating, 1998). This prompted a flurry of literature in human geography and political science on 'new regionalism' (see Amin, 1999; Keating, 1998; Jones and MacLeod, 1999; Peck, 2002) and a discussion of the functions of a newly empowered, but governmentally defined, geographical space.

The early literature to emerge on new regionalism did not recognise the role of the state and the way in which it has, and continues, to change to meet political, social, economic and global demands (see Jones, 2001). These early readings also portrayed the state as declining in both power and influence, nationally and internationally, as a result of breaking up the UK into smaller sites for governing (see Harris *et al*, 2004; Norris, 2001; Deacon, 2004). More recent discussion on regionalism, however, places greater emphasis on the changing focus of UK central government throughout the Thatcher, Major, Blair and Brown years, and now under David Cameron and Nick Clegg. What is reflected is not a reduced role of the state, but rather a changed role and arguably a more powerful and influential one as a result (see North, 2011). These "changing functional and territorial contours of the state" (MacLeod, 2001:806) emphasise government responses to globalisation.

Labour's Modernisation Agenda therefore legitimised regionalism using a dominant discourse of Localism (Keating, 1998; Rural White Paper: *Our Countryside: the future – a fair deal for rural England*, DETR/MAFF, 2000). Despite the devolution of the regions, central government has retained overall governing control of the scale of governance through networks, prescribing mandates, agendas and goals, and devolving

accountability and responsibility to local actors. This “re-territorialisation of political economic activity” (MacLeod, 2001:814) therefore reflects a “deeply heterogeneous and contested process” (Swyngedouw, 2000:70, in *ibid*:814). The literature on regionalism shows that what has taken place is not, as argued by Jessop (1994) a hollowing out of the state, but through territorialisation, or regionalisation, government is attempting to make the state stronger. What has replaced ideas of a hollowing out is, then, a ‘filling in’ of a scalar and institutional matrix (Goodwin *et al*, 2005:421). Through the national-to-local networks establishing partnerships and aiming for civic renewal, government is able to access the local. However as a result of ‘filling in’, the local is fast becoming part of an “increasingly complex spatial division of the state” (*ibid*:421). Government attempts to maintain influence in governing through policy and frameworks to maintain political-economic relations of control. Yet this reorganisation of the state through regionalism, and efforts to bolster government power using the discursive terrain of increased regional and local governance, serves to complicate Localism, as I will show elsewhere in this thesis (Peck, 2000; MacLeod, 2001).

In examining more closely efforts of government to ‘fill in’ the state, Jessop (1990:267) notes that “the power of the state is the power of the forces acting in and through the state” (in MacLeod, 2001:816), or rather, in and through centre-local relations designed to ensure government aims. The region can therefore be seen to be created, shaped and guided by the political forces which act upon it. The literature thus views the configuration and function of the region as contradictory to the philosophy of Localism. Despite encouraging greater, autonomy and governance separate from the state, politically regulated regional bodies and agencies ensure that the outcome of local decision-making will always conform to the overarching goals and agendas of government. If we examine this concept using the *institutional-relational approach* (Lipietz, 1994), overall government control is maintained because a hierarchy of actors

is created through the interdependent and inter-relational links between the national and the local levels (in MacLeod, 2001). Lipietz (1994) calls this process ‘regional armature’ as the state manifests a “proactive space for itself” (MacLeod, 2001:818) in which it can call to action certain assets (human or non-human), at different scales, for political, social or economic means.

Once Localism has permeated the region, government then has access to local power and geography. These geographical nodes of power at the local scale are able to strengthen or contest governmental goals for Localism, as I will now discuss.

### **Geography and Local Power**

Kearns (1995) argues that geography plays a mediating role in governance at the very local scale. To Kearns, geography determines “the citizen’s inclination to participate in the institutional arrangements that comprise local governance” (ibid:156) and refer to the uneven geographical conditions and consequences of local governing. Following Kearns, five key ‘geographical dimensions’ can be identified which can determine power at a local level: place, history, socio-spatial environment, sense of place and local government. Geographical dimensions are by no means restricted to these five elements however I have condensed my analysis to suit this study (see also Phillips *et al*, 2001).

These five elements are made and remade by the inter-relationality of networks and other heterogeneous entities which create place (Wilcox, 1994; Baker *et al*, 2010; Allen *et al*, 1998; Massey, 2001).<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding, place is never complete, it

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<sup>12</sup> I define place here, following Kearns, as constituting three central elements: a) Community; the shared values and interests of a collective, developed over time, incorporating interactions with others. These values and interests create social norms and often are the basis from which collective political endeavours emerge; b) Locale; the physical environment of private and public spaces, different types of housing and

possesses a “genuine openness of the future” (Massey, 2005:11), it is always contested and is spatio-temporally unique at any given moment.

In examining these five dimensions it is possible to highlight why geography is particularly important to Localism: how and where geographical modes of power reside, how they can be exercised by citizens and government and their role in spatialising Localism. Geographical dimensions can operate to determine the form and function of policy and its specificity to each locality. When examined as modes of capital through, for example, the lens of Bourdieu’s habitus, these dimensions become important elements in controlling the flow of power. To government, these elements are sought after entities and desired by government to enable it to harness power to meet objectives.

In examining place as “an important mediating factor to the success of local government initiatives” (ibid:166), in this study I observe how Localism is structured and how the mechanisms and practices of civic engagement are determined. Hirst (2000) argues that affinity to place and the configuration of communities, locales and neighbourhoods, play a role in the production of active or inactive citizens. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, social capital is built through social encounters, shared interests and values in the community (see Putnam, 1993 and Wilson, 2003). These form the basis of place-specific ontological security and a “foundation for collective social and political endeavours” (Kearns, 1995:166) relevant to localised “time-geograph[ies]” (ibid:166). In exploring the history of place it is possible to uncover its contribution to the construction of the character of place. Through citizen “personality, ideology and consciousness” (ibid:167), histories are formed predicated on

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socio-economic groups; c) Neighbourhood: the time-geography of individuals where paths converge through the pursuit of individual or collective interests (Kearns, 1995). Place is also intertwined with individual histories which helps create its character. Ideology, language and consciousness also constitute norms and social practices within place (in Kearns, 1995).

norms and resources with rules “that reflect geographically and historically specific power relations” (ibid:168). Place and history combined, create physical elements which determine the “capacity for government” (ibid:166) within an area. This capacity, according to Giddens (1984; 1987), can be achieved through the timing and spacing of action and interaction between the citizen and government. Getting this timing ‘right’ can construct meaning in people’s lives, impart a sense of self-worth and empower those who participate.

The environment that citizens are in also plays a key role in how local governance is structured. Place is “defined by its external relations with broader social, economic and political structures” (Kearns, 1995:166) and the boundaries of place can be either fixed or flexible and open. In the 1991 National Survey of Voluntary Activity in the UK, Lynn and Davis-Smith (1991) assert that volunteering is strongly linked to an individual’s personal relationships. The survey showed that the more intimate relationships a person had with others, both within and out-with their local area, the more likely there were to participate in voluntary activity. Thus if people are relaxed and comfortable in their socio-spatial environment, if the boundaries of place were open and flexible, according to Kearns (1995:166) “they will be more willing and able to take part in its public life”.

“Structuration in place” (Agnew, 1987 in ibid:167), or the presence or absence of a sense of place, is also significant to community participation in governing. Relph (1976) posits that a sense of place is linked to how a person identifies with a place, as an individual, and as a member of the community. Participation in local governance permits the development and improvement of place thus a strong identification to place or sense of place, would indicate more of an appetite to become involved in local governance. Finally, the strength, presence and balance of local government and its elected representatives is the last of Kearns’ five geographical modalities of power.

Kearns asserts that inciting a “politics of turf” (Kearns, 1995:169) is important to engaging citizens in local governance “to maintain exclusive possession of valuable resources in their territory” (ibid:169; see also Taylor, 1989). Enhancing public consciousness encourages local mobilisation and thus a strong political force and modality of power.

In this research I explore the relation of these dimensions as an exercise of localism with a small ‘l’: local approaches to resident engagement and participation, largely exercised by town and parish councils. Kearns (1995) suggests that government seeks control over the type of localism deployed by those at the heart of communities, yet it is inherently localised. It is made and remade through inter-relationality, social processes and political and economic forces, and it is negotiated with those at the centre of their creation: citizens and communities.

This section on scale has brought together literature on the politics of scale, regionalisation as a mode of creating new scalar relations and attempts by government to change the habitus of citizens and harness geographical modalities of power. The literature presented in this section suggests not only the significance of geography in Localism, but perhaps the inability of Localism as an agenda or initiative to engage citizens. Rather, a governmentalised but chaotic Localism is made and remade through non-human actors in dialogue, space and scale. This disarray makes it difficult to pinpoint the scales at which Localism is made. With these ideas in mind, I now move on to the third and final point of inquiry in this thesis: how Localism is performed.

## **Performing Localism**

### **Governmentality**

Following the above discussions on strategy and scale, this section explores the performance of actors in Localism. Using Foucault's (1991) governmentality as a theoretical structure, I will demonstrate here how the literature views the actions and behaviours of actors engaged in Localism. The literature presented in this section also reflects the incongruences between strategic and practical Localism showing where there is a potential poverty in our understanding of its performative elements.

Foucault's ideas on governmentality arose from his examination of the relationship between "power techniques and forms of knowledge" (Murdoch, 2005:41): that to engage with concepts of power, political rationalities which reinforce power also have to be investigated (Foucault, 1991, 2004; Lemke, 2001). Governmentality comprises two key elements; first, reasoning, or rationality, "a way of thinking about the nature of the practice of government" (Gordon, 1991:3); second, technologies: "procedures that enable rationalities to act effectively upon diverse subjects and objects" (Murdoch, 2005:42). For Foucault these elements are "intertwined" (Gordon, 1991:3; Murdoch, 2005:42) and are able to "shape[...] and reshape conduct"(Dean, 1999:18).

What emerges, then, is a "regime of governmentality" (Murdoch, 2005:43) which predetermines thought and behaviour and reflects the relationship between space (i.e. the community, territory or institution) and discourse (i.e. the range of rationalities and technologies of government) in contemporary governing (Murdoch, 2005). Advanced liberalism can therefore be characterised by the extent to which "power is exercised... by the invisible strategies of normalising judgment" (Murdoch, 2005:43). In Localism, the actions of citizens can therefore be seen to be predefined, meaning that

outcomes will align with governmental priorities, not necessarily those of the community or citizen themselves. I turn now to one of the key modes of implementing governmentality, through practices of soft paternalism as evidenced in the work of Thaler and Sunstein (2008), Jones *et al* (2010) and Pykett *et al* (2011).

### **Soft Paternalism**

Barnett *et al* (2008) argue the polycentricism of governing is perhaps best explained with reference to soft-paternalism as a political project of coercion (see Raco, 2009, Clarke, 2009, Lawn, 2006). Soft paternalism came to the academic fore in 2008 following the publication of Thaler and Sunstein's *Nudge* (2008). The book discusses methods of achieving predictable outcomes through behavioural economics using libertarian paternalistic mechanisms (Lockton, 2008). *Nudge* outlines the effect people's cognitive biases have on understanding, interpreting and using methods such as rationalisation, "prompting social norms" (Jones, *et al*, 2010:4), and spatial design (Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Pykett *et al*, 2011). The key rationale is that choice can be architected in order to alter cognitive biases, change behaviour, strategy and social motivation, and educe specific outcomes. This is done through the power of suggestion, a 'nudge' strategy, creating but not closing off opportunities and choices, or through designed spaces to influence thought processes and motivate behaviour. Choice architecture, a component of libertarian paternalism, is fundamentally based on presenting options in a way "consistent with the desired action" (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008:90). Designing and executing choice architecture, as soft paternalism, 'correctly' can therefore lead to significant changes in thinking, behaviour and lifestyle, making paternalistic mechanisms desirable to governmental attempts to normalise citizen

behaviour (Foucault, 1991, 2004; Thaler and Benartzi, 2004; Tversky, 1972; Norman, 1990; Vincente, 2006).

Soft paternalism can be distinguished from ‘hard’ paternalism in that it nudges towards certain decisions but does not restrict access to other options (Jones, *et al*, 2011). The aim is to guide citizens into making better choices, but how this is architected and what constitutes a ‘better’ choice is at the discretion of the architect (Van De Veer, 1986; Friedman and Friedman, 1980; Raco, 2009). To government, as the architect, choice architecture is an attractive tool especially when applied to strategies for Localism. It essentially meets two objectives; helping the political realm achieve its policy aims and engaging the state with society (Barnett, *et al*, 2008). John *et al* (2009) posit a further strand of choice architecture but one that is founded in deliberative democracy. The ‘*think*’ strategy rests upon public decision-making: the freedom of citizens to weigh up opportunities using civic orientation, not nudges from government. Rose and Miller (1992) argue that the ‘think’ strategy is one which extends the “moralising effects of public deliberation” (in John *et al*, 2009:364). However, Miller contends that this strategy supports and even encourages decision-making using, often, ill-informed bias’, preferences and information.

Both the ‘nudge’ and ‘think’ strategies display individual strengths and weaknesses in their ability to engage citizens and create democratic choice. Yet the ultimate aim of government remains the same in both approaches: to achieve certain outcomes. Behavioural economics (nudge) and deliberative democracy (think) can therefore complement one another, as in essence, they embody the same foundations: a “response to the contingencies of our bounded rationality” (ibid:369). The final empirical chapter of this thesis will evaluate the nudge and think strategies in more detail to reflect their effectiveness, and limitations, in guiding predictable policy outcomes.

There is an ethical argument surrounding libertarian paternalism and particularly choice architecture. As choice is architected, it can also be manipulated and designed in order to steer decision-making to align with certain priorities. Governments therefore risk creating false dichotomies where only two options are presented when in fact many more may be available, or decoy effects when the introduction of a third, marginally more attractive option, removes focus from two previously thought to be preferred outcomes, either accidentally or deliberately (Lockton, 2008). For government to remain ‘soft’ in its paternalism it needs to allow open and unrestricted choice to ensure democratic and free decision-making. However, the ability to do this rests on the moral judgment of the architect.

Libertarian paternalism has emerged as a means to shape decision-making contexts and can be viewed as a contemporary interpretation of Foucault’s governmentality (Jones, *et al*, 2010, 2011; Pykett, *et al*, 2011; John *et al*, 2009). Using the extant ideas of soft paternalism, I explore in this work the extent to which ‘nudge’ and ‘think’ strategies are deployed through Localism to ensure certain outcomes. Using governmentality to analyse the performative side of Localism, I hypothesise here that there may be a poverty in *real*, autonomous community action in Localism because of the potential centralisation of power by government. I now turn to discuss the production of publics; an ultimate goal of the devolution of local decision-making to citizens by government to create active engaged groups able to perform in governing their area.

## **Producing Publics**

A central component of Localism is the production of publics, as government seeks to convene groups able to govern their area. However, the literature suggests that

the processes at work to ensure governmental outcomes are achieved operate to contradict the core idea of Localism: local control over local governance. While there is significant descriptive literature on Localism, governance and the politics of scale (see Clarke, 2009; Swyngedouw, 1997; Peck and Tickell, 2002 and Brenner, 2004 for example), there is very little evaluative work on the processes or outcomes of initiatives, such as Localism, to create and mobilise publics. Moreover, there are few studies which evaluate the creation of different *kinds* of publics as a result of public participation in governing activities (Mahoney *et al*, 2010:15). I therefore draw here on Habermas (1962) and Dewey's (in Hildreth, 2009) conceptualisations of publics to reflect the emergence of publics as vital entities to government-structured local initiatives for governing.

Habermas, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), sought to discern a bourgeois public sphere as a form of public. He highlighted that through philosophy and language, a shift had taken place during the eighteenth century whereby an autonomous, self-directed public had emerged. This public created a division between the public and the private and, using reason, could participate in rational-critical debate. This public served to check and balance state power and domination, but moreover, created a body for public expression of needs, priorities and concerns. During the latter part of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, this public became recognised by government as crucial, especially in terms of its power held through public opinion. This increasingly powerful public, able to advocate and represent itself, was therefore identified by Habermas as a critical force in modern politics.

Dewey, as a pragmatist, also recognised the importance of publics in the political realm. Dewey looked at the significance of shared experience in the production and mobilisation of publics but also identified the public as disparate, scattered and

pluralised (in Allen, 2011). Recent academics have sought to discern the underlying notions of power in Dewey's work (see section on *Shifting Power*; Hildreth, 2009, and Allen, 2011), noting that power, for Dewey, is the medium through which publics are mobilised. Therefore for publics, the idea of 'power to', as discussed in the earlier section on *Shifting Power*, makes things happen. This 'power to' emerges through the mobilisation of citizens into a public, their coming together as a powerful body to effect change. Yet it also has to be understood that public action is underscored by "the temporality of public-making processes" (Mahoney *et al*, 2010:17). As such, publics are made and remade through "reflexivity by which an addressable object is conjured into being in order to enable the very discourse which gives it existence" (Warner, 2002:67).

In mobilising an active public, government makes this public the *policy object*, to achieve the goals of social and community policy in advanced liberal societies (Raco, 2003). What can be discerned from the above discussions on the strategic frameworks for Localism, and the scale at which they are implemented, is that through a dominant discourse of 'active and engaged' publics, *discursive publics* are being created. In forming a public, or multiple publics, government is able to tie these group(s) into a centre-local network of governing and ensure, through strategic means (i.e. governmentality, soft paternalism), that central government agendas are met. These publics are brought into existence through governmental aspirations for active citizenship. They are impressed with "a politics of relatedness which reimagines the notion of responsibility" (Massey, 2005:188). According to Wylie (2006:303), "a discourse... *creates* [a public], makes it really, actually exist as a consequential and meaningful set of beliefs, attitudes and everyday practices and performances". The exercise of a dominant rhetoric of local leadership, citizenship and participation therefore serves to create subjectivities and form governmentalised publics (Mouffe, 1993; 1995).

There is a substantial body of work on the existence of publics. Staeheli *et al* (2009) suggest that there is no single ‘public’ but instead multiple publics in existence able to be formed and reformed over time. Warner (2002) notes that a public can be a strong force within decision and policy-making, as instead of conforming to normative understandings of ‘the public’, constructed through domination and characterised by hegemony, ‘a public’ is a looser construct in competition with other publics. There is a consensus therefore that publics are “...actively created through address and through participation in public life, and are not simply historical remnants or the result of state power” (Staeheli *et al*, 2009:644; see also Calhoun, 2002; Iveson, 2007; Warner, 2002; Mouffe, 2000).

Publics can be seen, therefore, as not solely political creations but the active force of a governmentalised dominant discourse, based upon a government *ideal* of citizenship and governance. This dominant discourse is presented through government rhetoric of community activism, engagement and the creation of cohesive communities. Governmental publications, such as *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (2006), *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* (2008) and the *Localism Bill* (2010), project governmental ideas of autonomous publics who are granted powers of decision-making and are able to alter the political, social and economic landscape of their communities.

Although publics are created by government as addressable objects, it is the degree of ‘power to’ they are endowed with that I investigate through this study. The ideological frameworks provided by government to embed ideals for active individualism create “a kind of self-imposed disciplinary code” with “unbending rule regimes” (Peck and Tickell, 2002:380). The rule regimes may therefore ensure that anything performative in localism, exercised through governmentally convened discursive publics, is architected by government.

From the literature it is clear that the citizen can be a powerful force in Localism, able to help or hinder governmental aims. However what is also clear is that civic action can potentially be restricted by the *tools* of government. It appears that there is therefore a need to balance civic and governmental action and this can be achieved through the actions of publics. Publics are convened and called to action by government and as they are a governmental creation, cannot be viewed as wholly autonomous, rather extensions of governmental control. Yet publics have the capacity to mediate state power and as described by Habermas, hold an important power of public opinion. It is the behaviour of publics which I explore in this research to investigate their role in moderating government control in Localism and promoting the interests of their members. Although the literature shows that government appears to be in control of Localism, publics have the capacity to counterbalance state action and advance the interests of communities and individuals.

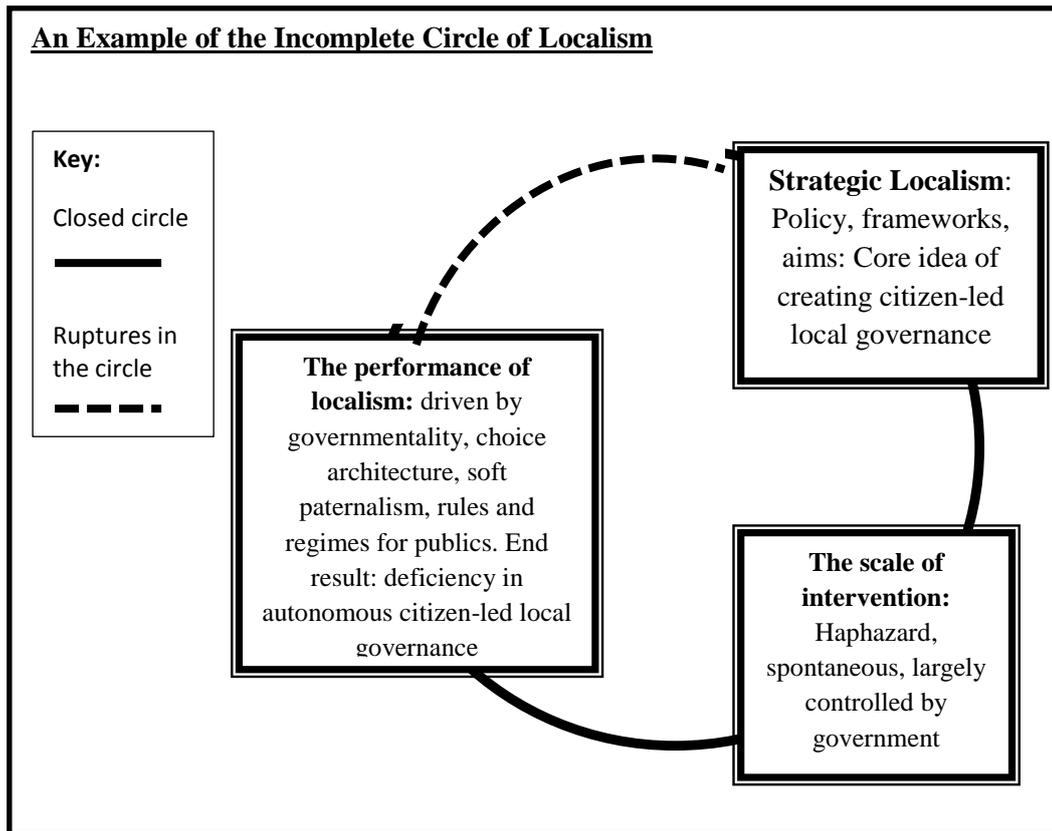
## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a discussion of the key literature and theoretical concepts which underpin Localism. The above discussion reflects the multifarious nature of Localism and its complexity which weaves power, technologies of government, theory, scale and geography into its design. What is clear from the above analysis, and is evident in the literature, is that there is a potential for the ideology and practical aspects of Localism to be disharmonious. It appears, therefore, that in discursively framing Localism as a mode of engaging with the citizenry, it becomes a top-down endeavour. This, in contradiction to the fundamental philosophy of Localism, subverts what it wishes to achieve: bottom-up governance. It is this aspect which I interrogate throughout this thesis in relation to a number of theoretical registers: first, in

the network of relations created through Localism; second, in the scale at which governing takes place; third, in the significance of geography in Localism and the role of localism with a small 'l'; fourth, in the potential poverty in terms of the performance of Localism; and fifth and finally, in the configuring of subjectivities and changing the habitus through jumping scale and mechanisms of soft paternalism.

Localism is a highly contested policy, one which is open to regulation by central government through the use of strategic tools seeking to change the culture of local governance in very specific ways. It is clear from the literature that the strategic modes of ensuring predictable outcomes, such as the use of soft paternalism and convening publics, aim to restrict citizen control over decision-making. I return here, then, to the idea of a circle of Localism. With the above discussion in mind, I suggest that there are interruptions in the circle because of the behaviour and rationalities of government. The circle is then rendered incomplete.

The empirical chapters of this thesis inquire further into each of the three composite sections of this chapter in turn: strategic Localism, the role of scale in Localism and performing Localism. Through these empirics I uncover the challenges of Localism. I also use these chapters to explore the roles of individuals, geography and how the illusion of choice impacts upon the creation of devolved local governance through Localism in Cornwall. The literature I have outlined above shows that Localism is a pragmatic strategic governmental response to modern governing. Yet it also suggests that Localism is more inclined towards ideology than practice (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004). I therefore interrogate Localism both practically and ideologically in this research and examine in depth the suggestion that Localism serves to centralise power instead of dispersing it (Harvey, 2005; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Jessop *et al.*, 2003).



**Figure 2.2**

To tease apart this notion I use the empirical accounts of participants of this study to explore contradictory effects of a dominant governmental discourse of Localism (De Bruijn, *et al.* 2002; Kickert, *et al.*, 1997; Klijn, *et al.*, 1995; Klijn and Koppenjan 2007; Sørensen and Torfing 2007).

In examining ideas of scale in Localism, the literature shows that Localism fails to engage actors fully at the local level as a result of the scalar hierarchical relationships created for governing through Localism. Further, the studies of those highlighted in this chapter show that Labour’s processes of regionalisation in the UK created new territories for governing and attempted to change the scale at which local governance is performed. However, what has arisen to balance governmental re-scaling of governance are geographical dimensions, historical and localised localism with a small ‘l’, sub-scales and the emergence of publics. These elements appear to be crucial factors in the

local assuming some semblance of control in governing and have the capacity to enable the local to assume control over governing and for Localism to appear and disappear at various intervals (Massey, 1993; MacLeod, 2001). The next chapter will provide a framework and analysis of the methods I have used in this research.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapters have introduced the research, set the scene and provided an analysis of the key theoretical points of inquiry in this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the methodological framework I have used for researching the three tenants of Localism that are central to my investigation: strategy, scale and performance. I begin this chapter by discussing the cultural turn in researching policy and ethnographic approaches to data collection. I then discuss my framework for researching Localism using a phased approach to gathering data from across Cornwall. The following section shows how I approached obtaining data and the selection of my chosen methods for collection and analysis. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of ethical considerations concerning this research and my approach to leaving the field of study.

#### **Researching Policy**

A cultural turn in researching policy took place in the 1960s (see Harvey, 1996) when researchers began to shift from engaging in largely quantitative research<sup>13</sup>, to qualitative approaches which could reflect attitudes, behaviour and thought processes. These qualitative studies questioned governmental *need* for “truth, objectivity and certainty” (Steedman in Steier, 1991:53) and instead began to offer modes of “seeing, interpreting and knowing” (ibid:53). From the previous chapter it is evident that contemporary policy making is characterised somewhat by a “fragmentation of

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<sup>13</sup> A result of demands from government for statistic and quantifiable data that could be easily understood.

authority” (Weiss, 1982:26 in Denzin *et al*, 1998:402) and a continually shifting set of decision-making actors and scattered aims. To try to navigate this complexity, Rist (1989 in Denzin *et al*, 1998:405), amongst others, has approached researching policy using “an ongoing set of [methodological] adjustments” to enable multiple readings and interpretations of the social world. Through continually adjusting, being flexible and reflecting upon the position and role of the researcher and the field of study (discussed in more detail later in this chapter), the cultural turn in researching policy has allowed the creation of alternative readings, experiences, theories and descriptions of social thought and behaviour (Denzin *et al*, (Eds), 1998; Woods *et al*, 2006, Goodwin, 1998 and Marsden and Murdoch, 1995).

The researcher has therefore become an active participant in the world around them, rather than merely “receiving knowledge” (Steedman in Steier, 1991:61). The researcher is the “builder of the world” (ibid:61) acting on alternative psychologies and epistemologies and producing multiple hermeneutics. The question is, then, how to methodologically approach building worlds in geo-political research. The sociologist James Coleman wrote that there is no single set of methods that can be deployed (in Denzin *et al*, 1998). Coleman’s suggestion raises two key points; first, having no set of comprehensive research methodologies requires the researcher to experiment and create or adapt existing methods to suit their investigation; and second, if researching policy is not limited to a set of basic methods, researchers are granted the freedom to ‘go it alone’ to suit the context of their study (ibid; Smith, 1991).

According to Lefebvre (1991), the study of scale explores categories such as environment, place, spatial, temporal and cultural aspects which “interactively make the geographies we live in and study” (Howitt, 1998 in Marston, 2000:221). Examining policy through the lens of scale can therefore uncover these geographies to investigate how social practices are shaped at varying levels (MacLeod, 1999, 2001; MacLeod and

Goodwin, 1999 and Paasi, 2004). Studies into scale by Giddens (1984), Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003) and Thrift (1996), for example, have examined change in integrated and relational approaches to governing, difference in the role and impact of power, and the unevenness of relations between and within scales (see also Leyshon and Tickell, 1994; MacLeod and Jones, 2001). Further, geo-political studies at a local scale using structural analysis, such as that conducted by Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003), MacLeod (1998) and Neumann (2010), have investigated the interconnectedness between scales and actors, and the political ecology and shifting power relations which govern their behaviour. In drawing on individual narratives and assembling them into a collective discourse, concepts of regionalism (MacLeod and Jones, 2001), unevenness (Paasi, 1991; Gregory, 2000), and a continuing “(re)constitution” (Swyngedouw, 2007:141) of power can therefore be informed.

From the above discussion it is clear that context and the way in which the research field, participants, events and data are contextualised are, according to Steedman (in Steier, 1991: 54), of great importance in building worlds: “it is the context that interacts with the objects of observation to produce the elements we endow with meaning”. It can be concluded, then, that context, adaptation of methods and flexibility in approach are important elements in drawing together participant’s experiences to inform a discourse. This discourse provides an account of lived experience, of human behaviour and of a reality of itself. To understand lived experience, I have deployed a range of ethnographic methods to draw out data from participants in order to investigate Localism.

## **Producing a Framework of Study**

My framework for studying Localism falls broadly within constructivism (see Steier, 1991; Morgan, 2001) which suggests that conducting social research is a co-operative process. Engaging in this “reality-constructive activity” (Ravn, 1987, in Steier, 1991:106) enabled me to interrogate the theoretical points of inquiry (for example scale, power, unevenness and space) of this thesis using participant’s accounts of lived experience. As Localism is an approach centred upon the citizen and community, it appeared correct to try to include participants from central and local government, communities, individuals and stakeholders, for example organisations in the voluntary and community sector. Adopting a constructivist framework allows an investigation of Localism through the use of a range of methods (described in more detail later in this chapter) to investigate individual perceptions, interpretations and effects of Localism across space and time (May and Thrift, 2001; Massey, Allen and Sarre, 1999).

This study is part funded by Cornwall Council and the University of Exeter as an exercise in exploring and providing greater understanding and best practice in Localism, as a mode of governance, across the county. To supervise this investigation I was granted three supervisors, two from the University of Exeter and one from Cornwall Council, to support both the University and local authority aspects to the study. My supervisor at the council secured a desk for me at Cornwall Council’s headquarters at County Hall in Truro where I was given space within the One Cornwall office. This office housed the local government officers tasked with strategising and overseeing the transition of Cornwall County Council into a unitary authority and ensuring Localism was embedded into every day local government practice. Working from this central local government location gave me access to Cornwall County councillors, local government officers and allowed me to understand the organisation the

authority, and the idealisations of how a unitary Cornwall Council would operate. This time allowed me to determine who were and would be the key actors in embedding Localism in Cornwall and the roles of local councillors, council officers and other stakeholders. This let me develop an understanding of who I would approach within the council for interviews, allowed me to observe the behaviour and actions of those involved in the One Cornwall project at the Council to help inform how Localism was perceived and understood at this level.

To investigate Localism within communities, I began by selecting study areas around Cornwall to provide a range of data which I hoped would produce an understanding of difference across the county. I then engaged in preliminary conversations with potential participants in each of my three study areas. These groups consisted of individuals in communities, Cornwall Council councillors, Cornwall Council employees, and members of the voluntary and community organisations in Cornwall, local Members of Parliament, members of the Cornwall Council Chief Executive Board and community support workers and organisers in the county. In engaging with participants I began to build rapport and understand what their role might be in Cornwall Council's ideas for Localism in the county.

In switching to a unitary authority, the concept of the Community Network Areas meant that engagement and participation would be done differently to the historical practice in the county. The District Councils were to be abolished: these were the 'second tier' in a two tier system (where Cornwall County Council was the first tier) and closest to the community. The District Council was the visible presence of the local authority in each of the six districts in Cornwall. The District Councils were responsible for housing, planning, taxation and parks, for example, plus engaging residents in local decision-making. The eradication of these and implementation of Community Network Areas meant a change to the structure of governing and engaging with the local

authority at community level. Within the Community Networks a Localism Team was put into place (see Figure 4.1 on page 123) and the remit that was assigned to District Councils was transferred to the unitary Council (such as planning and taxation). The Network Areas were then the site for Localism to be put into action through the efficacy of the Localism Team under the direction of the Network Manager. In making contact with the Cornwall Council officers who had been signalled to me as potential Network Managers or members of Localism Teams at an early stage (before transition to the unitary authority), I was able to build relationships and get an idea for how Localism, in theory and practice, was envisaged.

I then moved on to analyse primary texts such as policy and records to examine the rhetoric of Localism, governmental beliefs and attitudes as pathways to idealisations of, and for, Localism. This process allowed me to begin to sketch out idealisations for Localism from both government and community, using my own interpretation of the literature presented. I then began to explore, through conducting interviews and observation, how the implementation of Localism was envisaged by participants; how it was to be structured locally, how power relations played a role in this implementation, and how this actually occurred in communities. I visited each area on three occasions over the course of eighteen months to gather data. Using a phased approach in this way (repeating visits to try to re-interview the same participants) let me assess changes to Localism over time and distinguish differences in the geographies of implementing Localism and engaging residents. In analysing Localism throughout the life of this study, using the texts, data and understandings collected from my three study areas I began to build a picture of participants' visions for Localism, how these materialised (or not) and the effects of implementation on their lives, thinking, behaviour and attitudes towards local governance. At the end of the fieldwork I brought the data together and began to index common issues, themes, trends and peculiarities. This evaluation phase

allowed analysis of power networks and relations, an identification of (l)ocalism and where and how communities and government had been affected by Localism over space and time.

Finally, I constructed a fuller writing of Localism in Cornwall by assessing the feasibility of the policy using data from Localism projects, local and central government practices and the roles of the community and stakeholders in Localism. This phase permitted an evaluation of the extent to which Localism is geographically dependent, whether it could be transplanted into other communities, in other counties and where the common pitfalls and drawbacks throughout the stages of strategic design, local interpretation, implementation and outcome lay. This phase was “where the scientific part of the project [was] most manifest: the attempted generalisations of the lessons learned may be considered (social-) scientific knowledge” (Ravn, 1987 in Steier, 1991:109).

This study on Localism required the participation of policy-makers, government employees and those tasked with designing and implementing Localism at a strategic level. I term these participants ‘elites’ to signify their role in the policy-making, interpretation and implementation phases. The next section will provide more detail about my approach to researching political elites.

### **Researching Political Elites**

In this study, ‘elites’ refers to political elites in a position of power, or to provide a more exact definition: those who hold certain positions in policy processes, such as the local government Chief Executive or a Member of Parliament, able to alter the course, interpretation and implementation of policy. Ethnographic approaches to

researching elites, such as interviewing, permit an exploration of strategic power (see for example Jones *et al*, 2004; Hertting, 2009; Parker, 2007; Cloke and Jones, 2001 and Cloke *et al*, 2000). In extending previous ethnographic analyses of elite involvement in policy-making and implementation, this approach focuses on impact and assessment of government agendas (see Goodwin and Painter, 1996; Murdoch, 2005; Kearns, 1998; Murdoch and Marsden, 1995), and political and social adaptation to new modes of governing (Jones *et al*, 2010; Pykett *et al*, 2010; North, 2011). Researching elites “is not the same as studying the mass population” (Moyser and Wagstaffe 1987:22) as greater attention needs to be paid to the reflexivity and positionality of the researcher because of the power assigned to the elite’s position and remit (see later section on *Reflexivity and Positionality* for further discussion).

In this research I found that identifying elites and gathering data from them was challenging for three reasons: first, the role of the elite is sometimes unclear which confused my understanding of their responsibilities and position in the policy-making process. To overcome this I constructed my own definition of elites (as already described) to enable an identification of elites significant to the formulation and implementation of Localism on both a national and local scale. The second challenge I faced was in accessing elites because of the demands on their time. Although Ostrader (1995:135) notes that such problems have been “exaggerated”, throughout the study, and given the challenging political conditions this research was conducted under<sup>14</sup>, I found that ensuring adequate time for interviews was sometimes difficult. Further, on occasion I was only allowed partial access to interviewees which often resulted in partial data gathering or a need to return to the participant to obtain more information.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A volatile political and economic period and a restructured local authority.

<sup>15</sup> i.e. a short meeting, an interview whilst at another meeting, or a telephone interview; see Cochrane, 1996 in Woods, 1997.

The third and final challenge I encountered was in asking questions of the elite's "back region" (de Laine, 2000:79): their decision-making rationality, personal perspectives, experiences and visions for the future. In asking these questions I entered into a new power dynamic between myself as researcher and seeking to hold the dominant position in the interview process, and the elite also vying for this role. As noted by Ostrader (1995), the researcher has little option other than to assume the subordinate position whilst interviewing, as without doing so could restrict the collection of data. In recognising the power of the elite<sup>16</sup>, and in assessing my own positionality and reflexivity, I allowed the elite this dominant role to try to draw out as rich data as possible and attempt to create and maintain a consistent, respectful relationship. These three challenges to researching elites thus caused me to reflect on my own reflexivity and positionality in the field as a whole, which I will now discuss in more detail, beginning with my approach to entering the field.

### **Reflexivity and Positionality: Entering the Field**

Reflexivity is the act of "reflecting on ourselves" (May and Thrift, 2001:44) and necessitates a recognition of "the practice of research, our place within it and the construction of our fields of inquiry" (ibid:44). Gergen and Gergen (1991) note that "there is no means of achieving an observer-free picture of nature" (in Steier, 1991:76), meaning that the characterisations and observations of the researcher play a large role in the collection, interpretation and analysis of data. Being reflexively aware is recognising these characterisations. Greenbank (2003:796) suggests that to be reflexive in research, when entering the field three crucial factors should be considered: 1) the values of both the researcher and the participants; 2) the morals of the researcher and the participant; 3)

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<sup>16</sup> Evident in their role, knowledge and exclusivity.

the personal interests of the researcher as they have the ability to alter both the data outcomes and analytical process (see also British Educational Research Association: [www.bera.ac.uk](http://www.bera.ac.uk)).

Being reflexive, to Holliday (2002:53, 60), means that the researcher should be receptive towards the values of the participant. The researcher should then be ready to enter into conversation which could alter any preconceived ideas or directions of the study so the “...outcome of research [does] not appear to be a prejudgement arrived at without due examination”. Cloke *et al* (2004:32) also note that awareness of “the composition of pre-constructed data” in addition to “self-constructed data” (ibid:32) requires considerable evaluation in ethnographic studies. Cloke *et al* note that regardless of pre-planning, “the ethnographer is always implicated in his critique through his self-conscious interactions with a particular group of subjects” (ibid:32). Being aware of my position in the research, my educational and working background in British and international politics<sup>17</sup>, and my previous lines of work in journalism and public policy, allowed me to identify where my expectations and preconceptions for the research lay. With these considerations in mind, I now turn to discuss my reflexivity and positionality in the field.

### **Reflexivity and Positionality in the Field**

When collecting data in the field from local organisations, stakeholders and members of local communities, being reflexively aware of my position, my approach, my language, tone, familiarity and empathy with interviewees enabled me to build a greater rapport with participants. Becoming familiar with the local geography, places of

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<sup>17</sup> I obtained my Masters (Scots) in American Studies and International Relations and I have previously worked for the Scottish Government and United States Congress.

interest, issues and concerns often brought me closer in conversational terms to members of communities. Similarly, before interviewing or observation, familiarising myself with the needs of local stakeholders in Localism, and the role of local organisations in helping structure and implement Localism, provided a basis for common discursive ground. I ensured I was open to learning about the interviewee, their role and responsibility in the community, and their expectations of themselves and others. Engaging in this practice allowed me to empathise with the participant, of their visions for their community, but moreover, it allowed me an insight into their behaviour and thought processes. Being reflexive in my approach to gathering data from participants provided me with detailed, rich and sometimes very personal accounts, all of which improve the quality of the data presented in this thesis and the legitimacy of this research's recommendations.

Similar to being reflexively aware, the positionality of the researcher is also critical to the interpretation and contextualisation of data (see Greenbank, 2003; Holliday, 2002; Cloke *et al*, 2004). Particularly because I was working within the political arena and the potential for bias, it was important that I remained nonpartisan and aware of my positionality throughout the data gathering, analytical and interpretation processes. In being reflexively aware of my own position in the research and my potential influences on the study, I was able to be “self-critical about what [I] enable[d] to be seen and [I] might also occlude” (Cloke *et al*, 2004:30). With my approach to reflexivity and positionality in mind, I now move on to discuss the methods I employed for data collection.

## **Data Collection**

### **Study Areas**

In selecting study areas across Cornwall I was able to gather data in order to reflect difference in Localism across scale, geography and time. Using study areas has not been widely used in political, geographical and sociological studies between the 1960s and 1980s because of the focus on quantitative research methods (discussed above, see also Pires, 1982:17; Hamel *et al*, 1993). In recent years, however, social science research has begun to reintroduce using specific study areas as a valuable mode of conducting geographical studies (see for example Curry, 2009; Edwards, 2008). Despite Rose's (1991) argument that choosing specific areas in which to extract data are not representative, Yin (1985:21) asserts that this approach enables the researcher to "expand and generalise theories". It is clear that a single case study conducted within defined spatial-temporal boundaries cannot provide accurate generalisations for other areas. However, in carefully selecting multiple study areas, choosing vantage points from which politics, culture, behaviour and thought can be accessed "in its least altered form" (Miner, 1939 in *ibid*:24), generalisations and trends can be identified. In selecting more than one study area for comparative purposes, the legitimacy of representativeness and more opportunities to produce norms and patterns can be identified.

In his study of the transfer of powers in planning, Tewdwr-Jones (1998) used two case study examples to examine data taken from mid-Wales. Through comparison, he showed both of his case study localities would benefit from one simple course of political action, thus Tewdwr-Jones reflected not only accounts of lived-experience but examples of shared solutions. Similarly, Welch (2002) also used case studies to explore the legitimacy of rural local government and was able to compare findings to show how local governments engage with governance in different ways. Following Welsh and

Tewdwr-Jones, my use of gathering data from specific areas in this research permitted bounded, linear studies of lived-experience at the scales at which decision-making and implementation take place.

Using similar formats to Curry, (2009), Clarke (2009) and Tewdwr-Jones (1998) for creating comparative studies, I selected three study areas in Cornwall which could provide data on the basis of their differentiation. The political division of the county into three main areas, East, Mid and West Cornwall, and further into nineteen Community Network Areas (described in the introductory chapter) provided me with ready-made localities to study. I selected one Network Area from each of the three main areas of Cornwall using local and central government profiles and surveys as a guide. This information provided statistical accounts of difference. For example, Cornwall Council's *Area Profiles* ([www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)) and the UK central government's *Total Place Survey* ([www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)) presented data reflecting areas of poverty, crime, prosperity, land and home ownership, population change and active citizenship. I will now discuss in more detail my selected study areas.

Looking firstly at East Cornwall, I selected the Community Network Area of Bodmin because of its rurality and, in accordance with Cornwall Council survey data, has a high number of people living in agriculturally active villages (1589 households).<sup>18</sup>

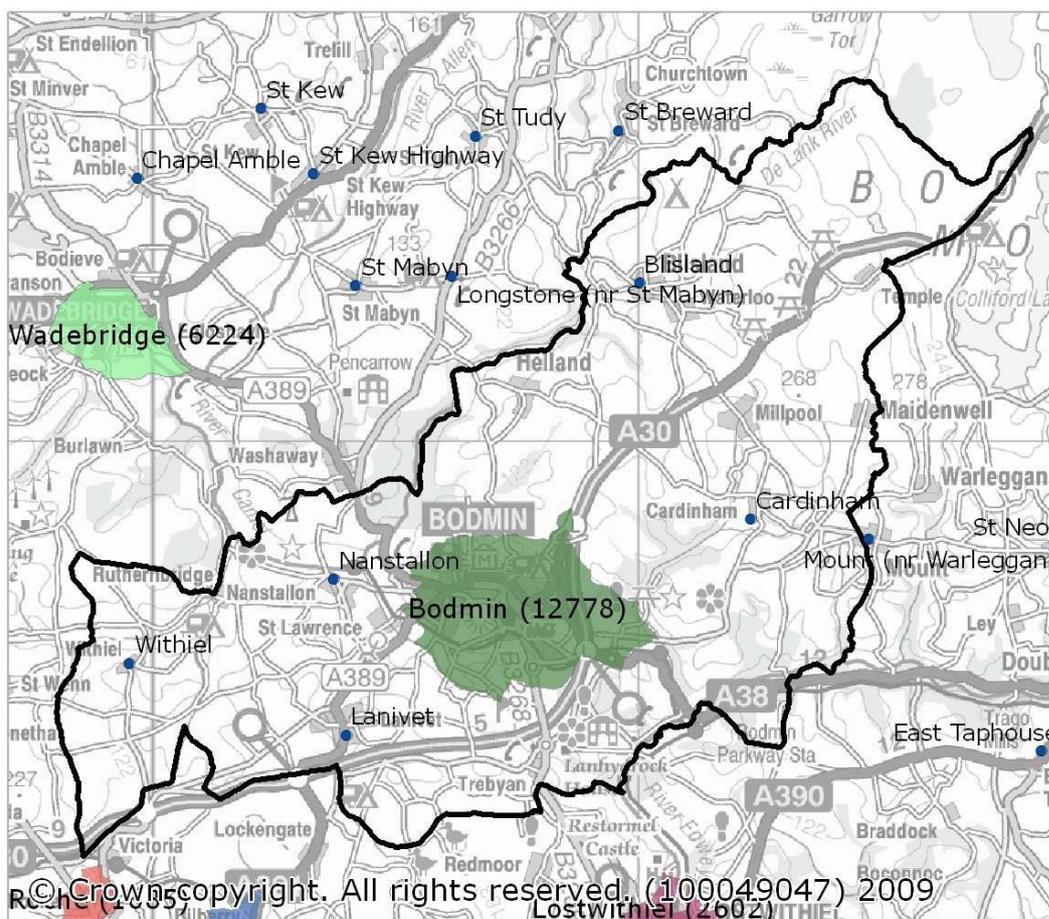
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<sup>18</sup> Data taken from Cornwall Council Community Network Area Profiles: Truro and the Roseland, Penzance and Bodmin, [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk).

**Study Area 1: Bodmin Community Network Area, East Cornwall**



Map Source: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)



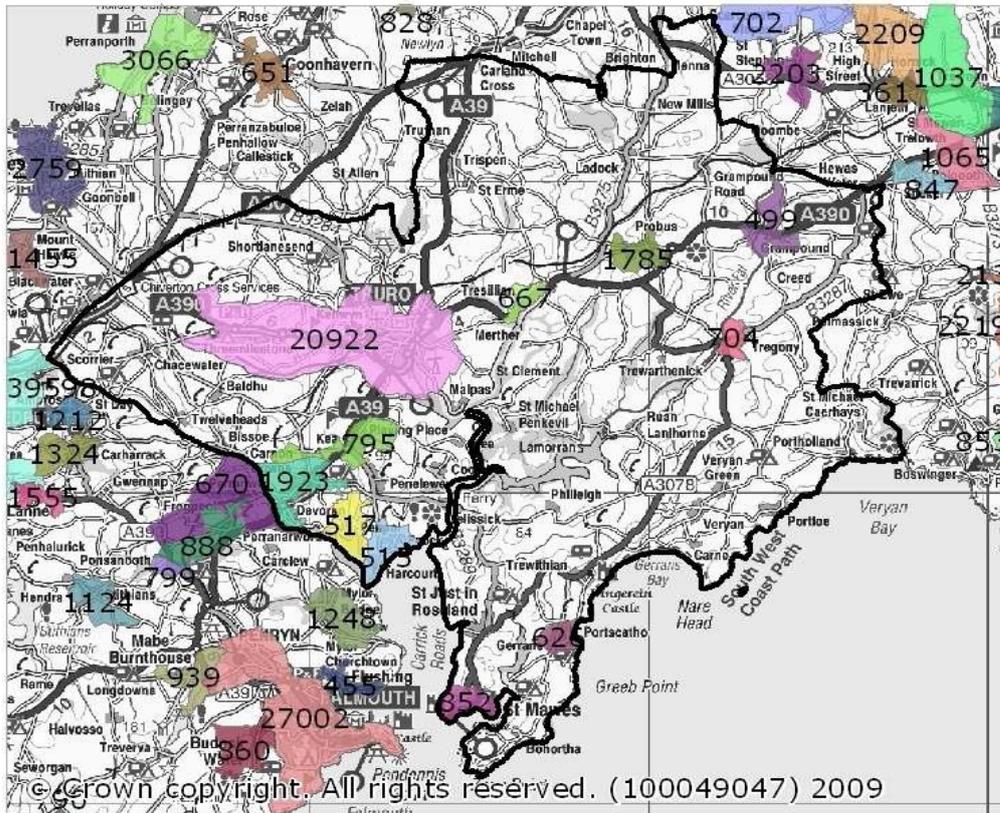
Map Source: Cornwall Council Community Network Profiles, [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

**Figure 3.1**

**Study Area 2: Truro and the Roseland Community Network Area, Mid Cornwall**



Map Source: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)



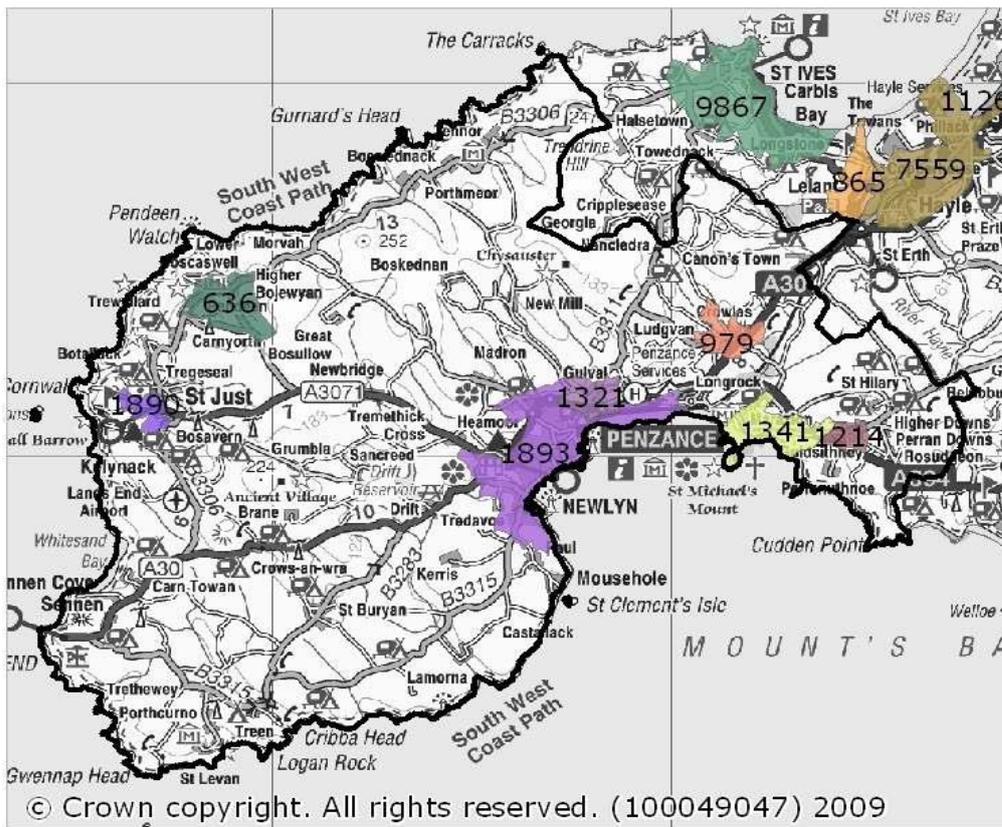
Map Source: Cornwall Council Community Network Profiles, [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

**Figure 3.2**

**Study Area 3: Penzance Community Network Area, West Cornwall**



Map Source: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)



Map Source: Cornwall Council Community Network Profiles, [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

**Figure 3.3**

In Mid-Cornwall I selected a second Network Area as Truro and the Roseland because of its mix of urban (Truro, the county's only city) and rural (the Roseland Peninsula), its high population density (44,300), a high number of households in suburban comfort (3145 households being defined as "older, financially secure families living in suburbia" (ibid), and a high number of wealthy village dwellers (2147 households defined as "well off commuters and retired people living in attractive rural environments accessible to towns" (ibid). Finally in West Cornwall, I chose the West Penwith Network Area because of its high percentage of low-income estates (2553 households) and large number of elderly people living on low incomes (1478 households; ibid; see Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 for study area maps).

The Network Areas, as politically-drawn locales encompassing towns, villages and their hinterlands, are each managed by a Council appointed Network Manager and their team of community support workers and community organisers. This aggregation of staff is the local strategic level of decision-makers. Operating within these Network Areas are also town and parish councils, local businesses and organisations, voluntary and community organisations and local service providers. In selecting Network Areas to study I was therefore presented with a 'ready-made', bounded, local structure of governance and a collective of local actors. When gathering data, I spent a total of three months, at three-monthly intervals, in each study area over the course of eighteen months (see Figure 3.4). In the next section I will discuss my chosen methods for data collection in these areas.

### Area Study Visitation Timetable

| Study Area                 | Date Visited  | Date Visited | Date Visited   |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Bodmin                     | March 2009    | May 2009     | September 2009 |
| Truro and the<br>Roseland  | January 2009  | June 2009    | October 2009   |
| Penzance (West<br>Penwith) | February 2009 | July 2009    | November 2009  |

**Figure 3.4**

### **Methods for Data Collection**

In this section I discuss in more detail the methods I selected for this research, based upon the theoretical points of inquiry for this study at three distinct levels:

- 1) **Strategic level** (central and local government) rationality, behaviour, decision-making, power relations, networks and the exercise of top-down controls on Localism;
- 2) **Local level** (Cornwall Council employees, local bodies and organisations) rationale, behaviour, power relations, networks, interpretation, control, attitude, decision-making;

- 3) The role of **communities and individuals** in Localism, the transfer of power to communities, publics and individuals, how power can be exercised from the bottom-up through Localism.

I did not research the strategic level, the local level and the role of communities and individuals in Localism separately but instead conducted the study as a whole using the same methodological techniques to gather empirical data. The methods I used were as follows:

- a) **Interviews:** 42 semi-formal interviews (with additional repeat interviews shown in Figure 3.5) over three phases conducted with Members of Parliament, members of Cornwall Council Executive, member of Cornwall Council, Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks, Voluntary and Community Organisations operating in Cornwall, Cornwall Council employees, Community Workers. 22 informal interviews with members of studied communities.
  
- b) **Observation:** observations of 38 participants over three phases in multiple settings such as a focus group in Penzance, a community group's (Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change (CN4C)) quarterly meeting to discuss priorities and networking; residents association meetings; Cornwall Council Community Network Manager meetings, Town and Parish Council meetings, Community Action Group office setting and Cornwall Council employees in office settings.

**c) Records, Documents, Written and Broadcast Material Analysis:**

analysis was conducted throughout the study of policy, central government recommendations, consultations, think tank publications, local newspaper coverage, local political commentary and local news items.

Each of these methods will now be discussed in turn.

### **Interviews**

Oakley (1981) was one of the first sociologists to provide a grounded account of the fundamental differences between interview styles. She drew comparisons between a scientific, positivist style of interviewing and a relationship approach based upon the rapport and trust between the researcher and researched. The positivist style focused on detachment and objectivity, and the establishing of a friendship between researcher and participant. Both styles allow the researcher to lay the framework for the tone of the interview and determine the on-going relationship between participant and interviewer. Yet the relationship approach allows interviewees to become equal partners in a conversation and provides an opportunity for shared understanding to emerge. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998:36), “this personalisation of the interview makes it a potential agent of social change, where new identities and new definitions of problematic situations are created, discussed and experimented with”. In a study of rural governance in the Scottish Highlands, MacKinnon (2002) used a relationship-based approach to his interviews. Doing so drew out narratives as lived-experience and allowed greater understanding of government relationships with communities and local state agencies. It is clear, therefore, that the use of interviews to investigate local

government, elected officials and the community are a powerful means of accessing narratives to expose claims to truth, knowledge, ideals, aspirations and discord (Fish, 2004).

**Table Showing Interviews and Observations Conducted**

| <b>Participant</b>   | <b>Interviewed</b> | <b>Observed</b> |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Cornwall Council Employees</b>  | <b>9 (4)</b>       | <b>6</b>        |
| <b>Community Network<br/>Managers</b>  | <b>7 (4)</b>       | <b>4</b>        |
| <b>Cornwall Council Executive<br/>Members</b>  | <b>2 (2)</b>       | <b>1</b>        |
| <b>Cornwall Council elected<br/>Members and Town and<br/>Parish Council Councillors<br/>and Clerks</b> | <b>7 (3)</b>       | <b>4</b>        |
| <b>Voluntary and Community<br/>Sector</b>  | <b>9</b>           | <b>3</b>        |
| <b>Community<br/>Regeneration/Organisation<br/>Officers</b>  | <b>3 (2)</b>       | <b>3</b>        |
| <b>Local Community Support<br/>Police Officers</b>   | <b>3 (1)</b>       | <b>1</b>        |
| <b>Members of the Community</b>  | <b>22</b>          | <b>15</b>       |

|                              |   |           |
|------------------------------|---|-----------|
| <b>Members of Parliament</b> | <b>2</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>64 (16 repeat interviews with same participants)</b> | <b>38</b> |

*Repeat interviews shown in brackets.*

**Figure 3.5**

The structure of my interviews followed a semi-structured style to allow me to ask specific questions following the key literatures and points of inquiry significant to this study.<sup>19</sup> Conversation and further questions then led from these core points of inquiry.

Using a relationship-based approach to interviewing, I encouraged participants to reflect upon their own views or feelings of Localism, and the relationship between the topic and their lifestyle and experiences. I found that doing so allowed the participant to steer the interview process to a degree, elaborate on certain issues, allow me to question further, and create a conversational tone to the interview.

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<sup>19</sup> For example, the location and shifting of power, strategic intervention, the impact of multiple interpretations of Localism and the effects of government rationality on communities.

As Woods (P., 2006:36) notes, “a great deal of qualitative material comes from talking with people whether it be through formal interviews or casual conversations”. The interview cannot therefore be considered a “neutral tool” (ibid:36), however. As the interviewer constructs the situation, the context and reality of questions and answers are provided in this framework. The interview can, therefore, become a situation which is influenced by the researcher and their personal characteristics. The interview process thus carries many pitfalls. For example, in the participant’s unwillingness to be interviewed despite prior agreement, their suspicions regarding ‘why’ investigate Localism, suspicions that I was auditing their position or role, and their use of me as a councillor or therapist. I took many steps to try to minimise these problems, for example in nudging the conversation back to the field of questioning, securing the participant’s consent for interview in advance of the interview and briefing them fully on my topic of investigation, the nature of the study and that the intellectual property lay with my University, not the local authority.

Reflexivity featured heavily in my interview process, especially when gathering data in communities. I approached these interviews informally, in speech and dress, to attempt to put participants at ease. Ostrader (1995) argues that the researcher should maintain a business-like persona throughout the interview process but I found that in certain situations, being informal created a greater connection and trust with the participants. De Laine (2002:67) states that trust is an important factor in the interview process as the more the participant trusts the interviewer, the more likely the collection of rich data and to enter into the ‘back region’, a concept I will discuss further in the next section on observation.

## Observation

Observing participants in a natural situation, at a meeting, in a discussion or whilst at their desk, for example, allows the collection of data “about the social world” (Denzin *et al*, 1998:37). For this study I employed two types of observation: participant-observer and non-participant observation. The participant-observer technique lets the researcher “engage in appropriate activities for the situation, while simultaneously observing people, activities and physical aspects of the situation” (Spradley, 1980:54 in de Laine, 2000:39). This method of data gathering has the capacity to allow the researcher to enter the participant’s back-region to play a role in the group or situation, and try to build confidence, trust and rapport with the participant. Being a participant-observer requires the researcher to “access the group’s [or participant’s] interpretive framework” (de Laine, 2000:39) in order to communicate with them. This then allows a “staging the self” (ibid:38) and creates a behavioural script. Koonings (2004) used the participant-observer technique in his study into participatory budgeting in Brazil to show the effects of democratic engagement on citizen’s daily lives. Similarly, Coaffee and Johnston (2005) found that adopting the method of participant-observer furthered their investigation modernisation through new Localism in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

Non-participant observation is also a useful tool in studying a participant’s front region to explore power relations. Cloke *et al* (2000) used non-participant observation in their work into partnership and policy networks in rural local governance to show how new forms of local partnerships impact homelessness. Following Cloke *et al*, in this study, I employed non-participant observation in situations where my participation was not required (for example, town and parish council meetings, Communities and Local Government Committee meetings (Westminster) and Civic Society Meetings). Non-participant observation let me explore the entirety of the situation. I was able to

reflect on body language, tone, those who were present and those who were not, age and gender ratios, a participant's behaviour and attitude towards other participants, cultural or historical references and the overall performance of the event or situation.

Using both participant-observer and non-participant observation allowed me to explore key aspects of Localism in the rationale and behaviour in formal and informal decision-making and discussion situations. In attending meetings of town and parish councils, Cornwall Council's Community Network Managers, voluntary and community groups and community gatherings, such as Truro Civic Society, I was able to investigate both the front and back regions, or the public space and private space, of participants' thinking, behaviour, interactions and decision-making.

I conducted my observation within the three research phases by attending as many meetings held by and organised for stakeholders of Localism as possible in order to give some chronology and structure to the data and try to emphasise changes and differences in participant behaviour, attitude and responses over time. I adopted the participant-observer technique in my data collection when in scenarios which called for my role to be made public. For example, in a meeting of the Community Network Managers I was introduced by my supervisor within the council to allow those present to understand why I was in attendance. During this meeting I was able to observe the rationale and behaviour of the Network Managers, but also engage with them on the reasons behind their decision-making, their personal perspectives, to enable me to work with them on practical tasks to identify moments and processes of individual decision-making, and try to grasp the nature of Localism at this local government managerial level. I also used participant-observation whilst attending a Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change (CN4C) meeting. Using my physical access to participants at the meeting as social access (see Lee, 1993:133 in de Laine, 2000), I was able to observe CN4C members, their interactions with each other, and their behaviour and attitude towards

Cornwall Council officials at the meeting (Network Managers and Community Regeneration Officers) in conversation, body language and when recounting their personal experiences and visions for community development.

I recorded my observation in field journals and noted down participant's body language, tone, the general feel of the situation and how interpreted what they said or did. An example of my field notes is as follows, reflecting on a focus group I had held in the West Penwith area:

Great bunch. Took a while to warm up but really got going, using the church (as a meeting venue and to gather participants) works. They seemed to want to talk and were glad of the opportunity. Told me I "speak English". Perhaps clear that communication not working well here, residents not knowing/understanding about transition (to a unitary authority).

Another example details my impression of a Cornwall Council Manager tasked with communicating and implementing Localism:

...A large but gentle man, softly spoken, perhaps in his later 50s. Impression that he has the knowledge but perhaps not the drive or determination. His communication needs to be better.

Observational methods carry some drawbacks, however, especially in areas of privacy, validity and reliability (Denzin *et al*, 1998). Using observational methods creates issues of invading the participant's privacy and conducting clandestine research.

Denzin *et al* (1998) note that observational methods have been discussed at length by Institutional Review Boards with a view to limiting the amount of disguised observation that can be undertaken by researchers. One mode of overcoming these problems is to introduce a code of ethics, as I have exercised, into the data collection process to commit to “caring [and] trust” (ibid:37).

Participant-observation can also leave the researcher vulnerable, feeling what de Laine (2000:39) calls “culturally incompetent” in performing their role as part of the group. I found that to avoid this, I first adopted a non-participant observer role to conduct a preliminary observational assessment of participants. Using on-going access (throughout the day or in follow-up observation) to the group or participants, I gradually integrated and thus reduced my mistakes, or cultural incompetency. As a “learner” (ibid:39) in these socio-cultural situations I wanted to avoid hindering the development of, or breeching, trust between myself and participants. In approaching situations and environments slowly and maintaining my role as participant-observer I was able to minimise mistakes. I now move on to discussing my approach to gathering data through texts and broadcast material.

### **Gathering Data through Records, Documents, Written and Broadcast Material**

Texts do not possess meaning, it is the reading and (re-)writing of texts that create and assign meaning. According to Denzin *et al* (1998:111), meanings are always “socially embedded” and part of an “exercise of storytelling” (Fish, 2004:40) situated in the context of the research and the researcher themselves. For this study, the interpretation of “mute evidence” (Denzin *et al*, 1998:110), such as texts, presented a challenge because they were, more often than not, “separated across space and time from its author, producer and user” (ibid:110). The texts I use in this study consist of

both records<sup>20</sup> as “full state technolog[ies] of power” (ibid:111), and documents<sup>21</sup> which can be seen as “personal technolog[ies]” (ibid:111). Records are fairly straightforward in terms of reading, understanding and analysing, however documents need a greater amount of interpretation, and for that interpretation to be contextualised.

Jones *et al* (2004) drew upon additional sources of data such as policy and government recommendations in their study into devolution and the production of new territories in the UK. Jones *et al* found that these sources provided a supportive and contextual role in constructing a discourse of devolution and served as a useful tool in corroborating or questioning field data. My exploration of the opinions and visions of government (through texts such as central government Policy, White and Green Papers, research documents, consultations, recommendations and summaries) let me identify trending language, ways of phrasing Localism, governmental views, aspirations for local power and governance, and government approaches to inviting local participation. These texts also allowed me to draw out a discourse of responsibility and accountability, and how government has discursively structured the channels of decision-making in Localism.

Publications from voluntary and community organisations, such as *Volunteer Cornwall*, *Bodmin Town Council* and other local stakeholders in Cornwall<sup>22</sup> enabled me to identify five key aspects of the implementation of Localism in communities: first, common issues within local governance; second, where perceived areas of need and deprivation lay; third, how non-governmental groups envisaged greater local governance and joint-working with government in new inter-scalar networks of power; fourth, the role of the community in Localism; and finally, how local stakeholders

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<sup>20</sup> For example policy, central government recommendations, minutes from Cornwall Council or Town and Parish Council meetings, financial records for Localism projects and voting records.

<sup>21</sup> Such as letters from residents to local government, my own written recorded data from meetings and observations and memorandums from Cornwall Council’s Chief Executive and other widely distributed staff information.

<sup>22</sup> For example ‘Totally Truro’, a business improvement organisation.

anticipated new roles and levels of responsibility and accountability in local decision-making.

Gathering information from material culture, such as the local press in the form of newspapers, local radio and television news and current affairs programmes, also provided a source of additional document and broadcast data. The *West Briton*, BBC Radio Cornwall, the *Politics Show South West* and local BBC and ITV news bulletins. These sources have provided, throughout the course of this study, broader discussion, wider national recognition of issues facing the South West in terms of local democracy and Localism, and local news items relating to Localism projects in Cornwall. These materials fall under ‘media logic’ which “confounds experienced reality with the artifices of the media” (Denzin *et al*, 1998:259). This information formed largely representational and communicative accounts which are, again, dependent upon the context in which they were written or expressed, and the context in which I interpreted them. Denzin *et al* (1998:258) note that material culture possesses outer-layer relationships with “narratives and underlying codes” which can then be used to interpret data. However, the wealth of narratives and codes in existence are endless, making the interpretation of the “meaning of a story problematic” (ibid:258). These texts contain multiple alternative meanings and can also be read in multiple alternative ways. This presents a key hermeneutic problem, or “a crisis of representation” (Denzin *et al*, 1998:258), which will be discussed further in the next section on data analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

The collection of data using different methods, from different actors at different scales, requires an examination of what is important to each scale. Actions, aims, information required and the questions asked determine how policy is formed, who

participates in its formulation and its envisaged outcomes. In order to examine data Huberman and Miles (2002) posit that questions of context, diagnosis, evaluation and strategy require addressing, as shown in Figure 3.6 (see also Foucault, 1972; Derrida, 1998 [1967]). The type of qualitative methods used in this study have produced data which is “invariably unstructured and unwieldy” (Huberman and Miles, 2002:309). This is because of the constructivist practice of data collection and analysis I have employed to “create[...], through a set of interpretive practices, the materials and evidence [which is then] theoretically analyse[d]” (de Laine, 2000:38).

*Contextual: Identifying the form and nature of what exists*

e.g. What are the dimensions of attitudes or perceptions that are held?

What is the nature of people’s experiences?

What needs does the population of the study have?

What elements operate within a system?

*Diagnostic: Examining the reasons for or causes of what exists*

e.g. What factors underlie particular attitudes or perceptions?

Why are decision or actions taken, or not taken?

Why do particular needs arise?

Why are services or programmes not being used?

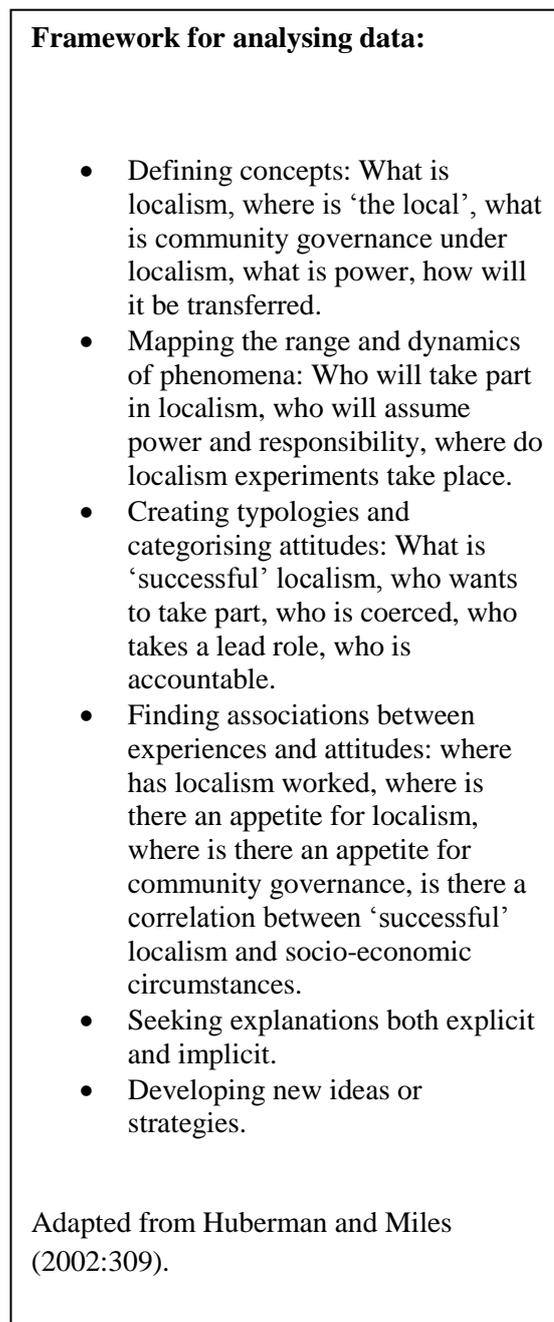
*Evaluative: Appraising the effectiveness of what exists*

e.g. How are objectives achieved?

What affects the successful delivery of programmes or services?

**Figure 3.6**

The discourse which I present in this study is an example of text in “microform” (Huberman and Miles, 2002:309), which essentially attempts to encapsulate lived experience (Foucault, 1972). The data therefore has to be transformed into a structure that provides meaning to the research. I did this using the following framework presented by Huberman and Miles (2002).



**Figure 3.7**

After data was collected around these frameworks and I had completed interview and observation transcriptions, I was able to identify thematic trends to conceptualise and index the material and begin to sort it into issues and topics. These themes brought into focus the interconnectedness of the data. During this indexing phase of the research I ensured that the core theoretical points of inquiry of this study were woven into the analytical frameworks. Within these core themes, indexes of patterns, connectivity and disparity began to emerge which required me to make “judgements as to the meaning and significance of the data” (Huberman and Miles, 2002:316) taking into account the varying contexts of the data itself.

This analytical process was interpretative, subjective and experimental in my attempts to construct understandings of Localism in Cornwall. As noted by Woods (1997:115), “if qualitative research is experiential, then it is the experiences of the researcher, not the subject which are dominant”. These experiences are transferred through interpretations which are “custom-built, revised and choreographed” (Denzin *et al*, 1998:185), but are not strict in their design. With these loose designs of interpretation, and a consequence of deploying structuralist modes of investigation, multiple hermeneutics emerged, or rather, a hermeneutic problem was exposed whereby Localism was transformed by the narratives into something else by design, materiality or approach at each scale of investigation. According to Steier (1991:191) the researcher should be aware of the problem of multiple hermeneutics and create a “hermeneutic spiral which moves dialectally through possible interpretations moving out and beyond”. This then creates the scope to widen understanding and not close off interpretations before they have been fully considered. Through creating a hermeneutic spiral I was able to engage in examining the reciprocity of what “exists as objects and relations” (ibid:193), and explore what I and the participants in this study provided contextually for the interpretation process. I conducted the analytical phase of this study

iteratively in order to continually revise my interpretations using new data to place emphasis on or introduce new patterns or topics, or corroborate existing interpretations and understandings. The next section of this chapter will discuss the ethical framework I adopted for this research which flowed throughout each stage of the data collection and analytical processes of this study.

## **Ethics**

The construction of ethics in research is necessary so as not to cause harm to participants. The ethical decisions I took for this research fell into two categories: ethics of the research; and research ethics. Examining firstly the ethics of research, I begin here with ethical considerations surrounding participants. The participants of this study were over the age of eighteen, all were given full briefings about the project, its structure and intended outcomes, and all were given the opportunity to opt-out of the study at any time. Turning now to ethics of research in the field, the nature of this project and its investigation of Localism under Cornwall Council meant that being ‘in the field’ (in council buildings and with local government employees) did not pose any ethical dilemmas. I undertook no clandestine recording and was open and honest about my presence. The original proposal for this research, submitted in 2008, was part-structured by Cornwall Council and the project is also part-funded by them. The ethics of research can therefore be dismissed quite readily.

My research ethics required greater consideration, however, especially regarding data inclusion and omission. “Ethical dilemmas are defined as situations in which there is no ‘right’ decision, only a decision that is ‘more right’” (Hill, Glaser and Harden, 1995:19, in de Laine, 2000). The ambiguity of what constitutes a ‘more right decision’ led me to follow Rose (1994) in employing a code of ethics. These ethics allowed me to

weave both common sense and moral responsibility into each stage of this study. I achieved this by integrating three ethical steps into this research regarding data:

First, this research allowed me considerable access to participant's back regions, exposing, at times, very private material and knowledge (see de Laine, 2000).

Participants all engaged in open disclosure, that is, they participated in open and frank discussions which I recorded. Once I was in possession of data I knew to be sensitive, I ensured it was embargoed until my analytical and writing stages. It was here that I entered into a situation of beneficence and non-maleficence: I needed to make decisions on omission and inclusion taking into consideration the dilemma of "for the greater good" and "to do no harm" (in de Laine, 2000:136; see also Hill, Glaser and Harden, 1995). Second, to make these decisions I frequently adopted "the role of the other" (de Laine, 2000:136) to enable an evaluation of the significance of the data in the research and possible consequences of its release from the vantage point (as best as possible) of the participant. In some cases, the ethical implications of presenting such detail in this thesis may have had too great an effect on the participant's lives, therefore this detail was omitted.

Third and finally, participants in this research were all granted anonymity but those with job roles and remits central to the study of Localism, such as Cornwall Council's Chief Executive, are named. Naming participants, with their consent granted at the beginning of interviews, provides a contextual framework for reading and interpreting the data and allows this thesis to have the depth and scope of information required of an academic inquiry. However, whilst gathering data, if I was asked to switch off recording equipment or not note down information, I did so without question. None of these accounts have been used in this study. Taking these steps ensured, as much as possible, that ethical considerations were integrated into the research at all

times. I close this chapter with a discussion of my reflexivity and positionality in leaving the field of study.

### **Reflexivity and Positionality: Leaving the Field**

It is first important to reiterate that this study took place at a time of significant upheaval in central government (the general election in 2010), local government in Cornwall (becoming a unitary authority), and alongside a recession. These events meant that the jobs and roles of Cornwall Council employees were subject to change. I therefore had to employ a significant degree of reflexivity to ensure that data collection could still be undertaken.

A major issue I encountered frequently was the loss of a field of research. It is, after all, the actor who creates the field of study. The turnover of staff and changing roles of Cornwall Council employees required me to act quickly to find a replacement 'field'. In those instances where I was left without a participant, I located the person who had either assumed the previous participant's job role or someone with the closest remit and responsibility. As these incidences began to occur more frequently as the study progressed, I worked hard to create rapport with new participants as swiftly as possible.

Coming to the end of the field work, I began to structure my approach to leaving the field. Taylor (1991:238 in de Laine, 2000:141) notes that once the fieldwork has finished and the researcher moves away from the field and participants, it is right to have concerns about the "social, political and ethical implications of ethnography and fieldwork". De Laine asserts that the researcher has a responsibility to the ongoing relations with participants, as well as the relationships already established.

Whilst in the field, especially in small communities and when researching town and parish councils, I built friendships within these close-knit groups. The rapport I created with participants allowed me to obtain significant data, and doing so I believe has made this research richer, deeper and opened pathways for further study (see chapter eight). I felt it was important therefore to maintain these friendships, as much as possible, through providing update accounts every six months detailing my analytical and writing processes. In a sense, because of the close relations I had built with some participants, and following Taylor's (1991) own observations of his feelings towards his participants, I felt indebted to those who participated in the study. Similarly, and owing to the nature of this research, I felt a growing sense that I wanted to do a justice and service to communities and individuals in Cornwall who strive for greater autonomy and freedom in determining the futurity of their communities. I was concerned that my departure from the field would, as highlighted by de Laine (2000:142), "create feelings of disappointment and even feelings of betrayal and exploitation". It was therefore of great ethical significance to me to try to minimise these reactions which I attempted to do so by upholding contact.

The relationships I built with political elites were less close than those with community members. This was largely a result of the formal nature of my interaction with this group, the environments in which we met and the power dynamic between me as the 'subordinate researcher' and them as the 'dominant elite' (as discussed above). Despite having less emotional ties to this group of participants, I decided it would be prudent to try to maintain relationships in case I required follow-up information or clarification, for them to get in touch to talk about the study and its direction, or ask any questions about publication and dissemination. I did this in the same way as with members of communities, through email updates regarding the progress of the project at

six-monthly intervals. Having discussed my approach to researching Localism, I now close this chapter with concluding points.

## **Conclusion**

My approach to researching Localism has been structured for this study to allow an investigation of the strategy, scale and practice of Localism in Cornwall. My framework for data gathering provided me with an opportunity to use an iterative, ethnographic approach to engage in “an exercise of storytelling” (Fish, 2004:40). Creating these spatial stories has allowed my exploration of the disjointed, complex, contingent and never complete nature of Localism. Yet conducting this investigation has not been without its problems.

As already noted in this chapter, this research took place during a politically and economically volatile period where Cornwall Council underwent major changes to reconfigure its staffing and financial structure to meet demands for cost-saving. This study was also conducted as the two-tier Cornwall County Council was dissolved into a unitary ‘Cornwall Council’, a change in the structure of local government as a result of local elections, and a change in national government with the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. These major shifts have impacted this research through the removal of certain job posts at a local government level (i.e. the Head of Localism), the merging of departments or remits, the turnover of staff working at Cornwall Council, and a change in rhetoric and meaning from Labour’s ‘Localism’ to the Conservative’s ‘Big Society’.

The loss of participants as a result of staff restructuring at Cornwall Council, the fluctuations of governmental interest in Localism, and the hermeneutic problems I

encountered when analysing data, thus posed real and difficult challenges in this study. Similarly, in interviewing elites and issues of self-styled elites, time constraints and investigating their 'back region', were also problematic but gave me cause to reflect on my own reflexivity and positionality in the field. Doing so permitted me to construct alternative approaches, be flexible in my framework of study, and recognise my own preconceptions and beliefs throughout the data collection and analytical phases of this project.

This study has allowed some critical insights to be unearthed. Approaching the study in phases and using case studies have, I believe, provided rich data which interrogates assumptions of power dynamics, local governance and policy formation, interpretation and implementation over space and time. The chapters which follow are constructed around my own personal interpretations and analysis of the data I have collected. Based on my contextual understandings and the way in which I construct social realities for the data, the following should be considered as one of many possible interpretations of the material.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Localism: Strategising New Governance**

#### **Introduction**

The intention throughout this thesis is to examine the development of new governance through Localism. This chapter analyses the beginnings of Labour's *new* Localism in Cornwall, specifically the transition to a unitary authority and modes of embedding mechanisms to ensure local governance is at the centre of its early operations. In this chapter I bring to light the early tensions and concerns surrounding Localism as a top-down initiative by central government seeking to elicit bottom-up governing. I make two arguments in this chapter: the first is that the restructuring of local government in Cornwall to a unitary authority has created rigid centre-local relations in and through a hierarchical network. This activity has stifled the freedom and flexibilities and embedded a top-down Localism unable to be moulded to suit specific local need in the county. The second argument I make is that the co-ordination of governance by central government, and resultant centralisation of power, has ensured that dominant relations of control remain, and it is these which interrupt the practical application of strategies for Localism by local leaders in the county. What becomes apparent from the empirical evidence is that strategically, there is more of a focus on a top-down agenda for Localism and reliance upon Third Way ideology. What appears to be lacking are practical strategies for Localism to be mobilised from the bottom-up, adapted to specific community need and methods to tailor participation and engagement strategies for local residents. In what follows, I uncover the dominance of regulatory frameworks in governmental strategies for Localism and how, in striving to meet central government aims, both local government and community commitment to Localism stall. I expose in this chapter the moments of interruption in Localism which prevents

practical strategies emerging and instead maintains an overarching ideological agenda. The call to reorganise local government to accommodate formal Localism, and of the creation of a network of actors bound together by central government, permit the steering of Localism from the centre.

As explained earlier, Labour's promotional materials for Localism, the documents, policies, speeches and press releases, championed a central ideology: increased local autonomy, the transfer of budgets to local authorities, the emergence of local leaders, a reduction in central government intervention and greater public engagement in policy and decision-making. A powerful discourse of Localism emerged and combined with regionalism and a reformation of local government structures, called upon local authorities to integrate greater joint-working into service and engagement plans. This approach necessitated a (re)structuring of local and central partnerships to enable decision-making and agenda setting to be devolved to local people. To facilitate this reorganisation, power also had to be redistributed to filter down the formal authority for governance from central government to local government and communities.

Ideologically, Localism intends upon fluid power relations. However, as described in the existing literature on Localism, *power to*, that is the transfer of the power of governance from government to the local, appears to have been interrupted (Giddens, 1984; Dewey, [1916] 1966). Pykett *et al* (2011) suggest that it is through a dominant discourse of Localism and strategic lines of conduct that local governance has become governmentalised (Foucault, 1991). Drawing on the theoretical literature outlined in chapter three of this thesis, in this chapter I engage with Foucault's concept of governmentality, or the mentality of government, to explore the technologies and rationalities of governmental discourse on Localism. Foucault's understandings provide a lens through which to examine government thought, practice, ideas on power-sharing

and devolved governance, and the roles central government expects those engaged in Localism to play. The data I present in this chapter has been collected from areas across Cornwall in the first two phases of my field research, in 2008 and 2009. I use this chapter to present what McKee (2009) calls a narrative of ‘realist governmentality’ through Localism. To further McKee’s (2009) inquiry of analysing the discursive effects of Localism, I begin here with an examination of the development of the rhetoric of Localism and how it transformed local government in Cornwall.

### **Steps Towards Institutional Change: The Rhetoric of Localism**

As discussed earlier in this thesis, it was the *Skeffington Report* in 1969 which brought to light a political awareness of the advantages that involving the public in decision-making could yield. The promise of local involvement in governance resonated with successive governments but it was not until Labour’s second term and the advent of Labour’s ‘new Localism’ that significant change in government thinking and strategic design began to be communicated on a wider scale to the citizenry. Mawson and Spencer (1995), Tomaney (2002) and Stoker (2004) have explored the impact of rhetoric in the translation of governmental aims through strategic policy. They argue, alongside John *et al* (2009), that central government discourse on Localism provided enough momentum for change at the level of local government: indeed it was primarily through discourse that the network of governing, discussed above, was created through Localism. However, it is the inherent power dynamics of this discourse, the top-down manner in which Localism is presented and the dominance of central government over local operations which I argue create moments of interruption to the circle of Localism. In using a dominant rhetoric, Localism becomes a top-down agenda for governing, not a ‘strategic framework’ to elicit bottom-up governance.

## A Top-Down Rhetoric

Following the advice of central government as presented in the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (2006), in 2007 Cornwall County Council lodged an application to become a unitary authority, known then as ‘One Cornwall’, following this strategy for institutional change from central government.<sup>23</sup> Cornwall’s Bid documents echoed central government’s criteria for becoming a unitary authority and presented a strategy for a change in the structure of the council, of governance and of the operations of the local authority. Demonstrating how the authority could restructure their two-tiered system to meet central drivers for enhanced governing structures and stronger service delivery, Cornwall Council set out to showcase their methods of “serving the citizen”, “enhancing accountability”, “providing cost-effective services” and “increasing the role of partnership working” (*Parts One, Two and Three: One Cornwall, One Council*, Cornwall County Council, January 2007) through a unitary authority structure. The Bid outlined a “new framework for governance” (ibid, *Part One:4*) in Cornwall, stating:

It is not envisaged that this council will take the form of a traditional authority... the council will exercise leadership and oversee ‘unified’ governance in the county, focusing its attentions on the commissioning of key services and facilitating partnerships to identify local needs and oversee local delivery (Part One: Our proposal for a Single Council for Cornwall, Cornwall County Council, January 2007:29).

This framework placed a special emphasis on the benefits that embedding Localism in local government operations could have for the county. In particular, the

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<sup>23</sup> Invitation shown in the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, (DCLG, 2006).

local authority sought to reflect how greater democracy, encouraging and empowering communities, and providing cost-effective solutions to service delivery, could effect a change in the culture of self-governance in Cornwall. Cornwall County Council thus began to follow central government's strategy for internal restructuring in an attempt to "make services more locally accountable, devolve[e] more power to local communities and, in the process, [attempt to] forg[e] a modern relationship between the state, citizens and services" (Speech by Alan Milburn MP "*Localism: The need for a new settlement*", DEMOS seminar, 21 January 2004).

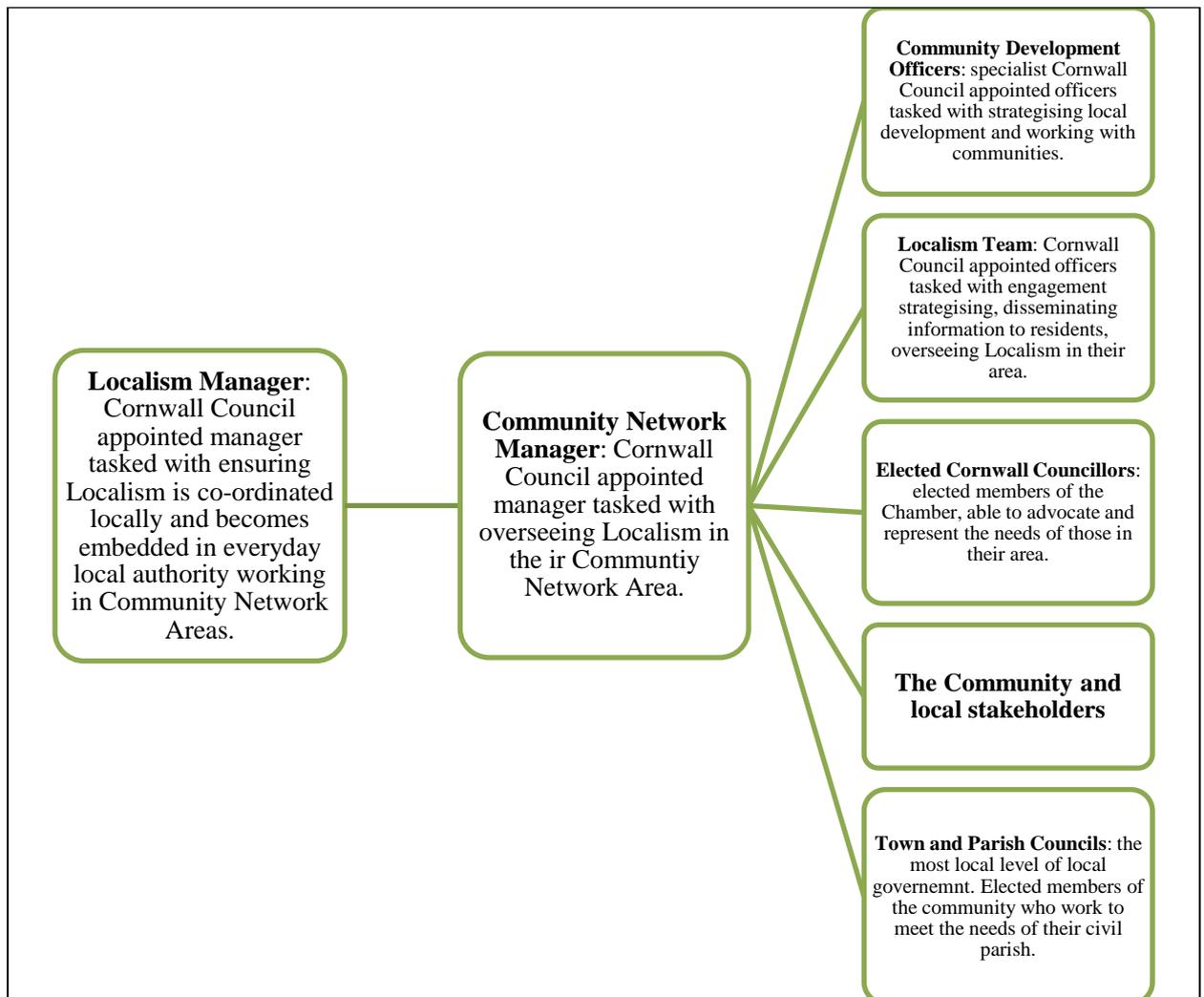
A new structure of community engagement was to be developed in Cornwall with the development of Community Network Areas where partnerships would be created between the local authority and communities and new modes of joint-working could be embedded. The Bid envisaged the division of the county into 21 Network Areas (later to be reduced to 19) created to serve as areal bounded sites drawn around towns, villages and their hinterlands. This process sectioned the county into smaller, more manageable areas for governing. Each Network Area was to be led by a Network Manager: a council appointed officer assigned a managerial and leadership role to co-ordinate community development, engagement, service delivery, information dissemination, economic development, environmental issues, community planning, regeneration, conservation, community safety and transport and highway issues ([www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)). Working with the Network Manager in each Area was to be a team of council employees tasked to support their work. In addition, specialists, such as community regeneration facilitators, were to be integrated into, and sometimes shared between, Networks. The task of this Network 'team' was to perform Localism, supported by the new Cornwall Council itself and local elected Members who represent and advocate for constituents within their ward (see Figure 4.1).

The new structure for governance in the unitary authority also called for a change in the role and working of elected Council Members. This role stipulated that they and Cornwall Council officers would work side-by-side, engage in open lines of communication, share decision-making and powers of governing and actively encourage local participation in governing. In addition, the *One Cornwall* proposal stipulated a new role for the unitary authority itself as commissioner, in much the same way that central government had redefined its role as *enabler* in establishing institutional change for Localism.

However, achieving change in local government in Cornwall was problematic. In late 2006 the local authority launched a county-wide consultation on moving to unitary status. In June 2007 the County Council noted that “a representative sample of Cornwall’s residents [were consulted] by Ipsos MORI in accordance with Market Research Society guidelines and a series of focus groups were run by the Combined Universities in Cornwall” (Cornwall County Council, Agenda 10.2, June 2007). In addition, the local authority distributed leaflets to local residents, consulted with local stakeholders (housing associations, the Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Local Councils, etc.) and the then District Councils: Caradon, Carrick, Kerrier, Penwith, Restormel and North Cornwall.

The press representation of the consultation was resoundingly negative, noting that that “eighty-one per cent of those polled in [the districts of] Caradon, Carrick, Kerrier and Penwith [...] registered an overwhelming vote of no confidence in the proposal” (ibid). In a formal meeting of the County Council, the Chief Executive rebuked this claim, noting that “[i]n fact, only 22% of those polled voted to oppose the One Cornwall proposal; 73% of those polled did not express an opinion either way” (ibid).

## The Structure of Governing in the Community Network Area



**Figure 4.1**

In justification of the negative media response, the council also stated that:

An assessment of the poll result must also be seen in the context of the methodology that was adopted. It is common knowledge in the market research sector that postal self-selection surveys are a less robust methodology than face-to-face or telephone surveys. In face-to-face and telephone interviews the profile of achieved interviews can be more effectively monitored, which increases confidence that the respondents are

representative of the host population. There are no such guarantees with postal votes of the type conducted by the district councils. It is also the case that self-selection surveys tend to attract a disproportionately high response from those whose attitudes are more negative to the issue being researched (ibid).

Cornwall County Council thus faced the very real possibility that they would have to renege on the Bid to become a unitary authority. In an interview with a member of the public in Penzance one participant told me: “I voted against the unitary, we all did, 85% of Cornwall did but they still did it. How can you trust that?” (primary interview data, Penzance June 2009). Another said: “I voted but it doesn’t make any difference, does it?” (ibid).

Haubrich and Ritter (2000), Aragonès, Palfrey and Postlewaite (2005) and Alesina (1988) note that this type of situation reflects the contradictory and competing challenges that local authorities face when attempting to redesign decades old modes of operation. Reneging on the *One Cornwall* Bid may have resulted in a loss of integrity and public trust and at the time the local authority was already under considerable pressure from the public and central government for failings in services and poor economic performance. In a bid to avoid this situation, an option was presented to the sitting council to redesign the *One Cornwall* proposal and adopt the two-tier pathfinder mode of restructuring. The Chief Executive of Cornwall County Council criticised this idea, however, stating that:

- 1) [Central] government officials have stated on numerous occasions that, “...the status quo is not an option” and have suggested that areas that

retain a two-tier system of local government will, in the future, be required to deliver the same efficiencies as those areas that adopt unitary structures.

- 2) The Local Government Chronicle (LGC) reported that counties that predicted savings from unitary bids but later withdrew their plans could face financial penalties.
- 3) Without a unitary council for Cornwall it will be more difficult to make savings and efficiencies in back office and support services and duplication of management overheads. Duplication in the production of plans, strategies and financial statements will remain.
- 4) Cornwall has an excellent track record of delivering complex and challenging transformational projects.
- 5) Members may wish to consider whether withdrawing the proposal could adversely affect the reputation and standing of the authority and the favourable relationship that it has with its stakeholders and the Government.
- 6) The County Council's submission to CLG stated its ambition for the unification of public services in Cornwall and described its proposal as a significant step towards a more radical and ambitious model of 'regional' governance for Cornwall.
- 7) There has been a clear indication from government that unitary status could facilitate the devolution of responsibilities to Cornwall that are currently administered at the regional or national level<sup>24</sup> (ibid).

These seven points represent the reality of the Council's decision: reneging on the *One Cornwall* proposal could present very real, and somewhat difficult and embarrassing challenges for the local authority, not just locally but nationally. The decision was made by the Chief Executive, and arguably against popular opinion, that

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<sup>24</sup> Angela E. Smith (the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) stated in a Commons Debate on Cornwall Local Government Reform on 18th April 2007 that "...the unitary strategy for Cornwall might well enable that door to be opened and that discussion to happen".

the *One Cornwall* design should go ahead. In January of 2007 the *One Cornwall* proposals were submitted to central government and in March 2007 they were accepted.

In an interview with the One Cornwall Program Director, I asked him about tensions over Cornwall Council moving to a unitary authority and of convincing the District Councils that it would benefit them, he noted:

We made a case to government and I think [...]we set out a powerful case which was properly backed up by a financial [plan]. North Cornwall [District Council] were very strongly opposed to any change but we were able to convince government that change was in the best interest for Cornwall... I don't think we've convinced everybody now, [right now we're dealing] with the arguments 'for' and 'against' and some of the 'against' have some force. You have to make a judgement really at the end of the day and we did seek to, at one point, to see if we could get agreement for a single bid from Cornwall but we were never going to get that because the District Councils wanted to keep all their district members, they wanted to keep the membership and that couldn't be any part of our bid. Some of the District Councils took against the cause for what we had as Community Networks (primary interview data, March 2009).

Cornwall County Council thus had in place a structure for the new local authority, a new design for local governance and a new mode of engaging with local residents. Yet in October 2008, six months before transition to a unitary authority, this design was not viewed as robust or indeed workable by some council employees:

I'll be brutally honest, it's become far less about community and more about us and what's convenient for us and that was never the intention. Local

government, public institutions are not equipped to being flexible and trying to suggest to people that there should be different models for different areas is [hard]. Cornwall's a big area, big differences between different communities, but that's gone out the window from what I can see. I think we've collectively panicked because its unfamiliar territory, because it'll take quite a while to achieve, and put in what people are referring to as an 'interim approach', we're going to standardise things, the same model of approach, model of engagement in every community... and Network Managers are doing the same thing in every community and the problem with the interim approach is that they tend to become permanent and I'm sceptical that we'll be able to move beyond that (interview data, Cornwall Council employee part of the Localism implementation strategy team, October 2008).

Because of central government pushing us to engage more with communities people are going through a tick box scenario, but they're not thinking about following it up. They're not going to have time or resources to act on it. We've got to readdress the balance between engaging and reacting... I blame it partly on central government guidance (interview data, Cornwall Council employee working with the previous District Councils to prepare for a unitary authority, October, 2008).

Whilst situated in the One Cornwall office at County Hall in Truro, I made field notes on the mood and atmosphere in the office. In late 2008 there was a great degree of hesitancy amongst Cornwall Council employees about how the new local authority would integrate Localism. One officer within the office who's remit was community development told me she was upset because the Council's approach to community regeneration was to be part of strategies for 'economic development'. My notes read:

... [She's] not happy at all. Said there needs to be a focus on the community not on money. Thinks that the idea of Localism has been put aside. Might be some confusion?. [Another employee] said he thinks community regeneration will be coupled with area networks not economic development. It doesn't appear as though the message is clear. Two people in the same office have completely different information on what is to happen (field notes, October 2008).

It is clear that those working within Cornwall County Council leading up to the transition to a unitary authority held sincere doubts regarding how Localism could be achieved in the county. In particular, there was an understanding, as articulated by the One Cornwall Program Manager that Localism in Cornwall would become a top-down endeavour. He noted:

For me localism is ensuring that communities are individuals who live in places, and there are lots of different places in Cornwall, who are able to shape what happens to them in their communities and the resources that flow to them. The danger is that a new council is a top-down machine that decides at a high level where resources shall go and it's just pushed out of there. Whereas the effect of a strong localism agenda would be that there's influence from the locality (primary interview data, March 2009).

This 'danger' was echoed in an interview with a Cornwall Council Intelligence Officer who said: "I'm sceptical about the benefits that being a unitary authority will bring initially. I'm just not sure how we're going to make things happen. The frustration within the current Council about the new Council is evident" (primary interview data,

January 2009). Moreover, it is clear that there were concerns over the steering from central government to put in place a structure of governance that would not be suitable for the county. These concerns remained after transition to a unitary authority, as one community development officer situated in the Bodmin area of Cornwall noted in an interview:

Localism, what a task! It has been handled very badly. People don't know what's going to happen to parish councils, they (Cornwall Council) keep putting names to things – fluffy stuff . It's the nuts and bolts of the community which make the world go round (primary interview data, August 2009).

It is evident that the devolution of power to communities and the emergence of bottom-up governance are also being questioned. The above interviewee's views on the structure of the new authority, a strategic focus on local government, not communities, and the perceived inflexibility of new governing through Localism reflects a common perception of the centralisation of power. This was, as understood by the participants, taking place both at a central government level and within the local authority.

I turn here to explore what Foucault's ideas on governmentality lend this analysis. Foucault (1994:338) noted himself that the “governmentalisation of policy agendas seek to make government possible so that governmental action means that things work out for the best”. Labour's idea for Localism to be embedded in local government working, and for the redesign of governance at a local level to accommodate these changes, signal a process of *governing at a distance*. Governmental agendas to ensure Localism was part of local government working were impressed upon local authorities in a top-down fashion (through White Papers) whilst the discourse that

accompanied such changes championed local autonomy, self-governance and freedom from the auspices of government. These rationalities and techniques of government, or the *governmentality* of government, brings to light the machinations of power and power-sharing in Localism. Power is a key concept of governmentality because of its capacity to produce outcomes, in its ability to facilitate endeavours and in its capability of moulding subjectivities. Foucault (2004:307) noted:

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.

To explore power in more detail, in the next section I examine how a network of governance through Localism has emerged through a dominant discourse of Localism and governmentalisation of devolved governance.

### **Networked Governance**

I argue in this section that through Labour's Modernisation Agenda, communities, citizens, stakeholders, local government, local and regional bodies and organisations can be seen to have been pulled into a network of relations with central government. Although this process of aligning actors should allow for open and democratic engagement in decision-making, what this process achieved was to "establish and build subjectivities in and through which government programmes and strategies can be operationalised and implemented" (Raco, 2003:76). As I describe

using empirical evidence later in this chapter, for Localism, this network became a strategy of governmental control but one that was much more subtle than a diktat (Murdoch and Abram, 1998; (Rose and Miller, 1992; Bevir, 1999).

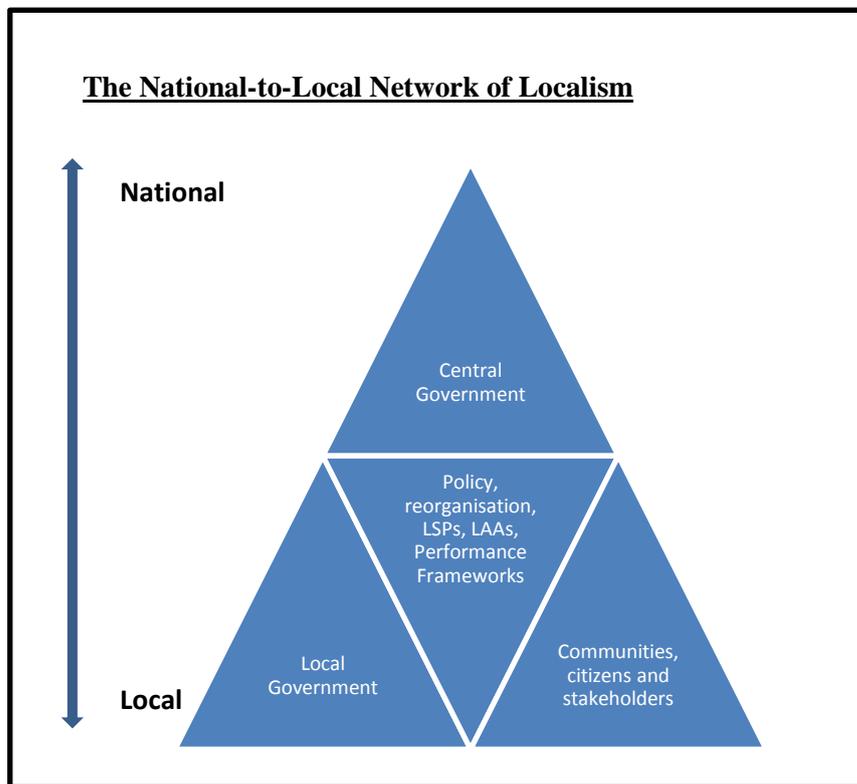


Figure 4.2

Through discourse, as a technology of governing, government is able to establish a hierarchy with central government steering development and behaviour through, as discussed, LSPs, CAAs, LAAs and numerous other frameworks for action and regulation. These strategies standardise, or normalise, behaviour, and ensure that each actor performs in a certain way. The performance of actors therefore aligns with governmental expectation and requirement.

The national-to-local network of Localism runs from the centre to the periphery; from central government to the citizen in the community. In analysing this network created it is first important to consider why and how communities and local government conform to central government ideas. It is through a social contract that government is

empowered in the voluntary trading of “autonomy for security” (Norman, 2010:93). The legitimacy of government then permits it to pass legislation for citizens, who are morally bound, to follow. According to Hobbes, authority is then the voluntary “choice of individuals” (ibid:94) through an “idealisation of a legal relationship between state and society” (ibid:94). Modern UK government does not presuppose that it can, in its activity, assume absolute power and today’s democratic approaches to governing have flexibility and democratic engagement for joint state-society policy-making discursively in-built. However, the social contract remains and willingly or unwillingly, the citizen relies upon government to create and enact policy, thus centre-local relations are maintained.

It is through the “dynamic temporality of discursive structures and their complex immersion in actual material places or spaces” (Murdoch, 2005:36-7) that a “variety of technologies of power” (Eldon *et al*, 2001:147) are exercised to create a network of governing through Localism. However, it is the way in which power relations are embedded and transported between actors that are the basis for network operation (Latour, 1987). It is therefore right to assume that it is a dominant central government rhetoric on Localism, engaging both local government and communities, deploying mandates, regulatory frameworks and standardised aims, that defines power relations.

The rhetoric of Localism is powerful and espouses joint-working and community empowerment, engaging with liberal democratic ideas for small government, greater community governance and autonomy. However once actors are engaged in the centre-to-local network, for government to assume control, normalisation needs to occur to co-ordinate activity. For Localism in Cornwall, normalisation could be seen in frameworks for local government reorganisation (into unitary or pathfinder authorities), specific targets for local governing and through rhetoric promising governing which is spatially motivated and structured to individual localities.

Although greater local autonomy is promised through Localism, it is clear that central government remains the convenor of the network governing Localism, and through forging a social contract, stays at the top of the governing hierarchy (see for example Lowndes, 2001; Cloke *et al*, 2000). It appears that the network is solidified around the dominant actor in Localism: central government. This pattern creates a “long narrow network... that make[s] possible the circulation of information” (Latour, 1987:167). The benefit of this type of network is that authority and power can be returned to the convenor of the network: central government. Essentially, the subordinate actors of the network allow central government to become powerful and then “simply disappear behind [its] greatness” (Murdoch, 2005:62).

The network resembles the strategic operation of Localism; the alignment of local government and stakeholder actors into a hierarchical, top-down policy-led, network. However this is what can be called ‘part one’ of the implementation of Localism, ‘part two’ is the performative side of embedding local governing: of engaging local actors, creating opportunities for participation and permitting the devolution of power and influence to the most local level. This performative side requires actors to enact Localism, put governmental rhetoric into practice and distribute power between composite actors. I now look to the theorisations of Giddens (1984) and Dewey (in Hildreth, 2009) to explore the concept of power further.

### **Power Sharing through Localism: July 2006 – April 2009**

Central government as a whole produces “policy, not services” (Wilson and Game, 2002:113). Through the powers of legislation central government determines who receives certain services, which will be provided and how they will be funded. This power of legislation therefore dictates the function and flow of influence hierarchically.

When we conceptualise power in Localism, central government can be seen to have pledged the devolution of governance to the local level, “to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives” (DCLG, 2006:4).

However as noted by Marsden *et al*, Murdoch and Abram and Wilson and Game (2002), the transfer of power at a local level is not fluid. Giddens (1984), viewed the human as the “active subject” (Layder, 1997:164) and power as a “dialectic of control” (ibid:166-169). He saw power as relational and recognised its ability to be held by many and transferred through “shift[ing] [the] balance of resources, altering the overall distribution of power” (Giddens, 1984:32). This conceptualisation echoed John Dewey, as already discussed, and his understanding of power as the “capacity to execute desired ends... [which] suggests intentionality and emphasises ‘power to’ rather than ‘power over’” (Hildreth, 2009:786). It is this ‘power to’ aspect that idealisations of Localism portray.

Following Dewey, the supposed shift in power from central government to local government to communities was to be exercised with a purpose in mind: to increase local governance; to be exercised expediently according to situations and need; and that there be no guarantees: power can be used and misused in a number of ways (see Allen, 2011). Localism thus emphasised *power to*, or the *empowerment of*, communities and the citizen. Yet as the accounts from those engaged in Localism in Cornwall reflect, power relations are not as fluid or flexible as Dewey and Giddens would have perhaps preferred. As Leach and Wilson (2002), Curry (2009) and others notes, in practice, governance, through discursive framing based around a set of political ideals, does not amount to egalitarian modes of governance. Theoretically, power through Localism was to be distributed between state and society but in practice, it appears that normalising discourse and government centralisation restrains this process.

The new structure of governance for Cornwall provided, on paper, an increasingly local approach to local governance with the proximity and amount of Network Areas and dedicated staff working across the county, yet at this early stage the concern over the practicalities of enacting Localism were evident. This scepticism can be attributed to three factors: first, as I have discussed, the lack of a clear strategy for performing Localism; second, the radical change the local authority was to endure after decades of operating under the same structure; and third, the hard-lined approach of central government surrounding Localism and the mandated requirement for local government to reorganise to accommodate increased local governance. The Chief Executive said of the early view on Localism when he took up his position at Cornwall Council in November 2008 that:

When I arrived there was a lot of talk about Localism but if you sat in a room with six different people they would all have their different definitions of what that is and they'd all be pretty woolly (interview data, October 2009).

Evident at this early stage were therefore cleavages in power relations: how the new authority would work with communities and citizens under the new authority, the confusion over what Localism means for Cornwall and how inclusive the Network Areas could be to ensure engagement opportunities were presented to citizens. Despite these misgivings, the *One Cornwall* proposal integrated joint-working into its rhetoric for Localism, absorbing much of central government's focus on modernising governance:

[The new local authority will] enable knowledge, skills, opinions and energy

of local people and their representatives to play an active part in building successful communities; bring[...] the council closer to the community and ensure that council services operate on the basis that working with local communities is a central part of their work; and, show[...] all parties – local councils, community groups, public bodies and private interests – that working together in partnership is the best way to do business and improve your area (Cornwall County Council, 2008).

It is clear that the dominant discourse of civic participation in governing was being fed by central government aspirations for the shape of the new local authority. This steering reflects Curry's (2009:231) research investigating the characteristics of the state "as co-ordinator and partner", as political structures emerge but are not fully understood by those tasked with their implementation (see also Kooiman, 2003; Fung and Wright, 2003). This, then, is the moment in which 'strategy' reverts to 'agenda', where idealisation overtakes practical application and devolution of power becomes interrupted.

Despite concerns, Cornwall County Council began to make Localism its own and began to construct a Localism Charter for the new council to elaborate on the proposed civic partnership in governance. The Charter was to serve as a wider structure to institutionally embed bottom-up governance using central government prescriptives.<sup>25</sup> The local authority stated that Localism:

...is about citizens having influence over and taking some responsibility for what happens in their area. It requires authorities to engage with residents to

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<sup>25</sup> The Charter as a whole document was not published in its entirety and instead remained in draft format with excerpts used in various other Cornwall Council publications such as the Draft Localism Handbook ([www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)).

improve their quality of life. It envisages a renewed interest in democratic participation, which in turn suggests the need for more investment into community engagement (Draft Localism Charter, Cornwall County Council, 2008:1).

The Charter reads:

...people [will] have more and better information about their local services and how their public authorities are performing, people [will have] the right to an answer when they put forward suggestions to their councils or ask for action, there [will be] more neighbourhood management available, more opportunities for communities to take on the management and ownership of local facilities and assets and more coordinated support for citizens and community groups to help them take advantage of empowerment opportunities (Draft Localism Charter, Cornwall Council, 2008:2).

The political overtones are explicit in the Charter, particularly in the above extract of promises of *greater civic opportunity for community management*. This discourse of passing responsibility and accountability to the citizen was one heavily emphasised by Labour but as Tomaney and Pike (2006) and Keating (2005:208) note, the concept of devolution is “notoriously loose... often used to hide critical questions about the balance of power”. Again what was clear in the Charter was that there were no concrete strategies of implementing Localism practically. Yet the emphasis on governing devolution attempted to allow central government to relinquish some of its local ‘burdens’, remove itself from the direct line of fire and promote civic inclusion, and a sense of autonomy governing and in local decision-making.

As suggested by Murdoch and Abram (1998), although the positional strengths of devolution and shifting power are in place, it is clear they have been designed to fulfil particular government objectives. The absence of a clear framework for the delivery of Localism in practice, reflected in the thoughts of those working at Cornwall County Council before transition to a unitary authority in April of 2009, show that local government and its institutional reform did little more than embed a framework for increased partnership with government. I turn here now to the months immediately after transition to a unitary authority (post-April 2009) to discuss how, in practice, new governing in the county progressed.

### **The New Unitary Authority**

The Community Network Areas began their operation in April 2009, firstly by bringing together, in partnership, local stakeholder actors. This process expanded the national-to-local network already in place and entrenching it deeper into the local level. It is through the extension of this network that the local authority sought to transform governance in Cornwall and allow it to be defined spatially in accordance with each Network Area's needs. The "cluster... of organisations connected... by resource dependencies". (Rhodes, 1997:37) represented a new form of network-based local governance through Labour's ideas of Third Way *new regionalism* (Keating, 1998). The powers of decision-making and priority-setting were to be shifted to these Network Areas to provide for local people greater opportunities to shape the future of their area. In addition, the Networks sought to increase accountability as decisions were to be made by local stakeholder participants. However, what I will show in this section is how government remained in control in setting responsibilities and remits. The depth and scope of power granted to these "new localised networks" (Cloke *et al*, 2000:112)

was determined by government and thus the practical responsibilities and capabilities of Community Network Areas were “dominated by the public sector which has the capacity and resources to devote to the task” (Tomaney and Pike, 2006:131). The result of this centralisation of power was a lack of co-ordination and support within Cornwall Council for the implementation of Localism, practically, within the county. What we can see emerging is, then, “a tension between strategic policy and local involvement” (Marsden and Murdoch, 1995:3), not least because of government centralisation but because of the establishment of new structures of governing through the Network Areas. One Network Manager noted in July 2009, four months after transition, that:

...Localism means nothing to [Cornwall Council]... it’s about the connection and flow of information [but if they] aren’t pushing out the message of localism, aren’t sticking to the same message, [can] something that’s not understood survive that process? I think what’s needed is a strong view of the future, for [the Cornwall Council Cabinet member for Community Safety and Neighbourhoods] and [the Head of Localism for Cornwall Council] to stand together and highlight what is going to be achieved and communicate the message. At the moment it rests on the strength of the Community Network team (interview data July, 2009).

Another Manager noted:

We need to be a little bit more articulate about where we’re going and show some sort of leadership but [the Head of Localism for Cornwall Council] hates plans. She’s said it. Where can you get without plans though? There needs to be some sort of structure. [The Area Network Manager for East

Cornwall is] not too active, plans need to be in place over the next two to three months but it's not realistic in saying that. Take the Active Partnering model, spent ages getting that together, the amount of work that went into it but now who leads on it? When or how can we get it moving? It describes really how we can work together in the future but we're not going to get there if we don't start it now. But who leads? Who takes on which roles? They're not telling us this so do we just go and do it, take the lead? Should we go and look for the nod? Go out there and ask for the nod? (interview data, July, 2009).

The emphasis of the Chief Executive of Cornwall Council was on the role of town and parish councils in Localism, but at these early stages, they too appeared distanced from and somewhat disillusioned with what Cornwall Council could provide through Localism. A Parish Council clerk noted:

[We thought] Localism would be the end of life as we know it. There's a rigidity in Cornwall Council... it's all different from when I started. People have an emotional attachment to the parish councils but politics hasn't worked for us, it's detracted from the 'local'... [the parish] could have achieved even more without Cornwall Council (Interview data, June 2009).

It is clear that those at this local level, the Parish Council watched and endured the centralisation of power by Cornwall Council and the retraction of their involvement in Localism activities. A local councillor of the same parish as the clerk stated:

Things aren't easy at the moment with the new Cornwall Council. There's difficulty in access to unelected bodies and everyone seems to be overstretched. At the Implementation Executive meeting [I attended] it got very heated. Residents used to work together and make an effort to get to know one another but that doesn't happen any longer. Community spirit is still felt ...but the local shop, post office and primary school have been lost over recent years.

The councillor's comments reflect the uneasy relationship with local government, perhaps as a result of the pressures of restructuring to a unitary authority. Further, this statement shows the reality of the loss of local amenities to small communities. Whilst attending a meeting of Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum (VCSF), I observed the interaction between different members of voluntary organisations in the county. The meeting was held in June of 2009 and what appeared to be of great concern was how the restructuring to a unitary authority would impact the voluntary sector. In my field notes I made the following observations:

In the general chat pre-meeting a man said to me "it's all a shambles, really" [about] the new unitary. He said that better (voluntary sector) partnership with Cornwall Council needs to happen. The questions I keep getting asked are if the voluntary sector is safe. Another man said that Cornwall Council "thinks they're doing everything right, they think they're communicating". There's a lot of tension here about Cornwall Council not recognising communities (primary observation data, June 2009).

The restructuring of governance, a new unitary local authority, a fracturing of the community and the loss of closeness amongst residents can be seen to be of great

concern to some in the voluntary sector in Cornwall. Localism relies on the unity and integration of communities to become engaged and participate in governing endeavours. Without this, greater effort to create cohesive communities is required, reliant on increasing resources.

Another Town Council clerk spoke of his concerns surrounding the dedication of Cornwall Council to Localism and the resources and importance the Town Council feels the local authority has for practically embedding Localism:

In the end all the conversations we have with [Cornwall Council on Localism] seem to come down to money. Who decides, them or us? ... We ultimately thought that we could help them deliver Localism as we know there are people who have expertise in the area but it might be that Cornwall Council are so busy in sorting out their internal structures that the localism team aren't able to convince people [...] that Localism should be a priority. Or, it could be that they see the majority of the 213 town and parish councils as not having the resources to deliver Localism or services. That then makes it easy for the Council to say that 'there's no appetite in the sector' [for Localism] and take it away ... Perhaps Cornwall Council is trying to marginalise [Localism]... maybe that's too Machiavellian? (interview data, July 2009).

The reticence of Cornwall Council at this stage to commit fully to Localism is therefore evident as articulated by different actors in different Network Areas. The concerns were that the local authority will renege on Localism, that it will not commit resources and time to ensuring that local residents are engaged and can participate in local governance and that Cornwall Council will monopolise the governing arena, undermining the roles of the town and parish council and thus being unable to deliver

for local residents what they want and require. Another Network Manager stated that he felt there was a lack of support from elected Members of Cornwall Council and an inability to communicate local need to the Council at all tiers:

I think for there to be a future for Localism there's got to be a blend of Member support, development of town and parish councils and articulation of community priorities. From there these elements can influence service plans and that could shape the longevity of Localism (interview data, July, 2009).

Although the redesign of Cornwall County Council into a unitary authority spearheaded Localism in its Bid to central government, as the new Cornwall Council progressed, it is clear that the original structure for Localism received less support from those at the very top of local government. This meant that further down the rungs of local governing, at the local councillor and town and parish council levels, practical approaches to Localism were not being put into action. This then marks another moment of interruption in the circle of Localism. As many within the local authority that I interviewed for this study noted, Localism became less about the practical nature of engaging local people in governance and was reduced to a concept that could be picked up and dropped at the discretion of the local authority.

The designated role of the Network Manager, as outlined in the Bid for unitary authority status, meant they were to act as local leaders in the community, bridging the gap between society and government. However, in an interview with a member of the voluntary sector in the county, there were concerns about the Network Areas and Managers:

The new Cornwall Council structure is bringing everyone into that (partnership) model so it's becoming for the VCS (voluntary and community sector). Organisations are needing to look at more than one Community Network where before, one group previously had one-to-one officer contact. Now after transition, that's completely gone (primary interview data, June 2009).

A framework for engaging with the voluntary and community sector in Network Areas was part of the Localism Agenda but it is clear that there were concerns over how individual organisations could play a role in the new council structure. There appears, then, a limited early capacity for Localism, engagement and participation, to be shaped by stakeholders from the bottom-up. These difficulties and concerns over the flow of power to stakeholders, communities and particularly the Network Manager reflects the top-down nature of Localism in this instance. The interruption in the flow of power to Network Managers did not escape the attention of Cornwall Council's Chief Executive. Indeed it appeared that he seemed to advocate it, in favour of greater focus on town and parish councils:

In my view that's not about a falsely created area like such and such community area... because they're not real. It's actually about parish and town councils because they are real... That may be inconvenient for the council because there's quite a lot of them but they are much more real than [19] artificially created areas by members or senior officers (interview data, August 2009).

However, as the interview extracts from a town and parish council clerk above attest, the Towns and Parish Councils were not granted or supported any more than the Network Areas. The Chief Executive continued:

I think there's a conflict around the management practicalities of setting a new organisation up and where localism fits into that, and I suppose if I was here six months earlier I would have dampened down expectations and taken things more slowly than the unitary organisation stuff did, it was too late to unpick that when I arrived (interview data, October 2009).

What is clear is that right from the very top of Cornwall Council, the legitimacy of the Network Areas and delivery of Localism were in question. Numerous studies have addressed the negative reception to radical change in local government, not least Stoker *et al's* (2003) research into the *Local Government Act* of 2000. The hesitancy of local authorities to alter local political leadership speaks directly not only to the reluctance of local government to share or devolve power but, as was expressed through public opinion in opposition to becoming a unitary authority, to the equivocation of Cornwall Council to restructure the local authority and local governance after so many years of a particular way of working. Scepticism around how increased local governance would emerge and how the new structure of governing would serve the county remained, and was articulated by a senior council employee in June, 2009:

There is a danger that we all talk about Localism, it's something we're all aware of but don't actually do anything about. It's a fairly big learning curve, there's a different way of doing things and I think across the authority ... their

understanding of Localism is different... it's not shared across the board  
(interview data, June 2009).

The practical application of Localism as a mode of governing did not, therefore, take off from a strong footing as a result of four main issues: first, the fractured understanding of what Localism meant to Cornwall Council and how it should be enacted. In an interview with a member of a county-wide charity based in Truro specialising in helping people to volunteer in their community, the representative noted: “it should be about real choices... real people who live in the community [but there appears to be a need to] control the amount of autonomy [given] to communities. The public sector believes they know what communities need” (primary interview data, September 2009). In the absence of commitment from actors such as the Chief Executive at the very top of the local authority meant that sufficient power, resources and support were not filtered down to the Network Managers, town and parish councils, and the citizen in the community. The politicisation of local governance and, largely mirroring central government's idealisation of Localism, can be partly to blame. As noted by one Cornwall Council officer:

I think the concept of community is perhaps even more ephemeral than the concept of Localism. Because we're a local authority I think we're in the fortunate position of being able to define what a community is, I think that's what we've done through the Community Networks... by drawing lines on a map and by us organising some stuff around it, that makes those areas real in some shape or form. Whether it's right or wrong and whether some people like it in a clinical or objective sense, there is now a reality around those Community Network Areas, there is a geography of community that means something from an administrative point of view (interview data, June 2009).

The community, and what the local authority could provide for the community, real or areal, can be seen to have driven Cornwall's new governing agenda. However, in this politicisation of the county, the real, tangible aspects of community governing appear to be all but forgotten at this early stage. Second, the imposition of formal structures of reorganisation in local government served to radically alter the institution of service provision, council operation, local governance and the geography of governing in the county. This radical overhaul meant a change in the operation of the entire local authority and its partners, a transformation many who had worked in local government for some time did not welcome, as will be discussed further in the next chapter. Third, reorganisation meant a change in the way Cornwall Council was run. It moved towards an "executive government [of operation,] constituting almost a revolution" (Wilson and Game, 2002:92) in local government. The move to a unitary authority meant that strategy and policy that was once defined seven times for the county, needed to be consolidated into one single approach for Cornwall. Fourth and finally, the disruption in power being channelled to local areas can be attributed to the lack of a strategic implementation plan to ensure that it could be put into practice and spatialised by Network Managers in charge of configuring Localism towards local need and priorities. Bringing these four issues together, the problems the Networks faced can be attributed to a singular predicament, that of the introduction of a top-down Localism: central and local government insisted upon a structure of Localism which allowed them to continue to govern at a distance.

These first few months after transition to a unitary authority proved difficult in terms of the new structure of governance and of the on-going practical commitment to Localism from those at the top tier of the local authority itself. What cannot be overlooked, however, are the overarching local and national challenges which impacted

local governance in Cornwall. First, as a result of the recession and austerity measures forced upon local government in England from 2009, budgets for local governing projects and pilots and for service delivery were severely restricted during this time. Second, because of the restructure of the political, service and employee structures within the local authority, the flux of staff, movement and dissolution of positions and change in the political make-up of Cornwall Council presented challenges in terms of manpower and agenda-setting. Third and finally, the local and central government political structures began to alter significantly. In Cornwall, local government moved from a Liberal Democratic-led Chamber to one of no overall control and an increase from 82 Members to 123. At a national level, the ruling Labour Party was beginning to lose credibility under Gordon Brown initiating preparation for a general election in 2010. These three factors also have to be considered as contributing entities to the stifled flow of power in Localism and the hesitant foundations of practical application of local governance.

## **Conclusion**

From the empirical data and discussion presented above, it is clear that a top-down structure of Localism was being presented to Cornwall. The overarching concepts of Localism and the Big Society present an opportunity for significant change in governance. Yet therein lie problems of how, and to what extent, communities are granted the ability to develop bottom-up governance and assume effective control of their area. This tension has brought to the fore issues of the true machinations of devolved power, democracy, relationships between state and society, governance and ideas of space and locality. I have discussed here two of the methods of embedding Localism that central government has deployed: through creating **networks of**

**governing** and of **discursively shifting power**. Both these methods have a governing mentality at their root; that is, they are mechanisms government has used to tie the local to central government and present a specific type of Localism in a top-down fashion to local government and communities.

It appears, therefore, that there has been a reliance on a top-down agenda for Localism. Further, there has been no clear universal understanding of what Localism is or how it should be enacted, and a disregard of the citizen and community, articulated as local confusion at the alteration of governance in the county: “Never heard of the Networks. Don’t know what they do. What are they there for?” (quote from a group discussion held in Penzance, June, 2009).

It is evident that as the local authority in Cornwall progressed to a unitary authority, the idealisation of Localism remained but practically it became complex, especially as commitment from the top of local government began to falter and there was a recognition that Localism would become a top-down endeavour. As Tomaney and Pike (2006:130) argue, “part of the attraction of devolution is that it appears to bring government closer to the people and open spaces for new actors to influence and shape the priorities of local... policy”. Engaging and securing institutional reform through rhetoric thus allowed the rethinking of democracy in Cornwall but only in terms of institutional change. The issues government faced, as described here in terms of austere financial hardship and political transformations at a central and local government level, allowed a space to be created for a new kind of politics to be “tested” (Tomaney and Pike, 2006:130; see also Humphrey and Shaw, 2004).

Through Localism, central government has been said to have exercised its “experiment with democracy” (Giddens, 1998:75) which presented endless possibilities for citizen engagement in local governance, but due to its largely top-down nature,

lacked means to exert a change in the practicalities of governing, through being sensitive to the specific geography of governance, in Cornwall. Localism therefore presents a “dilemma” (Tomaney and Pike, 2006:130) where the complexities of the reality of new governance are blurred by government attempts to foster bottom-up governing using top-down methods. Power to, or the empowerment of citizens through Localism, at these early stages, must therefore be seen as an outcome of top-down idealisations for Localism. The discourse of Localism exhibited by central and local government thus reflects dominant relations of power which could frame local governance (Eldon, 2001). This framing created a functioning network of governing but this network was, again, a top-down, strategic organisation of actors, aligned to deliver specific priorities of government.

For Cornwall, it is clear that in the Bid for the unitary authority that a network of governing dominated the shape of Localism. However as the transition to the new authority approached, cracks appeared when Cornwall Council employees began to consider how Localism could be delivered practically. This marked the first moment of interruption in Localism and of the reversion from ‘strategy’ to ‘agenda’. Further, as Localism began to take effect, the performative roles of Network Managers appeared to be disregarded by the local authority. This rejection by those high up in Cornwall Council of the practice of Localism in communities, of embedding and performing Localism, or merely supporting those tasked with doing so, marked a second moment of interruption and a further shift as a pattern of Localism, which appears and disappears in accordance with a jostle for power and control, began to emerge.

These moments thus began to undermine Localism in the county and the new structure of governance for Cornwall. Localism perhaps then has to be viewed in these early stages as steered by central government as a top-down agenda and as such, lacking in a practical grounding for the diffusion of power.

Sullivan (2001) and Morgan (2007) note that relations between local and central government, and communities, are likely to remain unbalanced. As a result, “local government funding, priority setting and performance assessment [will] all firmly [remain] in the hands of central government, leaving the local level anything but empowered” (2007:1247). With this statement in mind, in the next chapter I explore further the tensions between implementing a top-down structure of Localism to convene bottom-up governing. I investigate the role of scale in Localism through examining the interrelationships between actors tied into the network of governance in more detail. In particular, I use the next chapter to highlight the emergence and bearing of localism, with a small (l). I examine how historical, place-specific localism and the power of the local are able to better engage residents than formal, top-down Localism.

## Chapter 5: Scale in Localism

### Introduction

This chapter examines the role of scale in Localism. In this chapter I introduce the concept of a politics of scale: the rules and norms determining actor's remit and behaviour. This politics safeguards the containment of scales, keeps actors 'in their place', and mediates relations between them. In scaling actors into a hierarchy, government seeks to define, bound and fix scales (Harvey, 1996). However, as I will show, despite governmental efforts to embed fixity in scalar relations, "struggles and negotiations among all social actors" (Martin, 1999:38) weaken these boundaries. I show here how complex the political geography of Localism is when increasing the amount of actors, and altering their role, in governing through Localism. In this chapter I uncover the development of new, sub-scalar relations in Cornwall as a result of local contestation over power and influence in Localism. I examine the emergence of two specific sub-local scales; that of the elected political representative who view Localism as a challenge to their role and power, and of local town and parish councils who enable the exercise of a spatial-specific localism (small 'l'), that is, a historical, local-specific type of governance.

I explore these actors' ability as individuals to create sub-local scales in and of themselves to contest top-down Localism and therefore break the scalar hierarchy. I examine these behaviours through the lens of Bourdieu's *habitus* as actors attempt to mould the attitudes, beliefs and understandings of others to create new scales (Cidell, 2006). The ability to become removed from the fixed bounded scale of the local and 'jump scales' has been articulated by Harvey (1996) as a mode through which individuals can challenge the scalar hierarchy and the interrelations between scales. The

needs and concerns of these actors are then forced upon others at different scales. Essentially, these actors challenge the dominant governmental politics of scale and create a new politics with new rules and intended outcomes. The individual is therefore a highly influential actor in scalar relations and as described by Latour (1987), particularly powerful when in an associative network. I begin here with an examination of scalar relations in and through Localism.

### **The Politics of Scale**

Scale is neither an ontologically given and a priori geographical territory nor a politically neutral discursive strategy in the constructions of narratives. Scale, both in its metaphorical use and material construction, is highly fluid and dynamic, and both processes and effects can move from scale to scale and affect different people in different ways, depending on the scale at which the process operates (Swyngedouw, 1997:140).

The concept of scale can be characterised by relational fluidity; able to change the relations, geometries and formulation of power. Scale and scalar relations are dependent upon the constituent actors within a scale and their relationship and engagement with those in the scales above and below. Mediating this hierarchy of relations is a politics which governs which entity belongs to which scale, the processes and mechanisms that take place at each scale, and the power and influence of constituent entities at a particular scale.

The existence of multiple politics of scale has been discussed at length by human geographers (Swyngedouw, 2000; Smith, 1992; Brenner, 2000; Cidell, 2006) seeking to rethink the normative paradigms of scale and how relations are mediated at different

levels (local, regional, national and global). Although these theorists argue that scale is a social construction, through regionalism Labour established itself as political governor, able to create and define a top-down politics determining the scale at which issues, concerns, policy and transformation should be mediated or implemented (Cidell, 2006). This politicisation of scale allowed government to “frame issues at certain scales” (ibid:197) which intended to draw power down (locally) and up (globally) (Swyngedouw, 1997; Brenner, 1999).

Yet in drawing scalar boundaries, Labour overlooked relationality, the distinguishing features of people and place, the existence of communities across and between boundaries and the underlying network of relations (Smith, 2001). Turning away from this relational aspect meant glossing over the possibility of contestation and dissent of this politics *within* and between scales (Cidell, 2006). If new boundaries, bringing with them rules, norms and roles for those within the new boundary, are layered upon historical communities, there is clash between ‘old’ and ‘new’. The result of this is contestation and the emergence of sub-local scales of resistance to challenge the new structure. This emergence therefore exerts a bottom-up reaction and destabilises the dominant framework set by government.

In theorising this resistance, Smith (1993) sought to examine networks of association to explore challenges to the dominant politics of scale. However what Smith was unable to investigate was the manifestation of resistance of the individual within scales: the effects of their personality, profession, attitudes, beliefs, expectations of power and historical relationality with space. It is therefore the individual that I focus upon in this investigation of scale and their ability to break free of governmentalised bounded scale, challenge the dominant politics of scale and create unevenness in scalar relations.

## **The Role of the Individual**

As a scale, the individual is typically least effective, and according to Latour (1988), instead operates optimally as part of an associative scale, such as the local. It is therefore the fixity of scale and its collectivisation of individuals, groups and entities into a single bounded scale which has typically rendered the individual as ineffective. The hierarchical nature of governmental ideals and scale-centred policy means that decision-making “rests within a particular jurisdiction which remains territorially bounded” (Cidell, 2006:200) and closed to the individual assertion of power and influence. For the individual to be recognised as a singular actor within a scale they thus have to overcome the homogeneity of scale, establish their own scale and ‘jump scales’ (Harvey, 1996) in order to influence those at different scalar levels to garner enough support to realise their aims and agendas.

As I will show later through my empirical evidence, in jumping scale the fixity of governmental spatial containers is circumvented. The economic, cultural and political activity assigned to geographically-bounded sites is superseded by the creation of new political, social, economic or cultural relations at different scales, thus destabilising the governmentalised rigidity of scale. The ability to jump scales is “a primary avenue to power” (Brenner, 2003:229). Possessing the capability to jump scale, the individual can therefore be considered as the site of multiple scales, not simply a constituent of a territorially bounded scale.

It is the identities and interests of an individual which enables them to destabilise scale (Martin, 1999; Cidell, 2006). I use here the example of elected Members of Cornwall Council. These individuals possess a number of identities: first, they are an individual; second, they are part of a political body of decision-makers for the local area; third, they are a member of local government – this position means they

are duty bound to exercise both top-down governmental frameworks relevant to their role, and attempt to advocate for, and facilitate, bottom-up governance; and finally, will likely hold membership to numerous local organisations of interest. When faced with certain issues, these multiple identities may come into conflict as a result of the individual's struggle between interests or external pressure from within the scale to which they are governmentally assigned. This bounded scale comprises individuals, each bringing particular personalities, aims and agendas to the collective. The power of this scale is therefore contingent upon individual characteristics, personality and ideology working in harmony with the system of governance in place. As Cidell (2006:201) asserts, "the extent to which individuals are conflated with their scales" determines the potency, in terms of power and influence, of the individual within the scale. For example the Leader of Cornwall Council acts as a spokesperson for their ward, of the political party of which they are a member, and of Cornwall Council itself.

Difficulties arise when local government, politics and facilitating or exercising top-down or bottom-up governance come into conflict. What appeared to be of concern to the elected Member was the impact of Localism, and drivers to embed local governance, to representative democracy. To government, Localism and representative democracy would co-exist, but in Cornwall when it came to mechanisms for increased locally devolved power, the elected representatives are shown to have perceived the unity of these approaches differently. In the empirical evidence I am about to present, the elected individual, in this case the Cornwall Council Councillor, sought to contest the dominant politics of scale, move away from the governmentally-defined container of the scale of the local and create a new politics to further their interests. I show here how a situation, perceived to be threatening to the position and power of the elected representative, provided an environment where the individual could form a scale in and of themselves, thus creating a new politics of scale able to challenge the dominance of

government in Localism. In the next section I detail the behaviour of the individual at the local scale in Cornwall. I begin with a synthesis of one of the most controversial decisions made by Cornwall Council in eradicating Community Network Panels; boards designed to permit the membership of local actors for decision-making purposes. I show here how the individual was able to mobilise the Council chamber to make a decision to dissolve the mandate for the Panels and in doing so, created a sub-local scale: a new politics of scale in and of themselves to mediate power relations, jump scales to further safeguard their interests, alter the habitus of composite actors on their scale and others, and change the course of Localism in Cornwall.

### **Network Panels**

The creation of Community Network Panels was part of Cornwall County Council's original Bid to central government in 2007 for restructuring to a unitary authority. The Panels, although still at a discretionary stage when dissolved within a matter of weeks of being put into practice, were designed to allow actors in the community (the citizen and local stakeholders and service providers) to assume an overt and collaborative role in local decision-making. The Panels were to comprise of a baseline membership of elected Members and the Community Network Manager. Auxiliary membership was then to be decided according to Network Area need or specific issues, for example decisions on anti-social behaviour would require membership of the Police, local youth groups and community developers. Service providers such as the Primary Care Trust, Voluntary and Community Sector, town and parish councils, public organisations and residents would, theoretically, then be permitted to take seats on the Panel, supply information and expertise to inform decision-making, and thus become 'active citizens' in their community by deciding on

solutions, priorities and courses of action. The Panels were viewed by many Network Managers as an important mode of formally bringing together composite actors of the Network and allowing democratic practices and dissemination of responsibility to emerge.

On July 15<sup>th</sup> 2009 the head of Localism at Cornwall Council called an emergency meeting for Community Network and Area Network Managers. In the twenty-four hours leading to this meeting, the 123 Members of Cornwall Council's elected chamber had made the decision to dissolve the Community Network Panels. This decision was delivered to Network Managers from the Council's Executive board as an Executive/Member joint decision. However, the local authority had, up until this point, supported the concept of the Panels as a statutory method of local engagement and participation in governance. At some point, the local authority's perception of the legitimacy of the Panels had been altered.

The decision made by elected Councillors to disband the Panels was said at the time to have been reached "without much resistance" (interview data, July 2009), yet the outcome of meetings between Community Network Managers in Bodmin and Truro and the Roseland and elected Members in May 2009 showed that "as many as 50% were in support of the Panels" (interview data, July 2009) as a means to collect information and arrive at a collective consensus between wider partners, professionals and experts in their local area. There is a discrepancy, then, between the apparent support from some Councillors for the Panels, and the 'unanimous' decision to abolish them. It is therefore right to focus upon the individual and their role in guiding and realising this decision. Within the 123 elected Members there was, before and after the transition to a unitary authority, a number of individuals who vociferously opposed the redesign of Cornwall County Council and governing through Network Areas. It was noted by Cornwall Council Officers, Network Managers and elected Councillors that a

small number of Independent and Conservative Councillors led the campaign to disband the Network Panels. These individuals thus need to be looked at in more detail in terms of their ability to influence others, to essentially alter the habitus, to initiate change in the composition of Localism in the county and impede the extension of democratic engagement to the community.

To the Network Managers, the elected Councillor was central to the implementation and practice of Localism in communities: “its Member territory really... the thing is now we’ve got to be reliant on Members and you don’t always get consistent ones” (interview data, Network Manager tasked with implementing Localism, July 2009). Network Managers saw that having the support of the Councillor and inviting them to engage and work jointly with local stakeholders was important to embedding Localism. However, resistance from the small number of Councillors opposed to the necessity, legitimacy and function both of the Community Network Areas and of the Panels began to prove the efficacy of the individual. Expressing their dislike of the Network Areas, one Independent Councillor remarked about the Panels:

Do we really need something that self-conscious? Don’t we have rich communities already? They’re (Cornwall Council Executive) building a mountain out of nothing and running the risk of destroying something we do subconsciously... I don’t see any need for them. The Community Network Manager [has] a hopeless task and I have deep sympathy for them (interview data, May 2009).

In the months leading up to transition to a unitary authority in April of 2009 and in the weeks immediately after restructuring had taken place, a minority of around three

councillors made their positions on the Networks clear through issuing statements in the Council Chamber, publicly at community meetings, and on occasion, discussing their opposition with the Network Managers personally. Local Council elections took place in June of 2009 and membership of the Council grew in accordance with the Electoral Boundary Commission's redesign for the county from 82 Councillors to 123. This initiated a 'new wave' of councillors to Cornwall Council but a large proportion of successful candidates were incumbents. The local elections marked a change from a historically Liberal Democrat-led Council to one with no overall control. With the new Council in place and the abolition of the District Councils, councillors began to voice their opinions, positive and negative, on the new structure for governance in the county, of the Networks and Managers and the decision of the previous Chief Executive to go ahead with restructuring despite local hesitancy (as discussed in the previous chapter). Yet it was the negative perceptions of the new Council, again led by a small number of incumbent Independent and Conservative councillors, which began a 'trend' for disapproval, feeding into underlying public and political perceptions, and reinforced by the local media, of dissatisfaction with the new local authority.

In an annual general meeting held by a parish council in the Truro and the Roseland Network Area, one of these councillors was in attendance and voiced his opinions about Cornwall Council's approach to Localism and local councillors. He noted:

...to say there's been confusion over transition (to a unitary authority) is an understatement. They (Cornwall Council) all talk over there like localism is a new thing. There's been no progress of the Community Networks. Still! Morale's low amongst the councillors because of all that uncertainty about

employment and departments and who's where (primary observational data, May, 2009).

This meeting attracted around thirty local residents, the Community Network Manager for the area and the parish council. Five speakers were given time to present (including the parish councillors, the Cornwall councillor and Network Manager) updates on the development of the parish, on engagement strategies and events, and a progress report on Cornwall Council's transition to a unitary authority. I took field notes at this event to record the feeling in the room, the ways in which each speaker was received, the actions and reactions of local residents and the questions that were being asked of the parish council and Cornwall councillor. My notes read:

...they seem (the parish council) like they've really planned this out well, and got residents to attend. The parish councillor is received well, people are nodding as he runs down a checklist of achievements over the year. He seems a quiet, gentle, elderly man. Kind voice, trustworthy, I suppose. Sounds honest, not a great public speaker but got the points across and was applauded when he sat down. All change when the Cornwall councillor stood up. Lady beside me tutted and said "here we go". Audience are moving around, making some noise as he stands up. Had been all quiet up until now. His voice is a lot more stern, harsh sounding. Seems an angry man. Doesn't have any notes in front of him like the parish councillors did. Wondering whether he's going off the cuff to respond to what the others have said. He's very opinionated. Gesticulating and pointing his finger a lot. Seems charismatic but aggressive (primary observational data, May 2009).

These notes give an indication of the personality of the Cornwall councillor, how they are received in a public setting and their feelings on the new Cornwall Council. Despite not being well received at the above meeting, these councillors appeared to be able to alter the habitus of those around them through voicing their reservations surrounding the Networks, and particularly on the topic of economic restructuring and where or how funds should be reallocated for Cornish prosperity.

This argument accessed the local Zeitgeist for an independent Cornwall, one free of the constraints of central government control and able to govern itself without restrictions and according to local need. This mode of framing opposition to the Networks and Panels aligned the argument with democracy and ‘freedom’ and allowed the small contingent of resistant councillors to redesign symbolic power by transforming, or rather accessing underlying ‘Cornish’ values, behavior and attitudes.

What emerged was a new field of governance which was able to begin to influence thought, action and attitudes about the local authority. The small band of councillors created their own sub-local scale, breaking from the boundaries of local government and contesting governmental approaches and frameworks for Localism in Cornwall. The councillors appeared to have been successful in changing the habitus of those around them. Although some councillors had staged opposition to the new local authority before restructuring, it was not until they had withstood re-election, become secure in their role, gauged the personalities of the new councillors around them and ascertained the composition of the Network Area of they were now a part, that their opposition could increase. The councillors’ actions began to separate them, as political figures, from the local authority, and attract other councillor’s support, as well as that of the public. Massey (2004) regards this behaviour as the result of the multi-facets of place and the political, geographical and cultural contestation over the ‘right’ course of governing for the county. This activity fractured the assigned ‘local’ scale and instead

began the creation of a new sub-local level comprising the individual as a scale in and of themselves. Massey (1993:153) describes this process as ‘power-geometry’ in which the unevenness of “interconnectedness... even among people who are living in the same place” is displayed through reactions to social change, as experienced with the transition from a two-tiered to unitary local authority. The establishment of a new geometry of power makes the individual increasingly dominant and forceful figure, able to gain the attention of the local authority (as a new sub-local scale) and those Councillors around them.

Looking more at the individual, the multiple identities of the elected Councillor appear to have come into conflict leading to their opposition to Localism and a ‘need’ to alter the habitus to effect change (Cidell, 2006). The individual is the “site of multiple and conflicting identities, a local of struggle for political power and control... and an entry point into the sphere of social reproduction” (Cidell, 2006:202). Councillors are therefore “not bound by, but rather, transcend scales in an attempt to articulate, defend and secure their interests and identities” (Martin, 1999:38). The identities and interests of councillors are inclusive of their political affiliation, their personal interests, their membership of Cornwall Council, and of their perceived role of themselves as elected representative. These multiple identities therefore served councillors as modes through which contestation of the Network Panels could emerge through the transcendence of scale and the creation of a separate scale in and of themselves. It is clear that there is a complex political geography involved in Localism. There emerged, then, a very real tension between representative and direct democracy amongst political figures in Cornwall.

## **Representative versus Direct Democracy**

Representation, advocacy and facilitation embody three fundamental aspects of democratic society, vital to its practice. However it is the extent to which they are realised, and which actor or actors assume control of each element, which remains a continual point of contestation. The definition of, and what is incorporated within political representation varies and with new governing through Localism, greater powers of self-representation were to be shifted to the citizen. Advocacy in its most simple form is to influence outcomes and can be delivered by the citizen, the representative or government. Advocacy as a practice includes raising issues of interest, questioning or holding an administration or elected official to account, proposing and suggesting solutions for policy and entering into or facilitating public expression of ideals. Facilitation then, at its root, is the act of allowing or aiding progress or change to take place. Interlinked and arguably sequential of one another, representation, advocacy and facilitation are important in the formation, deliberation and delivery of a cohesive Localism agenda in Cornwall but the manner and method in which they were to be delivered, and more importantly by whom, is the grounding for this discussion.

In Cornwall, the new local authority granted the Community Network Manager, the elected councillor and the citizen the ability to fulfil the role of representative, advocate and facilitator in governing their local area. Essentially the theoretical premise was to enhance democracy in the county within the ‘designed communities’ of the Community Network Areas. The installation of the Community Network Manager meant the introduction of a new level of representation.<sup>26</sup>

The remit of the Network Manager has altered significantly since its original design, set out in Cornwall’s 2007 bid for unitary authority status, but their general role

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<sup>26</sup> Incorporated within each Network Area are at least six Councillors.

remains: to facilitate change or improvement that best serves citizens at a community level. Yet the role of the Network Manager posed a threat to Councillors' historic position within the community. The initial job description for the Manager included the setting and dispensing of local budgets, acting as a local and accessible figurehead in communities for citizens to express their concerns and needs to, aid in the process of community decision making and establish partnerships with local businesses and syndicates in order to best determine how to serve the community effectively. The role of the Manager has since lost some of these attributes and their job framework looked very different at the time of the change to a unitary authority in April 2009. The Manager was no longer in control of local budgets and the prospect of Network Manager-centred decision making was scaled back. In essence, however, the Manager embodies a 'symbol' of Localism: a person who should be able to recognise and grasp the needs of the Network Area, the issues the area faces, the capacity for change that the area holds and the benefits and impacts tackling local issues would have on communities. This role is, nevertheless, one shared historically by the elected representative. The communication and building of relationships with local actors is task also granted to the Member "to lead the development and management of [communities]" (Cornwall Council, *One Cornwall*, 2007). This remit includes overseeing the implementation of governance arrangements, engaging citizens in decision-making, promoting democracy and active citizenship and promoting community cohesion. There are therefore elements of cross-over between the role of the councillor and that of the Network Manager and with no clear distinction of where jurisdiction and overall power would lie.

The main difference between Managers and councillors is that councillors are elected by the public who reside in their ward. On the grounds of popularity and job suitability, the citizen chooses their representative. Managers are Council appointed and

employed, thus they are not selected by the general public but awarded their job role. A councillor's role, as specified by Cornwall Council is to "balance the needs and interests of their residents, voters, political parties, the County Council and other local councils" ([www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)). A Councillor's local level responsibilities include organising and chairing community consultation events, holding constituent surgeries, working on behalf of citizens, developing links with all parts of the community and seeking to help them negotiate solutions, supporting local partnerships and organisations and gaining resources for their electoral division. As decision-maker, a Councillor plays a role in deliberating with the Council, the Executive, Policy Development and Scrutiny Committees, other Committees, Boards and Panels and regulatory Committees. A councillor can therefore also be seen as a 'symbol' of democracy in the community, through forging relationships and finding ways of enhancing community life. Yet essentially, a councillor advocates on behalf of the citizen, as does the Manager, facilitates in local development, as does the Manager, and brings together the diverse views and needs of the communities they serves, again, much like the Network Manager.

This intersection of job roles did not go unnoticed by councillors. Even as the initial plans for the unitary authority were published in 2007 and the remit of the Network Manager came to light, disapproval from existing Members of Cornwall County Council of the similarities in responsibility emerged. There arose, then, a very real conflict between representative and direct democracy. At the very heart of Localism were drives for increased local power, but there remained an electoral process to establish local leaders. With both mechanisms in place, it appeared inevitable to the councillors that at the very least, certain powers and control would be subtracted from their position. The abolition of the Network Panels in June 2009 must therefore been

seen as an attempt by councillors to claw back some of their historical power and return the balance of power to the elected representative.

Discursively, Cornwall Council's draft *Introduction to Localism* (2009) did not portray the councillor as harnessing any less power than they were historically accustomed to. The Council states that the councillor is a "local community leader" with "new opportunities and expectations" enabling them to play a "more proactive role within their communities" (ibid, *Section A*) as a result of the new Community Network structure. The draft framework notes that councillors will lead their Networks as "the focal point of local partnership working - bringing people together, finding solutions and resolving tensions". The councillor would also "develop new ways of communicating with and involving all sections of the local community" and "acting as the bridge between the Council and the local community" (ibid, *Section A*). Perhaps then, it is right to look to the psychological effects that a new Council structure, new mechanisms of governing and a change in the number of elected councillors may have had upon Members. The perception of a reduced role and decrease in power was articulated by one councillor as:

...Chaos. It's how you use the label of Localism to deliver governance. Some of those who were kicked out of the Council (through local elections in 2009) are shattered people, I regret that, I think its dreadful but then you have to build that up again and I'm not certain we have the stuff and people in place to do that (interview data, June 2009).

The disapproval exhibited by councillors of the role of the Network Manger was articulated by a Community Development Worker in the Bodmin Network Area:

When I went to a [local] meeting with [the Network Manager], the Councillors basically used [them] as a whipping boy... I stepped in and said that perhaps we could field questions and then present them for answer through [the Manager] but it was hard (interview data, August 2009).

Similarly in the Truro and the Roseland Network Area a local resident commented:

[The Network Managers] have got their work cut out given the re-elections of [certain Councillors]. They're [...] dead against the Community Networks so it's anyone's guess if [the Managers] have a job or role in a few months. I think we've got to hope the Conservatives do something (interview data, June 2009).

In West Penwith a local councillor also commented on their concerns with the local Network Manager:

We've had meetings with [the Manager] and we've talked about things like access to funding in the local area... but the main problem is that [they] aren't putting out the right information. [They] don't have local knowledge and there's been a lot of misunderstandings. I think there needs to be some sort of better training given on local areas (interview data, June 2009).

There is a geographical congruency, then, across all three studied sites that councillors, development workers and even the general public, were wary of the

interactions between the Manager and the elected Member. With the threat to their power and influence, the councillor can be seen to be in conflict with their multiple identities, particularly in attempting to safeguard their personal identity as reflected in their frustration with the structure of new unitary authority and the Network Manager. The councillor's actions cannot be read exclusively as attempts to impede Localism, however, nor can the conduct of a select few councillors be seen as widespread throughout the Council chamber. Yet in taking action to re-configure the habitus and in contesting the new modes of democratic engagement installed by Cornwall Council through the Network Areas, the councillor can be seen to have put a stop to a critical practice of Localism in the function of the Network Panel.

### **Creating a Sub-Local Scale**

It can be seen that opposition to the Network, Managers and Panels was thus a negotiation between multiple identities seeking to problematise the new parameters of power and governance employed through Localism. The geographical context of this struggle necessitated a re-framing of the local scale. In “refusing to conflate scales” (Cidell, 2006:202) with the Community Network Areas and Manager, the elected representative severed the scalar boundedness of the local level and created a divide between government and politics. The establishment of a sub-local scale is thus an example of the politicisation of the local; the exertion of political power and influence to jump scales to influence decision-making at the local scale. It would be incorrect to assert that local government afforded councillors this degree of power as a result of their position on the scalar hierarchy. Instead it was the resistance of the individual, the personality and identity of councillors within this scale which created and determined the use of such power. This contestation of Localism must therefore be seen as a manner

in which local politicians deal “with their multi-scalar identities” (ibid:202) when threatened with a loss of power and influence through governmental mandates.

The creation of this sub-local scale at the councillor level, and the emergence of multiple politics of scales within the local level as a result, reflects the fluidity of scale, that it is not fixed and able to be contested. In challenging the dominant politics of scale the councillor reinforced their role as elected leader and thus sought to question, or perhaps undermine, the actions of the local authority in installing Network Managers who possessed a similar role. The politics of scale established by councillors ensured firstly that their role remained one of power and authority over decision-making, but also that processes concerning the framework of governance in the county were firmly guided and shaped by the councillor. I use Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* to describe these shifts.

### **The Significance of *Habitus* in Jumping Scales**

Bourdieu’s (2000) concept of habitus theorises how behaviour, culture and social structures are interlinked and how human action is bred by the resulting symbolic power of this fusion. According to Bourdieu, values, behaviour and attitudes are thus learned symbolically within an environment, or a field of governance (Bourdieu, 1993). Drawing on Foucault’s (1991) conceptualisation of governing rationale, Bourdieu suggests that changing the habitus could influence action, thought, attitude and understanding (Foucault, 1991; 2004). In reinforcing a scalar hierarchy through Localism, rules and norms, which are stipulated through governmental engagement and control of conduct, established the *grammars of living* (Rose, 1999), or the way in which government would have subjects act and think (Lowndes and Wilson, 2001; Jones *et al.*, 2010; Lemke, 2001; Dean, 2007; Barnett, 2005; Raco, 2009). These norms

serve as mechanisms which aid in defining scale, establishing a hierarchy and determine the remits and behaviours which are bound to that scale.

A politics of scale therefore attempts to configure the habitus of scaled actors. As already discussed, regionalism under Labour redefined the local through reshaping the sense of self using territory. In territorially binding scales, particular decisions, power and actions are assigned to composite actors of those scales by central government (Flint and Rowlands, 2003). However when the scale becomes fractured, there is simultaneously a break in the habitus. Actors no longer adhere to preconceived subjectivities and instead seek to reconfigure the environment, and thus the habitus, of their own and other scales. As will be shown in the next section, the elected representative's estrangement from their 'given' scale not only contests the habitus designed by government for Localism and intended to be fulfilled by actors in leadership roles within the scale, but attempts to alter the habitus of others' through jumping scales. The behaviour and rationale of the individual therefore problematises a governmentalised agenda for Localism. In challenging this agenda, a new relational politics seeking to reshape conduct is created thereby altering the habitus to elicit change in the processes of democratic engagement to safeguard their own interests and identities. This activity reiterates the contestation between government and politics but also reflects the relative ease with which local governing and central government mandates can be altered through local resistance. In fracturing scalar relations, the individual is thus also able to rupture the centre-to local-network and thus the governing hierarchy created and governmentalised by central government.

Essentially, the action taken by the individual at this level contributed to a further interruption in Localism within the county as parts of Localism can be seen to have disappeared. I follow on from this section with analysis of a further creation of a sub-local scale, focusing on the action and role of town and parish councils in Cornwall.

These members of the community largely disregarded governmental conceptualisations of Localism and instead relied upon their historical approach to local engagement and participation; localism with a small ‘l’. In not deviating from frameworks for place-specific localism, it is here that certain aspects of Localism seem to re-appear, albeit at a different scale to which it was intended by government. Localism at this scale, with a small ‘l’, is therefore contingent on the efforts of local community members and their resistance to not only the dominant politics of scale surrounding Localism, but drive to ensure strategies for local engagement are tailored to meet need and desire. The town and parish council is therefore another example of an emergent sub-local scale but one based upon a politics around a localism which is socially, spatially and historically embedded.

### **Town and Parish Councils**

Town and parish councils were, from the initial draft of the Bid to become a unitary authority, a key institution in delivering Localism in Cornwall. However, following the abolition of the Panels there was concern amongst Councils that further local engagement and participatory tools would also be removed at the discretion of the councillor. As structures of government closest to communities, engaged (for the most part) in community life and development, as representatives for their communities and advocates for local improvements and delivery, town and parish councils are at the heart of the community. Within the structure of the new unitary authority they served as a ‘first point of contact’ for Community Network Managers in establishing local partnerships and gauging local priorities and needs. The building of trust, time invested in educating town and parish councils about the new Council structure, and the development of Parish Plans meant that for many Network Managers, filtering the

information on the decision to dissolve the panels was not only embarrassing, but also reneged upon elements of trust, confidence and democratic purpose. In a meeting between a Parish Council in the Truro and the Roseland Network Area and the Corporate Director for Communities at Cornwall Council, concerns over Parish Council disengagement with democratic and localist practices as a result of the loss of the Panels were raised:

**Parish Council:** “we want to move away from stuffy decision-making... we’re embarrassed that urban areas in Cornwall have more of a say than rural areas. It’s about changing the culture... but the organisation (Cornwall Council) said no.”

**Corporate Director:** “the traditional way of getting things done isn’t easy. Pull the strings you need to pull.”

**Parish Council:** “there’s a desire in the Parish Council to want to deliver – we’ve raised expectations [on Localism].”

**Corporate Director:** “Politics is politics. That’s politics.”

The dismissal of the Corporate Director of the Parish Council’s concerns over how Localism could be delivered in the area, given the dissolution of the Panels and the lack of support for Localism from the local authority, discussed in the previous chapter, is clear. Moreover, what is evident is the desired separation between local government and politics. It appears from the above comments from the Corporate Director that ‘politics’ is to blame for the dissolution of the Panels, emphasising a conscious division between government and the political figure. In Bodmin, the Town Council also shared similar concerns:

...at Cornwall Council, there's a lot of talk going on but no real engagement with us on decisions... it's an example of how the different departments within One Cornwall don't speak to each other. They said they were striving for 'true and meaningful partnership', it was both of those from our perspective. [There's been a lot of] snap decision making, this wasn't just us that suffered though, various cases came out from across Cornwall (interview data, August, 2009).

It is evident that at the very local town and parish council level there were still aspirations for Localism. This can be attributed to three key reasons. First, Localism at this scale of governing has to be transparent, there is no lower tier of local government than the town and parish council thus councillors have more of a presence in their community and stand to lose more should they abuse their position or mislead their community. Second, town and parish council councillors do not get paid for their services. Therefore those who put themselves forward for election are, most likely, driven to do so out of a personal desire to do more for their local area, to serve their community, and to ensure its development and future prosperity. Third, and most importantly, the idea of Localism differs at this very local level. Localism is presented here with a small 'l' to represent, ideologically, a different set of historic practices, approaches and responsibilities, as already discussed. Although the dominant discourse of Localism has been transported by government channels through the centre-local network, to the town and parish council, localism is a practice that many had been engaging in prior to government mandates to integrate it into local government operations. Localism was not, therefore, a politicised, diktat for community engagement, it was a language to describe the practical aspects of involving residents in local decision-making.

The localism that Parish and Town Councils exhibit is one of historical, cultural and social significance, geographically specified to the communities they serve. The type of politicised Localism which the local authority sought did not resonate with many town and parish council's working patterns. Following opposition from councillors to the new structure of governing in the county, and being aware of Cornwall Council's reneging support, many began to craft certain 'types' of localism which would serve their communities in attempting to integrate new ways of engaging communities according to recommendations, pursuing individual projects of localism or in reverting back to their own modes of localised governance. In the Bodmin Community Network Area the Town Council was confident in their historic ability to deliver localism, continue to engage with local residents and maintain a strong relationship with local stakeholders and partners:

We as a Town Council restructured and refocused after April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 so that we could start to tackle priorities we felt we could really make some moves on. We're focusing on a 'cleaner, greener, safer' agenda instead of stepping on Cornwall Council toes with things we can't do much about like highways. We're also looking more at the longevity and long-term impact of the things we're doing (interview data, August, 2009).

The Town Council thus ensured that their 'style' of localism did not cross boundaries with that of Cornwall Council's to avoid duplication and conflict. The Council was however aware of the ill-feelings descending from Cornwall Council regarding their drive and structure for localism in the area:

The thing that really hacks off Cornwall Council is the communication we have with residents, they'd really like to emulate that and see themselves in that role but just can't seem to get it right. We really think that the work we've been doing here for years has us in a good position and the way that the Bodmin Community Network is structured, it's probably one of the best in terms of parishes that come under its remit. The dissolution of the network Panels for us is not a big worry. Because we're a larger Town Council we're not concerned that we won't have our voice heard. We're known as the loud ones and will always get our point out if we think we need to (interview data, August 2009).

The Town Council therefore had its own agenda for localism which included not only a strategy for implementation, but mechanisms through which to perform their particular localism at this scale. The Council developed a community engagement strategy for the area and were awarded for their efforts by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) with whom they work closely. The Town Council clerk noted:

We've come to realise that there needs to be some teeth in what we're doing and we need to hold Cornwall Council to account. In the end all the conversations we have with them seem to come down to money but what is then best value? Who decides, them or us? We ultimately thought that we could help them deliver Localism as we know there are people who have expertise in the area but ... Cornwall Council are so busy in sorting out their internal structures (interview data, August, 2009).

In the West Penwith Community Network Area the Town Council were also actively structuring their own renewed approach to localism within the unitary authority

framework. A member of the Town Council spoke of his disillusion with Localism at the Cornwall Council level stating that the Head of Localism did not ‘understand’ what it meant. He spoke of poor communication between the Community Network Manager in the area, a lack of consultation with town and parish councils across West Penwith and of the problem of elected Cornwall Councillors dominating local decision-making processes. The Town Council, alongside community development officers operating in the Network Area, therefore began to focus on specific projects in the area as the focus for Localism. The *Market Coastal Towns Initiative* (MCTi) and *Area Forum* groups provided structures, and a clear goal, for the engagement and participation of local residents. These projects allowed the town and parish councils to work alongside Cornwall Council and Cornwall councillors, however as one community development worker noted, these programmes were only “able to tailor to small pockets of need, there is no blanket coverage for Localism in the area” (interview data, June, 2009). The officer also spoke of the dislocation between the Network Manager, Cornwall Council staff and the elected Members, but moreover, voiced their concerns for there being no Development Officers specifically allocated to the West Penwith Network Area. Within Cornwall at the time there were eleven Officers spread across the nineteen Network Areas. The role of the Development Officer in helping to structure and implement practically Localism, with a capital ‘L’, could therefore be seen to be not highly regarded by the local authority. Both the Town Council Member and the Development Officer reiterated that there were gross misunderstandings within Cornwall Council, and especially at the West Penwith Network Area scale, which exacerbated the fractured approach to Localism in the area.

In a similar vein to West Penwith, a Parish Council within the Truro and the Roseland Network Area also took it upon themselves to engage in specific projects of Localism, most notably to take control of the Local Development Order (LDO) for the

area. LDOs are an element of the Local Development Framework for local areas “...which collectively delivers the spatial planning strategy for the local planning authority’s area” (Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks, 2004:1). An LDO:

[intends] to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to managing development. Local communities and all stakeholders will be involved from the outset and throughout the preparation of local development documents; front loading. Local planning authorities should take key decisions early in the preparation of local development documents. The aim will be to seek consensus on essential issues (ibid:1).

The Parish Council began by piloting the LDO after a selection process with town and parish councils throughout the county. Instead of planning applications being evaluated through the planning process at local government level, the Order allows town and parish councils to take a lead role on decision-making. The LDO was the first step for the Parish Council in gaining more autonomy in planning for their community, but it was only one of their advancements towards greater local autonomy. The parish council had a strong history of effective consultation with local residents and developed what the parish council clerk called “a historical culture of engagement” (interview data, June, 2009) through using their own strategies for localism, tailored for the local area. Community engagement in the parish had been ongoing for decades, structured and performed by the elected local parish councillors. Although Localism had been encouraged by Cornwall Council as a ‘top-down’ exercise by central government, the parish council merely used its existing structure of community engagement and participation, and continued to consult and work with residents in ways it had always

done. Cornwall Council's top-down mandates for Localism did not, therefore, significantly impact the Parish, instead they served to stir frustration within the Parish Council. As the Parish clerk noted in an interview "...it's the end of life as we know it" (interview data, June 2009). He continued, stating "...few Parish Councils in the county have [this Parish's] level of localism... politics hasn't worked for us, its detracted from the 'local'... party politics should be left at the door when looking at [local] issues" (ibid). These sentiments reflect the Parish Council's desire for increased autonomy, and for the local authority to step back from the Parish Council's action. The LDO allowed the Parish Council and local residents to take more control over the future of their area. Bottom-up governance was encouraged through local projects such as the LDO, but much like West Penwith, Localism advanced, mostly, around specific projects with clear goals resulting in an uneven landscape of Localism across the county.

### **Unevenness**

The decrease in support for Localism at Cornwall Council and elected representative scales gave town and parish councils cause to focus on local engagement and participation in their area. For many Councils this did not require increased action but merely a renewed emphasis on the processes of engagement they had historically enacted. It is clear from the town and parish councils interviewed and observed that their commitment is to a localism with its own historical provenance, not the ideologically pure Localism formally introduced by government. However localism at the Town and Parish scale is uneven. Without a mode of embedding blanket methods for local engagement across the county, town and parish councils differ in their ability to conduct localism with a large or small 'l'. This uneven development of politics thus

problematise both Localisms, articulated by Swyngedouw (2004) as a “new mosaic” of local governance.

Looking more closely at unevenness in terms of geography, the different types of local engagement and participation appear to have affected the outcomes of localism. Localism (small ‘l’) appeared to be more project-based in the Truro and the Roseland and West Penwith Network Areas, but in Bodmin there appeared to be a more cohesive and broad-reaching approach in place by the Town Council. This unevenness can be theorised in social, political and cultural terms. First, peripherality, characteristic of many rural areas, impacted psychologically and practically on the West Penwith Network Area, despite resources being allocated and a strong community development team and Town Council being in place. As one member of the Voluntary and Community Sector in West Penwith noted:

Reaching out is becoming more difficult, we have great uncertainty about the centralised government in Truro. I can’t see how Community Network Areas will notice us. How can communities be seen? How can people be seen? We’re in the gap [and need] town and parish councils to take on more of a role (interview data, June 2009).

This perception of peripherality was also articulated by a Community Engagement Officer working in the Area:

Now [we’re] were operating on a larger scale [we’re] less effective, there is less communication between officers and less or poorer relationships with residents. There’s a need for urban/rural diversity and a need for another

outlook or attitude towards needs. There needs to be more working together and a reflection of diversity of needs as blanket coverage is not effective (interview data, July 2009).

It can be suggested therefore that the sense of distance and the geographical proximity from the central Council offices in Truro exacerbated disengagement from the new structure of local government. The emergence of project-based localism and not full coverage reflects the Town Council's attempts to continue to engage with local residents in spite of a fractured local government and decline in elected representative support for localism in this area. In particular, the role and actions of the Network Manager in West Penwith were criticised by a number of interviewees for their lapses in co-ordination of the Network, hesitation in fostering local partnerships soon after transition to the unitary authority and disengagement with, and sense of poor leadership, amongst the Town Council and local Development Officers. The Network Manager declined interviews on a number of occasions thus I am unable to provide a rounded argument for this hypothesis.

Second, the wards of a number of Cornwall councillors in opposition to the Network Areas and Panels lay in the Truro and the Roseland Network Area. In embedding Localism, the Truro and the Roseland Network Manager thus had to mediate the 'type' of Localism deployed (small 'l' or capital 'L'): who is involved, where funding would come from and which communities and citizens would engage. Further the Manager also had to reconcile tensions between the councillor, town and parish councils, local stakeholders and communities to ensure a balance between representative and direct democracy. This mediation thus led to the development of individual localism projects, not complete coverage as a result of Member contestation and the politics they exerted seeking to scale decision-making and power geometries.

Third, the ideology of localism is different at the scale of Town and Parish Councils. They view local engagement and participation in governance as a fundamental element of their job role. For the town and parish councils interviewed in this study, this type of local consultation and joint-working are historical characteristics of community development at this level of local government. Indeed as the clerk of the Parish Council in the Truro and the Roseland Network Area stated: “politics hasn’t worked for us” (interview data, June, 2009). This Parish Council is thus consciously apolitical, aware of the problems between politics and local government and keen to leave “politics at the door” (ibid). The ‘brand’ of Localism brought into being by Cornwall Council in its commitment to better local joined-up working was not one embraced by town and parish councils. Instead, these groups preferred to adhere to their historical practices of community working, establishing their own practices by knowing what works, and what does not, in their local area. It is evident, therefore, that the actions of the town and parish councils allowed a different form of localism to appear at this scale. What emerged was a hybrid localism at a sub-local scale with a new politics of scale permitting town and parish councils to revert back to methods of engagement.

The removal of the Network Panels did, however, have an impact on not only town and parish working in the county, but also on wider governing in the role of the Network Manager, the function of the Network Area, the involvement of local stakeholders and the community in governing and of the local authority’s attitude towards Localism.

## **The Socio-Political Impact of creating Sub-Local Scales**

Following the removal of the Panels, a revised structure for engagement in Network Areas was published by Cornwall Council noting that structures similar to Network Panels would be used on a discretionary basis as a tool for ensuring "...a strong local influence on local service delivery [with] some devolved functions" (*Draft Introduction to Localism*, 2009). What these functions might be was not made clear but it was noted that the Panels, where used, would act as an advocacy tool for local groups and individuals to voice their concerns, present evidence and lobby for certain outcomes. Nevertheless, with the removal of the Panels, the direct and open link for the community to service providers, the Council, the Network Manager and officers was removed. Serving as a body whereby representatives from a wide range of community groups and services could come together the Panels would have allowed face-to-face contact between groups and individuals who might not otherwise interact.

The Head of Localism for Cornwall Council said at the time that by removing the Panels, Network Managers would have more flexibility to support councillors and town and parish councils. Yet as Maguire and Truscott (2006) note, it is the formal bridging of links between service providers and the communities they serve that is crucial in creating partnership working. Maguire and Truscott assert that such links allow "local area, interest or faith group representatives to access senior managers and policy makers, and inform them of directly experienced impacts of decisions they are making" (2006:3). It is the "little changes that really affect people's lives" (ibid:3) and the Panels had the scope not only to integrate a wide range of local actors into decision-making, but create an environment where joint-working and consensus could emerge for the whole Network. In addition, the Panels would have allowed for access to 'policy networks' (Rhodes, 1997) educating local actors how and by whom decisions are made and power is distributed throughout the community.

The removal of the Panels without any foreseeable compensatory mechanism being put in place can be seen to have limited advocacy within the Community Networks. A cause for the emergence of sub-local scales and new, multiple politics of scales, the removal of the Panels set in motion a splintering of the local scale, a surge in the power and influence of the individual and thus heightening tensions between government and politics and representative and direct democracy. One Community Network Manager, remarking on the role of the councillor said: “we’re dealing with people who fundamentally don’t understand” (interview data, July 2009). The creation of sub-local levels to enable interests to be secured can therefore be seen as inevitable, if fundamentally altering the socio-political landscape of Localism in the county. The necessity of these sub-local scales was articulated by town and parish councils in all three of the studied areas engaged in this research:

Services are not engaged in Localism, there’s a role for town and parish councils in developing their skills because they’re going to become powerless if we don’t get this articulation and communication right. The Community Network Manager has to go in different directions, look at different areas and at top priorities (interview data (Truro and the Roseland), July 2009).

...going back to the town and parish councils and the panels though, I think that all is not lost. That’s what I’m telling them anyway. The Team (Bodmin Community Network staff) spent a lot of time selling the panels so to lose them is frustrating. But there’s scope for town and parish councils to work together if the Agreements with them are developed... That sort of thing is valuable to people (interview data (Bodmin), July, 2009).

I think for there to be a future for Localism there's got to be a blend of Member support, development of town and parish councils and articulation of community priorities. From there these elements can influence service plans and that could shape the longevity of Localism (interview data (West Penwith), July, 2009).

The empirical data presented here of the dissolution of the Network Panels and of the emergence of sub-local scales changing the nature of Localism exhibit the bottom-up struggles and contestation created by the implementation of new governance in Cornwall. The tensions between elected representatives, direct democracy advocated by Localism, between politics and government, the new unitary structure of government and governing for the county and of the competing politics of scales reflect the multiple sites of conflict embedded within the geographically bound and governmentally structured 'local' scale. There emerged a 'need' for sub-scales and new politics of scales for the protection of identity, to safeguard interests, retain historical patterns of engagement and challenge governmental authority to reconfigure Localism to balance power for individual, political and community requirements.

## **Conclusion**

The emergence of the sub-local scales, created by the councillor and town and parish councils, reflect the development of a competing and contested, uneven, Localism in Cornwall. The empirical evidence exhibited in this chapter reflects the tensions between Localism as a top-down agenda, and localism (small 'l') as a bottom-up, historical and spatially shaped mode of engaging local residents.

The dominant politics of scale for the ‘local’, set by central government and articulated through policy and a dominant discourse of Localism, established spatial parameters for relations at this scale. Yet these parameters did not account for the local resistance to challenge governmental boundaries, and of the power of the local in disregarding governmental Localism (capital ‘L’). This dislocation reflects the complexity of the political geography involved in Localism: how difficult it is to geographically bind space and normalise or control the citizenry (Foucault, 1991). The empirical evidence presented in this chapter shows how the spatial demarcations, or containers, assigned to the local are questioned as space and scale come to be seen as fluid, dynamic and ever-changing, but weak in the face of localism (small ‘l’): local, historical and spatially specific modes of governing.

The top-down scalar narrative central government produced around Localism was of unique importance: it not only attempted to separate central from local, but empower and re-locate power to the local itself: attempt to build bottom-up publics able to self-govern. The local scale was therefore exercised as “a discursive and a material target for state intervention” (Whitehead, 2003:281). Yet in doing so, the local was redefined and constructed to conform to government idealisations of political and economic *new Localism* as a scalar and political tactic. However, the reality of the local is that it is contested, continuously shifting and reforming and possessing perhaps greater power and influence than central government would acknowledge. As I have shown in this chapter, it appears that the local has been “exploited as a strategy of political control and scalar domination” (ibid:281), but through localism, exercised greater dominance in governing.

The antagonism between composite actors of the local scale in Cornwall thus produced, as shown here, two distinct sub-local scales which interrupted Localism. The emergent politics of scale at each of these levels afforded composite actors particular

power and jurisdiction over Localism, thus the councillor was able to change the course of Localism and effectively hinder its further development through dissolving the Network Panels. In jumping scale, the councillor was able to reconfigure the local authority's approach to the practice of Localism and contest central government recommendations for greater local involvement in local governing. Similarly the town and parish councils were able to deploy their own form of localism in area-specific, historical and negotiated ways to mediate wider tensions. The jumping of scale here is seen in the town and parish council's ability to challenge the above scale, that of the councillor, and meet local government aims for on-going and dynamic patterns of local governing. The hierarchical dynamic of the 'local' scale was thus able to be contested, and the local scale seen as more powerful than government, as socio-political implications for Localism emerged, both in terms of a threat to the power and influence of the councillor and concerns over reduced local involvement in governing by town and parish councils.

The local, as a politically defined scale, thus needs to be rethought as one which is socially produced but also entrenched with historical political practices, individual personality, identity, intent, and a locally produced power capable of challenging top-down governmental authority and decree with bottom-up action and intelligence. The local is therefore not a "bland, cartographic demarcation" (Whitehead, 2003:284), but a mobilised, contested realm containing multi-scalar and competing politics of scales able to jump scales, redefine and contest governmental control (Brenner, 1999; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999; Marston, 2000; Smith, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1997).

I now move to the final empirical chapter in this thesis which examines the performance of Localism. The following chapter discusses the practical implementation of the exercise of Localism in Cornwall using empirical examples to reflect upon the use of governmentalised techniques in governing opportunities.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Performing Localism**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter, as the final empirical chapter in this thesis, examines the performance of Localism; what actors ‘do’ to structure and engage with participative initiatives. I look here specifically at the exercise of participatory budgeting (PB) initiatives in Cornwall as a mode of Localism in action. Crucially, in this chapter I explore the top-down framing of engagement strategies. I uncover here how government seeks to configure subjectivities and create active publics capable of self-governing. The production of publics, able to assume a decision-making role in governing their community, is at the heart of Localism in Cornwall to create increased local autonomy from government and to meet local needs.

PB projects have taken place across the world with varying successes, but for the UK Labour government the concept was seen as one which could alter the culture of local engagement in line with its visions for Localism. PB emerged in Cornwall following central government recommendations for increased local control over the spending of small budgets. Central government intentions were for PB to become embedded as a method of performing Localism through earmarking annual resources for communities to spend on local development, services and regeneration. I draw in this chapter upon PB pilots, as Cornwall Council’s experiments of Localism in action, which took place in the county in 2008 and 2009 (before the full restructure of Cornwall County Council to a unitary authority). Looking at this evidence allows a discussion of governmental approaches to engineering engagement through nudging decision-making

in participatory governing. PB pilots were put into action across Cornwall to roll-out Labour's plans, and for the local authority they also provided a number of auxiliary benefits. PB schemes were episodic in nature and delivered 'quick wins' for the Council, they presented to central government the effectiveness of the authority's engagement prowess, and attempted to recover public confidence in local government. Given the poverty in strategy for implementing Localism, as discussed in the first empirical chapter, and the challenges to Localism from councillors, PB had the potential to mediate these issues in four key ways: first, the local authority could take full control over a project, negating the need for the support of the local political representative; second, the local authority in Cornwall could shape a clear strategy and define outcomes for short-term projects of significance to communities but possibly of marginal importance to strategic plans at the local authority level; third, the local authority could determine where projects should take place and which communities and individuals would be involved; and fourth, pockets of perceived 'need' could be targeted within the county. To ensure these aims were met, I will show here how PB has been structured in a top-down fashion, incorporating *nudges* to design choice opportunities and ensure specific outcomes (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008).

I have touched upon Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality already in this thesis, and how it speaks to the philosophy of Localism. In this chapter I apply Foucault's ideas to the exercise of *nudging* the citizenry to make specific choices. The act of *nudging* is a strand of behavioural economics which examines how government rationale and technologies frame public engagement opportunities through *choice architecture*. The exercise of nudging is a governmental, or top-down, approach to ensuring outcomes and can be observed in Labour's ideas for Localism, but also more recently in the Conservative's Big Society, to focus upon and call to action 'the local' scale using a range of initiatives, ideas and forecasts for sustainable local democracy

and governance (e.g. neighbourhood grants as incentives to encourage the development of local groups and support social enterprise).

This top-down approach to governing appears to be a reaction to a largely disengaged populace, of uneven community willingness to participate in local governing and of the inability of government to access communities and citizens. Behavioural economics speaks to the “psychological understandings of citizens [and] the existence of a more complex kind of policy experiment” (ibid:15) as a way of accessing the citizenry and reaching certain outcomes. A range of behavioural interventions, such as ‘soft’ paternalistic strategies in recognising individual’s behaviour traits, embedding spatial and temporal strategies for engagement and encouraging social norms, are all modes of contextually orientating local governance through steering individuals towards certain behaviours. However, the emergent trend of soft paternalism poses challenges.

What I will show in this chapter is that deploying governmentalising methods, through the exercise of soft paternalism, does not guarantee specific outcomes. The deployment of rationalities and mechanisms to control civic behaviour exacerbate divisions in society, separating those communities who can and will participate from those who cannot or will not. I detail in this chapter how participatory budgeting schemes in Cornwall were exposed to a ‘nudge’ from local government to achieve certain ends. It is here that I critique Foucault’s (1991) concept of governmentality as in deploying a mechanism of government, in this case a behavioural nudge, does not mean that a predictable outcome will be reached.

In the first empirical chapter I discussed the rigid centre-local relations in Localism deployed through a top-down network of governing. The emergent restrained Localism was seen to stifle the freedom and flexibilities of eliciting bottom-up

governance. I pick up on the concept of the restriction of power through top-down techniques of engagement in this chapter to examine how central government recommendations for participatory governance through PB are performed by local government and how citizens engage with these initiatives. In the second empirical chapter I examined the scale of relations between actors in Localism, the instances of contestation, the emergence of bottom-up localism (small 'l') and the power of the local. As shown in the chapter, Localism is highly contested at the local scale largely as a result of top-down mandates and precepts, or expectations, embedded by government for and of the 'local'. I return to the idea of how Localism is mediated or managed in this chapter, in examining the emergence of project-based, governmentally-structured, top-down participatory governing formed around geographical context, appetite and capacity for engagement and participation.

I begin this chapter with an outline of the emergence of libertarian paternalism, its 'soft' and 'hard' applications, the role of governmentality in policy discourse and action, and ideas of new forms and technologies of governmental control. I then examine how these techniques align with Labour's Third Way philosophies to create publics: active engaged groups able to govern their area with limited intervention from government. The formation of publics was and remains essential to, what I posit as, the governmental pursuit of a seemingly autonomous but governmentally controlled citizenry (MacLeavy, 2008; Mahoney *et al*, 2010). I use empirical evidence from participatory budgeting pilots which took place in the towns of Redruth and Bodmin in Cornwall in 2008 and 2009 to discuss the structure and effects of governmental intervention into Localism practices (Painter, 2008, 2010). I close this chapter with an examination of participatory governance, its emergence in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and how it has been translated in UK governing initiatives.

## **Soft Paternalism in Governing**

As I discussed in the first empirical chapter, efforts to embed Localism and measures to implement it practically lacked both support from local government and, as top-down constructs, freedoms and flexibilities from central government. These shortcomings resulted in a poverty in the performative side of Localism, reflecting governmental reliance on rhetoric but little strategy to support these ideological beliefs. PB projects, beginning with pilot schemes, therefore appealed to the local authority in Cornwall as a means to establish 'safe' participatory schemes distanced from intervention, and thus subversion, from sub-local scales. The projects were funded, structured and implemented by local government, meaning that the Council could have complete discretion over their format, where they would take place, who would be involved and crucially, what their outcomes would be. Each Cornwall councillor has access to a small grant allocation which can range from £100 to £1000, plus access to a Community Chest scheme for local community and voluntary projects of £2,195. In a meeting with a Network Manager, he said that in his area there were funds available for PB projects and in putting these into action they could be a way to influence services and help target the needs of the communities there. However this sentiment was not shared by local councillors who appeared to have a different view of how the money should be used. The Network Manager noted:

There's £22,000 in the pot for engagement linked to Members (Cornwall Council Councillors) but they're unwilling to relinquish money for that. We thought that they might all pool in their share (of the Community Chest) but that's unlikely (primary interview data, May 2009).

Although the Network Manager appeared keen to put participatory schemes into action, it is evident that the spending of local budgets, as determined by the citizenry, was not favoured by Council Members. Returning to the discussion in the previous chapter regarding the perceived threat to the power and influence of Cornwall councillors, it appears that this process of allowing bottom-up influence on the spending of budgets was a step too far for some. However, in areas where this funding has been put to use in PB schemes, there has been a degree of steering to ensure specific outcomes match predetermined goals.

To ensure that these outcomes were met, I suggest here that the Council deployed mechanisms of soft paternalism seeking to steer citizen thought and behaviour. Through using paternalistic techniques government could attempt to solve the anticipated problems of Localism, assume control of initiatives and ensure that desirable outcomes were achieved.

Soft, or libertarian, paternalism is an approach to governing through which governmental aims can be realised. It encapsulates a number of mechanisms including temporal ordering, calculating technologies, spatial design and choice architecture as modes of government-sponsored behaviour change to legitimise governmental intervention in everyday life. Soft paternalism has been recently collectivised under the neology of *nudge* strategies (Jones *et al*, 2010; Pykett *et al*, 2011; John *et al*, 2009), a trend of behavioural economics now common in political rhetoric (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). Although having been used formally and informally for decades throughout government, the concept of nudging has recently swept political, social and financial realms as a way of designing governance through a psychological approach to influencing decision-making (Lockton, 2008). *Nudging* behaviour towards certain ‘desirable’ outcomes articulates the effects that of “prompting social norms” (Jones, *et al*, 2010:486), spatial design and choice architecture have upon individual’s cognitive

biases, understanding, interpretation and rationalisation. Thus through exercising nudges, behaviour, strategy and social motivation can be manipulated to achieve and predict certain ends (ibid; Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). It is therefore in understanding how people comprehend systems, technologies and designed entities that choice opportunities can be structured and suggestions presented to influence individual's thought and action (Thaler and Benartzi, 2004; Tversky, 1972; Norman, 1990; Vincente, 2006).

Soft paternalism can be distinguished from 'hard' paternalism in that it does not close off alternative options. Instead choices remain open but are presented in such a way that is "consistent with the desired action" (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008:90). However, how these choices are structured and what constitutes a 'better choice' is at the discretion of the architect (Van De Veer, 1986; Friedman and Friedman, 1980). Looking at the role of local government as the architect of choice in PB, exercising soft paternalism is an attractive way of ensuring that areas in need of development are targeted, that the spending of budgets is done so in ways consistent with governmental aims, and that the local authority can be seen to have fulfilled central government requirements for participatory governance (a culture of community governance through an engaged and participative public) (Barnett, *et al*, 2008). Thus in architecting choice in this way, there is no neutrality in design, it is done so with a set of predefined criteria and outcomes in mind (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008).

Governmental exercise of modes of libertarian paternalism therefore evokes a significant moral argument in the architecture and manipulation of decision-making to align with certain priorities. There is a risk of creating 'false dichotomies' where only two options are presented when in fact many more may be available, or 'decoy effects' when the introduction of a third, marginally more attractive option, removes focus from two previously thought to be preferred outcomes, either accidentally or deliberately

(Lockton, 2008). For government to remain ‘soft’ in its paternalism, it therefore needs to avoid these pitfalls to allow open and unrestricted choice, thereby being seen to uphold democratic and free decision-making. It is thus the moral judgment of government and the recalibration of the relationship between government and society which are significant in exercising these techniques.

Libertarian paternalistic techniques of behaviour change are closely linked with Foucault’s (1991) conceptualisation of governmentality. Engaging in soft paternalistic techniques of governing exercises a *mentality* of governance, that of competing for control over participatory governing and attempting to alter “the conduct of conduct” (Dean, 1999:10; Lemke, 2001:191). When examining the governance of society through soft paternalism, in Foucauldian terms the individual and the state are dependent on one another and the mechanisms, or conduct of one “co-determines each other’s emergence” (Lemke, 2001:191). It can be understood, therefore, that the actor who holds power, or is dictating conduct, and how that power is exercised, constitutes the nature of liberal governance in participatory democracy.

### **Introducing Participatory Democracy in England**

Participatory democracy signifies the coming together of forms of representative and direct democracy, a point of conflict in Cornwall as discussed in the previous chapter (Aragones and Sanchez-Pages, 2009). In attempting to mobilise both forms of democracy simultaneously, through PB for example, government looks to harmonise the practice of deliberative democracy. A co-constitutive democratic system is then what is desired and it is this that UK central government envisaged through increased local governing as a facet of Localism. However, this hybrid form of democracy has

resulted in a fuzzy *new* composition of governance, designed to incorporate and empower the citizen but still stringently led by government.

For Cornwall, PB was a mechanism of governance designed to alleviate the complexity of decision-making and create participatory publics, albeit transitory, able to self-govern. PB provided a perceived solution to the governmental co-ordination of Localism in reducing bureaucracy, cost and size of networked relations, and implementing a simplified route to participatory and direct governance. In the White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (DCLG, 2006), PB was cited as one of the key measures to devolve decision-making to the community. A more concentrated, small-scale endeavour, PB appeals to governments because of its short-term, straightforward, manageable processes of allocation and spending of local grants. As an ‘empowerment tool’ and one concerned with instilling sustainable self-governance in communities, PB was thus intended to allow citizens more control over decisive powers governing their local area.

Crudely, PB can be described as a means to provide financial incentives in exchange for participation. Through PB a local government grant (or other funding source) is presented to communities for locally-directed expenditure. Community groups and individuals submit proposals for local development or improvement and compete against one another for funding. The proposals are deliberated upon by a selection board comprising, for example, local government and local authority figures who then decide which proposal(s) deserve funding. PB is generally structured under a single thematic banner of one of local and/or central government’s strategic priorities for the area. Community engagement and participation for the funds offered through PB is then constructed around this pre-conceived theme. All submissions or proposals for the PB expenditure must surround this theme, meaning that a predictable outcome will be reached. As a controversial method of inciting local involvement in governing, PB is

designed to lessen the powers of the legislature and put decision-making in the hands of citizens. However, as I will show in the empirical evidence later in this chapter, it can also be seen to provide the guise of local decision-making and solution-forming, yet simultaneously a platform for government to deploy architected choice to meet political, social or economic targets.

PB is intended to “increase transparency, accountability, understanding and social inclusion in local government affairs” (Church Action on Poverty, 2008:4) by informing citizens of what government can provide and asking communities to identify their priorities for spending, facilitated by local authority officers. PB provides the mechanism through which responsibility materialises in creating an environment for self-governance through budgetary decision-making. Convening publics to take greater responsibility in their communities is a central tenet of Cornwall Council’s program for Localism and was seen as a method to deliver on promises of increased local autonomy. In 2008 and 2009 Cornwall Council piloted schemes for PB, under the name *U-Choose for Cornwall* after the launch of central government’s participatory budgeting draft-strategy and consultation in summer 2008. In the White Paper *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* (2008), the then Labour government stated that “all local authorities will be using some form of participatory budgeting by 2012” (DCLG, 2008:8). This commitment provided for Cornwall County Council an opportunity to showcase how participatory governing could be performed once it was integrated into the broader Localism agenda for the new unitary authority. The frameworks and directives given to local government to develop communities, such as the *Sustainable Communities Act*, the *Communities’ Empowerment Plan* and the *National Empowerment Framework*, allowed the Council to recognise the opportunities that embedding participatory governing could bring the new unitary authority:

...to embed [participatory budgeting] as a key element of the Localism Agenda [would] increase[e] the opportunities for community engagement and participation ...critical to ensur[ing] the new authority is responsive to local priorities, recognises difference and enables local people to have a greater say in the delivery of local services. [P]articipatory budgeting offers a significant opportunity to fully embed a truly participative approach in the coming years” (*U-Choose for Cornwall*, Cornwall County Council, 2008).

Participatory democracy speaks to the evolution of citizenship and aims to develop the citizen, their rights, roles and responsibilities, in ways that benefit them and their society. Measures of participatory governance have been developed to allow the citizen, and therefore citizenship, to advance and let the electorate become key actors in governance and decision-making. This “new progressive political agenda” (Koonings, 2004:81) initiates a “constructive interaction” (ibid:81) between politics, resources, citizen engagement and activity. Avritzer (2002) and Koonings (2004:81) term the product of constructive interaction “participatory publics”, groups of citizens who are enabled, through engagement and participation techniques to transform and take on the ownership of governance for their area.

### **Creating Publics**

The creation of publics is an integral part of establishing a society which is responsible and willing to engage in self-governance. In central government’s White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (2006:5), the then Labour government stated that:

Citizens and communities know what they want from public services, and what needs to be done to improve the places where they live. We want to use these strengths to drive up service standards and foster a sense of community and civic pride.

Further, the White Paper *Communities in Control* (2008:iii) noted:

...there are few issues so complex, few problems so knotty, that they cannot be tackled and solved by the innate common sense and genius of local people. With the right support, guidance and advice, community groups and organisations have a huge, largely latent, capacity for self-government and self-organisation.

The above extracts highlight the government's perceptions of crucial practical and intellectual roles for the citizen and community in delivering Localism according to Third Way idealisations. The discourse presents a sense that government is relying upon the individual and communities to mobilise and deliver policy objectives for Localism. In doing so, this discourse also engenders a sense of moral responsibility and self-efficacy for the individual and community to self-organise, engage and participate in governing activity to achieve what *they* want for their community. It is evident, then, that a discursive space was being created through governmental ideals for Localism, but this space was largely dominated by the "governmentalisation of policy agendas" (Raco, 2003:76) seeking to convene publics through top-down methods to employ certain actions so that objectives are met.

The convening and shaping of publics to exercise the self-governing aspirations of government can therefore be seen as a mode through which governing at a distance could occur. In creating publics government sought to define "a kind of social totality"

(Warner, 2002:49), containing individuals within specific geographical boundaries to create a cohesive group able to govern their area. In researching the emergence of publics in Cornwall through Cornwall Council's efforts to exercise Localism, I attended the meeting of a resident's association in the Truro and the Roseland Community Network Area. The association's membership was made up of local residents from the nearby streets in a residential part of the city. However, the association was convened and chaired by Cornwall Council Housing Officers seeking to bring about change in the area. The residents were largely private homeowners but amongst them were council tenants. I was told that there had been tensions between the residents and the association had been established to try to promote greater joint-working and development. In the meeting I attended I took field notes as I observed the relations between the residents, their attitudes to the council officers present and their ability to problem-solve. Here is an excerpt from the field notes:

Four council officers and five residents present. Just gotten underway, everyone sitting separate. Just introduced myself, said that I'm just observing, for them to pretend I'm not there. Already there's a call from one resident for an 'external' meeting to be held to resolve the internal issues in the group – there's apparently trouble with one member of the group. And she's right here. Tense words between residents and council officers about whatever problems the residents have with this lady. Residents seem to be quite disrespectful/resentful to the officers. Very tense, residents seem angry. Some not paying attention though... Officers clearly wanting to move on to the (meeting's) agenda. They praised residents for their good work on producing the minutes of the last meeting and communicated that things 'are being done' in the area with the association's help... A resident then asked why it takes so long for the council to get around to fixing problems – a question and answer wasn't on the agenda. An officer agreed that the amount of time to wait for improvement work was too long and said that

she and her colleagues were actively pursuing issues. Resident seemed happy with the response but in piping up unannounced and sounding rather ticked off, it's clear there is a disharmony between residents and the council. Another then asked about the council's housing policy and said that it's too complicated. A few others nodded in agreement, I think four residents present are social tenants and one private.

Later in the meeting, a council officer said that there was a £1000 pot of community funding available and residents could decide what that could be spent on. The atmosphere changed from being quite angry and disengaged to an almost small wave of excitement. A few ideas were thrown around and the residents discussed together the use of land behind one of the streets as a possible site for a playpark. The council officers said this would take time and planning. This did not go down well. Residents didn't seem to understand that they could not build on the land. Residents are not happy about the bureaucracy involved. A council officer then said that if at the next meeting 7 or 8 people attended, a committee could be formed to make a decision. The residents didn't hear this, I don't think, and carried on complaining about how the council doesn't take action on people's overgrown gardens (primary observation data, November, 2009).

What this data shows is that in Cornwall Council's convening of the resident's association there appears to be deep cleavages in the relationship between resident and with the council. All that appeared to be binding them together is that they live in the same area. Their fundamental values and views are quite disparate. This is an example of a politically convened public brought together for a purpose (see Mahoney *et al*, 2010; Iveson, 2003; Fincher and Panelli, 2001; Anderson and Jacobs, 1999). Publics of this kind exist by virtue, are autotelic surviving because of a *need* to be addressed and are driven by a purpose (*ibid*).

Publics have the capability to act and react as a body of political actors through the use of solidarity and power making them, as recognised by government, integral to local governing. Publics which ‘naturally’ occur, from the gravitation of individuals to one another to unite over collective interests, express normativity in values (Barnett, 2011). These publics bring together connected subjects who share common ideas but are open to a multiplicity of functions to allow them to integrate other, related concepts and practices into their framework (ibid). Publics which are governmentally convened do not possess such flexibility. Individuals brought together for a singular purpose as a tool of government do not possess the commonality found in naturally occurring publics. As seen in the previous chapter, separating individuals and entities into containers also causes dissent as individual interests and the multiple identities of members contest their categorisation. In the same vein, grouping individuals into publics invites similar tensions because of the assumption that commonality in, for example, geography, forges an active, cohesive public.

Yet government believes that it is through convening active, engaged and informed publics, as political actors, that local decision-making and agenda setting can take place. Indeed for Localism through PB in Cornwall, the creation of publics was to provide two key benefits to the local authority: firstly to produce or mobilise active citizens as a collective to participate and advance localist initiatives; and second, to mould a public capable of self-governance while government remains at a distance. In engaging and informing citizens and inciting a sense of moral responsibility the state *appears* to be devolving greater responsibility and power to the community and local government. However, this perceived power, imparted through discourse, ensures its practical application is limited.

Nevertheless, government continued to attempt to convene publics and as seen in the cases of PB outlined later in this chapter, does so through attempting to configure

subjectivities (Barnett, 2008; Giddens, 1991; Kinnvall, 2004). Subjectivities are translated through the top-down narrative for Localism, as discussed in chapter five, which is dispersed to local government and the community. This discourse is constructed by governmentally defined “moments of closure” (Giddens, 1991:1) which intend to reflect public sentiment, need and desire. A *geography of publics* thus emerges as mobilised political actors, created through a governmentalised dominant discourse of Localism, come into being.

In configuring subjectivities, government can “mobilise particular forms of knowledge or expertise to facilitate policy agendas” (Raco, 2003:77). The community is therefore organised into a “territory[y] of action” (ibid:77). For Raco (2003), Bevir (2006) and Foucault (1991, 1998), configuring subjectivities is inherently spatial as it is the “ordered maximisation of collective and individual forces” (Foucault, 1998:24-25) brought together by the power of government that produces a public and then enables its mobilisation through technologies of participation (in Raco, 2003). It is clear therefore that Foucault’s ideas of a governmentalised ‘conduct of conduct’ weaves throughout the fabric of the production of publics in Localism as government seeks “to establish and build subjectivities” (ibid:76).

The dominant discourse of leadership, mobilisation, citizenship and participation creates attitudes and beliefs which government aspires to become normalised by publics into everyday practice. As noted by Guthman (2008:1181), it is through this discourse that “the most promising route to activist projects” resides. Barnett (2008:14) argues that “publics cannot come into existence without presupposing infrastructures of communications and patterns of social interaction”. Normalisation therefore occurs through paternalistic mechanisms, defining the space, time, type and structure of governance within which publics will form and operate. Yet the subjectivities engendered by government discourse produce publics which are areal, they exist in no

true sense of an active, engaged, autonomous group. To counterbalance the artificiality of these publics, government must exercise constraints, through a politics of performance, to ensure they operate in specific ways.

### **The Politics of Performing Localism**

As I have discussed already in this thesis, Localism was a top-down, governmentally-driven initiative, structured with specific requirements and outcomes in mind. Although the local authority in Cornwall was granted some discretion in shaping Localism at a local level, it was also mandated to conform to a number of prerequisites to ensure evenness in development and predetermined results. Thus the devolution of governance was not as free ranging as the discourse of The Third Way presented, as in essence, elements of architected Localism, structured around government, not the citizen, were evident.

The hesitancy of government to allow citizens to engage in unrestricted governing reflects its role as ‘enabler’, “to encourage in us behaviour that is in our own best interests” (Halpern *et al*, 2004:60). As enabler, government determines the ‘default’, for example in setting agendas to eat more healthily (recommending five portions of fruit and vegetables per day), exercising more (guidelines presented by government QUANGOs such as the Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF)) or continue in education after age 16 (as seen in the publication of the White Paper, *Higher education: students at the heart of the system*, 2011). These defaults not only intend to encourage behaviour change, but also instill values of discipline and readiness to engage with governmental ideals in order for policy aims to be met. The discourse of encouragement which presents these defaults necessitates a change in the relationship between government and the citizen from purely paternalistic, ‘you must’, to more

choice orientated, 'you are able to'. However, this relationship is built upon a politics which establishes how, where and when choices, decisions and options will be taken, by whom and what the outcomes of these will be.

The lack of a clear strategy for performing Localism and divisions at the local scale in Cornwall, discussed in the previous chapter, meant that evenness in embedding Localism was not achieved. Therefore specific projects such as PB initiatives were favoured by the local authority to deliver on their promise of Localism, attempt to foster closer local government-community working and be seen by central government to have conformed to recommendations. Through these projects a politics emerged which was governed by both local and central government, with top-down policy goals, frameworks, mandates and specific outcomes in mind. This politics determined the amount of funding made available for Localism endeavours, which communities would be involved, the thematic and target-based structure of the projects and what the intended outcomes should be. I suggest here that this politics, although steered by central government as a result of funding being drawn down from governmental departments, can be seen to have been largely shaped in Cornwall by local government needs. I posit that this politics had a focus upon wider aims, and perhaps not individual community aims, of anti-social behaviour, the development of communities in deprived areas and environmental protection.

The caveats placed upon spending meant that PB projects were required to be 'spun' in certain ways, conforming to top-down idealisations of how community engagement in Localism would emerge. Further governmentalisation of what could be achieved through projects for Localism came from Cornwall Council and although intended to target very real needs and issues in local areas, certain 'co-operative' communities were selected as sites for PB projects with targets which could be achieved through 'quick wins'. To ensure that these projects for Localism would provide material

results for the community and adhere to governmental expectations, mechanisms of soft paternalism were layered onto schemes to ensure desired outcomes. This move from a paternalistic to a seemingly avuncular state therefore altered the way in which decision-making was structured, allowing central government to step back and local government to perform a greater role, particularly in structuring participatory governance.

The establishment of a politics of performing Localism reflects the causal effects of a shift in the balance of power and decision-making from government to more fluid and interactive mechanisms designed for the community (ibid). This *shift* is popularly characterised as a move from ‘old’ to ‘new’ forms of governance, where old governance represents the previous *status quo* of centralised and institutionalised governing in “a top-down” fashion (Walters, 2004). New governance therefore reflects a move away from centralised governing and towards a more pluralised network of governance, placing governance in the hands of the public and private sectors, the third sector, communities and the individual.

This transition has been seen, in part, as a result of a cultural backlash from communities who, perhaps due to increased availability of information on human rights, democracy and autonomy, have begun to demand choice and influence on decisions that directly affect their lives (ibid). There have been two significant changes to the dynamic of power as a result of this shift (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). First, it has produced a stronger sense of liberalism within society by encouraging individuals to participate in governing and become autonomous advocates. Second, it has required the development of alternative modes of governing that enable centralised power to be dispersed more widely, such as PB.

## **The Beginnings of Participatory Budgeting**

Participatory budgeting first emerged in the City of Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989. An innovative system for making budgetary dissemination more democratic and transparent, participatory governance through devolved budgets allowed a complex structure of governing to emerge in the city, designed and tailored to the needs of Porto Alegre's citizens. PB is Localism in action and was seen by the City's government as a mode of redesigning governance to ensure that democracy, openness, accountability and inclusion were incorporated to the structures of governing at all levels. Budgets are allocated for local spending and are granted to a convened panel of citizens of Porto Alegre to debate, discuss and decide upon where and how this money is spent. For example, the process begins in January of each year when neighbourhood, regional and city-wide assemblies ask the citizenry to participate. Spending priorities are then identified once enough views and ideas have been collated and in February and March, specialists in PB help convene plenary assemblies in each of the city districts. Citizen-delegates are then elected to represent the neighbourhoods and the Mayor's office begins filter through each area's spending priorities. Regional plenary meetings are held in the months after and councillors are elected to the Municipal Council of the Budget to represent both the districts and the spending priorities. The Municipal Council of the Budget then decides upon which priorities are acted upon with the available finances, the money is then distributed and plans put into action (Santos, 2005; Sintomer, 2008; [www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk)).

The PB system in Porto Alegre was developed to suit the unique social, political, cultural and historical geography of the City, the disparate communities living in and around the area and the local characteristics that combine to create a unique and dynamic geography, such as levels of poverty and working patterns. The regeneration of governance in Porto Alegre, the local authority sought to reframe the city's socio-

political history and create a “window of opportunity” (ibid:166) for participatory democracy. The appetite for greater self-governance came, therefore, from both the top-down and bottom-up to allow citizens to take more control of decision-making and increase accountability and transparency in government. It was a slow evolution of change but one that has created and solidified new processes and terms of governance in the city. Stability in governing has emerged and despite a general election in the city in 2004, the system of participatory governance in place since 1989 has not been not altered. To date, over 100 European Cities have implemented forms of participatory democracy, such as Paris, Rome and Seville. However, despite widespread use and relative success, PB has not been implemented to any great extent in the UK. In 2005, the City of London attempted to introduce PB but low citizen participation and insufficient budgets did not provide the projects with any credence or longevity (www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk; see also Hilden in Germany and Altidona in Italy, for example; Sintomer *et al*, 2008).

Other PB projects pursued in England from 2008 to 2009, on the whole, spoke to governmental needs and requirements of communities. Although a number were structured around disengaged communities and those in poverty (see for example Walsall, West Midlands and Tower Hamlets, London), the projects lacked ongoing earmarked budgets, firm government-local joint leadership and framing to suit local desirability. PB projects in Cornwall under *U-Choose* also reflect these shortcomings, which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. The form of decentralised governance introduced by the government of Porto Alegre underpinned democratic consolidation through “expanding the universe of spaces of popular deliberation” (Koonings, 2004:84) by “restoring conditions for governance” (ibid:84), instilling ideas and practices of pluralism in governance, and strengthening participation, empowerment and inclusion. Those which emerged in England focused more on bounded communities

requiring an exclusive membership of these groups for participation. The opportunities to roll these projects out further were limited. In addition, conditions were placed upon participating communities, forced to adhere to thematic constraints more often than not surrounding wider governmental aims such as improving the health or environment of areas. These themes would have an impact on civic life in the community but are essentially governmental defaults and do not allow free-reign of the citizen for deliberation over the spending of a local budget.

The successes of participatory governance in Porto Alegre have been attributed to “a combination of a strong and pragmatic political will on the part of local government on the one hand, and of bottom-up mobilisation on the other side” (Sintomer *et al*, 2008:167; see also Santos, 2005). It is this meeting of top-down and bottom-up that provides the balance for participatory governance to emerge, for it to be trusted as a means to improve local conditions and possess some form of permanency. The balance, produced largely by a “countervailing power” (ibid:167; see also Arvitzter, 2005) through a participatory and scrutinising public, encourages the state to rely on society, and vice-versa, in a co-dependent relationship with a common aim. Within English PB projects this countervailing power has been somewhat curtailed. Citizens may want to engage in participatory governing but the fact that it has only, to date, been implemented through short-term geographically-based projects makes it difficult for a wider, self-convened public to emerge. Further through deploying mechanisms of soft paternalism in these projects, government is essentially preventing a co-dependent relationship with society from emerging. In harnessing full power and control government does not allow the meeting of top-down and bottom-up thus the balance of participatory governing remains uneven.

In examining this unevenness as a result of government intervention into participatory governance, I draw here on empirical data from two PB pilot schemes in

Cornwall in 2008, each of which produced very different results. The two pilot areas, Redruth North and Bodmin, share similar characteristics as areas of high indices of deprivation and largely rural communities, but there are fundamental differences in their social and participatory geographies. The divergent outcomes of the pilots reflect the unevenness of governmental attention to the geography of participation, and in the interpretation of the diffusionistic, or *nudge narrative*. As will be shown, in attending to the geography of Redruth North, governmental implementation of soft paternalistic techniques resulted in the moderate balance of top-down and bottom-up priorities and needs. However, inattention to this geography in Bodmin resulted in a heavily paternalistic project and one met with inertia by local residents. I begin here with an overview of the PB pilot put into action in Redruth North in 2008.

## **Redruth North**

Prior to the launch of the PB programme in Redruth North, few structured governance opportunities for managing community budgets had been provided for local residents. An area afflicted with high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, an Audit Commission report in 2005 showed that three-quarters of people in Redruth felt they were unable to influence decisions affecting their neighbourhood ([www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)). In 2008 Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, Cornwall County Council and local organisations such as the Redruth North Partnership<sup>27</sup> (RNP) held a series of neighbourhood meetings to engage with local residents and discern their priorities. PACT meetings (police and communities together), similar to the one convened for the PB project, were a common occurrence in the area and provided a space where local police could meet with residents and discern their issues and

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<sup>27</sup> A collection of six residents associations in the Redruth North electoral ward, the Town and County Council, and partners and agencies from the local area.

concerns. In an interview, a local police sergeant told me that PACT meetings had been running for some time and they felt that in the Redruth area, they were “ahead of the game” (primary interview data, July, 2009). He said that public discontent in the area had led to anti-social behaviour. The local police called a PACT meeting and spoke to residents about what the whole community, police and residents, could do together to alleviate the problem. He said:

We were looking to the public to help define the solutions. We need a holistic input, the police can't solve all the problems. If we didn't convene and go to the meetings they'd probably die (the meetings). We have to keep getting people involved and share responsibility in the community (primary interview data, July 2009).

At the meeting specifically to determine community priorities for the PB project, residents asked for more local uniformed policing, better services for young people, increased community-safety work by wardens and efficient tackling of disturbances created by youths (ibid). Basing a participatory budgeting pilot in the area on these initial priorities, Council officials and community support workers used these socio-economic characteristics of the geography of Redruth North to structure the pilot.

In marrying these priorities with local government strategic aims, the local authority themed the pilot ‘community safety’ to guide residents in their applications for the spending of the devolved budget. Continuing to engage with local residents, Cornwall County Council officials, local police and members of the RNP met throughout the months of September and October of 2008 to discuss the framework for the pilot. As an umbrella body of organisations and local groups operating in the local

area, the RNP was granted the role of organiser and facilitator of the project by Cornwall County Council. Funding was provided by One Cornwall<sup>28</sup> and Kerrier District Council,<sup>29</sup> and a panel was established to evaluate development proposals submitted by the local community, consisting of members of the RNP, community volunteers, Town Council and Cornwall County Council officials.

On October 9th 2008 Cornwall Council launched a call for submissions for the *U-Choose* scheme in Redruth North ([www.redruthnorthpartnership.co.uk](http://www.redruthnorthpartnership.co.uk)). Fifty-two local residents, alongside the RNP, voted to provide twelve projects proposed by residents (*One Cornwall*, issue 17, February 2009, Cornwall Council). These projects included the establishment of *RedYOUth*, an organisation which provides structured activities for disadvantaged and vulnerable youths in the Redruth area (ibid).

The pilot essentially reorganised the relationship between the local authority and the community in permitting the local body, the RNP, to take control of organising and facilitating the project. The local authority was able to step back and allow the RNP to exercise their knowledge of the local area and those living in Redruth North, and be seen as a local ‘face’ of a locally-orientated project. The decision to do so reflected Cornwall County Council’s sensitivity to the geography of Redruth: a historically politically disengaged populace but one with strong local connections and appetite for engaging in participatory initiatives. In permitting the RNP a leadership role, the exercise of soft paternalistic techniques through embedding the theme of ‘community safety’ allowed the authority to remain in control of the scheme but at a distance. The theme incited a stronger focus of local residents in their applications but also ensured the local authority that the outcome of the pilot would meet governmental objectives. Cornwall County Council thus regulated the project but allowed, on the face of it, some

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<sup>28</sup> The transition body from a two-tiered local authority to a unitary.

<sup>29</sup> The previous district council, dissolved on April 1st, 2009.

semblance of local autonomy. I turn here now to the second example of PB in Cornwall, in the area of Bodmin.

## **Bodmin**

Thirty miles from Redruth is the town of Bodmin. A town located in a rural area, much like Redruth, Bodmin had extensive experience of PB schemes prior to Cornwall County Council's planned pilot in 2008. The Town Council and the Bodmin and Surrounding Area Forum had historically assumed much of the engagement and participation work for the area and had in place a system for the allocation of small community grants for residents' projects. Concurrently, North Cornwall District Council<sup>30</sup> ran a community chest system, also providing funding for community-led ventures for residents living in Bodmin. The area was therefore accustomed to participatory governing schemes, especially those which offered budgets for local expenditure. However, in structuring the pilot for the Bodmin area the local authority did not take this historical engagement into account. Instead Cornwall County Council used the same format as in Redruth North and attempted to engage with local residents on local issues of concern. The close-working between residents and the Town Council and the availability of funding for local projects meant that the local authority's initial engagement with those living in the area did not highlight any conclusive problems to be addressed as concerns were already communicated to local bodies. Moreover, engagement was done by the County Council, not the District Council operating in the area. This meant that knowledge of local needs and of existing funding opportunities was not conveyed, thus contributed to the problems facing the planned PB pilot.

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<sup>30</sup> The previous District Council before Cornwall became a unitary authority in April 2009.

Despite this lack of information, the local authority proceeded to structure the pilot without joint-working with local organisations. No theme was proposed for the pilot but instead, a strict framework was imposed to ensure a flow of processes. In an interview, a community engagement officer noted:

“With hindsight, Bodmin and Surrounding Area Forum already [had] a small fund for each of the parishes to apply for, North Cornwall District Council [also ran] a very successful community chest which also gave funding to people... [the issue was with] fairness as a rule, if you apply for funding, if you fit the criteria, there is the money and you tend to get the funds” (primary interview data, February 2009).

The Council attempted to employ learning from the Redruth North scheme, largely as a result of the huge volume of applications submitted, and decided to place conditions on the pilot: applications were only to be accepted from organisations and individuals who were “fully constituted and recognised” in the area; caps were employed on the maximum amount of money that could be applied for; and a ‘quota system’ was established to make sure that a “minimum number of projects are accepted from rural parish areas (minimum of four projects from outside of the Bodmin electoral divisions)” (*One Cornwall*, issue 17, February 2009, Cornwall County Council). The decision was made by the County Council to cap the number of applications because it was felt that too many applications could “lead to problems with assessment” (ibid). As such, only thirty-two proposals were to be considered.

The PB event was to be held in the Town Council’s Shire Suite in central Bodmin on a Saturday during the day. Submissions were asked to be submitted before

this time so applications could be assessed and short listed to make sure they tied into the broad thematic headings described above. The short listed applications were then presented at the event and each would be given three minutes to describe their ideas. Attendees could then vote for the project they felt deserved the funding by grading the project on a scale from one to ten. The winning projects would be required to “provide a three-monthly update on how they have used the money. This will be a fairly informal arrangement to ensure that the process does not become too onerous” (ibid).

It is clear that the Bodmin pilot was more stringently controlled than the Redruth North initiative. There were more conditions and rules to be adhered to, perhaps to avoid complications if the predicted high number of applications were submitted. However, at the submission deadline, only one project proposal had been submitted, not enough to run the PB scheme or invite residents to vote on proposals. After the event, a Cornwall Council engagement officer spoke of breakdowns in communication between citizens and the local authority, noting that “services are not engaged... there’s a role for town and parish councils [but] they’re going to become powerless if we don’t get this articulation and communication right” (primary interview data, July 2009).

The pilot in Bodmin can therefore be seen to have been poorly planned and disengaged with the geography of participation in the area and of the trust and close-working between residents, the Town Council and District Council. Disregarding these essential specifics significant to Bodmin, the local authority’s approach to the pilot attempted to weave in lessons from the Redruth scheme and established a firm framework for the mechanisms of the pilot. However without understanding of the appetite for PB and of the existing similar schemes in place, this planning and framework was largely redundant. In heavily paternalising the pilot the local authority created an initiative that not only resembled others in place, but that was not as flexible or locally orientated as those co-ordinated by local organisations.

## Lessons From Redruth North and Bodmin

In looking at the differences between the PB projects in Redruth and Bodmin two key findings are evident; first there is a clear difference in the geography of participation and level of previous engagement between the local authority and communities; and second, there are differences between intervention by government and the exercise of paternalistic techniques of control of the process to ensure predictable outcomes.

The Redruth pilot was promoted and structured for an area which “historically lack[ed] any engagement with local government structures” ([www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk); [www.stcleerparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.stcleerparishcouncil.gov.uk)), meaning the opportunity to participate and play a role in shaping the future of their community was uncharted territory for the local community. Redruth North, without prior opportunity to engage in participatory budgeting schemes, thus provided a space where a *new* idea could flourish because there lacked a normalisation of behaviour to participate in such initiatives. A cohesive public was formed through the invitation to residents by the local authority to participate in structuring the PB project. Residents then united to form a decision-making body to actively engage with the scheme and govern their local area. Residents could begin to act as organisers, advocates and decision-makers for their community. Nevertheless, the choice architecture implemented by the authority through theming the project as ‘community safety’ created an ‘infantilising rationality’. As a new project, the community could be steered in their approach, thoughts and behaviours to align with that of governmental aims (Jones *et al*, 2010). Redruth North thus became a site for guiding and moulding residents into an engaged public through choice architecture, uniting the concerns of the community with that of the local authority. However, this coming together of top-down and bottom-up needs created asymmetrical relations as the local authority was seen to be in control of the funding for the scheme.

In contrast, the Bodmin pilot was layered on to an area with already existing structures of participatory engagement. Moreover, the funding already in place for Bodmin had a wider remit than *U-Choose* could provide and the financial incentives were also lower than those provided by the Town Council and the Bodmin and Surrounding Area Forum. In an interview with the Bodmin Community Network Manager, he noted that the previous District Council in the area (North Cornwall District Council) had in place a patchwork of engagement and priorities which met local priorities. He said that Localism was “member territory”, noting that historically Cornwall County Councillors and town and parish councils had deployed the majority of engagement opportunities. This statement is consistent with the failure of the PB pilot in the area as without the input of local Cornwall, and town and parish, councillors, there was no understanding of the historical or social attitudes towards engagement or what the local community needed. There was no opportunity to deploy infantilising rationalities or normalise behaviour as participatory publics had already been formed through civic engagement with the Town Council and the Bodmin and Surrounding Area Forum. As a result, there was no meeting of top-down and bottom-up needs. One Cornwall Council officer interviewed said of the PB pilot in Bodmin, “as a new concept it’s hard to sell... If I knew then what I know now I might have been tempted to have a lot more input with community groups rather than parish councils and it might have been a good idea to say we’ve got £10,000 to spend on village halls, it was too wide” (primary interview data). The Community Network Manager in the area, talking about the difficulties in engaging residents in the newly formed Network Area:

The District Council saw everything but now there’s a bigger area and I’m concerned. We need to be more articulate... a clearer vision of where we’re going. All is not lost and there’s scope for everyone (local stakeholders in

Localism) to work together but agreements need to be developed (primary interview data, July, 2009).

In Bodmin, residents were presented with a top-down, governmentalised and strict framework for the proposed initiative to ensure the pilot met certain priorities. The pilot thus lacked a *nudge*, as a guide and incentive, to cajole residents into taking part. Yet, in being top-down, it also failed to engage with the specific needs of the area and of the historical, and accepted, ways of engaging residents.

The two case studies reflect the variation in use of paternalistic techniques in PB projects and there are three points which bring together the exercise of these methods in social control. First, Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality can aid an explanation of the architecture behind choice opportunities but in practice, governmentalised approaches do not always lead to the achievement of governmental aims. Governmentality emphasises that "modern forms of power operate through diffuse networks, which seek to utilise systems of freedom (or self-conduct), as a basis for governing" (Jones *et al*, 2010:8; Norman, 2011). Having an understanding of the mentality of governing, or the conduct of conduct, allows government to employ technologies or modes of governance such as soft paternalism. Exercising these strategies, as seen in architecting choice through the implementation of a nudge, redefine the balance of power between government and the community and allow the community to become a countervailing power. Outwardly, the community is seen to be acting independently of government but in essence, dominant relations of control are steering thought and behaviour. However in creating rigid frameworks for PB, as seen in the pilot in Bodmin, the governmentality governing this practice created a structure that was unyielding and overtly governmentally-orientated, thus the community did not

embrace the initiative. Governmentality, then, although a valuable tool in understanding and structuring engagement activities so as to achieve desirable outcomes, needs to be balanced and conducted somewhat surreptitiously in order for community buy-in to be attained. Sensitivity to the spatial context of the PB project and the geography of participation already in the area can therefore be viewed as beneficial indicators to the level of paternalism required for the area.

Second, soft paternalism can be seen to have been used as a mode of power and social control, however, in architecting choice, freedom of choice is only a façade. Subjects become “normalised by so-called infrastructures of feeling [as] top-down spatial techniques... are simply used to meet the behaviour-change goals of a professional cartel” (Jones *et al*, 2010:14). Gauging the level of paternalism has to be carefully navigated to ensure that citizens *feel* they are in control of governing. It is here that libertarian paternalistic mechanisms of governing problematise government agendas (Jones *et al*, 2010). Labour’s approach to state activity advocated the increased autonomy of the citizen and the community, but in exercising choice architecture and governmentalising governing opportunities, government undermines this ideological premise. Libertarian paternalism thus essentially creates Janus-faced participatory governance.

Finally, although competing entities, a compromise can be reached to enable freedom of choice, supply helpful nudges and restrain government. Choice architecture is a convincing mode of governance to steer or nudge decision-making in order to improve communities but as the above case studies show, there lies a stark warning that the geographies of place need to be assimilated into frameworks for libertarian paternalistic techniques. Brautigam (2004), amongst other theorists of PB, asserts that there is a semi-prescriptive formula that could enhance the effectiveness, success and sense of ownership felt by citizens engaged in participatory budgeting. For example,

“blueprints” should be avoided and “a menu of possible strategies” (Brautigam, 2004:667) put forward for participating citizens to choose from. Essentially, then, it is the localisation of paternalistic endeavours that needs to be achieved so that each project is tailored towards individual communities, geographies, individuals and capacities. Taking into account geographical, historical, cultural and societal differences, individualised diffusionistic, or nudge, narratives can be applied to move away from infantilising citizens and discounting their ability make rational decisions. Soft paternalism, if exercised sensitively, can therefore encourage joint governmental-community working if a meeting of top-down and bottom-up priorities are integrated into a collective framework seeking to produce and maintain a more active and engaged community.

## **Conclusion**

Tomaney and Pike (2006), Humphrey and Shaw (2004) and O’Brien *et al* (2004) assert that the devolution of responsibility and decision-making away from central government “appears to bring government closer to the people and opens spaces for new actors to influence and shape the priorities of local and national development policy” (Tomaney and Pike, 2006:130). As an “experiment in democracy” (Giddens, 1998:75), PB is an attempt to provide a semblance of autonomy for communities, individuals and publics through shifting responsibility and decision-making to local communities. The International Institute for Environment and Development ([www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)) argues that local organisations not only possess greater knowledge and understanding of local communities, but also elicit a sense of trust and partnership with local residents. Governmental engagement with these groups and granting permission for them to assume leadership of PB schemes can be advantageous to convening

cohesive publics. However, the above studies illustrate that rather than governance taking place in communities, it still remained in local government. This in part can be explained by the short-term nature of PB projects that make it difficult to maintain continuing public participation. The transient nature of publics created through PB were relatively unsuccessful in changing the culture of participation and engagement in participatory governance. The highly managed, top-down, approach to participatory governance in Cornwall prevented a transformation in the culture of participation. In seeking to ensure the conduct of conduct and normalise citizen behaviour, Cornwall Council restricted the evolution of bottom-up governing. The practices employed and the default norms dispensed to elicit desirable behaviour resulted in an uneven practice of PB: communities with active, engaged publics are able to flourish under such frameworks, while those with less participative residents may be unsuccessful. In order to navigate the complexities of local governing, participatory initiatives must, therefore, be sensitive to local geographies. There appears to be a 'need' for those structuring such projects to understand, and incorporate, historical practices of engagement and the previous priorities of the communities involved. A blanket approach to participation and engagement schemes is, therefore, ineffective. Default frameworks for action and integrating individual characteristics of place can be seen to help shape participatory schemes according to community desire, ability and need.

For Labour, ideas of decentralisation were entwined with visions of "greater equality of opportunity" (Willett and Giovannini, 2011:3; see also Mather, 2000). However as Norman (2010) argues, although Labour set about rescaling (down-sizing) government to project the appearance of decentralisation, they were simultaneously centralising and imposing greater control over local government and communities. Through governmental rhetoric around ideals for Localism and the mobilisation of active publics, what can be seen to have emerged is "centralised decentralisation"

(Willett and Giovannini, 2011:12). With overarching aims for “...people to be given more control over their lives; consulted and involved in running services; informed about the quality of services in their area; and enabled” (*Strong and Prosperous Communities*, DCLG, 2006:7), the dominant discourse from central government sought to normalise, engage and mobilise individuals and publics. Indeed through the recent Con-Lib alliance *Localism Act* (2010-2012), communities are granted increased opportunities to challenge service providers and service delivery, to bid for self-running of these services, to buy community assets and to call local referendums on local issues.

In much the same way that Dewey (1916) advocated for experimental forms of governance to allow the citizen to increase governing autonomy, as described in chapter four, the rhetoric of PB seeks to enact this through practical and discursive means. The discursive space created by government through rhetoric thus forges a new politics of accountability whereby the state is not directly held responsible for local decision-making and agenda-setting. Staeheli (2008) notes that strategies, such as performing Localism through PB, have been used for many years as a means for the local to find solutions to local issues. She suggests, therefore, that government is predisposed to rely upon communities to solve local problems. Staeheli (2008:18) recognises this as a “moral politics and a moral geography... [not] an abdication of responsibility”. This is furthered by Rose (2000) who suggests that citizenship hinges now on moral values not liberty and freedom (in Staeheli, 2008). Yet the dominant discourse seeking to elicit the mobilisation of publics through PB, and the politics of performing Localism, presents ideas of public obligation and responsibility thereby inoculating government from these duties (Cope, 1997, 2001; Trudeau and Cope, 2003; Staeheli, 2008).

In the more recent *Localism Bill* (2010), communities are to be granted increased opportunities to challenge service providers and service delivery, to bid for self-running of these services, to buy community assets and to call local referendums on

local issues. However as seen in the above case studies, it was the top-down nature of the PB projects which caused problems. The public created through the Redruth North through scheme was a transient one: an areal governmentally convened public formed around the PB initiative. However, after the scheme ended, the public dissolved. In effect, the pilot came to a close before bottom-up could get underway. In configuring the subjectivities of this public and imposing the nudge of ‘community safety’, government was able to mobilise local participation, but, it can be argued, the success of this was because the organisation at the head of the initiative was the RNP; a local partnership recognised and trusted by residents.

The PB initiative planned for Bodmin remained centred around a top-down framework from Cornwall County Council and did not seek leadership from local bodies such as the Bodmin and Surrounding Area Forum. There thus lacked significant moments to convene a public and as the rhetoric around the proposed scheme was one of strict frameworks and conditions, bringing together local residents did not prove effective. It can be concluded, therefore, that local organisations not only possess greater knowledge and understanding of local communities, but also elicit a sense of trust and partnership with local residents. Governmental engagement with these groups and granting permission for them to assume leadership of PB schemes can thus be viewed as advantageous to convening cohesive publics.

It cannot be overlooked, however, that the short-term nature of these PB projects, and others conducted around England, have experienced difficulties in maintaining bottom-up, organised publics. The transient nature of these publics convened to achieve ‘quick wins’ for local government were relatively unsuccessful in changing the culture of participation and engagement in participatory governance. Returning to the example highlighted above of PB in Porto Alegre, it was through revolutionising the approach of government to governing opportunities, engaging the

community from the very beginning and allowing them to shape the process, that transformation not only of civic participation but of the living conditions of residents occurred. I suggest here that the measured and managed approach to participatory governance in England prevents transformation of the culture of participation. In seeking to ensure the conduct of conduct and normalise citizen behaviour, government restricts the evolution of bottom-up governing.

Devolved decision-making through Localism therefore presents a contradictory and inconsistent picture. It provides the guise of local autonomy, but in fact is structured so that central government can retain overall control. PB, as a form of Localism, thus represents an example of what Willett and Giovannini (2011:14) calls the “democratic vacuum pending on England, and all the political, social and economic imbalances ensuing from this” (see also Jones *et al*, 2010).

In Cornwall, a window of opportunity to rebalance democracy has been created through the restructuring of local government to a unitary authority and the division of the county into Community Network Areas. As stated above, the PB case studies presented in this chapter were conducted before the local authority’s reorganisation and it is clear that during this time, participatory governance was both fractured and sporadic. After the transition to a unitary authority it was envisaged by Cornwall Council that the redesign of governmental and governance frameworks would create an environment for improved and long-term participatory governance.

To bring this analysis up to date, a more recent example of the development of this framework for on-going community engagement in local decision-making can be seen in the Newquay Safe Partnership established in the town of Newquay on Cornwall’s north coast. Organised as a response to resident’s and local business’ concerns over anti-social behaviour and safety, the Partnership was established on 28

July 2009 and consists of 25 officers and members from 15 different Council services and partner agencies.<sup>31</sup> The trepidations of Newquay's residents peaked when two holidaymakers lost their lives in cliff falls in 2009 as a result of excessive youth alcohol consumption in the town. Residents came together to protest at County Hall in Truro, the unitary office of Cornwall Council, and demand intervention and support for better monitoring, policing and restriction of alcohol in Newquay. The then Chairman of Newquay Town Residents Association, noted at the time that "bad decisions have been made by planning and licensing departments [of Cornwall Council] in allowing so many bars and clubs to spring up without any real thought of the consequences for the people that live here" (thisiscornwall, 2012). The efforts of residents prompted action from Cornwall Council and the Residents Association led the convening of local organisations and bodies to create the Partnership. It continues to be led by local residents, those who live in the area, see and experience problems within the town requiring attention from the organisation of local groups.

The Partnership was not convened by Cornwall Council, but rather born out of a bottom-up, local appetite to effect change in the area after serious incidents. Nevertheless, the local authority, through the newly formed Community Network Area, began to work in partnership with residents and local bodies, listening to and acting on priorities they raised, and providing support and funding to change the culture of alcoholism and anti-social behaviour in the town.<sup>32</sup> What is evident is that Cornwall Council has facilitated in the development of local governing through resident participation to create change for Newquay. Although the protests of residents could, arguably, have not been ignored, the local authority has recognised the importance of

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<sup>31</sup> Including Cornwall Council, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, NHS Health Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), Visit Cornwall, Tourism Newquay, Newquay Town Council, Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service, Cornwall Council's Anti-social behaviour team, Communications service, Community safety, Environment service, Legal, Licensing service, Newquay and Cornwall Tourism, Safeguarding children service, the Town Centre Manager, Trading standards and the Youth Service.

<sup>32</sup> A list of measures can be found in the Appendix.

understanding and work with the specific and unique geography of the area, discerning the impacts of anti-social behaviour, the transient holidaymaker population of the town, the needs of local businesses, issues faced by residents and of the participatory and engagement capabilities of those living and working in Newquay.

In the following chapter I present the overall conclusions from this research and tie together the findings from each of the three empirical chapters. I reconceptualise governance and power according to this thesis' findings and provide a summary of lessons from the research.

## **Chapter 7:**

### **Discussion**

We have been enslaved by three pernicious and mistaken ideas: that politics is only about the relationship between the state and the individual; that individuals are fundamentally economic automata; and that any derogation from perfect competition is a cause of inefficiency and makes some people worse off. The result is to drive both political and economic debate into a dead end (Norman, 2011:223).

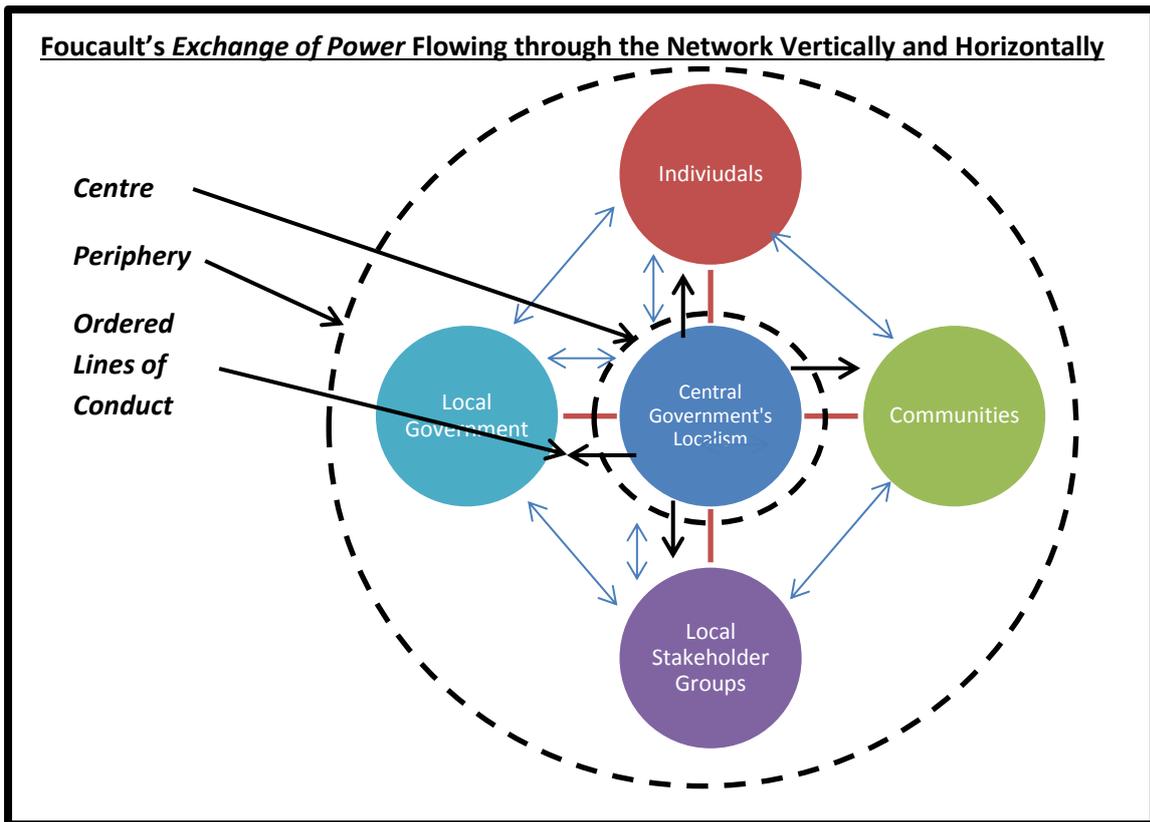
Using Cornwall as a case study, I have described how governmental ideology, limitations to power-sharing, top-down structures of embedding new governance and rationalities for governing have shaped the course of Localism in the county. What can be understood from this investigation is that the failure of government to understand a certain cultural ethos of communities almost guarantees a certain level of underachievement. Local hostility to Localism and the rigid frameworks and targets it brought rendered the practical application of a governmentally designed Localism innately flawed. It was at the local scale that government was met with resistance from actors; from those who intended upon maintaining the status quo in representative democracy, from those who wished not to engage with government initiatives at all, and from those who continued to enact localism with a small 'l' to safeguard local governance in its historical format. Furthermore, it can also be understood from this study that attempts to forge *new* governance through Localism in Cornwall have been stalled by a reluctance from government to relinquish power to the local. The ideology upon which Localism is based sets the tone for the creation of inclusive, autonomous,

devolved governance, however in practice, the mechanisms through which government imposed Localism can be seen to have obstructed both implementation from the top-down, and engagement and participation from the bottom-up.

This final chapter brings together the findings from the three empirical chapters and provides a discussion on the strategy, scale and implementation of Localism in Cornwall. To close this chapter I discuss the theoretical implications of the data presented in this research and how these inform current debates of Big Society.

### **Re-Conceptualising Governance and Power**

To return to the objectives laid out in chapter one of this thesis, I look firstly at how this work has interrogated theoretical conceptualisations of power and governance in Localism. The network of relations created through Localism brought together actors pivotal to its operation: central government, local government, regional organisations, bodies, communities and citizens, for example. Foucault (1982) posits that in drawing actors into a network, this activity then “establish[es] and maintain[s] ordered lines of conduct at a distance” (in Murdoch 2005:74; Wills, 2001). These ordered lines of conduct were evident in the White Papers, recommendations and regulatory frameworks presented to local government and communities on their remit and role in Localism. The enforcement of these rigid, top-down frameworks, and the drive of central government to promote evenness in community development, seemingly disregarded those who could not ‘keep up’ with what government asked. This led to the stalling of Localism and misinterpretations which then trickled down through local government to Community Network Areas and Town and Parish Councils (see Figure 7.1).

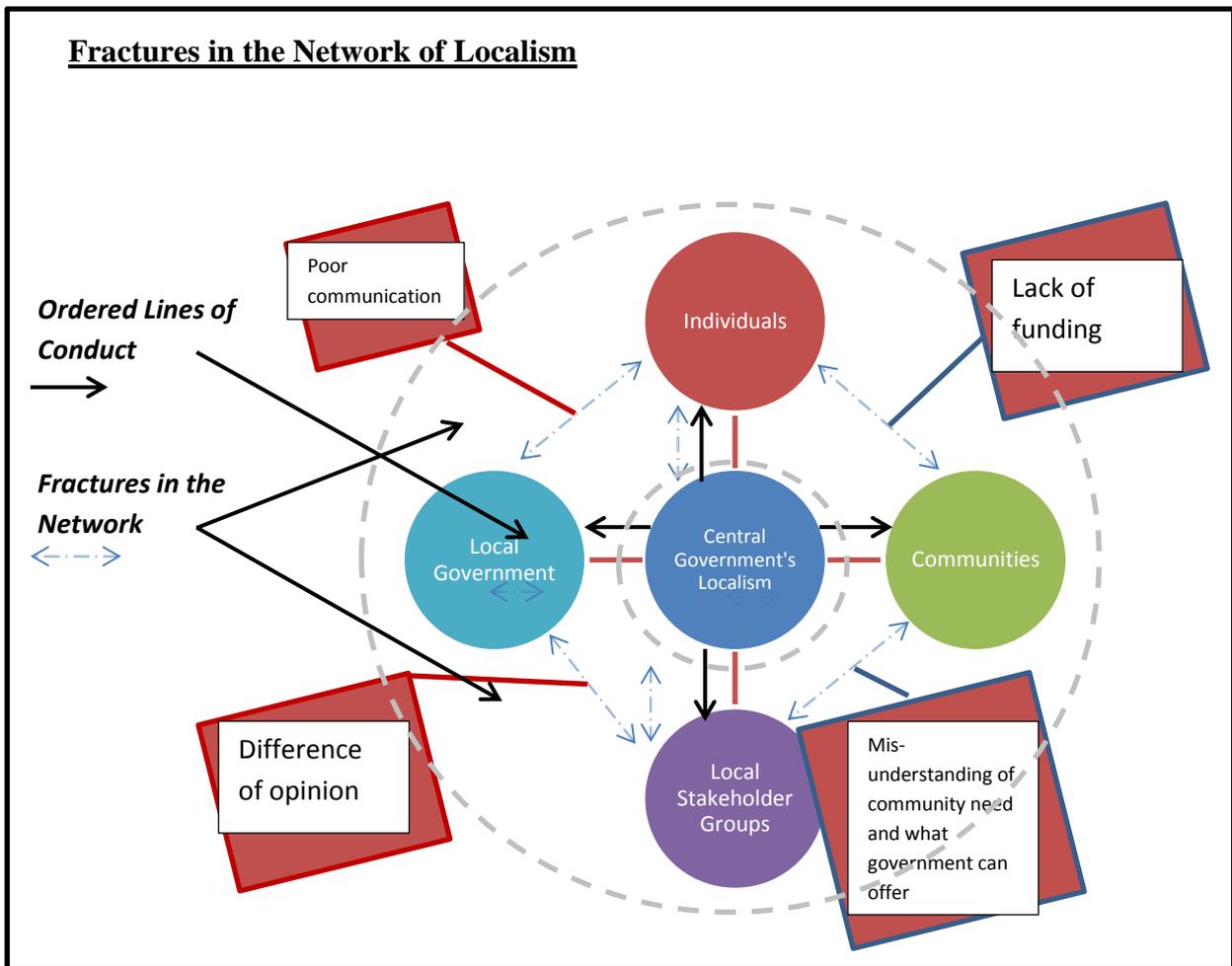


**Figure 7.1**

What emerged, then, were a number of interruptions to the flow of power, or breakages in the ordered lines of conduct, as the local resisted an imposed Localism and rigid frameworks for promoting an ideological Localism could not be put into practice.

The first of these interruptions to the flow of power from central government to the local scale was described in chapter four, examining how Localism is strategised. The discourse of Localism is founded upon ideology, not practical strategies for achieving *real* devolved local governance. The empirical chapters have reflected how policy changes and adapts over space as not only a result of agendas for devolved governance, but of the context of geography itself. Moreover what this work shows is that Localism, as defined by government, is reliant upon ideological precepts and a dominant discourse. As the local authority in Cornwall soon realised, it is not possible to implement rhetoric as strategy; there needs to be practical guidance, with in-built

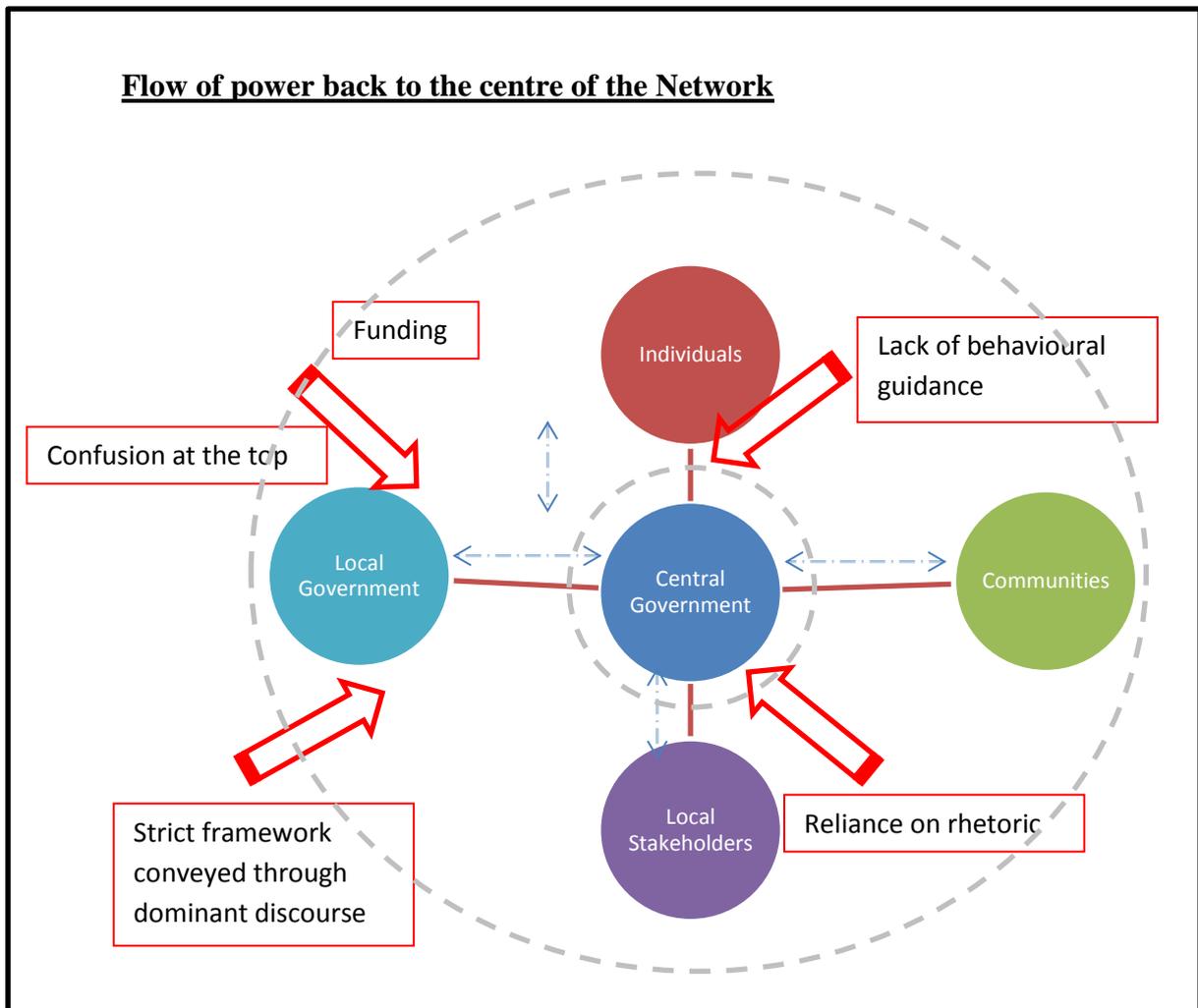
flexibilities, given to local government and communities to follow. Without these Localism becomes confused, as seen in chapter four displaying the differences in understanding, lapses in communication and misinterpretations which were characteristic of early attempts to embed Localism in Cornwall (see Figure 7.2).



**Figure 7.2**

Through the dominant discourse of Localism, I suggested in chapter four that there appears to be a *governing mentality* at work to produce predictable behaviour and outcomes. Through the rhetoric of Localism, government attempted to normalise the procedures and processes of governance to create evenness. However this in fact created *unevenness* as central government's prescriptives were not sensitive to, or accepted by

those at the local scale. The development of practical strategies for performing and embedding Localism at the local level was therefore hindered and power flowed back to the centre of the network of Localism (see Figure 7.3).



**Figure 7.3**

From the quotes provided in chapter four from the Network Managers, it was clear that those working at Cornwall Council understood that any shifts in power and influence from the centre to the periphery were stifled: “We need to be a little bit more articulate about where we’re going and show some sort of leadership but [the Head of Localism] hates plans. She’s said it. Where can you get without plans though? There needs to be some sort of structure”.

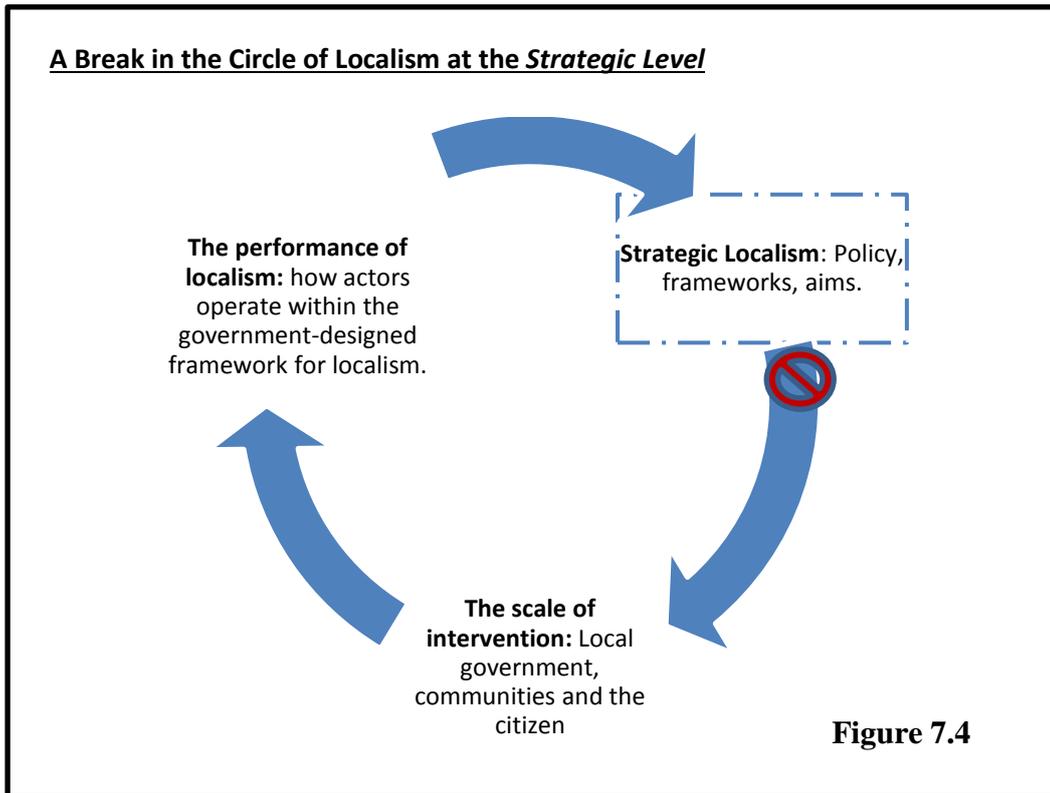
Throughout this investigation I have used the idea of a circle of Localism to represent the composite parts of achieving devolution in local decision-making. The circle begins with strategies for Localism, then moves to those who are engaged in the different scales of decision-making in Localism, and finally to how Localism is practiced. In chapter five it is clear to see an interruption to the circle at the strategic stage. The discursive *intention* of central government to allow ‘power to’ local government and communities, but in lacking practical implementation guidance and enforcing regulatory frameworks, there appeared less of a ‘strategy’ in place and more of a descriptive ‘agenda’ (see Figure 7.4).

In terms of shifting power, it is right to conclude that the transference of power in Localism by government had been interrupted because of an over-reliance on top-down ideas for Localism. I move now to discuss the theoretical implications of hierarchy and scale on habitus in Localism.

### **Habitus, Hierarchy and Scale**

As discussed in chapter five, actors within Localism appear to be in a hierarchy. Yet because the hierarchy is imposed they do not simply ‘settle’ for their given position. Instead “struggles and negotiations [occurred] among social actors” (Martin, 1999:38) resulting in the creation of sub-local scales, jumping scale and the creation of new politics of scale. What this research shows emerging in Cornwall is an intra-scalar contestation of influence and power in Localism to reveal the power of the local.

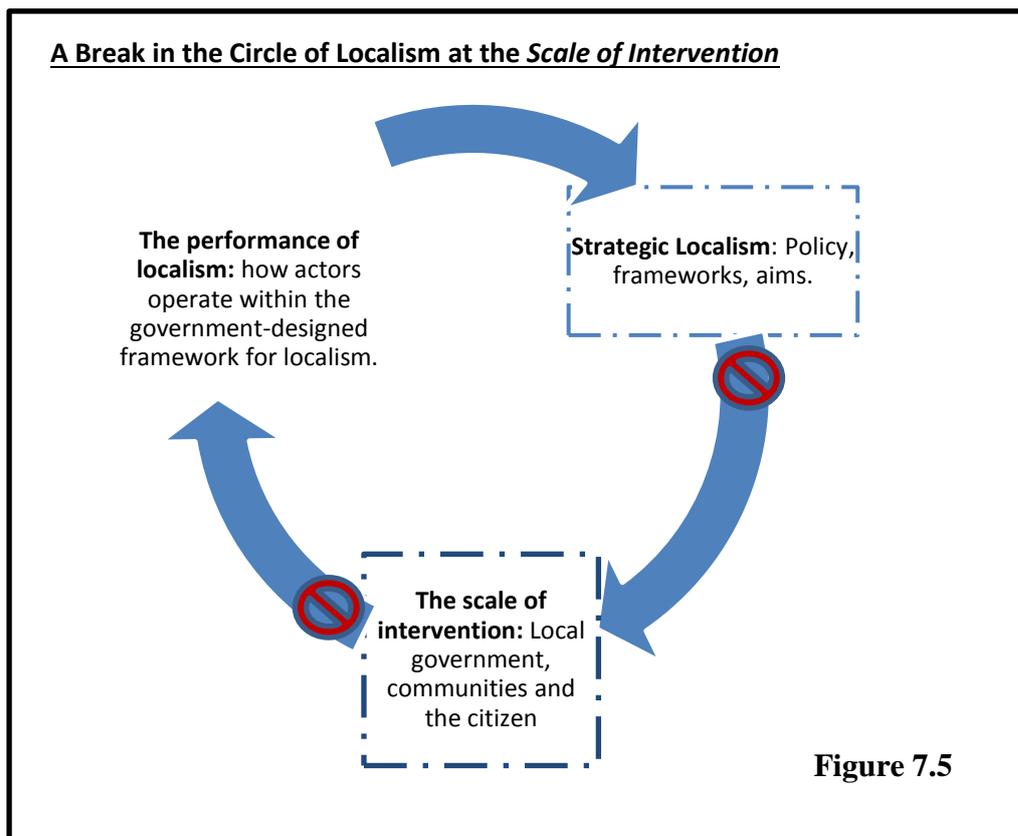
Returning to the concept of the circle of Localism, in examining the scale at which Localism occurs it is evident there is a further interruption at this point in the circle (see Figure 7.5).



I have shown in this thesis the development of two particular sub-local scales: the elected political representative and Town and Parish Councils. These actors were able to create scales in and of themselves, contest their given position in the hierarchy, transcend the *governmentalised* politics of scale and exercise their ‘local’ power and autonomy.

The creation of these new scales brings into focus Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. As discussed in chapter two, Bourdieu’s (2000) habitus describes the culmination of an individual’s understanding of their world constructed by society, economics, politics and symbols (Flint and Rowlands, 2003). Habitus is therefore socially constructed and formed from social norms and patterns of behaviour which predispose individuals to act in certain ways (Bourdieu, 2000). It is through the *field of*

*cultural production* that social and environmental influences take hold and the *grammars of living*, or governing *rationales*, emerge (Bourdieu, 1993; Flint and Rowlands, 2003; Foucault, 1991; 2004). For Localism, the *field* is the ideological foundation upon which it is based and the *grammars of living* are communicated through policy and frameworks determining how Localism functions, who is involved and what goals are to be achieved.



In chapter five, it was evident that actors were able to change the habitus of others: mould the attitudes, beliefs and understandings of actors both with their given scale and beyond (Cidell, 2006). In jumping scales in this manner, these actors made their needs and concerns understood at different scales and challenged the given, dominant governmental politics of scale. The new scalar structure created through these sub-scales, as seen in chapter five, reflect the potential influence of the actor, especially,

as suggested by Latour (1987), when in an associative network to increase their power and influence. In much the same way that Smith (1992) and Swyngedouw (1997:140) described, scale in Localism appears to be fluid, dynamic and not “a politically neutral discursive strategy”. Despite governmental attempts to keep actors in their place on the hierarchy through strategic lines of conduct (i.e. a dominant discourse, mandates and performance frameworks), it is clear that scale in Localism is ever-changing in relation to need, political, economic and cultural influences and the efficacy of those engaged. Irrespective of governmental attempts to create a rigid hierarchy of actors, what has been shown in chapter five is the potential for actors to question scale, break the hierarchy and alter the socio-political environment in which behaviour and actions of the local occur. Having discussed strategy and scale, I turn here to re-examine the role of governmentality in the practice of Localism through participatory budgeting.

### **Practicing Localism through PB**

What is apparent throughout chapters four and five are the difficulties government faces when trying to practice Localism: the complexities of the political geography involved. In chapter six I presented a method of enacting Localism through participatory budgeting. I showed here how government has come to assimilate libertarian paternalistic techniques into governing opportunities to achieve certain ends. I showed in this chapter that through architecting choice, predictable outcomes emerge from seemingly democratic practices of decision-making.

The ideological foundations of Localism look to permit the devolution of governance and in practice it is the creation of active, engaged publics that assume the role of governing. Through PB, as a mode of enacting Localism, publics were created

but they were partial, convened by government for a specific purpose and were subjected to paternalistic frameworks to guide decision-making.

The evolution of participatory governing in Cornwall can be likened to what Sintomer *et al*, (2008:174) call the strong “link between participation and a comprehensive modernisation process”. Labour’s Modernisation Agenda (discussed in empirical chapter one) sought to rejuvenate relations between government and society through new modes of governing such as PB. Furthermore, in the redesign and modernisation of governing in Cornwall through Community Network Areas, participatory governing has begun to effect real change, as seen in the local authority’s response to the issues facing Newquay. Despite the modest outcomes of PB in the county, and of that in the City of London, across England there have been cases of successful participatory governing schemes, for example ‘*You Decide!*’ in Tower Hamlets, London (£2.4million spent by residents), ‘*Everyone Counts*’ in Walsall and ‘*Your Voice, Your Choice*’ in Leicestershire (see [www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk) for more information). These schemes have begun to echo the format of those developed in Latin America with a stronger implementation of “decentralisation... making policies more responsive to the preferences of local citizens” (Aragones and Sanchez-Pages, 2009:57).

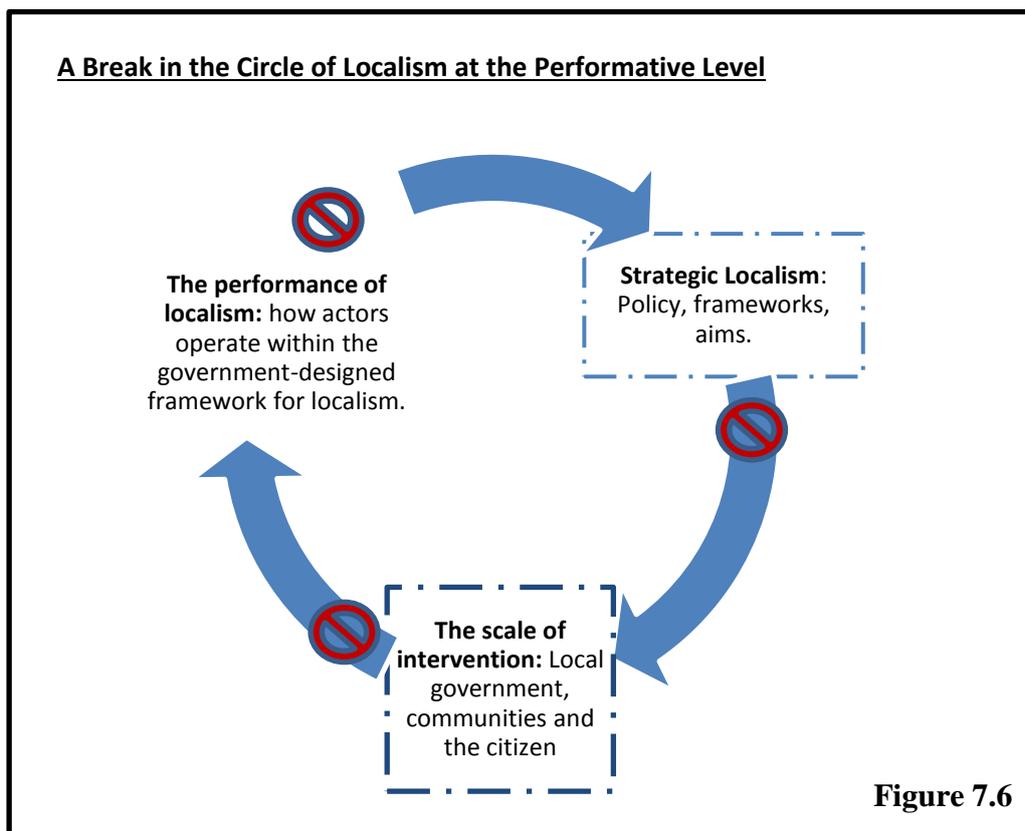
With greater scope to earmark rolling budgets, similar to those granted in Porto Alegre, and suggested creation of local assemblies and tiers of participation to establish a formalised structure to PB, what can be discerned, in line with an emergent civic ‘power’ in Latin America, is a greater governmental focus on the efficacy and significance of *citizenry*. When coming together to form an active public with agency and drive, as seen in the above discussion on the establishment of the Newquay Safe Partnership, the citizenry becomes an effective power, or a “strong public” (Fraser, 1996:89). Sintomer *et al* (2008:175) note that it is when “social mobilisation” and

“institutional innovation” come together that “empowered participatory governance [emerges], where the working class is central to the process and where a plebeian public sphere can develop”. The task for government is therefore to balance the empowerment of citizens with the convening of publics, governing autonomy and trust and confidence between government and society. Fedozzi (1999; 2000) argues that there needs to be a change in “internal structures and management procedures” (Sintomer *et al*, 2008:176) in order for participatory governance to emerge fully and produce empowered citizens as participatory publics. However, it is perhaps a review of governmental techniques of libertarian paternalism, a recognition of the significance of the geography of place and greater joint-working with local organisations and bodies which would encourage an improved environment for participatory governing through PB.

In examining the PB schemes in Cornwall using behavioural economics, aspects of libertarian paternalism become apparent. Although it presumably was not the intent of local government to structure PB opportunities paternalistically, so as to close down options for pursuing other local improvement projects aside from community safety, the top-down framework for the projects emerged as unyielding. The limitations that paternalistic strategies such as *nudging* provide, directs behaviour towards ‘desirable’ outcomes (Jones *et al*, 2010:1). Social motivation can therefore be manipulated, changing the habitus of the individual whilst all the while under the guise of increased devolution of power (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008).

In chapter six, it is the geometry of control deployed by governing mentalities designed to steer citizen behaviour that interrupts, once more, the circle of Localism (see Figure 7.6). In essence, employing a nudge strategy allowed for the scheme in Redruth North to occur. However, the longevity of the scheme was not assured, it was not accurately replicated in Bodmin and moreover, did not represent a clear devolution of power and governing to the community.

What can be seen in chapter six to have emerged is “centralised decentralisation” (Willett and Giovannini, 2011:12): the devolution of *some* aspects of governing, responsibility and accountability, under a framework to be approved and marshaled by government. This moment of interruption can be attributed to the problem that imposing a *governing mentality* can have on the performance of Localism.



I have returned time and again to Foucault’s concept of governmentality throughout this thesis in order to present a mode through which to discuss governmental ideas, behaviour and idealisations of and for Localism. It is evident in the excerpts from governmental literature presented earlier in this thesis that rationale and techniques of governing have steered Localism in Cornwall, aiming to meet certain targets, reduce spending, incite bottom-up governance and devolve accountability to the local. Using

Foucault's concept of governmentality to explore Localism has allowed the analysis of government thought and behaviour and illuminated where and how Localism has been stringently guided by government. However as I have shown in this thesis, governmentalising governing opportunities does not guarantee outcomes. As seen in chapter six, the PB scheme designed to take place in Bodmin did not emerge because it was *over*-governmentalised: the strict top-down frameworks for the project and approach to the project did not marry with local characteristics.

From the analysis in chapter six, it appears that the task for government should be to attempt to balance citizen empowerment with the convening of publics, governing autonomy and trust and confidence between government and society. For Fedozzi (1999; 2000), this would mean an overhaul of the "internal structures and management procedures" (Sintomer *et al*, 2008:176) in participatory governance. Yet what this research suggests is a further examination of not only the use and extent of libertarian paternalistic techniques but a recognition of the significance of geography.

### **The Role of Geography in Localism**

Following the work of Peck and Tickell (2002), Woods (2005) and Cloke *et al* (2000) on changes in the relationship between government and society, I have shown in this study how Localism has changed, and been changed by, specific characteristics of the local. In this study I have highlighted the problems that top-down Localism, and practicing Localism (for example through PB) in Cornwall has brought. What is evident is that bottom-up localism with a small 'l' had been part of Town and Parish Council operations before formal Localism was introduced by the Labour government (1997-2010). Despite local authority attempts to reorganise local engagement and participatory techniques to align with governmental mandates, the Town and Parish Councils studied

in this research began to influence Localism from the bottom up using their tried and tested forms of community engagement and participation.

Irrespective of attempts by local government to change its relationship with citizens through Localism (through the establishment of Community Network Areas to bring government closer to communities, for example), Town and Parish Councils perceived such approaches as, ironically, revoking local power and independence. Although Localism posed a challenge to “the existing spatial division of power” (Woods, 2005: 45-46), as described by one Parish Council clerk as “the end of life as we know it”, what can be concluded is that in Cornwall, relations between communities and local government appear to have remained the same even after a spatial re-design of the county. What has changed, however, is the *presence* of the rhetoric of local governance with a greater emphasis on community-led decision-making, increased provisions (such as local One Stop Shops across the county to provide a face-to-face local authority service for citizens) and wider discursive presence.

From this study of Localism in Cornwall it is evident that measures to embed Localism are adapted and affected by geography. However it is the governmentalisation of geography itself that proved challenging to Localism. Government concepts of regionalism and particularly the division of Cornwall into Community Network Areas have established areal geographies. The boundedness of communities has been governmentally imposed and as noted by one Council Officer, was simply done by “drawing lines on a map”. From the primary data presented in this research it is clear that these artificial Networks lack cohesion, similarity in history, needs, ideals, rules or norms. Despite seeking to veer away from a ‘one size fits all’ Localism, the governmentalisation of ideals, frameworks and desired outcomes can be seen to have established a ‘one size’ Localism which has difficulty in adapting to disparate geographies.

Yet Localism has also been adapted and affected itself, by accident or design, by geography. Geography and spatial politics can be seen to be of particular importance in establishing the parish council as a scale in and of itself, as described in chapter five. Further, it was the particularities of place that discerned the outcomes of the PB pilots, thus it is right to assume that place itself needs to be taken into consideration in order for Localism to be understood, enacted, embedded and mobilised from the bottom-up. Earlier in this thesis I presented Kearns' (1995) ideas for how geography plays a role in governance and it can be seen that differences in geography became of crucial importance to the structure and implementation of Localism in Cornwall: for example differences in and between place, history, socio-spatial environment, sense of place and local government.

Place is of prime importance, or as Massey (2005:11) describes, is the "openness of future". In accordance with the definition of place I use in this research, place describes where commonality in community values and interests are developed, where interactions with others occur, where social norms are born, the home of the physical environment, private and public spaces, housing, neighbourhoods and the convergence of individual and collective paths (see Kearns, 1995). It is the incompleteness and fluidity of place which makes it unique and emphasises the importance of integrating those who live there into projects for Localism. The citizen is thus crucial to the spatialisation of Localism; the capital found in a particular place (i.e. local knowledge, expertise) aid in determining the flow of power. This thesis therefore supports the assertion of Kearns (1995:166) that geography is a vital "mediating factor to the success of local government initiatives". I now move on to discuss changes to the institution of governance that Localism has introduced.

## Changes to the Institution of Governance

I began this thesis with two quotes; one from the Labour Party Manifesto in 1997 and one from David Cameron's Hugo Young lecture in 2009. Both quotes have at their core the same ideals of the *ideology of Localism*: increased devolution of power to communities, greater scope for reducing civic inequality and changes to the role of governing for both government and society. These shared ideals make for very similar approaches to a desired change in governance. Social renewal, partnership working and civic well-being are focal points of both Localism and Big Society and these approaches aim to embed equality in communities to improve socio-economic conditions, tackle unemployment, crime and anti-social behaviour. However in aiming to establish equality, what has been shown through this investigation is that there is a real danger that top-down, governmentalised methods of achieving this will be exercised.

From this study it is clear that in Cornwall, modes of enacting Localism were presented through top-down frameworks and concentrated in sporadic pockets of activity. However these isolated incidents of Localism should not be discounted as they began to change the face of governance in the county. The redesign of Cornwall Council allowed for a greater focus on local governing; on how communities and individuals could engage with government and design their own futures. Governance, or at least the ideals for governing, have therefore changed, with a greater focus, albeit only discursively in some cases, on the citizen. Returning to the *Garbage Can Model* of decision-making, we can see that Localism in Cornwall as a *new* mode of governance rests upon pragmatism (see Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972). The continuous re-making of space, the blurriness of scale, the making and re-making of politics of scale and the unevenness of Localism have made decision-making through Localism fuzzy (March and Heath, 1994; Hajer and Wagenaar (Eds.), 2003; Jones, 1994). Lefebvre's (1996:71) labelling of this process as "implosion-explosion" represents the continual flux of

Localism: changes in the scale of decision-making, the actors involved, what form Localism takes (Localism with a capital or small 'l'), how it is practiced and which outcomes are produced. The “uneven mesh” (Brenner, 2000:369) that is produced is representative of new governance: an increasingly complex and multi-actor arena (see Brenner *et al*, 2002; Marston, 2000; MacLeod and Jones, 2001; Paasi, 2004). The political construction of Cornwall, seen in the creation of Network Areas, can be seen to have “challenge[d] the interpretations of region and place” (Paasi, 2004:536). This method of institutionalising de- and re-territorialising practices has to be seen as a contextual exploration of Localism: the reorganisation of power, scale and governance in an attempt to embed new geometries of relations (Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003).

In their 2010 election manifesto, the Conservative Party placed an increased emphasis on civic involvement noting that they intend to “create a climate that empowers local people and communities” (Prime Minister’s Office, 2010). To achieve this, the Party sought to remove power from politicians and elected representatives, allow communities and individuals to take control, relinquish assets for civic ownership, and encourage active citizenship through participatory incentives. Yet in contrast to Localism, the emphasis of the Big Society is on volunteerism and an ideological precedent that communities *can* and *will* accept their newly designated role of planners, strategists and implementers. Scepticism is shared by many, including Ministers within government and the Voluntary and Community sector, who are expected to deploy extra measures in supporting and advising groups, individuals and organisations in their new role as leaders of their community. The concept of the Big Society, although still in its relative infancy, raises a considerable amount of unanswered questions also posed in discussions of Localism. These questions range from the degree to which Big Society will become a top-down endeavor, what the structure of decision-making might be, who is in charge, to who is held accountable and responsible for governing.

What this research has shown is that Localism, as the predecessor of Big Society, is contingent upon a number of factors and it is these which determine the success and failure of Localism as a new mode of governing. I will now discuss these as ‘lessons from the research’.

## **Conclusions and Lessons from the Research**

Throughout this study, a number of key practices have emerged as being either important to, or detrimental to, the formulation, agenda, strategy, behaviour and outcomes of Localism in Cornwall. I bring these together here to discuss how this research has met the objectives set out in the opening chapter of this thesis, and to emphasise the lessons learnt from deploying Localism as new mode of governance in Cornwall. I return once again to the aims and objectives of this research set out in the introductory chapter to demonstrate what can be concluded from Localism in Cornwall. First, I intended to explore the effectiveness of Localism in harnessing community and individual participation and engagement. I did this through the analysis of governmental approaches to getting citizens involved in Localism and detailing the strategic and practical challenges this posed. I will tackle each of these challenges in turn.

Strategically it is evident in chapters one and four that governmental ideas for Localism followed strict top-down guidelines and were developed to produce specific outcomes, such as increased local governance, the devolution of services and assets to communities and citizens and the ability for government to remain at a distance. Yet local government translated these priorities differently, adapting them to suit the political, social and economic conditions of the communities they served. Further, the redesign of Cornwall Council, and the issues this entailed, made embedding Localism increasingly complicated. Council Officers not only needed to become acquainted with

their new job remit and design of the Council, but also a new method of approaching every aspect of state-society working, not just participation initiatives. Alongside these difficulties were economic problems for local and central government due to the global recession, a largely disengaged Cornish population not used to political change or increased local government presence, and a wealth of competing civic and governmental priorities (discussed in chapter five). These issues rendered a strategic approach to Localism in Cornwall largely impoverished.

To counterbalance this problem, pockets of Localism emerged, as seen in chapter six and in the analysis of the PB pilots in the county. These too carried with them their own issues but the design and targets of the Redruth North project provide some learning examples:

- To be attentive to geographies: research and strive to understand the population, their needs, issues in the community, historical engagement projects and whether there is a desire to participate.
- Build flexibility into approaches: make room for and actively seek out those in the community who want to be involved in decision-making.
- Construct projects around what can be achieved and what citizens *want* to be achieved: allow for bottom-up engagement and participation to change the course of Localism.
- Allow the project to be accessible to everyone: ensure that there is not something similar already in place and that it does not speak specifically to a particular demographic (i.e. build in funding for the regeneration of green space

being open to suggestions for youth projects as well as bowling greens and community centres).

- Avoid the over-use of top-down regulations and rules.
- Do not rely on a dominant discourse to dictate strategy. Real, experiential evidence is needed to formulate a workable and practical approach to Localism.

In practical terms it is clear from the data that there was a poverty in the behavioural aspects of Localism in Cornwall. However as I discussed in chapter five, the Parish Council were perhaps the ‘exception to the rule’, able to exercise bottom-up localism and possessing a number of Members who had the time, resources and understanding of local government to work to realise the parish’s aims. In chapter five I also demonstrated how the influence of others changes the behaviour of Localism as support and influence grow to enable the jumping of scales and redefinition of the politics of interaction between actors. A number of lessons regarding the practical application of Localism can then be drawn from this research:

- The **strategy** has to be in place: one that is sensitive to the geography of communities and marries both local and governmental agendas.
- It is important to gather local knowledge and involve local residents in projects from their infancy to ensure that their trajectory follows that of what is desired by the community, not the government.
- Resources need to be directed towards communities in need (i.e. those with high levels of anti-social behaviour, crime or unemployment).

- Communities who want to assume greater responsibility in local governance and who demonstrate that they need to be allocated funding, support and flexibility in order to realise their potential.
- Greater scrutiny should be put in place to balance the actions of elected Members of the Council to ensure that fair and adequate participation in decision-making be made available to communities and citizens.

Two further objectives of this research were to assess the effectiveness of Localism in *engaging members of communities in local projects* and of *empowering the lowest tiers of local government*. As discussed in the opening chapters of this thesis, Cornwall is largely a rural county, made up of numerous hamlets and villages and a significant proportion of isolated dwellings. One of the key aims for the switch from a two-tiered to a unitary local authority was to endow Cornwall Council with greater access to citizens, and vice-versa. The nineteen Community Network Areas were put into action in the hopes of reaching out to rural, isolated people and bringing them into the governing process for their area. Through the data it is clear that the Network Areas were met with disdain by many, not least the Council Officers tasked with their operation. The confusion over remit, the roles of Council Officers, the function of a Localism Manager and Head of Localism at Cornwall Council and the redesign of the geography of governance led to a confused local authority structure in 2009. The extracts from interviews I have presented in this study reflects how citizens and those engaged in Localism, such as Town and Parish Councils and elected Members, found the transition to unitary status difficult. Indeed from the primary interview data collected from Council Officers and Town and Parish Council clerks, it is evident that capacity and efficacy for governing differed wildly across the county with some wishing

to remain distanced and disengaged from governance. However, what Localism did manage to provide in Cornwall was opportunities for increased local autonomy in decision-making, such as that described in the case of the parish council's LDO. At the time of printing, there are currently two LDOs in operation in Cornwall, the Carnon Downs LDO described in this research and the Newquay Airport LDO. A Penzance LDO is also currently in the stages of consultation and drafting with expected implementation by 2013. These opportunities for local people to assume greater control of the planning process have been enhanced by Cornwall Council's adoption of Localism into its everyday working.

Two final objectives I stated at the beginning of this thesis were to *explore empirically Localism 'in action' as part of a newly restructured local government and to evaluate the development of Localism in Local and Central Government policy, rhetoric and action*. In chapter three I introduced Goodwin *et al*'s (2005) concept of the 'filling in' of the state through devolution of power to local authorities and communities and establishing new geographies of governance through concepts such as regionalism. We can see that through the redesign of the governance of Cornwall and the establishment of new regions for governing through Community Network Areas, this *new geography of Localism* was uneven. The empirical evidence shows how particular cases of Localism emerged in accordance with geographical dimensions such as those highlighted by Kearns (1995) (place, history, socio-spatial environment, sense of place and local government). The behavioural aspects of Localism therefore differed significantly across the county ranging from little to no engagement in Localism of any form (seen in parts of the West Penwith study), to bottom-up Localism reflected in the study of the Parish Council and the LDO. The redesign of Cornwall Council into a unitary authority created, on paper, the framework for increased local governance, however in practice, especially in the first year of operation, the transition to a unitary

authority, job losses, departmental changes, financial challenges, new job remits and roles and changes to the structure of governance in Cornwall caused a multitude of problems for Localism. As the data shows in chapter four, one of the most difficult challenges was the interpretation of Localism by Cornwall Council and the translation of that to Network Managers and Localism Officers. The lapses in communication and confusion over *what Localism is* caused misunderstandings between Officers and a general sense that Localism, in accordance with its intended ideology, was not being carried out. As discussed in chapter four, Localism Officers often felt that the Head of Localism did not give sufficient direction or understand how a localist approach could work for individual Community Network Areas.

What emerged in these early stages was an uneven capacity for governing in Cornwall. As the data showed the Truro and Roseland and Bodmin Community Network Managers had clear ideas and drive for what could be achieved in their area, yet the West Penwith Manager appeared out of touch with Localism Officers operating in that area, making for a disengaged populace and fractured approach to Localism. The increasing complexity in governing that the reconfiguration of Cornwall Council generated facilitated the emergence of the sporadic pockets of Localism I have described in terms of, for example, the PB pilot and LDO. It can be deduced that the early actions of Cornwall Council can be seen to have made Localism accessible to ‘the few’. Again in these early stages we can see a clear hierarchy of actors and their inter-relational and interdependent relations between and across scales. This hierarchy enabled Cornwall Council to retain control of who is involved in Localism, how it develops and what outcomes it will produce (MacLeod, 2001). As Lipietz (1994) suggests, this institutional-relational approach allows government to develop a *regional armature* (Lipietz, 1994) to maintain a grasp on governance in order to deploy assets, both human and non-human, at various scales on the governing hierarchy, for a variety

of economic, political or social reasons. The lack of practical guidance from central government provided this landscape as the local authority was forced to find its own way with Localism, not only as an embedded approach to policy and decision-making, but in new local government design and with a population who were largely used to being disengaged from governing processes.

Throughout the duration of this research, the landscape of Localism in Cornwall has changed significantly. Part of this is due to the simple passage of time and increased efficiency of Community Network Areas, yet noticeable changes have come from the root of Cornwall Council, and from local citizens, as local engagement in governing is fast becoming the norm. I conclude this final chapter with a postscript to bring this investigation of Localism in Cornwall up to date.

### **Postscript: Big Society as the ‘New Localism’ in Cornwall**

With the change from Labour to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 came Big Society. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Big Society shares many of the same ideals as Localism but instead, puts greater emphasis on volunteerism and public ownership of assets. For Cornwall, Big Society has begun to effect more changes to local governance.

Within the county, a number of projects have been attributed to new mechanisms for devolving governance through Big Society. For example, Cornwall Councillors’ Community Chest allocations have increased under fiscal reorganisation of councillor funds. In 2012, £2,195 was allocated to each councillor specifically to be spent upon projects run by voluntary and community groups in their local areas. This provision has enabled village hall renovations, green-space preservation, buying surf-

rescue boards to ensure safety at local small beaches and buying new instruments for local orchestras. As a result, communities have been able to play a large role in directing spending. The previous leader of the Council, Alec Robertson noted in January 2012: “Many people are still talking about what the Big Society means - in Cornwall we are actually making it work” ([www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)).

Nevertheless, there have been a number of challenges to the implementation of Big Society in Cornwall. In September 2011, the Redruth North Partnership (RNP) went to the press to complain about the amount of time it was taking for permission to be granted from Cornwall Council Officers, elected Members and Town Council Members to allow communities to direct service provision in the area. One of the goals of Big Society is to enable citizens to assume increased control over the provision of services but despite the members of the RNP wishing to take on this new role, this responsibility was being denied by the local authority. Cornwall Council noted at the time that the process of allocating funds to the RNP to take over certain service provision was lengthily and it was this which caused delays in the transfer of power. What can be observed in this instance is a community partnership wishing to assume responsibility for their local area, in accordance with Localism and Big Society pledges. However, bureaucracy, and perhaps a hesitancy to devolve control from government to society, have been working to stifle local autonomy. One local councillor remarked at the time that in Redruth in particular, “the Big Society initiative isn't winning support locally” ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)).

This sentiment was shared in February 2011 by Cornwall Waste Action, a local organisation dedicated to sustainable resource use and management. Central government's *Localism Bill* (2011) introduced new measures for planning which include allowing local interest groups to deliberate on planning issues and to hold local referenda. For the waste and recycling sector this, and the introduction of a legal

requirement for developers to consult with local residents before constructing proposals, meant that the planning process would become drawn-out. The waste and recycling sector are concerned that an increasingly local but less accountable bureaucratic process may be created if the measures presented in the *Localism Bill* are enacted. In lengthening the amount of time it would take for a decision to be made, the chances of challenges to a decision increase. Although local citizens and groups will have a greater say in planning decisions, local solicitors agreed that increasing engagement, and the length of time people have to participate, may “have a profound impact on developing waste and recycling projects by potentially creating another layer of community involvement in proposals” ([www.cornwallwasteaction.org.uk](http://www.cornwallwasteaction.org.uk)). This concern is one of the greatest facing Big Society proposals as the danger is that as more people become involved in governing, the more complex and drawn-out processes become.

Another issue that faces Big Society in Cornwall is that large organisations will assume control of service delivery. Such concerns have already been raised in the county after the contractor Serco bid for the running of the coalition government’s National Citizen Service (NCS). The scheme would see young people over the age of sixteen partaking in community work in their local area. The danger is that Serco, the service company, would gain the monopoly for running the NCS, able to outbid local charities, volunteers and groups with local expertise and therefore not allow local partnerships to be formed. If Serco did win the bid, without local partnerships there may emerge similar failings, as seen under Localism, through the creation of a paradoxical Big Society: one which is run by ‘the few’ without significant input from local residents ([www.thirdsector.co.uk](http://www.thirdsector.co.uk); [www.thisiscornwall.co.uk](http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk)).

A final example of challenges to Big Society is in the case of the Cornwall Energy Recovery Centre, an energy-from-waste plant proposed to be built in the small Cornish village of St Dennis. According to Cornwall Council, the proposed waste

incinerator would help tackle the 300,000 tonnes of waste the county produces per year. The local authority believes this project to be the answer to the pressing issue of landfill space which is predicted to run out in 2014. Local consultation on the development began in 2005 and was met with virulent local disapproval. The proposal was then dismissed by the previous Cornwall County Council in early 2009. However, plans were re-submitted by the waste management contractor and supported by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, after being urged by the Leader of Cornwall Council Alec Robertson, in 2011. The Local Government Secretary approved plans in May 2011, despite on-going local opposition to the development and public requests for the decision to be overturned. This case emphasises the power that government holds in having the ‘final say’ on important decisions. The waste plant is clearly of strategic benefit to government and despite local opposition, government exercises its position in the hierarchy of actors to achieve a desired outcome (see [www.environment-agency.co.uk](http://www.environment-agency.co.uk); [www.resource.uk.com](http://www.resource.uk.com)).

It is clear to see that Big Society, as a modern extension of Localism, faces a considerable number of challenges, not least in gaining public confidence in the face of widespread critique and local dissent from elected Members of Cornwall Council and citizens. However the majority of these challenges are those that blighted Localism: government inability to devolve power; government desire to achieve certain outcomes; consultation but no action on stated citizen desires; and overall lack of strategy and implementation, despite government rhetoric to act. It is evident that changes are being made to adapt government and citizens to a Big Society, for example the provision of funds for local development (i.e. *The Investment and Contract Readiness Fund*<sup>33</sup>), the financial organisation *Big Society Capital* for social investment and the Big Society Network hoping to build local enterprise. However it is the real achievement of Big

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<sup>33</sup> A £10million fund of charities and social enterprises to support training and the development of skills; [www.cornwallvsf.org](http://www.cornwallvsf.org).

Society projects ‘on the ground’, in communities and involving local people which actively changes the culture of participation and engagement, as has been displayed in this research.

Changes to the institution of governance can be seen to be taking place through Localism and now, Big Society measures. Yet these changes are slow to materialise and dependent upon the will of government to *trust* in the local. What can be observed, however, is a measured transformation in culture under the direction of a dominant discourse of Big Society. As I have shown in this study, the more citizens begin to realise their stake in society, the greater the opportunity and potential they have to help shape the future of their local area.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

This thesis has contributed to the existing literature on governance, geopolitical studies, human geography and policy studies in presenting findings from an investigation of Localism. The findings from this study have set an agenda for continued research on the complexities of governing through Localism. The time and funding limitations of this research mean that further investigation into the agenda that this study has set is necessary. In examining Localism and localist approaches to governance I have concentrated this study on strategy, scale and performance. These three areas of investigation have reflected the continual changing nature of relations between government and society, the tensions between top-down and bottom-up governing, resistance to top-down local governance initiatives at a local level and a governmental reticence in devolving power to local areas. This research has also shown that the attempted pluralisation of governance through Localism has been restrained because of the politicisation of mechanisms for governing.

To explore this agenda further, a critical point for continued study on the role of geography in Big Society would be of significance. An examination could be conducted into whether space and place play as significant a role in Big Society as they did for Localism. This investigation might include exploration of the impact of characteristics of place in concepts such as volunteerism, whether Big Society is able to build new spaces of participation in the same way that Localism did through the development of Community Network Areas in Cornwall, and whether Big Society is both desirable and achievable in a modern Cornish society. There is also greater scope to deepen the use of the theoretical registers employed in this study. For example, in terms of Foucault's (1991) governmentality it would be of interest to explore the ways in which government rationalities for Big Society mirror those of Localism. Similarly, an examination of the hierarchy of actors in Big Society would provide a comparison to the scales at which they were placed in the hierarchy in Localism. This could then be used to assess the capacity for actors to jump scales, create new scales and provide understandings as to whether citizens, communities and local stakeholders are any more empowered through Big Society as a contemporary neology of *new* governance.

This study has been conducted on a relatively small scale and it would be prudent to continue this analysis to incorporate research of how Localism in Cornwall continues to change under drives for Big Society. In particular, local elections in the county will take place in May 2013: in exploring the changes to the political dynamic at Cornwall Council level and how these impact upon local governance would enable a continuation of the investigation of the political machinations of power and governance in Cornwall. Further, an on-going assessment of town and parish councils to explore whether Big Society has an impact on the exercise of localism with a small 'l' would enable an examination of formal structures of implementing measures for increased local governance.

It would be of interest to explore in greater detail the feasibility of rolling out more PB projects in the county to examine bottom-up influence in these projects and participatory figures now that the unitary authority has been in place for almost four years. The dynamics of Cornwall Council have shifted significantly since the beginning of this study in 2008, and continue to do so. It would be prudent, therefore, to focus upon how Community Network Areas and Managers practice Localism, twelve months on from the cut-off point of the empirical research of this study.

Finally, in exploring Big Society further, one point in particular to study in greater depth would be Dewey's concept of *power to* and whether, given more recent challenges to Big Society as discussed above, it is able to deliver more for local residents than Labour's Localism could. Certainly under Big Society there are increased support mechanisms, particularly financially, for the building of enterprise, however whether this funding can be exercised in rural counties such as Cornwall would be of great significance to investigate.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A**

### **Sample Interview Questions:**

Sample questions from an interview with a Community Development Worker:

- Can you tell me a bit about community cohesion in the area?
- Could you explain the activities of any resident's associations in the area: do you feel that the communities are stronger for having these?
- Can you tell me about your views on the workings of the council and the community network area and manager?
- Could you give me a description of your job role and how development workers are assigned to areas?
- Could you give me any incidences of partnership working in the area. Do you feel that with a network manager in place there's a stronger, more cohesive local government and approach to localism?

Sample questions from an interview with a Community Network Manager:

- Could you tell me about your approach to engaging with residents?
- Could you explain to me the way in which you approach convening partnerships with local stakeholders?
- There is a consensus amongst other Network Managers I've spoken to that this area is the least deprived in the county – have you found any difference in your expectations of resident participation because of economic circumstances?
- What are your views on the public's use of the One Stop Shop in the area? Do you feel as though its function is being understood amongst residents?
- Can you tell me a bit about your relationship with local councillors and the town and parish councils in the area?

- What are your immediate and future priorities for Localism in the area?

Sample questions from an interview with Cornwall Council Chief Executive:

- Can you tell me about your understanding of Localism and how it might play out in Cornwall?
- How do you envisage the Community Network Areas bringing people closer to local government?
- How have the changes to the local authority affected staff?
- What is your vision for Localism in Cornwall over the next five years?

## Appendix B

### List of Newquay Safe Measures

| <b><u>Issues Faced</u></b>                              | <b><u>Newquay Approach (pre-partnership, June 2009)</u></b>   | <b><u>Partnership Approach (after June 2009)</u></b>   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Anti-Social Behaviour</b>                            | Closure of public toilets at night.   | Re-opening of public facilities 24hrs;   |
| <b>Town centre night-time disturbances</b>              | Neighbourhood Watch schemes.  | Youth workers patrolling streets; police monitoring of town centre   |
| <b>Alcohol related issues</b>                           | Protest at County Hall, June 2009; complaints to police, local authority and local licensed establishments. | Flyer and licensing conditions enforced and checked; ID requirements reinforced. 'Street Safe' scheme; Street Pastors in operation. Restrictions on cut price alcohol; Nightsafe initiative.   |
| <b>Underage drinking</b>                                | 'Challenge 25' to ask for identification when purchasing alcohol.   | 'Exodus '09' events for under 18s; alcohol-free mini festivals; youths bused to and from events safely. 'Follow you home' scheme, youths caught with alcohol or drunk or disorderly are sent home and visited by their local police to ensure the youth understands their misdemeanor. If youths are caught drinking or drunk/having taken drugs, parents are contacted and asked to pick them up. |
| <b>Opening of new establishments in the town centre</b> | Highlighting of planning decisions for nightclubs and pubs in the town centre                               | Test purchasing carried out in the town to catch establishments selling alcohol to underage customers. Multi-agency visits to the town to promote awareness and correct management   |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  |   | <p>procedures. Parental consents enforced for under 18s staying overnight in the town or outlying campsites. No alcohol policies enforced at campsites and lodgings. Having the correct and required number of staff at hotels, hostels, lodges, campsites and pubs/clubs enforced. Restrictions on cut price alcohol.</p>  |
| <b>Accommodation and local transport</b> | <p>Buses to and from campsites and hotels near the town; increased affordable accommodation' Newquay Clean Up organized by the Resident's Association; action and involvement in derelict buildings and street redevelopment</p>          | <p>'Operation Brunel'; Police officers and trained dogs meet trains and planes coming into Newquay to stop illegal alcohol and drug use; plain clothes police officers travel on local transport to keep the peace; Bluetooth warning messages sent to mobile phones of those misbehaving. Hotels, lodges and hostels given 'safeguarding guidelines' from the Newquay Safe partnership to keep residents safe. Cut-price bus tickets are allocated for under-18s going to an organized under-18 event.</p> |
| <b>Results</b>                           | <p>Surge in tourism due to recession brought more teenagers and groups to the area. Residents and local groups not equipped to tackle growing amount of incidents without extra police, local authority and service provider support.</p> | <p>Newquay Safe was created within ten days once Cornwall Council joined the partnership.</p>   |

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