

WHEN DO COMMUNITY LEADERS MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE? EXPLORING THE  
INTERACTION OF ACTORS AND  
INSTITUTIONS

by

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## ABSTRACT

There are an increasing number of opportunities for community leaders to be involved in governing processes. However, the community leader literature fails sufficiently to distinguish the interaction of structure and agency. The thesis establishes a theoretical approach which places community leaders as 'situated agents'. The thesis establishes a 'reading-acting-effect' model to examine how the readings of actors are translated into action and how they interpret the difference this makes. Case studies of two neighbourhoods in Sheffield reveal the changing influence of the community and of the state upon community leaders' behaviour. In the early stages of development community leaders concentrate on the substantive difference their actions have in their community. The state plays a more significant role as community leaders begin to operate in governance arenas, making compromises to access state resources. State actors play important roles as rule makers and interpreters that affect how community leaders behave. Community leaders face a central dilemma between: modifying their behaviour to work with the state thereby increasing their opportunities to receive funding; and the freedom of working at a distance from the state without such support. Conflict can arise between community leaders as they adopt different positions in relation to the state based on their distinct interpretations of this dilemma.

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## RELATED OUTPUTS

### Publications:

**Munro, H.A.D, Roberts, M and Skelcher, C** (2008) "Partnership Governance and Democratic Performance: Community Leaders and Public Managers as Dual Intermediaries" in Public Policy Administration, volume 23 (1) pages 61-79

### Conference Presentations:

INLOGOV Research Seminar Series, University of Birmingham (2005)  
"Coming to terms with the past: biographical interviews" (Munro, H.A.D)

HMSC Partnership Symposium, University of Birmingham (2006)  
"Partnership governance and democratic effectiveness: community leaders and public managers as strategic actors" (Skelcher, C, Roberts, M and Munro, H.A.D)

Network Governance: Between Efficiency and Democracy, University of Roskilde, Denmark (2006)  
"When do community leaders make a difference?" (Munro, H.A.D)

CINEFOGO, University of Western England, Bristol (2007)  
"When do community leaders matter?" (Munro, H.A.D)

Interpretative Practitioner Conference, Free University of Amsterdam, Netherlands (2007)  
"An interpretive approach to community leaders: Sheffield stories" (Munro, H.A.D)

INLOGOV Research Seminar Series, University of Birmingham (2007)  
"When do community leaders make a difference?" (Munro, H.A.D)

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### The New Governance of Local Communities

There are an increasing number of opportunities for citizens to become involved in the process of governing in the UK. Sullivan (2004 p195) observes that “opportunities to participate abound in local governance post-1997” with the state increasingly using innovative techniques to engage with citizens such as citizen’s panels, community forums designed around communities of interest and place (Stewart 2003) and partnerships (for example Skelcher et al 2005). Marinetto (2003 p104) notes that “community involvement is now regarded as integral to good practice in policy circles” and has become a mandated part of much government policy (Purdue 2005). As Raco and Flint (2001 p586) summarise,

“This new emphasis, on participatory democratic forms (such as area forums) and processes (such as community planning), encourages citizens and communities to mobilise themselves and take-on active roles in the ways in which they are governed.”

Such an emphasis on participation reflects a shift in the way that local communities are governed. Skelcher (2004) tracks this development taking the idea of the sovereign council as a starting point. Skelcher argues that from the mid-1940s up to the early 1980s a single body was responsible for the local government of the community. The primacy of the local authority consisted of two features highlighted in Stewart’s (2000 p26) discussion of a local authority’s responsibilities,

“Local authorities are responsible for the provision of a series of services, many of them required by national legislation. Yet local



authorities are also political institutions constituted by local elections with a capacity for local choice and local voice. Within the parameters set by these conditions, different emphases can be given to the role of local government. Local authorities can be seen as agencies for the delivery of a service...They can, however, be seen as political institutions constituted for local self-government with a concern for their area that extends beyond the services provided."

First, a council acts as a provider of services. Wilson and Game (2006) highlight the considerable range of services that were the responsibility of the council during this period including education, social welfare and housing alongside regulatory and monitoring functions such as town and country planning. Secondly, a council acts as a focus of local democratic activity,

"It is the elected forum for the community, the focus of organised and informal local political activity, and when it acts it does so on the basis of legitimacy accorded by the electoral process."  
(Skelcher 2004 p28)

Within this system of governance, the role of citizens is to elect representatives to govern on their behalf and "between elections, their involvement in politics is limited to checks upon their leaders" (Lowndes 1996a p165-166).

Conservative governments from 1979 until 1997 challenged the idea of the sovereign council by establishing a number of agencies that operate at an arm's length from elected political authority. These bodies (referred to as quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations or quangos) were set up to make and manage public policy within a specific policy area. Whilst some altered the way in which central government delivered their services to local communities such as NHS Trusts, others, like further education corporations and careers service companies took on functions that were previously the responsibility of local authorities (Skelcher 2004). The move weakened local

authorities, circumventing their power, and reducing the scope of their service delivery function (Stewart 2003, Taylor 2003a) and role as a focus of accountability to local communities (Skelcher 2004).

The period saw the introduction of market forces into the governing of communities altering the way in which services such as refuse collection, school meals and IT services were delivered. Under Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) local authorities were required to compare the cost of providing a service in-house with those of any private contractor who put in a bid with the contract going to the lowest price bidder (Wilson and Game 2006). Such 'contracting out' and the creation of quangos was thought to bring with it more efficient and focussed service delivery (Skelcher 2004).

Labour governments since 1997 have built upon the changes introduced under the Conservatives and have emphasised the role of partnerships as a policy instrument. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) identify 5,500 individual partnership bodies that have been created since Labour came to power in 1997. Skelcher (2004) argues that Labour's rationale for the prominence of partnerships has technical, policy and ideological dimensions. On the technical side, partnership working is "predicated on the notion that the transaction costs of 'agencification' and contractulisation could be reduced if collaborative inter-organisational arrangements to plan and co-ordinate activity could be created" (Skelcher 2004 p 32).

On the policy side, partnerships were seen as a response to the notion that "the classic hierarchical model of public administration does not work" (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p476). The top-down approach is argued to be ineffective in addressing persistent policy problems (or so called 'wicked

issues') that could not be addressed by a single organisation. These 'wicked issues' include: "the environmental issue and the hope for sustainable development; crime and disorder and the hope for safer communities; discrimination and the hope for a fairer society; and social exclusion and the hope for more meaningful lives" (Stewart 2003 p12).

Ideologically, partnerships reflected Labour's Third Way whereby public, private, not-for-profit and community actors are viewed as stakeholders in the process of governing with each making a valuable contribution to policy. As a result of Labour's emphasis on partnerships, the process of governing is now carried out by numerous and various stakeholders operating in new public governance spaces (for example Hirst 2000, Rhodes 2000). The complexity of the policy environment requires the involvement of a number of actors with no single body able to address the majority of issues facing a community, as under the sovereign council model (Hendriks and Tops 2005). This reduces "government to only one of many actors" (Rhodes 2000 p62) rather than the single, dominant executive.

Although these changes have reduced the role of local authorities as service providers they still play an important role within these new governing processes. As Skelcher (2004 p26) argues "they are perceived as guiding and mobilising collaborative effort rather than being the primary source for delivering local public policy". Indeed, their remit has widened to encompass a power of well-being. Local authorities are charged with the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. As Stewart (2003 p11) argues,

"Community government is a wider and more embracing concept. The role means that authorities have a concern for community well-being that extends beyond the services provided but those services remain important means for securing that well-being."

## The Engagement of Community Leaders

The involvement of a plurality of actors in governance not only changes the role and position of local authorities, but also affects the role and expectations of citizens. These 'new collaborative spaces' (Skelcher et al 2005) bring together various combinations of public, private, not-for-profit and community actors. In particular, government has sought to engage individuals to represent a discernable community (such as a geographic area or users of a specific public service). This thesis focuses on these individuals, commonly referred to in the literature as 'community leaders'. These individuals take on roles as collaborators and partners in decision making that go beyond their traditional roles within local government, for example as electors or customers. As Skelcher (2004 p28) states,

"Collaborative structures provide a disturbance in the smooth government of the locality. They are an avenue for the legitimate entry of new actors into the determination, funding and control of services and activities, and affect the underlying political economy of local public policy."

Although Skelcher (2004 p25) argues that the use of partnerships undermines the political activity of local authorities "as a democratic voice of the community", community leaders themselves are increasingly being given the opportunity to participate directly in the governing processes that affect their localities and services. Such actors potentially have the opportunity to exercise considerable discretion in the determination and implementation of public policy. Indeed, this is part of the rationale for their involvement; offering new ways of involving actors who are less constrained than those associated with the more traditional representative institutions of government and civil service (Munro et al 2008).

The involvement of citizens in the governing processes reflects, at least in part, the increasing complexity of problems faced in communities. Taylor (2000a p12) summarises this point:

“The problems of the twenty-first century demand imaginative solutions and the release of new resources, which may well come from communities. The commitment to participation suggests that the ‘tacit’ knowledge, resources and skills that lie in the most marginalised communities are at least being acknowledged as part of the solution to some of these problems.”

Alongside the recognition of persistent and complex policy problems there is a similar belief that society itself has become increasingly multifarious,

“Civil society is widely accepted to be a sphere of free association, where ideas, feelings and perceptions may be articulated, discussed and challenged with relatively little constraint. Civil society therefore consists of many diverse voices. Community leaders embody these civic voices...”

(Purdue 2005 p264)

Therefore, part of the rationale for involving citizens as community leaders is that they possess expert local knowledge which serves to improve the quality of decision making (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000). This results in improved effectiveness and efficiency of state spending (Skelcher et al 1996) and makes services more responsive to the specific needs of a community (ODPM 2005).

There has been growing evidence that people in the UK are becoming increasingly disengaging from political activities. For example, turnout at the local government level has averaged between 30-40% for some time (Stoker 2006, Lowndes 1996). For the vast majority of the population of the United Kingdom the message appears to be the same:

“Politics is an ad hoc activity from which people tune in and out according to the circumstances that are confronting them.”  
(Stoker 2006 p35)

The opportunity to participate needs to be perceived by publics in order to serve as an incentive for action and some actors will be more likely (and able) to participate than others. For instance, areas where people have high levels of skills have higher levels of involvement (Lowndes et al 2006). Against the backdrop of national indifference community leaders can be seen as atypical as they commonly represent areas of disadvantage.

The involvement of community leaders in governance processes serves to connect increasingly divorced and disengaged citizens with councillors and council officers (for example Klijn and Koppenjan 2000). Involving citizens as community leaders therefore benefits the “inter-relationship between civil society and the political realm” (Marinetto 2003 p104) by reducing the distance between the state and citizenry. So whilst community leaders may not necessarily be elected, their involvement helps to improve the legitimacy of decisions made under the traditional representative system.

Alongside the growing complexity of society and its problems is a perceived need for local authorities to get closer to its citizens and communities (Stewart 2003). Local government is seen to be disconnected from citizens, reflected in government’s aspiration that modern local government should be put back “In Touch with the People” (DETR 1998). Labour has shown a desire to “re-connect citizens and with the policy process, and do so in a way that involves them as partners in achieving desired outcomes” (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002 p9). For example, community leaders serve “as key points of contact between governmental regeneration initiatives and local residents in neighbourhoods” (Purdue 2001 p2221).

The government also see other normative benefits that result from the involvement of citizens. These include fostering a culture of civic activism and political engagement and generating a greater sense of community (ODPM 2005). As Taylor (2003a p14) argues,

“Optimists would see civil society as holding the key to a third way which would balance the shortcomings of the state and market and open up a new political space.”

Community leaders are engaged in a range of policy areas. For example, the local populace has been “elevated to the apparent status of partner in the regeneration process” (Hastings et al 1996 p5). Other examples include substance abuse, teen pregnancy, gang violence (Alexander et al 2006) and adolescent problem behaviours (Feinberg et al 2002). Sullivan and Skelcher (2002 p9-10) use the example of regeneration to illustrate the changes associated with Labour’s collaborative agenda and the issues that have arisen as a result,

“Local regeneration programmes emphasise the need for communities to take ownership of the process by becoming members of local partnership boards, and in some cases managing regeneration resources and taking responsibility for the provision of services...This move to recreate citizens as joint producers of welfare with a collective commitment to common ends highlights in an acute form issues pertaining to citizen participation in collaborative contexts...”

Regeneration partnerships have proved to be a fertile area for research within public policy (for example Purdue et al 2000, Taylor et al 2007, Anastacio et al 2000, Barnes et al 2007, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). These new political spaces provide an opportunity for what Hemphill et al (2006) call a ‘new breed’ of community based actors “to emerge and to be at the forefront of local decision making” (Hemphill et al 2006 p60). This thesis seeks to fill the gaps in the literature surrounding community leaders and their roles in

these emerging, less formalised methods of political participation. By becoming involved in governance processes community leaders come into contact with a number of structures associated with the state such as regeneration partnerships, council departments and school boards. They will also encounter the state in the form of other actors such as council officers, councillors, and paid governance actors. This thesis considers how community leaders experience these interactions with governing structures and the effects on their involvement.

### Key Research Themes

The first theme to be explored in the research is the interactions between community leaders and the new governance of local communities. The introductory section above has observed the increasing opportunities for individuals drawn from civil society to be involved directly in the process of governing. These community leaders are potentially significant within these emerging governance processes. However, a number of authors researching these governance opportunities have drawn attention to the apparent distance between the rhetoric of involving community leaders and their practical impact (for example Taylor 2003a, Klijn and Koppenjan 2000, Lowndes et al 2001, Purdue et al 2000, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002).

Such analysis encompasses a wide range of themes. For example, questions are raised over the power relations between community leaders and their governance partners (Purdue et al 2000, Anastacio et al 2000, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, Davies 2002, Taylor et al 2007, Barnes et al 2007). Barnes et al (2003) have argued that the way in which public



institutions are structured has a major impact on how publics are constituted for participation and the consequent authority decision-makers accord them. Lowndes (2004) questions just how much local councils have changed in the face of the developments highlighted above. Other authors raise doubts concerning the ability of community leaders to represent their community in these new spaces (for example Anastacio et al 2000, Mayo and Taylor 2002) and note the potential for their behaviour to change as a result of their involvement (for example Barnes et al 2004, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, Purdue 2005).

In taking on new roles within governance, community leaders encounter a number of formal institutions such as the way seats on a regeneration board are distributed as well as informal institutions such as the organisational culture that councils bring with them to partnerships. These institutions have the potential to both provide opportunities and to constrain. In order to investigate the interrelationship between community leaders and the structures of governance systematically it will be necessary to develop an appropriate framework to examine this interaction. This forms the central objective of the thesis (see chapter 2). The interaction between community leaders and the institutions of governance can be seen as part of the wider structure-agency issue. This concerns the extent to which individuals act consciously and attempt to realise their intentions against the extent to which actions are determined by external factors (for example Hay 2002, McAnulla 2002). As such, the thesis seeks to contribute towards the understanding of community leader behaviour and impact.

The second key theme examined by the thesis concerns Bang's concept of Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens. Henrik Bang has been prominent author within the community leader literature. Bang suggests that the patterns discussed above have resulted in the formation of a new type of community leader which he labels as the everyday maker. The definition of everyday makers shares much with that of community leaders in the wider literature. Everyday makers are citizens who operate at the grassroots level but a point of departure from other community leader literature is the assertion that such individuals are largely uncoupled from traditional governance institutions. This is in contrast to expert citizens who are members of the public who seek to become part of the governance elite. However, the literature review in the following chapter will question the differences between these actor types outlined by Bang. The thesis seeks to build upon the work of Bang by clarifying this distinction and seeking to develop a typology of community leaders. A clearer distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens has the potential to develop the broader understanding of community leaders and contribute in a number of ways for example; as actors spanning the boundary between civil society and the state, how they understand their position in relation to institutions and how these factors affect their behaviour.

The final theme is to carry out a UK based case study of community leaders operating in a particular area. In order to carry out the other research themes identified in this section it is necessary to undertake a case study of community leaders. Firstly, this will provide a means of investigating the interaction between community leaders and the new governance of

communities in a particular setting. This will also allow the framework established to examine the interaction between structure and agency to be examined and provide a means of testing the validity of the model in the field. Further, an examination of the interaction between community leaders and the new governance of local communities allows the thesis to add to the existing literature regarding the rhetoric of involving people drawn from communities and the impact of such involvement in practice.

Secondly, a case study will help to build upon Bang's distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens. The two actor types stem from Bang's research carried out in Denmark and Hendriks and Tops' (who have used Bang's work to establish everyday fixers) based on research in the Netherlands. The thesis therefore seeks to consider everyday makers and expert citizens in a UK setting to see if such actors are visible domestically and if so, to clarify the distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens.

### The Argument and Structure of the Thesis

The central argument of the thesis is that the interaction between community leaders and the new governance of local communities has been under-developed within the community leader literature. The rest of the thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 is based upon a focussed review of the existing community leader literature. It establishes who community leaders are, the impact they have and how they develop. It highlights a number of common themes, inconsistencies and shortfalls within the literature. An examination of Bang's concept of the everyday maker highlights the unclear

and under-developed position that the community leader literature adopts in terms of the respective roles of structure and agency within analysis. A structural critique is used to problematise the literature based on its common assumptions concerning the agency of such individuals. This leads to the generation of a set of relevant questions based on this research aim.

Chapters 3 and 4 establish a means of examining community leaders in light of the problems outlined in chapter 2. In chapter 3, new institutionalism is discussed. This theory is used to offer fresh insight into the debate by emphasising the regulating and constraining effect of structure (labelled as institutions) upon actors. The chapter considers the three main branches of new institutionalism (sociological, historical and rational choice). The chapter also introduces some methodological implications. Discussion of Bevir and Rhodes' (2006) concept of the 'situated agent' show the need to consider the relationship between actors and the environment they operate in. Chapter 4 establishes a conceptual framework to understand community leaders. It starts by questioning the emphasis upon formal and informal rules within new institutionalist studies and incorporates Giddens' (1984) understanding of institutions as consisting of rules and resources. In response to this, a new approach is offered that examines how community leaders read their environment, translate these interpretations into action and subsequently assess their impact. Community leaders are understood as being in an on going dialogue with their environment; an environment made up of factors related to the state and community alongside their own agency and experiences.

Chapter 5 translates chapters 3 and 4 into a practical research approach. It outlines how the questions will be answered and data will be generated using a case study approach. It considers how interpretations can be empirically studied using interview methods traditionally associated with other academic disciplines such as anthropology and mental healthcare. Such an approach is used to track the development of community leaders and see how their perceptions alter over time. Analysis of this data leads to the identification of stories told by interviewees. The chapter also considers other methodological issues such as research ethics and the impact of the researcher.

Chapter 6 introduces the contextual setting of the case study presenting the overarching stories of Sheffield and of the two neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey. The chapter outlines the development of the city focussing upon its institutions, character and levels of community activity. The neighbourhoods are also introduced to show their levels of community activity and sources of regeneration funding.

Chapters 7 and 8 present the case study data and are structured around the research questions. Chapter 7 examines the biographies of community leaders examining their development from their initial motivation to become involved through to their present position. This highlights the number of groups and institutions with which they are involved, the significance of time and how the relationship between community leaders and their institutional settings evolve. The chapter establishes a typology of community leaders suggesting that a distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens can be made based upon the respective roles of the state and the community

in the interpretations of community leaders over time. The chapter also identifies another type of community leader labelled as professional citizens.

Chapter 8 is concerned with the primary research question outlining how community leaders interpret the difference they make and how their stories compare with those of other actors such as council officers. This considers the local focus of stories, the role of the state and the responses of community leaders to the constraints imposed upon them over time. The chapter also highlights the changing roles of the state and the community in the interpretations of community leaders as they become more embedded in the new governance of communities.

Chapter 9 returns to the central research questions and outlines the contributions of the thesis. It identifies five contributions. Firstly, the thesis undertakes a Sheffield case study of community leaders using a rarely used approach of narrative interviewing. Secondly, the work offers a fresh interpretation of known material by presenting a structural critique of the community leader literature. Thirdly, it identifies the failure of the literature to take sufficient account of context. Fourthly, it suggests a need to understand the development trajectories of community leaders and finally, how actors view their position in relation to the state and community. The thesis also lays out lessons for future research using a similar methodological approach and suggests future paths for research.

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the key themes that will be examined by this thesis. It has established the research context in which a particular actor

type, namely the community leader, has emerged as significant in the UK as part of the wider shift towards governance. Community leaders are individuals drawn from civil society to be involved in the process of governing over sustained periods reflecting the increasing number of opportunities for citizens to be involved in 'new collaborative spaces' (Skelcher et al 2005). At the same time, this occurs against a backdrop where levels of political participation have fallen meaning that for the majority of the population "politics is an ad hoc activity" (Stoker 2006 p35).

The involvement of community leaders revolves around the notion that the traditional system of governing through a single body is not suited to meet the needs of a modern, complex society with policy issues cutting across conventional departmental lines. Community leaders possess expert local knowledge which, when used alongside that of other governance actors provides appropriate policy responses. This is seen as advantageous to both parties involved. Firstly, it helps to address the legitimacy problems of the representative democratic system with community leaders acting to reconnect the state with communities. There are also benefits to the community leader personally (such as improved skills) and the wider community through policies which better match their needs.

The chapter has identified four major themes that the thesis will consider. Firstly, it will examine how community leaders interact with the new governance of communities in relation to structure-agency. This will necessitate the creation of a conceptual framework. Secondly, the thesis seeks to develop Bang's concept of everyday makers and expert citizens to

establish a typology of community leaders. In order to examine these two themes, the third theme of the thesis will involve a UK based case study.

This introductory chapter has also provided a brief synopsis of each of the chapters to follow including an overview of the arguments and structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 will review the existing community leader literature and identify gaps that would benefit from further research.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW: COMMUNITY LEADERS AND STRUCTURE-AGENCY

#### Introduction

Community leaders have been the focus of a substantial body of research (for example Bang and Sørensen 2001, Purdue 2005, Anastacio et al 2000, Barnes et al 2004) and a variety of government initiatives in the UK and internationally. This chapter examines this research and is divided into two parts. The first is organised around three key questions beginning with: how does the literature define community leaders? By examining how others label such individuals the chapter establishes a working definition that will be used throughout this thesis. The literature highlights a number of characteristics used to identify the 'who' of community leaders capturing a broad range of individuals. This approach is considered alongside the problems it raises. These include the potential tensions between definitions based on the roles individuals play and between those based on their position, and the respective roles of the community and the state as sources of a community leader's legitimacy.

The second question is: how does the literature explain the impact of community leaders? The literature review examines the role that community leaders play within governance. It discusses the high expectations put upon these individuals by their community and the state and questions their ability to act as effective community representatives. Friction also arises from the position of community leaders as situated simultaneously as members of a

community and of state structures. As such they risk straying too close to the influence of one to the potential detriment of their position in the other. The review also highlights the apparent significance of the state in affecting the impact of community leaders.

The third question enquires: how does the literature explain the development of community leaders? Individuals are assumed to benefit from their role. However, a number of authors highlight the problem of burnout resulting from the pressures associated with being a community leader. This seems to fit uneasily with research that suggests community leaders may act to block others from becoming involved coupled with the conflict visible between long-standing community leaders and relative newcomers. This also highlights the contested and conditional nature of a community leader's legitimacy.

The second part of the chapter considers the relative significance of structure and agency in the community leader literature. An examination of Bang's concept of everyday makers and expert citizens suggests a need to reposition analysis in a manner which systematically considers structure and agency. This analysis poses a central question which lies at the heart of this thesis regarding the conditions under which community leaders matter to public policy. Are they free agents able to mould and shape public policy, or are they constrained by existing structures to a largely symbolic and marginal impact?

## Defining Community Leaders

### Defining Community Leaders by Position and Role

Community leaders can be defined using a number of characteristics taken from the literature. Firstly, the involvement of individuals drawn from civil society highlights the changing context of governing discussed in the introductory chapter. This has resulted in new forms of resource allocation and modes of democratic participation (Anastacio et al 2000, Raco and Flint 2001). Communities are no longer simply the passive recipients of services provided by the state (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000). Instead, citizens are simultaneously both recipients and participants (Anastacio et al 2000 p2) playing a direct role in the process of governing (Raco and Flint 2001). The move towards local governance and the empowerment of local communities establishes a backdrop which creates opportunities “for a new breed of ‘community leader’ to emerge and to be at the forefront of local decision making” (Hemphill et al 2006 p60). Whilst community leaders are engaged in governance, they are distinct from state actors. They are citizens embedded in a community acting as counterweights to the growing isolation of political and business elites (Purdue 2005). Community leaders are unlikely to be paid for their role, acting as volunteers rather than employees. As a community leader (quoted by Shaw 2005 p22) reflects,

“I live and work here, and I hope the community can see that- it's not some guy parachuted in from some government department.”

Whilst separate from state actors community leaders are also distinct from people who live or work in a community. Indeed, authors commonly refer to residents and community leaders separately (for example Low et al

2005, Russell and Vidler 2000). What distinguishes community leaders from, and takes them beyond their position as residents or workers in an area, is the role that they play. As Purdue (2005 p264) observes,

“Civil society is widely accepted to be a sphere of free association, where ideas, feelings and perceptions may be articulated, discussed and challenged with relatively little constraint. Civil society therefore consists of many diverse voices. Community leaders embody these civic voices.”

So community leaders serve as representatives of a community, articulating its views and opinions to different actors. They can act as community representatives in a number of ways based upon their role and position. The first refers to a form of community participation identified previously where individuals are actively identified as ‘leaders’ who become “involved as community representatives in the management of an urban regeneration partnership” (Ball and Maginn 2005 p17). Community leaders are therefore members of a community who are engaged as part of official structures, such as a Local Strategic Partnership established by a local authority, business and civil society organisations, or a New Deal for Communities (NDC) board established by central government. As actors involved in governance partnerships community leaders collaborate with actors from a broad range of organisations from the public, non-profit, business sectors (Provan et al 2005).

Ball and Maginn (2005) argue that this understanding of community leaders is the focus of the community leader literature and this definition is indeed shared by a number of authors (for example Purdue et al 2000, Taylor 2000a, Anastacio et al 2000). This is also reflected in the research designs used by authors studying community leaders, many of whom identify

partnership case studies and then focus on community leaders within them (for example Hemphill et al 2006, Anastacio et al 2000, Purdue et al 2000, Taylor 2000b, Purdue 2005) using interviews (for example Taylor 2003a, Hemphill et al 2006, Carley et al 2000) alongside other techniques such as analysis of reports and documentation (Hemphill et al 2006, Purdue et al 2000) and focus groups (Purdue et al 2000, Anastacio et al 2000).

Another means of identifying community leaders is as individuals holding positions in voluntary and community based organisations within the case study area such as a tenant's association (for example, Anastacio et al 2000, Barnes et al 2007, Low et al 2005, Tandon et al 1998, Kelly 1999). Such an understanding incorporates a broad range of individuals. As Sullivan and Skelcher (2002 p169) observe,

“The sources of community leadership are varied but tend to comprise: leaders of communities of identity, such as faith communities or domestic violence survivors groups; leaders of communities of place; and leaders of communities of interest, for example nature reservation group.”

Despite the multiplicity of communities encompassed within this definition, the understanding of community leaders as members of partnerships or community organisations appears to exclude a number of other individuals identifiable as community leaders. For example, Purdue et al's (2000 p3) definition of community leaders extends further by opening up the possibility that community leaders may not be part of a formally constituted organisation,

“Leaders may be defined, therefore, by their position, by the decisions they take, by their reputation with others, or even their style of behaviour regardless of formal position...Community leaders may be occupants of formal positions (e.g. on community forums or tenants groups); they may be identified as influential (e.g. through faith organisations, community arts groups, schools, family centres), as

long-term stimulants of community activity, as political activists, or simply as people who help others to get things done.”

This understanding reiterates the importance of identifying community leaders based on the role that they play rather than simply by their position within an organisation or partnership. Community leaders can be recognised by the activities they undertake in their community and also how they are perceived by community members and beyond by other actors. The role they play is likely to be sustained over substantial periods of time. For example, Barnes et al (2003) and Lowndes et al (2001) argue that community leaders have a history of community action.

#### Defining Community Leaders by Legitimacy

Community leaders are considered as a mouthpiece for their community (for example Thake and Zadek 2000, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). However, the contestations discussed above draw attention to an important issue in the literature, namely, how does an individual come to be recognised as a legitimate representative of a community? The legitimacy of community leaders stems from two primary sources: the community and the state. There may be tensions within and between these two spheres resulting in legitimacy being a constantly contested issue.

The first source of legitimacy is the community from which the individual is drawn to play a representative role. Indeed, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) note that if an individual is not recognised by the community they risk being rejected. In some cases, legitimacy is demonstrated through elections. For example, the New Deal for Communities programme allows for community representatives to be elected by the community, with turnout in

some cases exceeding that of councillor elections in the area (Rallings et al 2004). However, legitimacy does not necessarily need to be formalised by community voting. For example, Hemphill et al (2006) note that legitimacy may not necessarily be the result of democratic processes; instead it may be the result of peer acceptance. Purdue et al (2000 p2) state that community leaders are,

“Individuals who are elected, selected, nominated, self-appointed, arm-twisted, or otherwise chosen as ‘leaders’ of a ‘community’”.

Connelly et al (2006 p268) argue that there is an unresolved issue surrounding “what can replace the ballot box as the foundations of (governance’s) claim to legitimacy.” Part of what makes a community leader acceptable appears to be what they offer such as “specific knowledge; experience of the community; or demonstrable evidence of having benefited the community through their actions” (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002 p169). As such their legitimacy is in need of maintenance and susceptible to change (Connelly et al 2006). For example, community leaders may become distanced from their community over time and thus dependent upon their position in partnerships for their legitimacy and identity (for example Purdue 2001, Taylor 2000b). Further, the means of accountability back to their community may be limited,

“In theory, community representatives are accountable to the citizens living in their neighbourhood. But community feedback, which is heavily dependent on meetings, means that, at best, activists and, at worst, only paid workers, get to participate in the consultation process.” (Purdue et al 2000 p39)

However, accountability does not rely solely on meetings as Purdue suggests. Accountability can be exercised in a number of ways including, for example the day to day encounters and interactions between community leaders and

neighbours. This issue will be returned to later in the chapter in the discussion of the development of community leaders.

Alongside the community leader's community, the second main source of legitimacy is the state and the other governance actors with which a community leader interacts (Purdue et al 2000 and Purdue 2001). The significance of governance actors as a source of legitimacy is reflected in the methods used within much of the community leader literature which predominantly revolve around the examination of community leader involvement across partnership case studies.

Some writers differentiate between community leaders based upon how they understand their relationship with formal and informal state structures. For example, Skelcher et al (1996) distinguish between: 'network enthusiasts' (who view networking positively as a means of opening up governance thereby allowing more community involvement, novel policy solutions and synergy); 'activists' (who consider networking as a way of ensuring strategic goals are met and regeneration is delivered in an integrated way); 'pragmatists' (for whom networking is a necessary evil providing an opportunity to secure funding); and 'opponents' (who see networking as an attack on local democracy where policies are created in way that circumvents democratic processes). Alternatively, Purdue et al (2000) distinguish between 'champions' (who support and promote the partnership and may regard their position as the source of their legitimacy and be unwilling to leave), 'pragmatists' (who treat the process in professional terms) or 'opponents' (whose oppositional stance may be from outside or inside a Single Regeneration Budget [SRB] programme).



The role of the state in legitimising a community leader can be seen in Kelly's (2003) discussion of the Bosnian immigrant community in the UK. Kelly argues that the definition of Bosnian community leaders is based firstly on the state's assumption that a group of migrants sharing the same country of origin constitute a community. From such a starting point,

"The assumption of a community brings with it an assumption that there can be community leaders who can represent that community, although these leaders are rarely elected or democratically chosen."  
(Kelly 2003 p38)

However, Kelly argues that the notion of a Bosnian community is artificial. It is one that is defined by the state and is only maintained by members of Bosnian community associations because it allows them to take advantage of the financial opportunities made available to refugee organisations by the state. However, there is no Bosnian community underpinning these organisations,

"Bosnians were urged to form formal associations and shown how to go about creating them, but there was little consideration of whether there was an informal community that could underpin the formal one. There are kinship groups, friends, and networks, but there is no community and no feeling of obligation to others. These associations reflect the expectations of British society and as such, their continued existence is dependent upon the benefits that can be accrued from a continuing social policy focus on refugee communities."  
(Kelly 2003 p46)

### Community Leaders: A Working Definition

The definition of community leaders as community representatives in governance partnerships and community organisations shows the role of the state in establishing which 'communities' are to be involved and what policy priorities are. There is also likely to be some overlap in these definitions. For example, an individual may simultaneously be a member of a community

organisation and of a regeneration partnership. Indeed, being a member of a community organisation may form the basis of their legitimacy in the eyes of the state given the state's tendency to equate community involvement with community organisations identified previously by Williams (2003). Sullivan and Skelcher (2002 p166) argue that community leaders are predominantly a state construction,

“Overall it is central government that wield the most power in determining which citizens or communities are to be involved in collaboration, not least because it is central government that determines the priorities for collaborative action.”

Whilst acknowledging the potential artificiality of state defined 'communities' Raco and Flint (2001 p604) argue that this may bring the members of the 'community' closer together,

“The creation of new spaces of governance may, in and of itself, encourage participation and a sense of community, resulting in a growing sense of identity amongst local people towards these spaces and increasing the congruence between institutional spaces and local definitions of places.”

The discussion regarding community leaders as representatives suggests that their legitimacy is contested and highlights the potential friction between state and community. Indeed, what legitimises a community leader in the eyes of one may differ from what legitimises them in the eyes of the other. For example, research has suggested that the state prefers individuals who are “adept at reading account sheets and wading through documents” (Purdue et al 2000 p33), have management skills (Taylor 2003a, Mayo and Taylor 2002, Skelcher et al 1996) and are sharp and able to get things done (Carley et al 2000) rather than individuals who are necessarily a good leader of a community (Purdue et al 2000).

There is a further issue concerning whether councillors are community leaders. Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) consider the use of community leaders as part of a new form of participation, which they term interactive decision making, whereby “citizens, users, interest groups and public and private organisations that have a stake in a decision are involved in its preparation” (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000 p368). However, the above discussion shows councillors fulfil many of the characteristics of a community leader. A distinction cannot be drawn based upon elections since some community leaders have been shown to be elected. Nor can a meaningful separation be made based on pay in the sense that councillors are not formally paid, instead receiving remuneration through ‘allowances’ or ‘pensionable remuneration’ in the case of executive councillors (Wilson and Game 2006 p270-1). The debate is also set against a backdrop where the legitimacy of councillors is questionable on the grounds of: the uncertainty of councillors’ roles in governance and authority structures, a crisis in recruitment, low turnout at elections, incidents of sleaze and perceptions of single party councils (Lowndes and Sullivan 2000).

Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) also distinguish between actors based upon the arenas of the interactive decision making process. They argue that “through the rather aloof role played by politicians, two separate decision-making arenas arise: an ‘interactive arena’ in which the interactive decision-making process unfolds and an ‘administrative-political arena’ in which the results of the interactive arena are translated into a project decision” (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000 p372). Councillors are vital in both arenas whilst community leaders are only prevalent in the first. Although such differentiation may be

valid in some instances, some community leaders are engaged throughout the stages of the policy process (and distinct from councillors) such as those involved over the lifetime of a NDC programme. So, whilst councillors can be considered as community leaders, for reasons of clarity this thesis shall exclude elected local authority office holders from the definition and will refer to the groups separately.

This section has highlighted a number of issues associated with defining an individual as a 'community leader'. This is a theme that will be returned to throughout the thesis. However, for reasons of continuity and ease of communication a working definition of community leaders can be produced based on the characteristics outlined above. Other terms (such as everyday maker, expert citizen or councillor) will be used only in cases where the author wishes to draw attention to a significant distinction between these groups and in such cases, will be highlighted. Therefore, this thesis defines community leaders as:

- *"Individuals drawn from civil society...*
- *...to represent a discernable community (of space or interest).*
- *Their legitimacy is conditional and may be contested by the community...*
- *...and by the state, business and voluntary and community actors with whom they interact."*

## The Impact of Community Leaders

An examination of the community leader literature suggests that there may be a gap between the rhetoric of involving community leaders and the reality of their impact (Mayo and Taylor 2002). Indeed, Taylor (2003b) questions whether the move towards neighbourhood governance should be considered as a Holy Grail or a poisoned chalice. This question introduces a number of tensions within the community leader literature which will be examined in this section.

### Community Leaders as Representatives

The first surrounds the expectations placed upon community leaders both by their community and by the state. As Purdue et al (2000 p45) observe,

“Community leaders bear heavy expectations to span the barriers between the structures and professions of government on the one hand and the socially excluded and often disgruntled local populations on the other.”

The expectations placed upon community leaders by the state are particularly high. Community leaders are expected by state partners to “deliver their communities” (Taylor 2003a p138) in governance arenas. They are to be both accountable to their community and representatives of it, accurately articulating the community’s views, opinions and needs. Indeed, Hemphill et al (2006 p65) argue that,

“The success of urban leadership will depend on the extent to which the personnel chosen for the role can be said to be representative and therefore accountable to the local community.”

Community leaders take on roles as co-operative participators and deliberators in the process of governing (Munro et al 2008). However, the delivery focus of many of these governance partnerships means that

community leaders may not be able to directly consult with their community but are still asked to make decisions on their behalf (Taylor 2003a). This creates a problem since a community leader is being asked to reflect and represent a diversity of needs and wants (Ball and Maginn 2005) across a community that is unlikely to have shared, universal opinions (Taylor 2003a, Barnes et al 2003, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, Rao 2000). As Anastacio et al (2000 p22) found,

“Community representatives were expected to represent ‘the community view’, but the reality is that communities are rarely homogeneous: there are conflicting interests and perspectives.”

Unsurprisingly, Mayo and Taylor (2002) found that community leaders struggled to represent the differing views of the community. This is exaggerated by a further characteristic of community leaders seen in the literature; they are small in number. Indeed, Taylor (2003) calls the role a minority sport, Jones (2003) a minority activity and Purdue et al (2000) and Taylor et al (2007) suggest that community organisations are often reliant on one or two active members.

Individuals identified as community leaders are commonly referred to in somewhat angelic tones (Deakin 2004) with labels such as ‘community champions’ (Shaw 2005) ‘local heroes’ (Hendriks and Tops 2005) or ‘community stars’ (Anastacio et al 2000) frequently used. Barnes et al (2007) use ‘lay’ to refer to such individuals (so lay representatives, lay members, lay people etc...). However, such a term has connotations of being condescending, neglecting the very skills and expertise that these people possess which forms part of the rationale for their involvement.

By becoming involved community leaders capitalise on an opportunity (Purdue 2005) and gain social capital. However, the benefits of the involvement of community leaders extend to the wider community as well since traditionally marginalised communities are being given a voice (Hemphill et al 2006, Jones 2003) and more control over their lives and communities (Taylor 2003a) thereby promoting social inclusion. Williams (2003 p532) argues,

“The involvement of people in their communities bolsters community spirit, encourages local solutions to be sought to local problems, promotes local democratic renewal and delivers support to those in need.”

Such analysis conforms to the Holy Grail aspect of Taylor’s question. Conversely, on the poisoned chalice side of the debate Maloney et al (2000) argue that benefits accumulated by the individual community leader can only spread wider if they are passed down to the community through the leader. Skelcher et al (1996 p28) quote a senior civil servant who observes the difficulty of getting the ‘right’ individual,

“You can easily get the community representative wrong. You can get the wrong person- the people who shout the loudest are not necessarily those with community support.”

In contrast to the favourable terms used above, community leaders are also negatively labelled as ‘usual suspects’ (Taylor 2003a), ‘career activists’ (Hastings et al 1996) or as ‘Godfathers/Godmothers’ (Mayo 1997). Such labels question the ability of individuals to represent their community. For example, Ball and Maginn (2005) note that such individuals may be political activists whose understanding of the ‘neighbourhood view’ are coloured by their own political agenda. Further, those who become involved may be at an advantage in relation to other members of the community. Nyden et al (1997)

argue that the middle-class culture of US organisations gives middle-class activists an advantage over other actors and Russell and Vidler's (2000) study of community leaders in Sri Lanka found that community leaders were often not the poorest in a community and, compared to other neighbours, reasonably well educated. On this understanding community leaders may simply replicate existing social exclusion patterns (Purdue et al 2000, Mayo and Taylor 2002, Jones 2003). Their involvement may block the involvement of others and have negative impacts on other traditionally excluded groups as Anastacio et al (2000 p2) note,

“The acquisition of social capital by some- the ‘community stars’- may actually be to the detriment of others- particularly to the detriment of groups already struggling with social exclusion on the basis of race, gender, occupation or age.”

Taylor (2003a) refers to the dark-side of community highlighting the ‘Us and Them’ aspect where a community is defined as much by the people individuals wish to exclude (the ‘Them’) as the positive bond of an ‘Us’. Community is often used to sound “warm and positive” and assumes an agreement on basic values (Taylor 2003a p52). This glosses over the complexity of communities and the diversity it covers (Purdue et al 2000). For example, the discussion of Kelly's (2003) research of Bosnians living in the UK highlighted the false assumption that Bosnians had shared values and indeed, saw themselves as part of a Bosnian community at all.

Notions of community can also mask over the internal divisions that exist within a community. There are numerous examples of tensions within geographical communities such as those between: people who live and work in an area (Anastacio et al 2000); older council tenants and younger incoming homeowners (Purdue 2001); age groups (Taylor et al 2007); and ethnic



groups (Taylor et al 2007, Anastacio et al 2000, Purdue et al 2000). Alongside this is the recognition that some traditionally excluded groups of people such as the homeless, refugees, disabled, gay and the young may also be isolated within a neighbourhood (Anastacio et al 2000). These groups may be under-represented within neighbourhood governance. For example, Purdue (2001) observes that whilst they were seen as the source of many problems, young people were largely absent from decision making structures. Further, Anastacio et al (2000 p22-23) argue that,

“Expecting one black person to represent the diversity of black and ethnic minority views in an area could be seen as tokenism.”

This discussion questions whether a few so called community leaders can be effective representatives given the complexity of communities, the types of individuals likely to become involved and the high expectations that come with their role.

### The Position of Community Leaders

The second tension within the community leader literature concerns the position in which actors find themselves as a result of their involvement, and the issues this creates. Community leaders span the boundaries between the state and civil society and at the same time, discussion has shown that they may lack a formally constituted position. In taking up their role they face fundamental challenges. On the side of the community, they carry the high expectations of the often excluded elements of civil society (Purdue 2005) that they are seeking to represent alongside the difficulty of managing the complexity of community views highlighted above. They must report back to the community decisions that have been made on partnerships which may “fly

in the face of community wishes” (Taylor 2003a p193). At the same time community leaders “must attempt to convince local people to take an interest in regeneration and attend meetings” (Purdue et al 2000 p37); something that is likely to be difficult given that Purdue et al (2000 p32) found that getting the community to participate can be “like pulling teeth”.

By becoming a community representative, a community leader’s position within their community is seen to change. They may be required to take up a formal position within an organisation and/or partnership. Furthermore, community leaders increase their personal social capital through their role. Purdue (2001 p2221) also found that,

“The community leaders studied struggled to connect to their grassroots supporters in the neighbourhood.”

This means that community leaders and their community may become increasingly divorced from one another. The gap between community leaders and their community places further limitations on their already questionable ability to represent and deliver their community. This is something that will be returned to in the following section.

Community leaders also face a number of difficulties in their relationship to the state. Whilst community leaders may become distanced from their community they may also face problems with being fully accepted as part of a partnership by state players. They may face difficulties in “persuading other major players in regeneration to take their views, aspirations and representativeness seriously” (Purdue et al 2000 p37). Purdue (2001 p2220) argues that with partnerships “community leaders occupy a position akin to ‘strangers’- members of a group yet with their difference remaining difficult to overcome”. Community leaders can be

criticised by their public sector partners who can accuse them of being unrepresentative and unable to represent beyond their community (Taylor 2003a, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). Anastacio et al (2000) argues that this will often occur when the partnership board or council do not want to hear what the community leader is saying.

Conversely, a number of authors identify a problem associated with those community leaders who become too close, and too similar, to their state colleagues within partnerships. If a community leader strays too heavily towards their public sector partners an individual risks becoming incorporated (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, Purdue 2005). They begin to mimic the discourses and institutional practices of state players in features such as the language they use (Barnes et al 2004). In so doing the community leader becomes detached further from their community and ceases to be considered as a legitimate representative by the community (Anastacio et al 2000). They run the risk of shouts of “you’ve fucked up the estate and now you’re carrying a briefcase!” (McCulloch 1997) from members of the community.

The position of community leaders presented in the community leader literature is an uncomfortable and inconsistent one. Rather than acting as a bridge between state and citizen, community leaders may become divorced from their community, have their position challenged by other governance actors or be incorporated by the state. Taylor (2003a p193) summarises the position of community leaders as one of no man’s land,

“They (community leaders) are caught in a no-man’s land where they are expected to represent the views of their constituencies to partnerships on the one hand, but at the same time to embody the partnership back in the community on the other, even when its decisions fly in the face of community wishes. Where money is at stake, representatives also run the risk of being suspected of

feathering their own nests by their community, while being accused of being unrepresentative by their new partnership colleagues is an occupational hazard, especially if they challenge the drive to consensus.”

### The Influence of Community Leaders

It has been noted that the legitimacy of a community leader is contested by both the community and the state. Whilst councils are increasingly required to involve communities and community leaders, they are reluctant to do so leaving a sense that community opinions are “not sought after but their support needed” (Purdue et al 2000 p32). Community leaders are excluded from the early stages of partnership formation after key decisions have been made (Mayo and Taylor 2002). As Taylor (2000 p1023 original emphasis) observes “the partnership is formed and *then* involves the community”. For instance, community leaders are sometimes only shown programme bids “just in time to sign before it is submitted” (Purdue et al 2000 p255).

On such a basis, the involvement of community leaders is more “council bureaucracy than a route to citizen empowerment” (Purdue et al 2000 p32). Community leaders are there simply to make up the numbers (Purdue 2005) and as a result communities remain marginalised (Taylor 2000a). This line of argument seems to conflict with the point made earlier regarding the role of community leaders as deliverers of their communities. If community leaders are there merely to make up the numbers, their role may be to legitimise state decisions rather than act as representatives of the community view. Indeed, Taylor (2003b p190) questions whether the opportunities presented to community leaders are simply a “new arena for social control” where community leaders are “blinkered by the money”. The participation of

community leaders may be nothing more than a coercion of free labour and volunteering time (Jones 2003) or a means of “channelling and smothering local political protest” (Ball and Maginn 2005 p21).

There may also be discrepancies between participant opinion and the final decision which is often still taken by politicians and officers (Purdue et al 2000). Klijn and Koppenjan (2000 p367) observe,

“Participants in interactive decision-making processes often appear disappointed with what politicians do with the outcome of the interactive process. The link between interactive decision-making processes and the sanctioning and implementing of the results in ‘normal’ political decision-making procedures and arenas is apparently problematic.”

The discussion concerning the incorporation of community leaders suggests that the state attempts to control community involvement processes, seeking to specify agency obligations through various mechanisms such as monitoring (through performance indicators, targets etc) and the threat of sanctions against uncooperative behaviour (Ball and Maginn 2005). Individuals who agree with the council agenda are deemed ‘acceptable’ and preferred to those seen to be rocking the boat (Anastacio et al 2000). The community leader is therefore in a position where “they do not decide the game that is being played; they do not determine the rules of play, the system of refereeing or, indeed, who plays” (Taylor 2003a p123). For example, the heterogeneity amongst Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BMEs) is unlikely to be adequately represented by the single seat that is sometimes offered on a partnership board (Smith and Stephenson 2005). The dominance of the state in establishing the rules for involving community leaders may also affect the type of person likely to become involved, encouraging the atypical few possessing the necessary management skills (Taylor 2003a, Mayo and Taylor

2002), personal contacts (Hendriks and Tops 2005) and vocal chords to shout the loudest (Lowndes et al 2001, Hendriks and Tops 2005).

The impact of community leaders is a contested topic within the community leader literature. The involvement of community leaders does establish “windows of opportunity that can be exploited and opportunities for communities to be active subjects and create their own power” (Taylor 2003b p191). These opportunities clearly have the potential to benefit those individuals and communities involved. Furthermore, there is some evidence of a shift in power relations, such as Jones’ (2003) Merseyside case and Anastacio et al’s (2000) study which found some examples of good practice amongst their case studies and noted that later schemes in particular demonstrated improved opportunities for participation. However, the role of the state seems to restrict the influence of community leaders. As Carley et al (2000 p50) argue,

“Too much community involvement in partnerships tends to be tokenistic, that is involving only a few ‘community representatives’, and/or controlled by public agencies and regeneration professionals where agenda and decision processes are determined with little reference to the wider community.”

As such, community leaders must manage the joint pressures of the state and the community suggesting that in order to make an impact they “have to operate with a considerable degree of sophistication” (Taylor 2003b p193).

### The Development of Community Leaders

Community leaders may develop through their involvement in partnerships and their communities. Purdue et al (2000) observe that through their

involvement, some community leaders get skills which allow them to go onto other funding possibilities or get jobs in the voluntary and community sector. For these individuals their experience as a community leader is empowering instilling in them confidence, skills and vision. Anastacio et al (2000 p2) argue that,

“Individuals and groups learn in significant ways from their experiences of participating in area regeneration programmes as active citizens. There are important benefits here, both for the individuals and the organisations concerned.”

There are also examples of community leaders receiving good support, training and mentoring to help them with the steep learning curve associated with their role (Anastacio et al 2000, Mayo and Taylor 2002). However, a number of authors argue that being a community leader can be a burden rather than an asset. Alongside the potential criticism from the community and the state seen above, the role of a community leader can be a stressful and time consuming one (Anastacio et al 2000). Purdue (2001) found that partnerships were a full time job and Jones (2003) observed that community leaders were swamped with jargon and long meetings. Purdue et al (2000 p37) state,

“The physical and emotional cost to the individual leaders is so heavy that many feel that it is not worth the effort to continue to be involved.”

‘Burnout’ is identified as common problem amongst community leaders as a result of the pressures associated with their role. For example, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002 p171) note,

“‘Burnout’ is a major problem for community leaders in collaborative activity. They are generally under greater time pressures than statutory partners and will invariably experience stress as a result of their voluntary role.”

Also, for those community leaders Purdue et al (2000 p34) identify as 'opponents' to a partnership, involvement may be a disempowering, emasculatory experience,

"The community leaders felt undervalued; their time was used as if they had nothing else to do. They were not able to make any significant decisions, but were merely informed of the decisions made by others. They felt manipulated into the partnership to serve the interests of the council, rather than being properly consulted."

It has been acknowledged that any benefits a community leader does receive as a result of their involvement do not necessarily extended to the wider community; they need to be passed on. Furthermore, a gulf can emerge between community leaders and their community (Taylor 2003a). The distance between community leaders and their community can make it hard for newcomers to get up to speed with the workings of a partnership or regeneration project (for example Taylor 2003a). This can also be an issue if the community leader becomes 'burned-out' leaving a large gap which may be difficult to fill (Taylor et al 2007). Anasatcio et al (2000) also recognise that overtime community leaders may become more or less involved, organisations may become more or less active and officers may come and go.

Experienced community leaders may also be reluctant to allow others to become involved but Taylor et al (2007 p25) are quick to note that "their neighbours may be happy to let them get on with the job." However, the disinclination of community leaders to rescind power associated with their role can mean that they attempt to block other actors who try and become involved, acting as gatekeepers (Russell and Vidler 2000). As Taylor (2000a p1028) argues,

"Community leaders who have struggled against the odds to achieve a say in the decision-making process may not find it easy to cede control



to others. It is not hard in the community development literature to find examples of community leaders who climb up Arnstein's famous ladder of participation and then pull it up after them (or those for whom participation is the first step to the way out). In fact, it is perhaps surprising that so many do not."

Such behaviour seems to sit uneasily with the problems that being a community leader may bring. Taylor (2000b) observes that whilst some community leaders can become divorced from their communities, they can also make a valuable contribution to their community. However, in order to address the potential divorce between leader and community, Taylor (2000b) suggests that there needs to be a turnover of community leaders. Taylor et al (2007 p31) found examples where "existing leaders in the programme had actively encouraged others to get involved and given them the confidence to take up new responsibilities". The authors also cite examples where the departure of one community leader, rather than leaving a disastrous black hole had encouraged others to step in and fill the void. However, given the prospect of community leaders acting as barriers to the involvement of newcomers, tensions can develop between established community leaders and incomers. Purdue (2001, 2005) discusses the potential friction between the first generation of community leaders involved since the start of an SRB project, acting to legitimatise the project and the second generation who emerged as SRB resources were spent on capacity building. Purdue et al (2000 p40) found that,

"In some cases the community leaders were so well established that they were able to prevent any new leaders appearing at all. Alternatively the new leaders formed a second tier of leadership with smaller, more immediate concerns, and felt inhibited by, or unconnected to, those who officially represent them. However, others felt open hostility to the established community leaders who they saw as unrepresentative or obstructive gatekeepers, and were moving towards setting up new forms of representation."

## The Agency Logic of Community Leader Theory

### The Case of Bang's Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens

The discussion of the development of community leaders shows the significant role they are accredited with in the community leader literature.

For example, Taylor et al (2007 p22) state,

“This programme made us aware just how fragile many community organisations are, reliant on the energies of two or three people with few resources. In these situations one individual can make or break an organisation and a key individual moving on can be a major crisis.”

A feature of the community leader literature is the underlying assertion that it is individuals that “made (it) work” (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p480). Indeed, the discussion of the skills held by community leaders above highlights the trait aspects of some of the literature. For example, Alexander et al (2006) examine the qualities of community leaders in order to see which combination of traits result in an effective leader. The effectiveness of the leader is assessed based upon the overall ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of the project that they were involved in. The focus on the individual abilities of a community leader is perhaps best illustrated by an examination of Bang’s concept of the everyday maker.

Bang’s analysis shares a number of similarities to that of the wider community leader literature. It begins by observing the declining levels of civic engagement and collective participation in politics drawing on Putnam’s social capital work (for example Putnam 1995) to show that citizens are increasingly “bowling alone” (for example Bang 2005). Bang and Sørensen (1998 p1) observe Putnam’s assertion that “the West is becoming increasingly ‘uncivic’” and that there has been a thinning of collective political participation.

In the face of such increasing individualisation members of the political elite acknowledge that they can no longer govern in a top-down manner,

“High modern society has grown so complex, dynamic and differentiated that no expert system can any longer rule itself solely by exercising hierarchical and bureaucratic control over people.”  
(Bang 2003a p243-244)

Instead, actors from different ‘life worlds’ must enter into communicative relationships and “talk openly and share with people rather than talk down to them or preach for them” (Bang 2005 p174). Actors operate through “horizontal arrangements” (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p476) in a new discursive arena to solve complex policy problems, something Bang labels as ‘culture governance’.

Bang and Sorenson (1998 p2) argue that this context has prompted the emergence of a new political identity that “contradicts Putnam’s story of decay”. Bang labels these individuals everyday makers. Everyday makers are conceived as ‘laypeople’ (citizens) working at a grassroots level preferring “to be involved at the lowest possible, local, level” (Marsh and O’Toole 2004 p25). Everyday makers overlap in many areas with the definitional practices of community leaders discussed earlier in this chapter. However, a major point of departure is that an everyday maker is not interested in “participating in formal institutions” (Bang 2005). They are “largely uncoupled” (Bang and Dyberg 2003 p234) from state structures and elite politics (Bang 2003b). Everyday makers are seen as being apathetic towards ‘big’ politics associated with parliamentarian and corporatist arenas and even those linked to oppositional social movements (Bang 2005). Instead everyday makers operate in a “flatly organised” system (Bang 2005 p161) and are interested in the ‘small’ or ‘micro’ politics of the neighbourhood.

Bang and Sørensen's work is based on interviews with twenty-five active citizens in the Inner-Noerrebro district of Copenhagen, Denmark. Of these twenty-five, Bang and Sørensen (1998) argue that they saw traces of this new political identity in all of the interviewees but concentrate upon two individuals in producing the maxims of an everyday maker. Table 1 (overleaf) shows the credo of an everyday maker provided by Bang and Sørensen. Alongside it are the principles for Hendriks and Tops' (2005) 'everyday fixer' produced in response to Bang's work to fit the Dutch case. Hendriks and Tops work stems from the examination of a Neighbourhood Development Corporation in The Hague and uses one individual as an example of an everyday fixer.

Citizens who seek access to the culture governance table working full time are labelled by Bang and Sørensen (2001) as 'everyday activists' or 'expert citizens' ([Bang 2004] the term expert citizens will be used throughout this piece for clarity). These individuals are seen as being incorporated as members of the state system elite and block other citizens from participating in the ways discussed above. As Bang (2005 p163) argues,

"Expert citizens appear as a new (sub-) elite cooperating regularly with elites from both private and public organisations in the area. Their professionalism and cooperative attitude distinguish them from the old grass roots, which- more than anything else- drew their political identity from their antagonistic relationship to the authorities."

Table 1: The Principles of Everyday Makers and Fixers

<u>Everyday Makers</u> (Bang and Sørensen 1998)	<u>Everyday Fixers</u> (Hendriks and Tops 2005)
1. Do it yourself...	...but don't do everything yourself (do what you're good at)
2. Do it where you are	Begin "with yourself, your street and your own neighbourhood" (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p484)
3. Do it for fun but also because you find it necessary (a worthy cause-Bang 2003a)	Such necessity comes before fun
4. Do it ad-hoc or part time...	...but it will take up far more time than formally contracted
5. Think concretely rather than ideologically...	...but ideals will give it purpose
6. Show responsibility for and trust in yourself...	...but responsibility is sentiment and accountability is if the project works
7. Show responsibility and trust in others / Do it with respect for others (Bang and Dyberg 2003) and with respect for the differences of others...	...but working directly overcomes tactful caution. Older principles like all hands on deck are more important
8. Look at expertise as an other rather than an enemy...	...but experts are likely to be restricted by rules, guidelines etc...
(9. Do it with the system if need be (Bang and Sorenson 2001) but preferably with other lay people (Bang 2003a)	

The assertion that an everyday maker can "do it themselves" means Bang and Sørensen (1998, 2001) are making an assumption about the ability of such individuals to affect their environment in order to realise their preferences and intentions as rational actors. Implicit in such an assumption is a belief that the actor could have chosen to act differently and their actions are important (Hay 2002). In taking such a stance, the everyday maker literature appears to overlook the significance that context has in defining "the range of actions available to actors" (McAnulla 2002 p271). This can be conceived as part of the structure-agency debate concerning the,

“Extent to which we as actors have the ability to shape our destiny as against the extent to which our lives are structured in ways out of our control; the degree to which our fate is determined by external factors.” (McAnulla 2002 p271)

The neglect of the role of structure can also be seen in the claim made by Bang and Sørensen (2001) that everyday makers are able to operate largely outside the state system. However, all the examples of everyday makers (Bang) and fixers (Hendriks and Tops) are of individuals engaged with institutions. For instance, Hendriks and Tops’ example of an everyday fixer works for a neighbourhood development corporation which engages and interacts with the state. Further, the authors identify administrative backing as a condition for the effective working of their everyday fixer (Hendriks and Tops 2005). This shows that even those who try to bypass institutions are unable to do so as fully as they believe or would wish.

Consequently the distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens becomes unclear. The only other criteria offered to distinguish between makers and experts are their level of professional skills and competencies (Bang 2005) and the time they give to their role. However, the research of Hendriks and Tops (2005) found that whilst their everyday fixer was only formally contracted to do three hours a week, in reality they did far more. It is not uncommon for the work load of such individuals to be described as akin to a second job. Such working is also likely to result in a level of skills which further blurs Bang’s distinction. On this basis the difference between everyday makers and expert citizens is not whether they are involved with the state or not but the extent to which such interaction occurs.

Furthermore, the everyday maker's focus on operating at the local level shows a potential to overlook the significance of factors that extend beyond the neighbourhood. For example, the highly localised Community Development Projects undertaken in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s were considered largely unsuccessful not because of local factors but because of the inability of the projects to counteract wider forces, such as social and economic policies which resulted in unemployment and industrial decline (for example Alcock 1997, Taylor 2003a).

### A Structural Critique of the Community Leader Literature

To summarise the points made so far, individuals drawn from civil society are increasingly involved in a range of policy areas as part of a wider shift towards governance. This is based on an assumption that "statutory bodies (such as the police) don't speak the language that people who live here want to hear or understand" (Shaw 2005 p22) and that "people at the grassroots understand the real issues" (Shaw 2005 p25). The complexity of society and its problems can no longer be addressed by a single, bureaucratic executive. Whilst the majority of the public appears disengaged from political participation a small number of individuals have taken up these opportunities and become engaged in the process of governing for sustained periods. The involvement of these community leaders has theoretical advantages for both state and community (Raco and Flint 2001). The former receive legitimacy and accountability benefits whilst the latter receive improved services and "more of a say in the way places...are run" (ODPM 2005 p2). However, the balance of betterment appears to be in the state's favour. The community leader

literature suggests that the state is able to affect the type of individual likely to become involved, their role and the amount of influence they have through a number of mechanisms. Further, community leaders appear to occupy a lonely no-man's land position spanning both the state and the community.

In spite of this, Bang's concept of an 'everyday maker' draws attention to the capacity of actors whilst apparently neglecting the relevance of structural factors within this analysis and the wider community leader literature. Indeed, an examination of the community leader literature highlights how the design of institutions has clear implications upon the role of actors. For example, Taylor (2003 p185) suggests that "the 'usual suspects' are often created by systems, timescales, and structures of the partnership itself". Taylor (2000a p1024) also discusses how benchmarking in NDC's places restrictions on how the programme is delivered,

"These guidelines may be offered with the intention of supporting those who are not familiar with the tasks that are placed before them. They also ensure that local developments can be understood within an overarching national policy framework. But coming from the centre, as they do, they enshrine pre-existing cultures of programme design and decision-making, rather than taking the risk that communities, given time and resources, may do things differently. They may not be 'written in stone' as far as the power-holders are concerned, but they are given considerable weight by accountable bodies understandably reluctant to take risks with such a high-profile initiative. In pursuit of the guidelines, alternative approaches take a back seat. While benchmarking offers an apparently flexible way of comparing performance in one area against another, it can also discourage diversity, as authorities follow examples of those who have gone before them and have been successful."

It is perhaps unsurprising that the community leader literature centres on the agency of such individuals. However, the agency focus of this literature leads to questions of whether, and how, structural analysis can add fresh insights. In other words, what is the significance of forces that extend



beyond the “flesh and blood” (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p481) of community leaders? The framing concept of the everyday maker in agency terms has opened up the community leader literature. It can be taken as an exemplar of the analysis in terms of the wider structure-agency issue amongst the community leader literature; an issue that McAnulla (2002) argues is unavoidable in political science.

This is not to say that structures go ignored in the analysis of community leaders. Indeed, Purdue et al (2000) identify the external policy environment, partnership institutional arrangements and culture (all structural factors) as the most important cogs that drive individual community leaders and in turn their community and neighbourhood. Purdue et al (2000 p44) declare that “most power does not lie in the hands of community leaders...but in the government policies and the structures of central and local government”. At the same time however, Purdue et al (2000 p1 emphasis added) begin their analysis by stating that,

“Structures, resources, programmes and projects are important, but *the key ingredient of success on the ground is widely recognised to be personal styles and inter-personal relationships*. Little of the literature, however, has focussed on the individuals who become involved in local regeneration work- their motivations, aspirations, or ways of working. Still less has it focussed on ‘community leaders’- those who, by one route or another, emerge as the representatives of communities on regeneration partnerships.”

The examination of the community leader literature has suggested that although community leaders are seen to ‘make it work’, in practice they experience a number of constraints upon their agency. The literature provides examples of both formal and informal institutions that restrict the ability of community leaders to make a difference. For instance, by only having a single BME seat on a partnership board, the formal design of the

organisation serves to affect who can (and cannot) become involved. Furthermore, community leaders are commonly seen as legitimate only if they are drawn from a formal voluntary and community sector organisation (Barnes et al 2007).

On the more informal side, the perceived existence of a “secretive organizational culture” (Purdue 2005 p261, Carley et al 2000) within the council was found to make working with them difficult. Taylor (2003a) argues that the state has a limited capacity to work in new ways and Raco and Flint (2001) suggest that local authorities need to reform their structures in order to cater for more participative decision making. There also appears to be a strong reluctance amongst councils to embrace new ways of working and alter policy in the wake of community leader input (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000, Taylor 2000a). Smith et al (2004 p520) argue that “councillors in particular have failed to learn new operating codes”. This can be seen as an international trend with the American academics Glaser et al (2006 p206) remarking that “local government has historically resisted meaningful community engagement”.

Although community leaders appear to be working in new spaces created by the shift to governance, the above analysis suggests that there is resistance within long-standing institutions which limits the impact (Barnes et al 2004). Community leaders find themselves amidst formal and informal institutions leaving them seldom able to exert influence with the exception of an atypical few who are able to play the rules of the game to their advantage. For example, Purdue (2005) argues that community leaders are not completely powerless and some capitalise on the opportunities that being in a

partnership present, citing as an example the two community leaders who act as partnership chairs in two of the case study areas. Indeed, community leaders are not completely at the mercy of the institutions that surround them, a “prisoner to their environment” (Hay 2002 p104). However, as it stands, the existing community leader literature adopts, at best, an unclear position on the respective roles of structure and agency. What is needed is a more considered, systematic approach that examines community leaders and the impact of the institutional settings in which they operate and how these two spheres interact and influence one another. This discussion lends itself to an overarching core research aim: to develop a more nuanced analysis of community leaders as agents operating in an institutionalized setting.

## Research Questions

The research aim set out above can be expressed through five more detailed research questions:

Research Question 1: Under what conditions do community leaders make a difference?

The thesis seeks to build upon the existing community leader literature by repositioning analysis to study the interaction between community leaders and structures. The aim is not to overly critique the existing community leader literature, particularly as community leaders are less frequently researched than other actor groups within the literature (for example Purdue 2005, 2001 Hemphill et al 2006, Purdue et al 2000). Rather the analysis of the

community leader literature suggests that whilst structure is visible and appears to play a significant role, this has not been considered systematically.

The thesis contributes by examining when community leaders are able to be of consequence. Community leaders operate within structures which both constrain them but also present opportunities. This question is concerned with the interpretations of community leaders and how their reading of the environment affects what they do. Three dimensions of difference can be identified: substantive difference associated with the ability of a community leader to make gains by securing a redistribution of resources; symbolic difference covering the recognition of actors and their acceptance by other actors; and procedural difference linked to alterations community leaders have upon the way in which governance is carried out. The meaning of this question is discussed in greater detail in chapter 4 in the context of the conceptual framework.

Research Question 2: How can the relationship between community leaders and their institutional setting be conceptualised?

The chapter has suggested a need to reposition analysis in a way that examines the roles of both community leaders and institutions. Therefore, the thesis seeks to contribute to the community leader literature by developing an actor-institution form of analysis. Community leaders have been shown to work across the boundary between state and civil society. The discussion of the community leader literature has highlighted the tensions that can arise as a result of operating in such a position. Community leaders enter into a dialogue and interact with their institutional settings made up of state and

community factors. The thesis will position community leaders as situated agents privileging neither agency nor structure but instead seeing the two forces as interwoven. This will be discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 4.

Research Question 3: What factors determine the capacity of community leaders to read and influence rules?

Community leaders take up multiple positions within governance arenas. As such they come into contact with numerous structural forces. Chapter 3 discusses new institutionalism as a means of considering the role of these structures (labelled as institutions) alongside the agency of individuals. Within the new institutional framework is an understanding of institutions as being made up of rules and resources. The first part of this question concerns the subjective interpretation of rules made by community leaders and how this affects what they do. It is concerned with how community leaders respond to institutions. The second part of the question concerns the ability of community leaders to modify the rules and is concerned with the procedural aspects of difference. In other words, how do community leaders change institutions rather than respond to them? The relevance of this question will become clearer in the context of the conceptual framework established in chapters 3 and 4.

Research Question 4: To what extent do community leaders change their readings of the community and the state as they develop from everyday makers to expert citizens?

The discussion of the community leader literature has introduced Bang's research on everyday makers and expert citizens. This work has the potential to contribute towards a fuller understanding of community leaders and how they interact with institutions. However, the above analysis has suggested that the distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens is under-developed in the existing literature. The thesis therefore seeks to contribute to the community leader literature by clarifying this distinction. The question may also prompt the creation of a typology of community leaders which builds upon the existing terms used (such as community leader, everyday maker and expert citizen). This question concerns how the roles of the state and the community change in the readings of individuals as they become increasingly involved as 'community leaders' over time. The relevance of this aspect of the question is shown by the model established in chapter 4. Clarifying this distinction may also assist in the wider definition of community leaders which this chapter has shown to be a contentious topic.

Research Question 5: How can community leaders be examined using a methodological approach not previously or widely used within existing studies?

The final research question is closely associated with the research theme of carrying out a UK based case study. The review of the existing community leader literature has shown that there is a high level of similarity in the

methods used by authors. Therefore, the thesis will seek to make an original contribution by taking a fresh approach to the study of these actors. The thesis will seek to utilise the insight offered by methodologies not previously or widely applied in the study of community leaders. The use of an innovative methodological approach will also be seen to be necessary given the conceptual framework established by the thesis. The methodology taken will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 3

### NEW INSTITUTIONALISM AND SITUATED AGENTS

#### Introduction

The focus of this chapter is upon establishing a means of understanding the interactions between community leaders and their environment. The chapter begins by considering the debate between the relative importance of structure and agency within public policy. Agency refers to the ability of an individual to affect their environment whilst structure is concerned with the conditions that “define the range of actions available to actors” (McAnulla 2002 p271). Structure-agency considers the relationship between structures on the one hand and the agents who operate through them on the other. As such, it is considered as a fundamental theoretical issue within the human sciences and is a leitmotif running throughout the chapter. The existing community leader literature (particularly Bang’s analysis of everyday makers) has been shown to focus primarily upon the agency of community leaders. Conversely, the role of structure appears underplayed and underdeveloped within the community leader literature. This was shown as being to the detriment of the field. The thesis therefore considers the interaction between structure and agency and seeks to reposition the analysis of community leaders in a way that by more readily incorporates structural analysis.

The chapter moves on to consider the potential benefit offered by new institutionalism in achieving this research aim. New institutionalist theory has enjoyed a recent resurgence within public policy. In opposition to the community leader literature, new institutionalists start analysis with structural



forces (what they label 'institutions') rather than agency. These institutions take many forms but are united by a number of common attributes. A central feature of institutions is their constraints on human behaviour. However, institutions are a positive as well as a negative force. Institutions have an enabling and mediating role that makes co-operation between actors possible. Institutions simplify political life thereby stabilising interactions and creating opportunities for actors.

It can be misleading to talk of new institutionalism as a single, unified body of thought. It covers a number of approaches taken from a wide range of academic disciplines. The chapter considers three commonly recognised branches of new institutionalism; rational choice, historical, and sociological. Each of these streams is taken in turn using a number of guiding questions. These are a consideration of what the theory has to offer and the implications of the approach upon a study of community leaders. The analysis also seeks to identify problems associated with each of the streams.

The discussion of the three approaches shows the usefulness of new institutionalism in a study of community leaders. The discussion also highlights a number of potential flaws associated with the use of new institutionalist approaches. A central issue concerns the role of actors within new institutionalism. This demonstrates the relationship between structure and agency. Institutions are the product of actors but then subsequently influence how individuals behave. The debate concerns the relationship between the two and how both can be taken into account rather than which one which is the most important. Community leaders are therefore

recognised as situated agents, embedded in a specific context with which they interact.

The decision to analyse community leader as situated agents has implications for the branch of new institutionalism used throughout the thesis. The remainder of the chapter considers these implications in more detail, particularly in the context of the problems associated with new institutionalist theories. For example, the branch of new institutionalism selected must readily see a role for actors in the creation, maintenance and potential to change institutions. It is suggested that a sociological understanding of institutions fits most readily with the notion of a situated agent. This understanding sees actors as behaving strategically but also places them in an embedded context with which they are constantly interacting and interpreting. Some of these issues, such as the limited capacity of new institutionalism as a predictive tool are seen as being important to acknowledge but not entirely relevant given the objectives of the project.

## New Institutionalism and Situated Agents

### Structure and Agency

The structure-agency debate concerns the relationship between individuals and the environment in which they find themselves (Hay 2002). At its heart lies the fundamental issue regarding “the degree to which we can determine our own future” (McAnulla 2002 p272) taken against the extent to which we are simply products of our environment. Agency is understood as, “the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously and, in so doing, to attempt to

realise his or her intentions” (Hay 2002 p94). Structure relates to context, suggesting that actions only occur in accordance with structural forces. Structures act to regulate behaviour meaning that the greater the influence of structure, the more predictable behaviour becomes. Taken alongside one another, structure establishes the conditions under which actions occur whilst agency concerns the strategies required to realise intentions within such conditions (Hay 2002).

Some authors have claimed structure-agency to be the most important theoretical issue within the human sciences (for example McAnulla 2002 p271). It is certainly a highly prevalent one, one with which “we cannot help but grapple” (McAnulla 2002 p274). This is illustrated by McAnulla’s (2002 p271) discussion of the American presidency in terms of structure and agency,

“When discussing the US Presidency commentators will frequently make reference to the talents and/or weaknesses of George W. Bush. These are issues of agency: Bush’s style, psychology and character are discussed in relation to how effectively he is performing as President. On the other hand, commentators will discuss the external challenges which the US Government faces. These are issues of structure: ‘globalisation’, international institutions and environmental threats may all be cited as structural trends or conditions which the US Government must react to or act within. They do not choose such circumstances; nonetheless they must act in relation to them.”

The debate regarding the relative significance of structure and agency shows the two to be interwoven and interdependent. Indeed the above quote illustrates the often uneasy distinction between the two forces. Although McAnulla expresses Bush’s character as part of agency, to some extent this can be attributed to his cultural context (for example, his familial upbringing, his father’s experiences as President, as a Texan, as a Republican etc...) making it part of structure. The chapter now moves to consider a means of

examining this interplay of structure and agency offered by new institutionalism.

### New Institutionalism

New institutionalist theory has experienced a surge in popularity within political science (for example Peters, 1999 and 2005, Rhodes 2006) and the field of public policy in recent years (for example Lowndes et al 2006, Gains et al 2005, Crouch and Farrell 2004). In terms of the structure-agency issue identified above, new institutionalist scholars emphasise the role of institutions (structure) arguing that,

“Most political action of any consequence for society occurs within institutions, or is heavily influenced by institutions.”  
(Peters 2005 p165)

Analysis seeks to identify the “relatively enduring structural constraints on human behaviour” (Cortell and Peterson 1999 p177) and so begins with structure (institutions) rather than the agency of individuals (Peters 1999 p141). Institutions are understood in general terms as having a number of common features (Peters 2005 p18-19). Firstly, institutions are structural features of society taking both formal and informal forms. They encompass both the formal rules such as legislation and the informal tacit assumptions regarding behaviour in terms of ‘the way things are done around here’ (Ostrom 1999). So, in the context of local government, Lowndes (2005 p292-293) offers constitutions, structure plans and community strategies as examples of clearly specified, formal institutions. Conversely, informal examples include the public service ethos, social exclusion and paternalism.

The formal and informal form of institutions was illustrated by the examples regarding community leaders in the previous chapter. For example, a community leader may be the member of a community organisation such as a Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) which has a compact formally outlining the parameters for behaviour for its members. Failure to follow the compact results in sanctions such as the expulsion of the individual from the TARA. Community leaders expressed the difficulty of engaging with the council based on a perceived secretive culture (Purdue 2005). This demonstrates the impact of informal institutions (in this case the culture of the council) which act as a barrier to those outside of the institution. An institution may therefore be visible only when an individual who is not part of it comes into contact with those who are.

Secondly, Peters (1999 p18) argues that institutions will be relatively stable and enduring over time,

“Individuals may decide to meet for coffee one afternoon. That could be very pleasant, but it would not be an institution. If they decided to meet every Thursday afternoon at the same time and place, that would begin to take on features of an institution. Further, if those people are all senators then the meeting may be relevant for our concern with institutions in political science.”

The study of institutions concentrates upon the “mediating and constraining role of the institutional settings within which (such) outcomes (are) to be realised” (Hay 2002 p105). The structural features of institutions go beyond individuals to affect the behaviour of groups of actors. This results in a certain amount of regularity and continuity in human behaviour (John 1998). There is a sense in which institutions make governing possible since they reduce uncertainty and provide stable frameworks for interaction (Lowndes 1996b). Institutions will vary in the amount of regularity they

require. For example, Peters (2005 p18) notes that “universities appear to require predictability for course hours and little else, while prisons require rigid adherence to schedules.”

Whilst affecting individual behaviour, institutions themselves are the product of human action. As Lowndes (1996 p182) states “institutions are devised by individuals, but in turn constrain their action.” However, Grafstein (1988 p578) is quick to observe the prevalence of such paradoxes in society,

“The notion of our own products having power over us is now as familiar as the alarm clock at our bedside and the world of work it wakes us up to experience.”

There is a duality between the two forces of structure (or in this case institutions) and agency (in this case actors) (Hay 2002). This issue is relevant in the study of community leaders since it relates to the research aim of examining the interaction between community leaders and institutions. An understanding of this interaction will help to examine the conditions under which community leaders make a difference. The consideration of new institutionalism implies that community leaders will come into contact with, and be affected by formal and informal institutions regardless of whether they are an everyday maker or an expert citizen. These institutions will affect their behaviour and the consequences of their actions. This issue will be returned to later in the chapter in the discussion of situated agents.

### The Branches and Streams of New Institutionalism

The above section has introduced the ‘new paradigm for political science’ of new institutionalism (Rhodes 2006) and some of its themes. However, to talk about new institutionalism in general terms may be misleading. Lowndes

(1996b p182) observes that there is no singular new institutionalist theory that is agreed upon by all academics within the field. Instead, the theory represents “many streams of argument”. Within new institutionalism sit a number of approaches to institutional phenomena, which in itself is contested. For instance, Peters (2005) identifies six approaches whilst other authors (for example, Lowndes 1996b, Hall and Taylor 1996, and Koelble 1995) commonly identify three main strands; historical, rational choice, and sociological. Each of these strands originates from a different discipline,

“Political science gave us historical institutionalism, economics gave us rational choice institutionalism, and sociology gave us sociological institutionalism. Approaches proliferate. The several proponents squabble.”

(Rhodes 2006 p93)

Each approach has different implications for the research for example, in terms of how the role of community leaders as actors is understood and how institutions change. This has been examined in greater detail by the authors above (for example Peters 2005, Hall and Taylor 1996, Lowndes 1996b) and highlights the ease with which writers can become lost in new institutionalism and the apparent difficulty of relying upon the notion of a single ‘new institutionalism’ (Rhodes 2006). Some time will therefore be spent examining the three most commonly identified strands of new institutionalist theory; historical, sociological and rational choice. The approaches will be examined in terms of what they can offer analysis and their respective implications for the study of community leaders and finally, any problems associated with the approach.

## Historical Institutionalism

At the core of historical institutionalism is a belief that “timing and sequence matter” (Pierson 2000 p251). Choices made early on in the formation of an institution or policy decision will have a strong and persistent affect upon subsequent decision making (Peters 2005 p71). Policies are considered to be ‘path dependent’ so that,

“Once launched on that path they will persist in that pattern until some significant force intervenes to divert them from the established direction.”

(Peters 2005 p20)

Institutions are considered to be longstanding, “persistent features” (Hall and Taylor 1996 p941) which push development down a particular path. Whilst subsequent decisions may deviate from the path it is “likely to be followed in the absence of other pressures” (Peters 2005 p74). There are still a range of options open but these are constrained by earlier, initial decisions. Pierson (2000 p252) argues that there will be a “self reinforcing feedback process” of increasing returns which means over time, the relative benefits of the present activity increase. Conversely, although a different option remains possible, the cost of switching paths increases in line with the increasing benefits of the present activity. As Levi (1997 p28) argues,

“Once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice.”

Pierson (2000 p255) uses economic geography to illustrate this increasing returns process. So, concentrations of economic activity such as Silicon Valley in San Francisco reflect the benefits of firms specialising in similar industries locating close to each other. The concept of path



dependency has been frequently utilised in public policy (for example; Gains et al 2005, Crouch and Farrell 2004, Lowndes 2004). The model is used to question the extent to which local government has changed in the face of central government policy (for example Gains et al 2005).

It is also clear that path dependency does not necessarily equate with efficiency. The dominate keyboard layout used for computers was initially designed to slow typists down since their speed meant that their typewriters frequently jammed. In response the QWERTY keyboard was developed and then mass produced by Remington. The first batch sold well and more and more typists learnt the new system meaning that the QWERTY design, initially established to hinder typists became the market standard (Waldrop 1992). This shows how “earlier events matter much more than later ones” (Pierson 2000 p253) and the difficulty of deviating from a path even if the outcomes may be lower than those of an alternative course.

Peters (2005) argues that institutions are only vaguely defined within the historical branch of new institutionalism. What constitutes an institution is commonly defined by examples “ranging from formal government structures (legislatures) through legal institutions (electoral laws) through more amorphous social institutions (social class)” (Peters 2005 p74). There is also a strong link made between institutions and rules (see for example Hall 1989), a topic that will be focussed upon in detail in the following chapter.

The relative fixity and prominence of institutions amongst historical new institutionalists creates a key issue relevant for this study. The first of these concerns the role it leaves community leaders in the face of such powerful institutional forces. The structure-agency balance is heavily weighted in

favour of structure (Koelble 1995). A limitation of using the historical branch of new institutionalism in the study of community leaders is the limited room it gives them,

“Individuals are not helpless or passive actors when it comes to institutional choice, but historical institutionalists insist that institutions guide their choices.”  
(Koelble 1995 p239)

By working within an institution individuals are assumed to accept such constraints even if they were not involved in the initial formation of the institutions some time ago (Peters 2005). They could behave differently but actors are assumed to be better off adhering to institutions. The decisions of actors are based upon an instrumental calculation and also how they interpret their situation (Hall and Taylor 1996). However, these are made within an actor's embedded context, and factors beyond their individual calculation or control affect the process (Koelble 1995). In part this reflects the scope of analysis with which historical institutionalism is associated. For example, Hall's study (1989) is concerned with the shift from Keynesianism to monetarism within a nation state.

Since a major feature of institutions within the historical stream is their steady persistence, how the approach deals with institutional change sees little role for agents. Historical institutionalism offers 'punctuated equilibria' and ideas (Peters 1999) to explain change. History is divided between 'normal periods' (Gorges 2001 p138) of equilibrium where institutions operate "in accordance with the decisions made at its initiation" (Peters 2005 p77). These will continue until pressures caused by alterations in the socio-economic and political climate provide necessary impetus for change (Koelble 1995). At such a 'critical juncture' (Gorges 2001 p138) such as those created

by phenomena such as economic crisis or military conflict (Hall and Taylor 1996), everything comes “up for grabs” (Gorges 2001 p138) and actors search for new answers. Institutional change is possible during these critical junctures before history continues down the new path set up by the institutions.

The link between structure and agency within historical institutionalism is unclear (Peters 2005). Agents appear to have little role in critical junctures other than to respond to them. Although agents have a role in establishing institutions at this stage, even these responses are structured by the focus upon ideas. Historical institutionalism privileges structure far above agency meaning that it has limited value in the study of community leaders and how they interact with structures as everyday makers and expert citizens.

Historical institutionalism considers the reasons for change ex post facto and by reaching beyond institutions into the realm of ideas. It appears better placed to describe phenomena rather than explaining why they happened or predicting future change. The approach also fails to fully explain what is sufficient pressure to cause institutional change, instead historical institutionalists are left reasoning,

“The change did occur, did it not, so there must have been sufficient pressure to generate the observed shift.”  
(Peters 2005 p78)

### Rational Choice Institutionalism

Rational choice theories appear to offer more scope for community leaders to exert agency than is seen in historical institutionalism. Institutions are seen

as the product of actors, created by individuals in order to realise their intentions,

“Institutions do not occur willy-nilly. Rather, rational individuals design them to help them achieve certain ends and, above all, to provide exchange relations with rules, procedures, and enforcement mechanisms.”

(Koelble 1995 p240)

Rational choice institutionalism highlights the benefits of institutions (Hay 2006). Since rational choice institutionalists see politics as a “series of collective action dilemmas” (Hall and Taylor 1996 p945) in this stream, institutions are created to stabilise exchange relationships between actors (Koelble 1995). Institutions aim to achieve “predictability among humans” (Ostrom 1999 p50) and are therefore defined in terms of the rules that govern these interactions. Rules serve to minimise transaction costs and allow for co-operative behaviour. These ‘rules of the game’ (North 1990) encompass both formal and informal aspects to include the do’s and don’ts actors learn on the ground (Ostrom 1999). What is important is that these rules are understood and enforced by agents within the institution (Ostrom 1999).

Although institutions are human products existing “in the minds of participants” (Ostrom 1999 p37), once established institutions shape subsequent decisions. As Koelble (1995 p232) states,

“Institutions are created by utility-maximising individuals with clear intentions. Yet once they exist, they set parameters for further action.”

This reflects the interplay between structure and agency identified by Grafstein above. An individual conforms not simply because it maximises utility but because of factors such as the cost of non-conformity, information available concerning other people’s preferences (or an individual’s perception

of them), existing patterns of behaviour (Grafstein 1988) and the costs of transition.

Based on such an understanding, institutions are in need of constant maintenance (Lowndes 2001) and change reflects a conscious design choice. This occurs when actors renegotiate in response to changes in the wider economy to maintain the maximum possible utility,

“Institutions change because (these) actors attempt to change them, based upon their expectations about how changes will help to maximise their utility.”  
(Gorges 2001 p140)

There will also be actors outside of an existing institution who have a motive to change them but lack the power to do so (Lowndes 2004). This raises the idea that one actor's utility is likely to conflict with another's and demonstrates the constraining impact of institutions. There is an imbalance of power between individuals meaning that,

“Change is most likely when there is an increase in the effectiveness of individuals seeking change and a decrease in the blocking power of individuals whose interests are served by the current institutional arrangements.”  
(Cook and Levi 1990 p407 as quoted by Koeble 1995 p240-241)

The apparent significance of agency within rational choice institutionalism can however be considered as somewhat illusory. Hay (2002) argues that rational choice is inherently structural since people are understood to make decisions based on knowledge of their environment meaning that the environment determines behaviour. The rules individuals are assumed to follow, such as an attempt to maximise utility show a very economic and somewhat plastic perception of individuals. Such a “characteristic set of behavioural assumptions” (Hall and Taylor 1996 p944) seem inappropriate in a study of community leaders. The theory also cannot

explain how preferences come to be and why these vary from person to person (Koelble 1995).

Rational choice seems unable to deal with complexity both in terms of preferences and of the governance environment. Actors have multiple goals (Pierson 2000) and there are likely to be multiple options that satisfy utility maximising criteria rather than there being a single, optimum decision (Gorges 2001). This issue restricts the understanding of community leaders offered by rational choice institutionalism. For example, such a limited conception of behaviour may struggle to unearth the differences between everyday makers and expert citizens.

### Sociological Institutionalism

The sociological literature on institutions calls into question the ability of actors to behave in a way that rational choice theorists would describe as 'rational' and furthermore challenges their ability to establish institutions. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that actors cannot choose among institutions, rules, procedures and norms. What constitutes a rational decision is socially constructed (Hall and Taylor 1996 p949) since actors are embedded in a context beyond their control. As Koelble (1995 p235) states "the very concept of rationality is dependent upon its environment." This makes it absurd to talk about maximising utility and rationality in the manner described above in the rational choice approach. Based on this, the understanding of what constitutes an institution is very broad including,

"Not just formal rules, procedures or norms, but the symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the 'frames of meaning' guiding human action."  
(Hall and Taylor 1996 p947)

Actors react to the settings within which they are surrounded (Koelble 1995). As Hall and Taylor (1996 p949) state,

“The individual works with and reworks the available institutional templates to devise a course of action.”

This means that there is potential for institutions to be constantly changing. Such adjustments are referred to as sedimentation showing that “structures may be transformed over time but they also retain much of their past history” (Peters 1999 p104). A longstanding organisation therefore reflects an ability to successfully process and adapt to the environment (Peters 2005). Despite the potential for institutions to change regularly and be affected by actors, the strength of institutions means that actors commonly adopt the “conventional wisdom” (Gorges 2001 p139) and behave in ways that are similar to each other. As Koelble (1995 p234) states “most people are inherently conservative: once they establish a routine, they tend to stick to it.” Individuals scan the environment and act in a manner fitting to the situation and setting. Individuals “pick and choose” (Peters 2005 p26) amongst institutional influences and interpret their role. March and Olsen (1989) argue there is a ‘logic of appropriateness’ in the behaviour of actors. Therefore,

“To act appropriately is to proceed according to the institutionalized practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, and often tacit, understandings of what is true, reasonable, natural, right and good.”  
(March and Olsen 2004 p4)

This understanding may help distinguish between everyday makers and expert citizens based on the similarities and differences in community leaders’ interpretations of the ‘conventional wisdom’ and of what is ‘appropriate’.

The tendency for individuals to behave in particular and shared ways also extends to organisations since both are subject to similar cultural forces

(Hall and Taylor 1996). A major model used to explain such a process of homogeneity within sociological new institutionalism is isomorphism. Change occurs because of isomorphism (Koelble 1995). DiMaggio and Powell (1983 p149) define isomorphism as,

“A constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions.”

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify three types of isomorphism; coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism is the formal and informal pressures exerted upon organisations by organisations upon whom they are dependent such as government mandates or the requirement to meet particular performance indicators. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) cite the work of Milofsky (1981) who identified that community organisations establish hierarchies to gain support from hierarchical funding organisations in spite of the commitment of many of the community organisations to participatory democracy.

Mimetic isomorphism occurs in response to uncertainty. For example, ambiguous goals or an inherently changeable environment mean that organisations may model themselves on other organisations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Normative isomorphism covers professionalism within particular fields. As a result, actors receive the same training creating a “...pool of almost interchangeable individuals who occupy similar positions across a range of organisations and possess a similarity of orientation and disposition...” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983 p152). This may be apparent amongst the state actors that community leaders interact with in governance arenas.



There are a number of concerns associated with the use of the sociological branch of new institutionalism. Peters (2005 p107) is quick to praise the richness offered by sociological institutionalism but is just as swift in observing its perplexing qualities. This is linked to the lack of a distinction between institutions as entities and the process through which they are created. The approach is stronger in explaining the processes that establish an institution rather than the characteristics of the institutions that result (Peters 1999). Furthermore, the understanding of institutions is so broad that “almost nothing is left out” (Peters 2005 p116). This leaves an approach that is non-falsifiable (Peters 2005) but not necessarily useful and creates a methodological issue regarding how such amorphous structures can be analysed.

There are also a number of concerns raised by March and Olsen’s understanding. Firstly, the assumption that actors will behave ‘appropriately’ seems to neglect the complexity of both actors and context essential for this study. Individuals will define ‘appropriate’ in different ways and are also likely to interpret cultural signals differently (Peters 2005 p31). Indeed, community leaders are likely to be,

“Embedded in a myriad of economic, social, political and historical factors pertaining to the exchanges between the local state and the local civil society.”  
(Pierre 1999 p375)

By working in such a complex setting, rather than there being a single appropriate response, a number of actions may be deemed ‘appropriate’.

Gorges (2001) challenges DiMaggio and Powell’s concept of isomorphism on the grounds that it cannot explain why organisations within apparently similar cultural settings may vary greatly. DiMaggio and Powell

(1983) state that they do not seek to explain variation but homogeneity (DiMaggio and Powell 1983 p148). Even with this in mind, the existence of different organisational structures calls into question the apparent strength of the pressure to conform identified by the authors. An answer to this issue may be offered by Gorges (2001) who observes that pressures operate at various levels. These forces, such as those operating at a local level may be more influential than those at the societal level.

### The Problems of New Institutionalism

The above discussions introduce the potential insight into the analysis of community leaders offered by the streams of new institutionalism. New institutionalist theory provides a fresh way of understanding community leaders by emphasising the role of structure. It responds to the issues discussed in the previous chapter by repositioning analysis in a manner which examines structure and agency. New institutionalism provides a conceptual framework under which the patterns of interaction between actors and institutions can be considered alongside how these have developed. Lowndes (2001) argues that the focus on formal and informal institutions within new institutionalism reflects the increasing prominence of informality within governance thereby offering an appropriate means of studying community leaders as part of wider institutional change.

However, the discussions also highlight that each approach is not without its problems. These issues are in need of further consideration. Indeed, Lowndes (2001) argued that new institutionalism was a theory in need of 'rescuing' after the 'old' institutionalism fell from favour in the face of a

growing emphasis upon behaviourism in the 1960's. Furthermore, Peters (2005 p2) observes that "the attempted re-conquest of the discipline by the institutionalists has been far from complete". In the context of this study the primary issue concerns the respective roles of structure and agency within new institutionalism. The discussion of each of the approaches suggests that structure is privileged over agency. This issue shall now be discussed in more detail since it is fundamental in the study of community leaders.

### New Institutionalism: The Role of Agency

New institutionalism appears to mirror the community leader literature in terms of how structure and agency are understood. Rather than focussing too heavily upon agency at the expense of structure, approaches within new institutionalism concentrate on structure potentially leaving limited space for, and understanding of, agency. New institutionalism presents a scenario in which the freedom of agents to move is severely restricted. In essence new institutionalism seeks to "identify relatively enduring structural constraints on human behaviour" (Cortell and Peterson 1999 p177) alongside some consideration of how these institutions arise (for example Ostrom 1990, 1999).

In the case of historical institutionalism in particular actors appear to drop from view within analysis. Although clearest in the historical stream, this is also visible in the rational choice strand which seems to offer actors considerable agency but falls down based on its "relatively simplistic image of human motivation" (Hall and Taylor 1996 p950). It is probably the sociological branch to which Abel and Sementelli (2004 p72) refer when they argue that,

“Many institutionalists insist that ‘all behaviour is cultural,’ clearly implying blank slate determinism and relegating humans to the role of largely passive observers moving in obedience to laws operative within a culture and institutional structure that they can never control.”

Guided by such an impression it is easy to arrive at a position of morose fatalism and passivity given the largely pre-determined nature of events new institutionalism eludes towards. This seems an automaton interpretation of agency since such human predictability would make the scope for autonomy the same in a fascist or liberal democratic setting (Hay 2002). Whilst this reading of new institutionalism is extreme it does pose a fundamental question regarding how structure and agency are understood. There is a danger that the use of new institutionalism to examine community leaders will simply over-emphasise the role of structure rather than the agency of such actors (as seen in the community leader literature). Neither of these scenarios is desirable. Instead, what is needed is a more rounded conception of agency and structure; one that does not leave studies open to criticism on grounds of under-playing the role of structure, nor one which over values structure to the detriment of agency.

#### Structure-Agency: Structuration and Situated Agents

It is clear that institutions affect agency but it is also apparent that the reverse must be true; “without them (agency) nothing changes, without them there is nothing to explain” (Hay 2002 p107). This creates the strange paradox discussed previously. Institutions are “human products” but at the same time are “social forces in their own right” (Grafstein 1988 p577-578). The discussion of new institutionalism shows that institutions need to be formed and maintained. This process only happens through agents and it is unclear

how agents internalise the institutional habits around them. As Grafstein (1988 p597) argues,

“The view of institutions as creations encourages our optimistic belief that what we have created and understood- what we define- we can master.”

The debate regarding the relative significance of structure and agency shows the two to be interwoven and interdependent. It is not a matter of ‘is it one or the other?’ but ‘what is the nature of their relationship?’ and ‘how can both be fully incorporated into analysis?’ Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration examines the duality of structure and agency. Indeed, Stones (2005) argues that the start point for structuration was Giddens’ desire to avoid subjectivism which concentrates overly on agents and objectivism which focuses on structures. In response, structuration takes a dialectic approach by conceptualising structure and agency as two sides of the same coin rather than distinct phenomena (McAnulla 2002). Giddens (2001 p700) defines structuration as,

“The two-way process by which we shape our social world through our individual actions and are ourselves reshaped by society.”

Giddens (2001) uses language to illustrate the process of structuration. In order for language to exist it must be socially structured in that it has properties that need to be observed by society. However, these structural qualities only exist in so far as individuals follow these language rules in practice. Actors could choose to behave differently and are understood as having causal powers; they are “able to ‘make a difference’ to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events” (Giddens 1984 p14). In order to make a difference agents draw upon structures to produce actions that may change or

serve to reproduce structures (Stones 2005). These structures are made up of rules and resources. Rules are identified as the “procedures of action aspects of praxis” (Giddens 1984 p21). Giddens labels resources as authoritative (involving the control of objects/goods) or allocative (involving the control of people). As such resources can be understood as the “media through which power is exercised” (Giddens 1984 p16). The role of rules and resources is something that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The duality between structure and agency proposed by Giddens (1984) can be seen in the author’s analysis of Willis’s (1977) research of children in a school in a deprived area of Birmingham in the UK. Willis splits the school children in to two camps: ‘the conformists’ who follow the school rules and ‘the lads’ who do not. Of the two, it is ‘the lads’ whom Willis and Giddens concentrate upon. The behaviour of ‘the lads’ such as their persistent talking in class and joking culture shows not only that they deviate from the rules they are expected to follow but a wider rejection of the prerogatives on which the authority of their teachers rests.

Giddens (1984 p292) argues that in order to understand what motivates ‘the lads’ to behave in such a way there is a need to understand “that they do grasp, although in a partial and contextually confined way, the nature of their position in society.” ‘The lads’ are drawing upon rules and resources which extend beyond the immediate context of their actions. Their behaviour is based upon their experiences out of school within historically working class communities and families. Willis (1977) observes that ‘the lads’ parents are likely to work in low paid, shop floor environments which are likely

to exhibit similar joking cultures and relationships with authority as 'the lads'. The actions of 'the lads' parents have been transmitted to their children and is reflected in their behaviour at school.

As a result of the poor educational achievement caused by 'the lads' actions the scope of the jobs available to them is restricted; they are likely to end up in the same low paid jobs done by their parents. The teachers are in possession of resources that 'the lads' fail to see as scarce; namely the distribution of knowledge, the timing and spacing of activities and the entrenched institutional support of wider society (Giddens 1984). 'The conformists' on the other hand do recognise the scarce commodity held by their teachers and through their adherence to the rules achieve academically and begin their upward career path. 'The lads' understanding of their position in society which informs their actions means that they do not achieve academically and as a result find it difficult to ascend up the career path. However, this discussion has shown that "the lads are actively involved in the production of the constraints on them" (Stones 2005 p39) and in so doing they "commit themselves to a life of generalized labour" (Giddens 1984 p301).

A number of authors have raised concerns with the practical application of Giddens' conceptualisation of structure and agency offered by structuration theory. Archer (1996) argues that that Giddens pushes structure and agency together until the distinction between the two becomes meaningless making it very difficult to apply it to research. Hay (2002) argues that by seeing structure and agency as two sides of the same coin as Giddens does analysis oscillates between each coin face resulting in an artificial bracketing off of structure and agency. As a result structuration has only a

limited ability to examine the relationship between structure and agency which has been identified as a key aim for this research project.

Bevir and Rhodes (2006 p72) recognise that in order to understand agency, it is also necessary to understand structure. Bevir (2002 p212) recognises “individuals as inherently embedded within social traditions or languages”. Furthermore,

“Agency...always occurs in a social context that influences it. Agency is not autonomous- it is situated.”

Bevir and Rhodes (2006) use the concept of ‘situated agents’ to show the interaction between structure and agency. Rather than seeing the two as separate forces, Jessop (1990) seeks to bring structure into agency and agency into structure. This establishes a ‘structured context’ and a ‘situated agent’. When a situated actor is placed back in a structured context and the structured context back into the situated agent “the dualism of structure and agency has been dissolved” (Hay 2002 p128). Such an understanding is advantageous since it prevents the bracketing off which can occur with structuration. Such an approach makes a consideration of the relationship between structure and agency possible in a way that structuration does not (Hay 2002).

An actor is conscious, reflexive and strategic, meaning that they act purposely to “realise a given set of intentions” (Hay 2002 p129) but also may act intuitively or out of habit. Individuals operate against a backdrop made up of their own prior experience and theories (Bevir and Rhodes 2006). A community leader will perceive certain strategies as having a higher likelihood of success than others. For example, they may choose to join a community organisation rather than working alone thereby increasing their chances of



being seen as legitimate by the state. The community leader may also seek to work cooperatively with governance actors rather than attempting to work without the state as seen in the discussion of everyday makers and expert citizens in the previous chapter.

Individual actors do not start from zero (Grafstein 1988) with 'pure' agency but must respond to the structures that are beyond their control. To return to the example used earlier, George W Bush had no control over the country, the existing institutions and history into which he was born. However, these factors can be seen to have affected his behaviour. Individuals are born into a social structure which serves as a background for their interpretations and actions. They may however, "adapt, develop, and reject much of this inheritance" (Bevir and Rhodes 2006 p72). In this sense some institutions pre-exist agents and will commonly endure beyond their life time. This does not mean that actors are powerless to the institutional context in which they find themselves. As Marx (as quoted by Hay 2002 p117) argues,

"Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not in circumstances they have chosen."

Furthermore, individuals enter each situation with residues of the past which impact their present and future behaviour. For example, evidence from cognitive psychology and organisational theory suggests,

"Actors who operate in a social context of high complexity and opacity are heavily biased in the way they filter information into existing 'mental maps.'"

(Pierson 2000 p260)

The discussion of the relationship between structure and agency through new institutionalism has shown that the two are not readily separable from one another but interact. As Hay (1995b p2000) identifies,

“Structure and agency, though analytically separable are in practice completely interwoven.”

The circular nature of the relationship between structure and agency has important methodological implications. Namely, to better understand community leaders it is necessary to examine them as situated agents using a methodological approach which “refuses to privilege either moment (structure or agency) in this dialectical and relational interaction” (Hay 2002 p134).

### The Case for Selecting Sociological Institutionalism

The decision to understand community leaders as situated agents helps to address the fundamental structure-agency issue that has been identified throughout this chapter. Taking this approach has further implications in terms of the other problems commonly associated with new institutionalist approaches. The chapter now turns to consider these other issues in relation to the branch of new institutionalism that will be used in this study.

In defining institutions it is necessary for the approach to readily incorporate human aspects. Although rational choice institutionalism initially offers the largest potential role for actors this was seen to be limited by the rather economic conception of preferences and motivations. Of the three main new institutionalist approaches it is sociological institutionalism that offers the most potential for actors to be significant. Institutions are conceived as modifying continuously over time, their development likened to that of coral reefs growing by “slow accretions” (Sait 1938 p16 as referenced by Rhodes 2006 p96). In comparison, historical institutionalists rely heavily upon human compliance and long periods of institutional fixity. As Hay (2002 p135) argues

“it is increasingly difficult to reconcile with a world in which the ‘rules of the game’ seem to be in a state of near constant flux.”

Sociological institutionalism bases the study of institutions upon the changing behaviour of actors, their interactions and interpretations so it is necessary to see small steps and changes (Lowndes 2005). Such an understanding therefore places emphasis upon the micro level at which community leaders work as well as the wider context. Lowndes (2004 p242-243) argues that it is,

“Grassroots actors who make and remake institutions on a daily basis. Local politicians, public servants and citizens are all engaged in matching situations to rules. They make their own decisions about following, breaking or bending the rules of the game.”

This aspect seemed to go overlooked in Abel and Sementelli’s (2004) criticism of sociological institutionalism shown earlier. This may also address a flaw of DiMaggio and Powell’s work in explaining variation rather than homogeneity. Actors are situated in a particular context with institutions operating at multiple levels affecting them. Actors are likely be affected by different combinations of institutional arrangements (Lowndes 2001) and may interpret institutions differently prompting varied actions. The values of actors may also change over time. It is therefore important to consider the role of the culture in which situated agents are embedded.

In dealing with criticisms of what compromises the ‘old’ institutionalism, authors taking a new institutionalist approach have expanded their definition of what constitutes an institution. For example, rather than just focussing upon formal rules, new institutionalism expands definitions to consider informal rules as well (Lowndes 1996b). By widening the definition John (1998 p64) argues that it attempts to incorporate “too many aspects of political

life under one category". Such 'concept stretching' (John 1998) is reduces the explanatory power of the approach.

This issue is particularly prevalent within sociological institutionalism where the definition of an institution extends far beyond formal structures to incorporate "habits of decision making and belief systems" (John 1998 p58). Within such an understanding "almost nothing is left out" (Peters 2005 p116). Although this is a valid criticism, the use of such a definition appears closer to the practice of situated agency than that offered by the focus on rules within the rational choice stream. It offers a definition which readily sees the role of actors in interpreting institutions on a day to day basis. At the same time actors are embedded in a specific cultural context. It therefore avoids looking to a deus ex machina to explain change. Such a tendency to reach for a "grab-bag of explanations" (Gorges 2001 p137) can be seen in the historical disciplines focus upon ideas. These can be seen as relatively amorphous such as the ideas of monetarism and Keynesianism used by Hall (1989) to explain changing government policy.

The openness of the sociological definition of institutions reflects an acknowledgement that "reality is messy" (John 1998 p196) and such complexity should be confronted within analysis. More pressingly such a definition results in the methodological issue of how such structures can be analysed. Lowndes has begun to incorporate different streams of new institutionalism into research projects. In a study of local political participation Lowndes (alongside Pratchett and Stoker) use concepts which "draw upon insights from both rational choice theory and sociological institutionalism" (Lowndes et al 2006a p546). This is something that will be considered in the

following chapter in the context of rules and resources. Nonetheless, what remains vital are the methodological implications of new institutionalism. Any understanding of actors is incomplete without an understanding of institutions (and vice versa). Actors are better recognised as situated agents.

The final issue raised by the examination of the streams of new institutionalism was the predictive power of the approach (for example Hay 2002). New institutionalism seems far more comfortable in describing what has happened in the past and seeking to explain events through institutional analysis. However, it is important to note that the focus of this project is not based upon making such predictions. Instead, it seeks to understand when community leaders are able to make a difference. In so doing, it acknowledges the need to consider cumulative change. As Hay (2002 p143) argues,

“To understand the present is to understand how it has evolved from the past and to trace the legacies of that evolution.”

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined new institutional approaches to political phenomena in relation to community leaders. The theory responds to the flaws highlighted throughout the community leader literature by focussing upon institutions. In terms of the debate regarding structure and agency, new institutionalists begin analysis with structure arguing that,

“We behave the way we do because we have become habituated into behaving in particular ways in particular contexts and because it is difficult and potentially risky, as a consequence, to imagine ourselves behaving in any other way.”  
(Hay 2002 p106)

New institutionalism therefore acts as a counterweight to the dominant community leader literature. The discussion of the three main streams of argument within new institutionalism show the potential insight they can offer in the study of community leaders. However, these approaches were not without their problems and a number of associated issues were raised. In acting to redress the balance of structure and agency there is a fear that new institutionalism sits at the opposite extreme from the community leader literature.

It is clear that “agency affects structure, but structure also affects agency” (McAnulla 2002 p278) so an approach needs to consider the roles of both. Structure and agency are seen as inter-related and interdependent. Institutions are seen as human products that subsequently affect individuals. However, there are no institutions without agents to enact and animate them. In response, community leaders will be understood as situated agents; individuals act strategically in order to realise their preferences but do so whilst nested in a particular setting. Such a conception sees the importance of both structure and agency but does not privilege one over the other.

It is possible to do this within a new institutional framework but this viewpoint of structure and agency does have implications for the study. Seeing community leaders as situated agents means that institutions are understood as being created and interpreted by actors. Actors have the potential to change them in their everyday life at a local level as Hay (2006 p64) argues,

“Institutional change is understood in terms of the interaction between strategic conduct and the strategic context in which it is conceived, and in the later unfolding of its consequences, both intended and unintended.”

At the same time actors will be affected by the past but also the context in which they are situated as illustrated by 'the lads' discussed by Giddens (1984) and Willis (1977). The above discussion suggests that it is the sociological understanding which most comfortably suits a focus on situated agents. Similarly to Lowndes however, other streams will be used to offer additional insight into community leaders. The next chapter examines the study of institutions within new institutionalism and in particular the emphasis upon rules. The thesis moves on to consider how the interaction between community leaders and institutions can be studied, focussing upon the new institutionalist focus on rules and the importance of resources identified by structuration.

## CHAPTER 4

### READING - ACTING - EFFECT: MODELLING COMMUNITY

#### LEADERS AS SITUATED AGENTS

##### Introduction

This chapter develops a framework to enable an explanation of the conditions under which community leaders make a difference. It builds upon the argument of the last chapter that community leaders are better understood as situated agents. Such an approach privileges neither structure nor agency with actors embedded in a particular context. The chapter is guided by the first research theme of developing a means of understanding the interactions between community leaders and institutions.

The chapter begins with a discussion of rules and resources which are central themes within new institutionalism and structuration. Institutions are seen as a means of distributing resources and are closely linked to power. Institutions are commonly conceived as rule sets meaning that there is a focus upon the identification of rules within the literature. These rules incorporate both formal and informal dimensions and are play an important role in shaping behaviour. Informal rules are argued to be at least as important as more readily visible formal rules. This poses a methodological issue surrounding how such informality can be observed. This introduces a discussion of some of the other problems associated with the study of rules. It is suggested that rules may offer a limited conception of community leaders as situated agents operating in a complex policy environment.



In response, readings are presented as a way of exploring the subjective world of rules. This builds on the understanding that institutions and rules are based on the interpretations of agents. Community leaders are therefore in an ongoing dialectic relationship with their structured context. They act based on their reading of the environment and the expected consequences of their behaviour. This affects their subsequent perceptions and highlights the context specific local knowledge held by community leaders and their developing understanding of institutions. This leads to the establishment of a model that will be used to examine community leaders and their interpretations illustrated in Figure 1.

The chapter then examines the features of the environment in which community leaders are embedded and interact with as situated agents. The model shown in Figure 1 focuses on two key areas that make up this environment: the state consisting of political opportunity structures; and the community made of a community leader's communities, community organisations and other community actors.

Political opportunity structures highlight the role of state based institutions upon civil activities. As an example, the ability of local authorities to establish opportunities for community leaders and organisations to become engaged in governance is discussed. This shows that aspects of institutions may be more likely to engage certain groups than others, creating a dilemma for local authorities. The institutions associated with local authorities sit within those which operate at multiple levels such as those more readily linked with central government.

The community aspect of the model focuses on the role of factors such as the community leader's reading of their community. This draws upon work associated with collective action and social mobilisation highlighting the ability of actors to create opportunities to make a difference. This introduces a discussion concerning the relationship between the state and the community. The community aspect of a community leader's setting is commonly linked with collectives seeking to redress perceived imbalances in the allocation of resources. This suggests a potential role for community leaders to move between the two arenas of state and community.

The first research question of this thesis concerns the conditions under which community leaders make a difference. Therefore, the chapter considers what it means to 'make a difference' in the context of the framework established in the chapter. Three aspects of difference are identified: (1) substantive difference related to the ability of a community leader to achieve a beneficial redistribution of resources; (2) a symbolic aspect concerned with their recognition as an accepted part of governance; and finally (3) the difference they make to governance procedures. These dimensions are discussed in turn. A further example taken from the research provides a synthesised example that shows the complexity and interconnectivity of difference in practice.

The chapter concludes by identifying some methodological implications that stem from this discussion alongside the previous chapter. These include the potential for interpretations to be identified through interviews, the need for analysis to be able to factor in time to show the ongoing process of interaction

between community leaders and context and finally, the need for context to be examined.

### Institutions: Rules and Resources

A common strand within empirical studies using a new institutionalist framework is an understanding of institutions as rules (Peters 2005, March and Olsen 2004). Institutions are the “underlying rules that guide and constrain political behaviour” (Lowndes et al 2006 p546). These are seen to make cooperation between actors possible by providing a framework for interactions (Klijn 2001). Rules “simplify political life” (Lowndes 2006) reflecting an attempt to bring some “order and predictability” (Ostrom 1999 p50) among individuals. North (1990) use the term ‘rules of the game’ to encompass these formal and informal aspects. Such rules of the game are both understood and enforced by agents within that particular institution (Ostrom 1999, Klijn 2001). March and Olsen (2004 p3) argue,

“Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfil the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions.”

Giddens (1984 p21) defines rules as the “procedures of action aspects of praxis”. The discussion of Giddens in the previous chapter raised concerns surrounding the application of structuration theory. However, Giddens (1984) conception of institutions as extending beyond rules to incorporate resources has the potential to add to a new institutionalist analysis of community leaders. Resources are divided between: allocative resources associated with the command over the material features of the environment, the means

of production and any goods produced from a combination of these two; and authoritative resources associated with the command over the organisation of time and space, the reproduction of the body and the organisation of life chances.

Resources are the “structured properties of social systems” (Giddens 1984 p15) and as such offer actors opportunities but also constraints. Actors living within the European Union are subject to a number of rules and resources. For example, actors have to abide by European Court of Justice decisions but at the same time it may help employees to take action against employers who force staff to work in unsafe conditions (McAnulla 2002). McAnulla (2002) also offers the exclusive Waldorf Hotel in New York as an example. The high room costs can only really be met by those with high disposable incomes. It is not impossible for those with less financial resources to visit the hotel but it is clear that rules and resources strongly influence who is likely to stay at the hotel. Actors draw upon rules and resources in the production of social action and as a result reproduce the institutions. In this case, the Waldorf maintains its status as an elite hotel making it more attractive to those better able to meet the high costs in the future. As such, actors draw upon resources and rules highlighting the role institutions play in allocating resources and the interaction between agency and structure discussed previously.

The conception of institutions as rule sets means there is a focus within the new institutionalist literature upon the identification of rules. Ostrom (1999 p38) defines rules as,

“Prescriptions that define what actions (or outcomes) are required, prohibited, or permitted, and the sanctions authorized if the rules are not followed.”

Such a definition demonstrates the potential for rules to be imposed upon actors. This highlights the differential power relations between individuals embodied by rules (Lowndes 2006). Rules are understood as being nested within those operating at other levels and show the interactions between institutions across various levels (Ostrom 1990). Resources are likewise closely associated with power. Giddens (1984) argues that allocative resources are the material resources involved in the generation of power whilst authoritative resources are the non-material resources involved in the generation of power that derive from an actor’s ability to harness the activities of others and therefore occur because actors have dominion over others.

Ostrom’s definition of rules draws attention to the formal and informal nature of rules. For example, Wagenaar’s (2004) study of a public administrator in the Dutch Immigration Office shows that formal rules alone do not explain the behaviour of actors. Instead the complexity of everyday situations means that the administrator has to “turn the partial description of such situations, as exemplified in formal rules and procedures, into concrete practical activities” (Wagenaar 2004 p651). A rule may also come into conflict with another rule in the context of a particular situation (March and Olsen 2004).

The definition of what constitutes a rule offered by authors such as Giddens is neither clear nor consistent (for example Thompson 1989, Stones 2005). Further, Lowndes et al (2006a p542) argue that informal rules are at least as important as the formal in “shaping the behaviour” of actors. This

creates a methodological issue in that informal rules are not as readily visible as the formal. Indeed, Ostrom (1999 p37) argues that the most powerful institutions are 'invisible'. So the question becomes: how can rules be identified?

### Methodological Issues Associated with Identifying Rules

In addressing the issue surrounding the identification of rules, Lowndes et al (2006a) draw attention to Ostrom's concept of rules-in-use (Ostrom 1999). This concentrates on the formal and informal elements that make up "the distinctive ensemble of 'do's and don'ts'" (Lowndes et al 2006a p457). Rules-in-use are visible on the ground, particularly when someone new to the institution is being socialised into it. Lowndes et al apply the concept of rules-in-use within their CLEAR framework. The CLEAR framework is designed to help practitioners and policy makers seeking to improve their practice of citizen consultation and engagement. Under the framework people participate: when they Can, when they Like to, when they are Enabled to, Asked to, and when people experience the system as Responsive to their input (Lowndes et al 2006b).

The framework provides a questionnaire offering a number of questions to help local authorities diagnose their own practice. Based on these questions practitioners and policy makers can identify the strengths and weaknesses of their consultation and engagement practice. For example, a local authority may be very good at enabling citizens to participate (the E dimension) and asking for their views (the A dimension) but are weaker when it comes to incorporating these inputs into policy decisions (the R dimension).

The CLEAR questionnaire uses classificatory questions including socioeconomic and demographic data (such as what proportion of the population is from a minority ethnic group) alongside more open questions/statements such as 'citizens having the necessary skills for participating in political life'. This provides a rich source of data for analysis. However, it is unclear how these questions can result in the identification of rules-in-use from either the narrow or very broad questions. The former say little of rules whilst the latter are open to the interpretation of the respondent. In the example above, in response to the question concerning the skills of citizens to participate the respondent could simply say 'yes' without revealing more about their practice (Guarneros et al 2006) or rules-in-use.

Lowndes et al (2006a) use qualitative research methods (interviews and focus groups) to follow up the CLEAR framework data taking Ostrom's approach of identifying rules-in-use. Ostrom (1999 p53) states that the researcher should ask the actors involved "how are things done round here?" However, this alone does not serve as an appropriate means to identify institutions and their effects. Indeed, when I asked this question in interviews for this research, it elicited fairly pedestrian answers which almost felt scripted. This highlights the difficulty of identifying informality, not only for the researcher but also the respondent themselves. For example, Wagenaar (2004) argues that institutions are often taken for granted and therefore difficult for actors to identify. Rather, Ostrom's question seems more to act as a statement of intent suggesting a methodology rather than laying out a step-by-step guide.

Hall's (1989) concept of 'standard operating procedures' offers some improvement on rules-in-use since the focus is upon routine activity (Peters 2005) and rules that are recognisable to the actors even if they are not necessarily followed in all instances (Lowndes 2006). However, these must be inferred from the way actors talk and are revealed not through direct questions such as "what rules do you follow?" but by studying what actors "say and do" (Klijn 2001 p134) since rules are created by interaction between actors. As Klijn (2001 p136) puts it, "rules need followers" and are therefore in need of constant maintenance. So whilst providing uniformity and stability, rules are constantly being contested and reinterpreted in the day-to-day context of each situation.

Alongside the difficulty of identifying rules, a number of wider issues related to the study of rules in new institutionalism can be identified. In the same way that the definition of institutions leaves almost nothing out, if behaviour cannot be explained by the existence of identified rules, there can be a tautological assumption that behaviour is therefore the result of rules that were not identified. This leaves an approach that is non-falsifiable (Peters 2005) but not necessarily useful.

The focus on rules seems to offer a limited conception of agents operating in a simplified policy environment. The complexity of governance results in uncertainty leaving multiple options available to actors that could be deemed as being 'appropriate' (Scharpf 1997). As shown by Wagenaar's (2004) public administrator, actors have to interpret the partial descriptions provided by formal and informal rules in relation to everyday work scenarios. Rules act as a signpost which must be interpreted by actors (Wagenaar 2004)



rather than specifying the specific action that should be taken (March and Olsen 2004). What is 'appropriate' will be different in each situation (Lowndes 2005) as an actor translates rules into behaviour (March and Olsen 2004). Flyvbjerg (2005 p239) argues that "experts do not use rules but operate on the basis of detailed case experience".

There is also the possibility that actions will result in "unintended, perverse consequences" (Hajer 2003 p185) seen in the discussion of 'the lads' in the previous chapter. McAnulla (2002) offers the example of a government policy designed to alleviate unemployment which although successful, increases inflation as a side effect. Based on this understanding, actors are unlikely to have perfect information and even if they did, this is no guarantee that their action will have the intended affect. Uncertainty is an "inevitable by-product" (Hajer 2003 p186) of the increasing complexity of the policy environment. As a result, Beck (1999 p123 as quoted by Hajer 2003) states we now have an increased "awareness of our unawareness".

The usefulness of studying rules conceived in such a rational and calculated manner has also been questioned. Flyvberg (2001 p22) argues,

"Rationality in the West has become identical with analytical thinking that is, with conscious separation of wholes into parts. Arational behaviour, in contrast, connotes situational behaviour without conscious analytical division of situations into parts and evaluation according to context-independent rules."

The study of institutions has been shown to consist of the study of rules and resources. This section has expressed a number of key issues associated with the focus upon rules within new institutionalism. Firstly, 'rules' are difficult to identify, in part due to the ambiguity of the term. This makes the research of them inherently complicated. Furthermore, it has been suggested

that rules neglect the role of context in explaining behaviour which has been seen to be crucial to understand situated agents. On the basis of such an understanding coupled with the risk of focussing too heavily on the significance of structure or agency rather than seeing the two as interdependent, another approach to studying institutions and rules is desirable.

### A Model for Understanding Situated Agents

Institutions are created and remade based on the subjective interpretations of actors. Indeed, Ostrom (1999 p37) recognises that “institutions exist in the minds of participants”. Furthermore, the understanding of community leaders as situated agents highlights the interplay of actors and their social context (Bevir and Rhodes 2006). In order to capture these dynamics ‘reading’ is offered as a way of uncovering how actors interpret the rule-bound aspects of their environment. The focus here is on how an individual makes sense in relation to their context. As a situated agent, an individual is in a constant dialogue with the environment in which they are embedded. An interpretation is formed through this process occurring in dialogue with this environment as an actor seeks to understand, or read, the setting. Such meaning making is a dialectic and social process based upon the environment in which the situated agent is located.

Actors are orientated towards their context and their actions are a result of interactions between situated agents and their context (Hay 2006). The discussion of rational choice institutionalism in the previous chapter has shown its tendency to take actors as rather economic and predictable. Within

such a conception there can be an assumption that actors have an “unmediated access to the contours of the terrain they inhabit” (Hay 2002 p209). They are therefore able to accurately “read off the likely consequences of their action from their knowledge of the context in which they find themselves” (Hay 2002 p209).

Instead, community leaders in the model established by this thesis are understood as being “reflexive and formulate strategy on the basis of partial knowledge of the structures” (McAnulla 2002 p280). They make a strategic assessment of the context in which they are situated. In so doing, actors must rely upon the imperfect knowledge provided by their own reading of the situation (Hay 2006). Community leaders lack complete information and must “interpret the world in which they find themselves in order to orientate themselves strategically towards it” (Hay 2002 p209). An actor must orientate himself/herself and their strategies towards the context in which their intentions are realised (Hay 2002 p210). An actor will consider the likely consequences of their actions alongside a judgement of the context in which these actions take place. This process is “based upon the perceptions (accurate or otherwise)” (Hay 2002 p132) of both context and the consequences of particular actions.

It is important to recognise that a community leader’s world is not being recognised as only being constituted of rules and resources. As March and Olsen (2004 p17) argue,

“Action is rule based, but only partly so. There is a great diversity in human motivation and modes of action. Behaviour is driven by habit, emotion, coercion, and calculated expected utility, as well as interpretation of internalized rules and principles.”

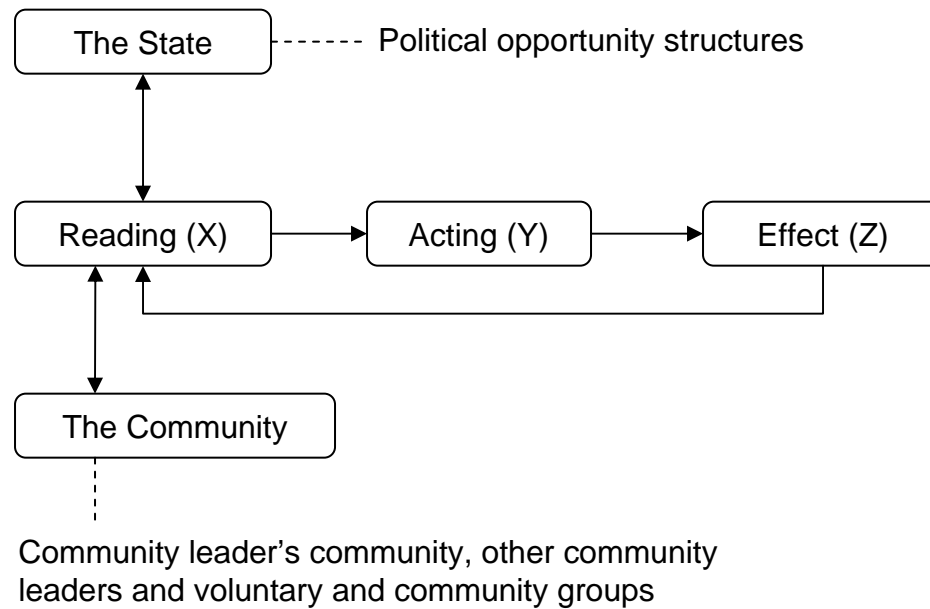
For example, if an individual bypassed the reading aspect of Figure 1 they could be said to be acting out of habit based in past experience. However, the primary concern of this project is the interaction of community leaders and institutions. This will be studied by focussing on rules, resources and community leaders meaning that the other aspects of the world are largely excluded from the research. In turn such an approach helps to address the tautological assumption concerning rules identified above.

In keeping with the sociological understanding of new institutionalism an actor's reading is likely to change over time as they constantly scan and re-interpret their ever-changing surroundings. The focus on reading highlights the significance of seeing actors as embedded in a structural context which needs to be understood but also sees the relevance of agents. Therefore, this approach incorporates context whilst remaining within new institutionalism.

The interaction between community leaders and their environment is illustrated in Figure 1. Figure 1 proposes that a community leader scans their environment resulting in a Reading (X) and they respond by Acting (Y) in a particular way which has an Effect (Z). On this understanding actions are,

“Collectively produced or reproduced in a dialectical interaction with the particulars of the situation at hand as it is embedded in its wider organisational, social, and cultural context.”  
(Wagenaar 2004 p644)

Figure 1: Reading-Acting-Effect



This process is thought to be ongoing with the individual reflecting upon the effect made which feeds back into their subsequent reading. In order to understand readings there is a need to examine the actions that animate them and vice versa. This relationship is shown within psychological studies, for example in examining a golfer's swing (Craig et al 2000) or how a pilot handles a helicopter (Padfield et al 2003).

The feedback loop in Figure 1 suggests that an actor makes an assessment of the difference their action has made which contributes to their subsequent interpretations. The context is not neutral in the sense that it privileges certain strategies over others (Rhodes 2006) and actors will have access to different resources. However, actors are able to adopt different strategies to overcome differential resources. McAnulla (2002 p281) uses the example of an individual seeking to obtain tickets for the Olympics. Such a person may be disadvantaged in comparison to someone with access to specially designated corporate tickets. In response they may queue overnight to increase their chances of obtaining publicly available tickets. The different strategies open to actors and their readings are clearly closed linked to issues surrounding power.

In the above example, the strategies adopted by actors seeking Olympic tickets are based upon their command of resources. Strategic actors will make an interpretation of their command of resources and make comparisons with other actors who are also seeking to get tickets. In the context of this study, community leaders are likely to need both allocative and authoritative resources to achieve their aims. For instance, community leaders may behave in a particular way as they read it as being an effective means of

accessing resources offered by the state such as regeneration funding and the expertise of state actors. It is also likely that other community leaders will be seeking to access the same state resources prompting competition between actors. However, the strategic actions taken by community leaders will vary based on their readings of the rules and resources available.

In seeking to achieve their aims community leaders will necessarily interact with other strategic actors in the institutional environment. The above discussion shows that community leaders will find themselves competing with some actors and seeking to collaborate and build positive relationships with others. These relationships are also likely to modify over time. How community leaders read their relationships with actors and how this informs their behaviour raises the issue of trust.

Trust between actors develops as they go through multiple reading-acting-effect chains and reflect on the effects of their collaboration. Actors will make an assessment of the benefits of having worked with others and goodwill will develop based upon a number of factors such as the perceived benefits each party receives through the collaboration, the reliability and the predictability of the actors behaviour, how each responds to the other's behaviour, how the interaction helps their understanding of institutions, the perceived power and competence of the actors and the potential for future benefit.

Individuals are assumed to be reflexive and learn from their actions. They adjust their strategies based upon their assessment of the consequences of their actions and their improved understanding of institutions as they go through the reading-acting-effect chain. These include the

intended and unintended consequences of their actions and may also highlight the inaccuracy of their earlier readings (Hay 2006) as seen in the discussion of Willis' (1977) 'lads' earlier. However, their actions change the context, meaning that individuals have to adjust behaviour in response to this new setting (Rhodes 2006). Also, experiences from the past impact the future strategies of an individual, for example,

"A job seeker may make several unsuccessful attempts to gain employment. However, by gaining feedback from employers, and perhaps from interviews, they may adapt their future approach to finding a job and, consequently, prove successful."  
(McAnnulla 2002 p281)

However, there are no guarantees concerning the quality of the learning made by an actor since it is again based upon their interpretations (and of employers in the above example). Hay (2002 p211) argues that,

"Political actors certainly do draw lessons from past experience, but there is no guarantee that they will draw the 'right' lessons, nor any simple way of adjudicating between the 'right' and the 'wrong' lessons in the first place."

It is also important to remember that the community leader's contextual environment will be ever changing. As a situated agent they will constantly be coming in contact with new, fresh scenarios (Wagenaar 2004) and responding to the actions of other actors.

What is produced through the reading-acting-effect chain can be linked to Yanow's (2004) concept of local knowledge. Local knowledge is defined as,

"A kind of non-verbal knowing that evolves from seeing and/or interacting with someone (or some place or something) over time."  
(Hafner 1999 as quoted by Yanow 2004 p12)

This knowledge is contextual in the sense that it is specific to a particular setting and reflects "very mundane yet expert understanding...from



lived experience” (Yanow 2004 p12). In this instance, community leaders can be seen as possessing local knowledge concerning their community (how it works, what its needs are etc). Within governance this local knowledge is seen as valuable to the community leader but is considered essential in successfully tackling policy problems by state actors. These individuals draw upon a community leader’s local knowledge in order to address policy problems.

In using an actor’s reading at point X as the start for analysis there is an issue concerning how the actor came to find themselves at that point. In order for an actor to form reading X they will have gone through multiple reading-acting-effect chains which go some way towards explaining their interpretation at that time. Actors are situated in terms of both context and time. Any analysis of community leader’s reading therefore needs to consider both of these factors. The dimension of time shall be addressed first. Since readings are the result of an ongoing dialectic process there is a need to examine how an individual’s reading develops and how they came to be at their present position. In other words, in producing an appropriate methodology it is essential to give community leaders history. This involves a consideration of their prior knowledge (Yanow 2000) and how this has evolved and developed before they reach the chain of reading-acting-effect shown in Figure 1. A consideration of time will also help to examine how trust develops between actors. This is an issue that will be examined in detail in the following chapter on methodology. The second issue of how context can be understood requires more detailed discussion and can be linked to the state and community boxes shown in Figure 1.

## The Role of the State: Political Opportunity Structures

The previous section has discussed the internal practice of community leaders and their learning processes. The chapter now turns to the aspects of the environment with which they strategically orientate themselves beginning with those associated with the state. Maloney et al (2000 p803) use the concept of 'political opportunity structures' taken from social movement theory in order to establish the role of political structures and institutions upon civil activity. Tarrow (1998 p76-77) defines political opportunity structures as the,

“Consistent...dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting people’s expectations of success or failure.”

Political opportunity structures are shown in Figure 1 as making up part of the environment that community leaders are situated in and interact with in reading and acting. They are however, external to the community leader and the organisation(s) of which they are a member. Lowndes et al (2006a p545) observe the role of local governments in establishing the opportunities for actors and groups to become engaged in governance for example in the provision of community facilities, the design of public places and the openness of their decision making machinery. These structures therefore reflect points of interpenetration between the state and civil society (Maloney et al 2000). For example, the introductory chapter has shown how members of the community are being “elevated to the apparent status of partner in the regeneration process” (Hastings et al 1996 p5 as quoted by Marinetto 2003 p114). The growing emphasis upon the involvement of community leaders within the shift to governance can be seen as a high level change in the

opportunity structures which create opportunities for actors to become involved.

Political opportunity structures exist on multiple levels. There are those which can be associated with local authorities such as the examples given above. It is also possible to identify the opening of opportunity structures linked to central government such as their provision of regeneration funding regimes such as New Deal for Communities. These levels of opportunity structures interact and impact one another. Further, nation states are embedded within a domestic and international political environment and international changes may impact the nation state. For example, Oberschall (1996) argues that the success of the popular movement in East Germany convinced Czechs and Slovaks that peaceful revolution against communism was possible and that the holding of free elections in Poland called into question the popular appeal of communism.

The focus on opportunity structures has been criticised on the grounds that political opportunity structures is a 'sponge-like' term (Gamson and Meyer 1996) in much the same way that the definitions of institutions within new institutionalism are criticised as being too capacious. This raises concerns that political opportunity structures "used to explain so much, (it) may ultimately explain nothing at all" (Gamson and Meyer 1996 p275). Therefore, the same argument used in new institutionalism is also valid here in the sense that a broad understanding serves to capture the complexity of the political environment. As Maloney et al (2000 p809) argue, the broadness of political opportunity structures are a "testimony to the richness of the concept". The concept shows the facilitating and constraining role played by the institutional

structures and power configurations (Tarrow 1998, Eder 1993) that are available to community leaders. Similarly, this demonstrates a need for a methodological approach which is able to capture these elaborate settings suggesting a need for 'thick description' (Geertz 1973).

Smith et al (2004) argue that local authorities can promote inter-organisational co-operation but argue that in so doing, authorities face a dilemma. Co-operation is easier amongst a closed, small number of groups with similar identities. Coupled with this, local authorities do not have the "resources or even the will to engage" with all of the community organisations within the area (Smith et al 2004 p527) meaning authorities must be selective in who they engage. However, the decision of who to include is likely to foster mistrust amongst the excluded groups (Smith et al 2004) making future co-operation difficult. Political opportunity structures may therefore discriminate in favour or against certain types of actors or groups (Maloney et al 2000) highlighting the differential resources and the effects this has on the power of actors. For example, the examination of the community leader literature in the chapter 1 highlighted how the design of governance structures means that certain types of individual such as those with managerial skills (Taylor 2003a, Mayo and Taylor 2002), personal contacts (Hendriks and Tops 2005) and the loudest voice (Lowndes 2001, Purdue et al 2000) are more likely to become involved than those without these authoritative resources.

Political opportunity structures highlight how the socio-political climate affects potential community leader's perceptions regarding the necessity and possibility for actors to mobilise (Meyer 2002, Eder 1992). Tarrow (1998 p20) considers political opportunity structures as providing,

“A set of clues for when contentious politics will emerge, setting in motion a chain of causation that may ultimately lead to sustained interaction with authorities...”

Furthermore, Tarrow (1998 p199) argues that whilst other factors are important, opportunity structures “play the strongest role” in explaining social movements and collective action. In this context, political opportunity structures go far in explaining how situated agents become involved in voluntary and community organisations.

Such opportunity structures need to be perceived by individuals in order for them to act as incentives for action (Tarrow 1998). Some actors may be easier to affect via changes in the political opportunity structures than others and alternate incentives may be necessary to trigger different actors to respond. Tarrow (1998) uses the term ‘early risers’ to refer to those who are quick to respond to perceived changes in the political opportunity structures and mobilise others. The term may apply to those individuals who respond to incentives created by governance and become community leaders asked to “deliver their communities” (Taylor 2003a p138) by governance actors.

These structures will also be interpreted differently by agents and will also change and develop (Maloney et al 2000). This again serves to show the need for time to be factored into analysis. Marinetto (2003) argues that opportunity structures highlight the significant role that state bodies (such as local authorities) still play in public life despite changes in how the state exerts influence,

“Political authorities, as the gate-keepers to executive power and as holders of significant resources, are as crucial to creating the opportunities for active citizenship.”  
(Marinetto 2003 p110)

## The Role of the Community

The state alone does not make up the context in which community leaders read. Barnes et al (2004 p271) observe that,

“The public...does not just ‘respond’ to organisational initiatives but brings a whole range of assumptions drawn from other experiences of social and community engagement.”

It has been observed that meaning making happens in collectives or what Yanow (2000) labels as ‘communities of meaning’. Figure 1 therefore draws attention to the role of a community leader’s community and of other community leaders in the formation of perceptions. The local knowledge held by community leaders is specific to a particular, unique context. In other words, it is “situational” (Yanow 2004 p12) and is produced through interaction among people within that context at that time.

The community is therefore likely to play a significant role in how an individual makes sense of their environment and behaves. For example, Parry et al (1992) and Sawyer (2004) have found that an individual’s membership of a community can serve as a strong motivation for action. The explanation of ‘the lads’ behaviour in the previous chapter has also highlighted the significance of such factors. This suggests that some political opportunity structures can be associated with the community. The community is a political arena which provides incentives for individuals to mobilise. Political opportunity structures may “shape or constrain movements, but movements can create opportunities as well” (Gamson and Meyer 1996 p276). This touches on aspects such as mobilisation and support which can be linked to the literature on social movements and collective action (for example Nepstad and Bob 2006, Tarrow 1994, Tilly 1978, Olson 1965,

Gamson 1975). It also shows the need to examine the differential resources held by actors (Lowndes et al 2006a).

Social movements reflect the collective actions of a community acting “coercively in order to achieve democratic aims” (Medearis 2004 p55). These aims reveal power differentials with social movements considered as a mobilisation by the ‘have-nots’ against the ‘haves’ in order to achieve a redistribution of power (Stoecker 2003). By taking actions such as marching, boycotting and picketing (Tarrow 1998) social movements, “like other interest groups seek to distort or reframe an issue in order to ‘sell’ their message to the public” (Hendriks 2006 p495). These tactics are utilised “against powerful opponents” (Tarrow 1998 p2) because they do not have the same resources as such elites other than the strength provided by the mass of their numbers.

Social movements are a challenge to ‘the way things are done around here’ and show the potential for actors not to simply respond to opportunities presented by the state structures but to manufacture such opportunities themselves. Social movements usually conceive themselves as being in opposition to the state maintained status quo. However, Tarrow (1998 p25) argues that “acting collectively inserts them into complex policy networks, and thus within the reach of the state”. This suggests that when an individual becomes recognised as a ‘community leader’ by their community and also by the state they are inherently brought closer to state structures. Indeed, social movements seek this interaction with the state. For example, social movements can be defined as,

“Collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, *in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.*”

(Tarrow 1998 p25 emphasis added)

Although social movements are seen as interacting with the state the relationship is still commonly associated as being oppositional. However, Bang and Sørensen (1998) highlight the growing professionalism of social movements. The rhetoric of social movements as one of 'freedom fighters' acting against the prevailing government system is in conflict with their day-to-day negotiations in governance. This has similarities with part of the everyday maker credo that "merely to be against something will not do" (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p478) and the changes to the process of governing by involving multiple actors. As a result, governance can produce new collectives made up of state actors, citizen participants and individuals from the private sector (Barnes et al 2004). The professionalism of social movement eludes towards expert citizens since social movements are seeking access to the governance elite. This highlights the apparent blurring between the boundaries of the state and the community whilst Figure 1 models them as distinct from one another. This is done for reasons of analytical clarity and the overlap will be drawn out where necessary throughout the empirical data.

The notion of social movements as being in opposition is often used in relation to high level change such as the removal of a repressive regime (Hendriks 2006). It is clear that this is rarely likely to be the aim of a community leader. However, such individuals are in opposition as they are acting strategically in an attempt to change the future of their community and secure resources. Whilst not on the same scale as an attempt to depose a government (examples of the role of social movements include the collapse of communism and the release of Nelson Mandella in South Africa [McAdam et al 1996]), such behaviour can be interpreted as a challenge to the status quo



against an 'antagonist' (Gamson 1975). This can be linked to the research question regarding the ability of community leaders to not only read the rules but change them. Community leaders may challenge the rules, acting strategically to change rules based on their understanding of the difference they wish to make. The issue of difference is discussed in detail below.

The focus of this section has been upon the difficulties associated with the use of rules within the new institutionalist literature. In response, it has outlined an approach which stresses the need to understand community leaders as situated agents in an ongoing dialectic relationship with their environment. This process results in the formation of perceptions which lead to actions and an assessment of the difference made. The focus upon the interpretations of individuals provides scope for them to be unearthed through interviews. The study of institutions as outlined in the discussion of resources and rules was seen to make it difficult to take such an approach. McAnulla's (2002 p283) example of an unsuccessful female job applicant illustrates this point. McAnulla argues that the reason for their failure may be associated with a glass ceiling which neither the interviewee nor the members of the company are aware of beyond Lukes' (1974) first face of power. So whilst the company may say it is to do with lack of experience or bad interview for example, an alternative interpretation is possible. The focus upon the interpretations of situated agents is based on an understanding of institutions relating to how actors make sense of, interpret and interact with their environment. Alongside this is the need for 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of the context in which community leaders are situated.

## What it Means to Make a Difference

The preceding section has established the importance of examining how the interpretations of community leaders affect what they do. The final stage of Figure 1 shows the results of their action in the form of an effect. The research seeks to examine the processes and context in (and through) which community leaders operate. Based on this understanding the question of “under what conditions do community leaders make a difference?” is concerned with how community leaders understand the meaning of difference and enact their interpretations. Community leaders assess the difference that their strategic action has made and this links into their subsequent readings illustrated by the feedback loop in Figure 1. In making these interpretations, it is proposed that what it means to make a difference contains three primary dimensions; substantive, symbolic and procedural.

The substantive aspect concerns the impact community leaders have upon how resources are allocated throughout the governance process from setting the policy agenda through to outcomes. Such an understanding can be readily linked to a ‘stagist’ model (Parsons 1995) which divides the policy process into distinct stages. For example, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) divide the process into nine stages from ‘deciding to decide’ and ‘option analysis’ through to ‘policy maintenance, succession and termination’. Although such an approach is an overly simplistic way of examining policy it does provide a structured way to “consider the multiplicity of reality” (Parsons 1995 p81). This dimension of difference is concerned with examining situations within which the actions of a particular individual (in this case a community leader) result in a redistribution of resources that benefits the individual and their

community. Whilst it is clearly impossible to examine how events would have unfolded were the community leader not there, it is possible to demonstrate that an individual believes that resources have been allocated differently as a consequence of their actions. Such an approach is apparent in Stone's (1996) study of think tanks. Stone (1996 p4) argues that,

"One way to mitigate the problem of quantitative influence is by looking not at the degree of influence but at the role think-tanks see themselves as playing, the contributions they make to the policy process and, or if, these contributions are used".

An article by Nepstad and Bob (2006) discusses "when do leaders matter?" in the context of international social movements. Although the authors do not address the issue of mattering directly and focus primarily upon the traits of leaders, their understanding centres on the substantive aspect of difference for example, they consider the impact of leaders on three of the processes in the development of a movement (page 1). A similar approach is taken in Barker's (2001) study of head teachers. Barker is concerned with how the leadership styles of head teachers contribute to the success of their schools examining the school's OfSTED performance and the views of pupils and teachers (page 72).

In Gamson's (1975) discussion of social protest, the author identifies two positive outcomes for groups: acceptance and new advantages. Gamson argues that the success of a group can be seen by the new advantages that they are able to secure for their constituents (those whom the group is seeking to positively benefit through their actions) during or after their challenge. In other words; "did the potential beneficiaries of the challenging group receive what the group sought for them?" (Gamson 1975 p34) highlighting the substantive dimension of difference.

The symbolic dimension of difference can be linked to the second aim of social protest groups identified by Gamson: acceptance. This dimension is concerned with the recognition of individuals as actors and what a community leader represents and communicates through their presence. For example, the politics of presence (Phillips 1998) considers attempts to ensure the more equal representation of women and/or ethnic minorities in elected assemblies. In this context, the involvement of community leaders in the process of governing can be seen as a symbolic recognition of the value of their contribution to policy and the wider opening up of governing processes. Gamson (1975 p28) defines this dimension as the “acceptance of a challenging group by its antagonists as a valid spokesman for a legitimate set of interests”.

This aspect of difference is also suggested by Nepstad and Bob (2006 p7) who draw attention to the recognition “both internally and externally” of the leaders in their study. One of the community leaders interviewed as part of this project felt that they made a difference by virtue of having offices in their neighbourhood. Residents knew where these offices were and could choose to engage with the services the community leader’s organisation offered if they wanted. This shows an example of what Gamson (1975) would label as a ‘full response’ in that the community leader has been accepted by the state as a legitimate voice in the neighbourhood and as a result the community has received new advantages in the form of resources (the office building, the funding to employ the community leader’s post, funding for local projects etc).

Conversely, another community leader interviewed felt that they served simply as ‘important window dressing’ on a partnership board. This suggests

that their involvement is emasculatory since their presence serves primarily to legitimise state action rather than to utilise their local knowledge. Gamson (1975) would label this latter result as 'co-optation' whereby community leaders have been granted acceptance (in that they have been included in the decision making structures) but have not received new advantages; they only legitimise the allocation of resources determined by the other board members. Purdue (2005) draws upon the frequency with which community leaders are only shown regeneration bids just in time for them to be signed as another example of such co-optation.

The other two possible outcomes identified by Gamson (1975) are 'pre-emption' whereby actors are not accepted but receive new advantages and 'neither' where they receive neither acceptance nor new advantages. Gamson's analysis suggests a link between the substantive and symbolic dimensions of making a difference. This is supported by Eder (see for example Eder 1992, 1993 and Crouch et al 2001). Eder argues that before a social movement is able to start competing for a redistribution of resources (the substantive dimension of difference) they must first acquire what he labels as 'recognition' (amongst the public, the media etc) and what Gamson calls 'acceptance' (the symbolic dimension of difference).

The procedural dimension of making a difference relates to the role of community leaders in the way that governance is carried out. This aspect relates to the political opportunity structures established across the various levels of the state. The procedural dimension of difference is concerned with modifications in the 'way things are done around here' in a manner that more readily incorporates the views of community leaders and their communities. It

reflects a change in the rules where political rhetoric increasingly sees community leaders as being legitimately involved in the policy process (Hastings et al 1996). It is therefore concerned with the legitimacy issue discussed in the definition of community leaders. Again, this dimension of difference links to the substantive dimension as it likely that strategic actors will seek to modify procedural in order to secure a redistribution of resources.

In examining the dimensions of making a difference there are clear overlaps in the interpretations made by community leaders given the complexity of the specific contexts in which they find themselves. To use an example from this research project a community leader in one area opposed the building of a new development on the grounds that it would increase the flow of traffic in an area with a number of schools nearby and a large proportion of elderly residents. The development went ahead in spite of the opposition from the community leader's organisation but the individual was asked to join the board of the new development and secured the installation of traffic calming measures around the area. In this case, the individual did not achieve the outcome they initially intended, namely that the development did not take place. They were however able to gain new advantages by substantively changing the manner in which the development took place by ensuring greater attention to road safety. Furthermore, in becoming a board member there was a symbolic aspect to their impact and such acceptance makes them better placed to affect future decision making (a procedural dimension).

## Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been upon providing a framework to understand community leaders as situated agents. Within the new institutionalist literature there has been shown to be an emphasis on the rules and resources that make up institutions. Whilst the discussion of resources was seen as relatively straight forward, the conception of rules extends beyond formal rules such as laws to include “more informal practices, conventions and customs” (Lowndes et al 2006a p542). This creates a clear methodological problem concerning how such informality can be identified and studied. This sits alongside other issues related to the use of rules such as the rationality it assumes in actors in the face of a highly complex environment. Therefore, this project will use the reading-acting-effect model as a way of operationalising rules at the grassroots.

The focus is on interpretation which readily sees actors as situated agents whilst maintaining a new institutionalist stance. An actor is strategic and reflexive but it is also acknowledged that “all work takes place in a context” (Wagenaar 2004 p648). In such a context,

“Actors are strategic, seeking to realize certain complex, contingent, and constantly changing goals. They do so in a context which favours certain strategies over others and must rely upon perceptions of that context which are at best incomplete and which may very often prove to have been inaccurate after the event.”  
(Hay 2006 p63)

The strategies of actors highlighted the power differentials between actors based upon their respective command of resources. There is a “dialectic of structures and strategies” (Jessop 1990 p129) through which actors make sense of their context and carry out their reading through their actions. Actors then assess the consequences of their behaviour and as a

by-product the community leader reflects, learns and improves their reading of institutions. This is an ongoing, dynamic process with residues from the past affecting how an individual behaves in the present and future. Furthermore, the actions of an individual will affect their environment and how they interact with this context in the future. Therefore, neither an actor nor their environment is static, necessitating a consideration of both time and setting.

The chapter then considered two aspects of the environment in which actors are situated and interact with; the state and the community. The former considers the role of political structures in the associational activity of individuals (Marinetto 2003). Local authorities are able to affect the opportunities for actors to become involved in the process of governing for example, by providing resources community groups or opening up their decision making procedures for a limited number of groups. Such structures operate on a number of interacting levels and different structures are likely to attract particular individuals and groups.

Community leaders also interact with the community through the organisations of which they are members, the wider community and other community leaders and organisations. It has been suggested that community leaders are akin to 'early risers' (Tarrow 1998), quick to respond to opportunities created externally to them but also able to create their own, moving readily between the arenas of state and community. The use of terms drawn from social movement theory highlights the power differentials amongst groups and how actors and context operate on multiple levels.

Understood in this light, what it means to make a difference is based upon how community leaders interpret the difference their actions have and



the effect this has on how they read subsequent scenarios. It is concerned with processes rather than attempts to place a quantitative assessment of their value. There are three interrelated aspects to difference involving substantive, symbolic and procedural dimensions. This has a number of strong methodological implications. For example, since reading is based on how actors make sense and interpret, they can be unearthed through discussion with these people. Furthermore, there is a need for 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) to consider the unique contexts in which community leaders are situated. The thesis will now move to consider these issues in more depth and outline a methodological approach.

## CHAPTER 5

### METHODOLOGY: STORYTELLING AND THE USE OF CASE STUDY

#### Introduction

The focus of previous chapters has been upon establishing a conceptual framework to examine community leaders in 'new collaborative spaces' (Skelcher et al 2005) and more specifically the conditions under which such individuals make a difference. This chapter seeks to translate the implications of previous sections into the methods used to generate data. A case study approach dominates the existing studies of community leaders. The chapter begins by considering the use of case study which involves a number of techniques including interviews and analysis of documentation. Such an approach readily examines both actors and their context meeting the need to see community leaders as situated agents.

The chapter discusses the use of a single case study as the basis for the research. The implications of such an approach are considered including concerns that findings will only be applicable in that single case. However, in this instance it will be argued that a single case study is beneficial as it allows a detailed examination of the context in which community leaders operate. The chapter moves on to outline the stages of the research process beginning with the selection of the case study location. After a consideration of the rationales used by other authors taking a similar approach a number of criteria are established for this study. The city of Sheffield is chosen as the case for a

number of reasons including its history of civic participation and potentially high number of community leaders.

With the case selected, the chapter outlines how community leaders will be identified. This has two aspects. Firstly, prominent members of community and voluntary organisations and regeneration boards are identified. Secondly, interviewees are also asked to identify other relevant individuals. This also introduces the notion of communities of meaning. Members of such a community share a number of characteristics such as language and sense making. A number of communities of meaning are identified extending beyond community leaders to include council officers, regeneration staff and councillors. Since sampling is based upon the definition of community leaders given in the introductory chapter, a number of caveats are discussed such as the assumption that community leaders are visible and sit on formally constituted bodies.

Since the project concentrates on interpretations, actors are unsurprisingly the focal point of the methodology. The focus upon the interpretations of actors coupled with the need to factor time into analysis means that the chapter gives considerable attention to interview methods. This also responds to the fifth research question of the thesis regarding the use of a methodological approach not previously or widely used within existing studies of community leaders. It will be shown that a number of interview methods allow time to be incorporated into analysis by accessing history through the memories of actors. Three methods are discussed; biographical interviews, memory work and life histories to see if any of these interview methods can be used in this study. These methods are trialled in

three neighbourhoods within Sheffield of which two were continued. Of the methods, biographical interviews are seen to be appropriate, with some alterations made to ensure the research objectives are met.

The chapter then lays out the interview process beginning with how interviews were arranged. There is a consideration of the interview itself and how interviewees experienced the process. The chapter discusses the full transcription of interviews and how the data is analysed. It will be shown that actors make sense of their surroundings using stories necessitating some discussion regarding the identification of stories.

The identification of stories and the use of biographical interviews necessitate a consideration of the associated flaws. These include whether individuals can be assumed to reflect their organisation. There are also issues surrounding the reliability of human memory. It will be argued that in this study, the factual accuracy of actor's stories is secondary to what they illustrate about how actors make sense in their setting. The differing interpretations can also be compared to those of other communities of meaning alongside the data from other sources within a case study approach. Two processes are introduced to ensure the internal and external validity of stories. The first of these is peer de-briefing which takes place within the academic community and the second of member checking which involves taking the stories back to interviewees.

The final section includes a discussion of research ethics in terms of the role of researcher as a situated researcher and the issues associated with the use of Sheffield as a case study. The chapter concludes by laying out the stages of the research process.

### Constructivist Ontology

The reading-acting-effect model provides a tool for analysing how situated agents interact with their environment and construct their role. The model is concerned with how community leaders make sense of their own activities including their perception of having made a difference; it is not a falsifiable, measurable concept. Such an understanding is based upon constructivist ontological assumptions. Constructivism is rooted in a supposition that,

“We know the world not by objectively observing an external reality but by constructing how we understand it with others.”  
(Dodge et al 2005 p289)

Therefore, constructivist research does not claim to document reality. Instead it seeks to capture the interpretations of reality made by individuals and social groups reflected in the reading-acting-effect model. As Dessler and Owen (2005 p607) assert,

“Constructivists stress that any situation must be interpreted or defined by actors before they can have an effect on it. A central claim of constructivism is that the conditions of action are what actors make them to be. Action follows a course intended by conscious agents, who impose meaning on conditions that affect them only because they are aware of those conditions or interpret them in a particular way.”

This is illustrated in Parson's (1995) discussion of Becker (1963). Becker's research demonstrates that a policy problem (deviance) is the outcome of a labelling process whereby the activities of one group are disapproved of by others,

“Deviance...is created by society...social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying these rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an outsider.”  
(Becker 1963 p8-9)

Similarly, the constructivist stance of this project is apparent in the definition of community leaders (see chapter 2) which demonstrated the role of other actors (state and community) in labelling an individual as a 'community leader'. As such community leaders are social constructions (for example Barnes et al 2003). The constructivist ontology of this project has implications for the choices made in research design and will be referred to throughout the chapter.

### A Case Study Approach

This section provides a suitable methodological approach to meet the research questions. The preceding chapter has shown the focus on the interpretations made by community leaders. The primary means of 'data generation' (Yanow 2006a) will be through interviews with these individuals. A focus on agents is common within constructivism given its concentration upon interpretation (Dessler and Owen 2005). Interview methods will be returned to later in the chapter in more depth. However, previous sections have also stressed a need to examine community leaders in relation to their context as situated agents. Therefore, the wider approach of case study will be utilised to place community leaders in context. The use of case studies stems from a desire to understand social phenomena (Yin 2003). It embraces the complexity of social environments and seeks to capture this richness. Indeed, what differentiates case studies from more quantitative methods is that the approach does not seek to control behavioural events but instead examines phenomena within their contextual conditions. Yin (2003 p13) argues,

“You would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions- believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study.”

Within the case study approach there sits a gamut of actual techniques. Although interviews are prominent within these techniques,

Yin (2003) lists six categories:

1. Documentation
2. Archival records
3. Interviews
4. Direct observation
5. Participant observation
6. Physical artefacts

Such variation not only shows the suppleness of the approach but also suggests that the use of multiple techniques may complement one another to give a more complete picture of the case. The use of case study therefore allows the study of “wholes not parts” (De Vaus 2001 p231).

### A Single Case Study

Whilst a case study approach does allow for the complexity of the whole to be examined as opposed to the parts, any account it provides will be “partial and incomplete” (Easton 1992 p3). As Miles and Huberman (1994 p27) observe,

“You cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything.”

However, the approach does provide a means of examining community leaders as situated agents. In order to better understand how they operate within the fixed context, individuals will be drawn from a single city. The use of a single case study is criticised as findings are only valid in that sole instance (for example De Vaus 2001). However, Flyvbjerg (2006 p228) contests this assumption arguing,

“One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case may be central to scientific development via generalisation as

supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas ‘the force of example’ is underestimated.”

The publication of numerous studies which focus upon different cases allows for ‘naturalistic generalisations’ (Stake 2000 p442) that can be used to provide a picture of issues present throughout a research area. This reflects the notion that “we come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience” (Stake 2000 p442). This can be associated what Payne and Williams (2005 p297) call ‘moderatum generalizations’ which “resemble the everyday generalizations of the life-world in their nature and scope” and are drawn from personal experience. Such generalisations are moderate in the sense of their scope and the firmness with which they are held. As Payne and Williams (2005 p297) state,

“They are not attempts to produce sweeping sociological statements that hold good over long periods of time, or across ranges of cultures... (And)...are moderately held, in the sense of a political or aesthetic view that is open to change.”

Furthermore, in this instance the ‘cultural parochialism’ (Hay 2002) of a single case serves as an advantage since new institutionalism highlights the need to understand actors as situated agents operating in particular settings. The use of a single case study allows this environment to be readily and widely examined. This lends itself to ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) and also allows the reader to fully experience the context (Erlandson 1993). Such an approach also complements the desire to use “the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers” (Geertz 1973 p16). This is also in keeping with a constructivist approach where,

“Inquiry is less about predicting or generalising behaviour, and more about interpreting intention and meaning in context.”  
(Dodge et al 2005 p289)



So whilst this project acknowledges that contextual factors specific to the case place limits on the ability to generalize from it (Whetten 1989) it is argued that what is learnt in one place may hold valuable lessons for other areas (Barzelay 1993). However, 'moderatum generalizations' acknowledge that further evidence may confirm or refute findings (Payne and Williams 2005) and is in keeping with constructivism since future research may produce a more refined or sophisticated reconstruction of phenomena (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Further, what is most significant is that the research is authentic and rings true for both internal and external audiences (Miles and Huberman 1994). This is discussed in more detail in 'The Issues of an Interpretive Approach' section below.

A case study approach dominates the existing UK studies of community leaders. The case studies are drawn from different locations across the country and then community leaders are identified within these borders (for example Anastacio et al 2000, Purdue 2005). This approach is shared in the everyday literature. For example, Hendriks and Tops (2005) focus on a single individual but identify him by first examining an organisation (Neighbourhood Development Corporation) in The Hague. So, although community leaders are the focus of study they are contained within a geographically based setting which is identified first.

### Selecting Sheffield as the Case

A number of criteria can be used to justify selection of the case. The table overleaf shows some of the authors who have focussed upon a single local authority case study in the UK and their justifications for their selection.

Table 2: Justifications for Selection of A Single Case Study

AUTHOR	AUTHORITY/ CASE	JUSTIFICATION
William Hampton (1970)  Democracy and Participation: A Study of Politics in Sheffield	Sheffield Metropolitan District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not specified in publication but was based on a doctorate study supported by the Social Science Research Council.</li> <li>- Self contained city with no surrounding conurbation</li> </ul>
John Dearlove (1973)  The Politics of Policy in Local Government	London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The author acknowledges the shortcomings of using a particular authority but asks what criteria constitute a 'typical local authority'?</li> </ul>
Kenneth Newton (1976)  Second City Politics	Birmingham Metropolitan District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A typical example of cities in the UK allowing generalisations to be made. Compares Birmingham to averages on over 50 socio-economic criteria</li> <li>- Role of Joseph Chamberlain in changing the nature of local politics</li> </ul>
Peter Saunders (1983)  Urban Politics: A Sociological Explanation	London Borough of Croydon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proximity to researcher</li> <li>- Enjoys more autonomy than inner city London</li> <li>- Place where business and middle class interests are likely to feature</li> </ul>
Kevin Longmore (1998)  Without Foundation: Change in Local Government and its Effects on the Role of the Local Councillor	Sheffield Metropolitan District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not specified directly in the thesis but the author aims to update Hampton's (1970) existing research in the wake of changes to local government</li> </ul>
Michael Marinetto (1997)  The Political Dynamics of Camden: 1964 – 1994	London Borough of Camden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The author seeks to examine how national trends were felt locally over time necessitating the focus on a specific local authority</li> </ul>

Based upon the research aims and questions of this project, a number of research criteria can be established for the selection of the case. These are:

- (1) The case should provide a large number of potential interviewees.
- (2) The case should be in an area which has previously been researched allowing the context of the area to be examined. This criterion also suggests that the area selected will have a history of participation which would allow community leaders to reflect upon their experiences over time.
- (3) The case study should be accessible to the researcher geographically and in terms of contacts with community leaders (for example Yin 2003, Payne and Williams 2005).

Sheffield, a city in northern England will be used as the case study area since it fulfils these criteria. Firstly, there are many areas within Sheffield that are in receipt of central government regeneration funding. The involvement of the community is a requirement of much of this funding which should provide a number of community leaders for research. Secondly, Sheffield has a history of participation and research into communities. In addition to Hampton's study highlighted above, other public policy authors have examined the area (such as Longmore 1998, Carley et al 2000, Purdue et al 2000, Taylor et al 2007). Such existing research will be beneficial in

meeting the need to factor time into analysis and establishing the city as a context for community leaders in terms of the state and community aspects of the reading-acting-effect model. As a native to Sheffield, the researcher has a level of familiarity with the city which benefits the selection of community leaders and is likely to help build rapport and trust with interviewees (Neal and Walters 2006). Finally, Sheffield is selected for reasons of accessible convenience for the researcher.

Within the city, the two neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey are focussed on in greater detail as embedded sub-units to allow analysis of the community leaders operating within the shared governmental structure of Sheffield as the case. The two areas were selected because both are in receipt of central government regeneration funding: New Deal for Communities (NDC) in Burngreave; and in Southey, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). Both funding streams necessitate the involvement of the community thereby presenting a rich seam of situated community leaders.

These two neighbourhoods were trialled as potential research sites alongside a third area. This area (Manor and Castle) was also in receipt of SRB funding and was excluded for a number of reasons. Firstly, there were apparent similarities with Southey in terms of the sources of funding. Further, the area has fewer community leaders on the boards associated with the regeneration funding reducing the number of potential interviewees. Manor and Castle Development Trust has five compared with ten in Burngreave New Deal for Communities (BNDC) and twelve in Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration (SOAR). In terms of demographics Manor and Castle sits between Southey and Burngreave. For example, 95% of the population of

Southey is White, 59% in Burngreave and 81% in Manor and Castle. During the piloting of interview methods in the three areas (discussed in more detail in the 'Biographical Interview Methods' section of this chapter) Manor and Castle (alongside Burngreave to a lesser extent) appeared to show signs of research overload (Anastacio et al 2000) or fatigue as a result of a history of recent studies (for example Taylor et al 2007). Other areas of the city also in receipt of regeneration funding were excluded for the same reason. For example, Carley et al (2000) and Munro (2004) use Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe Community Association (NUCA) based in Netherthorpe; and Purdue et al's (2000) use of Darnall (SRB4) means that it is subsequently used in Purdue (2001) and (2005). Finally, two neighbourhoods were used instead of three for reasons of limited resources.

Yin's (2003) discussion of methods shows that case studies can be undertaken with differing emphasis upon the six categories. The focus upon community leaders means that it is wholly appropriate that the project will concentrate upon interviews with these individuals. However, alongside interviews sit a range of sources of evidence within a case study approach. It will be important to examine Sheffield as an institutional setting. This will involve the use of existing research such as that of Hampton (1970), Longmore (1998) and Purdue (2005 [where Sheffield is one of the eight cases]) which would come under the heading of 'documentation' in Yin's categorisation. When using documentation data Yin (2003 p87) observes,

"Every document was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case study being done."

Hampton's study aimed to provide a snapshot example of how the local government system operated at the time and of future possibilities.

Longmore's PhD thesis examined the changing role of local government and how this affected the role of councillors. The thesis uses Hampton's study as a benchmark for comparison (indeed, Hampton supervised Longmore). Although neither of the studies focuses specifically upon community leaders, each touches on areas relevant to this study such as the role of voluntary and community groups (which will be considered in more detail in the following chapter). There is also literature produced by the council and community organisations and groups that are engaged in regeneration that can be classified as documentation. For example, Burngreave New Deal produces The Burngreave Messenger, a monthly community newsletter which has been published since 1999.

Archival records will also be important for the study. More specifically, the historical context of the city and features such as the development of the council, covering Labour's dominance councillor information, turnout at elections and areas in receipt of regeneration funding will be considered in detail. This data will help to establish the context in which community leaders operate and how this has developed over time. It will also help to show how the council understand their relationship with communities which will help to establish the political opportunity structures.

### Identifying and Sampling Community Leaders

The definition of community leaders provided in chapter 2 highlighted how such individuals are commonly members of voluntary and community sector organisations and partnership boards created in the wake of the receipt of government funding. The identification of community leaders should therefore

be relatively easy given that by their very nature they are visible in their community. So, an obvious start point is to identify, using internet and local media sources, what projects are working in the city and who is frequently involved.

A combination of what Bonjean and Olson (1964) label as a 'positional approach' and 'reputational approach' (as used by Purdue 2005) is used to identify community leaders. The positional aspect selects community leaders based upon their visibility; they are the individuals holding "the greatest number and most important offices in the community" (Bonjean and Olson 1964 p281). In the first instance therefore, community leaders were identified based on their positions in community based organisations and regeneration boards.

The reputation aspect of Bonjean and Olson's approach (1964 p283) consists of "asking informants to name and rank the leaders in their community." So, from the start point of purposive sampling seen in the positional approach above, at the end of each interview, the interviewee was asked to identify other community leaders that they thought were relevant for the study. Yanow (2000 p10) uses the term 'communities of meaning' to refer to individuals who "come to use the same or similar cognitive mechanisms, engage in the same or similar acts, and use the same or similar language to talk about thought and action." Therefore, each community of meaning will make different interpretations of meanings and roles.

A number of other communities of meaning were identified: councillors, council officers and regeneration staff (paid professional staff employed by bodies involved in governance but not the council). Members of these

communities were also interviewed. These communities of meaning were identified based upon a consideration of the individuals with whom community leaders would come into contact as governance actors. Although councillors were identified as separate from community leaders in chapter 2 they sit on the regeneration boards in all three of the pilot areas suggesting they could provide relevant comparative data. Council officers were identified as associated with the council and interacting regularly with community leaders. Regeneration staff were understood as similar to council officers but distinct in that they are not formally part of the council reflecting the wider shift to governance. Such individuals would encounter community leaders in their day-to-day working within governance, for example as staff paid to work within BNDC or SOAR. Respondents from these communities of meaning were also asked to identify other potential interviewees. This was done until a saturation point was reached where the names offered were those of people already interviewed and other names were people who had refused interviews. The number of people interviewed in each neighbourhood is shown in Table 3 (below) and is broken down by communities of meaning and gender.

Table 3: Interviewees (community of meaning and gender)

	Community Leaders	Councillors	Council Officers	Regeneration Staff
Burngreave	7	2	1	3
Female : Male	(1 : 6)	(0 : 2)	(0 : 1)	(2 : 1)
Southey	8	2	1	4
Female : Male	(4 : 4)	(0 : 2)	(0 : 1)	(2 : 2)
Manor and Castle (pilot stage)	1	1	1	2
Female : Male	(0 : 1)	(1 : 0)	(1 : 0)	(2 : 0)



Such a sampling method of selecting respondents 'serially' and 'contingently' (Erlandson 1993 p92) means actors are internally and externally recognisable (Nepstad and Bob 2006) but is not without flaws necessitating a number of caveats. Firstly, in identifying community leaders based on their position within an organisation inherently institutionalist and pluralist assumptions are being made that community leaders sit in formal, and therefore recognisable organisational structures and positions within them (for example Bonjean and Olson 1964 p279).

The individuals identified are also likely to be more at the expert citizen end of the community leader spectrum as opposed to the everyday maker end since the initial focus on the 'positional approach' will identify individuals associated with governance structures. However, in the early stages of research such an approach is considered necessary as a 'way in' to the neighbourhood. The issue is also addressed in part by the identification of individuals for interview by other interviewees alongside the use of media sources.

Nevertheless, the possibility remains that in using such an approach, where the snowball rolls may exclude certain individuals. The researcher is left to "inherit the decisions of each individual as to whom is the next interviewee" (May 1997 p119). Further, those additional actors identified may be ones who work with the state whilst those with whom actors have a more acrimonious relationship may be overlooked alongside those who are commonly excluded. When asked to identify other individuals that the interviewer should speak to, some interviewees would ask for further clarification. At this stage the interviewer would ask for the interviewee to

identify individuals who they considered as significant or offering a different perspective. In response, regeneration staff and council officers tended to offer some names of individuals who they acknowledged as being 'difficult' but offered an alternative perspective. Therefore this is thought to have addressed some of the issues associated with the 'reputational approach'.

### Biographical Interview Methods

Since the phenomena under examination in this study are community leaders and their interpretations there is a methodological focus on interviews with these individuals. The focus upon interview methods is likely to privilege agency. However, such a method sits alongside a number of other techniques within case study which emphasise the situational aspect of community leaders as situated agents.

The research questions show the significance of time in explaining the development of community leaders and how their behaviour alters in particular contexts based upon their constant reinterpretations. The interview methodology needs to be able to factor in this time dimension. As Hay (2002 p143) argues,

"To understand the present is to understand how it has evolved from the past and to trace the legacies of that evolution."

The time dimension is absent from the majority of the local authority case studies discussed above, for example, Hampton's study is a snapshot. Hay (2002) argues that instead a more diachronic approach is required which is likened to a video panning shot rather than a static snapshot. However, there are some examples of time factored into case studies based on local

authorities. For example, Marinetto (1997) examines the political dynamics of the London Borough of Camden from 1964 until 1994 in order to see how national trends were felt in a particular local authority by examining the main events of each administration such as the capping of the council's budget under the Thatcher government.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that community leaders need to be studied holistically based on the assertion that "man cannot be carved into slices. He is a whole" (Febvre 1962 p852 as quoted by Breisach 1983 p371). Besides this sits the recognition within the literature that community leaders are seldom given the opportunity to speak for themselves (Anastacio et al 2000).

The need for 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) appears to suggest the need for an ethnographic approach. Under such an approach the researcher (or in this case, ethnographer) becomes immersed in the social setting (Bryman 2004) and "writes about the routine, daily lives of people" (Fetterman 1998 p1). Some of the examples of research produced using an ethnographic approach show the richness of the method. Young and Willmott (1957) examined family and kinship groups in Bethnal Green, East London. An example of the data they produced includes a list of people an individual encountered on a shopping trip and how the individual knew them. Alternatively, Barker and Wright's (1951) *One Boy's Day* was produced by a researcher (known to the child and family) observing the boy over the course of a full day.

Whilst the lushness of the data produced in such studies cannot be disputed, it must be acknowledged that this is a study of limited resources

which excludes the possibility of an ethnographic approach or longitudinal interviews over a long period. However, Yin (2003) argues that case study adds contemporary elements to the historical examination of the 'dead past'. Although the past can be seen as dead, it is still very much alive in sources such as documents, archival records and also in the minds of the actors involved. A number of methods are available that seek to track individuals over a period of time. Such methods are drawn from other academic disciplines and were therefore trialled to see if they could be transferred into the field of public policy. Three such approaches were considered: life histories, memory work and biographical interviews and are discussed in greater depth below (the approaches are also summarised in Table 4). These methods were tested in three areas of Sheffield and formed the basis of the pilots in the three areas leading to the continuation of research in Burngreave and Southey.

#### Biographies/Biographical Interviews

The term biography formally involves the written history of someone's life (Smith 1994) aiming to capture their essence or who they are. Such 'life writing' can clearly appear in a number of ways coming in, 'multiple forms, lengths, focuses, and perspectives' (Smith 1994 p288). Biography in social science reflects a belief that social processes are at least in part a result of the actions of individuals meaning that it is beneficial to examine factors concerning individuals such as their motivations, opinions and experiences of events and in this context, how these may have changed over time (Chamberlayne 2004).

Central to biographical methods is the use of interviews, which covers many research approaches but with one area of commonality; all interviews involve a conversation between people in which one person has the role of researcher (Arksey and Knight 1999). Chamberlayne (1999) distinguishes a biographical interview as involving a number of distinct stages:

1. A narrative (normally one-to-one) interview with the interviewee asked to speak freely about the situation under discussion with the interviewer an active listener with very little direct input to the narrative account.  
The interviewer should,  
“Encourage the person to explore, reconstruct and re-live experiences within his or her own frame of reference.”  
(Chamberlayne 1999 p5)
2. The interviewer is then able to ask questions that keep with the thematic sequence of the interviewee’s initial account.
3. At the final stage, the interviewer should ask external questions to cover outstanding themes that may have not been addressed or addressed only briefly.

This clearly places biographical interviewing within a semi-structured classification in stages 2 and 3 with the interviewer able to ask questions based upon the narrative given but also concerning particular topics the interviewer desired to be covered. However, at the first stage the only structure provided by the interviewer is the selection of the initial themes and topics with the respondent then free to narrate as they wish.

The role of the biographer (or in this case researcher) remains crucial in terms of constructing and studying the lives of those interviewed (Smith 1994). This role changes throughout the interview process going from little more than an 'active listener' to a more traditional 'questioner'. The method is seen as empowering for the interviewee based on an assertion that looking at the past can open up the future (Chamberlayne 1999). This also raises the ethical issues with what Mills (1999 p19) describes as rummaging in the memories' of others. Whilst Mills is concerned with the use of biographical methods with elderly people suffering from dementia, there is also the need to be sensitive in terms of people remembering their life in the context of this study with memory closely related to emotion.

In a study of ten memoirs published by members of President Clinton's senior staff, Dobel (2003) highlights the richness that biography adds to case study, noting,

"Although modern case studies provide intense and schematic insights (into executive and managerial practice) they seldom illustrate the full texture of life as it is experienced (by political actors). Memoirs (of senior officials) provide important evidence (about the nature of such services)."

(Dobel 2003 p17– brackets added)

A biographical interview leads into detailed case study analysis designed to compare the 'lived story' and the 'told story' (Chamberlayne 2004 p32). Complementary methods such as analysis of documents and archival records (Smith 1994) are used alongside the interview. Indeed, biography combines, "objective fact and subjective awareness" (Smith 1994 p300) as a constructionist activity which can provide valuable insight into 'street level' public policy. For example, Thomson et al's study (2004) concerning young people's evolving understandings of adulthood and citizenship involved

repeated interviews with young people over a five year period, memory books, lifelines and focus groups. This shows the potential issues of using what is essentially a longitudinal method carried out at regular intervals over a period of time whereas this study takes place on a much more restricted timescale of interview data collection. Arborio's study (2004) of nursing aides saw the researcher work with the aides for practical reasons (such as the work load of nurse's aides) but also included leaflets, staff parties, conversations snatched in corridors within the research showing an example of participant observation.

The biographical method seems to readily conceive actors as situated agents. Although the focus is upon individuals, Smith (1994) stresses the importance of the context in which these individuals operate. This clearly lends itself to a case study method which encompasses the whole umbrella of a case study (and biographical) approach,

"It is not only the great men and women who are important, but also the other people who surround them in complex social events."  
(Smith 1994 p295)

### Memory Work

Memory work shares health and social care as an area of common ground with the biographical techniques discussed above and highlights the similarities between them. However, the foundation for memory work comes from a feminist school of thought which manifests itself into a number of differences. The premise of memory work is similar to the effect of institutions upon agents. Memory work is based on the assumption that women have been socialised into the existing structures of society which benefit men thereby not allowing women full access to public life (Haug 1992). Women

repress their true feelings and memory tends to edit out unpleasant memories in favour of nostalgia (Greene 1991). Memory work therefore seeks to shake women out of such socialisation to produce deeper, more accurate insight.

A clear point of departure from biography is that the memory work process is carried out in groups. Indeed, Haug (1992) refers to the process as collective / memory / work, whilst biography has been seen to focus on one-to-one interviews. This group focus runs throughout the process and is translated into the method which is outlined below, based upon Koutrolis (1996):

1. The group (of between 6 and 9) members should decide the specific topic which they are going to focus upon.
2. Each member of the group then writes a memory based upon the topic in the third person as a story with close attention to detail (thoughts, smells) abandoning thoughts of relevance.
3. Each group member reads out their story to the rest of the group who analyse them and theorise about what they show. Language is decoded, stories are compared and contradictions are identified.
4. Each memory is then re-written, re-analysed and re-appraised. The re-writing is designed to allow articulation, clarification and identify the credible motives underlying the stories.
5. The re-writing stage can be repeated until the underlying themes and the meanings of the stories are clear and the memories reflect a better account of the event than the socialised original.



The memory work process places the researcher in a very different position than they find themselves as an interviewer. It is the memory group itself who take on the role of the researcher analysing and de-coding the stories. On this basis, the researcher becomes a member of the group giving the advantage of non-hierarchy and equal status of participants as closely as possible (Koutrolis 1996). This empowers the rest of the group as both the 'researched' and as 'researchers'. Also, it is a liberatory experience (Koutrolis 1996) because of the value in telling others about your experiences. The past is seen as valuable (Greene 1991) alongside everyday experience and the wider context. Memory work places specific emphasis upon using the past as a means of improving the future. As Greene (1991 p291) states,

“All writers are concerned with memory, since all writing is a remembrance of things past...memory is especially important to anyone who cares about change, for forgetting dooms us to repetition.”

The fact that group members are also writing for themselves is important within the feminist framework and reflects a difference with biographies. Writing not only introduces subjectivity but means that group members are writing for themselves and are not the subject of the writing of others (Koutrolis 1996). However, there is an ethical tension created when the researcher comes to use the data. As Koutrolis (1996 p110) questions,

“How do I, as a postgraduate student satisfy the demand of an academic institution that this research is my own work, yet at the same time honour what it means to be a member of a collective.”

Such an approach seems to see the value of focussing upon how actors make sense of their surroundings and behaviour. The subjectivity of memory work is similar to biographical interviews with both concerned with the perception of individuals (either alone or as part of a group) in the context of

an ever evolving present which changes the significance of the past (Greene 1991). Haug (1990 p20) argues that,

“What we can investigate is not ‘how it really was’, but how individuals construct their identities, change themselves, reinterpret themselves and see what benefits they derive from doing so.”

### Life Histories

There seems to be a great deal of overlap between biographical methods and the final method of life histories. In the same way that the previous techniques have sought to see the past in terms of the present, life history represents an, ‘intertwining of past and present’ (Apitzsch 2004 p7). Chanfrault-Duchet (2004) argues that life history focuses on life experiences as a whole with turning points identified within the chronology whilst biographical interviews focus on specific periods, facts or events.

The method’s origins in anthropology and biology mean that the focus is very much long term. For instance, the method is used in biology to examine species interaction, evolution and life cycles (Stearns 1992). Further, Korpelainen’s (2003) anthropological study covers from 1870 up to 1949. This places life history on a different time scale than the more focussed biographical methods. However, life history is increasingly used to examine recent phenomena such as the development of the internet from Swedish pioneers (Ahlen 2001).

The origin of the method also means that it seeks quantitative data to analyse phenomena. For example, Korpelainen’s study of Finland (2003) collects data such as age at death, number of children which are then statistically analysed. This quantitative focus is distinct from the qualitative bases of both memory work and biographies. When life history has been

used outside of science, the methods used are similar to that of biography with one-to-one interviews taking a central role:

1. Interviewees are asked to talk about an aspect of their life with the interviewer taking the same 'listener' role as with biographical interviews with an informal and flexible structure based around major life events (Francis 1992).
2. The interviewee is interviewed several times (Du Plessis 2004) in the same way as occurs in biographical interviews. The second interview is more focussed (Miller 2000) with more fixed questions at this stage.
3. The interviewer writes up the narrative which the narrator checks and edits (Du Plessis 2004).

The focus is therefore largely subjective as the spotlight is again upon perception and how this affects life choices (Bertaux and Thompson 1997). The role of the researcher is similar to that in biographical interviews. However, Francis (1992) stresses that the process of life histories places the researcher and the researched into a relationship due to the local level of the research.

A key aspect of life history interviews is a desire to get below the 'froth' (Chanfrault-Duchet 2004) of topics and is therefore similar to the aim of memory work to see beyond the veneer of everyday life and communication. In life history this is achieved by probing cracks and gaps in the description provided by the interviewee (Chanfrault-Duchet 2004) which draws attention

to some of the qualities needed by the interviewer such as rapport and flexibility.

### Interview Method Selection Based on Piloting

The above discussion of interview methods suggests that each of the methods have much to offer in a study of community leaders. The names conjure similar images and seek similar outcomes focussing on time, using terms such as 'oral history' and 'literary archaeology' (Greene 1991). At the same time, all of the approaches allow individuals the opportunity to speak for themselves, in their own words whilst acknowledging the importance of context in such accounts. The approaches are summarised in Table 4.

When studied in depth, there are distinct differences between biographies, memory work and life histories but there is also much common ground. A biographical approach encompasses life history and to a lesser extent memory work as the primary concern is to shake people out of their structure. However, this desire to unearth how actors interpret their surroundings is visible in all of the methods. In practice, the use of narrative, conversational interviews, repeated for clarity and accuracy is common and in this context are not far removed from public policy research methods.

Each of the three interview methods were trialled at the stage where three neighbourhoods were being considered. The life history approach was tested in three interviews in Manor and Castle and Burngreave whilst the biographical approach was trialled in Southey and Manor and Castle in three interviews. Since there are no formal rules for selecting memory work group members (Koutrolis 1996) and Kippax (1990) promotes the use of friends as

Table 4: Interview Methods

METHOD	ACADEMIC BASE	APPROACH	RESEARCH EXAMPLE
MEMORY WORK	Health and Social Care, Feminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The group (6-9 people) members decide the specific topic.</li> <li>- Each member of the group then writes a memory based upon the topic in the third person.</li> <li>- Each group member reads out their story to the rest of the group who analyse them and theorise about what they show.</li> <li>- Each memory is then re-written, re-analysed and re-appraised.</li> <li>- The re-writing stage can be repeated.</li> </ul>	"How women socially construct leadership in organisations: A study using memory work" (Boucher 1997)
LIFE HISTORIES	Social Work, Social Policy, Anthropology, Evolutionary Biology, Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviewees are asked to talk about an aspect of their life with the interviewer taking a 'listener' role.</li> <li>- The interviewee is interviewed several times. The second interview is more focussed.</li> <li>- The interviewer writes up the narrative which the narrator checks and edits.</li> </ul>	The social history of the AIDS epidemic (Rikard 2004)
BIOGRAPHY	Anthropology and Ethnography, Sociology (used to test theory on people or communities based on experiences/vignettes-Smith 1994), Health and Social Care, Phenomenology, History, Psychology (used to probe issues, for experimentation, quantification and testing propositions- Smith 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A narrative interview with the interviewee asked to speak freely about the situation. The interviewer is an active listener.</li> <li>- Questions within the thematic sequence of the interviewee's account.</li> <li>- External questions to cover outstanding themes that may have not been addressed or addressed in looked-for detail.</li> </ul>	"Explore how young people's evolving understandings of adulthood may contribute towards the understanding of citizenship..." (Thomson et al 2004 p218)

there is already a level of trust that increases the likelihood of the group functioning positively, it was decided to try the method with a group of eight acquaintances (including the researcher) who were all based in Manor and Castle. The topic selected for discussion was; how have you encountered the council?

Overall, the use of biographical interview method was found to be the most useful for this project of the three methods as part of the broader case study approach. The method proved to be more focussed than life history which was further limited by the time constraints of the interviews themselves. The life history method necessitates an interview of an extended period which did not match the period set aside by interviewees (normally about one hour) coupled with the difficulty of arranging the interviews themselves which were commonly either cut short by late running meetings, re-arranged or cancelled. It was found that one-on-one interviews were more suitable than those conducted in a group setting of memory work. In practice, members of the group frequently looked to the researcher as a guide thereby questioning the non-hierarchy assumed in such an approach. Furthermore, the method was seen as too time consuming requiring multiple meetings to be organised with actors with busy, conflicting schedules.

In pilots, the biographical method provided rich data of life arcs, motivations, interpretations and opinions on interactions of those working at the coalface of community governance. However, some alterations to the method were found to be necessary. For example, to ensure that the research questions were covered some guiding questions were used (including “can you give me an example of a case where you’ve made a

difference?”, “what organisations are you a member of?”) bringing the interview method into a more semi-structured approach than the previous weighting towards the unstructured end of the interview spectrum.

### The Interview Process

Interviews were arranged using a number of approaches. These included: attendance of public meetings and talking to individuals directly afterwards and arranging an interview; emails to actors requesting interviews; and phoning people directly (normally after their details had been passed on by another interviewee or if an individual had not responded to emails). The majority of interviews were carried out at the interviewee's place of work (such as a council officer's office or a community leader's organisation building) and as such involved elements of direct observation identified within Yin's (2003) categorisation of case studies.

The interviews were recorded with notes taken throughout. All of the respondents agreed to being recorded with the exception of one community leader in Southey. This individual wished to be honest and felt more comfortable not being recorded as some of their comments were party political and/or personal. In this instance, analysis was based upon the notes taken throughout the interview. All quotes used in the findings chapters (so chapters 6, 7 and 8) have a name attached to them along with their position such as Elsie, community leader. These are not the names of the interviewees. Each of their names was switched with another name in order to help ensure anonymity whilst maintain the humanness associated with a

first name. Further, this allows continuity and for quotes by the same individual to be compared across the findings chapters.

Some respondents were more comfortable talking largely uninterrupted than others shown in the varying length of time taken to answer the 'grand tour question' (Spradley and McCurdy 1972) used at the beginning of interviews ("How did you get here?"). Responses ranged from under a minute to well over thirty so with the more taciturn respondents more questions were necessary. As one interviewee said, "I'm not one of those people who can talk endlessly" (Jeff, regeneration staff). In this sense the interview departs from the norms of an everyday conversation and required the interviewees to be put at ease. Soss (2006 p136) acknowledges similar experience reflecting he "had to help (my) interviewees get comfortable with the idea that it would not be rude, in this context, to hold forth on a topic for fifteen minutes without giving me a turn to talk."

The format of interviews varied slightly with individuals from the other communities of meaning. For example, interviews with councillors were much the same as those with community leaders but some of the questions commonly used with community leaders were altered. So whilst a community leader would be asked if they had considered becoming a councillor, councillors were asked how they felt their position differed from community leaders and if they wanted to take on their position. Interviews with council officers and regeneration staff followed the same format as with community leaders but as the focus of the research is on community leaders some different questions were used. These would concentrate on how the individual perceived community leaders and how they interacted with them.



This meant that some of the other communities of meaning would refer directly to community leaders interviewed in the project. Such instances were taken as a chance to compare actor's perspectives and develop the picture of the community leader.

The decision was made to transcribe all of the interviews in full. Although this is time consuming (taking on average a full working day) it is a useful part of the analysis reflecting Wolcott's (1991 p21- original emphasis) maxim that "writing *is* thinking". The transcription process was found to be useful in identifying themes across interviewees and is considered in more detail below.

The transcription process did raise an issue concerning how to translate words to paper. There is a general problem with transferring the vocal event of an interview which extends far beyond being a simple exchange of words (Soss 2006) into a written one. Transcription "flattens voice" (Yanow- reference from personal contact) and something is lost in this translation (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2006). Furthermore, there were more specific issues associated with transcribing the Sheffield accent. Transcription was written to reflect what individuals had said but not done phonetically. For example, whilst the interviewee phonetically may say 'nowt', this was transcribed as 'nothing'. This issue also includes the tendency for local Sheffield people to exclude words from sentences which was left alone as much as possible. For example:

An individual may phonetically say:	Goin' t'pub?
This was transcribed as:	Going to pub?
But in 'Queen's English' would be:	Are you going to the pub?

This balance was done to allow actors to speak in their own words but at the same time make it more understandable to a lay reader. This also added time onto the transcription process.

### Interview Analysis: The Identification of Stories

It was found that respondents offered stories to answer questions providing an opportunity to see behaviour (Peters 2005 p26) and identify how they make sense in relation to their environment. As Feldman et al (2004 p147) observe stories “are a basic tool that individuals use to communicate and create understanding with other people and for themselves”. The interview transcripts were analysed and coded by identifying stories and pulling out common themes from accounts. Such stories were prevalent in interview transcripts reflecting the notion that stories and narratives are “simply there, like life itself” (Bathes 1977 p79). Bryman (2004 p412) states,

“Narrative analysis is a term that covers quite a variety of approaches that are concerned with the search for and analysis of the stories that people employ to understand their lives and the world around them.”

On this basis, the use of stories is in keeping with the focus upon how individuals make sense in relation to their surroundings and a constructivist approach since stories are constructions made by individuals and groups (for example Glover 2004, Dodge et al 2005).

This led to the production of storylines for each individual community leader showing their development over time. These storylines were also produced for the individuals interviewed as members of other communities of meaning to examine their trajectories and assessment of the environment to

allow comparison with community leaders. This process begun during transcription since,

“The human mind finds patterns so quickly and easily that it needs no how-to advice. Patterns just ‘happen’ almost too quickly.”  
(Miles and Huberman 1994 p246)

These themes were kept open and then re-examined to consider how different actors interpreted these themes and where conflicts arose. This results in a number of iterations of themes. The consideration of analysis as a continuous process means that the initial write up of findings began whilst transcription and analysis were still on going with alteration made where appropriate (Erlandson 1993). Such systematicity and the re-examination and questioning of research findings is seen as crucial to the analysis (Lynch 2006) and helps maintain a “scientific attitude” (Soss 2006 p101).

#### Issues in Using an Interpretative Approach

In placing principal value on the data provided by interviewees there are a number of points that need to be addressed. Firstly, there is an assumption that these individuals are representative of the bodies for which they work. It is inaccurate to consider community leaders as simply doing what is appropriate in a given situation as it neglects the scope for actors to bend and break rules. Also, the complexity of their working environments means that actors operate in multiple roles simultaneously and are likely to have multiple ‘appropriate’ responses open to them (Scharpf 1997). However, nor are actors solely motivated by their own self interest. Whilst they are not necessarily representatives they are certainly members of collectives or cultures such as a family or in this case, units such as a community

organisation, community or council. As such, they act from the perspective of these larger units. So it is likely that when interviewing a council officer their “critical unit of reference” (Scharpf 1997 p61) will be the council. In such cases it is “common and legitimate” to use aggregate categories for describing the actions of populations of individuals sharing “certain salient characteristics” (Scharpf 1997 p53). Also, it is important to recognise that meaning making does not only occur individualistically but happens in the collectives within which individuals are part (Yanow 2000).

Secondly, the interview data is based upon human memory and the view of reality presented by the respondent through their self-reflexivity. This poses questions concerning the validity of findings created in such a manner. However, the focus of the research is not a positivist attempt to place a value upon the work of community leaders or assess how much community leaders matter. The focus is upon understanding how actors read their situation and surroundings and how this, in turn affects what they do. This is inherently based on human interpretation and as such the research does not need to be able to claim to document ‘reality’. Instead it seeks to accurately capture interpretations concerned with “the how and the why behind the what” (Dodge et al 2005 p289). As Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2006 p323) state,

“When studying norms and beliefs, the distinctions between fact and fiction are meaningless.”

It is worth noting that authors have been startled by the apparent accuracy of biographies. For example, Dobel (2003) considers the memoirs (ten) published by members of President Clinton’s senior staff and was surprised by the consistency of their accounts. Further, Johnson (2006 p83) comments that “those in positions of authority are often as critical, and

sometimes more critical, of their organisations than the organisation's clients.”

Despite this,

“The interviewee works with a memory that remembers some aspects and not others.”

(Arksey and Knight 1999 p16)

Indeed, the accuracy of people's memories will vary greatly and is even likely to vary on the day of the interview compared to proceeding and prior days.

As Smith (1994 p288) states,

“Self will see the life from a different point of view at different points in life.”

Atkinson (2000 p213) argues that narratives or stories are a way of “presenting and re-presenting the world...which interpret that world in a particular way” meaning that any contradictions in the narrative are masked. However, what is absent from an account may be just as important as what is present (Atkinson 2000). As Ricoeur (2000 p260) states, a narrative has “the authenticity of its inauthenticity...” Such a bias can be seen particularly when individuals or communities of meaning put forward differing stories concerning the same issue (Atkinson 2000). Therefore, stories show the numerous interpretations of a situation (Feldman et al 2004).

Erlandson (1993) identifies the processes of ‘peer de-briefing’ and ‘member checking’ to ensure the stories offered by the researcher have both internal and external validity. Peer de-briefing takes place with fellow researchers whereby findings are discussed within academic communities. A key feature of many of the research that seeks to identify and analyse stories (see for example Feldman et al 2004, Dodge et al 2005, Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2006) is the et al, much of the research is carried out and analysed as a group. Since this project stems from PhD research there is a risk of

analysis taking place in isolation and peer de-briefing helps to guard against this issue.

Further protection against such isolation is offered by member checking with interviewees to ensure that the researcher's interpretation accurately reflects the meanings of the stories communicated by interviewees. This helps safeguard the potential distance between what an interviewee said, what they meant and the researcher's interpretation. Fetterman (1998) summarises this as the potential for a researcher to mistake a blink for a wink. Cooper (2004) notes the limits of relying solely upon what an individual says given the relevance of non verbal communication which is explained in a conversation between a young girl and her father which is started by the girl asking, 'why do Frenchmen wave their arms about?' when they talk.

In reflecting on the member checking process, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2006 p318) observe,

"Perhaps the most humbling experience of all is telling someone in the field...of some hard-earned insight and being met with a polite "that's obvious" stare."

Soss (2006) argues that it is more likely that some members will disagree with some aspects of the researcher's representation. In such instances, it is important for the researcher to show their reasoning for their representation using quotes and other sources of data. The data provided in the member checking process was not the same as presented in this thesis. A shorter, simplified version of the findings (alongside specific quotes) was presented. This avoids "exposing the reader to long and often only moderately interesting reports" (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000 p241) particularly given the academic focus of the thesis and the busyness of those interviewed. The process of

clarification shows a “methodological commitment to ‘get it right’ from the perspective of situational actors’ lived experiences” (Schwartz-Shea 2006 p105). It also serves to address the problem of transcription discussed above. Additionally the interpretations made by the researcher of individual’s stories are also correlated with those of other interviewees and of other research methods such as document analysis to pull out patterns and contradictions.

Yanow (2006b) makes a distinction between an individual’s public self which is seen ‘front stage’ and the private self seen ‘backstage’ (and adds the possibility of a part of an individual known neither by the self nor others). The view that people presented of themselves in interviews was one of rationality and altruism, of people who work cooperatively with others for the greater good. Respondents were far more at home discussing their successes rather than their failures and showing how relationships have been built up over time rather than conflict (although it should be noted the combative zeal of many of the individuals still shone through). Whilst it would perhaps be unexpected for an individual to state they became a community leader for the power (and would be aware of it as a motivation) the positive slant of the interviews has potential to skew analysis. However, alongside the use of alternative data sources, interviews with other communities of meaning help to tackle this issue since they were more likely to express alternative views regarding community leaders which fully encompassed positive and negative aspects.

## The Role of the Researcher

Given the emphasis that new institutionalists place on the influence of institutions on actors it would be naïve to neglect their relevance upon the researcher. As Yanow (2000 p6) states,

“Knowledge is acquired through interpretation, which necessarily is ‘subjective’. It reflects the education, experience and training, as well as the individual, familial, and communal background of the ‘subject’ making the analysis.”

The researcher is “not an objective machine but a positioned subject” (Shehata 2006 p261) acting as a ‘translator-story teller’ (Yanow 2000). In the same way that actors are understood as situated agents, the researcher should similarly be acknowledged and conceived as a situated researcher. This also applies with the use of Sheffield as the case study as it is the researcher’s home and this was frequently expressed in interviews. This supports the notion that “ethical issues are floating constantly beneath the surface” (Miles and Huberman 1994 p281). The marketing of the researcher’s Sheffield credentials was found to help build a rapport and foster trust in interviewees (Neal and Walters 2006). Alongside this, there was commonly a substantial difference in age between the researcher and the interviewee. This often meant that interviewees would often take a somewhat paternal stance. In response, the researcher would market themselves as a little naïve if the interviewee asked questions concerning their knowledge of an issue. As a result, the responses of the interviewee were likely to differ from those that would have been given to a more mature researcher.

Many of the interviewees commented on the process being almost therapeutic or even enjoyable. In particular, officers and staff commented that the process was beneficial as it gave them the opportunity for reflection. So



whilst as much as possible interviewees were encouraged to speak in their own words, the influence of the researcher in the process should not be ignored. The researcher is selecting the topics under discussion and whilst the account is emic, reflecting the “insider’s or native’s perspective of reality” through the analysis and decisions of what to include (and what to leave out) there is a shift to an etic perspective of an “external, social scientific perspective of reality” (Fetterman 1998 p22). The constructivist case study offers a reconstruction of respondent’s constructions (Erlandson 1993, Guba and Lincoln 1994). As Stake (2000 p441) observes,

“What results may be the case’s own story, but the report will be the researcher’s dressing of the case’s story.”

The final aspect of interpretation lies with the reader of the research (Alvesson and Skolberg 2000). As Flyvbjerg (2006 p238) argues,

“In addition to the interpretations of case actors and case narrators, readers are invited to decide the meaning of the case and to interrogate actors’ and narrators’ interpretations.”

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how data will be collected and analysed within this project. The primary approach will be case study in order to consider the importance of both actors and environmental setting. Such an approach involves a number of techniques including archival records, interviews and documentation.

The use of a single case study was shown to be appropriate as such ‘cultural parochialism’ allows the context to be readily considered. Sheffield has been selected as the case study area since it fulfils criteria established for the research: (1) it was seen to have a number of potential areas for research;

(2) has a history of participation and research into communities (for example Hampton 1970 and Longmore 1998); and (3) reasons of accessible convenience for the researcher.

Community leaders were identified using a combination of a 'positional' and 'reputational' approach. The positional approach makes a number of institutionalist assumptions about the visibility of actors but does provide an excellent 'way in' to an area. The reputational approach partly addresses these issues by asking interviewees to identify relevant actors. Although the analytical focus is upon community leaders, a number of other communities of meaning were identified; council officer, regeneration staff and councillors. The interpretations of each community can therefore be compared in order to identify similarities and differences.

In order to show the development of actors over time as a tracking shot rather than a snapshot (Hay 2002) a number of interview methods were tested to see whether they would be suitable since they originate from disciplines outside public policy. These interview methods (life histories, memory work and biographical interviews) stem from fields such as anthropology and mental healthcare (for example, Korpelainen [2003] uses life histories to examine demographics in Finland between 1870 and 1949). Therefore, the extent to which these methods can be successfully transferred was considered.

The methods were piloted in three areas of Sheffield (Burngreave, Manor and Castle and Southey) all of which have been in receipt of central government regeneration funding. Of the three methods, biographical interviews allow community leaders to speak for themselves and also

provided rich data regarding their interpretations over time. This first wave of interviews led to the continuation of Burngreave and Southey as case study areas whilst Manor and Castle was stopped. The interview process was continued until the names interviewees suggested were those of individuals who had been interviewed or had not responded to attempts to contact them.

Interviews were fully transcribed in order to assist analysis and also to help identify “the stories that people employ to understand their lives and the world around them” (Fetterman 1998 p412). Transcription readily allowed for themes to be pulled out and analysis was considered an ongoing process with the ‘story so far’ constantly being amended and updated.

A number of issues were discussed relating to the methodological approach. Of primary concern was the reliability of the human memory in providing storylines. Given the focus on human interpretation, the research does not need to be able to claim to document reality. What is important is that the analysis has both external and internal validity (Erlandson 1993). This is ensured by the use of other techniques under the umbrella of case study. This is furthered by the use of ‘peer de-briefing’ within the academic community and by ‘member checking’ with interviewees to make sure the researcher’s interpretation of actor’s stories reflects what was meant. This highlighted the role of the researcher in the process. The account the researcher produces is their interpretation of actor’s stories and is not considered ‘neutral’. Indeed, in the same way that interviewees are situated, so too is the researcher.

The next chapter will discuss Sheffield as the case study including the political opportunity structures and the community. It will also consider more specifically the neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey.

## CHAPTER 6

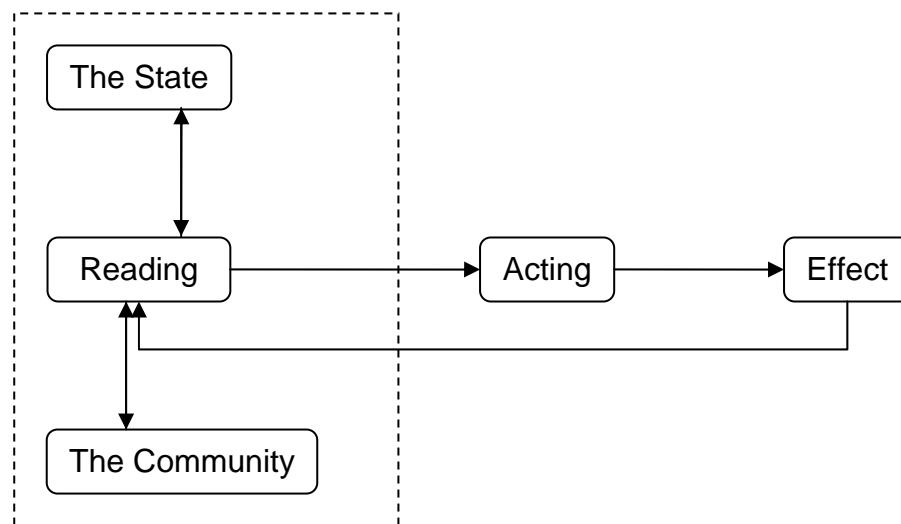
### SHEFFIELD STORIES: INTRODUCING SHEFFIELD,

### BURGREAVE AND SOUTHEY

#### Introduction

This chapter introduces the research setting of Sheffield and the neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey. It establishes and describes the environments in which community leaders operate and are situated. The focus upon situated agents highlights the multiple levels of context. The specific scope of this chapter is on two levels: the city and the neighbourhood. The broader UK backdrop is introduced where relevant. On this basis, the chapter is split into two parts. The first provides an overview of Sheffield as a contextual setting. It begins with a brief historical précis charting the development of the city from the industrial revolution and the decline of the sector in the 1980's through to Sheffield's present situation. In relation to the framework introduced in chapter 4 this chapter is concerned with establishing the community and state aspects of the diagram (shown in the area within the dotted line) in Figure 2 overleaf.

Figure 2: Sheffield's Political Structures



The chapter moves on to establish something of the character of the city and bring it into the grasp of a reader assumed to be unfamiliar with the city and its neighbourhoods. This part of the chapter is based around a quote from a grassroots Sheffield magazine seeking to identify what makes the city distinct from other UK cities, or what John and Cole (2000 p83) call the “uniqueness of place”. This draws attention to the environmental features of the city which stem from the boundary overlap with the Peak District National Park. Cultural aspects including music, sport and architecture are also introduced. The architectural history of the city reflects a number of features of the city. For example, Park Hill flats demonstrates the role the council has historically played in providing services and the on going redevelopment of city centre is shown in projects such as the Peace and Winter Gardens.

The party political history of Sheffield is discussed highlighting Labour’s dominance of the city which has been contested recently by the Liberal Democrats. This shows the divided nature of the city, split between the affluent west and deprivation in the north and east. This leads to a

consideration of the openness of political opportunity structures at the city level and institutions associated with Sheffield City Council. These include structures such as Area Panels designed to increase local voice and the council's Statement of Community Involvement. The voluntary and community sector is considered including the historical role of trade unions and the more recent role of community leaders in structures such as the Sheffield Local Strategic Partnership, Sheffield First.

The second section of the chapter concentrates upon the two neighbourhoods of Southey and Burngreave which make up part of the deprived areas in the north of the city. The storylines for the neighbourhoods are presented in terms of documents, archival records and the stories interviewees told concerning the area. This data is also used to show the dominant development arcs and narratives for each area in terms of how they came to receive central government funding.

Each of the areas is shown to be different in a number of ways. For example, Southey is a predominantly White working class area with a strong base of Tenants and Residents Associations (TARA's) whilst Burngreave is extremely ethnically diverse area and has little TARA based activity. However, a number of similarities are identified. Principally, both of the areas share a level of deprivation which qualifies them for central government funding; Single Regeneration Budget in Southey and New Deal for Communities in Burngreave. The areas also show a strong base of community based activity considered vital in the receipt of such funding streams. It is argued that the historical development of the neighbourhoods

shows how the construction of the past affects the present and how individuals behave.

The chapter concludes by summarising Sheffield, Burngreave and Southey as contextual settings. The chapter also provides much of the groundwork for the following chapters which seek to answer the research questions set in chapter 2. In examining community leaders in these specific cases, more of Sheffield and the neighbourhoods as environmental settings will be unearthed.

## Introducing Sheffield

### A Short History

The city of Sheffield is located in South Yorkshire and sits within seven hills and the confluence of five rivers (Don, Sheaf, Rivelin, Loxley and Porter). Such a position alongside the nearby resources of coal and iron ore made it ideal for water powered industry. As early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century Sheffield had a reputation for cutlery production and during the industrial revolution Sheffield became increasingly known for the production of cutlery, steel and later stainless steel. The city is very much “a child of the industrial revolution” (Hampton 1970 p27) with the population rising from 60,000 in 1801, 161,000 in 1851 and up to 451,000 by 1901 ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures)) after it was granted city status in 1893.

The rapidity of Sheffield’s development meant that it was “too short for the niceties of aesthetic layout to be given much consideration” (Hampton 1970 p27). As a result the city has been in receipt of cutting remarks



throughout history with George Orwell (1937) labelling it the “ugliest town in the Old World”. Orwell describes his experience of the city in greater detail remarking,

“The stench! If at rare moments you stop smelling sulphur it is because you have begun smelling gas...Once I halted in the street and counted the factory chimneys I could see; there were thirty-three of them, but there would have been far more had the air not been obscured by smoke.”

(Orwell 1937 as quoted by Hampton 1993 p138-9)

The prevalence of steel, cutlery and iron in the city resulted in substantial job losses in the wake of the 1980's deindustrialisation. From 1981, the unemployment rate in Sheffield has been high above the national average (Seyd 1993). The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 ranks Sheffield Local Authority as the sixth most deprived local authority in England. It has a high unemployment rate at 4.2% and around a third of Sheffield's wards have consistently scored high in the indexes of deprivation (Gaffney 2005). This deprivation is concentrated within particular parts of the city,

“In the late 1970's and early 1980's the city suffered severe industrial decline and lost around a quarter of its jobs. Nowadays, substantial areas of multiple deprivation exist in the north, east and central areas. This contrasts sharply with areas of marked affluence in the south west of Sheffield...”

(Gaffney 2005 p70)

Conversely, a Barclay's Bank Financial Planning study showed that in 2003, Hallam (located in the west of the city) was the highest ranking area outside London for overall wealth with 12% of residents earning over £60,000 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3871857.stm>). This has resulted in Sheffield being labelled as “one of the most polarised large cities in England” (Watts 2004 p30).

The city has found it hard to shake off its industrial legacy visible recently when a local music group received a national music award after derogatory remarks were made about the city responded with a sarcastic “well that were funny weren’t it” (Arctic Monkeys at the NME Awards 2006 viewable via [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZIeWOPC42k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZIeWOPC42k)). The view may not have been helped by the way the city is depicted in films such as *The Full Monty* and in visual reminders such as the Tinsley Cooling Towers which stand alongside the M1 and Meadowhall Shopping Centre. The juxtaposition of the towers and Meadowhall highlights the development of the city. As Seyd (1993 p185) states,

“The city’s public fabric had changed and so had its public face. In place of Hadfields steel firm was Meadowhall shopping and leisure complex...”

There has been controversy over plans to demolish the Tinsley Cooling Towers (see for example *Sheffield Star* 2006, [www.dontgo.co.uk/cooling.php](http://www.dontgo.co.uk/cooling.php), [www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/image\\_galleries/tinsley\\_cooling\\_towers\\_gallery.shtml?1](http://www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/image_galleries/tinsley_cooling_towers_gallery.shtml?1)) as it symbolises the city’s heritage and partly due to the success of a local magazine in securing a place in a national art competition incorporating the towers ([www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/)). One of the founders of the magazine stated that,

“Sheffield is the first city in the north of England, and these towers stand as a gateway...for those coming home or going away. Basically, a big public work of art here would mean something to half the country.”  
(Graham 2006)

The population was estimated at 520,000 in 2005 ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures/population](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures/population)) spread over 140 square miles (Gaffney 2005). Sheffield is predominantly White (91.2%) with the population

growth throughout the industrial revolution met by people from the surrounding region. It was not until after the Second World War that people from outside of England began to come to the city,

“The consumer boom bought full employment to the city and an acute shortage of labour led local industry to attract workers from the Caribbean, South East Asia, and elsewhere, thus broadening the background of Sheffield’s traditionally insular population.”  
(Hampton 1993 p119)

This labour shortage was predominantly met by immigrants from Pakistan and the Caribbean (Watts 2004) meaning that 4.6% of the population are Asian and 1.8% Black.

### The Character of Sheffield

In communicating something of the character of the city, a local magazine asked what sets Sheffield apart from other UK cities and concluded,

“Sheffield is unique because it’s so green it’s like living in a forest; because it’s produced the best pop music in the world ever; because it’s experimented with cutting edge modern buildings. Because it’s friendly, a social city. And because it’s whole attitude is non-conformist: it has never once done what it’s supposed to.”  
([www.dontgo.co.uk/openyoureyes/text.html](http://www.dontgo.co.uk/openyoureyes/text.html))

Sheffield is the greenest city in England with 150 woodlands and 50 public parks ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures)) with a third of the city lying within the Peak District National Park. Partly as a result of the geographical isolation caused by Sheffield’s situation (Hampton 1993) it has been labelled as the “largest village in England” (Hampton 1970 p28). The city is not north, south or mid (Hampton 1970) and whilst isolated it is located near to other surrounding cities such as Leeds, Manchester and Nottingham.

The cultural aspects of the city are shown by 7.2% of the population being employed in creative industries, high above the national average of 4%

([www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures)). This is apparent in terms of the number of successful bands Sheffield has produced. For example, in 2006 two Sheffield acts (Arctic Monkeys and Richard Hawley) were short listed for the prestigious Mercury Music Prize (which has also been won by another Sheffield band, Pulp in 1996). This is furthered by the hosting of the Snooker World Championships at the Crucible Theatre. The city is also home to the first ever football club (established in 1857), the two oldest clubs in the world (Sheffield FC and Hallam FC) and The Championship's Sheffield United (based in the city centre at Bramall Lane) and Sheffield Wednesday (based at Hillsborough neighbouring Southey). The Sheffield Ski Village is also the largest artificial ski resort in Europe ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/facts-figures)).

It is difficult to discern the friendliness of the city but the author of the magazine draws attention to Sheffield's "bus drivers and butchers who call you love and duck" (Graham 2006). Further, in one of the interviews a councillor recalled their experience outside Sheffield where people would say,

"I don't understand it, what is it about Sheffield people? (laughs) They're always talking about Sheffield' and... I think it's got quite a sense of a community as a city and obviously...it's certainly not been boring as a city, it's been quite turbulent politically and economically."  
(Alex, councillor)

Orwell's comments regarding Sheffield's lack of aesthetic appeal above is supported by a number of authors. Although "Sheffield isn't a big city or a high-rise city in the same way that Manchester or Birmingham are" (Graham 2006) the nature of the city's development means that "Sheffield is not...an ancient city full of pomp and splendour" (Hampton 1970 p28). Indeed, the architect Nikolaus Pevsner commented that the city was "architecturally a

miserable disappointment” with no buildings of any distinction built before the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Harman and Minnis 2004 p3).

Perhaps the most striking architectural feature of Sheffield which communicates some of its past are the Park Hill flats (see Figure 3) which are of “architectural and sociological importance” (Wainwright 2005). Designed by J L Womersley in 1965, Park Hill flats formed part of the council’s housing scheme to replace the old city centre slums. Influenced by Le Corbusier’s L’Unite d’Habitation in Marseille (Glancey 1998), Park Hill “tops a ridge above the city centre, like a concrete section of the Great Wall of China” (Wainwright 2005). Glancey (1998 p217) argues that,

“The forms they created-tough, stark, gridded- were meant, in part, to reflect the tough, stark and gritty world of the poor, working-class life in the northern England of the 1950’s.”

The project aimed to create “streets in the sky” seeking to establish a modern version of terraced housing built in the sky rather than the ground.

Drabble (2005) remarks,

“They reared up towards the sky like the visionary ramparts of an Italian hill town...They housed 6,000 people. Much of their fabric has since been demolished, but at the time they were hailed for their boldness and beauty. The architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner described the projects as ‘sensational’ and ‘socially a success’, even while prophesying that it would inevitable degenerate into a slum...”

The decline of Park Hill flats has created considerable debate over their future (with other similar projects in Sheffield demolished). However, the flats are now classed as a Grade II building so “Park Hill may be Europe’s ugliest building to some, but now it is the biggest historical building in the EU as well” (Wainwright 2005).

The council led Heart of the City redevelopment of the city centre (costing £130 million) has resulted in some more favourable comments

regarding Sheffield architecture. The Peace Gardens have won eight awards including RIBA Awards, Fountain of the Year and The Independent (as quoted by Sheffield City Council 2004 p18) stated,

“This public square may well be the best new city centre open space in Britain.”

The Peace Gardens are located next to the Winter Gardens (see Figure 4) which has received five awards including the Royal Institute of British Architects Award and the Royal Fine Art Commission’s Jeu d’Esprit Building of the Year Award (Sheffield City Council 2004) and can be described as,

“A dramatic soaring structure of parabolic glue-laminated timber arches rising twenty metres high in the centre, it is perhaps best described as Palm House at Kew meets the Galleria in Milan.”

(Daily Telegraph as quoted by Sheffield City Council 2004 p18)

This redevelopment is also visible in the Millennium Galleries, Barker’s Pool and most recently, the area around Sheffield train station which is being renovated to link the station to the ‘heart of the city’. However, if one turns their head in the other direction as they leave the station, Park Hill flats still cast a shadow (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Park Hill Flats (background) and Sheffield Train Station (foreground)



Figure 4: Peace Gardens (foreground) and Sheffield Town Hall, St. Paul's Hotel, Winter Gardens (background from left to right)



### Party Political History

The city is governed by the Sheffield Metropolitan District Council in the wake of the abolition of the South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council in 1986. The city has a strong Labour history since the 1920's and was the "first major city in England to be controlled by a working class party" (Hampton 1970 p44). This is illustrated by Table 5 overleaf which shows the make up of the council from 1974 up to 2006.

The dominance of Labour was only interrupted in 1999 by the Liberal Democrats but the council returned to Labour leadership in 2002. This displays the polarised nature of the city with Labour dominating the east whilst Liberal Democrats increasingly dominate the west (Watts 2004). In 2006 the council's 28 wards and 84 council seats were made up of: 44 Labour councillors, 35 Liberal Democrats, 2 Conservatives, 2 Green and 1 Independent.



**Table 5: Sheffield Local Authority Election Results 1974-2006**

YEAR	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	CONSERVATIVES	OTHER
1974	69	3	18	-
1975	66	4	20	-
1976	63	5	22	-
1977	-	-	-	-
1978	60	6	24	-
1979	62	6	22	-
1980	60	9	18	-
1981	-	-	-	-
1982	60	9	18	-
1983	61	7	18	1
1984	61	9	17	-
1985	-	-	-	-
1986	64	9	14	-
1987	65	9	13	-
1988	66	9	12	-
1989	-	-	-	-
1990	69	7	11	-
1991	70	6	11	-
1992	67	9	11	-
1993	-	-	-	-
1994	59	20	8	-
1995	58	25	4	-
1996	55	31	1	-
1997	-	-	-	-
1998	50	36	1	-
1999	39	47	1	-
2000	39	47	1	-
2001	-	-	-	-
2002	43	42	2	-
2003	49	36	1	-
2004	44	37	2	1
2005	44	36	2	2
2006	44	35	2	3

(Taken from [www.sheffield.gov.uk/fact-figures](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/fact-figures) and Seyd 1993)

(Council elections held by thirds)

(The number of wards has changed from 25 in 1945, 27 in 1967, 30 in 1973, 29 in 1980 and 28 from 2004 altering the total number of council seats with three seats per ward).

In the 1980's the city highlighted the conflicts between central and local government seen throughout England's urban areas. As Seyd (1993 p151) states,

"It would be impossible to write about any local authority in Britain at this time without referring to conflicts between centre and locality. In

Sheffield's case, however, it has to be a key theme of the narrative, because the city became the epicentre for challenges to the orthodoxies of Westminster and Whitehall. The campaigns for cheap bus fares and opposition to rate-capping drew a great deal of their inspiration and leadership from Sheffield."

Under the leadership of David Blunkett and the 'Brightside mafia' (named after the constituency which later became Blunkett's Parliamentary seat) Sheffield City Council was prominent in the new urban left movement (Seyd 1993). The Metropolitan County Council was labelled as the 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' declaring itself a nuclear free zone, providing cheap public transport and constantly coming into conflict with the Conservative government at Westminster. Longmore's study (1998 p96) considers the impact of this period upon the city council and argues that the "Sheffield in the 1980's and 1990's was not the city that councillors interviewed for Democracy and Community (Hampton's 1970 study) knew". As Seyd (1993 p154) summarises,

"In the mid 1970's the city was a traditional, Labour controlled local authority, confident of its electoral base, proud of its service provision, and a touch parochial and complacent about it too...By the late 1980's and early 1990's, however, the politicians had their doubts and uncertainties about the range and level of services to be provided by the local authority, the distribution of powers between centre and locality, and the calibre of their officers."

The council has a CPA rating of 'excellent' and won the Local Government Association (LGA) 'Council of the Year' award in 2005. The Sheffield Development Framework shows Sheffield's aim to become a "successful, distinctive city of European significance, with opportunities for all" and "successful and attractive neighbourhoods" (Sheffield City Council 2005).

### Sheffield's Political Opportunity Structures

The political opportunity structures of the city appear to be open with citizens offered considerable incentives for collective action. The council express a keen interest in engaging the citizens in the policy process and an IIP assessment report observed “the levels of involvement and good practice are consistently above that required to meet the standard” (quoted by Sheffield City Council 2004 p3). The city’s policy on involving the public is laid out in the city’s Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI was adopted in September 2006 and identifies how the public will be involved in producing the Sheffield Development Framework (the city’s planning policies and guidelines replacing the Unitary Development Plan) and over planning applications for new developments.

Neighbourhoods are focussed upon through Area Panels which are a key feature of this policy and are formally incorporated into the city’s SCI and city’s constitution. Established in 1995 as part of the Area Action Initiative, Area Panels divide the city into twelve corporate areas (with the boundaries based on major road links) and seeks to link the council to the community.

The constitution outlines the aim of Area Panels as being to:

“(a) improve Council and other services and make them sensitive to local needs, (b) strengthen links locally between various Council services and other agencies, (c) involve local people and improve the Council’s relationship with local communities, (d) provide a framework for local regeneration and for attracting external funds and (e) help Councillors to work together more to represent their areas more effectively).”

The Area Panel is made up of some of the councillors from the constituencies that make up the twelve areas (the number varies across each Area Panel) alongside representatives for key services and bodies (such as

the Police). A key aim of the Area Panels is to increase local voice alongside a desire to improve local services. Area Panel meetings are open to the public (with venues rotated in each area) and are designed to be more informal than other council meetings and welcome public involvement ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/council-meetings/area-panels](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/council-meetings/area-panels)). Public attendance at these meetings varies but an officer from the planning department remarked that the mailing list for the Sharrow Area Panel is 500 (people and organisations). The final aspect of Area Panel focus is upon supporting local regeneration. Each Area Panel receives a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) allocation weighted towards those areas most in need ([www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk)). The council also intensively targets resources at disadvantaged areas alongside commonly excluded groups such as disabled people, children and young people and ethnic minorities.

City wide regeneration is carried out through the Sheffield Local Strategic Partnership, Sheffield First which is “well run and well regarded” (Sheffield First Partnership 2005). The board of Sheffield First is made up of representatives from the public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors. These include members from community organisations in both Burngreave (Burngreave New Deal for Communities) and Southey (Burton Street Project). Within the Sheffield First family of partnerships is Sheffield One which has “moved from Master Plan to delivery on all seven of its major projects” (Sheffield City Council 2004 p5) including the architectural projects discussed above. Sheffield is also one of the pioneers of Local Area Agreements (LAA’s) carried out through Sheffield First and central government. In the future, Benjamin (2006) observes that,

“The city’s existing regeneration vehicles- Sheffield One, an urban regeneration company, and Sheffield First, an inward investment agency- will be subsumed into Creative Sheffield, whose three lead partners are the city council, the Yorkshire Forward regional development agency, and English Partnerships.”

The council has sought to produce a shared statement of commitment to civic renewal between local authority, voluntary and community sector, local communities and partners (Gaffney 2005). Alongside LAA’s, the council is also a Civic Pioneer. This is a central government scheme which seeks to establish local authorities as exemplars of civic renewal by “involving people most affected by an issue in their community so that they are actively engaged in tackling issues, rather than public agencies acting in isolation to tackle issues from the outside” (Sheffield City Council 2005 p1). Sheffield is also part of the South Yorkshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (which incorporates Southey) funded through a £500 million programme.

### The Voluntary and Community Sector

Sheffield has a strong history of civic participation and unsurprisingly given its industrial heritage, a strong Trade Union history (Hampton 1970). Indeed, friction between labour and capital led to the ‘Sheffield Outrages’ of the 1860’s during which union militants orchestrated a number of explosions and murders. In 1866, The Sheffield Trades Council organised a meeting which led the establishment of the United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades, a forerunner to the Trade Union Congress (Hampton 1970 p45-6)

There is also a history of community activity and protest. For example, a number of articles in Community Action magazine from 1972 until 1986 highlight a range of community based activity across Sheffield. Hampton’s

study (1970) focuses upon members of the community and how they perceive their community rather than voluntary and community organisations. For example, Hampton (1970 p29) argues that the isolation of the city also applies within the city with residents commonly regarding themselves as being from a specific neighbourhood rather than the city as a whole. This also reflects the design of the city where it is difficult to get to other parts without first going through the city centre. Furthermore, Hampton proposes the creation of 'neighbourhood councils' elected as 'little democracies' with a greater involvement of the voluntary and community sector at the end of his study.

In an interview with a council officer employed in the planning department since the 1980's the officer expressed a belief that the voluntary and community sector had become stronger in the city. For example, the council holds a database of 1,500 contact names (of which 1,300 are community organisations) that are contacted directly at key stages of the policy process such as in the creation of the SCI. Any letters received by the planning department are coded and added to a consultation database alongside all public meetings minutes (including Area Panels). However, the officer expressed a few problems with the system. Firstly, it is hard to process general comments made by the public with more specific comments easier to code. Also, the officer expressed frustration with central government attempts to control the process citing the SCI as an example. The guidelines for producing a 25 page SCI are 1,000 pages. This was perceived as overly elaborate and prescriptive making it difficult for planners to understand let alone the public who it is designed to assist.

## Introducing the Case Study Neighbourhoods

The previous section has provided a general overview of the city of Sheffield including the city's state institutions and political history. The chapter now moves on to focus specifically upon the two neighbourhoods of Southey and Burngreave.

### Introducing Southey

Southey Green is located in the north of the city and has a population of 14,000 ([www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk)). The housing is predominantly rented from the Arm's Length Management Organisation, Sheffield Homes (62%) which has taken over responsibility from the council. Sheffield Homes was awarded the maximum three stars performance by the Audit Commission in 2004. The concentration of social housing is reflected by the number of Tenants and Residents Associations in the area totalling fifteen, by far the largest concentration in the city. These TARA's also join together to form the Area P Alliance (named after the Sheffield Homes administrative area it falls within).

Southey has a strong history of Labour support making up all the councillors for the area since 1974. The area was affected by Sheffield boundary changes in 2005 which reduced the number of wards from 29 to 28. Southey is located within the Parliamentary constituency of Brightside, held by ex council leader, David Blunkett.

The area has a strong working class tradition and is predominantly White (95%). It was adversely affected by the decline of the manufacturing sector in 1980's and has above average levels of unemployment and benefit

dependency (ERS 2006). The area is amongst the 1% most deprived wards in England.

In the late 1990's the North East Sheffield Trust (NEST) was formed, made up of local community activists. NEST undertook a community audit which highlighted the issues faced in the area concluding,

"The problems that people face are myriad, the level of deprivation immense and the provision of resources to help combat these problems are negligible."  
(as quoted in the NEST Project Report 2002 p3)

As the chair of NEST reflected in 2001,

"When I looked around at the current level of community activity in the SRB 5 area my mind goes back in time to 1996 when there was a significant lack of such activity. People in the area looked at their surroundings and wondered why all the 'powers that be' had overlooked the area and why the area was on the slide. This was the context for the creation of NEST."  
(NEST AGM Report 2001)

In 1998 a series of Have Your Say Days were held where the community identified a number of key themes that needed to be addressed (Gaffney 2005). This process led to a council supported SRB bid for funding. In 1999 Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration (SOAR) was established after the receipt of SRB 5 (£20.53 million) and European Objective 1 funding (£4 million) to run from 1999 and 2006. The council acted as the accountable body seen as playing a supportive (rather than leading) role.

The area covered by SOAR extends far beyond Southey Green to include other parts of northern Sheffield: Foxhill, Longley, Parson Cross, Hillsborough/Winn Gardens/Owlerton and Shirecliffe. The SOAR area has a population of approximately 40,400 (Gaffney 2005) representing around 8% of the city population and 3% in area. The other three wards covered in the area are all within the 10% most deprived nationally.



SOAR is managed through a Partnership Board and is structured spatially through six Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG's) and thematically by seven Theme Groups (Community Empowerment, Crime and Community Safety, Education and Lifelong Learning, Employment and Economic Development, Environment Leisure and Transport, Health and Social Care, Housing).

The creation of SOAR has established a number of structures providing incentives for individuals to become involved. The community is involved in a number of ways. Firstly, the SOAR Board has twelve community representatives (alongside four councillors and six independent places which are selected by the Board) selected in community elections. The six NAG's produce neighbourhood strategies and also feed into the Board and the council led Area Panels. The SOAR monthly meetings are attended by around 140 local people (Gaffney 2005). The area also seeks to engage young people. For example, a North Sheffield Youth Forum was established involving the consultation of 700 young people (Gaffney 2005). As part of SOAR, a Kerching community fund was created specifically targeting young people alongside the Children and Young People's Participation and Involvement Group (CHYPPI). This partly reflects the perceived problems associated with young people in the area. For example, one community leader told a story regarding a number of youth destroying post office boxes with fireworks whilst another referred to young people driving motorbikes dangerously around the neighbourhood.

The strength of the community is shown by the perceived role of NEST in securing SRB funding. Furthermore, an early plan by consultants GVA

Grimley which included proposals to demolish council housing (published in September 2000) was rejected by the SOAR Board in November 2000 (ERS 2006) after opposition which included rooftop protests by members of the community (Gaffney 2005). This prompted SOAR to redraw the regeneration plans for Southey and led to the use of more innovative community involvement methods.

SOAR won a Municipal Journal award in recognition of its neighbourhood strategies and engagement of local communities (Sheffield City Council 2005) and received praise in the end of programmes evaluation (ERS 2006). However, the report also raised a number of concerns including the narrow base of community based individuals and highlighted SOAR's better "performance in respect of social indicators than economic indicators" (ERS 2006 p10). The ERS (2006 p16) report observed,

"There is no natural relationship between many of the six neighbourhoods in question, partly due to the barrier created by Halifax Road and partly to their own development which has seen them looking in for the most part, rather than looking out."

To summarise, Southey has a number of structures associated with the state and the community aspects of the reading-acting-effect diagram. The area has three key area wide structures: the SOAR Board, the Area Panel and Sheffield Homes ALMO Board. Other local structures include: two Sure Start Boards; fifteen TARA's (and the area wide Area P Alliance); and SOAR's six NAG's and seven Theme Groups. This has led to some confusion amongst the community over whether to credit SOAR, TARA's or the council with improvements to the area (ERS 2006).

### Introducing Burngreave

In sharp contrast to the ethnic homogeneity of Southey, only 59% of the 13,800 Burngreave residents are White. The neighbourhood is located just north of the centre of the city and reflects the waves of immigration to the city since the Second World War including Pakistani, Afro-Caribbean, Yemeni, Somali residents and more recently immigrants from Eastern Block countries; 23% of residents are Asian, 12% are Black and 5% Mixed ([www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk)) although the diversity is perhaps better shown by the story of a longstanding resident in the area,

“There are fourteen nationalities in our section of it (Abbeyfield Road), with a recent increase of Pakistanis and fewer West Indians than ten years ago...Our neighbours include Italians, Ugandan Asians, Americans and Australians.”  
(Vincent 1982 p1)

Further, one of the community leaders working in the area identified seventy-six languages spoken in the area not including regional dialects.

One hundred years ago Burngreave provided industrial housing for the working classes ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=51033](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=51033)) and a programme of redevelopment of Burngreave took place in the 1960's. A resident reflected that the housing was similar to the “Victorian days” (Paul, community leader) with outside toilets. Vincent (1982) also recalls 8,000 houses in the area being cleared from this period up to the 1980's. A similar labour heritage to Southey also meant it shared the impact of deindustrialisation in the 1980's and a resulting high ranking on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Burngreave is also predominantly a Labour area and falls within the Sheffield Central Parliamentary constituency currently held by Richard Caborn.

A Burngreave resident perceived that whilst the area had always been diverse, it used to have a real community spirit that changed after the decline of the steel industry and the loss of local services. In 1996 an article in the local newspaper highlighted the problems of Burngreave under the headline “Don’t Touch Burngreave with a Barge Pole” (as quoted in Burngreave Messenger 2006a). In response, a number of community members began to work together leading to the formation of the Burngreave Community Action Forum (BCAF) in 1997. Burngreave (joined with Darnall and Tinsley) received SRB 4 funding and established Burngreave Community Action Trust (BCAT) as the administrative arm of BCAF.

In 2000, BCAF, alongside the council bid for New Deal for Communities funding and highlighted the needs of the area,

“Everyone is in agreement about what the problems are- neglect, poverty, and social exclusion-“  
(Burngreave Messenger 2000a)

After a public meeting with the Government Office for the Regions (Burngreave Messenger 2000b) Burngreave New Deal for Communities (BNDC) was established receiving £52 million from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) from 2001-2011 in “the largest area-based regeneration programme in Sheffield’s history” ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=51033](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=51033)). In the early stages of the programme it was planned that BCAF and BCAT would deliver the BNDC programme (Burngreave Messenger 2001). However, a temporary board was established to decide these details and it was decided that BNDC would operate separately from BCAF as it was felt that “BCAF does not currently

equally represent all sections of the community” (Burngreave Messenger 2000c).

BNDC is made up of a partnership board of ten community representatives (elected by the community), six statutory representatives, five voluntary and community reps, three from the business community and one councillor. There are also a number of Theme Focus Groups covering: Education, Employment, Crime, Health, Housing, Environment and an Over-arching group. Burngreave New for Communities is held up as an example of effective partnership working with the council (Sheffield City Council 2004) under the ‘Advancing Together’ agreement. ‘Advancing Together’ establishes the standards of services delivered and local recruitment in the area. The BNDC programme consists of fifteen members of staff and 173 people are employed by BNDC funded projects (BNDC Annual Report 2003/04). The vision for the programme is summarised as,

“We look forward to the day when we say to a friend, ‘I live in Burngreave,’ and they reply, ‘That’s nice, I wish I did.’”

Burngreave New Deal for Communities recently won awards at the New Deal for Communities Achievement Awards, including awards for cohesion and residents achievement (Sheffield City Council 2005). The area is perceived by some community leaders as having turned around from the Barge Pole story and is held up as an example of best practice and was a feature of Sheffield City Council’s successful Council of the Year bid. A community leader sitting on a city wide board stated,

“Up to three or four years ago people would never read about Burngreave in the press unless it was about a drugs related shooting...Burngreave is more on the map now and the other month somebody from Yorkshire Forward was talking about business support and they used Burngreave as an example...”  
(Dee, community leader)

A recent example of community activity surrounds the proposed redevelopment of Spital Hill (the main shopping street in Burngreave) as part of the council's Burngreave and Fir Vale Masterplan. The construction of a large Tesco supermarket covering 80,000 square feet (Burngreave Messenger 2007) was backed by BNDC's Chief Executive (Burngreave Messenger 2005a). However, the Burngreave Business Forum refused to support demolition at either end of Spital Hill after the council asked the organisation to choose which end of Spital Hill they favoured for demolition (Burngreave Messenger 2005b). The council disputed whether the views expressed in this meeting reflected the wider business views since both claimed to have consulted the community and business on the matter and led to the formation of a new community group, Spital Hill Local Voice.

To summarise, Burngreave is perceived to be an area with a vibrant community sector and a history of mobilisation and participation shown in a story told by a council officer attached to the area,

“...on a community neighbourhood level there are community forums and they're your first point of call in this area, there's BCAF...and then Fir Vale end there's the Fir Vale Forum, they're both quite different animals mainly because of the sociology of Burngreave in the 1990's gave rise to a pretty well organised, combative interesting mixture of people sociologically; petty bourgeois radicals who either moved through Burngreave or decided to stay here because their choice of area was determined by their small 'p' politics and that layer insignificant numerically but really decisive socially, combined with a layer of mainly black and minority community activists and leaders or organisers who'd been around for a lot longer time and who I think were probably getting disenchanted with ethnically defined community organisations but who were as interested in what was happening to

Burngreave as they were with what was happening to the Pakistani community or African community and that alliance between the white radical and the black and minority wider leadership gave rise to BCAF and also the other things that BCAF did...(interrupted)"  
(James, council officer)

## Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been upon the neighbourhoods of Southey and Burngreave as environmental settings held within the shared governmental structure of Sheffield. A historical overview of the city clearly shows how the past has had lasting impacts upon how the city has developed. For instance, by growing rapidly during the industrial revolution, the city (and neighbourhoods like Southey and Burngreave) faced a number of problems in the 1980's which have left it the sixth most deprived local authority in the country. The legacy of Sheffield's past is also apparent in visual reminders such as the Tinsley Cooling Towers and Park Hill flats.

Alongside the picture presented of Sheffield, the chapter has also sought to capture and communicate something of what it is like beyond the limited information that can be shown by population and demographic statistics. This drew attention to,

"The greenery, the music, the friendliness: these make it different to other cities."  
([www.dontgo.co.uk/openyoureyes/text.html](http://www.dontgo.co.uk/openyoureyes/text.html))

Politically, the city has a long history of challenging rules established elsewhere and non conformity illustrated by the conflict in the 1980's between a council aspiring to create the 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' against the backdrop of a Neo-Liberal Conservative government in Westminster. More recently however, the council is held up as 'excellent' under CPA and

the city appears to offer open political opportunity structures. It has taken a number of steps to encourage and facilitate the involvement of members of the public in the process of governing. The infrastructure of Area Panels was created in 1995 across Sheffield and the panels seek to increase local voice, improve local service and support local regeneration. In terms of state structures, Area Panels provide “the main link between the Council and the local community” (Owlerton/Southey Green Area Plan 2005-2008 p3). Alongside Area Panels a number of other spaces encourage the participation of the voluntary and community sector such as those laid out in Sheffield’s SCI and LSP.

The relative deprivation of areas within Sheffield also creates a number of opportunities for members of communities to be involved through schemes such as Sure Start and the HMR Pathfinder. The neighbourhoods of Southey Green, Burngreave (and Manor and Castle- the third pilot case neighbourhood) are among the worst 1% deprived in the UK (Watts 2004). This can be traced back to the working class traditions of the areas which were adversely affected by the wider decline of the manufacturing industry in Sheffield.

Whilst the areas have deprivation in common, each has a distinct character. Burngreave is an ethnically diverse area with a number of communities organised around ethnicity and faith reflecting national immigration patterns. On the other hand, Southey is a predominantly White neighbourhood located to the north of Burngreave. The area has a strong base of TARA’s linked to the large proportion of properties rented from Sheffield Homes in the area.



Another commonality between the two areas is the receipt of central regeneration funding streams. An examination of both areas highlights the activity of community based organisations and their apparent role in creating these opportunities and is something that will be discussed in more detail over the next few chapters. The apparent strength of the community in these areas is also shown in the protests in each area over plans to demolish council housing in Southey and the proposed redevelopment of the Spital Hill shopping high street in Burngreave. Alongside such activity, the prominence of the community in the partnership boards of SOAR and BNDC provide a rich seam of community leaders.

The thesis now moves on to build on the foundations provided by this chapter and examine the interaction between community leaders and institutions.

## CHAPTER 7

### BIOGRAPHIES OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

#### Introduction

This chapter provides an overarching narrative of community leader development using the reading-acting-effect model. It builds upon the backdrop of Sheffield and the case study areas of Burngreave and Southey established in the previous chapter. The chapter opens with some biographies of community leaders to show the variety of individual experiences and to help identify some common themes. The initial prompt to become identifiable as a 'community leader' can rarely be explained as a premeditated decision; whilst not the product of chance, the road to becoming a community leader is more likely to reflect the importance of their everyday experiences in their community. There is a reading that something is missing or inappropriate in the neighbourhood that the state is failing to address.

From this initial impetus, the chapter provides a snapshot of the organisations with which community leaders are presently members. This shows that once an individual becomes a community leader, it rapidly becomes part of their life. They soon become engaged with a large number of organisations operating at varying levels of governance. This highlights the numerous institutions in which community leaders are situated. Individuals do not instinctively know how to work in these institutions and must go through a process of learning as they read the rules.

An examination of how leaders read institutions highlights the apparent significance of other agents. Other community leaders, council officers and

regeneration staff all play a role in communicating ‘how things are done around here’ raising questions around the power relationships between community leaders and such actors. The chapter examines how trust develops between community leaders and state actors as they interact and considers how community leaders experience their interactions with state actors. Overtime, community leaders move away from their negative perception of the council based in their original community experience to one of working collaboratively, reflecting Gamson’s (1975) analysis and the symbolic dimension of difference. This also draws upon Bang’s distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens suggesting that community leaders modify their behaviour as they get closer to the state.

The chapter argues that how community leaders read their relationships with the state and the community alters as they interact with governance institutions. The chapter concludes by establishing a typology of community leaders based on the differing actor biographies and considers why the trajectories of actors vary.

### Pen Portraits

The chapter will begin with four summary biographies (Exhibit 1) taken from the interview data to provide some examples of the background and trajectories of community leaders.

#### Exhibit 1: Pen Portraits of Community Leaders

##### Margaret

Margaret has lived in Southey for over 40 years and loves where she lives. Her children, who are now in their forties, also still live in the area and it is

them who prompted her to become involved in community activity. She has been a school governor ever since they were young and Margaret remains hands on; regularly attending assemblies to give out awards, talking about what she does and getting drug workers to do sessions at the school. Around the same time she became a school governor Margaret joined the Labour Party and was asked to stand as a candidate at the local elections. She was successful and was a councillor in Southey for 10 years. She stood “because she wanted to make a difference”. In her time as a councillor she was the Deputy Chair of Housing for the city which meant she was involved in some of the regeneration taking place in Norfolk Park and also was chair of the Area Panel for the area covering Southey.

Margaret stood down as a councillor after her father was taken ill and she cared for him but felt that it was important to remain active and decided: “I’ll do some volunteering” and her involvement “snowballed from there”. Alongside her role as a school governor (at two schools) Margaret is: chair of one of SOAR’s Theme Groups and acts as an advisor to the board; a member of Sure Start; involved with Activity Sheffield (a council led health programme); a co-opted member of the ALMO Board (involving Sheffield Homes and TARA’s); and a member of two local community groups, Foxhill Forum and the Wolfe Road Project.

Having worked as a councillor and as a community leader she says that she can “see both sides of the coin”. That said she wouldn’t want to stand as a councillor again because she thinks that she is too old to do the job and that there is too much pressure. Margaret thinks that she is able to be more outspoken in her present roles and is closer to the community now than when she was a councillor. She does as much work as she is comfortable with to avoid burn out. Margaret has built up close relationships with officers and staff as they have worked together over time and there has been “give and take” on both sides. Margaret sees “99.9% of the other community leaders on a daily basis” as they all live in the neighbourhood and see each other both at meetings and when they bump into each other at the shops.

## Rob

Rob, 65, links his community work back to the time he spent in South Africa as a works manager for a large Anglo-American tool manufacturer. In his 31 years in the job he was an active volunteer organising day trips for staff and making sure that all their families had a Christmas tree. When he returned to Sheffield, Rob started working door-to-door until his leg was shattered in an accident. During his lengthy recovery period (he still has pins in his leg and takes drugs to control the pain), Sheffield Homes contacted the residents of his neighbourhood about setting up a tenants and residents association to distribute a small pot of money targeted at Sheffield Homes residents. Rob agreed and helped to establish a TARA in his local area.

Having done the TARA work for a few years, Rob was also co-opted onto Parson Cross Forum by another community leader and he also sits on the Sheffield Homes Board for the area. Rob attends SOAR meetings (although he is not a member of the Board or any Theme Groups). His ill

health limits the amount of work he can take on. He is not interested in working in any city wide forums because he associates working at this level with too many restrictions, and he doesn't want to be "led by a nose-ring" by the state. Rob thinks the TARA has a good relationship with Sheffield Homes which is built on mutual respect and both groups come together and share information regularly.

## Shekhar

Shekhar arrived in Sheffield from Pakistan in 1963 and moved to Burngreave where he and his family have remained ever since. He worked as a general labourer in a steel factory (located on the site that would later become Meadowhall) and became a foreman at another mill until 1980 when, along with everyone else at the factory he was made redundant (the site of this factory became Don Valley Stadium). Shekhar used the qualifications he had obtained in Pakistan to go to college and was appointed to teach English to fellow immigrants. In 1986 he obtained a formal teaching qualification and continued to teach English to a broad range of people in Burngreave. As a result of his work, Shekhar became well known amongst many of the neighbourhood's residents.

In 1996 an article was published in the local paper which identified Burngreave as a "no go area" so with like minded community workers Shekhar went door-to-door in the community to try and get people to start working together to improve the area. This led to community meetings and in 1997, BCAF was set up with Shekhar elected as the chair. The Forum was approached by the Government Office about SRB 4 funding and after consulting with his family, Shekhar resigned from his teaching job, taking early retirement and sought to raise the profile of BCAF. In 1999, the council selected Burngreave as the recipient of New Deal for Communities funding and at a community meeting the Government Office asked who they wanted to represent the community. Shekhar was very humbled when they voted unanimously for him and he proceeded to work closely with the community to produce a development plan for Burngreave. Shekhar was a member of the Interim New Deal Board set up by the council and was elected to the BNDC Board at the first community elections. However, high blood pressure prompted him to step down from the board and he only returned a year later when he was feeling better (after re-election).

During his time in the steel industry, Shekhar joined a trade union and the Labour Party and he has frequently been asked to stand as a councillor in Burngreave. He declined to stand after discussion with fellow community leaders because whilst he thought he would probably be elected, he would lose his integrity as a community representative in the eyes of local residents. Whilst Shekhar has worked alongside the state for a number of years, his priority has always been Burngreave and as a result he states that, "I always stuck to my views and sometimes (the council) got very angry about it because Burngreave was paramount for me". In 2006 Shekhar was awarded

an MBE for his work in the community and received a similar award from his native Pakistan.

## Elsie

Like Rob, Elsie became involved as a community leader after the council sent out a letter asking residents to establish a TARA. Elsie, along with her husband (both long time residents of Southey) responded and set up a TARA for their neighbourhood and both remain active members. The TARA has been operating for 8 years and coincided with Southey's receipt of SRB funding. From this start point, Elsie's involvement "skyrocketed" and she became a member of a number of groups associated with housing: the Area P Alliance (made up of TARAs within the Sheffield Homes administrative Area P); the ALMO Board (involving Sheffield Homes and TARAs); and the city council led Tenant Participation Improvement Group. Elsie also began volunteering with Parson Cross Forum and is a member of the SOAR Board.

Due to the success of Parson Cross Forum and the regeneration funding available in Southey through SRB, a paid position became available with Parson Cross Forum. Elsie successfully applied for the job and now works 30 hours a week for the Forum with funding in place for two years. Although happy to work closely with the council, Elsie does not want to become a councillor stating "I don't want them restrictions" and also observes that of all the people working in the area, it is only councillors who have worked against the wishes of residents.

Elsie works closely with officers and staff, even going to other local authorities to talk to officers and council residents about how the two groups can work better together. To get to this stage, she acknowledges that both sides have had to change their attitude. She gets frustrated with some residents who still just argue and challenge rather than seeking to work collaboratively and with some members of the council who are still from the "old school" and still think "it's us and them". Elsie thinks that her role has become her life but says that she would find it difficult to stop because much of the good work would be lost; no one would step into her position reflecting the indifference of much of the wider community.

## The Development of Community Leaders

### Becoming a Community Leader

The above examples help to illustrate the sheer breadth of community leaders' experiences. However, a number of common themes can be identified from the biographies which will now be considered starting with their

initial prompt to becoming recognisable as a 'community leader'. A 'grand tour question' (Spradley and McCurdy 1972) was used at the beginning of each interview ("How did you get here?").

The first recognisable theme concerns geography. The historical background shows that actors frequently have a strong tie to the area in which they live and have been there for a long time, frequently running over decades. Individuals were either born in the area and have never left (as Margaret above stated "I've always lived in the area, certainly for the last forty years") or returned to the area in later life and settled there. A number moved to the area when they were younger and have never left. In Burngreave particularly, this reflects the high proportion of ethnic minorities in the area with individuals (and their families) immigrating and settling in the area, as illustrated by Shekar's biography. There were of course some exceptions, for example, Joseph, a religious leader came to Southey after he had requested a placement based on criteria such as a desire to be actively involved in community work.

The theme of geographical ties also has implications for the age of community leaders and it is clear that, as one community leader put it "most of us are getting on in years" (Elsie, community leader). Indeed, all of the community leaders interviewed were over the age of fifty and many had retired. Those individuals who move into the area predominantly do so as expert citizens having been members of organisations from the voluntary and community sector elsewhere. Alistair, a community leader in Burngreave had moved away from the area and worked at the Citizen's Advice Bureau before returning to the area in later life after he had retired.

The second theme is the prevalence of a specific interest amongst community leaders (education in Margaret's case) held alongside the wider interest in the geographical area. This initial interest in a particular field is likely to continue even though a community leader becomes involved in projects with broader aims such as regeneration. Community leaders without such a focus often interpret their role as having taken over their life. Officers also state that focus on a particular interest was important for the success of leaders as these actors are better able to target their specialist knowledge as a resource rather than seeking broad, ambiguous objectives and spreading themselves too thinly.

In terms of how people were pulled into the world of community involvement it often seems that there needs to be an initial area of interest or issue that acts as a catalyst. This highlights the role of the community features of the reading-acting-effect model. For instance, Margaret's initial involvement was prompted by her concern with her children's welfare as they started school and her wider interest in education. This interest can be translated into action in response to a perceived deficiency in what is available. For example, another community leader discussed how she came to be involved through a lack of facilities for children,

"There were nowhere (for her children to play), all the play areas got neglected, they've been neglected now for about twenty-five years to be honest with you. They've been neglected for about twenty-five years and I thought something needed to be done about it."  
(Karen, community leader)

Pam also recognised a shortfall in the provision of children's facilities in the area and recognised the resources available to her. As the owner of a gym in Southey and as a qualified gym instructor she saw the potential in



having “a building which I suppose other people haven’t got” which prompted her to seek out opportunities to use it to help people in the area setting up a range of projects.

Shekhar’s biography draws attention to an article which appeared in the Sheffield Star with the headline “Don’t Touch Burngreave with a Barge Pole” and as Shekhar reflects,

“that alerted us...and because of my family, my daughters and my sons lived within this area I thought that’s bad what’s going to be the future of people in Burngreave?”

For Jason, the initial prompt was the proposed demolition of his council house as part of a regeneration project that would have seen much of the estate demolished. Although his opposition to these plans was unsuccessful this served to motivated Jason to participate in further community activity.

The biographies of Rob and Elsie above show examples of people becoming positively involved through formal state institutions seeking to engage them, such as the council (and later Sheffield Homes) writing to tenants asking them to establish a Tenants and Residents Association. However, more common is the sense that “people became involved by default” (Roberts and Devine 2004 p287). The state aspects of the reading-acting-effect model seem to have little relevance in the early stages of community leader development. It is more common that a perceived deficiency in state provision (such as in children’s facilities) prompts action. Even in cases where individuals are prompted to become involved through the existence of a structure designed to do so, the choice to engage with them can be unplanned. The story below outlines how an individual who had been involved in the planning stages of how to use central government

regeneration money came to be elected to sit on the regeneration board even though they had no intention of standing in the community election,

“There were five place and on the closing night for nominations there had not been five nominations so me and (another community leader) drummed up people and...I decided that I would stand and posted my nomination form, I had to stop people in the street to get them to sign me nomination form because I'd left it so late and I posted it in the last post on Sunday which was supposed to be there by Monday lunchtime because I was so ambivalent about it because I didn't see that sort of activity as my forte but anyway, so I did that and we had 52% turnout, I got the most votes, more than the local councillors ever got so we got off to a really good start...”  
(Dee, community leader)

Tracking the development of community leaders shows that the initial decision to engage with governance structures is something that is almost stumbled into rather being one of conscious planning. It more readily reflects an activation of a number of long held, latent personal beliefs such as a responsibility to “give something back to the people in the area” (Pam, community leader); to “try and secure the well being for residents” (David, community leader); and a desire “to make a difference” (Margaret, community leader). Involvement is the logical extension of these values which stem from the local knowledge they possess as situated agents. Their local knowledge is based on their everyday experiences of their neighbourhood and has developed over substantial periods of time.

These experiences show the apparent significance of broad institutions such as familial upbringing and the role of “socialisation processes within the family life and in early adult experiences” (Whitely 1999 p42 as quoted by Roberts and Devine 2004 p286). Indeed, the influence of family is apparent in a number of instances in terms of parents but also children and spouses. A number of community leaders discussed the role their parents had played in

getting them interested in community based issues as it was something they had always seen their parents doing. Karen's story concerning the lack of children's facilities, reported above, also reflects her desire to try and make things better for her grandchildren and other children in the area.

A common theme in all of the accounts was that community leaders first became involved because of things of direct relevance to them and their families. The discussion of 'the lads' seen in Giddens (1984) has shown the significance of family and wider social class to affect behaviour. Almond and Verba (1963) also recognise the potential for less intentionally political areas such as family, peer group, school and workplace to influence the formation of civic culture. Sawyer's (2004) American research identifies family as the most important mediating institution in the socialisation of citizens (alongside education, parents, school and community life, access to public space and church life). The role of personal and familial beliefs in the initial involvement of community leaders qualifies a conclusion of Lowndes et al (2006a) which emphasises the possibility for local authorities to affect participation. In these early stages, the local authority seems to play an active role in prompting individuals to become involved only in a relatively small number of cases. Instead it is the community leader's community which plays a more significant role.

There are also cases where people have been co-opted by other community leaders already engaged and instances where people have felt almost tricked into becoming involved with an organisation,

"I once went to one of the Parson Cross Forum meetings and the elected officer stood down, there was a vacancy and they sort of conned me into taking it (laughs)."  
(Rob, community leader)

People who referred to becoming involved in such a way did so as expert citizens; they were already active in other community organisations. This also applies to those individuals who had previously lived in the area and moved back in later life. This begins to highlight some of the issues associated with the practical application of Bang's distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens. All of the community leaders interviewed quickly became involved in formal organisations instantly becoming expert citizens based on Bang's understanding. In order to draw a useful distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens there is a need to consider the proximity of community leaders to the state.

The opening question concerning how community leaders came to be in their position was also used with councillors and council officers and produced answers very similar to those of community leaders. This suggests that the paths of actors need to be considered alongside how they interpret their position and development. Many expressed the importance of social justice but a key difference is how these individuals choose to translate these values into action. From a similar start point in terms of personal readings officers and to a lesser extent, councillors choose to develop these values through university attendance leading to a job within the governance framework. Councillors also understand themselves as being community leaders before they choose to run for election to the council. Brian, a councillor in Southey started out by going along to a council event about the modernisation of his family's council house. From there he chaired a TARA, was a representative on the Sheffield Tenant's Federation, secretary on the

National Tenants Organisation and then he stood as a councillor. As he states,

“I’d not got any plan really to be a councillor but it was sort of a path, I don’t wanted to say (that I) drifted into it because that sounds like no conscious decision but I kept going along to things and thought if you really want to influence policy really and have more of an influence then I needed to become a councillor.”  
(Brian, councillor)

### A Snapshot of Present Activity

Despite the somewhat chance starting point of many community leaders once begun they find it difficult to stop; involvement begets further involvement. It is something that once started leads uncontrollably to further activity,

“I said...I’ll do some voluntary work and it snowballed from there (laughing).”  
(Margaret, community leader)

“Once you start volunteering you know, you get drawn in...there’s a lot of work.”  
(Alistair, community leader)

The role develops into something that they do: “It’s become my life” (Elsie, community leader). After the somewhat unplanned nature of Dee’s entry to the BNDC Board discussed above she reflects that,

“...Each time (elections) come up again I’ll think I’ll just do it for a year, I’ll just do it for two more years and I’m like into year five now and I’ve been chair of the board for two years and it just always seems like it needs to go a little bit further.”  
(Dee, community leader)

Community leaders find it very difficult to stop being involved. Once an individual has started “you can’t walk away from it” (Elsie, community leader) highlighting the extent to which the role of community leader becomes a part of the individual and is perceived as a personal responsibility,

“We can’t afford to lose it (the good work done by the regeneration project) can we? Not when we’re doing so well, we can’t.”  
(Karen, community leader)

This is also fed by community leaders reading of themselves as a rare breed of citizen. They perceive that if they did not do their job no-one else would step into the vacancies left behind. So whilst “there’s always the old faithful” (Dot, community leader) a community leader stated, “I wouldn’t say there’s ever enough of us, there are never enough volunteers” (Elsie, community leader). This can be associated with the symbolic dimension of difference in the sense community leaders perceive that without them, the political landscape would look different and no-one would step in to fill the void. It also highlights the responsibility that community leaders interpret their role as having, which originates from their reading of the community aspects of the model.

A snapshot of the organisations community leaders are involved with supports the impression that the role is very much something that becomes their life. This is illustrated by a community leader from Southey who lays out the extensive number of organisations with which they are a member:

“...Beaston and Cookson TARA, Area Panel as a Southey rep representing Southey and my own TARA. Parson Cross Forum on that I’m a director and again, speaking for our TARA. Southey Forum (collection of TARAs for Southey). Then the Area P Alliance which is fifteen TARAs in this area all joining up to be an alliance so we’ve got a very loud voice and we feed back to the ALMO Board...I also attend Crime and Community Theme Group for the SOAR Board but I do it for the area...Housing Investment Group...I’m on the SOAR Board itself, as a director on the SOAR Board. I represent Southey on that. I’m on the Tenant’s Participation Group which is Sheffield City Council...Basically I think that’s it because I could go on forever.”  
(Karen, community leader)

Whilst the number of groups which a community leader is involved with is large, the groups are not expansive in terms of scope, being tied together

by the issue of housing. What differs is the geographical level at which they operate. The exceptions to this are SOAR, the Area Panel and Parson Cross Forum which have wider remits that overlap to include housing, for example Parson Cross Forum was established by TARAs but has subsequently extended its remit.

A small number of the community leaders interviewed were members of a more modest number of organisations. For example, Rob (seen in the pen portraits at the beginning of the chapter) is a member of the TARA he was involved in setting up, Parson Cross Forum and the local Sheffield Homes Board. He has refused a number of offers to become involved in other organisations and whilst he attends SOAR meetings, he is not a formal member. This decision is based on his reading that he will be overly influenced by state actors in these settings. There is potential for these individuals to be labelled as everyday makers as they focus on a very specific, local level of activity and refuse to become members of higher level organisations.

### Working Within New Collaborative Spaces

The previous section has shown that community leaders tend to be engaged in a large number of organisations and as such, will interact with a range of governance actors. Each of these organisations will house different institutions since each exists in a specific, embedded context with their own distinct interpretations of 'how things are done around here' (Lowndes 2005). Community leaders operate at various, interacting levels as situated agents

and appear aware of their varied environments. For example, a community leader in Southey discussed the different responsibilities at each level,

“I mean at last TARA meeting we were discussing what our next two days trips were going to be and those sorts of things...and then at SOAR board it's something totally different, you're talking money then (laughs).”  
(Dot, community leader)

If they are reflexive, situated agents it would be expected that community leaders would adapt their behaviour based on their reading of 'appropriateness'. However, there is a universal statement self-perception amongst the community leaders interviewed that they do not modify their behaviour based on their situation. Instead, “what you see is what you get” (Margaret, community leader). For example,

“What they say about me is what you see is what you get, I don't put no airs or graces on for anybody. (pause) I don't see why you should.”  
(Karen, community leader)

Another community leader stated,

“I say what I think and that's it (laughs).”  
(Alistair, community leader)

Despite this belief, in practice community leaders do appear to alter their behaviour to match their setting. Indeed, these contradictions appear in the interviews. Karen, cited above, went on to say,

“I do talk different, when I'm in TARA meetings I talk like I talk now but if I'm in anywhere where they talk posh, I talk posh, I talk correctly  
(Karen, community leader)

Hajer (2003 p179) uses the term 'scale jumping' to describe “the art of putting in each intervention at the appropriate level” and whilst they may be uncomfortable to admit it, community leaders need to be able to understand, move and work between differing governance levels, requiring sensitivity to each unique situation. In each context there will be interaction between the



various institutions and these will not always be compatible with one another. A community leader must manage this conflict and “pick and choose” (Peters 2005 p26) between their institutional loyalties based on their beliefs, their reading of the situation and their role in it (Hay 2004) and as a result, what their behaviour should be. Community leaders act as ‘translators’ (Yanow 2004) moving between institutions and attempt to communicate in a way that is understandable in these different contexts.

Simply because an individual leader is able to work at one level does not mean that they will be able to work at another. It might be expected that it would be more difficult for community leaders to function the higher they go within governance structures, as this takes them further away from their community and the basis of their local knowledge. For instance, it would be expected that the community leader in the example at the beginning of the section would find it easiest to operate in the Beaston and Cookson TARA than at the other levels. However, this relationship also works the other way (i.e. downwards as well as upwards). If an individual operates regularly at a higher governance level they can be seen as detached from the lower levels. As one community leader stated when talking about the council,

“...you need people from down here who know what’s going on. It’s alright you being up there in your glass tower but you just don’t know what’s going off.”

(Karen, community leader)

Margaret, who was a councillor for ten years thought that she was more in touch with the community in her role as a community leader than when she was a councillor,

“Even though I liked to think that I knew local issues when I was a councillor, I know them more now than I did then.”

(Margaret, community leader)

A councillor supported this view point acknowledging that,

“The further you get up the hierarchy for want of a better word the more distance you’re putting between you and the people you’re wanting to talk to.”

(Brian, councillor)

This can be linked back to part of the rationale for involving community leaders in governance based on their local knowledge and ability to ‘speak for the community’. This will be seen to be an important resource that community leaders draw upon as they seek to make a difference.

The environment within which the community leaders of Southey and Burngreave are operating also shows a number of parallel structures within which they can seek to make a difference. There are those which can be readily associated with the council such as the Area Panel and councillors read these as the most appropriate arena to link to the community. There are some examples of community leaders adapting to the structures that have been established, for instance Southey’s Area P Alliance was set up by the TARAs within that area, but these boundaries were defined by Sheffield Homes. A similar group also exists in Burngreave based on the Area K administrative boundary of Sheffield Homes. However, those community leaders engaged with the regeneration boards of SOAR or BNDC tend to consider these as the best means of engaging the community and making a difference. There is also overlap between the actors involved with the various structures. For example, councillors sit on the Area Panel but also have places on the regeneration boards of SOAR and BNDC. These regeneration boards can be considered as institutions created by central government as they are based around SRB and NDC funding. However, community leaders

often only refer to central government in an abstract, far away manner and mainly in reference to Tony Blair (the Prime Minister) rather than say, The Department for Communities and Local Government. It is only as community leaders begin working closer to such state structures and develop their knowledge of them that they may start to refer to the Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber or the Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward (both based in Leeds).

Community leaders also alter their behaviour based upon changes in the environment. An example of this is a story about the appraisal of Sheffield Homes in Southey by outside inspectors. This was referred to by Dot and Elsie in order to illustrate how community leaders vary their behaviour in response to the entry of new actors,

“...inspectorate came round at TARA level so we loved them up saying, ‘oh, they’re marvellous, the best thing since sliced bread’ and then inspectorate had gone back we said, ‘right we’re back to normal, (right) daggers drawn’ (laughs).”  
(Dot, community leaders)

As strategic actors, both behaved in a different way during the inspection compared to their normal behaviour, based on a reading that it was in their best interests for the inspection to go well.

This section has shown that community leaders operate in numerous organisations that sit at varying levels within the governance of Sheffield. In order to operate across these levels leaders tailor their behaviour in response to their reading of how to act in that specific context. Whilst community leaders are uncomfortable to admit to such practices it is unclear whether the ability to scale jump contributes to their ability to make a difference or is as a by-product of it. This issue will be returned to in more depth in the following

chapter. This section has also highlighted how community leaders will vary behaviour based on the situation and their reading of the rules. This also introduces the importance of time in affecting both the behaviour of community leaders and how they relate to the institutions affecting them.

### Learning the Rules

Ostrom (1999) observes that rules can be examined as newcomers are socialised into the institution. This process can be seen in how community leaders experience working in a new organisation and how this affects their behaviour and vice versa. One community leader in Southey remembers the intimidating feeling of attending her first SOAR Board meeting,

“At first I found it very off putting, no frightening at first because the name alone; SOAR Board you think, ‘oh my god, big company board’ you know (pause) a lot of agency people on...”  
(Karen, community leader)

Despite having been involved in TARA work for thirty years Karen found themselves unable to follow what was being discussed. This shows that the ability to work in one organisation does not guarantee success in another. The community leader had not had sufficient time to read the rules associated with that institution.

The initial experience of community leaders reflects the perceived inadequacy expressed by some community leaders at the early stages of working within higher levels within governance,

“When you first come into community work it’s very, very difficult because you haven’t got confidence, you don’t really know what’s happening.”  
(Dot, community leader)

This mimics the experience of a new councillor, Alex, who observed the difficulty of following his first SOAR board meeting and council meetings. When asked what advice he would give to himself if starting again, the councillor drew attention to what he had done, which was not to speak in meetings for fear of saying something that could get him (or his party) into trouble.

The inadequacy that community leaders perceive when they start working in governance arenas demonstrates the impressions of power relations leaders make as they interact with other governance actors. This can also be seen in the distinction that a community leader in Southey made between herself and council officers and regeneration staff,

“...housing meetings right, there could be someone in there that it’s the first time they’ve been or (it’s) very intimidating with them (officers and staff) sat there in the shirts and we’re sat here in our rubbish, and hairs not combed and you’re watching your watch because you’ve got to get kids from school...”  
(Karen, community leader)

This reading of power relations has implications for the behaviour of community leaders. Some of the language community leaders use to refer to officers and staff mimics that of ‘the lads’ discussed by Giddens (1984) with one community leader referring to “the big wigs” and perceiving a strong “us and them” (Elsie, community leader) divide. However, community leaders can also draw upon rules to help them in these situations. When discussing rules, Rob made reference to having to follow the rules that Sheffield Homes established for TARAs,

“We’ve got to stick to this Code (gets Code down from the wall) in the Constitution that we’ve got, we have to stick to those rules.”  
(Rob, community leader)

Later in the interview, Rob returned to the topic to show how the constitution could be used to prevent Sheffield Homes from seeking to act in a way that contravened these rules,

“Sheffield Homes...cannot be prescriptive outside that Constitution.”  
(Rob, community leader)

Furthermore, there is scope for community leaders to alter the rules once they have gained access to governance tables. In the case of the community leader intimidated by their first SOAR board meeting, rather than remaining quiet, their response was quite different,

“Taking me as I am I put my hand up in a meeting and said, ‘I don’t understand a word you’re talking about, if you want me to be on this SOAR Board I need to understand what it’s about, I’ve got to learn’. So what we arranged to do were to have half an hour before the SOAR board when we could ask questions. Then we had the SOAR elections which got community reps on and I was their buddy helping them so I think the SOAR board has gone from strength to strength. There are a lot of community on it now. (Q: has the language changed?) There’s no jargon, I could show you the minutes and a seven year old child could read it. No jargon whatsoever. You know those stupid words they put in and you say, ‘what does that mean?’ There’s none of them in, it’s all down in English...”  
(Karen, community leader)

Community leaders do not instinctively know how to operate within organisations that are new to them. They often feel out of place and must go through a process of learning as they develop their reading of the rules. Whilst the precise nature of this development is uncertain, a number of threads can be pulled out. Firstly, much is associated with the symbolic dimension of difference and takes place simply by virtue of being in the new environment regularly over an extended period. This exposure allows the actor to build up sufficient knowledge of the institutions. One community leader referred to it as a “period of osmosis” (Josh, community leader) that resulted from being immersed in the institutions for a long period. Another

community leader stated that the language of funding is something that they “just pick...up” (Dot, community leader) and associated it with the volume of meetings they attended commenting, “you’d be surprised how many meetings we go to really” (Dot, community leader). However, some of the changes reflect community leaders challenging and adapting rules rather than simply adjusting to the way things are done, illustrated by Karen’s story of her first SOAR meeting above. These changes begin to show some of the procedural difference community leaders make and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The second major source of learning the rules takes place through training, carried out through other actors. These individuals can be existing community leaders in the form of ‘buddying up’ or ‘palling up’ whereby they sit down and talk to the individual about their interests and the available training,

“If you’re a newcomer to TARA and (community leader) would say ‘have you got a general interest or a specialist interest in elderly, or youth, or housing or what?’ and then she would then lead me and say ‘there’s a training session on that that runs for six weeks would you like to be involved in that?’ and then that would give me some skills in that area and you’d pick up.”  
(Dot, community leader)

Alongside the buddy system, formal training may be offered from regeneration staff. This is illustrated by the example of the treatment of new community representatives on the BNDC Board,

“Well for them we did what I thought was quite a good induction programme and actually a two day away day thing, a management pack, we palled them up with a mentor, another board member (pause) and the HR manager, with the community engagement manager, was supposed to have a interview with them at the end of their induction period and from there was supposed to follow the individual development plan but I don’t quite know what happened to that (pause). If it did take place then no one seems to know it took place (laughs).”  
(Dee, community leader)

In Southey, the SOAR handbook given to new board members as part of their formal training was found to be out of date with one of the regeneration staff observing that in practice there was a need for a more easily understandable book. As a consequence, most of the training was done verbally and therefore, informally. The training processes in both Southey and Burngreave show the apparent limitations of formal rules. The above examples illustrate that formal rules may be established but not followed through (as in Burngreave) or inadequate (as in Southey).

The training process shows the potential for other actors to affect a community leader's reading as they act to socialise them into their new surroundings and again raises issues surrounding the power relations between actors. For example, the advice one community leader gives to new members on the board is, "remember: you're as good as them (officers and staff)" (Dot, community leader). However, the act of translating 'how things are done around here' is not neutral since actors are interactively passing on their interpretations. These actors are not 'passive conduits' (Yanow 2004 p15). The apparent relevance of these regeneration staff (and other community leaders) in a community leader's development is likely to affect the ability of community leaders to make a difference and is something that will be returned to, and built upon in the following chapter.

### Developing Relationships with Officers and Staff: Trust and Collaboration

The development of community leaders extends beyond internal changes to include how their relationship with the council officers and regeneration staff



has evolved. In the early stages, community leaders in both areas have a shared, negative perception of the council. This originates from the reading amongst the wider community that their neighbourhood has been abandoned, prompting some community leaders to act. A councillor in Burngreave acknowledged that “distrust is the starting point” (Tom, councillor) when working with the community and this issue is considered to be long lasting and difficult to change. Shekhar commented that “people didn’t have faith in the council” around the time that BNDC was established whilst a community leader in Southey identified it as still being a fundamental problem,

“We’ve suffered because we’ve still got the (mis)trust factor round here.” (Pam, community leader)

Community leaders carry this hostile reading of the council (and of the state in general) into the early interactions resulting in community leaders having a lack of trust in officers.

Gamson (1975 p28) argues that a sign of the success of a social movement is a shift from challenging their antagonist to one of seeking to work together and the subsequent acceptance of the movement as a “valid spokesman” by the antagonist. Gamson (1975 p31) states that such acceptance “involves a change from hostility or indifference to a more positive relationship.” There are clear signs of such a shift in both Southey and Burngreave. Indeed, the inclusion of community leaders in the process of governing illustrates the acceptance of the antagonist (in this case the state). However, this alone does not result in trust between actors.

By seeking to collaborate with the state rather than simply challenging, community leaders are making a strategic decision that is based, at least in part, on past experience. This can be illustrated by a quote from one of the

community leaders, who observed a number of individuals who still read their role as challenging rather than collaborating with governance partners,

“There are some community leaders who would swear black were white, they just see their role as to challenge and to argue and not as working together in partnership and we’ve found that you don’t get anything done working like that.”  
(Elsie, community leader)

Elsie, along with many of the community leaders interviewed, reads her environment in a particular way. She believes that to make a difference community leaders change the way they interact with state actors, requiring them to modify their behaviour. By working together, some of the initial friction between the actors dissipates as each develops their knowledge of the other. This leads to a greater understanding of the officers and staff by community leaders,

“At first we thought they were fobbing us off but by working with them I know for a fact there are certain things that they can’t tell us (the information) so I respect them for that.”  
(Karen, community leader)

Despite the development of some mutual understanding over time, some aspects of the way regeneration staff work remain foreign. A community leader involved with BNDC still found it difficult to understand the way that regeneration staff operated. She told a story highlighting the apparent inhumanness of staff procedures in setting up meetings,

“...I just find it really hard to relate to them, there’s a sort of formality and you think you don’t have to be, like...we have a PA to the board and I get an email...saying so and so has asked me to email you to ask if you would be...I think well why don’t you just phone me up? What am I supposed to do? Email back to (the PA) who then emails back to someone else if you want to fix a date just call me up and I’ll get my diary out (laughs).”  
(Dee, community leader)

The relationship between community leaders and governance partners is seen as a “natural progression” (Dot, community leader) or “a form of maturing” (Jeff, regeneration staff). Trust develops as actors work together and go through multiple reading-acting-effect chains and reflect on the outcomes of their collaboration. Crucially, this is seen as a “two way street” (Margaret, community leader) whereby community leaders modify their behaviour but also expect officers and staff to do the same. So by working together community leaders gain respect for the work of state actors and similarly the way staff and officers interact with community leaders demonstrates similar respect and an alteration to the previous power relationships with the communities of meaning now collaborative partners.

A sign of their good working relationship and trust in Southey is a story told by a number of the community leaders,

“...one of the biggest compliments (was when an) independent came in and he was doing some work with the SOAR board and the compliment he said was you cannot tell the difference between the community, councillors and the independents (pause).” (Margaret, community leader)

This is widely perceived as a ‘good thing’ by the community leaders of Southey, a sign of the ability of SOAR members to work effectively together. It also demonstrates the ability of community leaders to read the appropriate way of behaving in SOAR board meetings. However, it could equally be seen as incorporation with community leaders simply mimicking other actors on the board, reflecting Lukes’ (1974) second face of power. Other actors have noted this issue. One councillor was critical of the behaviour they saw exhibited by community leaders in a SOAR Board meeting,

“I mean years ago I went along to one of the SOAR Board things and it was a member of the community that was chairing it and I’m not going

to name anybody but they were a bigger bureaucrat than anyone I've ever come across; wouldn't let people speak because they weren't members of the SOAR Board (pause)...You know even in the council we (have) half an hour at the beginning of meetings to let people say what they want to say. And I'm not really criticising that person because that's what they saw the board as really (pause). You know it was a board and it was like exclusive rather than inclusive..."  
(Brian, councillor)

However, the good relationship between community leaders, councillors and officers was not replicated in all cases. One community leader in Burngreave told a story regarding how they would feel if their experience were that of 'you can't tell us apart' as in Southey,

"I met some people from another New Deal once, resident board members and they said, 'when you come into our offices you can't tell who's a board member and who's a member of staff' (pause) and there was part of me that thought, 'Oh, I wonder (what) that would be like' and another part that said 'God that sounds dreadful, I'd hate to work there'."  
(Dee, community leader)

The development of trust is assisted through the enduring relationships between community leaders and staff. In Southey the good relationship between Sheffield Homes and the TARAs developed over time. So when the long-standing community liaison officer left and was replaced and then replaced again a few months later, it took time for this relationship to develop again. The newcomer empathised, stating that TARA members thought,

"'Why should we trust you because you might not be here in three months time?' So it's taken a bit of time to build up a level of trust and a level of rapport and with some TARAs. With some particular members that might take a bit longer because they're still a bit, 'well you've been here a while but...' you know..."  
(Louise, regeneration staff)

The newcomer does not possess sufficient local knowledge of an area which is foreign to them, nor do they share any history with the community leaders. This illustrates the time it takes for trust to develop in a context

where the default reading of the state is hostile. It is also possible that a member of regeneration staff may be perceived as not changing their reading of staff-community leader relations. As one leader stated, “what can I say without being cheeky? They’re old school, it’s us and them” (Karen, community leader). It is unlikely that community leaders will trust such individuals showing the importance not only of how the community leader reads the benefits of collaboration and the length of their collaboration but also how they read the behaviour of the other. How officers and staff read their relationships with community leaders is something that will be considered in more detail in the following chapter.

Change in how community leaders interact with officers does not mean that community leaders simply lose their initially hostile stance. The language of community leaders appears to remain combative in tone in spite of a perceived good working relationship. So when discussing the strength of their relationship with Sheffield Homes, a TARA based community leader in Southey stated,

“That doesn’t mean we’re ‘yes men’, when we have something to say, we say it and we get a response from them. Quite often they see we’re right so they either change their ways or alter the situation.”  
(Rob, community leader)

Although community leaders are not wholly placated by being involved, their reading leads to a conclusion that their behaviour needs to be calmer and that they need to learn to listen more if they want to achieve their aims,

“I want to do it right...I’m determined to do something but I don’t want to go bull at a gate (pause) because I tend to be a little like that.”  
(Margaret, community leader)

In order to make a difference community leaders interpret that they need to adapt their behaviour upon membership of an organisation in order to

demonstrate their awareness of the rules. This also extends to a reading by some community leaders that they must not only alter their behaviour whilst within the structure but also when in public,

“I’ve also got to be careful, I’m very mindful because I’m on the SOAR board and the one thing I wouldn’t say is that I am representing anybody. Because you’ve got to be very careful, you can soon bring that body into disrepute, you know you’ve got to be extremely careful...”

(Margaret, community leader)

In considering themselves as representatives of an organisation, actors are constraining their agency. They are unable to speak as freely as they would like in public based on their reading of the rules associated with their role. This also occurs within the meetings based on the position community leaders hold within the board,

“I feel constrained by being chair (pause) because I have to button my lip all the time. In public I have to support the Chief Exec and the staff team and the board. If the board are frustrated with the staff team I have to support the staff team. If the staff team are frustrated or annoyed with the board I have to support the board. If local residents or the press or the media or local voluntary and community groups or organisations attack the programme as a whole or the board, or the staff team or the Chief Exec I have to defend it...”

(Dee, community leader)

## A Typology of Community Leaders

### Comparing the Paths of Everyday Makers, Expert Citizens and Councillors

So far, the chapter has examined the development of community leaders highlighting the broad range of experiences. From the analysis of the biographies it is possible to identify some patterns of behaviour shared by actors. Based upon these themes and the differing paths of the actors it is possible to establish a typology of community leaders.

A distinction between Bang's everyday makers and expert citizens can be made based upon the proximity of community leaders to the state and how they interpret their position and their relationships with officers and staff. The thesis has highlighted the flawed distinction Bang makes between these everyday makers and expert citizens and these problems are borne out by the Sheffield case. Of the community leaders interviewed, none can be classified as everyday makers; all are involved with formal community organisations, commit large portions of their time and possess a range of skills and resources as a result of their involvement. In the beginning, actors are motivated to become community leaders as the result of factors that have direct relevance to them (or their families). In the early stages of involvement community leaders focus on this specific, local level interest and as such come close to the spirit of Bang's everyday makers. In the majority of cases, actors become involved with an ever increasing number of organisations. They also begin to work closer to the state and seek to work collaboratively with state actors. This closer association with state rules and resources results in modifications in their behaviour.

However, the spirit of Bang's everyday makers can be seen amongst those community leaders who become involved in more than one group and collaborate with the state (as seen with other community leaders) but limit their activity to the very grassroots level and maintain their initial motivation to become involved as their focus. The pen portrait of Rob at the beginning of the chapter provides an example of one such everyday maker. Rob became involved with a TARA and whilst he has joined a slightly larger community organisation and sits on a Sheffield Homes Board, the focus of his activity is

very much at the micro-level and limited to housing. Furthermore, Rob has turned down opportunities to work at higher governance levels. The reason for this is a reading made by Rob and fellow everyday makers that they will be more restricted at such levels because of the institutions and associated attempts by staff and officers to either dominate proceedings or manipulate them. Although these individuals do shift slightly from their initially hostile reading of the state and collaborate, they do so in a very guarded, limited way and maintain their 'us and them' stance. As a result trust is difficult to build amongst everyday makers and staff and officers.

Unlike those everyday makers who remain at the micro-level, the majority of community leaders interviewed began to work ever closer to the state and across numerous governance levels. These individuals can be labelled as expert citizens and are illustrated by the examples of Shekhar and Margaret at the beginning of the chapter. These individuals seek to positively engage with state structures, moving from their micro focus to the broader aims associated with higher governance levels. For example, Margaret moved from her interest in education to an interest in housing from her time as a councillor and the wider regeneration of Southey as she became more involved with SOAR as an expert citizen.

Through their work, expert citizens come into contact with new institutions and must go through a process of learning to read the associated rules and resources. In response to their new institutional environment they modify their behaviour and they come into contact with other governance actors. Expert citizens shift from their initially hostile stance stemming from the strong role that the community aspect of the reading-acting-effect model



plays in their early readings and seek to positively collaborate. This is closely associated with the symbolic aspect of difference and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. Trust builds up with officers and staff over time as they work together and is based on factors such as how the two actors read the successfulness of their interactions. However, trust can be lost quickly. Further, expert citizens still read attempts by officers and staff to influence outcomes and the relationship is seen as one of collaboration rather than incorporation. Expert citizens respond to their new institutional environment in a number of ways for example by seeking to work with other community leaders and activate a larger base of community based resources.

The example of Margaret shows the considerable fluidity and overlap between groups. Indeed, in tracking the development of councillors there is much similarity with the trajectories of community leaders. Some councillors identified themselves as being community leaders whilst others read that they started out as community leaders then decided that to make a difference they should become a councillor to “be part of the system” (Samir, councillor). Using Bang’s understanding such an individual moves quickly from being an everyday maker to expert citizen and finally a councillor.

The trajectories of the community leaders are similar to those of councillors in that many of them move from everyday makers to actors that work progressively closer to the state as expert citizens. This overlaps with the everyday maker philosophy that “merely to be against something will not do” (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p478). However, none of the community leaders interviewed expressed a desire to become a councillor and of the few who had previously been councillors, all said they would not want to return.

Bang (2005) argues that everyday makers will only have minimal interest in party politics. However, such reasoning does not provide an adequate explanation for why community leaders do not want to become councillors. Indeed, many of the individuals interviewed were members of political parties and some had moved from councillor to expert citizen. The apparent significance of political parties can be attributed to the backgrounds of both areas. For example, in Southey, the strong working class tradition can be associated with Trade Unions and Labour Party membership. This suggests a failure in the everyday maker literature as it fails to see actors as situated agents and take account of the significance of context. There are examples of councillors who were involved as trade unionists and stood as councillors such as Tom and Samir but also examples of union members who have remained expert citizens including Shekhar and Dot.

Some felt they were too old to be a councillor and that they would not have the time required. However, the more common reasons were based on a reading that being a councillor came with too many restrictions (party political, procedural etc...) and some decisions would be beyond their influence. For instance, a community leader, when asked why she hadn't stood as a councillor stated,

“They’re part of the structure aren’t they? They’re members of political parties (pause) with manifestos and disciplines...”  
(Dee, community leader)

This reading was supported by many of the councillors interviewed. For example, a councillor in Southey observed,

“When you become a councillor you think that you’re going to have pure power so to speak and be able to carry things through and there are loads of factors which come into that which prevent that from happening...”

(Alex, councillor)

Councillors have to look beyond their neighbourhood and have “to wear their councillor hats” (Tom, councillor). Community leaders have a desire to speak their mind and perceive that the closer to the state they come, the less able they are to speak as they wish. Shekhar told a story concerning his refusal to stand as a councillor despite being a long-standing member of the Labour Party as he read that it would divorce him from the community and the primary source of his power,

“I’ve been a member of the Labour Party for a long, long time (pause). Many times I’ve been asked to stand for election because of my friendships in the area and being well known in the area (laughs) but once about six years ago when Lib Dems were in power in Sheffield and Labour were losing seats everywhere in Burngreave and that’s when I came under real pressure and I was bluntly told that if I didn’t stand for election that means the Labour would lose a seat in Burngreave (pause)...So I went to my one or two friends, indigenous people, they’re very good people you know and one said to me, ‘yes you will win the election, no one can beat you here but you would lose the credibility’ and I said, ‘how?’ And she said, ‘people would think you had been doing all this just to become a councillor’ and I said, ‘thank you very much, that settles it.’ It’s sufficient for me because I had been saying, ‘no, no, no’ but this is sufficient for me. So I went back to the meeting at the councillor’s house and I said, ‘no because whether the Labour party win or lose I believe in practical work’ and...Burngreave needed my support and I would not let, because I did a lot of work I won’t like to let people down if I shift to the council and leaving the vacuum behind you know but that was excellent advice from my friend and I still believe that politics is different...actually working with the grassroots...”

(Shekhar, community leader)

There is a sense in which becoming a councillor is interpreted as a stage too far for many community leaders. As one community leader put it, “you have to say no somewhere” (Alistair, community leader). Instead they prefer to be expert citizens and make an assessment about how closely they

can work with the state whilst maintaining their agency. Each community leader will interpret this position on the expert citizen spectrum differently. For example, one TARA based community leader did not work in city wide housing structures created by the council because he felt he would be “led by a nose ring” (Rob, community leader). Conversely, another TARA based community leader was happy to sit at this level and went further by going to other cities (with council officers) to advise other local authorities and their community leaders on council housing issues such as stock transfer. These two examples show the distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens.

Alongside these two groups another type of community leader can be seen. This is exemplified in the biography of Elsie at the beginning of the chapter. She, and a small number of the community leaders interviewed, moved swiftly from everyday maker to expert citizen and thereafter became so close to governance structures that they took up a paid position thereby blurring the distinction with regeneration staff. Such individuals have become so expert that they are paid as regeneration staff but remain community leaders by virtue of their unpaid voluntary work in numerous other community organisations. These individuals will be labelled as ‘professional citizens’ to differentiate them from expert citizens and regeneration staff.

Table 6 overleaf shows how the community leaders interviewed in Sheffield can be split between Bang’s everyday makers and expert citizens and the professional citizens which have been added based on the Sheffield case study.

Table 6: A Typology of Sheffield Community Leaders

EVERYDAY MAKERS	EXPERT CITIZENS	PROFESSIONAL CITIZENS
Jason	Alistair	Elsie
Rob	David	Josh
	Dee	Pam
	Dot	
	Joseph	
	Karen	
	Margaret	
	Paul	
	Shekhar	

Expert citizens clearly dominate the table. However, the additional category of professional citizen helps to produce a more nuanced and empirically based typology of community leaders.

The levels at which community leaders operates therefore reflects their ability to adapt their behaviour based on their reading of the rules but also a decision about what levels they are comfortable working at to make a difference. This suggests that there is a shortcoming in the everyday maker literature as it fails to understand the trajectories of community leaders and how they interpret their position within the levels of governance.

For example, an everyday maker interviewed in Burngreave perceived that they had not developed or learnt anything throughout their involvement. This individual also maintained a hostile stance towards the council, and in later years towards BNDC, perceiving them as being too close to the state and being little more than puppets of government. However, the majority of community leaders interviewed read that they needed to work with, rather than against officers and that this was something that set them apart from less successful community leaders. This is shown by a story given by an expert

citizen concerning members of the community unwilling to change their stance,

“We’ll have a meeting and they’ll come and they’ll be perhaps twenty or thirty of them, and they’ll ask for criticisms for whatever’s going on and they’ll be loads of criticism going on...Then you’ll take a break because the next session is what do we do and how do we work to it (address the problems identified) and you come back to the table and half of them have gone home, they’re only interested in giving criticism. They’re not interested in sitting around the table and finding solutions...”

(Dot, community leader)

The story reflects a wider trend concerning how community leaders read the community as they become more and more involved as expert and professional citizens. Whilst the influence of the community seen in the earlier stages remains, there is a growing sense of frustration held amongst such actors. This stems from a reading by community leaders that the community is hard to involve as they have not developed the fresh perspective of the council held by expert citizens,

“I mean it links in to what I’ve already said is a frustration (pause) is getting across to people that they can make a difference. I mean most of the people in Parson Cross have been brought up in the old regime of you have it done to you, Sheffield council just does things, they just do it.”

(Elsie, community leader)

In a sense these actors are acting out of habit rather than a fresh reading of the environment and their role in it. In relation to the reading-acting-effect model these individuals are bypassing the reading stage as the environment changes. The community can be perceived as remaining passive and such apathetic indifference can act as a hindrance upon the more expert and professional citizens. One community leader told a story concerning their TARA annual general meeting and poor turnout from the community,

“We called this AGM meeting at the club across the road and nobody turned up so we couldn’t have a meeting and if you can’t have a meeting, then you’re no longer really recognised as the committee (pause) but you do have to carry on as the committee because then you have to call another meeting so we call this other meeting and (TARA community leaders) devised this letter...saying do you realise, (the leader) listed a lot of the jobs we’d done for them and you will lose representation for all these things if you don’t turn up and endorse us, then you’ve no TARA that’s it and so we were speaking to people and we were saying, ‘why didn’t you come?’ And they’d say, ‘you’re doing a grand job just get on with it’, ‘but without your endorsement we can’t get on with it!’ so on the night hundred people turned up (laughs).”  
(Dot, community leader)

## Conclusion

This chapter has developed a typology of community leaders based upon the biographies generated in Sheffield. The chapter examined the development of community leaders from their first point of entry to their present positions within governance. This analysis has clarified the meanings of Bang’s terms of everyday makers and expert citizens and built upon this work by identifying a third type of community leader, labelled as professional citizens.

It was seen that the initial point of contact for community leaders is seldom the result of governing structures or even conscientious decision making but is more likely to reflect the enactment of deep set, embedded values. This suggests long-standing factors such as family, everyday experience of the area and a sense of responsibility are particularly significant. State structures only appear relevant at this stage in the sense that they are seen to be failing to adequately provide services. It is the community in which they are situated that more readily explains the early involvement of community leaders.

On becoming a 'community leader', the activity of many of the actors rapidly escalates as they become involved with numerous organisations operating at various levels. New institutionalist theory would suggest that these different organisations will exhibit different rules, norms and values. Further, new institutionalists assume that community leaders will instinctively know how to operate in with these contexts (Lowndes 2005 p296) and will behave in a manner which is 'appropriate' (March and Olsen 1989).

There is a process of learning whereby community leaders adapt to their surroundings as they develop their reading of institutions that are initially foreign to them. This process leaves considerable scope for regeneration officers and fellow community leaders to pass on their interpretations of 'how things are done around here'. There is a sense that individuals may become caricatures or mimics, simply acting how they think they are supposed to. However, the translation process is an interactive one meaning that community leaders are not passive or neutral. Community leaders are able to affect rules to better cater for them. The ability of community leaders to move between levels and know which level to use, how and at what time (or 'scale jump') is likely to affect their ability to make a difference. As such, community leaders learn how to translate their local knowledge for specific scenarios and this is a theme that will be returned to in the following chapter.

The evolution of community leaders shows similarities with those of councillors. Many of the community leaders interviewed move quickly from being everyday makers to expert citizens working ever closer to the state. However, they consider becoming a councillor as having too many restrictions and instead choose which structures to engage with, and how close to the



state they wish to go. In working closer with the state, community leaders become more aware of the levels of state institutions (council, regional, national etc...) and through working with state actors their readings alter.

The hostility towards the monolithic and far off state is appeased by the human face offered by officers and staff. This does not mean community leaders lose their combative zeal and are pacified into “lap dogs” (Rob, community leader). Instead community leaders read value in working with and not simply against officers and staff. This requires changes such as a softening in approach and a readiness for community leaders to listen. Community leaders begin to collaborate with officers and staff and trust develops as they go through multiple reading-acting-effect chains. Trust is dependent on a number of factors such as the benefits each reads in having worked together and the potential for benefits in the future; the length of collaboration between the actors; and how each reads the behaviour of the other based on changing power relationships.

The process of working with the state potentially changes how community leaders read their community. Some community begin to express frustration that the community has not similarly altered their perception of the state, remaining hostile but passive and inactive. It is how community leaders interpret their position in relation to the community and the state that allows a typology to be established. Some community leaders remain at the micro-level and limit the extent to which they engage with governing institutions based on a reading upon how much their agency will be constrained. Such actors can be labelled as everyday makers. Expert citizens however actively seek to work closely with other governance actors and operate at numerous

levels modifying their behaviour based on their reading. A small group become so adept at reading the rules and resources associated that they take up paid positions as regeneration staff alongside their voluntary work. These individuals have been identified as professional citizens.

The biographies highlight the fluidity of actor's paths with the pen portrait of Margaret highlighting her transition from everyday maker to councillor through to expert citizen. However, the variations in the trajectories of actors cannot be readily explained by their biographies. For example, there are no patterns amongst community leaders who were first involved through state institutions; such individuals providing examples of everyday makers, professional citizens and councillors. Further, the discussion above offered examples of individuals that became expert citizens or councillors but who were all members of trade unions. Nor is it possible to see if any explanation can be associated with factors such as age, gender or ethnicity based on the limited sample size. However, an explanation may become apparent based on how actors read difference. The thesis now turns to examine this issue.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

#### Introduction

This chapter examines community leader stories of making a difference. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first is organised around the three aspects of difference established by the conceptual framework: (1) substantive impact relating to the ability of a community leader to achieve a beneficial redistribution of resources; (2) a symbolic aspect concerned with the recognition of community leaders as an accepted part of governance; and finally (3) the difference leaders make to governance procedures.

The chapter argues that community leaders concentrate upon substantive impact at the very local level in their neighbourhood. The chapter draws on the previous one to suggest that this focus can be explained by considering actors' trajectories. In the early stages, the community plays a major role in prompting individuals to become community leaders. Over time, community leaders increasingly perceive a need for funding. This compels them to become evermore involved with the state and governance.

In order to work with the state, community leaders read a need to alter their behaviour to match the multiple institutions with which they become involved. Closely associated with the focus on the neighbourhood level is the prevalence of the state in the account of community leaders. This demonstrates the link between substantive and symbolic impact. In order to be recognised as agents by the state community leaders modify their

behaviour to access state resources. The community also play a significant role related to symbolic impact; the presence of the community leader in the neighbourhood means that “everyday (they) make a difference” (Elsie, community leader).

The growing significance of the state as a source of funding brings community leaders into increasing contact with governance actors. The chapter considers the stories of council officers and regeneration staff as members of the state which are associated with procedural impact. The reading of state actors suggests that they play a prominent role in relation to community leaders. They are able to affect who is (and who is not) involved in the governing process and socialise community leaders into new institutions.

The second part of the chapter considers how community leaders interact with the state and the community aspects of the reading-acting-effect model as they become more involved in governance. An understanding of how community leaders read the state and community features of the model will be shown to explain the local and state focus of community leaders. It also demonstrates the links between the substantive, symbolic and procedural impacts discussed in the first half of the chapter.

There is an issue surrounding the extent to which the impact of community leaders relates to other actors. The chapter shows how community leaders interpret their new surroundings as they work alongside the state. This includes how they understand their developing relationship with officers and staff as they get more used to governance rules. It also discusses some of the ways community leaders respond to perceived

attempts by officers and staff to overly influence them. These strategies have differing levels of success.

As actors increasingly look to utilise governance institutions, they have to compete with other community leaders across multiple levels. This competition is based around whether actors are recognised by the state or by their community. It will be argued that this reflects how community leaders read the state and community as they move from everyday makers to expert citizens. The higher levels of governance are perceived as coming with more constraints on the agency of community leaders as they compromise to behave appropriately, thereby distancing them from their community. In so doing, they are able to adapt rules allowing them to have a greater substantive impact upon their neighbourhood. The chapter concludes that community leaders make a trade off between freedom from state influence and the substantive impact they can have.

### The Substantive Dimension

A unifying theme in the stories of community leaders was their focus upon substantive impact at the micro level. Exhibit 2 overleaf shows some summary examples of community leader stories concerned to the ability of actors to secure allocative and authoritative resources.

## Exhibit 2: Stories of Substantive Difference

- Karen told a story regarding her neighbour who had been unemployed for over 2 years. The individual had been unemployed due to a lack of skills and as a single parent following the death of their partner they had a limited amount of time to access training. Karen was in frequent contact with the individual and encouraged them to attend an IT training course which she knew was available. After completing the course, Karen encouraged the neighbour to apply for a job that he had seen. The individual was successful and has been in the job ever since and works hours that accommodate looking after his children.
- Pam referred to her ability to get local children to play football on weekends (instead of criminal behaviour such as blowing up post boxes and riding dirt bikes around the neighbourhood). The only resources needed were a ball and four cones that were kept in the TARA office. Children would come to the office to get the equipment and then return them at the end of the day.
- Margaret told a story surrounding her success in securing a drug worker for the local area. The worker would go into schools to talk to the children about drug related issues which were seen as a serious problem in Southey.
- Dot and Shekhar both told stories about annual Festivals in Southey and Burngreave which were organised by their respective community organisations and funded through the SRB and NDC programmes. These festivals were always very popular and successfully brought people from the community together.
- Alistair spoke about the receipt of £200 from the Area Panel to help with a local history group in his community. This funding allowed the group to research into the history of the shops on Spital Hill (the main shopping street in Burngreave). The results were published in a small pamphlet and larger maps were displayed in the area, town hall and in the Sheffield Star.
- Elsie referred to the TARA's ability to obtain funding for the redevelopment of the local church which needed a new roof. In order to access state funding, the TARA put in a bid to redevelop the church and make half of it into a community building that could be used as a resource for various groups.
- Josh told a story about his role in obtaining a lottery grant to run a computer course in the neighbourhood. Josh had applied to Yorkshire Forward before but had been turned down. He successfully re-applied the following year by marketing the needs in the area and by using the "language of government."

The focus on substantive impact at the local level is universal across all community leader types and can be linked to how individuals first became

involved as community leaders. The previous chapter drew attention to the failure of the state to provide local facilities as a prompt to community leader action. The story below outlines how a community leader in Southey came to be involved in the redevelopment of a local park,

“...Cookson Park, right...I’ve lived here all my life...my son who is now...forty-one...used to go on the cycle speedway track when he was seven or eight you know what I mean...I thought there’s a lovely area there that’s a dump, there’s nothing local where children can go, we can’t afford bus fare, nowhere clean and safe in a way to walk to these areas, such a long way. We thought there’s that lovely big area there getting wasted, lets do something with it.”  
(Karen, community leader)

Later in the interview, the leader returned to the park as an example of an instance of when she had made a difference,

“...if I showed you photos of how it (the park) were before, a dump and one instance of when they come to clean it up, they moved all this brush, and you know how trees grow like that (gestures hands joined through fingers) and make a canopy and when they went through it they found a settee, a bed, it were just laid out like a flat...two people had been living in it because it was so dense the water couldn’t get through, honestly (laughs) it were unbelievable...I’ll be so proud when that’s opened. When I saw the skate park opened and saw them take the fencing down and there weren’t a child to be seen anywhere, I never clicked on it were a school day. By half past three it were like Sheffield Wednesday were turning out and you know, they’re on there from half past six in the morning skate boarding and riding about...”  
(Karen, community leader)

The local focus of the community leaders shows some overlap with part of the everyday maker credo of ‘do it where you are’ (Bang and Sørensen 2001). However, as noted earlier, community leaders are not uncoupled from the state and those interviewed were very much engaged with state and organisational structures at various levels. Therefore, the ability of community leaders to scale jump (Hajer 2003) seems of little relevance to their ability to have a substantive impact. However, this may reflect the difficulty that community leaders face operating at the higher levels of governance within

Sheffield. Ash (1972) proposes that groups should 'think small' to increase their chances of success and Exhibit 2 above supports this advice. Further, the only individual who was unable to identify an example of where they had made a difference was an everyday maker whose aims were large, such as preventing the demolition of their estate, and who saw his role as challenging the New Deal programme in Burngreave. This individual reflected that "the nature of things I'm involved with are usually fraught with disappointment" (Jason, community leader).

The danger of this finding is that it could imply that community leaders have insufficient power to make a substantive impact at higher levels as institutional forces are too strong. As the same everyday maker stated "you expect to be disappointed when it gets to that level" (Jason, community leader) when talking about interactions with the Government Office. The previous chapter has shown that many community leaders find it difficult to work at higher governance tables. However, the focus of community leaders at the local level may reflect how community leaders interpret what it means to make a difference. Community leaders read the very local level as being the most important place for them to have a substantive impact.

Such a myopic focus was identified as a frustration by a council officer, who illustrated this with a story concerning a newly created community organisation in Burngreave. The council provided funding and resources (regeneration staff, office space etc) for the organisation to help it work strategically with other bodies such as the hospital. However, the state institutions were unable to ensure that the members discussed all of the



issues for which it was intended because of the agency of community leaders and the strength of their reading of doing things locally,

“Fir Vale Forum which isn’t earth shattering at all but a really good case study of how the council wanted to see the creation of a Fir Vale Forum three or four years ago, funded a couple of development workers, got a bit of access to regeneration funding, created a kind of secretariat, got a shop front, got some tables, desks, phone lines and (pause) now there’s a Fir Vale Forum. There are eight people who are on a management committee as trustees. Those eight people don’t want to know about strategic regeneration in Fir Vale, they want to help clean up the park, create a duck pond, make sure the kids behave themselves, make sure dogs aren’t crapping where they shouldn’t. That’s what they want to do and the council, we’re stumped you know, we’re saying ‘but you’re our strategic partner’ and they’re saying ‘we don’t understand what you’re talking about and we don’t want to be’ and the paid staff of the Forum are kind of thinking, ‘well, what do we do? Do we clean up the dog shit or do we try and have interesting conversations with the Northern General (Hospital) as a strategic partnership?’ And try as you might you can’t shift that Forum where it doesn’t want to go...”

(James, council officer)

The assumed path of the relationship is that community leaders find it harder to operate the higher up within governance they ascend because their agency is constrained by powerful institutions. For example, one community leader who sat on a city wide strategic board felt out of place at the meetings and remarked that they could not think of anything strategic to say to the other board members who came from the state or private sectors. She was unable to see the relevance of the work done at the board stating “I think it’s so strategic it’s bordering on the meaningless I’d say, it’s strategised itself out of existence (laughs)” (Dee, community leader). The individual was more comfortable at the local level where she could more readily see the substantive impact of her actions. At the same time she did see the significance of acting strategically but stated “you can’t be strategic all the time (pause) when it affects your neighbour’s lives and the people around

you” (Dee, community leader) showing the continued importance of the community within the reading-acting-effect model.

The stories of substantive difference highlight the importance of the state in the readings of community leaders. The state and the significance it is accredited with is a constant and recurring theme throughout the accounts given by actors. This reflects the reading that making a difference is related to the adroitness of a community leader (and their organisation) to win state funding. Community leaders frequently equated making a difference with their success in securing funding and conversely how a lack of funding is often cited as a block.

### The Symbolic Dimension

There is a clear symbolic aspect to the focus of community leaders upon the local level. A community leader in Southey argued that their presence as a member of an organisation in their neighbourhood had a symbolic impact,

“Well we’ve made a difference by being in the area...that door is always open and being where it is we make a difference everyday because people keep coming through that door for help, advice. We can’t always help them but we can always direct to where they can get the help for what they want so everyday we make a difference...”  
(Elsie, community leader)

The community leader had a recognisable role in the community and was an everyday resource which the community could utilise. Through their local presence, the community leader perceived that they had been able to secure small changes in the lives of locals by responding to community issues. For example, some elderly residents had been victims of ‘cowboy gardeners’ charging high rates for gardening work and either vanishing without doing the work or doing it to a poor standard. In response, the

community leader's TARA secured funding for a 'handy gardener' who carried out small jobs that residents needed to be done.

There is a strong link between the symbolic and substantive impact. In order to have a substantive impact, community leaders need a need to obtain financial resources and the predominant source of these resources is seen as the state. Therefore, in order to achieve new advantages (substantive difference) community leaders need to be recognised as legitimate agents by the state (symbolic difference). In turn, the 'acceptance' (Gamson 1975) of community leaders by state actors is demonstrated by the receipt of financial resources.

The stories of Southey and Burngreave support Gamson (1975) and Eder's (1992, 1993) assertion that actors need to be recognised and accepted before they are able to affectively compete for resources. This can be seen by considering an example identified by a community leader in Southey. This everyday maker spoke about the impact they had made by building a relationship with Sheffield Homes. Their acceptance by Sheffield Homes was illustrated by a 'walkabout' scheme where the community leader would regularly walk around the neighbourhood with a member of Sheffield Homes and point out problems in the area which would then be quickly resolved.

Although both Burngreave and Southey are in receipt of large pots of central government regeneration funding, community leaders recognise that funding for some projects is unlikely to come from a single stream. Community leaders therefore need to be recognised as legitimate across numerous arenas and know where to go for funding and how to tailor their bids appropriately. As one community leader stated,

“It’s knowing where to go and finding funding to begin with and being able to write your bids in European speak which are like that (gestures very thick document) and using the buzz words that don’t mean anything but they like to see them.”  
(Dot, community leader)

These skills illustrate the importance of developing their reading of the ‘rules of the game’ regarding state funding. The previous chapter has highlighted the development of community leaders who “pick up” (Dot, community leader) the necessary ‘buzz words’ from being in the environment for an extended period.

The previous section referred to an individual who felt out of place on a city wide strategic board. However, a councillor from Burngreave saw the presence of this community leader on the city board as a demonstration of a rare collection of strategic skills not shared by other community leaders. These included: the ability to read situations; possessing local knowledge from having lived in the area for a long time; and the ability to argue in an appropriate context stating that there are,

“...quite a complex set of leadership and micro-political skills that you need to have to be able to perform at that sort of strategic level in the city and (community leader’s) got all those skills. (The community leader) was actually invited to be on it so...it’s quite good having someone who is chair of Burngreave New Deal on that body as well because it’s such a significant player.”  
(Jeff, regeneration staff)

The ability to scale jump therefore shows that successful community leaders may be able to adapt to the different organisational settings and their institutional rules. However, they may have limited ability to act as agents at these higher levels and are better able to do so at the more local level. The ability to sit at these tables reflects the capacity of the individual as a situated agent to read rules and translate their local knowledge across institutions. By

achieving recognition across governance levels an actor increases the opportunities for them to have an impact.

It is important to remember that this relationship also works in reverse. Those councillors and officers who most frequently sit at higher levels in “their glass towers” (Karen, community leader) find it more difficult to work at lower levels. This grants community leaders a significant position since they are able to move between the state and community aspects of the reading-acting-effect model. The no-man’s land position of community leaders within governance indicates their ability to link the disparate groups together. They operate neither fully as community members nor council professionals. Instead they are able to read the rules associated with each and move between them.

The vast array of funding streams also provides opportunities for community leaders to respond if a funding application is rejected. As a Southey community leader stated,

“If one door shuts another one opens because you still get it done you just do it through a different door (Q: can you give us an example?) Well, (the) park. Someone decided that we couldn’t get this money, they did a quick count up and there weren’t enough money for the cycle speedway and I’m in this meeting and I says, ‘I’m not having that’ and wrote a bid to Onyx and got £50,000 and then wrote another one to Evolve and got £21,000.”  
(Karen, community leader)

The financial resources available through state institutions come from numerous sources operating at various levels. This again highlights the relevance of scale jumping as actors alter their behaviour to match the rules of that funding source. Further, scale jumping does not simply mean the ability to work at various levels, it refers to “the art of putting in each intervention at the appropriate level” (Hajer 2003 p179) so it is clear that this

skill will be vital when it comes to securing funding. As one community leader in Burngreave said “to be honest though any time we’ve applied for any kind of funding we’ve always got it” (Alistair, community leader) almost taking for granted their ability to get funding based on their successful symbolic recognition.

### The Procedural Dimension

The procedural dimension was the least commented on by community leaders. However, expert citizen did comment on the institutional constraints brought by central government funding. These included a feeling that community organisations have the government looking over their shoulder and frustration surrounding the length of time it takes to get anything done because of the procedures a decision must go through before it is enacted. As a community leader in Burngreave stated, “God it takes so long, it’s mind boggling, you’d think it’d be simple wouldn’t you? But it’s not, nothing’s simple” (Dee, community leader) whilst another stated, “everything takes so long, not weeks and months but years” (Dot, community leader).

Procedures were also perceived as a tool that officers and regeneration staff could use to “block” community leaders (Jason, community leader). However, there is some acknowledgement that such processes are needed, with a community leader in Southey stating: “the barriers that are sometimes put up are there for good reasons and I also think there are too many (laughs)...” (Margaret, community leader).

Some community leaders acknowledged that in choosing to work with the state, they were not seen as equal partners on boards in relation to state

players. One community leader considered themselves as being “important window dressing” (Dee, community leader) within BNDC. Their presence was simply a reflection of central government procedural requirements and as such, they were prevented from having an impact themselves. Instead they served to legitimise the actions of the local state actors. This can be linked to the second face of power (Lukes 1974) with the state able to set the agenda and outcome of BNDC meetings.

The importance of community leaders learning to read how to operate in new institutions and the relevance of marketing themselves introduces the significance of council officers and regeneration staff. These actors are also particularly important in relation to the impact of community leaders upon governance procedures. Indeed, whilst community leaders were unlikely to talk directly about their impact on procedures, amongst officers and staff it was the most common.

The term ‘regeneration staff’ is used to refer to the swathe of employed actors involved in governance such as workers from Sheffield Homes, staff employed by either SOAR or BNDC and outside consultants. Regeneration staff are seen as a new tier within governance as a council officer in Burngreave observes,

“The thing that regeneration has done is to create a profession where ten years ago there wasn’t a profession. That’s not strictly true because there were community development workers. There’s a whole layer of people who now (pause) inhabit that neighbourhood world including myself where ten years ago we seemed to manage perfectly well without them.”

(James, council officer)

The idea of professional citizens discussed in chapter 7 also highlights the blurring between regeneration staff and some community leaders. Over

time some of the community leaders in Southey moved into funded positions but remain community leaders by virtue of the numerous other community organisations with which they are unpaid members.

It is council officers and regeneration staff who display the most agency and power in their accounts. These actors can be seen as playing two important roles which have the potential to affect community leaders; regeneration staff and council officers are gatekeepers who apply rules and are also interpreters who make rules. These two roles will now be discussed in relation to their impact on community leaders and procedures.

#### Officers and Staff as Gatekeepers: Applying the Rules

Officers and staff act as gatekeepers interpreting the rules concerning which community leaders to work with. Such decision making requires the officer to make an assessment of the legitimacy of community organisations and leaders and is therefore closely linked with symbolic impact. A council officer in Burngreave discussed their assessment of which groups they engage with,

“I suppose there’s a kind of pecking order isn’t there in terms of assessing the...robustness...but when you’re assessing voluntary organisations I suppose the council are in partnership with the voluntary sector...We have quite strong relationships as a local authority with the government second 11 like Age Concern, Groundwork all those big, national semi-statutory agencies that rely upon government funding...and then at a local level there’s the tenants associations who I think are kind of under-recognised lately as the switch has been from councils as landlord to councils as strategic...whatever...On a community neighbourhood level there are community forums and they’re your first point of call. In this area there’s BCAF and then Fir Vale end there’s the Fir Vale Forum...And then you’ve got the organised local voluntary sector and round here I think that means organisations that are involved in educational achievement or staying in school...organisations providing services of childcare, a couple of environmental organisations which are local in remit and then a range of quasi-informal groups- lunch clubs, church faith groups who come and go and credit unions in there before the



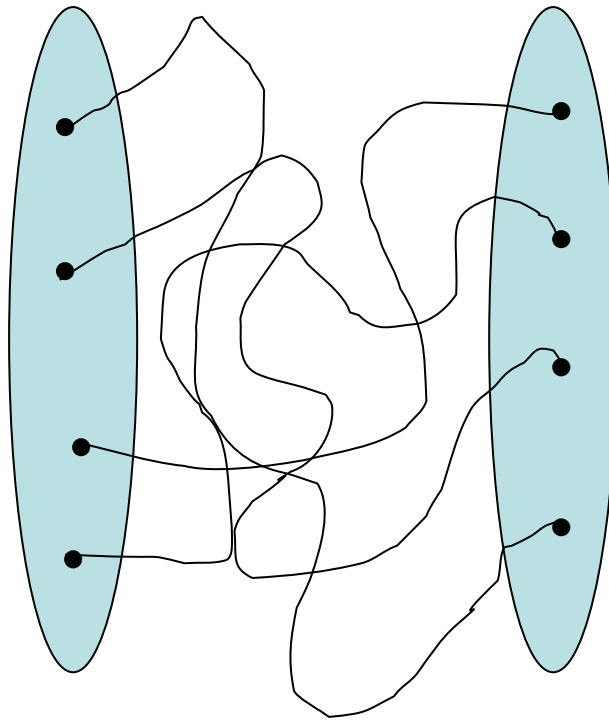
organised voluntary sector and two big advice organisations; CAB and another big independent advice service at Fir Vale.”  
(James, council officer)

The process by which officers make such decisions reveals which community leaders are likely to be seen as legitimate at that time. Officers develop ‘rules of thumb’ (Dearlove 1973) concerning the types of community leaders they should involve. Community Leaders who are able to meet officer and staff requirements become part of procedural practice and are available for regular conversation with officers. However, officers found it difficult to fully articulate the process through which they choose who to engage with. A council officer in Southey talked about their role as signposting the Town Hall to community leaders,

“I guess in my head I’ve got a picture and I could draw kind of a nice little diagram showing...It’s like those things you do in kids puzzle books where you’ve got on the left hand side one set of things here, one set of things there and these are school kids and there’s all these different kind of flows and trying to work out if Billy wants a strawberry cake which line should he follow...

KIDS

CAKES



...In my head I've got a load of things from the centre and to be honest all I feel I have time to do is to put the people here (pointing to the 'kids' section of the diagram) in touch with the appropriate thing here (pointing to the 'cakes' section)...I guess I'm just conscious of talking that ok SOAR have got a group which calls itself Community Safety which is supposed to have a community safety remit for the area and they have a meeting and it's not like this but let's suppose six or seven people show up for that out of a population of 50,000. I'm telling these people at the centre that the group that you need to talk to which is a representative group of people in the area is this and there's a whole kind of set of assumptions that go within that in saying that this is the most appropriate group but because it's probably a snapshot decision that I make in replying to an email in a morning in which I've got like twenty-five different emails to respond to, I just say talk to this person and that's it and that's as much of a process that I go through in terms of signposting..."  
(Stuart, council officer)

In their role as gatekeepers, officers and staff are able to call into question the extent to which an individual legitimately represents the community. A member of the BNDC staff recalled a story concerning a

conversation with one of the community representatives on the board after they had claimed to be expressing the 'community view',

"So you say the community want this, when did they say it?' 'Oh, I know it because they've told me.' 'Right, how did the community tell you?... 'Oh, I walk around and they talk to me' and I say 'ah hold on, a few people walked up to you.' It's not just that but this does happen almost everywhere I've been there'll be people who say 'my community this, I speak for the community' and quite often what it means is a few people have bent their ears but you get to that delusional stage when you say, 'yes, I am the community'. Sometimes they can be blinkered between being objective and being passionate...I can step back and say I agree with what you say, or it's a very worthwhile cause but do you think we should be looking at other alternatives? So by persuasion we eventually get there."

(Duncan, regeneration staff)

In behaving in such a way, staff and officers are making claims about their own ability to speak for the community. It implies that they have developed local knowledge similar to the community leaders regarding the area and are able to weigh up the validity of statements so,

"When someone stands up and says, 'we the community want this' you can say with some confidence 'actually no I know that's not what the community wants' because I'm out there talking to them as well."

(Jeff, regeneration staff)

In acting as rule appliers, staff and officers are able to block those who they do not consider legitimate or who do not conduct themselves in a manner appropriate for the setting. This can be illustrated by how a member of the SOAR team responds to a group they referred to as 'loudmouths'. These individuals were perceived as being highly vocal and prominent in meetings but only complained about the problems of a neighbourhood and the council's failure to deal with them. These 'loudmouths' fail to alter their reading of the council from one of hostility to one of co-operation and collaboration, in contrast to many of the community leaders interviewed. 'Loudmouths' are

considered by other community leaders and officers and staff to be acting inappropriately,

“There’s no point trying to muffle the shouts of these loudmouths because that will just give them more fuel to shout even louder. So (pause) basically listening and nodding (is the ways I respond), the more you agree, the more it annoys them (laughs) because there’s authority over there (holding out one hand) and there’s us (holding out the other). (Loudmouths say) authority never listens to us so if you do listen they get a bit annoyed...”  
(Jeff, regeneration staff)

This supports the reading of a Burngreave community leader who felt that acting as a “resident from hell” (Dee, community leader) meant they would be ignored. Indeed, one of the key developments identified in community leaders was that they had calmed down their initial aggressive stance as they worked with officers and staff and listened to other viewpoints, developing trust between the actors. This has clear implications concerning the relative power of state actors and community leaders drawing upon the second face of power. For example, community leaders read that certain types of behaviour and emotions are acceptable when interacting with state actors whilst others are not. Further, regeneration staff and council officers are able to prevent some actors from taking part in the decision making process.

However, it has been shown that whilst community leaders alter their behaviour over time in relation to the state, they do not lose their bullishness. A member of the SOAR team also felt that it was important for community leaders to have this trait and not become placid. They argued that it would be counter-productive for regeneration staff to overly influence community leaders,

“...a leader to some extent is only as good as the board they represent (pause). To some extent it would make my job easier if I had a very supine board it would make my job very easy but I don’t think we’d end up doing the kind of stuff we should be doing because you just end up becoming alienated from your constituency, the board is your touchstone...”

(Tim, regeneration staff)

A member of staff was largely willing to let decisions be made by the community even if they did not necessarily agree with them but thought they could influence them if they felt they were wrong,

“So I can imagine how it would have been but if I think something really is wrong then will try in some slight and diplomatic way try to influence it but generally speaking I try to bite my tongue, it’s not my decision.”

(Jeff, regeneration staff)

This sits uncomfortably with the notion that some groups are considered as more worthy than others and those with differing views would be avoided (for example Anastacio et al 2000, Smith et al 2004). There is a two way change that occurs in terms of how the council interpret a particular area and also how the community leaders read council officers and regeneration staff as members of governance structures. Whilst council officers work for the council, the two are not synonymous with one another in the eyes of community leaders. To some extent the two are divorced from one another with specific officers open to praise or criticism whilst the view of the council as a whole is different. The previous chapter has discussed how the relationships and trust between actors develop over time. For example, there are some officers that have resisted the procedural change of involving community leaders in the process of governing but are unable to block leaders because of other officers and procedures within the organisation,

“We still have one or two die-hards that don’t like (the) way things are happening but because the people above them have got the say so they have to knuckle down and they do but the majority of the workers

on the council have sort of come through and they think it's great because think about it we're doing a lot of work for them (laughs)."  
(Dot, community leader)

Likewise, regeneration staff acknowledged that community leaders will be at different stages of capability and are reluctant to empower those they consider incompetent,

"There's one member of the board, I'm not actually convinced (community leader) knows what is going on...I'd be concerned if they were all like that but they're not. So I think if you've got twelve people you're always going to have some people who've got their head round it more than others (pause) and it's also a question of recognising that there's a limit in terms of how much they can take in, and take on board because there's no point in trying to develop the skills in someone who, you know in your heart of hearts, isn't going to pick those skills up. So I think that's why I focus on a baseline set of skills but it's difficult if you've got someone on who's crap, you're not going to kick them off are you?"  
(Tim, regeneration staff)

### Officers and Staff as Interpreters: Making the Rules

Besides applying the rules, officers and staff have a role as rule makers. They are translators, passing on their interpretation of 'how things are done round here' to new community leaders. The previous chapter noted the role of regeneration staff in providing training for newcomers to the regeneration boards. A member of the SOAR team describes this process as operating on two levels; the formal and the informal,

"One, it was done in a formal way that particularly the community reps that came onto the board they were given support from the SOAR team, they offered pre-meetings before the meetings where they could go through the papers and all that sort of stuff and there was a degree of buddying up and all that sort of stuff so there were formal methods of doing it on the board and to some extent on the Theme Groups but there was also the informal networks as well..."  
(Tim, regeneration staff)

In doing this there is obvious scope for the staff member to influence community leaders through both the formal documents provided and the

informal buddy system. The informal training in particular is cited by the community leaders themselves as helpful in the early stages. For example, a community leader from Southey acknowledges,

“(Regeneration officer) were my mentor (him), I used to collar (the officer) for all sorts. I sent (him) an email, Dear (regeneration officer) my love, what does ....page something, something, what does this mean and (he'd) email me back saying 'shall we meet up for a coffee?' you know what I mean...”  
(Karen, community leader)

Council officers also act as interpreters of central and local government rules. Whilst community leaders understand government rules as either out of reach or something to be worked within, council officers interpret some rules as so open that it is much like working in an 'institutional void' (Hajer 2003 p175). The ambiguity and rule saturation created by national structures leaves considerable scope for officers to draw upon their authoritative resources to exert agency. As a council officer working in Southey shows,

“...It's an area with a whole load of grey areas (pause). For example with the NRF stuff we've been given all our priorities and stuff that we should work to informed particularly by the stuff that is in Sheffield's LAA but I guess because the LAA is so big and covers so many different areas when you actually start translating what it means on the ground (pause) it's so flexible and it can kind of be (pause) you get a sense in which you can make it mean whatever you want to make it mean...I could probably find a way of following the stuff in the government guidance to the letter of the law to not formally be breaking anything in there and showing myself to be doing it just through clever use of wording...using it to fund whatever I want.”  
(Stuart, council officer)

Regeneration staff, on the other hand perceive that they are able to operate within the rules of central government but not utilise them to their advantage. They understand their role as balancing the demands of central government with the needs of the community. A member of the BNDC team stated,

“I pretty much know the game as I call it, the regeneration game so I don’t find it a problem to respond to central government requirements....If you look within that the executive board balances the needs of the community with the requirements of central government.”  
(Duncan, regeneration staff)

Regeneration staff consider themselves as being better able to exert their agency at the council level. In the case of SOAR, their historical ties with the council meant that before SOAR became an incorporated body the council formally acted as the accountable body. In practice however, the team had significant levels of freedom to act as they saw fit,

“...if you went along to a board meeting you’d think that’s good, board are making all these decisions about projects and decisions about how we should target investment all this kind of stuff and the Theme Groups are part of that process so if it’s Health and Social Care project it went through the Theme Group before it came to the Board (pause) but in reality there was no formality in the structures, it was almost like a gentleman’s agreement with the city council that they would go along with the decisions that came out of the structures we’d set up...”  
(Tim, regeneration staff)

It was at the highly localised level of their organisation that regeneration staff consider themselves able to change the rules rather than simply operating within those created at higher levels. A member of Sheffield Homes argued,

“There’s always new things cropping up, there’s always new ways of looking at things (pause) and you work within the system that you’ve got and then you think well actually that’s great but maybe we could add to that and enhance it and improve it and that’s the beauty of working in tenant participation I think, it’s constantly changing, constantly evolving so it’s a constant learning.”  
(Louise, regeneration staff)



## The Changing Reading of Community Leaders in Governance

### Explaining the Local and State Focus

The first part of this chapter has highlighted the focus of community leaders on the local level and the state. The reason behind the concentration of community leaders on the local level can be attributed to the readings that prompted their initial involvement. For example, if the catalyst for action was a lack of children's playground facilities that the leader subsequently addressed, they would interpret this as a substantive impact. This can also be partly attributed to the relative difficulty community leaders experience at higher governance levels. Likewise, in order to understand the persistent presence of the state throughout the narratives it is necessary to understand the development of community leaders and the context in which they are situated.

Preceding the receipt of central government regeneration funding, Southey and Burngreave had a strong existing base of community organisations led by some of the community leaders who later came to hold positions on the BNDC and SOAR Boards. There is a strong history of community leaders in both areas working without government funding. A few individuals chose to respond proactively to the failures of the state as a council officer recalls,

“...The sociology of Burngreave in the 1990's gave rise to a pretty well organised, combative, interesting mixture of people sociologically; petty bourgeois radicals who (were) either moving through Burngreave or decided to stay here because their choice of area was determined by their small p politics. And that layer, insignificant numerically but really decisive socially, combined with a layer of mainly black and minority community activists and leaders or organisers who'd been around for a lot longer time and who I think were probably getting disenchanted with ethnically defined community organisations but who were as interested in what was happening to Burngreave as they were with what was

happening to the Pakistani community or African community. And that alliance between the white radical and the black and minority wider leadership gave rise to BCAAF.”  
(James, council officer)

The decision to form BCAAF reflected a conviction amongst some community leaders in the area that something needed to be done. For Shekhar, the catalyst was a newspaper article that appeared in the Sheffield Star with the headline “Don’t Touch Burngreave with a Barge Pole” which prompted him and other “like minded people” to act leading to the formation of the Burngreave Community Action Forum which managed to “bring all the groups at one platform without...setting a race against each another. We tied all the people together and that was the significance you know that usually it’s difficult...” This resulted in satisfaction amongst the community leaders involved, as one remembers,

“There wasn’t any funding and back then, this is going back a bit, there wasn’t any local authority presence in the area, there were no government workers so basically although it meant things were neglected and as the steel industry was going down, the whole area was going down as well but it also meant that you sort of got the satisfaction of doing things and doing things together.”  
(Dee, community leader)

At this stage the community leaders of BCAAF in Burngreave and NEST in Southey can be seen as coming close to spirit of Bang’s everyday makers. Both neighbourhoods are working without state assistance and with a limited amount of resources. However, this period did not last in either Burngreave or Southey. In order to have an impact on resource allocation (the substantive dimension), community leaders perceive a need for money, meaning that they seek access to state funding requiring recognition (the symbolic dimension),

“For the first couple of years we had no funding at all, we did all the leafleting ourselves, we met in each others houses then we got some SRB funding and we set up the trust, BCAT.”  
(Dee, community leader)

Perversely, the community leaders identify the stage of working without state assistance as crucial in securing state acceptance and new advantages later on. Both areas interpret that in acting independently they made themselves candidates for central government funding. By mobilising the community and demonstrating need, the community leaders (and their respective organisations) demonstrated their appropriateness for state assistance and funding. It is here then that the state aspects of the reading-acting-effect model begin to play a more significant role in the readings of community leaders since they are mobilising in order to access state resources.

The ability of expert citizens and professional citizens to mobilise a large number of community actors increases the likelihood of them being recognised by the state. For example, one community leader made the link between her ability to get a large number of members for a community organisation and their ability to get state actors to attend meetings,

“I’ve got enough people now to get X, Y or Z to come and see us and ask for that information because people sat round my table want to know what’s going off.”  
(Pam, community leader)

### The Levels of the State

Community leaders interpreted the levels of the state in disparate ways. The state is not perceived as a monolithic whole. Instead, community leaders hold different views about various levels of governmental bodies. These readings influence the extent to which community leaders feel able to exert agency and

how they alter their behaviour between these various levels. For example, Josh, a community leader in Southey talked about his experience of applying to Yorkshire Forward (Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire and Humberside) for lottery funding. In the first year of applying the bid was rejected on the grounds that there was not enough money in the region. When the individual asked what was wrong with the bid they were told simply to re-submit it without changes the following year. Although dubious, Josh did so and was awarded the lottery money leaving him believing that he was at the mercy of the apparent perversity of Yorkshire Forward's decision making. This perceived failure of the RDA to follow rules understandable to community leaders is supported by a story another Southey community leader told about Yorkshire Forward stopping the funding for an education programme at very short notice,

"That money were agreed last year...and on Wednesday night you get a phone call saying the money has stopped from Thursday, oh no, no definitely not...they shouldn't be allowed to do that...They should have said in January when we went for our contracts and that."  
(Karen, community leader)

Although expert citizens get more adept at utilising institutions higher up within governance, there is still potential for a change to leave actors unable to respond. For example, in Burngreave one leader told a story regarding their receipt of Objective 1 funding for some fencing and lighting in their area. However, changes in the rules for Objective 1 meant that the scheme was deemed as being no longer appropriate for funding. The community leader expressed their frustration with this, particularly as they had to try and articulate it to the community who kept asking why the project had not started. This highlights the apparent power imbalance between

community leaders in relation to the state based on their dependence upon the state as a source of resources.

Whilst both Southey and Burngreave are in receipt of central government regeneration money, central government itself is considered as a far off obelisk that cannot be affected by the behaviour of community leaders. In order to access it, community leaders instead went to the city council and marketed themselves. In Southey for example, community leaders in the area formed the North East Sheffield Trust (NEST). NEST carried out a community audit allowing them to articulate the needs of the area and with the support of the council successfully bid for SRB money,

“...SOAR started out by community representatives suggesting that there was a need for money (Q: through NEST? A: Yeah) for the area and they sort of got together with the council and the council sort of agreed and half helped them to put a bid into SRB and this group, this NEST group was successful in getting the money for the area as long as the council were the accountable body...”  
(Jeff, regeneration staff)

Given these different interpretations and the various potential sources of funding it is useful to understand political opportunity structures as occurring on multiple levels which community leaders read differently rather than conceiving of a single set of political opportunity structures. Community leaders read the opportunity structures at the local level as more open than those at the national level.

In order to utilise the institutions of central government that are seen as beyond the reach and influence of the community leaders, there was a shared reading that this required the support of the council. Leaders were able to read the intermediate institutions of the council and exert influence. The use of the council as a powerful intermediary required the community leaders to

make compromises, be proactive and demonstrate a willingness to work with the council to initiate change in order to be accepted supporting Gamson's (1975) research. As a result they would be considered legitimate by the council and thus appropriate for central government funding. For example, when discussing the reasons that another area of Sheffield, Darnall, has not received regeneration funding despite similar deprivation statistics, a council officer argued it was because there was not the same common voice to proactively articulate need through a collective organisation willing to work with the council that Burngreave had through BCAF and Southey through NEST,

“The council sees an area in particular ways, if you talk to people in the Town Hall about Darnall they'll say ‘fucking Darnall, nightmare, there's so many organisations there...they're always fighting, they're always writing into the Town Hall I don't know where to start’...”  
(James, council officer)

In actively seeking central government assistance via the council, community leaders are becoming more the expert citizens moving from a stance of conflict with the state to one of co-operation and collaboration. This is based on the reading that in order to make a difference, community leaders need money and in order to get money, they need state support linking to symbolic impact. There is a sense in which some of the community leaders in Burngreave acknowledged that in going after central government funding they needed to accept the constraints this brought and tailor themselves to match state requirements. However, the story below of how Burngreave received funding also illustrates the ability of situated agents to modify state priorities based on marketing their local knowledge as a resource that state actors do not possess,

“I approached the appropriate people at the council so the meeting was organised with the Government Office (pause)...The Government Office liked the, you know the bureaucrats talk. They said ‘we have seen your papers and if Burngreave could change their priorities’ (pause) so...I said ‘right, we have been changing our priorities for years (pause) nothing has happened. This time I would like to ask the Government Office to change their priorities and look at the Burngreave, this is our turn now’ so they all laughed and said ‘yes Shekhar, you’re right the Government Office would like to help Burngreave’...”  
(Shekhar, community leader)

Community leaders make a decision that it is better to accept and work within the constricting controls linked with central government funding and have the regeneration money than not. The strategic choice is made to compromise and see if there was scope for community leaders to exert change from within the system. As a community leader from the area expresses when talking about their decision to become involved with the New Deal programme,

“...I just think that I’ve made the decision to get involved with New Deal and I know it’s flawed and it’s a government funded programme but it’s fifty-two million quid and we’ve got a choice; do we let someone else run it or do we see what we can contribute...I don’t see the point of being adversarial with it because...it’s for the community so it’s not up to us and try and bring it down, I think it’s up to us to try and compromise and try and have an influence on it.”  
(Dee, community leader)

The discussion of how community leaders read the various levels of the state demonstrates the power relationships that operate within governance. Community leaders are competing at the first face of power for funding and institutions provide a means of distributing these resources. In order to access the resources held by the state, community leaders modify their behaviour. However, by acting in this way community leaders are dependent on resources controlled by the state. It is easier for community leaders to be recognised by the state at lower levels where they can access

some resources but there are opportunities for community leaders to access larger resources if they can be accepted at higher levels. However, community leaders find it more difficult to access resources at these higher state levels due to the constraining impact of institutions and the limited power of community leaders.

### The Role of the State

The section above and the stories of regeneration staff and council officers have shown the potential scope for the state to affect community leaders. Further, the previous chapter has highlighted the changing relationships between community leaders and officers and staff as understood by community leaders. It has shown how community leaders navigate and adapt to rules. This gives the impression of leaders, if not being fully incorporated, certainly being quietened. These changes taken alone are somewhat misleading. They neglect the more proactive responses taken by community leaders in response to being involved in governance processes. In accessing governance environments community leaders are able to secure procedural impacts by altering the rules themselves.

Community leaders are aware of the potential for officers and staff to attempt to influence the process as they work ever closer to state structures. Whilst a strong relationship with officers is widely perceived by many of the community leaders they are also aware of the influence that officers can attempt to exert. In response, community leaders may adopt strategies that seek to mobilise a larger number of actors. For example, community leaders may seek support and assistance from other community leaders drawing



upon the community aspect of the reading-acting-effect model. Community leaders may hold meetings together in order to prepare for meetings with other governance actors. A community leader in Southey outlines the reasoning behind their pre-meetings,

“...There’s always a trend that the officers and the authorities try to steer you where they want you to go but when we did option appraisals we were at a meeting with everybody there and it tended to be going a bit that way, so we said hold on, and we started having pre-meetings just with the tenant representatives so we were all singing from the same hymn sheet and they couldn’t pick one off against the other. So we went into that meeting knowing exactly what we were talking about and the way that we wanted it to go...”  
(Dot, community leader)

The perceived value in mobilising in larger numbers also served as the motivation behind the formation of some community organisations. In Burngreave, the Burngreave Business Forum (which is made up of all the shop keepers working along the area’s main shopping high street of Spital Hill) was established in response to redevelopment plans which would have seen the demolition of a number of the shops. A community leader in the area was able to successfully activate the other shop-keepers in Spital Hill and mobilise them to challenge the antagonist (in this case the council). While there had been consultation for these plans with the shop-keepers it was carried out on a shop-by-shop basis. This was felt to affect the outcome of the consultation as one of the community leaders (and shop-keepers on Spital Hill) behind the group outlines,

“...The heart of this Burngreave Business Forum stuff was that all the businesses were together now. Once the plans had isolated them one by one and explain to them whether they’d get this compensation or that compensation and ‘here’s a packet to explain you all your rights and how you deal with the situation if you’re a compulsory purchase’ and so on. This is kind of like leaping over the consultation process.”  
(David, community leader)

On a larger scale, within Southey the TARAs in the area formed the Area P Alliance made up of all the TARAs within Sheffield Home's administrative Area P to enable the TARAs to have a "loud voice" (Karen, community leader) and "so that we're all working in unity to deal with issues with Sheffield Homes so they don't, well don't do this but to make sure they don't pick each TARA off" (Elsie, community leader). A similar group was also established in Burngreave based on a reading that it would allow them access to more decision making structures. A community leader explained the motivation behind the group was a decision "that we wanted more of a say in housing matters" (Alistair, community leader). Such behaviour is closely associated with symbolic and substantive impact. Community leaders seek to utilise the community aspects of the reading-acting-effect model. The community is used as a powerful resource by community leaders in order to modify procedures thereby allowing them to be recognised as legitimate by state actors; and in achieving this symbolic recognition community leaders are able to have a substantive impact in their neighbourhood by accessing state resources.

One community leader expressed exasperation at the existence of the new tier of regeneration staff,

"...suddenly there is a community development industry that at the drop of a hat will come and facilitate your meetings...(they've) wasted a lot of my time, manipulating meetings and you end up everyone is discontent and nothing has been achieved."  
(David, community leader)

The viewpoint of community leaders regarding regeneration staff and officers cannot be easily generalised. Community leaders saw regeneration staff and officers as being divided between those that can be worked with and

those who attempt to block community leaders. So whilst some regeneration staff and council officers are well favoured and are understood to play a crucial role in the work of community leaders a poor member of regeneration staff is seen as a *bête-noire*. It takes time for trust to develop between the groups based on an initial mistrust of council officers and regeneration staff amongst community leaders discussed in the previous chapter.

The example of the park project in Southey at the beginning of the chapter shows how the community leader responded to a park consultant who was not considered to be listening to the community. The story highlights the varying degrees of success that an expert citizen's tactics can have when encountering attempts to affect the impact they envision. In response to a feeling that the park consultant was seeking to produce a park that would benefit their portfolio rather than match community needs, the community leader simply called meetings without the consultant. This strategy enabled the community leader to get their own way on some issues illustrated in the story below,

“...The skate board park is nothing like the one the designer drew you know. We said we don't want (the park consultant's design), anyway we had this consultation day and bought kids that were skate boarders because I know nothing about skate boarding and I said 'what do you need on a skate park?' I says, 'draw me a picture' and on the consultation day these five or six lads from Foxhill...come running down and...this designer had this big thing up with design on and I unrolled it and says 'I prefer yours' and I walked over and stuck it on and says 'that's the new skate board park' and (assistant park consultant said) 'yeah I agree with that' but I says 'your bloody (park consultant) wouldn't' and (the park consultant) threw it out but I kept putting it back and we've got what the kids designed.”  
(Karen, community leader)

Conversely, in other instances the same tactics were unsuccessful in overcoming the consultant,

“...There were a fellow who built that park twenty odd year ago and because (they) were in the planning...(they) knew what was on that park so (park consultant) wanted to spend a lot of money on drainage and I fetched (old planner) in and (they) said ‘you don’t need it on there because you got this layer...that would not let water through, all you got to do is take off the top layer’...and (park consultant) argued and argued and (old planner) argued and anyway the council believed and took (park consultant’s) way and now it’s swimming in water that lovely new football pitch, it won’t drain away...”  
(Karen, community leader)

There is no easy answer to the issue of whether community leaders are blocked by council officers and regeneration staff. What is clear is that these actors have the potential to influence community leaders through their own readings of rules and institutions. Whilst community leaders are not unaware of this nor are they powerless against it, interpretations about the extent to which community leaders can make an impact when working closely with such actors vary. However, in order to have a substantive impact on resource allocation, many actors read a need to become expert citizens necessitating increasing contact with such individuals associated with symbolic impact. A good working relationship with officers and staff is considered important and may require community leaders to accept firstly, that they may need to compromise and secondly, that some factors will be out of their sphere of influence. The ability of each to impact the other demonstrates the significance of power in their relationships and how trust develops as a result of changes to how both actor sets perceive each other.

### The Role of the Community

As community leaders become more recognisable as expert citizens and professional citizens there is a shift in how they read their community and other community organisations. The success of some community leaders

(and their organisations), understood as being expert citizens working close to the state, can create tension with other community groups who do not share such proximity.

In Southey, one community leader expressed frustration with trying to work with a successful TARA perceiving that their accomplishments meant that they largely ignored the other smaller, surrounding associations. Individuals who are highly expert can be seen as blocking the activities of others. An individual engaged primarily in TARA work in Southey felt crowded out of funding by the dominance of SOAR. In working so closely to the state, they felt that SOAR members had become self motivated and distant from the community,

“A lot of what’s in the area is about the SOAR board, the SRB 3 money is out the window and as a TARA we find it extremely frustrating that they’re running around in circles making sure that they’ve got jobs when we, the volunteers, don’t get paid a penny...We find it extremely frustrating and difficult to try to get funding at this level. They’re up there in their ivory towers with their jobs on the SOAR board and what have you (pause)...In the meantime we find it increasingly difficult to secure funds.”

(Rob, community leader)

The success of Southey in securing funding also means that the neighbourhood is rife with projects. Expert citizens and professional citizens are able to navigate and exploit the opportunities presented by these institutions. Conversely, inexperienced community leaders may be overwhelmed and unable to move between structures easily, as a member of the SOAR staff team observed,

“One of the problems with the SOAR area...because it was an SRB 5 area because it was of a particular level of deprivation it’s become a Pathfinder area for all sorts of things. There are levels and levels of strategies and initiatives layered on top of one another and you get to a

point where it's almost impossible to sift through them and to know what they're doing and what their relationships are.”  
(Jeff, regeneration staff)

The conflict between community leaders who work closely with the state and those who maintain some distance is best illustrated by examining Burngreave. The success of Burngreave in securing central government funding was partly due to the strength of the existing community base surrounding the Burngreave Community Action Forum (BCAF) and later, its administrative arm, Burngreave Community Action Trust (BCAT) formed after the area received SRB 4 money. When the area received New Deal money however, BCAF and BCAT were not chosen as the main delivery organisation. The council set up an interim partnership board which became BNDC because it was unsure about the representative nature of BCAF and BCAT (although the community representatives on this interim board were drawn from BCAF).

In the early stages of the interim board there was considerable antagonism between the state and community players. One of the councillors involved attributed this to the historically negative stance towards the council, a reading that changes as community leaders access state resources to benefit the area. In response, the board was re-organised with a new chief executive and a formal agreement (Advancing Together) was established between BNDC and Sheffield Council. This clarified the need for the two bodies to work together and established the council as accountable body and guarantor. The procedural impact of Advancing Together was cited by one expert citizen as an example of making a difference. The agreement demonstrates a shift in power relations and helps to build trust as community

leaders are no longer subservient to the state but a legitimate partner working alongside state actors.

Although BCAT was given funding from BNDC members of BCAF and BCAT perceived that BNDC had crowded them out and taken over a programme that should have been delivered through them,

“When Burngreave New Deal came to the area people at BCAF and BCAT were really pissed off because they thought it should have been them so Burngreave New Deal were always seen to be the usurper taking away the pot of money that should have rightfully been BCAF’s and BCAT’s.”

(Tim, regeneration staff)

This suggests that the environment in which community leaders operate is not wholly capacious; there is limited room. The friction between BNDC and BCAT and BCAF ties to the notion within sociological institutionalism that “the environment of organisations is capable of supporting only so many structures” (Peters 2005 p111). In Burngreave there is only space for a certain number of organisations leading to a fight for legitimacy between the community leaders and their respective organisations in the area. In the case of BCAF and BCAT the organisations began to question the legitimacy of BNDC arguing that BNDC had been incorporated by state structures. A community leader attached to BNDC stated there was,

“...A political alliance re-emerging between BCAF and BCAT around the politics of ‘New Deal is a private company, it’s a government funded quango, it’s board is made of people there to further their own personal interests, it’s ripping off the community, it’s using public money to buy up private property for itself’...”

(Dee, community leader)

It has been acknowledged that community leaders involved in BNDC compromised in order to work within the government led New Deal but did so as they read they could have a substantive impact on resource allocation. In

making such a compromise, BCAF and BCAT argue that the community leaders engaged changed and are too influenced by the state and not enough by the community associated with the second face of power,

“...When you become a company director of something like New Deal you’re bound by company policy, it becomes a corporate experience and so people are constrained in what they’re allowed to say, they’re constrained in what they’re allowed to think...you make local people feel important and like they’re doing something of great value when in fact all they’re doing is giving credit and legitimacy to a private corporation.”

(Jason, community leader)

In turn, BNDC members perceive that BCAF and BCAT have failed to develop their reading in a similar manner to them. BNDC has questioned the legitimacy of BCAF and BCAT on the grounds it has ceased to be the best link to the community illustrated by the departure of some communities of interest such as Pakistani members and the poor attendance of meetings by the public. Alongside their inability to keep the disparate groups of Burngreave together, regeneration staff perceived that BCAF was made up of “poor salesmen” (Tim, regeneration staff) unable to market their ideas appropriately to potential funding organisations and achieve the necessary state recognition. There have also been questions raised over their ability to deliver the services that BNDC funded them to provide. As a member of the BNDC regeneration staff stated,

“BCAT is supposed to be a community development trust but it’s very weak, badly managed by the management committee. BCAT is entirely dependent on New Deal funding £200,000 but they are not delivering what they’re supposed to be delivering. If you did a value for money assessment you would find it difficult to justify why they’re spending £200, 000 per year.”

(Duncan, regeneration staff)

BCAF has lost the ability to sell itself as the best community organisation to deliver services in Burngreave on the grounds that had made



the area attractive for government funding in the first place: the unification of disparate groups and the effective delivery of services. The position of BCAF and BCAT is therefore one in which they consider that a body dominated by the state has crowded them out and blocks them from being able to make a difference in the area. At the same time they are dependent on the same organisation for funding,

“New Deal has got the power. Its attitude seems to be they either want to control BCAT or they want as to end BCAT.”  
(Jason, community leader)

At the end of 2006 BCAT closed. A letter from BNDC gave BCAT two weeks to repay £80,000 which BNDC argued had not been used for capacity building as it was intended (Burngreave Messenger 2006b). This highlights Connelly et al's (2006) assertion that legitimacy is susceptible to change and in need of maintenance. In a sense, BNDC has become a gatekeeper able to choose how to allocate resources.

Competition for resources between communities also occurs in Burngreave based upon ethnicity. A member of BNDC staff used a story about the provision of education support staff to highlight this tension,

“The Yemeni's have got one, the Somali's have got two, and the Pakistani's have got one. What that does exclude is the white kids because they don't have a group and if you look at the educational statistics they are at the lower key stages, so it's actually now the poor white kids that are underperforming and yet they don't have a study support... So unless you begin to address those issues of diversity one day there might be a problem because one particular community might we say 'hang on we had £52 million but we've never benefited from it'...Trying to change the study support to just one; ask the Yemeni to arrange it and the Somali's and the Pakistan's are worried that the Yemeni's will take over etc but we are not willing to fund four, we can only fund one...”  
(Duncan, regeneration staff)

The conflict between community leaders and organisations is far more noticeable in Burngreave than it is in Southey. In Burngreave there are multiple groups operating at an area wide level whilst in Southey there is only really SOAR and other groups that operate on smaller scales below it. This is illustrated by a member of the SOAR staff team who had experience of working in Burngreave,

“I think it’s more factionalised in Burngreave because you’ve got three haven’t you? You’ve got New Deal, BCAT and BCAF so you’ve got three organisations that purport to some extent represent and lead the community...so you’ve got that factionalisation and the question is over legitimacy. It’s like ‘I’m the legitimate community leader’, ‘no you’re not, I’m the legitimate community leader’...whereas over here it’s never really been like that so you’ve got leaders that operate at a variety of different levels...”

(Tim, regeneration staff)

The notion that there is only space for a limited number of community organisations also applies at the city wide level. A community leader from Burngreave sitting on a Sheffield wide partnership observed that other areas that received regeneration funding before Burngreave used to get all the attention on a city level,

“...when they (council) talked about regeneration in the city it was always Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe or the Manor and we never got any visitors, we were really out there in the cold and to me it’s a symbol of the fact that we’re not so much anymore it means that we’ve got a voice...”

(Dee, community leader)

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined community leaders’ stories of making a difference. Community leaders concentrate on the substantive impact that their actions have at the micro-level in their neighbourhood. A common theme across the stories of substantive impact told by community leaders is the prominence of

the state. This can be explained by considering the development of community leaders.

The initial prompt for becoming a 'community leader' demonstrates the importance of the actor's experience in their community and their sense of responsibility for it. Individuals interpret something needs to be done to address a failure in the state aspects of the reading-acting-effect model to adequately meet the needs of the area. Therefore, they read substantive impacts at the local level as the most important. Alongside this, they perceive an important symbolic function as possessors of local knowledge acting as representatives both in and for their area. The sheer scale of the work undertaken by each community leader means that the landscape would look very different were they not there.

In these early stages, community leaders in both Southey and Burngreave can be considered as everyday makers as they work largely without state assistance. However, over time many of the actors in both areas read that in order to have a substantive impact they require resources. The state is read as providing opportunities for community leaders to access such resources in the form of regeneration funding. Community leaders begin to operate within numerous groups at multiple levels necessitating a process of learning particularly at the higher governance levels.

In seeking to access central government institutions, both neighbourhoods sought legitimisation from Sheffield City Council and underwent a process of marketing themselves. This highlights the strong link between substantive and symbolic impact supporting Eder (1992, 1993) and Gamson (1975) assertions that actors need to achieve recognition before they

can compete for resources. However, part of this process was the demonstration of community leaders' ability to work independently and unite interests as everyday makers. So, in order to be recognised by state actors community leaders draw upon their recognition amongst the community and their ability to mobilise the community in order to be recognised by the state.

In working alongside the council there is recognition that "merely to be against something will not do" (Hendriks and Tops 2005 p478). Both areas were able to alter how the council saw their neighbourhood and also how community leaders saw the council. This necessitated a change in how community leaders made sense of their role in relation to the council from one of hostility and aggression to a mentality of working as partners.

As they come into increasing contact with the state they must interact with council officers and regeneration staff as other members of state bodies involved in governing. The stories of council officers and regeneration staff highlight their ability to influence community leaders. This occurred in two key ways related to procedural impact. Firstly, officers and staff serve as gatekeepers, applying rules and deciding who is and who is not involved in the governance process. Secondly, they act as rule makers socialising community leaders into the institutional 'rules of the game'. This supports the reading of community leaders that they need to alter their behaviour by working collaboratively with state actors. Whilst 'loudmouths' went largely ignored, regeneration staff expressed a preference for community leaders who remained combative but were also collaborative. Such individuals become a procedural part of governing. Although staff and officers express a willingness to allow the community leaders some freedom this suggests that

they choose how much influence they allow community leaders to have, intervening as and when they see fit.

The prominence of the state in the readings of community leaders and the roles of staff and officers raises issues surrounding power. Whilst community leaders openly compete for resources, they do so in order to be recognised by the state. Community leaders read that the best source of funding is the state and become dependent on the state for resources. As such community leaders modify their behaviour in order to be recognised by the state. This suggests a very uneven power relationship particularly given the ability of regeneration staff and council officers to act as rule interpreters and makers operating at the second face of power.

However, it is a mistake to assume that community leaders are incorporated and without power. Community leaders are not unaware of the attempts of officers and staff to influence them as they become expert citizens. In response they draw on the community aspects of the reading-acting-effect model using their local knowledge as a resource. Community leaders mobilise with other community organisations banding together into larger groups and also holding pre-meetings. It is unlikely that community leaders become fully incorporated as expert citizens given their strong characters. Furthermore, the translation of local knowledge is also not a neutral process. By entering these spaces based on their reading of the rules, community leaders adapt not only themselves but through their agency are also able to alter institutional arrangements to better suit their needs highlighting the link between procedural and symbolic impact.

Through their work with the state, community leaders become increasingly at ease with working with regeneration staff and council officers and develop trust. In part this shift reflects the humanising of what were previously faceless organisations. Community leaders also grow increasingly comfortable with the higher levels of the state and are able to scale jump to navigate rules and balance institutional influences. However, they have to make more compromises the more expert they become explaining why community leaders do not want to become councillors. Community leaders perform a valuable role of being able to move between institutions and the boundaries of state and civil society, something that state players are often unable to accomplish.

As community leaders develop and move closer to the state, governance institutions play a more significant role in the readings of agents. Community leaders decide what level of proximity to state they are comfortable with as expert citizens. Actors make an assessment based on a trade off between the restrictions associated with a particular position and the substantive impact they perceive that they can make by being there. Some community leaders may feel that they are inherently reduced to little more than 'important window dressing' by working with the state. Whilst such actors will still come into contact with the state and remain everyday makers or expert citizens they can be differentiated by their stance towards the state. Others acknowledge that although involvement with the state brings with it constraints, it is better to work with, rather than outside the governance system. By playing by the rules of the game they are able to exploit the

opportunities of state institutions and at the same time making small procedural changes to these structures.

How expert citizens position themselves will reflect their own interpretations which modify over time. Differing readings have resulted in conflict, particularly in Burngreave. Institutions provide limited space for community leaders to obtain funding requiring competition between community organisations. The competition that follows does not only occur within a neighbourhood, it also takes place at various levels. The council is capable of providing opportunities for a limited number of areas and can only focus on a few regeneration areas. Historically this had been to the detriment of Burngreave. It is perceived that the presence of actors from Burngreave on city level boards shows that the area is considered legitimate and has successfully reversed the negative reading of the council that existed previously,

“...up to three or four years ago people would never read about Burngreave in the press unless it was about a drugs related shooting and people talking about it would always say ‘you don’t want to go there’ or ‘if you go there your car gets broken in to...’”  
(Dee, community leader)

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

This final chapter is divided into four parts. The first provides a summary of the thesis re-stating the keys points made in each chapter. The second identifies the contributions of the thesis. The section is organised around the research questions identified in chapter 2 and summarises the central arguments of the thesis in light of the research findings. The third section considers future research avenues in response to the thesis. The section examines a number of aspects of the research that could be improved upon and areas that could be developed in further research projects. The final section offers some reflections on the PhD process and outlines the researcher's personal development.

#### Thesis Summary

The introduction established the context for the research. Community leaders were seen to have emerged as significant actors in the UK and internationally as part of the wider shift towards governance. They are individuals drawn from civil society to be involved in the process of governing over sustained periods reflecting the increasing number of opportunities for citizens to be involved in 'new collaborative spaces' (Skelcher et al 2005). At the same time, this occurs against a backdrop where levels of political participation have fallen meaning that for the majority of the population "politics is an ad hoc activity" (Stoker 2006 p35).



The involvement of community leaders revolves around the notion that the traditional system of governing through a single body is not suited to meet the needs of a modern, complex society with policy issues cutting across conventional departmental lines. Community leaders possess expert local knowledge which, when used alongside that of other governance actors provides appropriate policy responses. This is seen as advantageous to both parties involved. Firstly, it helps to address the legitimacy problems of the representative democratic system with community leaders acting to reconnect the state with communities. There are also benefits to the community leader personally (such as improved skills) and the wider community through policies which better match their needs.

In practice this development has created number of issues. The second chapter examined existing studies of community leaders. The chapter highlighted the need to define such individuals based upon the role as well as their position. Their role as legitimate representatives is contested by the state and the community and in spanning the boundaries of both, community leaders can find themselves in no-man's land. The discussion of the existing literature suggested a number of structural forces affect the ability of community leaders to fully perform their role. These include formal aspects such as how partnerships are designed and informal aspects such as the enduring culture of local authorities. The central argument of the thesis has been that, in the context of the existing community leader literature, there is a need to reposition analysis in a way that systematically considers the roles of agency and structure. This shortfall prompted the core research question of this thesis; under what conditions do community leaders make a difference?

Chapter 3 discussed new institutionalist theory as a means of re-examining community leaders by starting analysis with the structural forces. These structures (labelled as institutions) have a mediating and constraining affect on actors. The three main branches of new institutionalism were discussed; historical, rational choice and sociological. Bevir and Rhodes' (2006) concept of the 'situated agent' showed the need to consider the relationship between actors and their environment over time. The sociological stream of new institutionalism was selected since it offered an appropriate means of seeing community leaders as situated agents.

Chapter 4 examined the empiric focus upon rules in new institutionalism which was seen to be problematic. This was based on the inherent methodological difficulty of seeing, and therefore identifying rules without being embedded in a setting for an extended period. Therefore, as an individual researcher with limited resources, attempts to study rules could be considered a pyrrhic victory. The thesis offered a solution by remaining within new institutionalist rules but concentrated on how actors read and interpret their environment and how this, in turn, affects what they do. This was illustrated by the reading-acting-effect model shown in Figure 1.

Chapter 5 outlined the practical research approach using a single case study to examine community leaders and the new governance of local communities. Sheffield was selected as the case based on a number of research criteria such as the city's history of research and accessibility to the researcher. Community leaders were identified based on Bonjean and Olsen's (1964) 'positional' and 'reputational' approach. A biographical interview method was selected to examine the development of community

leaders and see how their perceptions alter over time. The method was chosen after trialling in three Sheffield neighbourhoods. The interview data was transcribed fully in order to assist analysis and identify stories.

Chapter 6 introduced Sheffield as the case. The chapter examined the development of the city focussing upon its institutions, character and levels of community activity. This showed how the city's history has affected how it looks today including its industrial heritage and the dominance of Labour. The chapter suggested that political opportunity structures are open and communities are encouraged to be involved in decision making in numerous ways. The two neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey (taken from the three which were used to test interview methods) were introduced showing that although diverse in character both were united by their deprivation and receipt of substantial pots of regeneration funding which necessitated the involvement of community leaders.

Chapter 7 outlined the biographies of community leaders in relation to the reading-acting-effect model. In the early stages the community features of the model are more significant in the reading of community leaders than those associated with the state. Upon becoming a community leader, actors come into increasing contact with the various layers of the state. There is a process of reading the rules whereby community leaders adapt to their surroundings as they develop their understanding of settings that are initially foreign to them. This introduced the importance of collaboration between community leaders and officers and staff and the development of trust. Community leaders position themselves and interpret their relationships differently. A typology of community leaders was established based on these different

readings with three groups identified: everyday makers, expert citizens and professional citizens.

Chapter 8 showed that community leaders concentrated on the substantive aspect of difference. In order to make this difference, community leaders read that they need financial support from the state making them more aware of state institutions. In order to compete for such resources community leaders market themselves to the council based, in part on their ability to operate without such support in the past drawing on the symbolic dimension of difference. Council officers and regeneration staff play significant roles applying and making rules which affect community leaders. However, community leaders modify rules and responded to attempts to influence them by drawing upon the community features of the model. Community leaders balance their proximity to the state and the associated compromises against the difference they can make and position themselves accordingly. As they develop and work closer to the state, community leaders can begin to read the community features of the reading-acting-effect model differently. As a result of their differing readings of this position there can be tension and competition between the types of community leaders.

### The Contributions of the Thesis

This thesis has examined five research questions:

1. Under what conditions do community leaders make a difference?
2. How can the relationship between community leaders and their institutional setting be conceptualised?

3. What factors determine the capacity of community leaders to read and influence rules?
4. To what extent do community leaders change their readings of the community and the state as they develop from everyday makers to expert citizens?
5. How can community leaders be examined using a methodological approach not previously or widely used within existing studies?

The thesis has successfully carried out a Sheffield case study of community leaders in the neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey. This accompanies the existing studies of community leaders reviewed in chapter 2 and makes an original contribution by using a method rarely applied in the field of public policy, namely narrative interviewing. This responded directly to the fifth research question. Such an approach allowed the generation of biographies for the community leaders interviewed. The understanding of community leaders in such a way had a number of benefits which are discussed in relation to the four other research questions posed by the thesis.

### Making a Difference

The interpretations of the difference made by community leaders discussed in chapter 8 reinforce the importance of the community features of the reading-acting-effect model. Individuals were seen to become involved as 'community leaders' because of a perceived need in their neighbourhood combined with

their own sense of responsibility for the area. As a consequence, community leaders focus upon the impact they have upon their immediate area. Their stories of making a difference are concerned with the neighbourhood level; improving the local park, helping a neighbour who has been out of work to get onto a training course or stopping cowboy gardeners taking advantage of elderly residents.

Community leaders are primarily concerned with the substantive aspect of difference and securing resources. A number of community leaders see value in them simply being there reflecting the symbolic dimension. However, they may feel that they are there but situated on the fringes as little more than 'window dressing'. Their role is to legitimise decisions made by other more powerful actors and they are only able to make changes at the edges of policy. Although part of community leaders being there reflects their recognition by state actors and a procedural change in the way communities are governed, this dimension is the least commented upon by community leaders. It is officers and staff who are more likely to comment on the procedural aspect which is likely to reflect the differing institutions between community leaders and officers and staff.

Overall, the dimensions of presence and procedure play a far lesser role in the interpretations of actors than the more output focussed, substantive dimension. However, the Sheffield case study has shown that the three dimensions of difference are interrelated and interdependent.

In order for community leaders to make a substantive impact they read a need for resources. The state provides opportunities for actors to secure such resources prompting community leaders to seek recognition and

acceptance amongst state actors. Community leaders draw upon the community aspects of the reading-acting-effect model in order to market themselves to state actors. Those community leaders who are able to achieve recognition in the eyes of the state are able to compete for the allocative resources that enable them to make a substantive local difference. This highlights the strong links between the substantive and symbolic dimensions of difference.

In working closer to the state, community leaders' readings of the state change. The initial hostility felt by community leaders (which prompted many of them to take action in the first place) softens as they experience the state in the more humane form of officers and staff. Community leaders and governance actors (council officers and regeneration staff) enter into a collaborative relationship as they work alongside and listen to one another and develop trust. Community leaders also read their modified view of the state as important in order to secure funding; a view that is reinforced by officers and staff.

Community leaders are more concerned with seeing the impact of their actions at the micro-level. Conversely, they find it much more difficult to see the value in their work at higher, more strategic levels. Whilst their presence at this level confirms their legitimacy in the eyes of governance actors, it also reflects the difficulty community leaders experience working higher up. At these levels there is limited space for community leaders and they struggle to read the rules and they may be blocked from having a substantive impact by institutions and more powerful actors.

Over time community leaders seek increasing financial resources to assist in their bid to have a substantive impact prompting them to seek access to higher levels of governance. Although there is limited space for community leaders at higher rungs it does present an increased number of opportunities to make a difference. Successful community leaders are able to read and move between governance levels. They are able to utilise the opportunities presented at various levels; something that other communities of meaning may find difficult. Furthermore, community leaders are far from simple, passive conduits in this process but act as translators and also affect the institutions they are involved with. This highlights the relationship between the symbolic and procedural dimensions of difference; before community leaders can modify the rules, they need to be able to read the rules and resources and access them by being recognised by other actors.

#### The Interaction between a Community Leader and their Institutional Setting

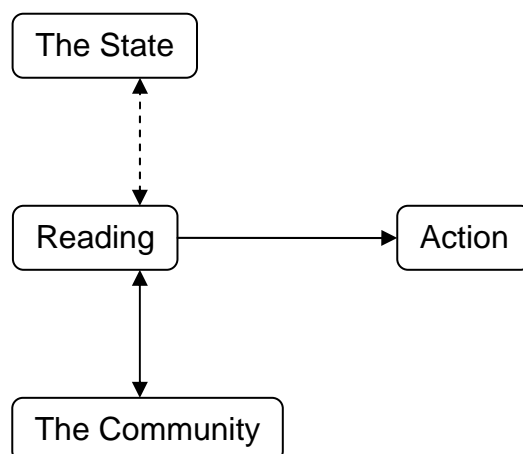
The reading-acting-effect model developed in chapter 4 has been shown to offer a fresh approach to the study of community leaders by conceptualising them as situated agents. The model offers a way of examining community leaders as actors operating in particular institutional settings at a particular time. Given the sustained involvement of community leaders in governance it is necessary to consider their development paths.

Chapter 7 discussed the development of community leaders based on their biographies. The first point of contact resulting in an individual becoming recognisable as a 'community leader' is likely to reflect the enactment of deep set values that result from being embedded within a community and perceiving a need. Their involvement is rarely the result of governing



structures. The state features of the reading-acting-effect model only appear relevant at this stage in the sense that they are read as inadequate. The provision of services is failing to match the expectations of individuals in the community. This combines with the particular community context prompting some members of the community to act and become recognisable as 'community leaders'. It is the community in which they are situated that is more likely to explain the early involvement of community leaders. So at this stage, it is the community aspects of the community leader's environment rather than the state that dominate their readings. This is depicted in Figure 5 below.

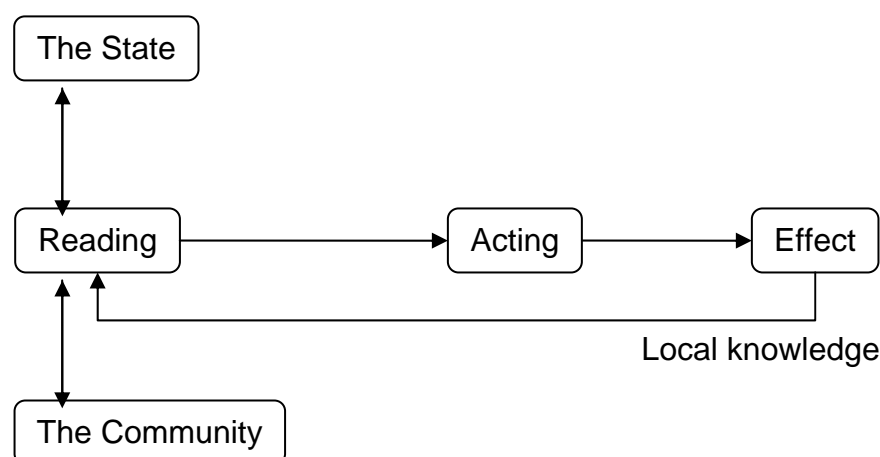
Figure 5: The Development of Community Leaders- Becoming a Community Leader



Once begun, community leaders become increasingly entrenched in the world of governance. Individuals become involved with an increasing number of voluntary and community organisations operating at various levels. In so doing they encounter a number of institutional arrangements which are

new to them. As such, they must read the rules and develop their understanding of 'how things are done around here' (shown in the feedback loop of the model- see Figure 6). This highlights the potential for other actors such as council officers and regeneration staff to affect the behaviour of community leaders. By becoming more and more involved, community leaders come into increasing contact with other actors within governance institutions.

Figure 6: The Development of Community Leaders- Early Stages



Existing studies of community leaders have been shown to focus upon the trajectory of a partnership and community leaders within it (for example Purdue 2005) rather than the path of community leaders. Therefore, the second contribution of this thesis is the consideration of the development of community leaders as governance actors. Although state institutions seem to have only a limited role in the early stages of a community leader's development, as they move closer to the state in search of funding these structures appear to play a more significant role in their readings.

At the same time, the role of the community in the behaviour of community leaders seems to alter. Whilst remaining an important influence in the involvement of community leaders in governance, some individuals may begin to express frustration with the stasis and indifference of the community in relation to the changes they have gone through and their hard work. So, although the model remains the same (Figure 6) the community leader's reading of the state and the community and their roles in relation to how they behave have changed.

The failure of the community leader literature to examine actors over time also results in a neglect of the multiple paths open to actors. Chapter 7 showed the overlap between councillors and community leaders, particularly in the initial stages of their involvement. Many of the community leaders interviewed move quickly from being everyday makers to expert citizens working ever closer to the state. However, the two groups vary based on how they read where they are better able to make a difference. Councillors move quickly from their status as everyday makers and expert citizens considering it a training ground for their work as councillors. These individuals read that the most effective way to make a difference is to become part of the formal representative system causing them to join political parties and stand for election to the council. Conversely, those individuals who remain as community leaders see this route as a bridge too far coming with too many constraints (party political, having to look beyond just their neighbourhood, time consuming) and continue their work as expert citizens.

Community leaders who do not become councillors face a central dilemma as they attempt to make a difference: do they work ever closer to

the state thereby increasing their chances of securing resources requiring them to change their behaviour? Alternatively; do they maintain their freedom and close links to the community at the risk of not getting the state funding that allows them to make a substantive difference? Each individual will read the answer to this dilemma differently and position themselves accordingly. So, whilst some community leaders do not become councillors, they may become so 'expert' that they take up paid positions as regeneration staff alongside their more traditional community leader work. As such this thesis has labelled such individuals as professional citizens. Each community leader makes a decision about close they are willing to go in relation to the state based on their readings and reflections on past experiences which will alter over time.

The development of community leaders has clear implications for state attempts to foster 'active citizens'. Namely, attempts by the state to encourage members of civil society to take part in governance will more readily motivate the more experienced community leaders in the mould of expert citizens and professional citizens rather than relative newcomers or individuals not yet recognisable as 'community leaders'. Furthermore, by utilising opportunities provided by state institutions expert citizens may serve to block other community leaders.

The development of community leaders demonstrates how community leaders interpret and interact with the context in which they are situated. This context is made up of multiple, complex layers which evolve over time. Features of this context play distinct roles at different times in the readings of actors. Therefore, the structural context in which community leaders operate

also needs to be understood over time. This thesis has posited community leaders as situated agents. In other words, actors are strategic and reflexive, acting to realise their intentions but within a specific setting in which they are embedded.

The storyline of Burngreave (provided in chapter 6) shows a neighbourhood affected by Sheffield's wider industrial development which resulted in an influx of immigrants to the area after the Second World War. The subsequent decline of jobs in the industrial sector felt in Sheffield (and across parts of the country) reflected in the deterioration of Burngreave. This culminated in calls in the local media that the neighbourhood 'shouldn't be touched with a barge poll'. Such changes to the area (and how it was perceived in the local press) prompted a number of community leaders to mobilise and take action seeking to make a substantive difference in the neighbourhood. As they worked, they increasingly perceived a need for funding resulting in the dilemma identified above; some community leaders modified their behaviour in order to achieve state recognition and access state support whilst others remained distant from the state.

On this basis, changes in the environment in which a community leader operates have been shown to affect their behaviour. Tensions are visible on the grounds of ethnicity and the differing proximity to the state amongst community leaders. This highlights the legacy left by waves of immigration to Burngreave and the changing impact of state regeneration funding. However, actors did not only utilise governance institutions to obtain funding but successfully mobilised the community to seek change. Actors in Burngreave

have responded to their changing setting but have also played an important role in affecting their environment themselves.

This helps to illustrate the third and fourth major contributions of the thesis. The thesis has contributed by offering a structural critique of the existing community leader literature. As a result, the thesis has highlighted the failure of the existing literature to sufficiently take account of context. In response the thesis has contributed by repositioning community leaders as situated agents. This has been shown to improve the understanding of how community leaders behave. For example, such an approach helps to explain why community leaders are interested in party politics (something that goes against assertions made in the everyday maker literature) by drawing attention to the history of the city and its neighbourhoods.

### Reading and Influencing Rules

Community leaders encounter a number of institutional arrangements, many of which will be new to them. In these settings community leaders must read the resources and rules that communicate how things are done, develop their reading and work alongside other governance actors. Those community leaders who do not modify their behaviour risk being excluded from governance processes shown by the 'loudmouths' in Southey. The aggressive stance of these individuals towards council officers and regeneration staff means that they go largely unheard. More successful community leaders read the rules of these processes and changed their behaviour, entering into a more collaborative way of working. This highlights the importance of power in analysis with community leaders modifying their

behaviour in order to be recognised by the state and making readings regarding what behaviour is appropriate.

However, community leaders are not only passive readers in these settings. They retain their drive and may adapt institutional arrangements and processes. For example, the actions of the community leader new to the SOAR board who admitted to being unable to follow meetings changed how future meetings were conducted. Community leaders may also respond to attempts by officers and staff to influence them by seeking support and co-operation from the community aspect of the reading-acting-effect model by banding together with other community leaders, forming larger groups and ensuring they present a united front in meetings.

Successful community leaders are able to adapt their local knowledge based on their reading of the rules. Their no man's land position between community and state can be considered as an advantage allowing them to move between governance levels in a manner other actors struggle to replicate. In terms of the model, the community remains an important feature in the readings of community leaders. However, by becoming involved in governance, the state begins to play a more active role prompting them to return to the community for support. Community leaders therefore have the potential to adapt their behaviour based on their reading of the rules but also to change rules.

The ability of community leaders to read and adapt rules is dependent on factors such as: their ability to adapt their behaviour; their willingness to collaborate with other actors; their ability to utilise resources such as their local knowledge and community support; participation in decision making for

extended periods of time; and ability to form larger, cohesive community groups. This implies that it is the more experienced community leaders who are better able to read rules. When confronted with new scenarios or settings these individuals have a greater wealth of local knowledge, resources and past experience to draw upon than relatively inexperienced community leaders. This ability to read the rules is likely to put them at an advantage when competing for funding and resources and may make them more aware of opportunities to adapt rules.

#### Defining Community Leaders: Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens

The state plays an increasingly important role in the readings made by community leaders as they become more recognisable as expert citizens and professional citizens. Officers and staff act as powerful agents passing on their interpretations of rules to incoming community leaders and are able to affect which community leaders are involved. At the same time community leaders working closely to the state may change how they read the community. Their community may become something of a burden since it has not been through the same processes as the community leader and continues to mimic national indifference. Therefore, the higher a community leader ascends, the more likely they are to become distanced from their community reinforcing the importance of their dilemma.

The changing role of the state in the readings of community leaders highlights the fifth contribution of the thesis. By moving closer to the state, the community leader literature assumes that such individuals are incorporated. Such a stance is deficient since it does not understand how the community



leaders themselves read their position. This neglects the reflexivity of community leaders and how they respond to perceived attempts by state actors to influence them. Namely, community leaders will attempt to supplant their resources by seeking out other community leaders. Their presence is also likely to result in changes to the institutions. How each community leader interprets their position in relation to the state will be different which can lead to tensions. Such friction can occur between community leaders working at a distance from the state and those happy to work on local authority led city wide boards and those utilising central government regeneration funding. It can also occur between councillors and other community leaders based upon their disparate readings of how best to make a difference and the structures they align themselves with. Councillors attach themselves to authority based structures such as the Area Panel whilst community leaders concentrate upon more participative structures associated with regeneration funding.

How actors understand their position can be linked to Bang's uneasy distinction concerning expert citizens who can be seen as incorporated into the decision making elite and everyday makers who are assumed to be operating outside the elite. Indeed, none of the community leaders interviewed in either of the neighbourhoods can be classified as everyday makers based on Bang's criteria. The issue is not whether community leaders are engaged with the state or not (as with everyday makers and expert citizens) but their closeness to state structures and how they perceive their position in relation to the state. On this understanding, everyday makers are visible in spirit amongst those individuals who work primarily at a very local level because they believe that the state will seek to overly influence and

dominate proceedings at higher levels. Expert citizens on the other hand acknowledge the compromises that come with working closer to the state but feel this increases their chances of achieving their desired substantive impacts in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, upon access such individuals are able to seek changes to the rules of these settings.

This finding has clear definitional implications. The definition of community leaders is one which is put upon them by academic and state communities. As such it neglects how individuals view their changing relationship with the state and as a result how they position themselves over time. It is clear that any understanding of community leaders needs to take into account the self reflexivity of actors. Each actor will see the appropriate position to the state differently and interpret where they should be in relation to the difference they wish to make in their community. This thesis has highlighted the need to consider actors as situated, acting based on how they make sense of institutions, resources, rules and past experiences.

## Future Prospects for Research

### The Reading-Acting-Effect Model

The reading-acting-effect model positions community leaders as embedded within a particular context with which they interact. The model identifies two principal groups: the community made up the leader's community and other community leaders and voluntary and community groups; and the political opportunity structures associated with the state. The model highlights how community leaders interact with each and how their readings of them alter

over time. However, the model offers a somewhat naïve distinction between the community and the state. There is clear overlap between the two reflected in the definitional overlaps between community leaders, regeneration staff and councillors. Furthermore, the community has been shown to be a political arena which provides incentives for individuals to mobilise, particularly in the early stages. The model may therefore benefit from a fuller conception of the environment which incorporates more of these features and relationships.

The model also highlights how differences in the paths of actors can be understood. Changes in trajectory can be explained by a combination of reflexive agents, their community and state political opportunity structures. Each situated agent will have different allocative and authoritative resources, and make their own personal reading of their environment. These interpretations will change as the environment alters, as community leaders read and influence rules and based on how actors interpret the relative significance of parts of the environment. For instance, the community plays a different role amongst expert citizens who have come to work close to the state than it does for everyday makers. Also, the multiple funding streams available to actors create confusion for less experienced community leaders but opportunities for long standing expert citizens who have developed their reading of these streams and how to access them.

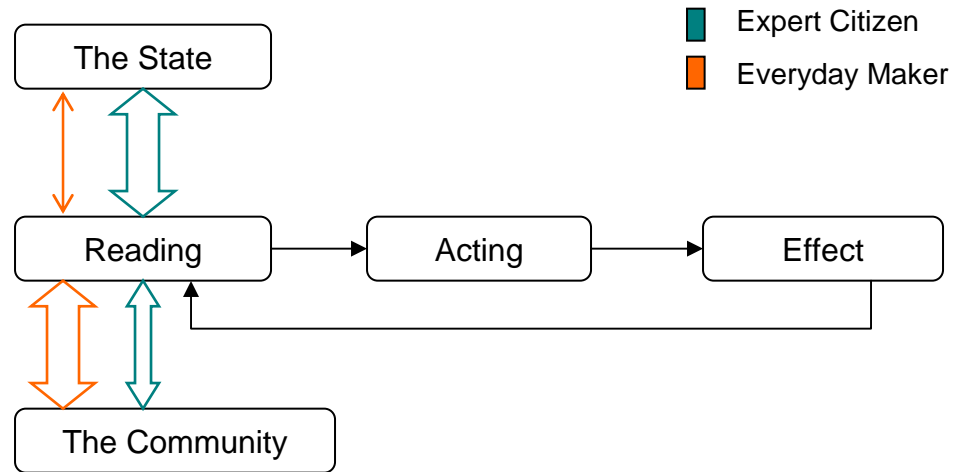
The trajectories of community leaders highlights a need for the model to more readily incorporate how actors understand their relationship with the state. The thesis has argued that a distinction can be made between everyday makers and expert citizens based upon their distance from the

layers of the state and how they perceive this relationship. It has also identified a third type of community leader; the professional citizen who takes on a paid position as regeneration staff but remains a community leaders through their multiple other activities. However, this is not readily part of the model in the sense that the model would look the same for an everyday maker and as it would for an expert citizen or professional citizen. Whilst not necessarily a problem given the written accompaniment, the model could be adapted to represent these differences pictorially for instance by using lines of varying thickness from the state and community aspects of the diagram (see Figure 7 overleaf for an example).

Those individuals who maintain their hostile stance in relation to the state (labelled as 'loudmouths' in Southey) can be understood as not having modified their readings of the environment. Rather, these individuals can be said to be acting out of habit. This interpretation can also be used amongst the wider community regarding the vast majority who remain hostile towards the state but politically inactive. Such individuals behave out of habit and in a sense skip the reading part of the model. Instead the acting stage of the model for these individuals is their failure to participate. In other words, their inaction is their action.

Future studies could also seek to use of the reading-acting-effect model to examine other sets of actors. For example, the model could be used to examine other grassroots governance actors in more detail such as Lipsky's (1980) 'street level bureaucrats'. Alternatively, it could be used to examine the interpretations of members of the public in areas of their political life such as their voting behaviour.

Figure 7: The Development of Community Leaders – Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens



### A Biographical Approach

The use of biographical interview methods has been shown to generate a rich set of data. This is a very useful way of examining how individuals interact with institutions and make sense of them. Whilst interviewees were very generous with their time, making space in their often hectic schedules, a biographical approach would benefit more fully from more time to assist in the identification of actor's readings and repeat interviews to clarify interpretations. Indeed, a more ethnographic approach could be taken in order to see the nuances and subtleties in the everyday experiences of community leaders. This would involve the use of other methods to see the minutiae of the everyday such as participant observation. This may also provide a suitable approach for those wishing to focus upon rules as the unit of analysis by improving their visibility. However, a study using rules needs to consider them as an evolving process rather than an empiric end point.

Biographical interviews also effectively factor time into analysis. Nevertheless, researchers could adopt a longitudinal approach to the study of community leaders to more fully consider how such actors develop over time. However, it is important to note that whilst ethnography may assist analysis it is unlikely to be a panacea. It is probable that much will still remain hidden from the researcher's view despite being more deeply embedded in the setting of interviewees. In practical terms it may be difficult to gain the suitable level of access to carry out an ethnographic approach given the time and commitment it requires of those involved. Furthermore, actors may move away, change jobs, cease being involved etc... which may limit the usefulness of a real time ethnographic approach. It will also be difficult for a researcher

to carry out and analyse the sheer amount of data that will be generated, particularly if acting alone with limited resources and a restricted timeframe.

### Motivation, Power and Leadership

A consideration of the shortfalls relating to the reading-acting-effect model introduces a number of other issues associated with the thesis and potential avenues for future research. The model is concerned with how the readings made by actors affects what they do. There is potential to use studies such as management and organisational behaviour which consider this issue under the label of 'motivation' (for example Mullins 2007). This can potentially be used to help understand why community leaders behave in particular ways.

The study of community leaders shows that motivation extends far beyond that of "rational, selfish, maximising economic man" (Parsons 1995 p314) seen in earlier management theory to include other factors such as a sense of responsibility for a neighbourhood. Indeed, both extrinsic (or tangible) and intrinsic (or psychological) factors are identified within motivation. For example, Mullins (2007) highlights the individual and multi-faceted nature of motivation. This helps address questions in the thesis such as whether the failure of the majority of the members of a community to become community leaders denotes their satisfaction with the status quo. In other words, what prompts one person to become involved as a community leader will not necessarily motivate another actor meaning that not becoming involved does not necessarily signify satisfaction.

A number of academics offer models which focus on a variety of motivations. Maslow (1943) argues that people always want more and what

they want is based upon what they presently have. Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' identifies a number of human needs ranging from physiological through to self-actualisation. Herzberg's (1966) 'motivation-hygiene' theory considers factors related to the environment in which an individual works which, if not there, cause dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) and factors that, if there, encourage actors to work better (motivation). More recently, Vroom's (see for example Vroom and Deci 1992) 'expectancy theory' considers three factors; valence (attitude to rewards), expectancy (about what is achievable) and instrumentality (perceptions of getting actual rewards).

These theories have been criticised on a number of grounds. For instance, Mullins (2007) argues that the theories have the potential to neglect broad institutions such as culture. Furthermore, these theories are based in workplace settings so it is questionable whether they can be applied to public sector actors. However, these approaches appear to have the potential to improve understanding of community leaders. For example, Mullins (2007) offers a number of responses open to actors when they encounter barriers, which can be applied to community leaders. An individual may undertake constructive behaviour either seeking to remove the barrier or make compromises. This mimics the central dilemma identified for community leaders as they become involved in governance. Alternatively, actors can respond to barriers with frustration. This results in frustration-induced behaviour seen in the 'loudmouths' of Southey or members of BCAF opposed to members of BNDC in Burngreave.

The brief consideration of motivation also introduces a perhaps more fundamental concerning the role of power relationships in the analysis. Whilst



power has been discussed throughout the thesis, the role it plays could be explored more fully in a later study. A number of issues surrounding the concept of power are apparent in the study which can be illustrated by drawing on some of the data presented in the cases. Indeed, the critique of the community leader literature in chapter 1 implies that it is naïvely pluralistic. The literature is criticised because it neglects the apparent concentration of power amongst state based players. The role of council officers and regeneration staff as gatekeepers implies that such actors have the power to decide who is and who is not involved. This can be linked with Bachrach and Baratz's (1962, 1963) mobilisation of bias and Lukes' (1974) second face of power whereby certain actors are able to exclude actors and issues from the policy agenda. Such analysis suggests elitism with power concentrated amongst officers and staff.

The role of staff and officers as gatekeepers recalls the barriers introduced in the motivation literature above. Linked to this is the notion that actions are affected by an anticipated negative reaction to actions (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 1963). This offers an alternative explanation for the inaction of the majority of citizens. People may feel that the council are neglecting them but do not act because they perceive their actions will have no impact. On this understanding, inaction does not reflect contentment but a sense of powerlessness. This notion reinforces the assertion that community leaders are atypical.

Alternatively, the very involvement of community leaders in governing processes challenges such professionalism and reflects a dispersal of power amongst actors. The rationale for the involvement of numerous governance

actors is that each possesses specific local knowledge necessitating co-operation in order to achieve desirable outcomes. This is more akin to pluralism than more elitist approaches. Furthermore, actors have been shown to respond and also change institutions and modify rules. As Prince (1998 p113) observes,

“People not only respond to their environments, they shape them.”

This suggests more of a neo-pluralist approach proposed in the later work of Dahl (for example 1985) and Lindblom (for example with Woodhouse 1993) which asserts that whilst “pluralist politics is not played on a level playing field” (Parsons 1995 p253) no group is completely powerless with overt conflict clearly visible between actors. Indeed, the solution proposed by neo-pluralists to the playing field issue was the creation of “more participative, open and fairer democracy” (Parsons 1995 p263). The Sheffield case study offers examples of community leaders attempting to overcome power differentials such as their banding together and holding of pre-meetings.

Although power has not been the focus of this study it is clear from this short discussion that the thesis opens up into a number of complex wider issues which could be researched in more detail in future studies. For example, what does the involvement of community leaders in governance say regarding the tensions between the traditional representative democratic system and the participative system? The discussion of power also extends to areas such as leadership since this is often portrayed as the exercise of power (for example Prince 1998). Although this thesis has focussed upon community leaders it has made little reference to the processes of leadership. This is because leadership per se has not been the focus of the study.

However, there is some potential for future studies to utilise the wider leadership literature. Prince (1998) highlights a number of flaws with this literature such as a tendency to ignore situational factors, overemphasise traits and neglect context. These are of particular relevance given the arguments made throughout this thesis concerning structure and agency. However, there is scope for future research which conceptualises leadership as relational, contextual and on going process such as that offered in Prince's (1998 p121) definition of leadership as,

“The construction, development and maintenance of frameworks for action, in particular collective or joint action.”

Such a definition could allow focus on the processes of leadership utilised by community leaders and the relationship between community leaders and their community.

### Researching Everyday Makers and Professional Citizens

The discussion of motivation, power and leadership highlight a number of ways in which the thesis can be opened up to other areas of research related to community leaders. The sampling method used to identify community leaders identifies individuals more recognisable as expert citizens than everyday makers as shown in Table 6. Future research could therefore examine those community leaders who choose to maintain some distance from the state for example, by refusing government funding. Although by their nature such individuals will be less visible than those who, for example, sit on an NDC board there is clear benefit in examining the interpretations of such individuals, how they get funding and the implications of their stance.

Such an approach would also allow the use of the more ethnographic approach suggested above. A number of such community leaders and associated voluntary and community organisations are likely to exist, ideologically refusing state support. The thesis has mentioned some of the existing research about actors who 'exit' from state support (for example Davies 2007). There is also research by authors such as Griggs and Howarth (2002, 2004, 2005) regarding airport protests which deal with similar issues.

There may also be scope to utilise existing research of faith based groups since groups with solely religious aims are ineligible for state funding. Whilst this has prompted many faith-based organisations to widen their work to make them eligible for such support, many do not. As such they rely on other sources of funding (such as tithes from congregants within the church). The role of faith-based organisations is something that has been considered elsewhere (for example Farnell et al 2003, LGA 2002, Lewis and Randolph-Horn 2001, Munro 2004) and could be utilised for further study of community leaders who operate at a distance from the state.

Finally, the thesis has identified a group of community leaders that sit alongside Bang's everyday makers and expert citizens. These individuals sit at the opposite end of the spectrum to everyday makers however there is similar scope to examine this group in greater detail to consider whether such individuals are visible elsewhere and if so, how they differ from other community leaders.

## Reflections on Doing a PhD

Unsurprisingly, I have found the PhD process to be extremely demanding. However, it has been challenging in ways which I was not expecting. After about six months I was asked by a friend what doing a PhD was like. I rather solemnly replied, "it's a bit like doing an undergraduate degree except you don't have lectures and you don't really know what you're studying." Colleagues in the department would laugh knowingly when I asked them to unpack the PhD process with none able to explain it, even those who had successfully navigated the process themselves. It was this sheer uncertainty I found most difficult to contend with.

Most of my first year was spent constantly trying to motivate myself to read journal articles and books which I was not entirely sure would be useful. Over time however, an odd process that I do not really understand (nor can explain) began. I started to note problems with the literature, ask questions in seminar sessions and my reading was taking me to other useful sources. This was helped when I tried to synthesise my thoughts in written form, something I tried to do regularly otherwise I found myself utterly incapable of writing a coherent sentence.

Writing regularly also meant that I was opening myself up to the views of my supervisors and colleagues in the department. This was not something that I was used to. As an undergraduate, you wrote an essay, had it marked and then moved on to the next piece of work. Now, I was required to clarify points, justify my views, receive criticism and then go back and amend my work. This was not something I relished. In fact, I hated it. However, the process of receiving criticism both verbal and written changed, and hopefully

improved the way in which I write. It has made think of research as an on going process rather than one which is ever really complete with findings leading to further questions, alterations to the theoretical framework and so on.

Over time and with practice I became more confident in many of the areas of work. I became better at presentations, primarily as I was teaching first year undergraduates every week but this also improved the way I presented at conferences and in supervisions with other PhD students. I was also better able to answer the question I'm sure most PhD students dread, "Oh, you're doing a PhD, that's interesting, what's it about?" I still don't like this question very much but over time I found myself better able to answer it and adapt my answer to the questioner.

The PhD process is a fundamentally isolating one since most time is spent reading and writing, two very individual tasks. Even when I felt I knew what I was doing and what I had to do, motivating myself to get going and to keep going each day was still a struggle. This issue was addressed partly by going out and interviewing people. This made the methodology aspect of the PhD far more interesting than I had found before as I would actually be going out and doing it and analysing the results rather than simply planning it. It also made me acutely aware of issues such as the logistics of actually arranging an interview that I had not really considered before. I became far more realistic in my methodology since I knew it would be me that would have to carry it out. It also encouraged me to tailor solutions to address problems and limited resources such as the use of biographical interview methods to factor time into analysis and the reading-acting-effect model to respond to the

issues associated with rules. Indeed, being responsible for all of the aspects of the thesis made me far more aware of what is involved in a research project. Overall, I think that the core area in my development has been becoming a researcher.

Undertaking a PhD research project also presented me with an issue of not being able stop thinking about the work out of 'office hours'. This inability to turn off proved difficult to solve but has prompted me to spend my spare time doing things completely unrelated to work. I feel that this benefited the quality of work in two ways. Firstly, it enabled me to come to the research relatively fresh the next day. Secondly, I found the things I was doing in my spare time (watching films, reading non-academic books, listening to music, going to museums etc) helped me to understand my PhD research and inspired me in ways which the academic field could not.

Finally, GK Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* (1908 p12-13) begins with the author describing a book he did not write,

"I have often had a fancy for writing a romance about an English yachtsman who slightly miscalculated his course and discovered England under the impression that it was a new island in the South Seas...His mistake was really a most enviable mistake...(because) what could be more delightful than to have in the same few minutes all the fascinating terrors of going abroad combined with all the humane security of coming home again? What could be more glorious than to brace one's self up to discover New South Wales and then realise, with a gush of happy tears, that it was really old South Wales."

This story illustrates how the PhD process has changed the way in which I see Sheffield, a city in which I have spent most of my life. The two case study neighbourhoods were not areas which I had really been to before so I could readily view them as 'New Sheffield' whilst at the same time both having the familiarity of being in the 'Old Sheffield' with which I was familiar. However,

the process also changed the way I experienced the city in more general terms causing me to consider common experiences such as paying council tax at Town Hall, conversations in shops, with friends, walking around neighbourhoods etc...in more detail than before. In a sense, I became an everyday researcher, thereby offering an answer to the question Chesterton sets in the wake of his story, "how can we contrive to be at once astonished by the world and get at home in it?"



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