‘WE BUILD OUR OWN HOMES’: PRACTICES OF POWER AND PARTICIPATION IN A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST DEVELOPMENT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of the West of England, Bristol, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis narrates the first three years of a 50 unit housing project carried out by Bristol Community Land Trust in partnership with a Housing Association. Working in close collaboration with prospective residents and to a lesser extent, other non-resident stakeholders involved in the project, this thesis provides insight into the participants’ aspirations and motivations for being involved. Additionally, it documents the challenges and obstacles Bristol Community Land Trust faced in trying to bring the project to fruition and reflects on the spaces made for prospective residents to meaningfully participate in the development process.

This research is located within an urban English context, which is concerned with the shortage of affordable housing, and seeks to explore alternatives to increased individualisation and privatisation, arguably promoted in conventional models of housing delivery. This research is not only concerned with finding ways to deliver more affordable housing provisions, but is located in conversations on how communities can participate and collaborate in the development of these provisions.

As a starting point, this research highlights the growing popularity of community land trusts and in particular, the increasingly common partnerships that are forming between community land trusts and Housing Associations. Whilst acknowledging that these partnerships are believed to be positive in enabling projects to move through the development process with greater ease (Moore, 2016), this research starts from a position of caution, asking what, if anything, is lost through

collaborations between community and non-community organisations, and how prospective residents experience the development process under these partnerships.

This research set out to examine whether Bristol Community Land Trust met prospective residents' aspirations of community-led housing. A participatory approach was employed to encourage research participants to adopt more of a co-researcher role, and to call into question who are the experts and who can participate in producing knowledge. The research sought to contribute to the case study group as well as to academia. The methodological approach used in this research was supported by the use of theories of power and community power to frame the analysis of findings. The stories captured as part of this research are entwined with broader observations on the practices of bringing a community land trust project to fruition.

This research captures how the nature and form of Bristol Community Land Trust led to struggles in enacting aspirations of community access and participation. Power played an important role in shaping the experiences of members from different stakeholder groups, whilst institutional and external pressures compounded issues of top-down governance. However, this research also points to ways that Bristol Community Land Trust stands to challenge who accesses community-led housing and to act as a driver of high-quality, shared equity and social rented housing, which is influenced by local community members and future residents, and is designed to foster high levels of social cohesion.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4

CONTENTS 5

LIST OF FIGURES 1

LIST OF TABLES 2

ABBREVIATIONS 3

PROLOGUE 4

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH 7

1.1) SITUATING AND FRAMING THE RESEARCH 15

1.2) POWER AS A THEORETICAL LENS 26

1.3) RESEARCH APPROACH 29

1.3.1) PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH 29

1.4) CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE 31

1.5) INTRODUCTORY DESCRIPTION OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS FROM INTENSIVE STAGE 32

1.6) STRUCTURE OF THESIS 37

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY 40

2.1) INTRODUCTION 40

2.2) ARRIVING AT A METHODOLOGY 40

2.2.1) PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION 40

2.2.2) EXPLORING PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO RESEARCHING WITH COMMUNITIES ... 44

2.2.3) DECIDING ON A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH 48

2.2.4) EMPLOYING A PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACH 50

2.2.5) CASE STUDY RESEARCH 53

2.2.6) THE SINGLE CASE 56

2.3) THE EXTENSIVE AND INTENSIVE STAGES 57

2.4) RESEARCHER-PARTICIPANT; ESTABLISHING A ROLE IN BRISTOL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST 61

2.5) METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS 62

2.5.1) COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOPS 65

2.5.2) PARTICIPATORY VIDEO 71

2.5.3) CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWS 74

2.5.4) RESEARCHER DIARY 76

2.5.5) OBSERVATIONS 76

2.5.6) GOVERNING DOCUMENTS 80

2.6) RESEARCH TIMELINE 82

2.7) DATA ANALYSIS: COLLABORATIVE AND INDIVIDUAL MEANING MAKING PROCESSES 85

2.8) PARTICIPATORY ETHICS 87

CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCHING COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING AND COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS IN ENGLAND 92

3.1) INTRODUCTION 92

3.2) COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING 92

3.2.1) COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING IN ENGLAND 93

3.2.2) COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS IN ENGLAND 98

3.3) RESEARCHING COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING; SOCIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES 100

CHAPTER 4: EXTENSIVE RESEARCH STAGE 103

4.1) INTRODUCTION 103

4.2) OBJECTIVES 103

4.3) GROUP DESCRIPTIONS 106

4.4) PROCESS 108

4.5) SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 109

4.5.1) NAVIGATING POWER IMBALANCES WITHIN GROUPS 109

4.5.2) HOW TO ORGANISE THE GROUP 110

4.5.3) DIFFICULTY IN KEEPING YOU OWN IDENTITY WHILST ALSO BEING PART OF A GROUP 111

4.5.4) DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES IN WHY PEOPLE WANT TO BE INVOLVED 112

4.5.5) NEGOTIATING ENGAGEMENT WITH THIRD PARTIES 112

4.6) DECIDING ON A CASE STUDY GROUP 113

4.7) CHAPTER SUMMARY 115

CHAPTER 5: REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE 116

5.1) CONCEPTUALISING COMMUNITY 117

5.1.1) GRASSROOTS ACTION; COMMUNITIES IN THE CITY 119

5.1.2) UNDERSTANDING WHAT MOTIVATES INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING .. 122

5.1.3) THEORIES OF COMMUNITY 129

5.2) A DEEPER LOOK AT POWER AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THIS RESEARCH 140

5.2.1) AN INTRODUCTION TO EXAMINING THEORIES OF POWER 142

5.2.2) HABERMAS ON POWER 143

5.2.3) QUESTIONING AND DEVELOPING HABERMASIAN THINKING 148

5.2.4) COMMUNITY POWER AND RADICAL DEMOCRACY 153

5.2.5) PRACTICING RESEARCH ON POWER IN COMMUNITIES 155

5.3) FOCUSING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS RESEARCH 162

5.4) CHAPTER SUMMARY 169

CHAPTER 6: BRISTOL CLT CASE STUDY 170

6.1) DEVELOPING IDEAS FROM PART 1 170

6.2) PEOPLE AND PLACE- SETTING THE SCENE 173

6.2.1) THE BRISTOL HOUSING MARKET 173

6.2.2) PEOPLE 174

6.2.3) PLACE 185

6.3) TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS 192

6.4) CHAPTER SUMMARY 193

CHAPTER 7: CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY- DEVELOPING A VISION FOR THE SHALDON ROAD PROJECT 194

7.1) EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY 196

7.1.1) CHASING COMMUNITY- DISCONNECTION, ISOLATION AND NOSTALGIA 196

7.1.2) BEING PART OF A RADICALLY DIFFERENT PROJECT 204

7.2) SEEKING INDIVIDUALISM IN A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT 217

7.3) DEMONSTRATING COMMITMENT TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY 226

7.4) CHAPTER SUMMARY 230

CHAPTER 8: PRACTICES OF COMMUNITY- SPACES OF CONFLICT AND COLLABORATION 235

8.1) INTRODUCTION TO EXAMINING DECISION-MAKING PRACTICES 236

8.2) THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON THE DECISION-MAKING PRACTICES 247

8.3) EXPERIENCES OF INTERNAL DECISION-MAKING PRACTICES 250

8.3.1) PASSIVHAUS CERTIFICATION 250

8.3.2) SOCIAL HOUSING 257

8.3.3) ALLOCATION OF HOMES 263

8.4) NON-RESIDENT STAKEHOLDERS OPINIONS ON THE DECISION-MAKING PRACTICES ... 274

8.5) ADDRESSING DECISION-MAKING THROUGH THIS RESEARCH 278

8.6) INTRODUCTION TO EXAMINING COMMUNICATION PRACTICES 295

8.7) EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNICATION 295

8.8) NON-RESIDENT STAKEHOLDERS 301

8.9) ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDER GROUPS .. 305

8.10) ADDRESSING COMMUNICATION PRACTICES THROUGH THIS RESEARCH 312

8.11) REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF POWER IN COMMUNCATION PRACTICES 318

8.12) CHAPTER SUMMARY..... 319

CHAPTER 9: UNDERSTANDING BRISTOL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST IN ACTION: COMPROMISE AND THE CONSENSUS-CONFLICT DEBATE 327

9.1) ASPIRATIONS AND THE REALITY OF GETTING THINGS DONE..... 327

9.2) THE NATURE OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN BRISTOL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST.... 330

9.3) WHO LEADS? QUESTIONING LEADERSHIP IN BRISTOL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST 336

9.4) RETURNING TO THEORY: CONSENSUS, CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE 339

9.4.1) POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF COMPROMISE..... 346

9.4.2) NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF COMPROMISE 346

9.4.3) REFLECTING ON THE ROLE OF COMPROMISE IN BCLT 348

9.5) CHAPTER SUMMARY..... 353

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS 355

10.1) RELATIONS OF POWER IN THE SOCIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES OF BCLT 358

10.1.1) RELATIONS OF POWER WITHIN BCLT..... 359

10.1.2) RELATIONS OF POWER BETWEEN BCLT AND EXTERNAL PARTIES 361

10.2) REALISING ASPIRATIONS: THE NATURE OF COMPROMISE IN BCLT? 365

10.3) THE ROLE OF CLTS IN PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO CONVENTIONAL HOUSING DELIVERY 370

10.4) RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 374

10.5) FURTHER RESEARCH 379

10.6) REFLECTIONS ON THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH 380

REFERENCES 387

APPENDIX ONE 397

APPENDIX TWO 414

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: **Differences and similarities between urban CLTs and traditional CLH**

Figure 2: **Example of typical urban CLT development process**

Figure 3: **Images from Workshop One**

Figure 4: **Images from Workshop Two**

Figure 5: **Images from participatory video**

Figure 6: **Lockleaze neighbourhood fayre**

Figure 7: **Gardening day**

Figure 8: **Research diary**

Figure 9: **Relationship between key stakeholders**

Figure 10: **Connections between key stakeholder groups**

Figure 11: **Prospective residents' annual household income**

Figure 12: **Prospective residents' current housing situation**

Figure 13: **Why prospective residents' want to live in the Shaldon Road community**

Figure 14: **Map of Bristol** (Source: Google Maps)

Figure 15: **Index of deprivation by ward** (Source: Bristol.gov.uk)

Figure 16: **Map of Shaldon Road site** (Source: Google Maps)

Figure 17: **Architectural design** (Source: bristolclt.org.uk)

Figure 18: **Timeline of key events**

Figure 19: **Decision-making pyramid**

Figure 20: **Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969)** (Source: citizenshandbook.org)

Figure 21: **Synthesis of compromise in action**

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: **Table of different stakeholder group**

Table 2: **Distinctions between action and participative research** (Source: Bell et al, 2004, p.10)

Table 3: **Research timeline**

Table 4: **Synthesis of conceptualisations of power**

Table 5: **Theoretical framework**

Table 6: **Prospective resident group- draft allocation policy**

Table 7: **Non-residents allocation criteria**

ABBREVIATIONS

CLH	Community-led housing
CLT	Community Land Trust
BCLT	Bristol Community Land Trust
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency (since become Homes England)
BCC	Bristol City Council
FCW	Future Creating Workshop
PV	Participatory video
CBPR	Community based participatory research

PROLOGUE

'The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.' (Harvey, 2008, p.23)

As I begin this thesis I believe it is important to set the scene and provide some background on how I arrived at the proposed topic for my doctoral research. Both my personal experiences and previous academic endeavours inevitably shaped my interests and informed my decision to position this research within the field of community-led housing. I open this thesis with a quote from David Harvey, whose voice as both activist and academic, I argue remains as relevant to the challenges we face today as it was nearly 50 years ago when he began writing on social relations and the city.

In June 2014 I became a member of Bristol Community Land Trust, having read a media publication on their existing project and their aspirations for future housing developments in Bristol. As a young person, aware of the growing challenges of becoming a homeowner, the community land trust model seemed like a viable

alternative to large mortgage re-payments and financial deposits. I was inspired by their ethos, including how they worked collaboratively with groups in Bristol to develop housing projects, their focus on creating strong and resilient communities, and the commitment to ensure that their developments remained affordable into the future. Until encountering the work of Bristol Community Land Trust, my main experience of community housing had been in rural settings. Upon arriving in Bristol in 2012 I visited the Ashley Vale Self-build community, which is a well-known exemplar of local residents coming together and taking back control of land destined to be acquired by large scale developers. I was excited to see examples of community housing in the urban context and to meet and talk to residents about their experiences of being involved in the project. However, I was also struck by a sense of disappointment, at those who would not have the financial capacity to be part of a project such as this. As Harvey (1973; 2008; 2009) argues, to challenge social injustices, we must be willing to engage in conversations to identify common political goals that re-define who has access to the city. When I came across Bristol Community Land Trust I saw potential to respond to Harvey's writing on the future of urban environments.

I began this research with the belief that housing security plays a vital role in quality of life, including building meaningful relationships within a neighbourhood or community, experiencing a sense of belonging and having the stability associated with a sense of 'home' to be able to engage in work and leisure activities. Insight gained from pervious engagements with community-led housing initiatives highlighted that whilst many people would advocate these alternative approaches to housing, they also acknowledge that they are complex and often do not follow a

linear development path. Furthermore, these engagements demonstrated that community-led housing is rarely unproblematic or resilient to external pressures and conflict but that by engaging with the lived experiences and micro-social practices we can gain insights into how these complexities interact with the development process.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

In 2010 a group of individuals came together with a shared interest in creating community solutions to housing in Bristol. Over the following year they initiated the process of creating Bristol Community Land Trust (BCLT). A community land trust (CLT) is a community-led, not for profit organisation, run by a membership of people from a local geographical area. CLTs acquire assets, predominantly land and housing, although other examples include workspaces or businesses, which are valuable to the community. CLTs are responsible for the long-term stewardship of these assets, and for ensuring that the development of existing or new housing stock is governed by communities' needs and remains affordable in perpetuity. (For more details of the nature and form of CLTs please see Figure One and Figure Two in this chapter)

Bristol Community Land Trust (BCLT) was launched in 2011 with the support of Bristol City Council and a partnering Housing Association. Since its launch, BCLT has gained over 200 members, completed one 12 unit housing scheme and has secured planning permission for its second 49 unit project. In addition to developing housing BCLT has hosted events bringing together individuals and organisations in Bristol to discuss how community-led housing (CLH) may be scaled-up and replicated across the city. BCLT's intention is to experiment with new and innovative approaches to delivering urban housing, through collaborative relationships with professionals and communities. Born out of a

concern for the displacement and exclusion of individuals who are unable to find security in Bristol’s property market, BCLT aims to model proactive responses to the inequalities associated with the growing divide between homeowners and renters in the city.

The scale and impact of housing inequalities in the UK is well documented in literature. Whilst this research did not engage in a detailed review of this literature, it is useful to highlight some key information on the UK housing crisis, which provides context in understanding the conditions that BCLT seeks to respond to. A Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) paper (Kilroy, 2017, p.2), provides a summary of the main conditions associated with the housing affordability crisis. Included in this summary were the following points:

> *‘-More than three million households in the UK now spend more than a third of their income on housing.*
>
> *-There has been an 88 per cent fall in the amount of social housing built compared to 20 years ago*
>
> *-The number of homes being built which are classed as ‘affordable’ has fallen to its lowest level for 24 years*
>
> *-The number of ‘working householder’, living in poverty (7.4 million people, including 2.6 million children) has reached record levels (..) (especially in London and southern England)’*

BCLT is part of a broader movement that seeks to respond to the points identified above, to find alternatives to traditional state or private avenues, and enable communities to actively participate in their own futures. As highlighted by Kennett, Forrest and Marsh, (2013, p.17) we are witnessing in the UK, ‘a substantial undersupply of increasingly commodified public housing, and a private rented sector characterized by rising rents and decreasing state support, as well as a lack of security.’ Thompson (2015, p.1027/8) highlights growing enthusiasm from the general public and researchers for ‘new forms of grass-roots urbanisms’… growing in the cracks of the dominant development model’. Within this grassroots movement, CLH, and CLTs in particular, have attracted attention at both government and community scales. In this sense, CLH is unique as it aligns with both right and left wing agendas, and middle class bourgeois and radical identities. The Localism Agenda (2011), introduced by the Coalition Government and maintained by the current Conservative Government acknowledged the need for increased support for alternative, CLH solutions as part of a plan to devolve power to communities, promote community asset control and enable alternative models of housing delivery to become more mainstream. Thompson (2015, p.1028) describes how CLH has ‘received renewed policy interest as part of a growing ‘third sector’ of community-based organisations and social enterprises increasingly turned to by the state to manage assets and deliver public services and regeneration at the neighbourhood scale’. On the surface, this restructuring of power appears to complement a desire from UK residents to take more active roles in their housing futures. A recent Building Societies Association survey reported 53% of people in the UK expressed an interest in building their own home (Government, 2011).

Whilst the current government’s focus on devolving power to a local level is a relatively recent endeavour, initiated in the Localism Act (2011), the UK has a much longer and richer history of grassroots activism, especially in relation to housing provisions. Community housing has been born out of political struggles such as the civil and workers’ rights movements and concerns itself with modelling radically different alternatives to dominant housing delivery approaches. These alternatives form part of what has been termed as a do-it-yourself culture (Iveson, 2013), which encompasses active citizenship in long standing models such as squatting and co-operatives, through to more recent forms of commoning including, self-help and self-build housing, co-housing, low impact developments and mutual homeownership schemes (for a detailed discussion on grassroots activism see Chapter Five).

Despite increased attention, much of the rhetoric around CLH continues to characterise it as alternative, with forms of mutual, collective and community housing regularly typified either as quirky, niche or anarchistic, or as a model of housing accessible only to the wealthy and affluent. Disparities between the growth in government and public interest in CLH and the number of CLH projects being mobilised and delivered highlights a need to engage with the tensions that exist between what Fuller, Jonas and Lee (2010, p.4) describe as an ‘alterity’ to mainstream capitalist systems that emerge from self-organisation and local autonomy and the current government’s interest in scaling up and institutionalising alternative forms of housing delivery. A 2015 Locality report, which sought to understand the scale and nature of the community-led housing sector in the UK, identified 736 Housing Co-operatives, 19 CLTs and 18 Cohousing communities that were complete and inhabited (Gooding and Johnston, 2015). Of particular interest to

this research is the number of CLTs and co-housing projects that have been delivered. Co-operatives have a long history and have become a well-established and recognised model of community housing. However, CLTs and co-housing models are relatively new phenomena in the UK with CLTs specifically, receiving significant attention from policy makers. It is reported that there are 225 registered CLTs in England and Wales (National CLT Network, 2015), yet despite this number being registered, the figures of CLT projects completed and inhabited demonstrates that they are not yet making a significant contribution to housing provisions.

Dominant discourses in literature around growing the CLH movement in England[1] focus on top down approaches and much attention is given to the challenges and methods of facilitation, highlighting barriers to land availability and finance (Bliss, 2009). However, there is less literature that goes beyond formulaic accounts of CLH groups to get at the harder to reach, lived experiences of people engaging with these community-led models. These experiences are informed by personal ideologies, aspirations and ambitions, all of which contribute to their decision to be a part of a project (Grube, Mayton and Ball-Rokeach, 1994). Jarvis (2015, p.95) calls for research to go beyond issues of policy and planning to explore the social relations, stating that 'it is important to recognise that the underlying concept [of community-led housing] is essentially socio-spatial rather than specifying a particular legal and financial model of land purchase or construction'. Additionally, Jarvis suggests that rather than attempting to categorise CLH as a unified model to be reproduced and

[1] This research worked with a CLT within the English planning system, and acknowledges that there are differences between England and other UK countries. Some of the literature used in this thesis focuses on England whilst the majority of literature refers to the UK.

scaled-up, research should be attempting to understand the ‘social architecture’ of autonomous community housing groups. Yet, expectations from current government are that CLH can replicate market and profit driven housing models, growing linearly from small scale and grassroots, to mainstream and scaled-up, rather than as a rhizomatic network of autonomous projects of varying scales, which are versatile and can adapt to meet the needs of different community groups.

A small collection of literature has engaged with the social and community relations of existing CLH groups, analysing levels of social capital, civic engagement and community resilience (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Lang and Novy, 2014; Lang and Roessl, 2011; Somerville, 2007, 2005; Ruiu, 2016; Sullivan, 2016). Additionally, Jarvis (2015, p.102) made a significant contribution to the under-examined field of ‘social practices’ in CLH groups in her work on co-housing projects in the UK, USA and Australia. Through this research Jarvis highlights a gap in our ‘understanding of the social phenomena of mutuality and collaboration in practice’, calling for more explorations of the ‘social mechanics of sharing in an intentional setting’ (*ibid*).

My own research interests have been significantly influenced by the work of Jarvis. Having been engaged with her work since undertaking an MSc degree in 2013 and hearing her speak at a number of conferences, her approach to generating knowledge and reporting findings has informed many of the values I now hold important as I develop my own researcher voice. This includes a commitment to explore beyond basic accounts of social structures, to seek more nuanced understandings of community action. Building on work from the small collection of

scholars who have begun to uncover some of the complexities and challenges around the social relations of CLH groups, this research intends to capture the stories and experiences of members of BCLT as they attempt to bring their second housing project to fruition.

Having identified a desire to undertake research with communities, to hear citizen stories, and to explore the nuances of action and participation in CLH, I decided to employ a participatory research approach, building collaborative relationships with members of BCLT. With input from members of different BCLT stakeholder groups we established the research aim of understanding members' experiences as they moved through the early stages of the development process. The research comprised two stages, an extensive and intensive stage. The extensive stage was carried out at the beginning of the research and involved informal discussions between myself and residents from five community housing groups in the South West of England (see Chapter Two for details of the extensive research stage). These discussions were used alongside an initial review of literature to shape the research focus and design. The intensive stage was carried out through a participatory case study with BCLT, focusing specifically on their second development, Shaldon Road project. When I first started meeting with members of BCLT they were beginning to develop designs for the scheme which would consist of 35 units (five self-build houses, 15 co-housing self-finish units and 15 Housing Association units). At this stage in the development process the main stakeholder groups were a Board, a Steering Group and a Housing Association. A 'Prospective Resident Group' and 'Project Group' were formed at a later stage. (See Chapter One for full description of stakeholder groups)

Participatory methods were used to create space for open communication between myself and members of BCLT and support a connection between theory (for the production of knowledge) and practice (to assist in furthering the endeavours of the Case Study Group). Furthermore, these methods supported collaborative dialogue, which I set out to achieve through this research. Collaborative dialogue was intended to assist in reducing power imbalances and build trust between the case study participants and myself, in my role of researcher (for further discussion please see Chapter Two). This dialogue contributed towards improving the members’ ability to navigate the challenges associated with the early stages of the development process and to respond creatively to the opportunities arising from the Shaldon Road project.

1.1) Situating and framing the research

This section identifies the importance of this research to the field of CLH. In doing so, it sets out a justification for the chosen research focus and introduces the overarching research questions and objectives. During the process of writing up I spent much time deciding whether the questions and objectives should be included at this point in the thesis as my desire to tell the story as it developed would have seen them introduced after an account of the extensive research stage. I considered whether including the questions and objectives at this point in the thesis helped convey the research focus or if I felt bound to more traditional forms of reporting because of underlying pressure to convey research in a format which has been shaped by a positivist approach of testing a hypothesis. Having engaged with these considerations I decided that introducing the research questions and objectives at this stage assisted in conveying the nature of the research I set out to undertake. My own interests and positionality inevitably shaped the design of this research and influenced the direction it took. The conversations undertaken in the extensive stage were guided, to some extent, by my interest in the social aspects of communities, a desire to hear more about the internal social relations of different groups and to understand the practices involved in community action. In addition to this, my previous experiences of community-led housing undoubtedly informed what I perceived to be important in terms of progressing knowledge and understanding in this field. Identifying what is at the core of this research, acts, in part, as the starting point, from which the following research activities stemmed.

In the previous section I drew attention to disparities between more traditional forms of CLH, which have been driven by grassroots and bottom-up action and the recent growth in interest in CLH at central government scale. I highlighted tensions between a traditional conceptualisation of CLH as a form of political activism, and more recent approaches that are, on varying levels, influenced by and engaged with top down governance structures. I identified a need to understand these new models, of which CLTs are the most prominent in the England, and to critically examine the experiences of people involved in them.

In the same way as traditional models of CLH, CLTs are often discussed in relation to their ability to support the empowerment of their members through active participation in the development of housing projects. Yet little research has been undertaken to examine the validity of this claim and there is a lack of literature that engages critically with how distinctions between traditional and new models of CLH manifest in the members’ experiences. The following diagram provides an overview of the similarities and difference between urban CLTs and more traditional models of CLH. It is important to note that there are many variations in how different CLH projects organise and govern. However, there are some normative similarities and differences that can be distinguished to assist in evidencing the need to recognise distinctions for the purpose of research.

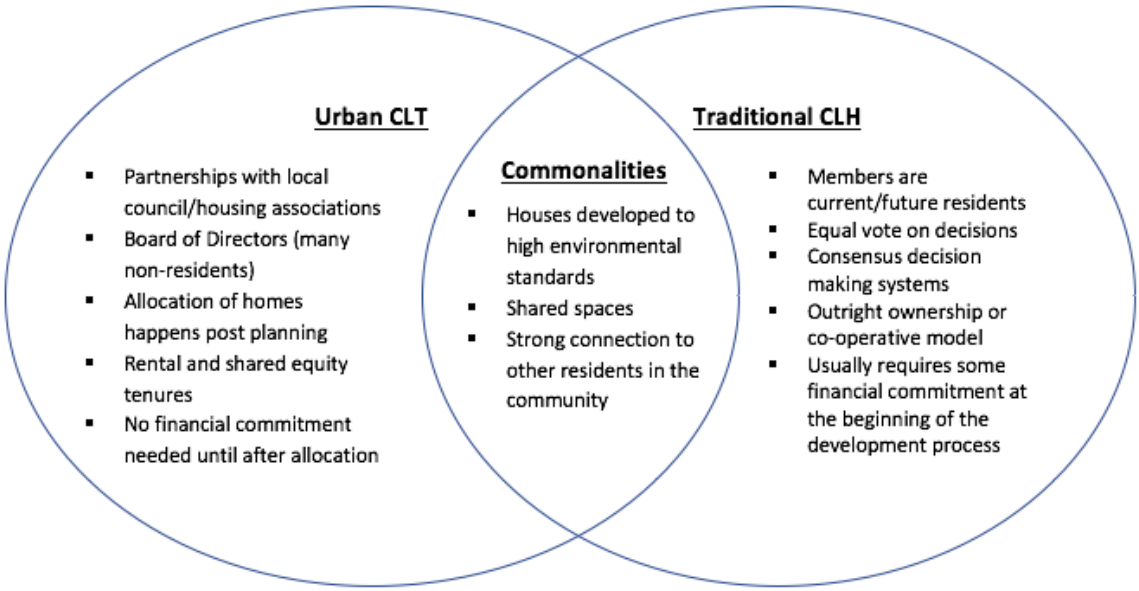

Figure 1: Differences and similarities between urban CLTs and traditional CLH

As is highlighted in the diagram above urban CLTs often develop partnerships with other institutions. The closeness between CLTs and local councils will inevitability result in different experiences than those that have been documented in studies of traditional CLH. In addition to this, CLTs have the scope to propose alternative collaborative ways of delivering housing that are radically different from the more traditional approaches. A wider range of tenure options, opportunities to deliver social rented units, and reduced need for financial resources, all increase opportunities to engage a broader range of citizens. In this way, CLTs offer the potential to respond to many of the criticisms of traditional CLH, such as only appealing to a white, middle class demographic or being exclusionary in the financial or social requirements of potential members.

It is important to acknowledge at this point that there are distinctions between urban and rural CLTs in the UK (Moore and McKee, 2012; Rowe, Engelsman and Southern, 2016). Rowe, Engelsman and Southern (2016) recognise this in their work, highlighting how urban CLTs have predominantly emerged in low income urban areas, compared to more affluent areas in rural locations. We need only look to examples of urban CLTs, such as Granby 4 Streets CLT in Liverpool, and East London CLT to see what Rowe, Engelsman and Southern (2016, p. 599) refer to as ‘community organizing and resistance to local authority neglect and over reliance on private investment’. Community organising within CLTs has been supported by the presence of a Board of Directors, meaning that there are often people with built environment expertise who can assist in navigating the challenges associated with planning applications. Furthermore, partnerships between CLTs and non-community institutions, such as Housing Associations and local councils, offers opportunities to access different funding streams and procure land for free. The following diagram is intended to provide an overview of how a typical urban CLT project develops, put together for the purpose of this thesis, but is by no means representative of all urban CLTs:

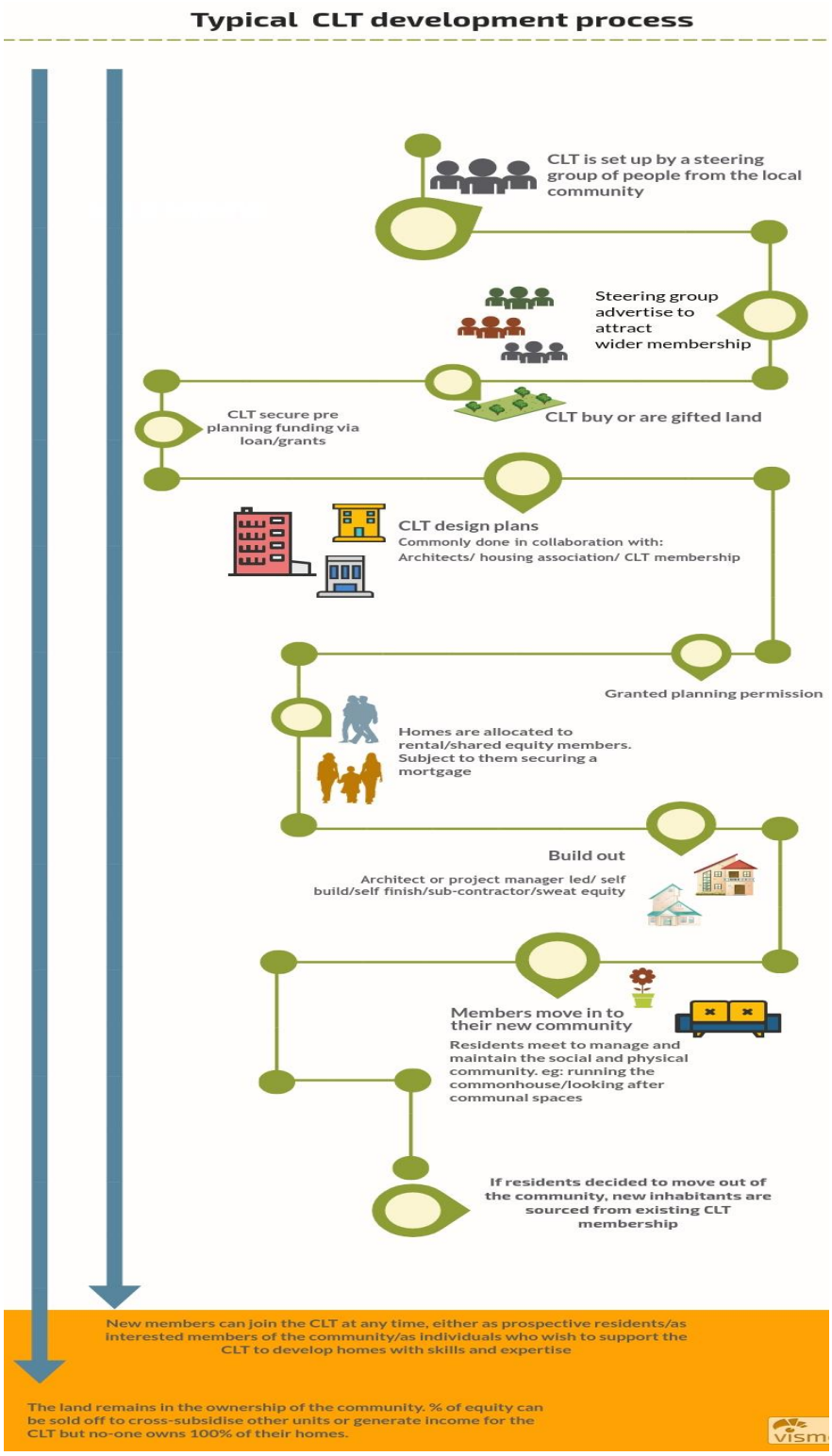

Figure 2: Example of typical urban CLT development process

CLTs have the potential to make a significant contribution towards challenging inequalities associated with housing delivery in England. However, we are only beginning to look at the way this new model of housing is working in practice and there is a significant gap in understanding of how the presence of members with professional expertise or partnering relationships with non-community organisations influence the development of these communities. There is a distinct need to build on the small collection of literature that has begun to critically examine the differences between CLTs and more traditional models of CLH. In order to do this, it is important to identify whether members participate because of distinctions between CLTs and more traditional CLH models, or whether they believe they are participating in a project that will replicate more traditional approaches. This raises questions such as, do they feel CLTs are more financially accessible, enable them to maintain their current lifestyle, or require less commitment in the development phase? Or are they expecting conditions associated with more traditional models, such as, to have full control over the design of their home and be part of a non-hierarchical and fully democratic organisation? Closely related to this are questions around whether members join CLTs because of ideological aspirations, in response to being in precarious and insecure housing situations or other undocumented motivations.

Situating this research within the wider field of CLH provides a valuable starting point, which informs the type of sense making processes that might be employed. Focusing on ‘community’ provides a starting point to understand how people collaborate. At the beginning of this research I identified a desire to capture stories, hear peoples’ experiences, and understand the social fabric of a CLH group. In situating and framing this research I became interested in the experiences of people

who make up the community; do they drop out, do they change their expectations, or do they try to challenge the organisational systems and processes? In creating a rich and detailed narrative of the development process from the view of prospective residents, it is possible to understand, who has power, agency and voice in the social and organisational practices. This contributes to wider debate on the scope of CLTs to support equitable housing delivery.

It is a sense of both potential and caution that I want to stress as the starting point for this research. I suggest a need to engage with the limitations of the CLT model, but also to call for a new way of looking at its scope for contributing toward housing delivery which allows for a decoupling from traditional conceptualisations of CLH. In seeking to respond to the points highlighted above, I propose the following overarching question:

To what extent does the Bristol Community Land Trust meet prospective residents' aspirations of community-led housing?

To enable me to answer this question, I pose the following three sub questions, which reflect the key points raised in this section:

- *How does power manifest in the social and organisational practices of the Bristol Community Land Trust?*

- *What effect do these practices have on the prospective resident members' ability to realise their aspirations for community?*
- *How does this inform our understanding of the role of Community Land Trusts in providing alternatives to conventional housing delivery?*

In order to focus my research on the questions outlined above I developed a set of objectives. I present these objectives along with a brief description of how they contribute towards answering the research questions.

Objectives:

1. *To undertake a review of literature on theories of power and community, in order to define how these key terms may be employed in this research*

The emergent and iterative nature of this research meant that I was continually engaged with literature as I sought to understand new issues, and how they developed. However, as discussed earlier it this section it is also important to acknowledge that I had a starting point, from which the research developed. I began by undertaking a broad review of literature relating to conceptualisations of community and CLH. As I carried out the extensive research stage I began to focus and refine my review on literature based on the conversations I was having with CLH residents. My attention was drawn to literature on theories of power and community, and social relations in community housing organisations. In focusing the parameters of literature, I could examine how scholars underpinned their work, what assumptions were being made, especially in relation to CLTs. This enabled me to

identify where previous research had engaged critically with the differences between the CLT model and more traditional CLH approaches, or contrary to this, where there were relatively perfunctory examinations of the distinctions. Engaging with these bodies of literature assisted in informing the research design and analysis. Based on the review of theories of power and community, I developed a theoretical framework, which underpinned my observations and analysis.

2. *To carry out an extensive research stage with members of community-led housing groups in order to:*

    a) *Discuss what challenges they have experienced whilst being involved in existing or prospective CLH projects*

    b) *Determine how they believe this research could contribute to knowledge and practice pertaining to the development of CLH projects in England*

    c) *Explore how individuals with lived experiences in the area of study can be included in the research design process and identify 1) how this approach impacts on the progression of the research and the generation of theory 2) how early engagement can enable the research to make academic and practical contributions*

As part of the process of refining the research topic and ensuring it made a useful contribution to the CLH movement, I undertook an extensive research stage, where I

met with members of five CLH groups. This enabled me to hear and learn from people who had direct experience of living in or setting up a CLH project. In doing this I positioned them as experts and sought to use their knowledge to assist in constructing a focus for this research.

3. *To examine members’ aspirations for the Shaldon Road community*

In order to deepen my engagement with members of BCLT, it was vital to understand what had brought them to the organisation, their aspirations for the project, and how or if their engagement was informed by a political or ideological belief. This assisted in developing the story of the community and capturing their vision for the Shaldon Road project. Furthermore, understanding these aspirations contributed towards analysing the members’ experiences of the development process. Identifying why members were motivated to join the project, (for example: a desire to develop housing in a democratic community) enabled a more nuanced understanding of why they might feel disempowered when they were unable to participate in certain aspects of the project. Contrary to this, someone who joined the project because their current housing situation was precarious or unstable, may experience having any input in the development of their future home as empowering. Examining members’ aspirations for the community captures a sense of the collective and the individual. It deconstructs the notion of BCLT Shaldon Road community as a homogenous group of people, who are in complete consensus over the aims of the project. Rather, it captures the diversity of BCLT membership and demonstrates that developing the community and finding common goals took negotiation, compromise and conflict.

4. *To identify which social and organisational practices affect the prospective resident members' ability to meaningfully participate in the development process*

Examining the practices of BCLT assisted in understanding the experiences members reported. These practices were the meeting point of both the social and material aspects involved in developing a community. Whilst BCLT engages with a range of practices, I was particularly interested in identifying the ones which were associated with the social and organisational development of the project.

5. *To examine these social and organisational practices through theories of power and community to understand how they impact on the prospective resident members' ability to realise their aspirations in the development process*

Examining the social and organisational practices through theories of power and community, assisted in developing rich understandings of how these practices affect the prospective residents' ability to realise their aspirations for the Shaldon Road project. By examining these practices, I gained a deeper insight into the prospective residents' experiences.

6. *To reflect on how the experiences captured through this research contribute to wider debate on the scope for community land trusts to empower members and challenge housing inequalities*

Meeting the previous four objectives enabled me to return to my overarching research question and draw conclusions on how prospective resident members were

able to realise their aspirations through the development process. In responding to this I positioned the findings from this research in the context of the larger questions raised in Section One pertaining to assumptions made about the scope for the CLT model to challenge housing inequalities and empower its members.

1.2) Power as a theoretical lens

The desire to undertake participatory research raises questions on how to translate stories and experiences into synthesised critical findings, which contribute to a wider body of knowledge. Deciding on a theoretical perspective and weaving this into the research design, assited in informing the way a researcher makes sense of the world they see around them. Power may have seemed an obvious choice of theoretical lens given that I had already identified a commitment to undertake research that flattened out power inbalances between myself, as researcher, and the research participants. However, it was not until completing the extensive research stage that I was certain that power would be the common theme to draw the stories, observations and experiences together into one coherent narrative. I discuss theories of power in greater depth in Chapter Five, where attention is given to the long and complex debate over applying a power lens in research. There I introduce key theorists contributing to discourses of power and examine how different perspectives shape our current understanding. Here I provide an introduction, intended to explain how the dicussions presented in this thesis are conceptualised through power relations.

Brennan and Israel (2008, p.83) discuss how power provides a useful theoretical lens through which to examine commuity action. They highlight a tendancy in community literature to simplify power as a ‘condition resulting from economic, social, or political position’, which is ‘insurmountable’ or ‘entrneched’. Rather, they argue, power provides a useful way to explore the mechanisms and practices employed by communities to challenge unequitable social and political structures. In this conception we see power not as something to be examined from afar but as a way of understanding inequality and challenging normative assumptions associated with it. Here power provides a lens through which to analyse the politics of community, to understand how control and agency is distributed between different actors and stakeholders, the different forms power takes and the way it is exercised in a local context.

Mouffe (1992) explores the conceptualisation of political communities and radical democracy. Within her work she addresses the role of power in mobilising communities towards a collective common good, highlighting the danger of ignoring individual liberty in the construction of community. She expresses how common concern ‘is a product of a given hegemony, the expression of power relations, and that it can be challenged’ (Mouffe, 1992, p.78). Here she is addressing dominant discourses that neglect the role of individuality or individual liberty in search of consensus and unity, prioritising a common goal that is fomulated by power holding elites rather than one that is arrived at through plural democracy. What is evident in Mouffe’s theoretical contribution is that power is not static, it shifts and alters over time. What may be the case at one moment in time may alter and adapt. When examining the social relations of a given community it is apparent that practices of

power are dynamic and suseptable to external factors and conditions. Understanding the nature of power in a given community and the way it is negotiated through social and political forces provides valuable insight into the lived experiences of the community members. Furthermore, the examination of experiences through the lens of power tells a story of how social interactions impact the construction of community.

Using theories of power to examine discourses and practices of community also provides a space in which to critique the prospective residents’ experiences of trying to realise their aspirations for community. The community housing movement is commonly associated with the emancipation and empowerment of individuals, through democratic governance structures and access to high quality housing. Yet this is rarely debated critically, and the prevailing assumptions remain mostly unchallenged (Moore and Mckee, 2012). However, as we see a growth in more professionalised models of CLH, exploring the potential for partnerships with third party institutions, there is a distinct need to engage critically with the politics of power exisiting within these relations. Examining these partnerships opens up discussions on the scope for empowerment in future CLT endeavours. To enable this, there is a need to understand how power manifiests in the social and organisational practices of a CLT and the affect these practices have on members’ ability to realise their aspirations in the development process.

Within this research, theories of power were used as a way to critically engage with assumptions associated with community action, by asking the questions, how and

why is power being employed in this given situation? Furthermore, it provided a tool to frame discussions on people's experience of a community housing project, to reveal issues of control and to examine the mechanisms employed as part of the development process. Finally, it also guided my own research engagements, ensuring I continually reflected on how my actions and research activities aligned with my epistomological position. It encouraged me to ask questions such as, is this research acknowledging and responding to the complex and multidimentional practices of power? Am I ensuring that the research participants have opportunities to share control over the research design and delivery? And, do the activities carried out as part of this research assit in challenging power imbalances?

1.3) Research approach

The methodological approach employed in this research was intrinsic to the iterative and emergent nature of the study's development. It is therefore relevant to briefly introduce the key methodological influences before outlining the thesis structure and definition of key terms.

1.3.1) Participatory research

In deciding on a methodological approach for this research, I began by identifying the organisational nature of the communities I sought to work with. Democratic and non-hierarchical governance structures were key principles of each of the community-led housing groups I engaged with in the extensive research stage. Additionally, each group expressed a desire to bring about some level of social

change either by sharing knowledge and experiences of setting up a CLH group or by delivering new CLH that would benefit future residents and the local neighbourhood. This led me to explore participatory forms of research that supported the co-production of knowledge, whilst also creating space to bring about action.

Participatory research is concerned with the re-distribution of power in relationships of inquiry from the academic or institution, common in traditional research approaches, to participants or communities (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). Although varying in levels of engagement, participatory research projects are typically associated with more emancipatory aims that serve to benefit research participants as well as make theoretical contributions. By attempting to even out power imbalances associated with more conventional methodologies, participatory research aims to facilitate space for collaborative dialogue and narrative in which the voice of those traditionally perceived as research subjects informs, shapes and guides the research process and knowledge production (Borg *et al*., 2012). Speaking specifically about housing research, Allen (2016, 2009) argues that housing researchers regularly fail to engage with the lived experiences of people in the topic of study. The focus on democratization and emancipation has led many researchers, particularly those involved in community-level inquiry, to engage with participatory research approaches. The shift away from positivist paradigms where the researcher is the producer of knowledge, towards a non-hierarchical epistemology of co-production, means participatory approaches are suited to research that engages with grassroots, community, marginalised or political groups. Burns, Harvey and Aragon (2012, p.2) highlight how in participatory research:

> *'…people work, create, stir things up, advocate, react, adapt and relate in many other ways we make sense out of life. This sensemaking combines simultaneous action and adaptive reflection as people navigate their way through real-life situations in order to survive, learn and in some cases thrive'*

The benefits highlighted above significantly informed the decision made at the inception of this research on what methodological approach would be most appropriate for the type of organisation I intended to work with. In Chapter Two I provide a detailed discussion on how I arrived at the selected methodology.

1.4) Contribution to knowledge

The previous sections in this chapter have provided a brief account of what I set out to achieve through this research. I have also touched upon how I wanted to conduct my engagement with participants and why I decided to employ a participatory research approach. I identified a desire to undertake an in-depth exploration of the processes of constructing a community housing project; to examine the social and organisational practices through the lens of power relations; and to reflect on how these practices affected the prospective residents' ability to realise their aspirations for community. Having discussed how newer models of CLH are attracting attention at both government and grassroots scales, I drew attention to the commitment of CLTs to fill gaps in affordable housing provisions and build in covenants that preserve affordability for future residents. This offers potential for genuine mechanisms that enable community stewardship of land. Moreover, I discussed how

the nature of the CLT model lends itself to working in partnership with Housing Associations, which in turn provides a new route through which to deliver social housing. However, I locate my contribution to knowledge primarily as a critical response to these points. I seek to bring attention to the potential problematics of assuming these new models of collaboration will bring about the same benefits as more traditional, self-selecting, community housing groups. I argue that through an immersive case study with one CLT group, it is possible to gain valuable insight into the impact of community and institutional partnerships. Rather than viewing this research as an opportunity to generate generalizable findings, I argue that through collaborating with the case study participants, we actively engaged in wider discourses on the prospects for CLH in England. By building strong relationships with BCLT members, I was able to share in their learning, knowledge development and everyday experiences and find cooperative ways of examining and documenting these. Many of the obstacles and challenges identified in the data reflect those reported in existing literature however, this research captures how participants navigated or overcame them. Whilst looking specifically at the experiences of one CLT the findings from this research feed into wider debate on how policy and future research agendas may support and strengthen the CLH sector.

1.5) Introductory description of key stakeholders from intensive stage

Over the duration of this research I engaged with many of the stakeholders involved in bringing the Shaldon Road project to fruition. Each of these stakeholders play an important role in telling the story of the development process. The following section

provides an introductory description of the different groups within BCLT and their roles in the Shaldon Road project. I also include a brief account of some of the external stakeholders who have had significant involvement in the development process.

The table below sets out the internal stakeholders as well as those with whom BCLT engaged with during this research. This is followed by a description of each of the different groups.

Internal stakeholders	Local stakeholders	External Stakeholders
▪ BCLT member	▪ Lockleaze resident	▪ Bristol City Council
▪ Prospective Resident Group	▪ Ecomotive	▪ Homes and Communities Agency
▪ Steering Group	▪ South Lockleaze and Purdown Neighbourhood Group	▪ Highways Agency
▪ Facilitation Group	▪ Partnering housing association	
▪ Board of Directors		
▪ Project Group		
▪ BCLT staff member		
▪ Core Research Group		

Table 1: Table of stakeholder groups

BCLT member- An individual who has paid £1 to become a member of BCLT. They do not necessarily have any involvement in meetings.

Prospective Resident Group- A group of BCLT members who expressed an interest in living in the Shaldon Road development. The Prospective Resident Group meet fortnightly (alternating between weekday evening and weekend morning) to

discuss the projects' progress and host one-off events such as community consultation events and socials. Access to the Prospective Resident Group was initially open to all members, however, once planning permission had been granted and the units were allocated these meetings were then exclusively for future residents.

Steering Group- This group was initially set up by the Board to bring together potential residents and people already living in the Shaldon Road area. It was intended that this group would guide the development process along with the Board and Housing Association. The Board asked around ten members who had expressed an interest in the Shaldon Road project to join the Steering Group. This was done on a first come first served basis. The Board also asked representatives from the local community to attend. Two Lockleaze residents, who had gone to an initial consultation event held by the Board, attended meetings for the first six months of this research. The Steering Group meetings were also attended by one Board member, and the paid BCLT staff member. Meeting attendance usually ranged between eight to twelve people. Meetings were held fortnightly on a weekday evening. The Steering Group merged with the Prospective Resident Group around one year into this research.

Board- The Board comprises a range of individuals who have been voted in by the wider BCLT membership at a yearly Annual General Meeting. There are currently retired architects, lawyers and built environment professionals sitting on the Board. Additional members can be co-opted onto the Board for temporary periods of time.

The Board is responsible for the wider development of BCLT and deals with business outside of the Shaldon Road project.

United Communities Housing Association- United Communities Housing Association are the development partners for the Shaldon Road project. They were also the partners on BCLT's first housing scheme, completed in 2016. United Communities Housing Association manage over 2000 properties in Bristol and Swindon including housing and other community infrastructure such as community centres. They work in close collaboration with BCLT and attend the Board and Project Group meetings. There are two Housing Association staff members who regularly engage with the Project Group and Board. In addition to developing and managing housing, United Communities have built and managed community infrastructure within the city. Whilst they did not have experience of delivering CLH prior to partnering with BCLT, United Communities identify as a community based housing association with a strong focus on working in collaboration with citizens of Bristol.

Project Group- The Project Group is made up of members of the Board, Housing Association, and two prospective resident representatives. Additionally, staff members from the architectural firm and Ecomotive regularly attend meetings. This group is focused specifically on progressing the Shaldon Road project. The Project Group usually meets once a month during regular working hours.

BCLT staff member- There is currently one paid member of staff within BCLT. This staff member works closely with the Housing Association, Board and Project Group. They are the first point of contact for new members, and co-ordinate meetings and communication with external bodies. During this research the initial staff member left and was replaced.

Core Research Group- Around six months after beginning my engagement with BCLT, I invited members of the Steering Group/Prospective Resident Group to become involved in the design and delivery of this research. Five Steering Group/Prospective Resident members expressed an interest in joining. This group operated outside of BCLT and was organised for the purpose of this research. However, it was made up entirely of BCLT members and the meetings were predominantly reacting to the events taking place in Steering Group and Prospective Resident Group meetings. For the first eight to ten months we met at least once a month to discuss and develop the research. The regularity of these meetings became less frequent as the case study progressed and they tended to happen more frequently in the run up to workshops or in response to concerns or challenges within BCLT.

Architectural firm- An architectural firm was selected to develop the Shaldon Road scheme. There was one lead architect who attended meetings with the Board and Project Group, and a collection of other architects who supported them. The lead architect changed during this research. The first lead architect met once with the Prospective Resident Group to present initial ideas. The replacement lead Architect

held two consultation events with Prospective Residents where they presented different design options and requested feedback.

Ecomotive- Ecomotive is a social enterprise, working to promote self-build and custom-build housing in the UK. They carry out consultancy work with communities and at central government level. BCLT work in close collaboration with Ecomotive and brings them in to assist in different aspects of the development process, from developing planning applications to teaching self-finish[2] skills to residents. Ecomotive have worked closely with the Housing Association and BCLT staff members as well as attending Project Group meetings and occasional Prospective Resident meetings.

Non-resident stakeholders- During this thesis I often refer to the 'non-resident stakeholders'. This term encapsulates the Board, Project Group and Housing Association and is used when drawing comparisons or explaining relationships between these three stakeholder groups and the prospective resident members.

1.6) Structure of thesis

Chapter Two sets out the methodological approach employed in this research. I provide an account of how my own positionality influenced the selection of a

[2] 'Self-finish' housing is an approach which sits between self-build and developer-built housing. Using a self-finish approach future residents may be responsible, at varying levels, for non-structural aspects of the build process. This could range from building internal (non-integral) walls, to fitting bathrooms and kitchens. Self-finish is used to try and reduce the construction costs for residents.

participatory approach. Here, I discuss the two stages of research and how this informed the decision to carry out a single case study. Additionally, I reflect upon the methods employed in this research and how they were combined to support a deeper level of engagement with members of BCLT. A research timeline provides an overview of how these methods were practiced over the duration of this research. I discuss how the case study data was analysed during the empirical research and on completion of the case study. Finally, I engage with the ethics of participatory research and the need to go beyond the ethical considerations and regulations associated with university institutions.

Chapter Three provides a review of subject literature. In this chapter I engage with exisiting scholarly contributions in the field of community-led housing and community land trusts. Additionally, I reflect on how this review informed my understanding of researching with communities.

In Chapter Four I discuss the extensive stage of the research. This chapter provides an account of the empirical work, summarises the key points that arose, and identifies how this informed the intensive case study with BCLT.

In addition to the subject literature reviewed in Chapter Three, I undertake a review of theoretical literauture in Chapter Five. I draw on theories of power and community, relfecting on how these infrom the development of a theoretical lens for this research.

Having set out the methodolgical and theoretical approaches employed in this research, Chapter Six provides an overview of BCLT and the Shaldon Road project.

The following two empirical chapters focus on the construction of community and the practices of community within BCLT. These chapters draw on interviews, observations, workshops and governing documents to develop a detailed discussion of the development process captured in this case study. I return to the theoretical and subject literature, situating this research within the field of CLH and literature on power and community in practice.

In Chapter Nine I discuss how this research contributes to theoretical conceptualisations of communities. I focus on the work of two key theorists, of polarised positions, and reflect on how each relates to this research. In critiquing these positions I reflect on how embedding research in practice provides a useful way of examining community participation and power.

Having discussed the empirical findings and theoretical contribtions of this research, the final chapter engages in a wider disucssion on how this research informs our understanding on the role of CLTs in future community housing agendas. In this concluding chapter I summarise how this research has made a contribution to knowledge and identify recommendations for future research endeavours. Finally, I reflect on my experiences of using a participatory approach and provide an account of the successes and limitations of engaging participants in the research process.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1) INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter set the scene for this research, providing some contextual background to CLH in England and giving initial accounts of the theoretical lens and methodological approach employed. Within this chapter I provide more detail on the participatory methodology adopted in this research. The decision to introduce the methodology at this point in the thesis was reached after carefully considering how to best synthesise a process that did not follow a traditional linear path. Over the duration of this research there was significant overlap between theory development and practice, which is commonly associated with a participatory research approach (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Sherman and Torbert, 2000). Introducing the methodology at the beginning of this thesis provides a more genuine account of the pivotal role it played in the construction of my research, emphasising how fundamental it was to informing the design, development and analysis processes.

2.2) ARRIVING AT A METHODOLOGY

2.2.1) PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

It was clear at the beginning of my doctoral studies that I needed to identify the philosophical position underpinning and informing the decisions I made regarding the preliminary research design. Acknowledging how I, as a researcher, examine and construct knowledge was an important part of determining the initial research topic,

aims, objectives and methodology. Holden and Lynch (2004, p.407) highlight the importance of engaging with the philosophy of research suggesting that 'it opens researchers' minds to other possibilities, which can lead to both an enrichment of their research skills and an enhancement in their confidence that they are using the appropriate methodology'. They draw attention to key questions which should inform researchers' methodological decisions, including *'how'* and *'what'* to research, suggesting that these can only really be answered by engaging with the philosophical question of '*why'* to research.

Here, I begin with the 'why' question, by setting out my own positionality as a researcher who is finding their place within academia, whilst also recognising the personal aspiration to remain engaged as an activist. The activist-academic is not an unproblematic place to be, as highlighted by Torre and Fine (2006), participatory researchers tend to remain more within the academic arena, working in collaboration with activists. In Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010, p.246) two year 'Autonomous Geographies' project they reflect on the challenges of being both activist and academic. In their reflective account of the project they write:

> *'Despite our activist and action research backgrounds it proved an exceptionally difficult journey that has made us think long and hard about what we, as people committed to and involved in the global justice movement, can and should do as academics.*'

Through their reflective writing they draw attention to the problems associated with being an activist and a scholar, regaling stories of hostility from activist communities.

Chatterton and Pickerill (2010, p.252) speak frankly about their realisation that they too had fallen into what they describe as ‘the dichotomy between academics and activists, or intellectuals and the movement’, which was exacerbated by the research funding council, who required an academic-led proposal and documentation of findings.

As I began my research I was naively enthusiastic about the ease with which I would balance my role as researcher and activist. Reflecting on this, it is clear now as I return to my earlier methodology draft, that I placed too much expectation on the potential collaboration that a participatory approach would support. As I reflect on in more depth at the end of this thesis, there is a significant risk of adopting a participatory methodology without engaging actively in questions such as how the research challenges inequitable systems, gives voice to those who are often marginalised and remains focused on social change. The remainder of this section will provide an account of where I started from and why.

Understanding my ontological and epistemological assumptions significantly influenced the methodological choices I made over the duration of this research. Furthermore, it enabled me to situate my research approach among the work of existing theorists. Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) view that reality is individually constructed and is constantly changing and adapting was useful in recognising that all participants, including the researcher, hold their own interpretations of the world around them. Acknowledging that people construct their own understanding of reality was vital when considering the challenges and opportunities that arise from

collaborations with research participants. Some participatory theorists have criticised Guba and Lincoln's worldview, suggesting greater emphasis needs to be placed on the construction of reality through social encounters and interactions (Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason,1997). This attention to shared experiences as a way of understanding reality was particularly relevant to my focus on the way the social and organisational practices affected the prospective resident members' ability to realise their aspirations for the Shaldon Road community. However, I also recognised the need to acknowledge the individual voice and to give attention to the autonomy of the different members. Therefore, both Guba and Lincoln's, and Heron and Reason's scholarship contribute to my ontological and epistemological position. Rather than perceiving reality as constructed either individually or collectively, I concur that people's understanding of the world is shaped by their personal beliefs and reflections and by the social structures that surround them. Additionally, the epistemological contributions of theorists such as Cohen *et al* (2007), Flyvbjerg (2011, 2003), and Habermas (1990) significantly influenced my philosophical position. Their endorsement of equitable and emancipatory approaches to constructing knowledge informs my own view that research should support both theory and action and that those whose lived experiences are the focus of the research are the experts.

Having engaged with a range of research philosophies I identified three main principles that underpinned my personal research position:

- Research should be mutually beneficial to research participants and academic researchers

- Knowledge should be co-constructed by the researcher and those whose lived experience is the phenomena under study

- The phenomena being studied is influenced by a wider historical, social and political context and cannot be separated from this.

These principles significantly influenced many of the decisions made when constructing and developing this research, informing how the empirical work was carried out and ensuring that the research progression aligned with my philosophical research position. In addition to guiding the research process these principles also enabled me to identify how I wanted to develop my research capacities and what underlying values informed these choices. One example involved improving my skills in facilitation. These skills played a vital role in enabling me to create space for meaningful participation in this research.

2.2.2) Exploring participatory approaches to researching with communities

Frankham (2009) identifies that since the 1970s there has been growing pressures in a range of fields, including planning and research, to adopt more participatory forms of engagement and in recent years there has been notable growth in the popularity of collaborative methodologies (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Israel, *et al*., 2013). Based on the philosophy of the participatory research (Heron and Reason, 1997) a range of collaborative based methodological approaches have emerged, receiving

much recognition for their ability to support more equitable and emancipatory engagements between academics, universities and communities (Borg, *et al.,* 2012) These include; community involved research, community based participatory research, participatory learning research, collaborative research, action research, participatory action research, participatory community research, feminist participatory research, and co-operative inquiry. However, there are significant variations in the scope and level of engagement being deployed in research adopting a collaborative approach. This variance is evident at an inter and intra disciplinary level ranging from cursory engagements with research participants to emancipatory forms of collaboration. Israel *et al* (2013, p.6) describe collaborative methodologies as 'conducting research that **to some degree** shares power with and engages community partners in the research process and that benefits the communities involved either through direct intervention or by translating research findings into interventions and policy change'. In this quote I highlight the use of the term 'to some degree' which captures the idea that participatory research may vary between light touch engagement through to co-constructed research design, data gathering, analysis and reporting. The flaws associated with a participatory methodology can be in its application rather than the theory which underpins it. The necessary lack of a universal or generic formula for undertaking collaborative research leaves it open to subjective interpretation and even manipulation. As a result, engaging with and contributing to methodological debate around its application is an important part of the research process.

As described by Bergold (2007, cited by Bergold and Thomas, 2012, p.1), a collaborative approach to research 'argues in favour of the possibility, the

significance, and the usefulness of involving research partners in the knowledge production’. These approaches are employed across a diverse range of research settings, from micro-level inquiry, encouraging communities or individuals to make sense of lived experiences, through to national and international engagement, facilitating the development of networks and influencing policy change (Reason and Bradbury, 2007). Collaborative approaches, such as, participatory and action research are often used interchangeably, while sharing many similarities, Bergold and Thomas (2012, p.3) highlight that it is important to acknowledge distinctions between the two:

> *‘Although there are numerous points of convergence between action research and participatory research, we believe that by identifying the differences between the two approaches one can more accurately define the distinctive features of participatory research’*

They describe how action research may not always be focused on collaboration, as the central condition of this methodology is to contribute to social change. Participatory research on the other hand, may not strive to bring about any change to practice but focuses primarily on the collaborative process of knowledge generation, on which action may then be taken. When addressing the similarities and differences between collaborative methodologies, Bell *et al* (2004, p.3.) suggest that in participatory research 'the primary goal is to create an environment and process where context-bound knowledge emerges to develop “local theory” that is understandable and actionable’.

In Collins' (2015) thesis, which gives a critical account of her experience of using a participatory research approach, she debates the differences between participatory research and action research methodologies. In setting the scene she provides a detailed discussion of the variations between collaborative methodologies in the global north and south. She traces the development of collaborative research in the global north, highlighting how early traditions were considered to be significantly weighted towards practice over critical engagement (Carr and Kemmis, 1986 in Collins 2015, p. 59). In response to this came the next wave of collaborative research that focused more on the emancipatory potential, giving voice to participants with less focus on the researcher as expert. Finally, Collins refers to a fourth wave of collaborative research, which resembles what is often termed action research, in which researchers seek to enable communities to expose oppressive systems and structures and propose radical alternatives.

In contrast, the history of collaborative research in the global south may be traced back to creative methods of protest, underpinned by a long history of political activism and alternatives to oppression. Collins (2015) describes how in the late 1960s and 1970s there was a general rejection of top down approaches to development as people began to recognise them as exploitative. Freire's (1973) focus on consciousness raising played an important role in advocating approaches to research that enhanced participant capacity and were rooted in practical responses to real-life problems. He argued that dialogue and discussion were vital in attempting to develop more advanced consciousness.

When considering how to employ a participatory approach in this research I engaged with the discussions highlighted above. I was particularly interested in distinctions between collaborative knowledge generation and taking action to bring about social change. The following section provides an account of the process I undertook when deciding on a methodological approach.

2.2.3) Deciding on a participatory approach

The process of selecting a methodology for this research took a substantial amount of time and the challenges associated with reaching this decision reflect the broader journey within this study that involved re-evaluating ideas and challenging my own understanding on which opinions and pre-existing knowledge are based. I had initially decided that an action research approach would be most applicable to the proposed research, however, over the first 12 months, as my relationship with the Case Study Group developed, I spent much time questioning if this would best align with the needs of the group as well as the research aims and objectives. The remainder of this section discusses why it was decided that a participatory approach would be more congruent with the way the research was developing.

At the beginning of this study I met with BCLT’s paid staff member to introduce the proposed research and discuss how collaborating with BCLT could contribute to its endeavours, as well as make a broader contribution to knowledge. At the time of this meeting the Steering Group for BCLT’s Shaldon Road project had just been established and had yet to undertake any activities that contributed to the project’s development. Following this initial one-to-one meeting with BCLT’s staff member I

began attending Steering Group meetings and discussed this research with other BCLT members. We identified a range of potential research actions that could bring about positive change for the group. These included exploring what motivated individuals to be part of the development, how these individual motivations contributed to a collective vision, examining ways of decision-making and facilitating open communication between members. This was intended to inform the organisational practices and mechanisms put in place during the development process for both the short and long term social sustainability of the project. As the Steering Group became more established it set up a sub-group which was responsible for organising the meetings. Within this group there were individuals who had significant experience in implementing consensus decision-making practices and facilitating open communication in meetings. Over the initial six months spent building relationships with the members, it became apparent that the group was pro-active at self-organising and that it would prove difficult to demonstrate that this research had delivered actions that the group would not have achieved on its own. This realisation required that I re-visit the action research literature and re-evaluate how I would demonstrate that this study had brought about social change and action. By reflecting on the knowledge gained in the six months I spent getting to know the Steering Group, I came to the decision that a participatory research approach would be more suited to the study. The questions surrounding the methodological approach arose before the Core Research Group was established and therefore this decision was reached independently of the research participants. However, the justification for shifting from action research to participatory research was discussed when establishing the Core Research Group.

In the same way as action research, participatory research is often built on a foundation of social justice and empowerment. However, as discussed in the previous section, literature that draws distinctions between the two different approaches highlights how participatory research 'shifts the emphasis from action and change to collaborative research activities' (Bergold and Thomas, 2012, p. 3). The following section will provide an overview of the participatory research approach and discuss how it supported the development of research questions, aims and objectives.

2.2.4) Employing a participatory research approach

A review of participatory research literature highlights a blurring of boundaries between the different approaches and many different perspectives on how they should be employed. What became apparent to me, as I familiarised myself with both theoretical literature and accounts of how different collaborative approaches had been implemented in research studies, was that whilst distinctions between different approaches seemed clear in theoretical scholarship, when applied in practice the boundaries appeared to be much less defined. This being said, there is a clear distinction between the prioritisation of action in action research and the aim to flatten out power relations and support knowledge generation in participatory research. The following table is taken from Bell *et al's* (2004) paper on the distinctions between action and participative research.

Action	**Participative**
Post-Positivist	Post-Positivist

Researcher achieves learning, and larger group may also learn	Researcher and select participants learn about larger group
The researcher facilitates the process, collaborates with clients to create or actualize change. Researcher typically does not engage in change action	Participants make essential decisions in research project by which they are affected
Researcher collaborates with 'clients'	Researcher works with 'participants'
Researcher and clients engage in self-reflection	Researcher works with select participants/ No expert
Third party researcher engages in change as expert	Group works to change self with researcher not as expert
Subjective	Subjective
Emergent property: improved capacity and wisdom	Emergent property: self-knowledge

Table 2: Distinctions between action and participative research (Source: Bell et al, 2004, p.10)

The use of participatory research in this study aimed to facilitate collaborative enquiry, relinquishing a substantial level of leadership to the community participants and enabling BCLT to take an active role in shaping the research agenda. The iterative and emergent process of inquiry was intended to facilitate the generation of knowledge as well as build the capacity of research participants through a collaborative democratic process designed to enable participants to become co-researchers. Moreover, the research design was intended to shift the power associated with having knowledge from the researcher to all research participants (Allen, 2009; Corburn, 2005; Freire, 1973). These aims assist in challenging the

concept of the community as a ‘laboratory for investigation to one in which community members not only participate in the inquiry process but also contribute their own knowledge’ (Hacker, 2013, p.5).

Participatory research relies heavily on an openness and transparency that more traditional research approaches do not require to the same extent. These conditions are only possible by developing a closeness between researcher and participant that is built on mutual trust and respect. Hearing accounts of people’s experiences, thoughts and feelings plays a vital part in generating knowledge, yet we are mostly conditioned to only engage in this type of sharing with our family and friends (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). Bergold and Thomas (2012, p.6) also discuss how the acceptance of conflict is important in creating spaces where people feel able to speak freely:

> *‘It is not a question of creating a conflict-free space, but rather of ensuring that the conflicts that are revealed can be jointly discussed; that they can either be solved or, at least, accepted as different positions; and that a certain level of conflict tolerance is achieved.’*

It is evident from the participatory research literature that any researcher attempting to create participative relationships should work towards reciprocal feelings of trust. Given this research’s focus on exploring power relations and opportunities for active participation, I felt certain that over the duration of the two and a half year case study we would experience some conflict between different members or stakeholder groups. I discuss this in more depth in Chapter Five, however, it is relevant here to draw attention to Habermas’ scholarly contributions. As a critical theorist, Habermas’

(1987; 1990) work is often used to underpin participatory research projects. He proposes a set of conditions, which if met in a social situation, provide 'ideal speech' conditions. This contributes to his broader theory on 'open communicative space' (1990) through which he describes how humans are naturally motivated to find collaborative ways of working. Yet as I address in more depth in Chapter Five, there is a focus, in Habermas' work, on consensus seeking. Whilst his contributions provide a useful starting point from which to develop methods of communication he does not give focus to ways of ensuring that conflict is a constructive or even transformative state within the group.

Whilst a participatory research approach should encourage the researcher to carry out an emancipatory project, it was important to recognise the risks and limitations associated with this approach. As highlighted in Chatterton and Pickerills' (2010, p.249) reflective account of their own research project, 'participatory research is not *inherently* progressive'. Furthermore, it is still at risk of becoming exploitative if the researcher focuses on what can be extracted to further knowledge, rather than how the insights gained through research can contribute to knowledge generation and social change. By working in collaboration with a Core Research Group and engaging in constant reflexive practice, this research aimed to reduce the risk of becoming unevenly focused on the academic outputs and deliverables. It was the intention that the engagement with co-researchers would encourage me to continually return to questions on how this research was contributing to BCLT.

2.2.5) Case study research

Having introduced literature on participatory research, this section discusses the decision to use a case study. Additionally, I provide justification for the use of a single case rather than multiple studies.

The case study has a long history in social science research and subsequently there is a wealth of literature relating to the challenges and benefits of its application. Yin (1994) describes how this comprehensive approach enables the researcher to examine multiple perspectives of a phenomena, highlighting how case studies are useful in answering the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions often associated with social science research. Similarly, Gerring (2006, p.4) describes how a case study approach encourages the researcher to utilise a ‘variegated set of tools to capture the complexity of social behaviour’. The case study provides a useful approach to gather in-depth narratives and real life experiences that relate to the phenomena being studied. Whilst this approach is most commonly drawn upon to carry out deep explorations of one or more cases, it should also encourage engagement with the wider social and political context, enabling the researcher to situate their research amongst other relevant theory (Peters, 1998). Stake (1995) identifies three different categories of case study research; intrinsic, instrumental and collective. He defines the intrinsic case study as an exploration of a specific individual or group, in which the researcher aims for a deeper understanding rather than generalisable findings. The instrumental case serves as a way of understanding a specific phenomenon that unlike the intrinsic case is often associated with testing existing theory. The collective study is used to describe research that involves two or more cases, now recognised as the multiple case study.

There are many examples of case study approaches being employed in community housing research both in the UK and internationally. Furthermore, a range of CLH studies have used case studies to elicit the richness of narratives consistent with this research. Examples include, Lang and Novy's (2014) study examining the relationship between cooperative housing and social cohesion in Vienna, Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) multiple case study of the everyday practices of activism in three political projects including a low impact housing development, and Korpela's (2012) study into the organisational structures of different co-housing groups.

The decision to use a case study for empirical data collection was reached having considered the type of questions that were likely to arise given my own research strengths and interests and the gaps identified in existing theory. Having decided to engage with a participatory approach this research aimed to build a depth of knowledge into what Yin (1994) describes as the 'complexity' of a study area and to use this to inform practice and serve the purpose of the group. Additionally, flexibility can be built into case study design allowing the research to respond to the emerging themes and challenges that are often associated with undertaking participatory research.

Despite its extensive history in qualitative research, the case study approach has been criticised for lacking rigor and scientific value. It has also been suggested to be useful for generating a hypothesis rather than testing theory (Abercrombie *et al.*, 2006; Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Dogan and Pélassy, 1990; Diamond, 1996). Additionally, many of these theorists have expressed further criticism of the single

case study arguing that it is un-generalisable and centred on purely descriptive accounts. The following section will provide a counter critique, discussing how single case studies contribute to the generation of knowledge and why this approach has been selected for this research.

2.2.6) The single case

Flyvbjerg (2006) discusses the perceived inability of case study research to draw direct comparisons and generalizable findings, arguing against claims that case studies are useful for creating a hypothesis rather than testing it. He responds by suggesting how the breadth and generalizability of case study research may be less valuable than the depth of insight, proposing that 'it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.13). Similarly, Welsh and Lyons (2001) argue that researchers should strive to achieve the best understanding of the selected case rather than searching for generalisations. Both Flyvbjerg and Welsh and Lyons draw attention to the need for thick descriptions that are context specific (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Morse and Field, 1995). Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight how an individual case will have multiple characteristics and a range of practices, and as previously highlighted in Flyvbjerg's work, there is a wealth of knowledge that can come from a deeper insight and understanding into these characteristics and practices. Stake (1995, p.85), wrote extensively on the single case, arguing that 'single cases are not as strong a base for generalizing to a population of cases as other research designs. But people can learn much that is general from single cases'. In setting out a justification for this

claim Stake discusses the cumulative knowledge generated from individual cases. Undertaking a single case inevitably results in more time being dedicated to one study, we may consider the depth of understanding generated through a single case as part of a wider body of knowledge. Viewing the single case study in this way negates much of the criticism it receives. Rather than seeing single cases as a compromise, it becomes an opportunity to achieve a greater depth of understanding.

This research intended to examine not only the easily observable social and organisational practices of BCLT, but also the micro-practices that may be found in day-to-day experiences. Furthermore, it aimed to explore the harder to reach, individual and collective aspirations for the BCLT community. Together these different factors assist in creating a rich narrative that tells a story of the development process. Having engaged with discussions around the single and multiple case study, I decided that a single case approach would be most appropriate for this research. To gain access to the harder to reach experiences of the research participants, I prioritised the depth of research over breadth and generalisability. Rather than forging surface level relationships with members of multiple CLH projects, I aimed to develop reciprocal relationships of trust, which may only come about over time. For this research, a single case study was arguably the most suitable. A multiple case study approach could have easily been adopted, however, that would have required different questions and objectives, and would not have allowed time to engage as deeply with a collaborative and participatory approach.

2.3) THE EXTENSIVE AND INTENSIVE STAGES

Having provided an overview of the methodology employed in this research, the following section introduces the two different research stages undertaken over two and a half years of empirical work.

When I began this research, I had identified a desire to situate it in the field of CLH. I was also aware that my own research interests lay in the social experiences of people rather than in, for example, the physical design of community housing developments or the policy process. Additionally, I knew that I wanted to undertake this research in a participatory way, where I was engaged with the people whose stories I wanted to hear and we were working collaboratively on generating knowledge. As part of this participative and iterative process of inquiry it seemed appropriate to begin by speaking to people who lived in CLH projects. I made contact with 12 CLH groups in South West England and asked to meet them to discuss my research. These were established and fledging CLH groups that used a range of different collaborative models such as co-housing, co-operative and CLT. Five groups agreed to speak with me during the extensive stage. I met with members of two of the groups several times and had conversations via email and telephone. Two individuals were particularly interested in my research and we had many informal conversations over the first six months of the study. Over this time they invited me to visit their communities and to join them at a direct action camp where people were protesting a proposed new road through a community owned growing space. Even after the extensive stage was complete we would occasionally meet unplanned at food nights at Bristol’s anarchist centre and discuss how my research was developing.

This extensive stage was intended to assist in refining my research topic and to identify and develop relationships with one group which would become the focus of the case study. During the extensive stage I met with Stephanie, The BCLT staff member at that time. After a few meetings, we decided that there was significant scope to collaborate on this research. BCLT became my Case Study Group and from around six months into my research I ceased meeting with other CLH groups, although I retained some email communication for around a year in total. Shortly after we decided to work together, I started attending Steering Group[3] meetings. Once I had been attending meetings for a month and had got to know some of the members, I requested five minutes of meeting time to talk about my research. During this time, I also spoke about my desire to undertake participatory research and asked people to make contact if they felt that they might like to be involved in the research design and development. Following that meeting five members got in touch either by email or face-to-face, and the following week we met in a coffee shop to talk and develop ideas. These members, who I met with outside of the Steering Group meetings, became my Core Research Group. In Chapter Four I provide a detailed account of the conversations and activities undertaken during the extensive stage and identify how it contributed to the development of the intensive research stage.

In total I conducted 20 interviews and 200 hours of observations between January 2015 and October 2017. The first year I was involved with BCLT I observed

[3] Steering Group merged to become the Prospective Resident Group around 12 months into this study

meetings and interviewed 15 members of the Steering Group and Prospective Resident Group. I made a conscious decision to build strong relationships with these stakeholders as I was primarily interested in the citizen experience of trying to obtain housing through a CLT. At the end of 2015 I interviewed a board member who regularly attended prospective resident meetings, however, the remaining four interviews with the project group representative, board member, and staff from BCLT and the Housing Association were carried out in 2016, in my second year of involvement with BCLT. The decision to interview these stakeholders was informed by a desire to understand more about the context and conditions which were shaping the prospective resident group’s experiences. The voices of the non-resident members were important in making sense of the nuances and tension in trying to work in partnerships to deliver a CLT development. The architecture firm’s voice is noticeably missing from the narrative presented in this thesis. This was predominantly because of the physical and structural distance between the prospective resident group and the architects. During the second year of the case study the architecture firm hosted three consultation events to present their plans and gather feedback from prospective residents. Unfortunately, none of these events provided an opportunity to build relationships with the architects which I could follow up with interviews. Additionally, between the Board and architecture firm it was decided that all requests for information and communication with architects would be filtered through the Board. In presenting a narrative of the development process it is important to acknowledge that the architecture firm’s voice is missing. Had I interviewed the architects working on the Shaldon Road project it could have provided another lens on the CLT process and the challenges of collaborating with a range of stakeholders.

2.4) Researcher-participant; establishing a role in Bristol Community Land Trust

The methodological approach adopted in this research required me to balance my role as research-participant and insider-outsider. Towards the beginning of this chapter I discussed my positionality as a researcher and in concluding this thesis I reflect on the participatory approach. Here I briefly outline my role in BCLT. Having been a member of BCLT since June 2014, before this research began, I was aware of the organisations aims and objectives, as well as their current housing projects. However, I had not attended meetings and did not personally know any of the members before beginning this research. As I began to build relationships with BCLT members I was open and honest about my motivations for attending meetings. I highlighted that whilst I have a personal interest in living in a community-led development at some point in the future, which may or may not be a BCLT project, my attendance at meetings was as a researcher looking to carry out collaborative research with the organisation.

The extent that I participated actively in the development process changed over the two and a half year case study. In the Steering Group and for the first year of Prospective Resident meetings I participating more actively. Contributing to discussions in meetings and being part of decisions. In early 2017 it was evident that the topics raised in meetings were becoming more focused on specific design elements. From this point onwards I continued to attend meetings, and to be involved in the activities required to progress the development, however, I would

often find myself adopting more of an observer or outsider role when the group were deciding on next steps and actions. When contributing to conversations in meetings I tried to be explicit about my position as a researcher rather than a prospective resident.

The type of research I set out to undertake as well as the nature of the relationships I built with prospective residents over the first year and a half meant that I would not have gone from being actively involved to a passive observer. Rather I became aware that the prospective resident voice needed to come from the members who hoped to live in the Shaldon Road community and that this research should seek to support and facilitate space to develop this voice. In the chapter that follows I return to discuss the relationship between BCLT members and this research, and my own role within that. In the concluding chapter of this thesis I engage in more detailed reflection on the successes and challenges of using a participatory approach in this research.

2.5) METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The methods used in this study were intended to build a dialogue between the community participants and myself, creating a coherent narrative that interrogated the research problems identified in the early phase of project planning as well as those that arose over the duration of the study. The Core Research Group were involved in the methods selection and the design and delivery of two workshops (discussed below). However, in order to plan and progress the project over the first 12 months, I proposed a range of participatory research methods to the Core

Research Group, which were discussed and refined collaboratively. Additionally, the Core Research Group members were encouraged to reflect on their own skills and propose methods they believed would be useful for this project.

As with many examples of participatory research projects the methodological approach may appear disordered as the needs and ambitions of different stakeholders are navigated and negotiated (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010; Maxey, 1999; Pain and Francis, 2003). In this research the method selection became part of the narrative. When discussing the importance of carrying out research that elicits thick description, Flyvbjerg (2011, p.311) argues how it may be:

> *'difficult or impossible to summarise into neat formulas, general propositions, and theories (..) however, a particularly 'thick' and hard-to-summarize narrative is not a problem. Rather, it is often a sign that the study has uncovered a particularly rich problematic'.*

The level of flexibility required in participatory research is concurrent with the commitment to engage in collaborative explorations of real time experiences as they emerge. Participatory research calls into question the nature of knowledge production and advocates for a more integrated approach to understanding the world. Davis and Dwyer's (2007, p.258) contribution to discussions on the future trajectory of qualitative forms of knowing highlights how it 'will be characterized as much by openness, reflexivity and recursivity as by categorization, conclusion and closure'. In this quote they allude to a messiness in their approach to generating data, which facilitates a more engaged and dynamic research process. This shares many similarities with Law's (2004, p.14) writing. Law argues that:

> *'(social) science should also be trying to make and know realities that are vague and indefinite because much of the world is enacted in that way. In which case it is in need of a broader understanding of its methods. These, I suggest, may be understood as methods assemblages'.*

Informed by these discussions on method selection I decided to engage my Core Research Group in a conversation about how they would like to carry out the research. It should be noted that I knew at this stage in the research process that I would probably undertake interviews, as I believed that they would play an important role in ensuring I met the academic requirements of doctoral study. The guarantee of collecting data by undertaking interviews, enabled me to adopt a level of openness and flexibility in the selection of other methods. I was less concerned with needing to generate outputs in order to demonstrate a contribution to knowledge, and could focus instead on the process of exploring different participatory methods.

The discussions that took place during the Core Research Group meetings tended to focus on group activities. What became evident through these conversations was that the co-researchers often perceived each method in isolation rather that as an 'assemblage', as suggested by Law (2004). My role as a researcher became more focused on drawing the different methods together as part of a research strategy, than on method selection. In the remainder of this section I provide an overview of the methods used in this research. Following this is an account of how NVivo was used to assist in analysing and making sense of the data.

2.5.1) Collaborative workshops

In the months spent reading around participatory approaches and planning how I would carry out my research, it became clear that there were opportunities to engage with members of the Case Study Group outside of one-to-one interviews. From my initial meetings with Stephanie, the first BCLT staff member, and Steering Group members, it was evident that they also felt this research offered an opportunity to gather data in a way that could assist the group in progressing with the development process. At the first meeting with the Core Research Group we discussed the types of activities we might wish to carry out. There was consensus that it would be useful to run group workshops, as and when factors arose that needed addressing. We discussed how the group's cohesion might be de-prioritised as the project progressed, due to more imminently pressing issues arising. Stephanie also highlighted this, articulating how she felt the group's social dynamics could be developed through this research.

As a result of these initial meetings it was decided that we would aim to organise two workshops, with flexibility to add more if required. At this early stage, we did not specify what we would use them to address but rather that we would wait until there were specific challenges or ideas emerging. Inevitably the ambiguity surrounding the nature and form that these workshops would take led to some anxiety around how I would marry my aspiration to carry out participatory research with the academic deliverables required of doctoral study. However, I was reassured by the participants' desire to focus research activities on the social aspects of the development process. Rather than worrying about the apparent lack of clearly defined workshop objectives, I embraced this as part of the iterative and emergent

nature of participatory research and chose to develop my understanding on workshops as a method to both bring about positive change and contribute to academic knowledge.

To begin to understand how to use workshops as a method, I carried out a search of participatory research literature to see how they had been employed in other research projects. I found Jungk and Mullert’s (1996) ‘Future Creating Workshops’ (FCW) and became interested in their focus on creating preferred scenarios based on understanding and examining existing practices. Foucault (1980) warns of the risks of engaging with ideal or utopian scenarios without examining what has already been done. He argues that focusing on ideals allows normative power structures to prevail, whist questioning what has already happened enables actors to challenge power relations. From my initial reading on the FCW method it was evident that it enabled participants to imagine ideal scenarios but was grounded in the interrogation of existing practices and experiences.

The FCW method is predominantly used by communities and non-governmental organisations to analyse and reflect on real-life situations, with the intention of creating preferred scenarios. Vidal (2006, p.2) describes how this method may support an action research approach by ‘focusing on facilitated and participative group processes to deal with real-life problems’. The workshop method is designed in a way that enables participants to move through a process of examining their current situation or problem, imagining an ideal scenario, and identifying what steps or changes need to take place in order to progress towards this preferred way of

being. Working in collaboration with workshop participants to co-construct a pathway from an existing scenario to a favoured one aligns with the principles, identified in Section 2.2, which inform my research position.

Whilst there is no strict formula for a FCW, they have traditionally been structured around five different phases. Vidal (2006, p.5) outlines the five phases based on Jungk and Müllert (1987) model. These are presented below:

> *'• The preparation phase: Here the themes, the invited participants, the methods, their rules and the time table of the workshop are settled by the organizers of the workshop and the facilitators. The room and local facilities for the workshop are settled.*
>
> *• The critique phase: Here the problem is critically and thoroughly discussed and investigated. Brainstorming is the preferred creative technique followed up by a structuring and grouping of ideas in some main sub-themes.*
>
> *• The fantasy phase: Here the participants try to work a utopia, to draw an exaggerated picture of the future. Brainstorming and other creative techniques might be used. The social fantasies of the participants are developed in this phase.*

• *The implementation phase: Here the ideas found are checked and evaluated in what concerns their practicability. An action plan is elaborated.*

• *The follow-up phase: Here the action plan is monitored; eventually changes are performed and if needed new FW’s are planned.’*

Jungk and Müllert (1987) and Vidal (2006) suggest that these five phases are typically conducted over a minimum of eight hours. This is arguably one of the main obstacles, limiting the FCW’s use in participatory research. I was aware that whilst it might be possible to run a workshop over one weekend day, it would be unlikely that members would be able to attend for more than five hours, given that many of them would need to arrange childcare. It therefore seemed appropriate to use the FCW method to inform the way we ran our workshops, rather than attempt to replicate the model in full.

Over the two and a half years spent with BCLT, we organised and ran two workshops. Workshop One took place in December 2015 and focused on the design standard for the site. Fifteen prospective resident members attended this workshop. We discussed where prospective residents would like to see the environmental credentials for the site, on a sliding scale from a Fabric First approach to Passivhaus Certification (for further discussion please see Chapter Nine). We also began

developing a vision for a ‘common-house’, including how the residents would like the internal space to be organised and how they might attempt to manage the space when living on site. Three prospective residents and myself did a short presentation of the different design standard options and then facilitated a group discussion on these. Following this, we led a session where members were asked to split into breakout group activities and brainstorm their ideas for the common-house.

Figure 3: Images from Workshop One

In December 2016 we held Workshop Two. Twenty members attended, including prospective residents, Board and Project Group members, the BCLT staff member, two Housing Association staff, and one of the directors of Ecomotive. This workshop was organised and run by two prospective resident members (one had been involved in running Workshop One, and the other had not) and myself. Workshop

Two was more formal than Workshop One, running over one day and including members from the non-resident stakeholder groups. In preparation for the workshop I also met with the BCLT staff member and two Housing Association staff. We used these meetings to discuss our plans for the workshop and ensure they felt it would be useful to them as well as prospective residents . The workshop was structured on a basic version of the FCW approach (outlined in this section). We began with an analysis of the current situation, moved on to imagine a more idealised scenario and then reflected on what steps would need to happen to progress towards this scenario. The workshop included a range of full and breakout group activities. After some ice breaker exercises and a discussion on what the members hoped to achieve during the workshop, we began with a fishbowl activity, where all members of the group sat in a circle and two individuals volunteered to come into the centre and take it in turns to voice their opinions on the given topic. At approximately two minute intervals one member switched out of the middle and a new member came in to join. Following this we used a popular workshop exercise called ‘world café’ where we split into four smaller breakout groups and looked in more detail at the concerns raised in the fishbowl exercise. After an hour in breakout groups, we came back together as a whole group, shared what had surfaced in the world café exercise and engaged in a full group discussion on these points. The workshop concluded by identifying some action points that we would begin to implement. These included some simple points that could be addressed straight away and some more complicated points which needed further discussion. The mixture of full group and smaller group activities was designed to ensure those who were less confident in speaking had the opportunity to share their opinions.

Figure 4: Images from Workshop Two

All written documentation generated in the workshops, along with transcriptions of breakout group discussions, were analysed using qualitative analysis software, as discussed later in this chapter.

2.5.2) Participatory video

In addition to running workshops, at our first Core Research Group meeting we also discussed the option of using video to capture the story of the development process. Some of the members expressed feeling that video would be a fun way of gathering opinions and hearing people's experiences. As neither myself or members of the Core Research Group had any significant experience in film making it was important to manage our expectations of what we could produce and to carefully consider the role video would play in both the collection and dissemination of data. Whilst my knowledge on video methods was limited I had come across participatory video (PV) methods and had attended presentations on their application in research projects.

PV is used in a range of disciplines for identifying and communicating the ‘voice’ of individuals and communities whose perspectives are often absent in mainstream discourse. Plush (2012, p.68) describes how PV can ‘educate, persuade, and advocate in ways that can bring positive change’. Rather than being focused on the outputs, PV is rooted in process and the social change that can come about from people collaboratively creating visual footage. Rose (2012, p.28) highlights how visual research methods ‘are argued to be especially effective in generating evidence that other methods – especially interviews, not to mention surveys – cannot’. She suggests how most visual methods ‘involve talk between the researcher and the researched, and it is claimed that things are discussed in the talk about visual materials that don’t get discussed in talk-only interviews’ (*ibid).* Visual methods, and PV in particular, have been identified as providing another medium for communicating ideas, addressing practices that are inequitable, and challenging power relations. In considering how to provide a wide range of opportunities for BCLT members to engage with this research, it appeared that PV could offer an additional platform for communication.

At our second Core Research Group meeting I spoke to the members about PV and we spent some time looking at Insight Share’s, an organisation specialising in PV, webpage. There was a mixed response from members. Katie, a performing arts teacher, was enthusiastic about using this method, whilst Rachel expressed how should would not feel confident enough to be filmed or lead interviews, but would be happy to help with filming others. Understanding the individuals’ own limits was an important part of the PV process. There were three roles that members could take on

if they wanted to be involved, these were filming, interviewing other members and being interviewed.

Over the two and a half years spent with BCLT, the PV aspect of the research peaked and waned. This was partially in line with the other pressures on the group but also a result of which members were engaging most with BCLT meetings at the time. When Katie's attendance at meetings reduced, there was also a reduction in people's enthusiasm for the PV aspects of this research. At first this seemed problematic, I was concerned that having documented my intention to use PV, it would, on some level, be a failure to not carry it out as intended. Although at the time I did not realise it, I later became aware that this was part of embracing the uncertainty and messiness associated with participatory research. The fact that the PV aspect of the research design did not manifested in the way we had initially intended was largely due to other methods being prioritised by the members. In total we did three filming events, where members designed questions, interviewed and filmed each other. These interviews were analysed using NVivio.

Although we did not develop PV in the way we initially intended, we saw how it could be a powerful method for opening a more honest dialogue between members, for whom power relations appeared unbalanced. The Core Research Group and I discussed what we should do with the visual outputs generated through PV activities. We agreed that I would retain the footage and if there was scope for the Prospective Resident Group to recommence work on it once planning permission had been

obtained and they were physically present on the Shaldon Road site, I would send the footage to them.

Figure 5: Images from participatory video

2.5.3) Conversational interviews

The other methods employed in this research were contextualised and framed in the interviews undertaken in one-to-one conversations with members of BCLT. Conducting interviews enabled me to hear rich accounts of the members' experiences and their individual stories on what had bought them to BCLT. Boodhoo and Purmessur (2009, p.5) highlight how 'interviews are an important tool used to

depict the story behind the interviewees' experiences'. Having developed a strong rapport with many of the members, these conversations were open spaces, where we talked honestly and frankly about people's experiences of the development process and how these aligned with their political and ideological aspirations for the project. In discussing conversational interviews, Roulston (2012, p.3) describes how they 'strive to create a friendly and informal atmosphere in which participants are respected as equal partners who are free to share their understandings concerning the research topic'. How to create an environment of openness and reduce unequal power imbalances between researcher and research participants is a central consideration in participatory research. By undertaking interviews in a predominantly unstructured form, and focusing conversation on factors that were surfacing in the Prospective Resident Group meetings and members' experiences of these, the participants being interviewed could guide the direction of conversation and raise issues that were important to them. Interviews were conducted in either public locations, such as cafes and community centres, or at participants' homes. Before arriving at an interview, I would usually note down either key topics, or prompts which would assist in guiding the conversation. Interviews were carried out over the two and a half year case study. This meant that the interviews were always reacting to what was happening in the development process at that time. At the beginning of each interview I explained why I was not going to be following a structured set of interview questions and highlighted that it was a free space where participants could steer the conversation towards things they wanted to discuss.

In total, I carried out 20 audio-recorded interviews with members of BCLT. In addition to these I had three PV interviews and four conversations recorded in my research

diary from the extensive research stage. My level of input in guiding conversation varied from interview to interview. Some participants were confident in leading the conversation and had lots of views and opinions to share. Other participants were less willing to lead and I was required to prompt them, by introducing topics.

2.5.4) Researcher diary

In addition to the group and one-to one activities, I kept a reflective research diary where I recorded my observations of meetings and events, captured the informal spontaneous conversations between myself and other BCLT members, and reflected on the participatory process. Researcher diaries are a commonly used tool in social science research, intended to promote self-awareness and self-reflection (Woll, 2013). Self-awareness and reflection is an important part of the participatory research process and responds to the need for researchers to remain engaged with the ethical questions around power, control and representation. Nadin and Cassell (2006, p.210) highlight how:

> *'the process of reflection is aided by the use of a diary as it enables the researcher to continuously think about their own research practices and assumptions, by recording those thoughts in a systematic way'.*

Over the two and a half year case study, I tried to write, even if only a short summary of the main events, after every meeting.

2.5.5) Observations

Embedded within the research diary were observational accounts of the different engagements between members. In addition to interviews and diaries, observations are a popular method in the social sciences. Whilst being employed in many research studies, there are significant variations in how they are used. In some instances, observations can be a way of maintaining distance between the researcher and researched. The researcher remains passive and detached from the events they are observing. Crang and Cook (1995, p.22) highlight that ‘to be an observer of a 'culture' implies a detached sitting-back and watching of activities which unfold in front of the researcher as if s/he wasn't there’. If used in this way, observations would have been in direct conflict with the philosophical approach underpinning this research. However, as Crang and Cook continue by saying:

> *‘Like many other writers, we argue that to talk about participant observation should not be to separate its 'subjective' and 'objective' components, but to talk about it as a means of developing intersubjective understandings between researcher and researched’ (ibid).*

In this, more engaged and active approach, observations become a meaning making process. They enable the researcher to be immersed in the phenomena being studied and to develop a practical understanding of the social relations that take place. Overall I undertook around 200 hours of observations. The focus of these were on understanding how the social and organisational practices were experienced over the development process. Primarily, I was interested in how power affected the prospective residents’ experiences, however, as the research developed it became apparent that in order to understand this I also needed to consider the

experiences of the non-resident stakeholders. This assisted me in developing a rich narrative of the real-life relationships that emerge within a CLTs housing development project.

My observations were carried out as an active member of the Prospective Resident Group, involving myself in meetings, events and specific tasks. Over the two and a half years, I attended fortnightly Prospective Resident Group meetings, took part in two community building days and went to two consultation events with the architecture firm. I joined a sub-group that met in-between Steering Group meetings to organise the following meeting, and was involved with a second sub-group that focused on engaging with the wider Locakleaze community, in which the Shaldon Road site is situated. Additionally, I volunteered as a BCLT representative at a fayre in the Lockleaze neighbourhood and attended gardening days on the Shaldon Road site.

Figure 6: Lockleaze neighbourhood fayre

Figure 7: Gardening day

Further to these prospective resident member roles, I also negotiated my role as a researcher. I met with members of the Core Research Group. Towards the beginning of the research these meetings were weekly, but became less frequent over time. I also attended two meetings with Housing Association employees and The BCLT staff member where we discussed the development of the Shaldon Road project. Negotiating these different roles, as BCLT member and researcher was very much a learning process, one which I had to find ways to reflect and analyse my observations and experiences.

My observations were recorded in my research diary, starting with a summary of the event or activity. I then documented the social interactions, including, the different stakeholders who were there, the nature of the conversation eg: were there conflicts, did everyone who wanted to get an opportunity to talk, did the conversation follow the aim/agenda or did it get boycotted or lose focus. Finally, I recorded any initial reflections on how the observations related to the theories of power I was using in this research.

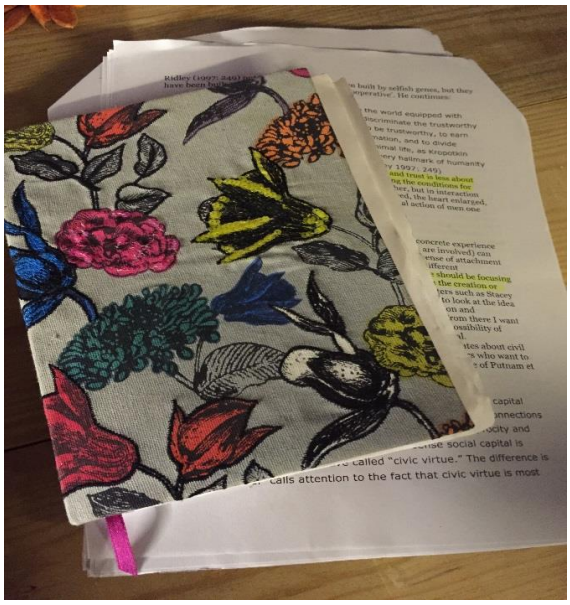

Figure 8: Research diary

2.5.6) Governing documents

In addition to the methods highlighted above I decided later in the research process to include governing documents in the data analysis. These documents included for example, a summary of the letting plan consultation and feedback, annual general meeting reports, and allocation policy proposals. Whilst these did not provide the same richness of data that was gained through the narratives and observations, the

documents did assist in building a story of how BCLT was developing. These documents were analysed in the same way as the transcribed interviews and diary entries which I discuss in Section 2.7.

2.6) RESEARCH TIMELINE

As is common in participatory research, the timeframe of when different research activities took place seemed somewhat disordered. Whilst observations played a continual role in the case study, other methods such a participatory video and collaborative workshops happened on an ad-hoc basis. The following time line documents when different methods were employed. This is intended to assist in developing a clear picture of this research process.

Activity	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15
Creative workshop												CW1
Participant observation	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO
Steering group meeting	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG		SG	
Facilitation group meeting					FG	FG	FG	FG	FG	FG		FG
Prospective resident group meetings											PRG	PRG
CLT project milestone							AD*					
Interviews	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN
Participatory video											PV	PV
Core research group meetings								CM			CM	
Community days												
Consultation meetings with architect												

Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
											CW2
PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO
SG											
PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG
IN	IN	IN	IN			IN		IN			
			PV	PV	PV						
CM		CM		CM		CM		CM		CM	
						CD					
					CE				CE	CE	

Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17
PO	PO	PO							
PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG	PRG
							PP**	PG***	
IN	IN								
CM									
			CD						

Participant observation	200 hours
Interviews	20 interviews
AD*	Allocation policy drafted
PP**	Planning permission submitted
PG***	Planning permission granted

Table 3: Research timeline

2.7) Data analysis: collaborative and individual meaning making processes

The analysis of data generated through this research took place in two ways. Firstly, there was the iterative and collaborative process of analysing which happened as I undertook the research and secondly, the individual analysis of data through qualitative analysis software, NVivo. The Core Research Group meetings, one-to-one interviews and conversations with members of BCLT acted as spaces to not only generate data but to refine and focus our understanding of the challenges which this research was responding to. This collaborative way of analysing was a shared meaning making process between myself as researcher and participants as co-researchers. The extent to which participants adopted their role as co-researchers varied from person to person. In Core Research Group meetings, participants were enthusiastic about engaging with the analysis of their experiences and the events that were occurring in the Prospective Resident Group. These meetings became productive spaces where we refined our research focus. For example, in one meeting we discussed how members had noticed a growing divide in the Prospective Resident Group, where they perceived that some members were demonstrating less concern about the shared aspects of the project. This informed a more detailed analysis of the members' commitment to the Prospective Resident Group's and wider BCLT's common concerns and shared goals. Many of the one-to-one interviews also provided space to make sense of the experiences being captured in this research. In setting up the interview space I was careful to ensure that the interview participants knew that they could bring to the table any issues, concerns or reflections that they felt were relevant to their experience of the development process. The extent to which participants used these interview spaces to make

sense of their experiences varied from person to person. Some participants wanted to tell their story of how they had come to be involved in BCLT and share their opinions on how the Shaldon Road development process compared to their expectations when they joined. However, other members used the interviews to interrogate their feelings and experiences, actively seeking to situate these within wider practices of BCLT. An example of this was the connections drawn between members’ sense of control over the development process and the involvement of the Housing Association as a non-community organisation.

These engagements with members of BCLT, as well as my own observations, underpinned the second, independent analysis process using NVivo software. Interview transcripts, reflective diary entries, governing documents, workshop material and PV transcripts were transferred into the NVivo programme, ensuring individuals were anonymised using pseudonyms for all participants. These were then coded using the initial themes identified in the literature review and extensive stage, and the topics arising from the intensive stage activities. These were organised as ‘nodes’ and ‘sub nodes’ in the software. Extracts from the research data could be connected to one or more of these nodes and as new topics emerged they were added as either new or sub nodes. An example of this would be ‘power’. The main node was ‘experiences of power’, which began with two sub nodes, ‘ownership of process’ and ‘representation of different stakeholder groups’. As more research activities were undertaken different topics were raised which participants related to their experiences of power, these included for example, ‘expectations of the process’, ‘uncertainty’ and ‘self-efficacy’, some of these required additional sub nodes, such as ‘ability to voice concerns’ which came under ‘self-efficacy’ but also

arose later in the process in relation to ‘organisational practices’. The different layers which can be developed using NVivo provided a useful visual aid for mapping out the connections and relationships between different topics.

It is important to note that I did not engage with all the different analytical tools offered in NVivo. For example, NVivo enables researchers to automatically generate matrices that cross-tabulate different nodes, which can then be presented in graphs and tables. Similarly, I could have used NVivo to analyse the frequencies of specific words and phrases in the data, prioritising the highest-ranking themes in my conclusions. However, it was not my intention to arrive at a conclusion that could be synthesised in patterns and relationships depicted in visual representations. My focus was on retaining the human stories and the autonomy of the different members’ voices. I was interested in following these stories and how they enabled me to understand the relationships and interactions between members.

2.8) Participatory ethics

This section draws attention to the ethical challenges associated with this research, acknowledging the complex web of ethics that interact with a participatory research approach. In addition to the generic institutional guidelines associated with ethical approval, participatory researchers should engage with the practical considerations of power, control and representation. Informed consent, which commonly involves signing a form at the beginning of the research process, does not adequately respond to the iterative and emergent nature of participatory research. Ideas are generated through continuous analysis with preferred methods arising from this

process. The researcher and participants maintain an openness that enables them to be reactive to challenges as they arise. To only be concerned with obtaining consent at the start of the research is problematic for participatory research. Rather, as Guillemim and Gillam (2004, p.261) suggest, participatory researchers should focus on 'ethics-in-practice', which involves continuously engaging with and negotiating different ethical considerations as they arise. Similarly, the UK Economic and Social Research Council's (2015, p.31) guidance for participatory research states:

> *'Consent here is not simply resolved through the formal signing of a consent document at the start of research. Instead it is continually open to revision and questioning. Highly formalised or bureaucratic ways of securing consent should be avoided in favour of fostering relationships in which ongoing ethics regard for participants is to be sustained, even after the study itself has been completed…'*

This focus on fostering relationships was key to negotiating the ethics of this research. At the start of this case study I focused on developing collaborative relationships with members of BCLT. Getting to know people, being present and engaged at meetings and ensuring a high level of transparency about my research endeavours, played a vital role in building and strengthening my relations with BCLT members. When I first started attending meetings I was open about my motivation for being there, but did not start talking about my research straight away. Rather, I was just present, contributing and engaging like other members. This assisted in breaking down barriers associated with researcher and researched and building trust. It would be naïve to suggest that my position as a researcher had no influence on these initial engagements, however, by attending meetings and showing a

willingness to be involved in BCLT activities and tasks, I was able to demonstrate a commitment to BCLT and begin to build relationships of trust with the members.

My own positionality in this research meant careful consideration had to be given to my role as PhD student, local community resident and BCLT member. Coghlan and Shani (2005) discuss this, drawing on the work of Katz and Khan (1978) to highlight how members of a participatory research Case Study Group may perceive their own roles and the role of the researcher differently to the researcher themselves. Similarly, Ganga and Scott (2006, p.1) describe how a cultural closeness 'affords researchers a degree of social proximity' whilst it also 'paradoxically, increases awareness amongst both researcher and participant of the social divisions that structure the interaction between them'. Whilst Shani and Coghlan (2014) do not propose a one size fits all solution to this, they emphasise how a system of inquiry, in which participants and researcher discuss their expectations of roles, can reduce the potential risks associated with this. The participatory research approach encourages participants' sense of ownership over the research process, supporting them to contribute towards guiding the research development. It also offers opportunities for the researcher to embed themselves within the Case Study Group. However, it is important to acknowledge that whilst I may have been able to achieve a level of embeddedness within BCLT, my role as a PhD student was always a factor affecting the research dynamics of the group.

The emergent nature of participatory research means that it was not possible to pre-empt all of the ethical issues arising over the duration of the research (Morton,

1999). Walker and Haslett (2002) highlight how the ethical issues of participatory research sit within the participatory research cycle. They suggest that whilst the research must adhere to overarching ethical principles, processes such as consent, confidentiality and anonymity should be considered as part of the participatory research cycle of planning, action and reflection. This research was granted ethical approval by the UWE Ethics Committee and abided by Economic and Social Research Council procedures. In addition to gaining ethical approval, I engaged with ethical considerations that emerged over the research process. Whilst writing up this thesis I spent time considering and discussing with peers, the ethical challenges relating to how I should document this research whilst being mindful of representing the voices of BCLT members. This is just one example of the continual ethical considerations that should be engaged with as a participatory researcher.

In this section I have highlighted how participatory research requires a level of ethical consideration that goes beyond the guidelines and requirements of a university Ethics Committee. I discussed how I not only adhered to the ethical regulations stipulated by the university but engaged with the practical ethics of being immersed in a group, which require the researcher to consider issues of representation, power and control. In the concluding chapter of this thesis I return to participatory research and reflect on my experiences of undertaking research in collaboration with others.

In this chapter I have provided a detailed account of the methodological approach employed in my research, setting out my own philosophical position and reflecting on how that informed the selection of a participatory approach. I discussed my decision to introduce the methodology at this point in the thesis and emphasised how the

participatory approach underpinned the research design, empirical data collection, analysis and reporting. Finally, I discussed the importance of participatory ethics to this research and drew attention to the distinctions between institutional ethical considerations and participatory research ethics. The following chapter introduces literature on community-led housing and reflects on the considerations of researching with communities.

CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCHING COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING AND COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS IN ENGLAND

3.1) INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter documented the methodological approach used in this research. I highlighted how the decision to undertake participatory research informed all aspects of the process from designing research questions to the written outputs. Whilst the process of refining and narrowing the focus of this research was achieved primarily through conversations shared as part of the extensive research stage, it is important to acknowledge that I was simultaneously conducting a review of subject literature. This enabled me to ground the topics arising in conversations with CLH members within a broader body of knowledge and to identify where this research could build on existing literature and where it could make a novel contribution. This introductory review focused solely on literature from the field of CLH. The decision not to engage with other closely related subject areas, such as housing studies or participative planning literature was informed by a commitment, at this early stage in the research, to be guided primarily by conversations taking place in the extensive research stage. It therefore seemed appropriate to focus my initial review of literature on understanding existing trends and gaps in knowledge directly relating CLH. This chapter begins by introducing literature on CLH before focusing specifically on the CLT model and how this may differ from traditional conceptualisation of CLH. Finally, I reflect on how this existing body of literature informed my approach to researching with BCLT.

3.2) COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

3.2.1) Community-led housing in England

CLH encompasses a broad and growing range of housing models including; co-operatives, cohousing, community land trusts, community self-build, self-help housing and tenant-managed organisations. In much of Europe and internationally, particularly in the USA, these CLH initiatives are believed to be important in delivering and maintaining affordable housing (Netto *et al*., 2015). Community housing models seek to respond to the micro-level needs of a local area, increasing the capacity of communities to take control over their housing situations. CLH aims to either reduce or remove ties to the volatile and profit driven housing markets, which exacerbate social inequalities and result in many people being excluded from home ownership, and the security of tenure associated with it. Cerulli and Field (2011, p.4) reflect on this, describing CLH as 'an act of agency, a proactive response to systematic inadequacies or injustices'. Additionally, CLH functions outside of the landlord-tenant/developer-homeowner binary that currently dominates many housing markets, most notably in the UK, proposing a different model based on 'the collective', 'the commons' and the notion of shared asset control (Rodgers, 1999; Ward, 1985). Thompson (2015, p.1024) highlights how CLH models:

> *'seek to reconnect inhabitants with the means of social reproduction by institutionalising some form of cooperative tenure, or 'third estate', in which member tenants cooperatively own land and housing as collective landlords'.*

Whilst these community housing models are not being proposed as an alternative to large-scale developer led housing delivery, there is a growing consensus that they could make a notable contribution to overcoming current housing shortages and

support sustainable urban regeneration (Bliss, 2009; Gulliver, Handy and Morris, 2013). Research to date has evidenced a range of benefits beyond meeting demand, including improved social capital and civic engagement (Boonstra and Boelens, 2011); reduced feelings of isolation, particularly in the ageing population (Fernández Arrigoitia and Scanlon, 2016; Fernandez-Arrigoitia, 2017; Glass, 2009; McCamant and Durrett, 2011) improved quality of housing stock including low carbon housing (Broer and Titheridge, 2010; Chatterton, 2013); increased ability to ‘lock in’ land value within the local community reducing vulnerability to market fluctuations (Moore and McKee, 2014).

Unlike dominant developer-led housing, CLH is emergent and flexible, enabling groups to adapt, combine and modify different models to best meet the needs of the specific members. The capacity for community groups to draw on specific characteristics and properties of these models has led to some organisations to question whether distinctions between different CLH models ‘are becoming increasingly academic’ (Building Social Housing Foundation, 2015). DeFilippis (2004) describes how CLH is part of a broader movement that is concerned with local common ownership, democracy and autonomy as a means of social justice. Through a series of case studies carried out in the United States DeFilippis draws attention to the possibilities for a more equitable society based on localised collective ownership of work, housing and money.

Although there has been a recent increase in interest around models of community housing, they have a much longer history in the UK and internationally. Most

prominent in the development of CLH in the UK are the Rochdale Pioneers who initiated the first housing co-operative in 1861. The 19th and 20th century gave rise to the first wave of co-housing across Europe, a movement rooted in utopian, communitarian and feminist principles (Williams, 2005). Moore and Mullins (2013, p.333) argue that the recent renewal of interest in CLH can be associated with 'entrenched social problems such as homelessness, undersupply of affordable housing, and neighbourhood decline'. Similarly, Jarvis (2015, p.202) highlights a 'renewed interest in the transfer of power to local citizens and community groups as a means to fulfil the locally defined housing needs and aspirations'. In addition to responding to an undersupply in housing, Jarvis (*ibid,* p.203) attributes the recent popularisation of CLH to a 're-engagement with the local sense of belonging, as part of a movement to oppose the effects of capitalism. This touches upon existing tensions that exist between utopian and pragmatic visions of CLH. Tummers (2015, p.14) review of existing co-housing research comments on this tension, describing how CLH initiatives 'are not exclusively based on utopian or community housing experiments, but also pragmatic answers to societal need such as everyday service'. This arguably leads to additional questions around how societal needs are identified and prioritised, and the potential for future tensions regarding whose voices are being heard in debates on how to grow the CLH sector.

As highlighted in Chapter One, much of the literature related to CLH positions it within broader initiatives aimed a societal change, often situating CLH projects at the fringes of society and as working against top down intervention and planning policy. Evidence from existing literature suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of the diverse reasons that individuals engage with CLH initiatives.

Jarvis (2015, p.205) argues that the motivations of people involved in CLH need to be ‘better conceptualised and understood if research and policy are to support and enable the process of growing locally driven housing solutions’. Through examining these motivations, it should be possible to move away from what Tummers refers to as an idealised perspective in CLH research, towards a critical understanding of citizen participation.

In the UK the level of participation varies significantly between initiatives categorised under the term CLH. Local resident involvement ranges from participatory consultation through to community self-build. Disparities in levels of participation between different CLH models in the UK can be attributed to the way mutual housing has developed, described by BSHF as a ‘collection of fragmented, grass-roots movements which by definition has not had a coordinated approach to defining or promoting the sector’ (BSHF, 2015). Despite increased political attention The Human City Institute (2013) recorded how community-led initiatives make up just 1% of UK housing compared to an average of 5-15% across other countries in the European Union (Gulliver et al., 2013, p.5). A recent report by Locality (2015) attempted to deconstruct this figure of 1% to gain deeper insight into the community-led housing sector in the UK. This report concluded that the collective CLH figures might be lower than the initial figure of 1% recording 736 housing co-operatives, 19 CLTs and 18 co-housing communities currently active in the UK. However, ascertaining precise data on the CLH sector in the UK is problematic given its disjointed nature. Furthermore, there is a significant number of informal community housing groups without planning permission who are contributing to the broader development of the CLH movement.

As highlighted earlier in this section there are tensions between CLH as a direct response to an affordable housing shortage and CLH as a rejection of what Jarvis (2015) describes as capitalist work systems centred upon monetary and growth based models. This is perhaps more evident in the UK where CLH is less normalised than for example, in Sweden, where research has suggested that up to 80% of new housing development is community-led (The idox group, 2015)[4]. Similarly, in many other countries CLH is better integrated in to local government and planning policy, often being more institutionalised and professional than in the UK, enabling community-led initiatives to be carried out in collaboration with large scale developers. Krokfors (2012, p.309) highlights how co-housing in Europe, most notably Germany and Scandinavia, is 'Increasingly being helped along by the authorities in a top-down fashion'. Reviews on individual and collective self-build housing in Europe draw similar conclusions. Field and Layard (2017, p.108) reflect on the self-build movement in England compared with other European countries, highlighting how:

> *'…only 7–10% of house completions in England are achieved in this manner, compared with much higher percentages of house completions around the rest of Europe, extending up to around 80% of completions in Austria'*

[4] It is important to note that there are no definitive parameters of what constitutes community-led housing and as such international figures may include models such as Tennent Managed Organisations where residents have less involvement than would be expected in the UK.

There is however a collection of flagship projects in the UK that have been the subjects of research projects that seek to inform wider debate on growing CLH. Furthermore, many of these projects have attempted to share knowledge upwards towards policy makers. Ashley Vale Self-build Community in Bristol, Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) in Leeds, and Lammas in Pembrokeshire are notable advocates of CLH, either taking part in research or co-authoring papers that use the experiences of residents to advise and inform planning policy.

3.2.2) Community land trusts in England

CLTs are one specific model of CLH that are concerned with creating long term affordable housing solutions. The CLT model first emerged in the USA in 1969 with the aim of providing marginalised populations with access to land (Davis, 2010). By the end of the 20th century the CLT model was gaining momentum in the UK, most notably in Scotland where in 1997 the Community Land Unit was formed to provide guidance and assistance to communities attempting to acquire land and assets. Between 2001 and 2006 the Scottish Government set up a land fund offering financial support to CLTs. This was instrumental in many setting up, and opened up CLT housing to people with limited finances (Moore and Mckee, 2012). The CLT model was not officially defined in England until the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008), however, it received rapid support from the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition, and has remained under the current Conservative Government. Similarly, the CLT is gaining momentum in Belgium, France, Italy and Australia (National CLT Network, 2016). Although the CLT movement is still in its infancy, many of its principles can be traced back to garden cities and co-operative models (Davis,

2010). CLTs are not for profit, volunteer led organisations, which aim to provide long term affordable housing by locking in land value, reducing vulnerability to market fluctuations. This model of housing is concerned with empowering communities through democratic management of local assets and 'ownership for common good rather than individual benefit' (Gray, 2008, p.68).

Although there are some variations in the way CLT models are applied, it is most usual for CLTs to retain an equity stake to enable re-sale at a reduced price (Davis and Stokes, 2012), commonly offering members the option to buy a minimal percentage up to 80% of equity in their homes. This offers greater opportunity for individuals with limited funds to participate in the project. Moore and Mckee's (2012) study of the CLTs in the UK highlighted how the movement has generally seen greater success in rural rather than urban locations. This may be associated with greater availability and reduced costs of land. Despite this, CLTs appear to be the model of community-led housing most favoured by the UK Government. Whilst it is not clear exactly why CLTs are favoured over other CLH models, it is possible that having professionals sitting on the Board of Directors, and CLTs' willingness to collaborate with Housing Associations, are factors that appeal to UK Government.

Although there is general consensus in literature that the CLT model has significant capacity to reduce social injustices associated with housing markets, there are some potential limitations that are often overlooked in what, as highlighted in Chapter One, may be a tendency to focus on idealised perspectives of the CLT model. Mckee and Moore (2012, p.289) draw attention to this, arguing that research needs to

acknowledge how 'CLTs will not inevitably result in equitable outcomes' and highlighting the need for further investigation into not only the 'transparency and democracy of CLTs themselves but their relationship to wider structures' (*ibid*). Thompson's (2015, p.1034) study of Granby CLT in Liverpool highlighted a tendency to 'enact a certain bohemian habitus which may act to alienate or exclude other social groups from the area'. In England, the exclusionary nature of CLTs may be associated with the time requirement and level of skills required to bring a CLT project to fruition, meaning there may be a tendency for more affluent individuals to engage (Moore and Mckee, 2012). Additionally, it is possible to suggest that there may be other factors that influence access, such as who knows about the existence of CLT projects, racial and class demographics (Rowe, Engelsman and Southern, 2016).

3.3) Researching community-led housing; social and organisational practices

This chapter has drawn attention to the varied nature of the CLH movement demonstrating how it sits both within grassroots urbanism and top down governance. This is reflected in the divergent themes emerging from the review of relevant literature. Whilst there is a significant body of literature that situates CLH within political activism and anti/post capitalist movements, there is also a range of literature concerned with how it may be scaled-up and mainstreamed, to work alongside local governments to deliver affordable housing. This is also reflected in literature that seeks to understand why people engage with CLH initiatives and may

partially be a result of limited research studies that have sought to understand these motivations.

Many of the discussions around CLH are concerned with social conditions as much as the material development of groups. Social practices are seen as providing a window through which to examine real-life experiences. In seeking to understand the way community was constructed and practiced in BCLT, the review of literature highlighted the importance of engaging with discourses of social practices in BCLT members' experiences. Phillips and Hardy (2002, p.3) describe how:

> *'social reality is produced and made real through discourses, and social interactions cannot be meaningfully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning'*

What Phillips and Hardy draw attention to in the above quote is how conversations around the social relations of a group, contribute to an important meaning-making process, which values the depth and richness of people's stories and experiences.

The review of literature on CLH re-enforces my decision to adopt a participatory and engaged case study. What is evident is that there is still significant need for research that explores what happens in the day-to-day practices of delivering a community housing project. Much of the literature highlights the disparate nature of the CLH movement, yet there is also a tendency to speak about CLH initiatives as a homogenous group. As I moved into the case-study with BCLT, I realised the

importance of acknowledging their autonomy from the beginning. Attempting to start without too many expectations of how they would construct their community was important if I was to remain open to the numerous ways in which BCLT engages in developing a sense of social cohesion and community. Ensuring this openness at the beginning enabled me to capture the multidimensional nature of BCLT and to, subsequently, undertake a more detailed and critically engaged analysis of how power emerged in BCLT’s practices and the impact this had on prospective residents’ expectations.

This chapter has provided an account of CLH literature and some of the challenges and opportunities of researching with community housing groups. The following chapter documents the activities and outcomes from the extensive research stage, which took place simultaneously to the review of subject literature.

CHAPTER 4: EXTENSIVE RESEARCH STAGE

4.1) INTRODUCTION

The commitment to undertake a participatory and emancipatory research study meant that early engagement with people involved in CLH was vital in order to ensure the research was rooted in genuine lived experiences and responsive to real challenges people faced when involving themselves in CLH initiatives. Given that the research intended to contribute to both knowledge and practice it was important to identify how it could create practical outcomes that were relevant to the lives of its participants. Additionally, involving participants in the process of identifying the research problems, questions and potential contributions challenges the positivist model of knowledge generation that still largely prevails in academia today (Herr and Anderson, 2005). The previous chapter provided an account of key literature on CLH and a closer look at recent developments in academic debate of CLTs. This chapter documents the conversations undertaken during the extensive research stage and discusses how these contributed to refining the focus of the intensive research stage.

4.2) OBJECTIVES

The extensive stage had a separate set of objectives from the intensive stage. These objectives were used to ensure that the conversations undertaken in this stage would inform the development of the intensive case study stage. At this point in the research process I had yet to meet with any CLH members and therefore narrowed

my area of focus and developed the objectives independently, based on my existing experiences of community housing projects and from an initial review of literature. In setting out the objectives for the extensive stage, I focused on people’s stories. I wanted to hear about the challenges they had experienced being involved in a community housing project and aimed to explore beyond obstacles associated with acquiring property or land, achieving planning permission, or securing funding. I set out to develop a deeper understanding of people’s experiences of the social relations. Additionally, this stage was about inviting people to share their ideas on how this research could make a valuable contribution to knowledge. The people I spoke with during this stage of the research were experts in CLH. These were not academics who had done interviews or observations with community groups, they were people for whom being part of a community housing group was their everyday lived experience. I therefore developed the objectives to reflect this. Objective A focused on learning about people’s experiences and hearing their stories. Objective B was intended to draw out people’s thoughts and reflections on how research could make a valuable contribution to the CLH movement. Objective C1 and 2 informed the methodological development in this research, enabling me to reflect on how a participatory approach could be practiced in research.

The following objectives were used to guide the extensive stage:

To carry out an extensive research stage with members of community-led housing groups in order to:

a) Discuss what challenges they have experienced whilst being involved in existing or prospective CLH projects

b) *Determine how they believe this research could contribute to knowledge and practice pertaining to the development of CLH projects in the England*

c) *Explore how individuals with lived experiences in the area of study can be included in the research design process and identify 1) how this approach impacts on the progression of the research and the generation of theory and; 2) how early engagement can enable the research to make academic and practical contributions*

A broad search of existing CLH groups was carried out using The UK Co-housing Network, Diggers and Dreamers, Radical Routes, National CLT Network and The Self-build Portal. Geographical location was the main factor considered when compiling a list of CLH groups to approach and I only contacted groups in the South West of England and the South of Wales. This ensured that I would be able to make multiple visits, which assisted in getting to know the members, building stronger relationships with them and creating more opportunities for open communication. Whilst I had not yet undertaken any social interactions with members, I believed that being physically present, would play an important role in building a level of trust that would encourage them to share their stories with me. Additionally, it is important to note that CLH is contextually different across the UK. Whilst I do not consider geographical location in my analysis and findings, I am aware that factors impacting a CLH groups' ability to develop a community in some cities in the North of England,

where for example, property is relatively cheap and groups struggle to use existing property as collateral for funding, is different from some cities in the South of England, where property is more expensive. Given the ranging environments in which community housing groups are developing projects, and that this research did not intend to carry out comparative case studies, it seems appropriate to select groups from a similar geographical location.

Email contact was made with 15 CLH groups of which four responded advising that they would be willing to meet and talk with me. Additionally, one prospective CLH group was put in touch with me via a local Bristol organisation that supports emerging CLH projects.

4.3) Group descriptions

The following section provides a brief overview of the five groups I engaged with over the extensive research stage.

Group 1: A housing co-operative in Bristol which currently owns three properties as shared accommodation. This co-operative is well established and has owned property for over 20 years. The individuals I met with from this group have been living in one of the co-operative’s properties for around five years. One of the key aims of this group is to enable more community housing opportunities in Bristol. It actively seeks individuals looking to set up co-operatives and provide loan stock from the assets they have acquired over the last 20 years.

Group 2: Bristol CLT- This is an umbrella CLT set up in 2010 to support community housing projects in Bristol. It currently has one completed and one active project as well as two other sites that it is attempting to acquire. The aim of the CLT is to support communities to come together to create affordable housing in Bristol whilst also lobbying for greater government support for community housing.

Group 3: A workers' and housing co-operative in Cornwall which has undertaken a self-build project to provide housing for members who work on a farm. This is a rural community and very different from the other groups that I spoke with. The individuals in this project both live and work at the site and represent more of a commune that the other groups I engaged with.

Group 4: Exeter Eco-housing Community, which has established a core working group and is currently looking for suitable land to undertake a large/mixed use development in Exeter. The project has been running since 2011 and a group of local residents has established a core vision for the project based on the co-housing model. The vision is to create a low environmental impact affordable housing development with a community building that is opened up to the wider neighbourhood.

Group 5: A newly formed group in Stroud which is in the process of securing land to undertake a co-housing project. The group intends to create housing, a community

space and a farm. This project is in the very early stages of development and is currently being led by six individuals.

4.4) Process

Over the extensive research stage I had contact with members of five different community-housing groups. I met numerous times with residents living in a Bristol housing co-operative, a staff member from Bristol Community-Land Trust, members of a Cornish workers’ and housing co-operative, and once with a member of the steering group for Stroud Co-housing Project. Additionally, I had email contact with two different prospective resident members from Exeter Eco-housing Community but did not meet them in person. The extensive stage was intended to hear mainly from people living in or hoping to live in CLH scheme rather that other stakeholders such as planners, architects, intermediary organisations. The decision to speak mainly to people living in or hoping to live in community housing projects

Each face-to-face meeting was carried out as an informal conversation. I decided not to audio-record them as I wanted participants to feel as relaxed as possible. In the intensive research stage I had time to develop relationships of trust with participants before carrying out interviews, however, this was not the case in these meetings so I decided I would reflect on the conversations in my research diary instead. In two of these meetings individuals spoke about activist activities in which they had carried out illegal actions. Some of these actions related to their stories of housing and, on reflection, I think that they may not have been as open if I had been recording the conversations. With members I met more than once I used the first meeting to hear

their stories and waited until the follow up meeting to discuss my research. I think this was useful in developing our relationship and I found that these individuals were open to discussing my research. I asked them to reflect on some of the challenges and obstacles they had experienced either setting up, or living in, housing communities. We then discussed my initial research ideas based on existing literature and the extensive stage meetings I had undertaken so far and they provided input on what they believed to be useful in furthering understanding of community-led housing.

4.5) Summary of findings

Although the groups highlighted challenges around land, finance and planning permission these were only seen as temporary obstacles. The members identified that the social relations of the groups posed a much longer term challenge. In the remainder of this section I provide a short summary of each of the factors identified during this extensive stage, before discussing how this informed the intensive case study with BCLT.

4.5.1) Navigating power imbalances within groups

Members identified power imbalances as one of the main causes of conflict in both the development process and the day-to-day running of an established community. They discussed how conflict happened when people had different ideas of what the group should be doing and when one person believed their voice was more important than others. Each of the individuals I spoke with identified how this was

often linked to an ideological position, where people were unwilling to compromise on their opinions of what constitutes best practice. Members spoke about how there always seemed to be at least one individual in a group who tried to speak more than others and did not recognise the importance of hearing everyone's voice.

Whilst power relations were mostly spoken about directly as an independent discussion point, as our conversations developed it became apparent to me that power ran through many of the other topics raised by the members. When they spoke about the challenges of retaining individual choice this was not just about being able to opt out of a communal meal or a community event, it was also about having the autonomy and freedom, so that at any given time they felt able to express opinions that diverged from the common voice. Similarly, when members spoke about negotiating engagements with third parties this was not solely about them interacting with non-community institutions that did not hold the same political beliefs, it was also about the threat those interactions posed to their power to self-govern. The realisation that power was a common theme arising in each of the different factors we discussed, was an important moment in refining and developing the focus of this research.

4.5.2) How to organise the group

Following on from the last point, many of the individuals I spoke with highlighted how important they believed the systems and organisational processes were in the successful set up and management of a community-led housing group. We discussed how having clear systems of governance, including documents that set

out the communities' expectations of their members, improved the ability to deal with difference and conflict. Many of the individuals I spoke with expressed how they had found it easier to challenge someone on their behaviour when they could refer specifically to a document. This was seen to remove much of the emotion behind the challenge to behaviour, and to enable more objective and abstracted conversations. Members from the co-operatives spoke of how there is a tendency to resist rules, especially when people identify as political activists, but highlighted how having basic rules and conditions which members sign up to, assists in ensuring the community runs democratically.

4.5.3) Difficulty in keeping you own identity whilst also being part of a group

This was raised by the members who I spent more time talking to. They spoke about how it was sometimes difficult to live in a community because they felt like there was not space for them to have their own identity. One member spoke about communities he had lived in in the past, describing how they were expected to eat and socialise together every night and share their earnings into a collective fund. He spoke about how he felt like he lost his individuality and although he shared the same values as other members of the group, the lack of autonomy and freedom made him unhappy. All the members I spoke with emphasised the importance of maintaining some level of independence when forming, or moving into, a new community. This relates back to Sullivan's (2016, p.322) work on individuality within community housing initiatives, which concludes that:

> *'Understandings of groups with collectivist agendas must necessarily account for the role individualism plays in the organizational culture of the group.'*

As both Sullivan and the CLH members I spoke with suggest, the role of the individual, and the potential tensions that arise between individuality and collectivism, should form part of future CLH research.

4.5.4) Dealing with differences in why people want to be involved

Some of the members I spoke with described how it could be challenging when people had different motivations for being part of the housing project. All but one of the members felt that it was good for people to have different motivations but that there was a need to be honest about what these were from the beginning. An example one member gave was how some of the other members in his housing co-operative were there for political reasons, strongly believing that they did not want to be part of the private rental system, whilst others were living there because they couldn't afford to rent on the open market and needed a place to live. Similar to the last point, the way community groups deal with difference refers back to Sullivan's (2016) work. The CLH members I spoke with talked about the challenges of negotiating different motivations and aspirations, which reflects Sullivan's call for future research to examine what sacrifices people are and are not willing to make for a wider collective.

4.5.5) Negotiating engagement with third parties

Some of the members I spoke with were against any engagement with local councils, community housing consultants and sometimes even local communities (unless the local communities were actively supporting the housing project). These members said that they only wanted to have contact with people who shared the same beliefs. Others spoke positively about engagement with people outside of the housing project, they saw this engagement as an opportunity to get local councils and residents talking about alternative housing approaches. In Chapter One I identified an interest in examining the impact that relationships with external parties had on CLTs. This reflected previous work by Moore and Mckee (2014) which had expressed caution about the distribution of power in partnerships between CLTs and Housing Associations.

The discussions in these meetings informed the design of the intensive research stage. How people navigate the challenges around individual and collective identity was discussed at length in many of the meetings. The housing members spoke about how they felt this would be useful to explore in my research. Additionally, members discussed how they believed it would be valuable to examine the way individuals develop relationships within the group and how organisational practices and structures affect this.

4.6) Deciding on a Case Study Group

When I began the extensive research stage I intended to find three groups who would be the case studies for the intensive research stage. However, as I started meeting with members from each of the groups and keeping reflective diary entries, I

realised that I would not be able to gain the depth of insights required to meet my objectives if I was splitting my time between three groups. This would not have been a problem if I was proposing to carry out more traditional qualitative research, however, as I had decided to use a participatory approach it became apparent that if I was limited in the amount of time I could spend with each Case Study Group, it would significantly reduce opportunities for participant engagement as well as compromising the benefits to each community. Having decided to undertake a single case study, I considered which of the groups that I had engaged with over the extensive stage would be best positioned for me to collaborate with. There was a range of factors that informed this decision. Location was an important consideration; the commitment to be immersed within the group required that I attend meetings, social events and other activities. I also needed to be able to regularly meet with the Core Research Group. This was important if I was to involve them in the design and development of the research. The groups’ willingness and ability to commit time to progressing the research was also an important consideration. The fact that BCLT were in the early stages of the development process meant that they were keen to involve themselves in anything that might benefit the project. In my initial conversations with Stephanie, The BCLT staff member, she expressed how she felt this research could address the social aspects of developing the community, which might otherwise be de-prioritised. This links to the final consideration when selecting the Case Study Group, which was concerned with which group this research could benefit. Unlike the other groups I met with in the extensive stage, BCLT were at a critical point in their development as a CLH group. Their first pilot scheme had presented them with lots of challenges and opportunities for learning, but they were also aware of the time pressures they faced in trying to progress with Shaldon Road,

the second, much larger development. It was evident that this research could provide a space in which these challenges, as well as the new challenges they would face in the second housing project, could be addressed.

4.7) Chapter summary

This chapter has documented the conversations undertaken with members of CLH groups during the extensive research stage. The findings from these conversations, along with the review of subject literature, assisted in focusing the case study research. Additionally, the extensive research stage drew attention to the complexities of living in intentional communities and how power is a common theme in understanding people's experiences of being involved in CLH projects. Building on the conversations documented in this chapter the following chapter introduces theoretical debates on theories of community and power and explores how a range of theorists can assist in understanding the experiences of members of BCLT.

CHAPTER 5: REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Having undertaken the extensive research stage I carried out a review of theoretical literature. This was informed by the conversations I had during the extensive stage meetings as well as the initial review of subject literature, undertaken at the beginning of the research process. Although presented here, before the intensive stage chapters, I continued to engage with theoretical literature throughout the case study. This was due to the iterative and emergent nature of the participatory approach. As topics were raised in meetings and one-to-one interviews I returned to the literature to make sense of, and develop, my understanding. From the conversations had during the extensive stage, and the review of subject literature I had identified that power would provide a useful theoretical lens through which to understand the experiences and observations captured in this research. Additionally, this research engaged with debates on grassroots action, active participation and citizen voice. Central to these debates was 'community' and how community was enacted in practice. By examining social interactions Brennan and Israel (2008, p.89) argue that it is possible to identify 'common needs that cut across individual fields (…) The culmination of this process is the emergence of community. These community interactions, in turn, shape the power capacity of local residents'. As highlighted by Brennan and Israel, community theory interacts with theories of power and agency. During the extensive stage it became apparent that BCLT were unique from other CLH groups in the level of institutional-community collaboration they were attempting to achieve. This raised questions around how the distribution of power

between different stakeholders was negotiated and what impact that had on the ability to form a community.

The review of literature was undertaken in response to topics, events and challenges, informed initially by conversations taking place during the extensive research stage, but predominantly during my time spent with BCLT. Additionally, I carried out an introductory review of subject literature detailed in Chapter Three. When I began the intensive research stage with BCLT I was expecting the research to focus primarily on the prospective residents' experiences of the development process, however, as the research progressed the relationships between BCLT and United Communities Housing Association and other external parties became increasingly important. Whilst the literature review reflected the shifting research focus by, for example, returning to literature on the conflict-consensus debate and introducing new literature on compromise, it should be acknowledged that there were other bodies of literature which may have been equally as helpful to engage with in greater depth. Examples include literature from participatory planning and housing studies. Whilst I engaged with some theorists from these fields, I decided that in order to maintain focused parameters for this research I would not introduce new bodies of literature. Had I engaged with participatory planning or housing studies literature at the beginning of my doctoral studies, this thesis could have been framed in a way that made a contribution to these fields. Rather, this will inform future publications that build on the work documented in this thesis.

5.1) Conceptualising community

‘To invoke the notion of community is to recognise that it is an ideal and is also real; it is both an experience and an interpretation’ (Delanty, 2010, p12)

The enduring attention community theory receives across a range of disciplines is testimony to its theoretical significance to understanding social life. Yet as I discuss later in this chapter, there is little consensus between community theorists on its application in research. The above quote by Delanty, argues for ‘community’ to be used as a concept to make sense of real life, but also as an action orientated approach to improving or challenging existing social conditions. It is this perspective that I use as my starting point for understanding theoretical discussions over the conceptualisation of community. Over the following chapter I argue that much of the prevailing literature on community and power remains largely theoretical and refrains from engaging with discussions on shaping and informing practice. In response to this, I identify how literature from the field of community development makes a valuable contribution to furthering discussions on the relationship between community theory and practice.

Theodori (2008) argues that understanding the prospects and opportunities for ‘community’ requires more engagement with the form community action and participation takes in localised settings. Green (2008) also calls for community research to place more focus on action. In proposing ways for community development scholars to engage in these more nuanced debates, Green (2008, p.50) highlights how:

> *'Approaching community development from this action-oriented direction requires consideration of existing theoretical perspectives within the realms of collective action and social movements'*

In responding to this point raised by Green, I begin my review on conceptualisations of community by engaging with literature on grassroots action and urban social movements. I then introduce literature that assists in understanding why individuals are motivated to involve themselves in communities. Following this is a discussion on theories of community, beginning with an overview of classical conceptualisations before moving on to look at more contemporary understandings. Through this review, I identify how theories of community contribute to this research in multiple ways; as a theoretical lens to examine the practices of BCLT, as a way of individuals framing their experiences, and as a way of making sense of and analysing the data generated over this research.

5.1.1) Grassroots action; communities in the city

There is growing interest, internationally, in what Iveson (2013, p.1) describes as 'micro-spatial urban practices that are re-shaping urban spaces'. 'Informal', 'people-led', 'DIY', 'guerrilla', 'Insurgent' and 'everyday' urbanism are just some of an extensive range of terms being used in literature that attempts to examine, understand and define small scale appropriations of alternative urban practices (Hou and Hou, 2010; Iveson, 2013; Tonkiss, 2013). Whilst these urban practices are diverse, including for example, political art projects, guerrilla gardening, co-housing schemes, transition initiatives and squatting, they are often associated with broader political, social and environmental aims (Holston, J, 1998; Pickerill and Maxey, 2009;

Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Iveson (2013, p.942) sought to find interconnections between these small-scale practices; asking if a 'shared politics of the city' connects them and how they could be framed in wider academic debates. He concluded that despite significant divergence in their actions and outcomes, it was useful to consider the commonalities of these practices in the context of 'experimental assemblages' and frame them within broader debates on the 'right to the city'[5].

There is consensus among a range of academics that despite distinct differences, many grassroots urban practices are unified by anti-capitalist values and a commitment to social change, which collectively challenge existing top down structures and disrupt established power structures in the city. This is evident in Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) study of three different grassroots projects in the UK, which argues that despite having varying aims each project shares a commitment to core values such as collectivism, democratic stewardship and self-management. Whilst there is significant consensus in existing literature that grassroots action is challenging top down models of state and market provisions, supporting communities to take active roles in shaping their futures (Bunce, 2016; Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010; Connors and McDonald, 2010; Thompson, 2015), there are notable divergences in how these are framed in relation to current

[5] The 'right to the city' was initial coined by Henri Lefebvre in 1968 and has subsequently been adopted by a range of other urban theorists. Harvey's define the right to the city as 'far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization' (Harvey, 2008; p.23)

government regimes. Whilst some of this literature describes grassroots action as radical, anarchistic or anti-capitalist in nature, pertaining to anti-neoliberal ideologies, there is a small but growing body of literature that argues that grassroots organisations are increasingly exploring different ways of organising and initiating new practices that contribute towards forming a more democratic city. This literature draws attention to an increase in grassroots organisations, with post-neoliberal agendas, that have the capacity to operate inside existing neoliberal systems and processes (Fuller and Jonas, 2003).

Bunce's (2016, p.140) research on urban commons in the UK argues that 'building commons must be considered in terms of the nuances and challenges of operating within larger neo-liberalized government and private sector processes'. This emphasises an interesting tension in discourse surrounding grassroots action that remains significantly under-explored. Are these communities operating outside or within wider neoliberal structures or are there variations in how they position themselves, both between and within groups? If, as Bunce suggests, there are significant differences in how communities view themselves in relation to wider UK governance structures then it could be argued that there is a need for greater autonomy to be recognised in literature and in discussions around supporting these practices.

The points raised above highlight a particular gap in existing literature on CLTs within the wider CLH movement and broader debates on grassroots housing action. In undertaking this research I sought to respond to this gap. In the opening section of

Chapter One I drew attention to disparities between CLTs and more traditional forms of CLH. I discussed how CLTs are receiving attention at both government and grassroots levels. As a result of this, partnerships between communities and non-community organisations have emerged. Individual CLTs, as well as the National CLT Network, a charity campaigning for policy change and supporting the development of CLTs across England and Wales, are working in collaboration with local and national government to bring more CLT housing projects to fruition. These collaborative partnerships result in different forms of grassroots action and challenges the traditional conceptualisations of 'community' in CLH. However, there has been little research into how the processes of delivering housing through a CLT model impacts on the experiences of the prospective resident members. Whilst existing academic literature is beginning to document variations in the form CLTs take as opposed to other grassroots organisations and more specifically, traditional CLH models, this is not necessarily explicit in the public information which prospective residents have access to. This highlights a need to examine why people have chosen to join a CLT, their expectations for how the project will develop and how the social and organisational structures are experienced in practice. Examining these points contributes toward a better understanding of the extent to which prospective residents feel that CLTs enable them to realise their aspirations for community.

5.1.2) Understanding what motivates involvement in community-led housing

To understand how a researcher might examine why people decide to engage in grassroots action and their expectations for the trajectory of the project, it is useful to draw on literature relating to the study of motivations. This responds to the previously highlighted gap in understanding why people choose to participate in CLT housing projects. To date there has been a limited number of studies that sought to address this gap in knowledge and from these there has been a significant focus on understanding the motivations for self-build rather than for the involvement in CLH projects. A report published by The Centre for Housing Studies at York University highlighted how ‘understanding the attitudes, motivations and behaviour of those seeking to self-build (either individually or as part of a group) can contribute to identifying any further steps that might be important in supporting and facilitating self-build’ (Wallace, Ford and Quilgars, 2013, p.11). The remainder of this section provides an overview of literature on motivations for both community-led housing as well as self-build. This not only provides an account of existing knowledge contributions but also of the methodological approaches that have been used in similar empirical studies.

Barlow, Jackson and Meikle (2001) undertook a research study to gain a better understanding of the self-build housing market in the UK, conducting a survey of a selection of local authority building control departments along with interviews with a range of professionals associated with the self-build sector. Whilst this study did not look directly at collective or community-led self-build, it did discuss the perceived motivations of individual self-builders, reporting how ‘most commentators feel there has been a shift from those self-building because they cannot afford mainstream housing or are not eligible for social housing, to those who are not satisfied with the

existing supply of houses’ (Barlow, Jackson and Meikle, 2001, p.17). Similarly, Ash *et al* (2013) produced a report that discussed motivations for self-build, however, this report focused purely on collective self-build. Interviews were carried out with local authorities, Housing Associations and developers, and a selection of prominent international collective self-build examples were drawn upon to produce a report on how collective self-build could be better supported in the UK. This research proposed that self-builders usually fall into one of two categories, both which have different motivational factors. These categories are older people with more money who aspire to build their own home that meets their current and future needs, and younger people, with less money who are motivated by the opportunity to save money by building collectively. Additionally, this research pointed to social support networks as a motivating factor. The report highlighted how sharing knowledge and expertise, as well as motivating and encouraging each other, had been identified as motivating collective self-build (Ash *et al*, 2013).

Whilst the aforementioned studies provide useful insight into the self-build sector they have focused predominantly on the opinions of professionals without drawing on experiences of the individuals and communities undertaking self-build projects. Furthermore, there is significantly more attention given to the final output than the development process. Brown (2007, p.3) addresses this gap in her study of self-builders in England by focusing on ‘home making as a social process’ rather than as an end product. Brown carried out six case studies of self-builders in England, using narratives to capture the individuals’ experiences. Whilst this research did not focus exclusively on motivations, Brown (*ibid,* p.271) concluded that

> *'the desire to self-build was motivated by two discrete factors, one concerned the cultural background of informants and the idea that self-building would help them achieve a home more closely suited to their lifestyle and sense of personal and family identity; the other concerned practical issues such as affordability and possession of DIY skills'.*

Broer and Titheridge (2010) also sought to understand the motivations of self-builders, carrying out semi-structured interviews with members of community-led projects. Whilst the methodological approach shares some similarities to Brown's, this research looked at the extent to which self-build communities facilitate low-impact behaviours. As part of their research Broer and Titheridge (2010, p.2090) looked at the motivations of both the individual research participants and the communities concluding that

> *'many people are not only attracted to reducing their environmental impact (…) but also to community features, such as 'a better quality of life', 'cleaner and fresher', 'better for children', 'safer', and 'a close-knit community feel''*

The limited range of literature highlighted in this section draws similar conclusions, however, the extent to which the individuals' motivations are understood varies significantly between the scholarly contributions of Barlow *et* al (2001) and Brown *et al* (2013), and Brown (2007) and Broer and Titheridge (2010). Both Brown and Broer and Titheridge elicit rich narratives on the experiences of the research participants whilst Barlow *et al*, and Brown *et al* focus on top-down approaches to growing the self-build market in the UK. Additionally, in each of these studies, motivations only

comprise part of the findings, and these appear to have been arrived at with limited critical analysis.

In order to develop a better understanding of how motivations may inform BCLT members’ wider aspirations for the Shaldon Road project, I broadened my review of motivations literature to examine how scholars have sought to conceptualise the term in research. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive review, but rather an overview of more recent contributions to examining motivations. The theoretical focus of this study is on theories of power and community. Understanding what motivates members to engage with BCLT assists in capturing their individual stories and serves as a starting point from which to make sense of the experiences reported over the case study research.

Motivation can be used to understand the reasons individuals engage and reject specific activities and actions. Many researchers seek to explore the relationship between individual motivations and beliefs, values and goals as well as how motivations are enacted over time. In a review of literature on motivations, Lai (2011) draws on the work of Broussard and Garrison (2004) to highlight how contemporary research has shifted towards understanding motivation as intrinsically linked to a set of three questions:

A) Can I do this task?

B) Do I want to do this task and why?

C) What do I have to do to succeed?

(Lai, 2011, p. 6)

Question A can be associated with individual's perceived self-efficacy. Question B refers to individuals' values. Question C relates to the actions individuals take based on Questions A and B. Self-efficacy and individual's perceptions of their capacity to undertake an action or task can be linked to their sense of empowerment. This is addressed in more depth in the following section, however, it is useful to note the cross over between this body of literature and theories of power.

In reviewing literature on motivations there is a focus on differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations are linked to personal enjoyment and interests whilst extrinsic motivations are instrumental and based on rewards (Deci and Ryan, 1999; Sansone and Harackiewicz, 2000). Intrinsic motivations can be most associated with Lai's three questions outlined above. Deci and Ryan (1999) argue that this type of motivation can only be sustained if individuals feel competent, which relates to perceived levels of self-efficacy. Similarly, Eccles and Wigfield (2002, p.110) discuss 'locus of control', concluding that individuals experience higher levels of motivation when they feel 'that they are more in control of their own success and failure'. Conversely to intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations are believed to be associated with instrumental drivers and personal gain, described by Benabou and Tirole (2003) as being a 'contingent reward' that can 'affect, directly or indirectly, the agent's behaviour' (p. 493). The work of Deci and Ryan (1985) and Eccles and Wigfield (2002) concluded that

extrinsic motivations might reduce an individual’s incentive to undertake activities that are more inherently interesting to them, highlighting how an individual guided by extrinsic motivations will be seek higher levels of personal reward.

The concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations provides a useful starting point for understanding how the social and organisational practices of BCLT impact on the prospective resident members’ experiences of the development process. Identifying why prospective residents are motivated to join the Shaldon Road project informs a broader discussion on the way the project aligns with their expectations and their aspirations for community. Furthermore, it enables me to understand how members’ commitment to the wider aims of BCLT are negotiated as their motivations for supporting an equitable housing project are balanced with their personal need for a place in the finished housing community. CLTs are different to most traditional forms of CLH in that the future residents are not identified at the beginning of the project. This requires prospective residents to remain committed to the project without any certainty that they will be allocated, or even eligible, for a place in the finished development. In undertaking this research, I sought to understand how this impacted on prospective residents’ ability to build a sense of community and contribute to decisions that shaped the future trajectory of the project.

In this section I have introduced literature of grassroots action and have discussed how insights into what motivates members’ involvement with BCLT may assist in understanding the members’ accounts of their experiences of the social and organisational practices over the development process. Closely linked to the study of

grassroots actions and the motivations and expectations of people engaged with these are theories of community. The concept of community becomes particularly important when studying grassroots organisation in the urban context, where individuals have ties to numerous place and non-place based communities. Urbanisation and the rise of technology has sometimes been linked to the demise of community (Putnam, 2001), understood in traditional terms as a homogenous group of people, who come together to form a collective identity. Yet it is well documented that a sense of community continues to prevail within cities, often manifesting in different ways to more traditional conceptualisations. The following section of this chapter will expand on this debate, engaging with a range of literature on community theory.

5.1.3) Theories of community

Embedded in literature on grassroots action is research into community groups and organisations. Community research is undertaken across a range of disciplines and is often concerned with community-led solutions to environmental, social and economic challenges. Key themes relating to community research include, community empowerment, community resilience, social capital, inequality and equality. The study of community, community development and community action are intrinsically linked to relations of power (discussed in detail in the following chapter), yet, as highlighted by Brennan and Israel (2008) current discussions on the nature and form of communities, neglect the importance of power in developing a theoretical lens. This research sought to draw on these two bodies of literature

(community and power) to develop the theoretical framework which informs the delivery and analysis of this research.

In this review of theories of community I draw on literature from different schools of thought, including urban planning, sociology, political theory and community development. There are variations in how community is understood within each of these disciplines. However, engaging with a range of different conceptualisations provides deeper insight into how thinking has developed over time and enables me to ground my own use of the term ‘community’ in existing theory. Delanty (2010, p.13) highlights how:

> *‘It is only by taking a broad and interdisciplinary look at the idea of community in modern social and political thought that we can have a fuller understanding of the significance of the current developments’*

Much of the literature that seeks to understand the phenomena, describes community to be made up of a diverse range of social factors, including shared norms, motivations and values (Bradshaw, 2008). However, there is consensus among this body of literature that ‘community’ is difficult to demarcate (Cohen, 2015; Lee and Newby, 1983) and that defining research parameters for communities may be challenging for the researcher. A review of relevant literature highlights how this is a fluid and contested term both between and within disciplines.

In undertaking a review of community theory, many theorists trace its roots back to Aristotle and the polis of classical Greece. This continued to inform many influential theorists’ conceptualisation into the Eighteenth-Century enlightenment or Age of

Reason (Delanty, 2010). Whilst important to acknowledge and understand the origins of community theory, for the purpose of this research it was necessary to define parameters of literature to be considered. I decided to focus my review on more contemporary understandings of community from a range of disciplines, rather than providing a detailed historical account of community theory. This was due to my research being concerned with conceptualisations of community in an urban context and the nature of power within an post-industrialised society.

COMMUNITY LOST AND FOUND; A CLASSICAL CONCEPTUALISATION

Early studies of community were concerned with the role of the collective in social and cultural life. In these conceptualisations of community, individually bore little significance and research focused on examining the phenomena of homogenous communities with little critique of the concept of community itself. In the late 1800s and early 1900s a collection of influential theorists focused their attention on what they perceived to be a breakdown of community life. Tönnies' (1957) conceptual categories Germeinschaft and Gesellschaft, commonly translated as community and society, were proposed in response to his concerns over a loss of the social ties associated with pre-modern society. Durkheim (1960) shared many of the same concerns as Tönnies regarding the changing nature of 'community' in the urban context. However, for Durkheim, urbanisation provided a space in which to explore new forms of commonality and community. Whist the theoretical contributions outlined above are an important part of more current debates over the conceptualisation of community, they came under criticism for their preoccupation with the global North. Stoecker (in ed. Hutchinson, 2010, p.172) argues how the:

> *'transformative dynamism of industrialism in Western society was implicitly juxtaposed with the perceived stasis of the non-Western world, such considerations are indicative of an ethnocentric bias informing classical theories of community'*

Whilst my research is situated in England it is important to acknowledge this critique of, and limitation to, classical understandings of community.

The urbanisation of the 1920s and 30s caused some scholars to question existing theories underpinning the study of community, exploring new ways of understanding groups of individuals in an urban context. Led by the Chicago School, a debate began, posing new questions for community theory and drawing attention to transience and diversity within urban environments. Cities were perceived as unique spaces of social interaction and the focus on geographical location, as seen in earlier conceptualisations, was challenged by individuals' ability to travel with ease to different locations. This points to a sense of fragility in both theories of community and the practice of community which requires a more nuanced and contextual debate. In his introduction to theories of community, Delanty (2010, p.6) cites the most notable shift in community theory as taking place since the so called 'cultural turn' in the social sciences since the mid-1980s. This cultural turn reflected much of the thinking that emerges from the Chicago School in the 1920s and 30s, which articulated a need to break from conceptualisations associated primarily with geographical location. However, Delanty highlights how challenges to traditional theories of community were developed further from the mid-1980s drawing on theorists such a Cohen (1985) to highlight a newer wave of community theory that

called for ‘community to be understood as less a social practice that a symbolic structure’ (*ibid*). This way of thinking remains relevant today, with a continued focus on community beyond the bounds of place (discussed in the following section). However, some more recent theorists have argued that focusing on the symbolic structures of communities has left many of the social aspects of communities under-examined (Amit, 2002). As is evident in the following section there has been a recent revival in research attempting to re-establish the study of social relations in community research.

CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDINGS OF COMMUNITY

The previous section provided a partial account of developments in community theory. It is important to note that it is not a comprehensive review, but one that acknowledges the complexity of historical debate over conceptualisations of community within the scope and parameters of this research. This section focuses on contemporary contributions to community theory, which have had a more direct influence on the theoretical lens employed in this research.

Contemporary understandings of community continue to critique and re-define the traditional conceptualisations described in the previous section, which have focused predominantly on geographical location or collective identities rather than recognising the specific context of a given community. Bradshaw (2008, p.13) contributes to contemporary understandings with his scholarship on post-place communities. His conceptualisation of community is rooted in solidarity, highlighting how ‘a key feature of the solidarity-based community as opposed to the place-based

community is that community becomes a concept that is variable rather than either-or’. This interpretation, which argues that community is not static but changeable and continuously negotiated, presents a more nuanced view of communities, which acknowledges that, at any given time, there will be a range of influencing factors and conditions. Bradshaw (2008, p.10) draws on the work of Kempers (2001), suggesting it provides a useful summary on the concept of community as the ‘sum total of how, why, when, under what conditions, and with what consequences people bond together’. Unlike theorists such as Cohen (1985), Bradshaw and Kempers clearly position their theoretical contributions within the social relations of community. Whilst Bradshaw’s contribution may be seen as a rejection of place-based community theory, he does reflect on the role of place, stating that in some instances ‘place may have huge advantages because of the collective action that gives it a reputation’ (2008, p.14). He continues by highlighting how these communities are not the same as more traditional conceptualisations of insular groups of people ‘but exist because of the post-place community of which they are a node.’ (*ibid*). What Bradshaw refers to in this quote is the idea that communities may be international, there may be a collection of many individuals involved in collaborating networks, but that a physical space can serve as an intersection where certain interactions can take place.

In the development of contemporary understandings of community, there has been notable attention given to the role of the individual and individual identity. Traditional conceptualisations suggested a shared identity, where individuals are united by collective values and beliefs. Contemporary understandings have critiqued this, suggesting a distinct need to recognise communities as a collection of individuals. Mouffe (1992, p.75), who is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, writes

on the role of democracy and individual liberty in communities, arguing that we 'should not accept a false dichotomy between individual liberty and rights on one side versus civic activity and political community on the other'. She describes how the agenda for future theorising on community should not be a choice between an 'aggregate of individuals without common public concern and a premodern community organized around a single substantive idea of the common good' (*ibid*). Rather, she proposes that we adopt a pluralistic view of community, whereby individuals share some level of commonality and ethico-political concern. She describes how:

> *'this modern form of political community is held together not by a substantive idea of a common good but by a common bond, a public concern. It is therefore a community without a definite shape, a definite identity, and in continuous re-enactment'. (p.77)*

This quote captures a sense of fluidity and change which I previously referred to in Bradshaw's contribution to conceptualising community. The idea that community is continuously re-negotiated seems particularly relevant to understanding the experiences of a developing CLH group. These negotiations provide insight into the way community is constructed and how individuals experience the process. Yet there is a lack of engagement with how the insights generated through researching communities may shape and inform practice. Theodori (2008, p.65) draws attention to this, arguing how community development researchers need to engage with

questions such as, 'what are the barriers that restrict or suppress community emergence? More importantly, how can such obstacles be overcome?'.

Brennan and Israel (2008) draw on contemporary understandings of community in their work on power. They view community from a field theory perspective(Sharp, 2001) which shares many similarities with more traditional understandings of communities as geographically located. Yet there is a distinct focus on individuality which sets it apart from more traditional community theory. Brennan and Israel (2008, p.88) describe how in community field theory:

> *'local society is seen as a comprehensive network of associations that meet common needs and express common interests. Such associations and the realization of common interests occur around, and are made possible through, social interaction. Interaction is therefore the essential element of community.'*

In this quote Brennen and Israel use the term 'network of associations' in relation to community. This has been cited by some theorists as a more appropriate term to be used in modern understandings of urban environments.

In Clark's (2007, p.4) review of community theory he highlights how a collection of theorists have argued for a shift away from community towards social networks, describing how:

> *'The advent of modern capitalism, industrialisation and urbanisation is theoretically considered to disrupt 'pre-modern' social organisations*

> *built around the family or kin group, to be replaced by 'gesellschaft' relationships of contractual obligations between individuals with specialised roles'*

Putnam (2000) also argues that that sense of community is being dissolved. In his controversial and commonly critiqued thesis (Stolle and Hooghe, 2004), Putman proposes that technological advances have re-shaped leisure time, which would have traditionally have been spent socializing. Putnam highlights how the increase in technology has led to greater individualism and consequentially, reduced capacity to develop social-cohesion.

Such arguments highlight the need to engage critically with the conceptualisation of community in this research. However, they also reflect a disconnection with the idea of the local in theories of community, which CLH is seen to directly challenge. One of the benefits associated with CLH is its ability to foster closer relations between its members, built on trust, care and a sense of shared endeavour. More recent commentaries on the manifestations and practices of community in CLH attempt to engage with this tension between local and networked social relations. Local social relations, in this context, can be seen as both a positive and negative. It can support more sustainable behaviours, such as sharing resources, supporting local economies and removing money from large businesses. However, it may also be associated with being inward facing and disengaged with external influences. In some instances, CLH may exclude others or have poor relations with the wider local neighbourhood. Contrary to this, networked social relations, tends to involve a more outward facing engagement with the wider geographical area and other community

and non-community organisations. These types of CLH groups might engage with local councils and share skills and knowledge with other CLH groups.

In addition to his commentary on tensions between community and networks, Clark (2007, p.10) draws our attention to the role of strong and weak ties in discourses of community. He highlights the theoretical contributions of Granovetter (1973) who suggests that ‘weak ties between individuals are crucial for creating new opportunities, enabling resource and information diffusion, and for the successful integration of different social groups’, whereas, ‘strong ties, while creating local cohesion, will ultimately lead to social fragmentation’ (*ibid*). Granovetter’s theory calls in to question many of the assumptions of what makes an ideal CLH group. When considered alongside questions of accessibility and the ability to engage a broader demographic, we are prompted to critically engage with the normative and entrenched ideology that successful communities are underpinned by close social relations.

The review of literature relating to theories of community demonstrates that ‘community’ is a diverse and contested concept. I have drawn attention to a long and rich history in community research and described how thinking has developed over this time. This presents a starting point from which to build my critique. I then introduced more contemporary understandings of community. I highlighted a range of theorists who propose that community should be examined beyond place-based conceptualisations. Bradshaw’s (2008) post-place communities proposes identity, meaning and culture as useful lenses through which to examine community.

Similarly, I introduced other theorists who argue that individual identity is a vital factor in community theory (Brennan and Israel, 2008; Mouffe, 1992). In these conceptualisations of community, the space created for individual expression is an important condition in opening-up and democratising communities. Finally, I drew attention to the role of social relations in communities. Brennan and Israel (2008) Clark (2007) and Granovetter (1973), all discuss how networks present a useful way of understanding the nature and scope of community action. Brennan and Israel discuss the role of local networks as support systems for community action, whilst Granovetter argues that developing networks rather than close community ties supports inclusivity and enables a group to have wider impact. Their alternative ways of viewing community challenges assumptions of what makes a successful CLH project. In their theoretical contributions, they call for researchers to examine specific communities in the wider context of equitability and social change. This makes a useful contribution to this research which looks at the experiences of one CLT group. In seeking to examine the scope for BCLT to enable prospective residents to realise their aspirations for community, inclusion and wider impact become important factors to consider.

Having undertaken a review of 'community' literature I identify a need to further understand how theoretical conceptualisations of community can support practice within a community setting. The review highlighted how community development literature has focused on action, whilst in other fields, dominant discourses remain firmly rooted in theory. As highlighted by Brennan and Israel (2008, p.82):

> *'While formally and informally recognized as important, an exploration of the process by which power emerges, evolves, and is managed within*

the confines of the community remains scant in the research and theoretical literature'

In the next section I discuss how theories of power can contribute towards developing a practice focused approach to research with communities.

5.2) A DEEPER LOOK AT POWER AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THIS RESEARCH

In the previous section I referred to the importance of power in conceptualising and examining communities, signposting the reader to this chapter where power is discussed in more detail. This section provides a detailed review of theories of power and how key theorists inform the theoretical lens employed in this research.

In many of the conversations undertaken during the extensive stage power was identified as a key factor associated with the ability of CLH members to realise their aspirations for community. Members of CLH groups with whom I spoke, talked directly about the impact of power imbalances between members of CLH groups, but also alluded to other experiences that I have attributed to power such as ability to maintain individual identity (discussed later in this chapter), and the level to which members feel they can influence decisions. This led me to undertake a review of literature on power, to examine how power is understood within a number of theories and how existing research has used it as a lens to explore the experiences of community organisations. Additionally, this review of relevant literature enabled me

to establish if 'power' would be a useful concept to inform the development of the intensive research stage.

In the previous section on theories of community I drew on the work of Brennan and Israel (2008). Having undertaken the extensive stage I found myself returning to their work on power relations. They highlight the importance of examining power in research seeking to understand community action. They discuss how the concept is significantly under-used by researchers of communities arguing that when explored:

> *'it is usually portrayed in a macro context, often in the settings of social movements (…) Far less often is the micro level considered. When explored at this level, power is typically tied to the condition which emerges as a result of local empowerment, civic engagement, and/or capacity-building activities (Beaver & Cohen, 2004; Fisher & Sonn, 2007; Gaventa, 1982). However, it is simply assumed or implied that power naturally emerges from these conditions and is successfully exercised.' (Brennan and Israel, 2008, p.83).*

This reflects the normative assumptions often associated with CLH (as highlighted in Chapter One), where empowerment is presented as a benefit, without critically engaging with the potentially problematic nature of this assumption. Yet by examining theories of power it is evident that it is complex concept, interwoven with social practices, organisational structures and individual identities. In developing their argument for a closer examination of the role of power in communities Brennan and Israel (2008, p.88/89) highlight how:

> *'Power can be used to facilitate social interaction or to suppress it. As Wilkinson (1991, p. 17) notes, 'community implies all types of relations that are natural among people, and if interaction is suppressed, community is limited.' To this extent, as interaction is limited, disaffection as a result of fragmentation, anomie, and alienation occur, hindering community from emerging'*

Whilst it is evident that theories of power and community can assist in creating rich understandings of the practices and experiences of people engaged in a community organisation, there is a notable gap in literature that attempts to draw these two bodies of literature together. The following section will introduce a range of theorists whose writings have informed the debate on conceptualisations of power. I draw attention to how these conceptualisations can be used in collaboration with literature on community to create a theoretical framework that examines grassroots action and informs practice.

5.2.1) An introduction to examining theories of power

In Chapter One I introduced 'power' as part of the theoretical lens employed in this research. This section provides a more detailed examination of theories of power by exploring some of the key theorists contributing to a long and complicated debate on its application in research. I begin by engaging with Habermas and his theoretical contributions on communicative rationality and ideal speech situations, analysing how they inform the analytical framework employed in this research. The decision to begin with Habermas' conceptualisation of power was informed predominantly by the extent to which his theoretical contributions inform participatory research disciplines

(Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Following this I engage with literature that has critiqued Habermas' theoretical contributions, drawing on a range of other theorists who propose different ways of studying power. I identify key limitations in Habermas' conceptualisation of power but argue that some of his thinking is useful in understanding the dynamics of power in practice, in a community setting. Having engaged with the philosophical positionality of some of the key theorists whose contributions continue to inform debates over the conceptualisation of power, I move on to examine a range of theorists who provide models for examining power in practice. Finally, I return to my initial claim that combining theories of power and community can lead to a deeper engagement with the experiences of community groups. I draw attention to Mouffe's (1992) contribution to community power theory, which proposes a radical alternative to Habermas' (1990) focus on consensus. In concluding this section on theories of power I discuss how the literature reviewed informs the theoretical lens developed for this research and set out the theoretical framework used to guide the development of this case-study and make sense of the data being captured.

5.2.2) Habermas on power

In examining literature on power there are significantly overlapping themes which are rooted in different truth claims. A range of theorists have contributed to this field of knowledge but their contributions, which may initially appear to complement each other, diverge significantly when examined from a perspective that takes into account their epistemological and ontological positions. Habermas is one of the key

theorists whose contribution to conceptualisations of power has evoked both support and criticism.

One of Habermas’ major scholarly contribution is his theory of communicative action and democratic theory (1987). Through these he argues that communication and power are intrinsically joined and that participants in any dialogue must have the same understanding of conditions that enable effective communication. He describes how communicative power can only exist when participants are focused on reaching mutual agreement and ideal speech situations are created. Habermas presented the following ideal speech conditions (translated into English) as a universal system for creating open communicative space:

> *1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.*
>
> *2a. Everyone is allowed to question any whatever.*
>
> *2b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.*
>
> *2c. Everyone is allowed to express their attitudes, desires and needs without any hesitation.*
>
> *3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (1) and (2)*

(Habermas, 1990, p.86)

Habermas' theory of communicative action and the ideal speech situation has significantly informed participatory research disciplines. Within this discipline researchers seek to create open spaces of communication where equitable discussion can take place and power imbalances can be reduced or challenged. Yet as I evidence below; Habermas' communication action and ideal speech situation have come under significant criticism from scholars from a range of disciplines.

The major criticism Habermas has received for his ideal speech situation is its universalistic assumptions. The majority of Habermas' other thinking has been centred around a situationalist approach in which he claims that communicative processes should be designed to the needs of specific groups. The universalistic approach used in the ideal speech situation has been criticised as being top down, where power is tied to sovereignty (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002). In comparison to Habermas, Foucault (1980) proposes a radically different conceptualisation of how power functions, arguing that rather than viewing power and sovereignty as interconnected, emancipation from the domination of power may only come about when power is understood as separate from law. Furthermore, in rejecting universal conditions of communication critics have argued that there will always be flaws in the ideal speech situation that allow for oppression or disempowerment of some (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002, Mouffe, 1992). In Habermas' (1999) later work he addresses these criticisms. Whilst still maintaining that the ideal speech system provides a useful theoretical framework he acknowledges the problematic nature of suggesting a universal model and refers instead to a more intersubjective concept of 'discourse ethics' as an approach for guiding communicative engagements. Yet, within Habermas' updated theory, there remains a problematic ontological

assumption that individuals will always seek consensus and that power imbalances may be overcome through normative morality. Habermas’ position on norms, which does not engage critically with relations of power, remains a weakness in his theory.

Despite a need for caution in adopting an Habermasian approach to analyse power in the communicative actions of a community, his conditions provide a useful grounding from which to build an analytical framework. Here, what Habermas draws attention to are the forces of power that can impact on a person’s ability to feel confident in their communicative capacity. This might be influenced by authoritative or manipulative forms of power. I discuss this further in the following section where I draw attention to the contexts of power put forward by Bachrach and Baratz (Bachrach and Baratz. 1962; 1970).

In a review of Habermas’ theoretical contributions Olafson (1990, p.644) highlights how he bases his theory of communicative efficacy on the capabilities of individuals to understand that ‘partnership rests on the ability of each to grasp the difference of the one partner from the other that is a consequence of individuation and ‘the fact that the other- the ‘you’ is another ‘I’’. This quote identifies a need for participants, in a given dialogue, to be able to identify a mutual desire to understand the other. This highlights an assumption made by Habermas, for which he has received significant criticism, that it is an innate desire of humans to try and find consensus and resist unequitable engagements. Criticism of this claim has mainly come from theorists who argue that power is always present in human interactions and that it is therefore misleading to suggest that power may be overcome in communicative acts.

Furthermore, Habermas' claim is dependent on the assumption that each participant in a communicative situation is being truthful. This becomes problematic when we consider the relationship between truth and norms. A range of theorists have addressed the impact of normalising behaviours, practices and knowledge, suggesting that once these become acknowledged by experts or are accepted into law or policy they become perceived as truth. Even if the effect of these lead to the domination or disempowerment of individuals they may be accepted and re-produced as part of a social order (Boulding, 1990; Flyvbjerg, 2003; Gaventa, 1982; Lukes, 2004). Flyvbjerg (2003) discusses this is his work on rationality and power arguing that truth and power are intrinsically linked. He claims that by portraying something as truth, through institutional systems, it is less contestable. Similarly, Lukes' (2004) third dimension of power relates to this, highlighting how individuals are subjected to power imbalances in their motivations and beliefs. Here Lukes suggests that the social actor is unable to understand their own motivations because they are influenced by the reason of power-holding elites who project their worldview as truth. Whilst Lukes has received significant criticism for his Marxist lens of researcher as expert and social actor as passive participant, his theory does assist in problematising Habermas' assumption that human engagements are based on the desire to find consensus.

Whilst it is possible to see many flaws in Habermas' conceptualisation of power, the ideal speech conditions he describes provide some practical guidance for a researcher attempting to examine the practices of power within a selected community setting. In seeking a framework for analysing the social interactions between members of BCLT, Habermas' ideal speech conditions help inform the

types of interactions I might look to analyse in order to understand the ability of prospective residents to realise their aspirations for community.

5.2.3) Questioning and developing Habermasian thinking

In order to engage further with debates on 'power' I review how other key theorists have contributed to the field. I structure this review around their challenges to Habermasian thinking, commenting on how they have advanced or proposed radical alternatives to Habermas' conceptualisation. I focus this review primarily on the contributions of Foucault (1980;1984a), Mouffe (1992), Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) and Flyvbjerg (1996, 2003), whose work builds a critique of Habermas' theory of communicative action (1987) and conditions of ideal speech (1984). Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) provide a valuable commentary on the Habermas-Foucault debate, drawing attention to specific ontological tensions. Furthermore, Flyvbjerg's own contribution to the field of planning suggests his theory of rationality and power (2003) can be strengthened further by drawing on Foucault's theoretical scholarship. Whilst acknowledging that this review only captures part of the theoretical challenges to Habermasian thinking, I argue that it provides a good grounding in the debates on relations of power that continue to influence research today.

The work of Habermas and other deliberative democracy theorists are juxtaposed by those who situate power and difference at the core of our social fabric (Foucault, 1980, 1984a). For these theorists power is an inevitable social condition, and not inherently problematic. Whilst sharing similarities with Habermas on his ideas of

rationality, Foucault is critical of Habermas' conceptualisation, suggesting that it is grounded in ideals rather than real life practices. In Foucault's theory of power and knowledge (1980a) there are some distinct differences to Habermas. One of the primary differences is how Foucault situates his theoretical contributions in the realm of contextualism while Habermas builds much of his theory on universalism. Foucault addresses how rationality may be used as a mechanism for reinforcing power imbalances rather than challenging them. However, where Foucault's theory of power diverges most from Habermas and many other social theorists, is in his claim that power is not wielded by individuals or even organisations as a tool for the repression or domination of others. Rather, Foucault claims that power is in everything and that it is more than political; he argues that it is embodied in our systems, knowledge and truths and normalised in our everyday life to such an extent that it may not always be perceived. From this perspective, Foucault proposes that discourses of power should be re-focused on socially constructed norms and constraints that need to be questioned and challenged. Foucault argues that challenging norms requires 'detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' (Foucault and Rabinow, 1991, p.75). For Foucault, the task is not to re-distribute power but to increase our capacity to recognise and challenge social norms that act as repressors when there is no individual or institutional intent to repress. Foucault argues that in order to challenge social order the actors need to challenge societal norms, advocating discourse as a place in which this can happen. As Flyvbjerg (1996, p.12) highlights:

> *'Freedom is a practice, and its ideal is not a utopian absence of power. Resistance and struggle, in contrast to consensus, is for Foucault the most solid basis for the practice of freedom'*

Foucault's theory of power and knowledge (1980) has been praised as providing a tool through which real change may take place. Flyvbjerg was particularly enthusiastic about Foucault's theoretical contributions, especially in relation to planning theory. In Certomà's (2015) paper on the 'dark side of planning' theory she discusses the spatialisations of rationality which she claims is what, in Flyvbjerg's opinion, is Foucault's main contribution to planning theory. She highlights how Flyvbjerg suggests 'it requires answering the question 'what has actually been done', before turning to the normative – and secondary – questions 'what should be done' (Certoma, 2015, p. 27). Additionally, she draws attention to how Foucault feels social change needs to take place, quoting:

> *'there may, in fact, always be a certain number of projects whose aim is to modify some constraints, to loosen, or even break them, but none of these projects can, simply by its nature, assure that people will have liberty automatically, that it will be established by the project itself [..] I think that [architecture] can and does produce positive effects when the liberating intentions of the architect coincides with the real practices of people in the exercise of their freedom' (ibid)*

It is this view that is most relevant to this research. As highlighted in the opening chapter of this thesis, there is a tendency in literature on CLH to assume a level of empowerment will take place, that through a desire to create equitable models of housing, the conditions will automatically lead to the emancipation of participants. It

is this normative assumption that is rarely challenged with any rigor, that I wanted to explore through this research. Whilst Habermas describes a set of conditions that may be conducive to more democratic governance, Foucault's theory encourages the researcher to look beyond the people at the techniques and mechanisms which are employed in social systems to reinforce and reproduce power imbalances.

There have been some scholars who have attempted to unify the work of Habermas and Foucault in the field of participatory planning (Healey, 1992; Hillier, 2003). Both Healey and Hillier draw on Foucault's conceptualisation of power to counter Habermas' weakness in understanding power in practice. They propose that analysing power in the social structures that shape planning practices can improve the quality of communication, especially between the planners and public, and subsequently remove power relations from the communicative spaces. Yet Flyvbjerg is critical of these attempts to marry two divergent theories. Flyvbjerg (1996, p. 19) highlights that, to attempt to empower those who have less voice 'surely requires an acknowledgment of power relations, and the possibility of power being used in a 'positive' way''. The concept of power being positive in communicative acts is a radical departure from what has been proposed as good practice in partnerships involving professionals and non-professionals, or community and non-community organisations. As Flyvbjerg eloquently argues, Habermas and Foucault seem so at odds in their worldviews that attempting to combine their theoretical approaches is problematic as one theoretical position, usually Foucault's, tends to become co-opted by the other. However, there is value in engaging critically with these different positions and observing how they assist in understanding data generated in research. Rather than proposing a framework that combines both theoretical

perspectives it is useful to draw on elements of both and to examine how each contributes toward a deeper analysis of the social and structural relations in an organisation. Instead of positioning this research within either Habermas, Flyvbjerg or Foucault’s worldview I set out to see how each assisted in understanding practice and real life experiences.

As I highlighted in the previous paragraph, Flyvbjerg (1998) contributes significantly to the debate on power relations, siding with Foucaultian thinking over Habermasian. However, Flyvbjerg makes distinctions between his own theories and Foucault’s, which can also be seen to progress and develop our understandings of power. In Rationality and Power (1998) he is critical of modernity and its dependency on rationality. Flyvbjerg (1998, p.325) argues that power is always present in rationality, in reinforcing norms that may act as oppressors, whilst rationality is not always a factor in power. He describes how ‘the first step in moving beyond modern weakness is to understand power, and when we understand power we see that we cannot rely solely on democracy based on rationality to solve our problems’. Furthermore, he expresses how ‘forms of participation that are practical, committed, and ready for conflict provide a superior paradigm of democratic virtue than forms of participation that are discursive, detached, and consensus-dependent, this is, rational’ (*ibid,* p.326). Here we see a challenge to Habermas’ consensus seeking model of communication, something which has been supported by other academics, most notably, Mouffe (1992), whose contribution to theories of power will be discussed in the following section. This challenge demonstrates a shift away from the idealised conditions presented in the work of Habermas, towards an analysis of power that is grounded in the practices of community. This assists in building a theoretical lens for

this research that is rooted in a desire to go beyond observation and bring about meaningful change.

5.2.4) Community power and radical democracy

In literature on theories of power, there are a small collection of theorists who have examined community power. Brennan and Israel (2008) describe how community power, or the lack of it, can be associated with either conflict or consensus conditions. They highlight how conflict situations occur predominantly in elitist power structures, where individuals or groups hold unequal power based on their social, political or economic standing in a community. Conversely to this, Brennan and Israel argue that consensus situations are a result of pluralist power structures, which rely on the collective capabilities of local actors who hold power and have the capacity to bring about social change. This may be associated with a more traditional understanding of power relations and Brennan and Israel do acknowledge emerging literature that challenges this conceptualisation arguing that power is contextual and may not always be a result of conflict or consensus (Daniels and Walker, 2001). In acknowledging these more contemporary understandings, Brennan and Israel highlight how decision-making may be most conducive with pluralist practices of power when collaborative action represents a diverse mix of local interests. This contemporary approach acknowledges how the capacity of communities can range significantly when they balance different values, beliefs and needs whilst trying to bring about social change.

This rejection of consensus-conflict thinking is developed further by Mouffe (1992, p78), who argues that ‘forms of agreement can be reached, but they are always partial and provisional since consensus is by necessity based on acts of exclusion’. Rather, Mouffe describes how ‘to make possible a hegemony of the democratic forces [..] an approach can only be adequately formulated within a problematic that conceives of the social agent not as a unitary subject but as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions, constructed within specific discourses and always precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those subject positions’ (*ibid,* p.80). This quote highlights Mouffe’s rejection of the idea of a universal citizen favouring a conceptualisation of citizenship that acknowledges the many different forms of individual liberty and the ability for communities to be made up of people holding different world views. In arguing for a shift away from consensus seeking models of community governance, Mouffe presents an alternative approach based on the premise of radical democratic citizens.

This provides an interesting alternative to what is often perceived to be good practice in community-led housing projects. In community governance, it is common to see consensus decision-making systems employed. What Mouffe is proposing is a conflictual consensus approach where conflict is accepted as part of a democratic governance structure that recognises participants as both individuals and citizens. Rather than seeking consensus, Mouffe’s approach is formed on the capacity to build a common political identity. Mouffe juxtaposes theories of liberalism against radical democracy, arguing how, instead of aspiring to achieve the type of consensus and agreement conditions advocated by Habermas, attention should be given to accommodating and negotiating the inevitable conflict that exists in the

social fabric of any community. Mouffe focuses on transforming antagonism into, what she identifies as its more productive counterpart, ‘agonism’, a condition in which individuals find some commonalities and shared goals (Bond, 2011; Hillier, 2003; Jezierska. K, 2011; Mouffe, 1992). Mouffe’s contribution to theories of radical democracy, appear in direct conflict to Habermas’ universal claim that basic human instinct drives individuals to seek agreement in social situations. These distinct positions seem irreconcilable and propose significantly different ways of understanding the individual and their intent in any communicative and discursive space. However, in proposing an alternative, Mouffe’s theories seem to lack any practical guidance on how to transform antagonistic conflict into agonistic relations (Jezierska, 2011). This polemic debate between consensus and conflict creates an interesting space for researchers seeking to explore the social relations of communities. Additionally, the conflict-consensus debate provides a useful starting point for researchers seeking to understand the nature and form of community organisations.

5.2.5) Practicing research on power in communities

Having discussed the contributions of Habermas, Foucault, Flyvbjerg and Mouffe to theories of power I now move on to look at how these debates on conceptualisation of power have been researched in practice. I draw attention to a collection of scholars who propose tools or models for analysing and understanding power, which I use to inform the development of my own theoretical lens.

Looking back over theories of power there are a range of academics who have proposed models for examining relationships of power. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) proposed the ‘Five contexts of power relations’ in which they aimed to draw attention to both the visible relations of power, which affect the way decisions are made, and the concealed practices of power that impact on a person’s ability to feel they have a right to be part of the decision-making process. Bachrach and Baratz model responded to Dahl’s (1961) assumption of a pluralistic society in which decision-making takes place through open and democratic processes. This can also be seen to challenge Habermas’ (1990) premise that individuals are motivated by reaching consensus.

Bachrach and Baratz’s (1970) five contexts of power relations include, threat, authority, influence, manipulation and force. Whilst threat, manipulation and force power are relatively self-explanatory, authority and influence power assisted in developing a more nuanced understanding of how power can be understood. Authority is described as the perceived ability of those who hold power to prevent access to something, while influence refers to the perception that the person or organisations making a demand needs to be obeyed. This may emerge due to normalised understandings of authority but can also arise in a community setting when one individual is held in high regard. This reflects Foucault’s conceptualisation in which he argues that power is unequally distributed across social grouping and norms can lead to repressions. Additionally, normalised understandings of authority is discussed in Flyvbjerg’s commentary on rationality and power, through which he argues rationalisations can exacerbate unequal power relations, furthering the oppression of those who have less voice and agency in decision-making practices.

Bachrach and Baratz's model encourages a closer examination of the less overt practices of power that become evident when analysing the social relations of a community or organisation within a localised context.

Boulding (1990) identifies four forms of power which he believes assist in analysing how power is exercised. He identifies destructive power, productive power, knowledge power and integrative power. Whilst destructive and productive power are widely accepted by theorists, his knowledge and integrative power are less well known. In this model, knowledge power refers to the level of information and experience an individual or group hold. Boulding proposes that understanding the knowledge a group holds is an important part of understanding community agency. In this model, integrative power refers to action carried out as an emotional response. This suggests some ability to see beyond personal situations to be motivated by a greater force such as compassion, concern or respect. In Boulding's contribution to the theory of power he emphasises the importance of access to resources. He claims that those who have more resources, both physical and knowledge, have greater power and that those who hold power will exercise it in either destructive, productive or integrative ways. This model is interesting in that it encourages the researcher to examine the nature and form of power as observed. In some regards Boulding's model complements the contexts proposed by Bachrach and Baratz (1970), drawing researchers' attention to unique contextual factors that should be considered in any analysis of power. However, whilst acknowledging the importance of localised conditions, Boulding's model for analysing power lacks any guidance for applying the model at a community scale.

Finally, I draw attention to Gaventa’s (1982; 2003) contribution to theories of power through his work on power and powerlessness. Whilst Gaventa advocates Foucault’s attention to norms and claim that power should not always be perceived negatively, he also argues that the power and agency of communities should be examined through a broader lens than class and cultural or social norms. Gaventa proposes three dimensions of power that should be analysed in any attempt to understand the power and powerlessness of communities. The first dimension is the ability of one group, usually with more social, economic or political power, to use existing systems and norms to dismiss concerns raised by those with less power. The second dimension emerges from the beliefs, values and practices of elites, whereby those who hold the power can manipulate what issues are addressed. The third dimension of power is concerned with the construction of norms and meaning associated with the perception of powerlessness in a community. In this dimension of power, the powerless adopt the views of those who hold most power. This relates to Boulding’s integrative power and may be evident when communities look to those who they respect or perceive to be more experienced, to make decisions. Gaventa’s work provides many examples of how he has applied his theories in practical case studies with political action groups. Whilst his accounts may be criticised for being descriptive in nature, he does address the multidimensional nature of power through storytelling, and calls into question some commonly accepted norms in the theory of power.

The following table synthesises the conceptualisations of power highlighted in this section. In this table I highlight each of the theorists’ models for understanding power

in practice, identify how they related to philosophical debates on theories of power, and reflect on their relevance to this research.

Theorists	**Models for understanding power and key themes**	**Links to philosophical debates on power**	**Relevance to this research**
Bachrach and Baratz (1970)	*Five contexts of power*	Acknowledges the importance of norms in understanding power- as advocated by Foucault. However, also suggests that these norms can be linked to Flyvbjerg's rationalisations literature, and assumptions over who should hold power	Challenges Habermas- links to Flyvbjerg- importance of understanding concealed practices of power
Boulding (1990)	*Four forms of power*	Knowledge power shares similarities to Flyvbjerg's contribution on rationality	Highlights the importance of structural conditions, such as access to resources (physical and non-physical)
Gaventa (1982,2003)	*Three dimensions of power*	Lukes (Habermasian position on power) but also link to rationality	Provides a practical example of how power

	as discussed by Flyvbjerg, and Foucault’s position on norms and positive power	was analysed in a case study

Table 4: Synthesis of conceptualisations of power

When presented together, it is evident that there are theorists who align themselves with elements of both Flyvbjerg’s, Foucault’s and Habermas’ philosophical positions on power. When viewed from a theoretical position Flybjerg, Foucault and Habermas’ conceptualisations of power seem incommensurable. However, when considering how their contributions can inform an examination of how power is practiced in communities and organisations, it appears they each have something to offer.

Within the different models of power highlighted in this section, there are some key issues, which theorists seem to agree should inform any examination of power in communities. Issues of access arise in each of these, both in the sense of physical access to resources and subjective perceptions of who has the capacity to gain access. This relates back to Habermasian thinking, which emphasises that all parties who want to be involved should be able to take part in any given discourse. Norms associated with who is best positioned to make decisions also arises across these different models. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) discuss influence power, Boulding (1990) refers to knowledge power and Gaventa (1982) raises issues on the norms of decision-making practices in his commentary on powerlessness in communities. Each of these conceptualisations of power relate back to normative assumptions,

which became a central theme in Foucault's work and was discussed extensively in Flyvbjerg's theory of rationality and power.

Additionally, from undertaking a review of models proposed for conceptualising power in practice, there is some agreement that different levels of power relations can emerge within a community. Drawing on the models outlined above I highlight three different levels of power. Overt power relations reflect much of the work of Habermas and his theory of communicative action and ideal speech situation. These relations of power include factors such as who has access and voice in a given scenario. Subtle power relations relate to the more nuanced relations that impact on who can influence and guide decisions. This reflects Flyvbjerg's theoretical contribution to power, drawing attention to norms and rationalisations made in a community or organisation. Finally, structural power relations relate to the norms, proposed by Foucault that go beyond any individual or group of individuals within an organisation or community. This arises in Bachrach and Bratz, and Boulding's contexts of power as well as in Gaventa's powerlessness theory. These relations exist in the structures that inform everyday life and are reinforced by norms existing, or entrenched, in social systems.

In this section I have engaged with debates on theories of power and how they may be conceptualised in research. Additionally, I have drawn attention to a small but influential sub-topic which draws together community and power, and reflected on how this can contribute to the development of this research. I concluded this section by discussing a small collection of models that have been developed to assist in

examining power in practice. In the following section I introduce the theoretical framework which informed the empirical and individual analysis stages of this case study.

5.3) Focusing the theoretical framework for this research

Having undertaken a review of literature on developments in theories of community, and philosophical debates on 'power', specifically the forms proposed by Habermas (1990), Flyvbjerg (1998) and Foucault (1980;2003), it was evident that there were elements from each of the theorists discussed above that made a valuable contribution to this research. In generating a theoretical framework through which to conduct the data collection and analysis, my aim was to capture aspects of these different perspectives which would assist in generating a rich narrative of the power relations in BCLT's development process and enable me to provide my own insights on using theories of power and community in research.

Identifying how I intended to contribute to theory assisted in explaining and justifying why the theoretical framework was both appropriate and useful for answering the questions posed in this thesis. My intention was not to test theory in order to identify one as superior to the others, although inevitably certain theories proved more relevant as the research progressed. Due to the participatory nature of this research the case study began without a clearly defined research focus. Rather I began with a commitment to the co-creation of knowledge and the intention to conduct research that was useful to people practicing CLH. Drawing on a range of theorists enabled me to use different lenses to try and make sense of what was coming out in the

research. Rather than prioritising one theory, seeking ways of unifying opposing theories, or developing new theory that sat between or alongside existing theory, I intended to explore how these different theories offered ways of making sense of peoples' experiences.

Whilst Habermas, Foucault, Flyvbjerg and Mouffe ground their thinking in vastly different world views, each of their work contributes to the field of CLH research. Habermas' consensus thinking dominates much of the literature on the governance of community groups, whilst Foucault's thinking on governmentality argues that groups will commonly govern based on dominant or normative ideologies. Mouffe's theoretical contribution, whilst offering a radical critique of Communicative Rationality (Habermas, 1984) and consensus, provides an alternative way of exploring how groups may constitutionalise and govern away from dominant consensus models. Engaging with these theoretical debates enabled me to ground my work in wider conversations about community governance, post-politics, radical democracy and community power. Being open to a range of different theories rather than advocating one over the others was, I argue, important in capturing the nuances of trying to deliver a CLT housing project. In reality, multiple conflicting theories could have been applied at various points over the research process. For example, some factors are uncontentious and may easy be met with consensus, whilst others benefit more from Mouffe's lens and her thinking on conflictual consensus. Similarly, some conditions demonstrate the normative ideologies that Foucault claims facilitate power imbalances, whilst other scenarios illustrate how relationships between community and non-community organisations can disrupt dominant power structures.

In addition to the theorists mentioned above, the theoretical framework was also influenced by the tools for understanding power discussed in section 5.2.5. These provided practical guidance for analysing what happened in practice as BCLT moved through the development process. This research did not intend to advocate for Boulding’s (1990) four forms of power over, for example, Bachrach and Baratz’s (1970) five contexts of power relations, rather it was my intention to include these as prompts for thinking about power in BCLT’s social relations.

Instead of coming up with a specific criteria against which to assess how power and community emerged in the social and organisational practice, I found it useful to generate a list of questions that I would refer to when analysing each of the different relations arising through the data. Instead of categorising the practices as either enabling or dis-enabling the prospective resident to realise their aspirations for community, I wanted to examine the nature and form of the social and organisational practices, understanding who had control and why, and, how that control effected people’s level of access, participation and agency. As advocated by Foucault (1980;2003), I was interested in understanding what was **being** done, before beginning to consider what **could** be done in the future to improve the practices of BCLT. As part of this research I also intended to explore theoretical conceptualisations of power and community and to enrich debates on how these may be used to understand and inform community practices. The theories used in developing this framework are critiqued in the empirical chapters of this thesis, where I present a model informed by the research findings.

The following table lists the questions I used when analysing data. It also includes an explanation of how the questions were informed by the review of literature.

Practices of community to be examined	***Links to theoretical literature review***
Conditions of engagement	
• Who is participating in the social engagement?	This question was informed by Habermas' (1990) ideal speech conditions and the need to identify whose voice was being included in the discussion; Brennan and Israel (2008), who identified the need to understand the form that associations and social interactions take within a community; Bradshaw (2008), who highlighted that communities are dynamic and include various actors at any given time; and Clark (2007), who argued for greater acknowledgement of the individual within a networked community.
• What is the nature of the participation? (formal/informal)	By examining the nature of participation in a social engagement it was possible to develop an understanding of what Bradshaw (2008) refers to as the how, why and when people bond with others. Additionally, it encouraged a more critical look at the type of engagements taking place. Understanding if these were formal or informal, in community or professional spaces contributed towards understanding who held power in a social engagement.
• Are different voices given equal attention?	This question was influenced by Habermas' ideal speech situation (1990) and intended to explore who holds power in community meetings and events.
• Is there anyone who is unable to gain access to the social engagement?	In posing this question I examined if participants were being excluded from specific aspects of the development process. Additionally, it encouraged a wider engagement with questions of access to the CLT project, that ssought to reflect on the diversity of the community. Habermas (1990), Bachrach and Baratz (1970),

	Boulding (1990) and Gaventa (1982,2003) all highlighted the importance of acknowledging who has access when examining power relations.
Developing community	
• How do social engagements effect the members' ability to form bonds? (strong and weak ties)	This related to the work of Brennan and Israel (2008), Clark (2007) and Granovetta (1973), who all identified the need to understand how social relations impact on the bonds formed between community members. They suggested that social relations within urban communities may be better conceived as networks and highlighted how weak ties may support greater diversity and access in communities. In posing this question I intended to interrogate an assumption in CLH literature that links strong community ties with greater social cohesion.
• To what extent are members able to maintain their individual autonomy in the social practice?	This question is informed by the theoretical contributions of Mouffe (1992) on plural democracy and individual justice. Mouffe argued for greater recognition of the individual within communities and highlighted how radical democracy should support autonomous individuals to mobilise around a shared goal.
• Is space made for different social positions?	Flyvbjerg (1998) claimed that it is important to interrogate the rationalisations at work in a community organisation. He argued that these can exacerbate unequal power relations. Mouffe (1992) rejected consensus-seeking practices calling for alternative approaches that recognised difference and conflict as important conditions in choice and positive agency. These theoretical contributions informed my decision to examine how BCLT made space for difference in the social engagements.
• Are there shared commonalities in the social practices?	Bradshaw (2008), Brennan and Israel (2008), Mouffe (1992) all identified how examining the shared commonalities between individuals provides a useful way of understanding communities. This proposes an alternative to more traditional conceptualisation of communities as entity rooted in place and defines community as a condition of social engagements and relations. Identifying the shared commonalities in the social practices of BCLT assisted in understanding how

	members' aspirations for community were realised or negotiated over the development process.
• Are participants open to conflict or seeking consensus and rationalisation?	Examining whether BCLT members were open to conflict or if they sought only consensus, contributed to understanding the scope for individual autonomy in the organisation's practices. Brennan and Israel (2008), suggested that conflict may be a result of elitist power structure, which aligns with Habermas' (1990) focus on achieving consensus in communities. Contrary to this, Mouffe (1992) argued that conflict plays an important role in developing democratic communities and supporting individual justice. Flyvbjerg (1998) highlighted how rationalisations over who is most knowledgeable and who should inform decisions, directly impacts on the scope for creating good power relations. Consensus decision-making is a common aspiration of community organisations which I interrogate through this question. I seek to understand how consensus and conflict conditions are perceived by the members and how these conditions emerge and are experienced in practice.
Experiencing community	
• Do experiences of disempowerment relate to norms associated with who is best positioned to guide the development process?	In seeking a deeper understanding of the conditions that relate to BCLT members' experiences of power I examined what normative assumptions were being made in the structures and relations of BCLT. These related to who was best positioned to make decisions and who was perceived to have the right to gain access to the different social practices of BCLT. This question drew on the work of Foucault, and his position which claims that disempowerment and repression are the result of structural norms rather than individual intent. This question also reflected Flyvbjerg's (1998) commentary on how rationalisations can reduce community agency and voice. Additionally, it was informed by the contributions of Bachrach and Baratz (1970), Boulding (1990) and Gaventa (1982,2003), who identified the need to look at norms in factors such as

	knowledge, influence, authority, and how they may exacerbate a sense of powerlessness within a community.
• Are power relations facilitating or supressing social interaction?	Following on from the points raised in the previous question, this question intended to encourage an examination of how the practices of power impacted on the social interaction between members
• What form do power relations take? (Overt/subtle/structural)	This draws on debates over whether power is wielded by one individual over another or if it is embedded in structural norms. In examining the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1970), Boulding (1990) and Gaventa (1982,2003) on conceptualising power in communities, I highlighted similarities in how they define different power relations. These inform the forms of power that I used in this question
• To what extent do participants feel able to challenge power relations that they identify as disempowering?	Linked to norms and rationalities that can impact on community members' agency and voice, I intended to examine when and how BCLT members challenged practices that they found disempowering
• Which community structures enable participants to express their sense of disempowerment?	Following on from the last question, I sought to understand what community structures enabled BCLT members to challenge practices they identified as disempowering
Researcher experiences	
• Are there power relations that I see as an insider/outsider- which participants do not raise as problematic?	Finally, I believed it was important to identify if there were power relations that I saw as an insider/outsider, which the research participants did not raise as problematic. This responds to Gaventa's (1982) claim that rationalisations of power may be so entrenched in people's expectations of participation and access that they do not observe inequalities.

	In asking this question I apply extreme caution to ensure that I do not give too much weight to my own observations but rather acknowledge them as part of the data and subject them to the same level of analysis as the participant data collected in this research.

Table 5: Theoretical framework

5.4) Chapter summary

This chapter provides an account of how theory has informed the development of this research. I began by introducing theories of ‘community’ and ‘power’, and drew attention to the small but influential body of literature that has explored ‘community power’. I also introduced scholarship on radical democracy and agonism, highlighting differences between the commonly employed, consensus systems, and the system proposed in agonistic and radical democracy which embraces conflict. To conclude the review of theoretical literature I discussed the collection of scholars who have developed models to analyse power relations with social situations. Finally, I presented the framework used to inform the development and analysis of this research. I highlighted how this framework would encourage a more critical engagement with the events and stories emerging during this research. Additionally, I discussed how engaging with a range of theorists would enable me to explore how each related to the practices of a community, and assist in making my own theoretical contribution. The following chapter provides an account of how this research transitioned from the extensive to intensive stage. Additionally I introduce BCLT and set the context of the case study.

CHAPTER 6: BRISTOL CLT CASE STUDY

6.1) DEVELOPING IDEAS FROM PART 1

The previous chapter introduced discussions on theories of community and power, which concluded by setting out a theoretical framework to be used in the development of this research. This chapter introduces BCLT and the Shaldon Road project. Before setting the context for this case study I provide a brief summary of the points raised in the previous section and the links between these and the conversations undertaken in the extensive stage.

In the earlier section on contemporary understandings of community (Chapter Five) I drew attention to a shift away from more traditional conceptualisations of community as rooted in geographical place and collective identities. I cited the work of Clark (2007, p.4) who argues that more recent theories of community have moved beyond ''pre-modern' social organisations built around the family or kin group' to examine social networks. Clark suggests these networks are built on more professional or formal engagements, which he claims to be a result of urbanisation and conditions associated with capitalism. Whilst contributing to an interesting debate on the current state of community theory, Clark's focus on what appear as transactional relations seems significantly removed from the way community is understood in CLH literature. Mouffe (1992) and Brennan and Israel (2008) provide a contemporary commentary on the role of social networks in understanding community, which seems more aligned with the other theoretical contributions drawn upon in this thesis.

In Chapter Five I highlighted how Brennan and Israel (2008, p.88) call for community to be seen as a ‘comprehensive network of associations that meet common needs and express common interests’. Similarly, Delanty (2010, p.195), talks of a renewed interest in community, which may be attributed with a ‘crisis of belonging’, where social relations may be organised as networks. These networks, Delanty suggests, have greater capacity to cross boundaries, both geographical and institutional. Based on this account of social relations it is evident that communication plays a vital role in a community’s success or failure. Whilst Clark’s (2007) focus on more professionalised relations seems at odds with CLH, his commentary on the role of social networks makes a valuable contribution to this research. He describes how social networks may be seen as the ‘descriptor of social relations’ and that examining networks without the contextual relations which surround them may produce little more than a map. Contrary to this, if the researcher engages with the social relations that underpin these networks it should assist in capturing the story of actual social phenomena.

By examining literature on theories of power and community key factors arose which were reflected in the conversations that took place in the extensive stage. Individual autonomy was highlighted in both the literature and the extensive stage. Mouffe (1992) discusses the importance of maintaining autonomy whilst identifying shared common concerns. In conversations with members of the CLH groups they spoke about the challenges of finding space for individuality in a community. Some of the members spoke about how they had lived in community where they had no autonomy and the negative impact that had on their enjoyment. But the same

members also highlighted the risks of individual autonomy without a common concern or goal and how this may lead to certain members dominating the conversations and discussions.

The previous point leads on to the consensus-conflict debate which was discussed in Chapter Five. In setting out the literature on community and power I highlighted how Mouffe’s (1992) ideas on radical democracy and agonistic pluralism set out a position that is distinct from the theory of deliberative democracy put forward by Habermas (1990). Whilst Habermas’ ideal speech conditions are intended to guide a group towards reaching consensus in decision-making, Mouffe argues that consensus results in the exclusion of some. In the conversations undertaken as part of the extensive stage, both Mouffe and Habermas’ contributions were relevant. Members from CLH groups identified how they had implemented consensus decision-making systems, but how this often did not stop certain members taking control. Similarly, they spoke about the difficulties of trying to reach decisions using consensus when members’ motivations for being part of the group differed. They spoke of how some members would also have compromise in order for the discussion to move forward. This raises questions around which people are compromising and if it is those who feel less able to convey their voices. When this is considered in relation to BCLT, and the range of stakeholders involved in the development process, it is interesting to consider how these same factors might impact on the organisation.

This section has synthesised the discussions undertaken during the extensive stage and the theoretical literature review. These, along with the subject literature discussed in Chapter Three informed the development of the intensive stage. The following section provides some background and context to BCLT and the Shaldon Road project.

6.2) People and place- setting the scene

This section introduces BCLT and the Shaldon Road project. I begin by introducing the Bristol housing market, followed by an account of the people involved in the project. Finally, I provide details on the location and setting of the development site.

6.2.1) The Bristol housing market

Bristol is the largest city in the southwest of England, with a population of 535,907 (Census; 2011). Bristol has the fifth highest average property price in the UK (Hometrack; 2016). In December 2016, Bristol property prices were reported to be 18.3% higher that the UK average (Land Registry; 2016). A recent report published by Bristol City Council (2017) highlighted how demand for housing continued to outstrip supply. Furthermore, this report drew attention to a significant shortage in new affordable housing provisions and a growing number of homeless and rough sleepers within the city.

Whilst Bristol's expanding property market brings benefits for some businesses and individuals within the city, for many citizens the increasing sale and rental prices make large areas of the city unaffordable. In a Housing Strategy Report (2016),

Bristol City Council identified that there were growing health and wellbeing inequalities across the city. The report highlighted that despite the ‘prosperity within the city, there are substantial problems of deprivation in parts of Bristol. The neighbourhoods that do not share the city’s prosperity often have insufficient good housing, transport and access to employment opportunities’ (Bristol City Council, 2016, p.4). There is an urgent need for more housing within the city, but particularly for the type of affordable housing that is being developed by BCLT.

6.2.2) People

In Chapter One I introduced the different stakeholder groups and provided an overview of their roles within the project. The following diagram depicts the relationship between the key stakeholder groups, documenting who each of the groups engage with.

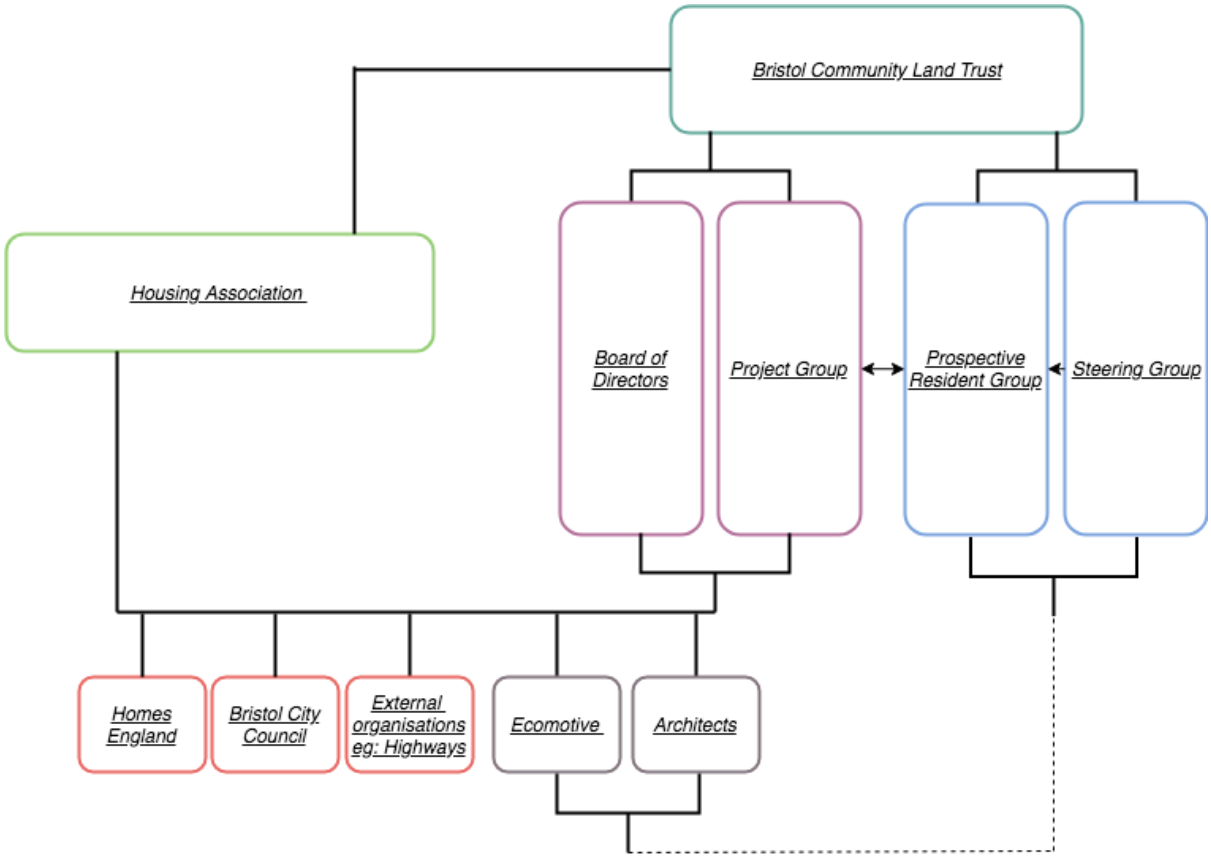

Figure 9: Relationships between key stakeholders

The diagram above documents how the Board, Project Group and Housing Association have access to all non-CLT organisations, whilst the Steering Group, which later merged to become the Prospective Resident Group, have contact with the Project Group and occasional contact with the Architect and Ecomotive.

Within the different non-resident stakeholder groups specific individuals played more significant roles in this research. In the remainder of this thesis I refer to these individuals, their roles in the development process, and their relationships with prospective residents. The following diagram documents how these individuals interacted with each of the stakeholder groups. The diagram also highlights individuals who were paid for their work on the Shaldon Road project.

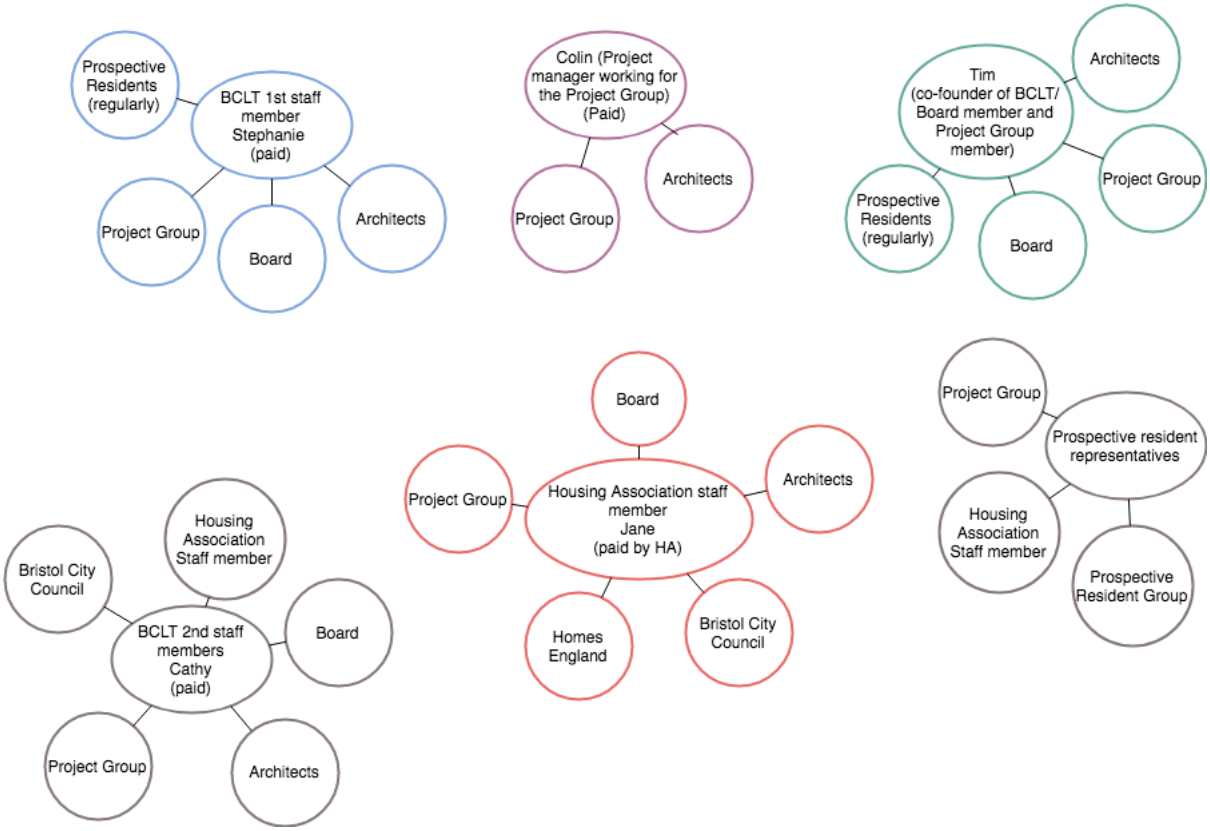

Figure 10: Connections between key stakeholder groups

The participatory approach used in this research meant that participants were more than subjects through which to gather data. They were a vital part of the research design. Subsequently, the development of this research became a social process, one in which the research participants' stories and backgrounds, particularly the prospective residents, played an important role. Therefore, it is important to capture the stories of the people engaged in this project, what bought them to BCLT and their histories which I have been lucky enough to learn about.

After attending my first Steering Group meeting I documented my experiences in my research diary. The following extract is taken from this entry and captures my first impressions of the group and my reflections on the events of that meeting.

> *'As I arrived at the library ready to attend my first Steering Group meeting, I was unsure of what to expect. Having spoken at length with Stephanie (BCLT staff member), she had offered some small insights into the members I was about to meet, but I knew nothing of their stories. On entering the building I was greeted by Stephanie, who was the only familiar face among approximately 20 people. After a brief announcement regarding general house keeping and admin the meeting begins. We go around the circle introducing ourselves with a brief account of why we are attending the meeting. The majority of people are interested in living in the development, whilst a couple are from Lockleaze and are keen to bring the voice of existing residents to the table. I introduce myself, as a researcher with an interest in community housing, who will be with them for the next three years attending meetings and generally getting involved in the everyday tasks. Some of the members nod, acknowledging that they had heard I might be joining them. After introductions, the meeting chair reads over the agenda points and the discussions start. What strikes me early on in the meeting is how confident the members are in expressing their opinions, how competent the chair is at facilitating the discussion and how diverse a range of skills the members bring to the group. The majority of the members seem to have a lot of experience of working in groups. There are clearly some members who have taken on more of a leadership*

role. A quick chat with Kate confirmed that she had experience in facilitation and had lived in co-operatives. Stephanie, from BCLT, helped guide the meeting but the members chaired and facilitated themselves. There are a couple of people who seem less comfortable with the non-hierarchical meeting structure. Two men from the group seem to have experience in construction and they noticeably talk over people, stating their opinions rather than contributing to a discussion. My first impression is that most of the members are professionals or have a high level of education. It was also very apparent that there was a dominant demographic in the room, all the members were white and ranged in age between around 30-50 years old.' (Research diary-03/02/2015)

Over the two and a half years that followed that first meeting, some of the members moved away for work opportunities and for others there was a distinct need to find housing solutions faster than BCLT could provide. But many of the members I met in that first meeting stayed and the Steering Group, which later merged to become the Prospective Resident Group, and meetings became a regular commitment in their lives. I got to know many of the members, building stronger relationships with some. Over the first year I was involved with BCLT, I met regularly in coffee shops with some of the members to chat about the Shaldon Road project and discuss my research, these members became the Core Research Group. I learnt their stories, each of them talking about what had led them to be involved with BCLT. I was struck by how different their situations were. Eric, in his mid 30s was a quiet man, but he spoke openly about his life experiences. Sixteen years of homelessness and temporary accommodation had shaped him. He held much distrust for the social

housing system, yet when he spoke about BCLT he conveyed a heartfelt enthusiasm about being part of something that challenged mainstream housing delivery. Mary, in her early 40s was chatty and open, talking about her excitement for what the project could be. She spoke of how her expanding family were out-growing their current home but how herself and her partner could not afford to upsize on their current salaries. Mary fondly recalled memories of being in her 20s, living in Brighton and the sense of community she experienced from having lots of friends that lived nearby. Rachel talked about her concerns for the future, about how she feared growing old without people around her despite only being in her 40s. Currently lodging in a house and being self employed, she expressed feeling trapped in a rental system with no prospect for full home ownership. Similarly, Katie, who was in her 30s raised concerns about growing old alone. Despite her current work as a performer and teacher offering lots of opportunities to socialise she expressed how she felt the need to be part of a community of people that she could live alongside. Kate, a political and environmental activist in her 30s, with experience in facilitation and consensus decision-making spoke about how she wanted to be part of something that challenged mainstream housing. Whilst also living in an overcrowded home, she was noticeably driven to be involved in something that could bring about social change and challenge inequalities.

Over the two and a half years spent in BCLT I heard more stories than those mentioned above. Many of the stories that are not told share similarities with those discussed; financial constraints of self-employment, growing families, insufficient incomes, unstable rental conditions were regularly given as reasons for having joined the project. But there was also something less tangible, that bought many of

these members together and motivated them to continue to attend meetings. This was a sense that BCLT project offered the potential for a more fulfilling life. Whether the members were in significant housing need or not it appeared that most of the them had arrived at a point in their lives where they wanted a better work-life balance and to be part of a project that was finding collaborative ways to challenge mainstream housing delivery. Additionally, as I got to know the prospective resident members better, it became apparent that collectively they had significant experience of being involved in areas relating to community development, either through volunteering, work, activism or education. This was an important skill set which did not become apparent until later in the development process. The prospective resident’s experience of working in and with communities gave them a different range of resources to members of other key stakeholder groups.

In setting the scene for this research it is important to highlight that the two and a half years spent with BCLT only offered a window into the development process. When I first began attending Steering Group meetings there was a mix of representatives from the local Lockleaze area, members looking to support but not live in the finished community, and members seeking shared equity, rental and self-build units. This mix was lost a few months after I started attending, and it became apparent that the remaining members were interesting in living in the development. This led to the merging of the Steering Group into the Prospective Resident Group, which had only just been set up. For two years following this, there was a noticeable change in demographics at Prospective Resident Group meetings. The majority of members in attendance hoped to be allocated a shared equity or self-build unit, whilst some members interested in rental units maintained occasional contact via the online

forum. Two and a half years later, at the end of my time spent with BCLT, there was a broader range of members attending these meetings. The Housing Association made contact with individuals who were eligible for the social rented units and invited them to join the meetings. Additionally, a member's community day saw individuals who had not had a physical presence at meetings begin attending.

As the project progressed the non-resident stakeholders collected demographic information from prospective residents . This enabled the non-resident stakeholder groups to understand the needs of prospective residents, their desired housing tenure and an overview of their financial situations. Whilst this research is primarily interested in the motivations and aspirations, and interactions and relationships of members, the demographic information provides a useful overview of prospective residents' situations.

In a survey conducted by the Board and Housing Association in 2016 prospective residents were asked to provide information on their current annual household income. The following chart presents the results:

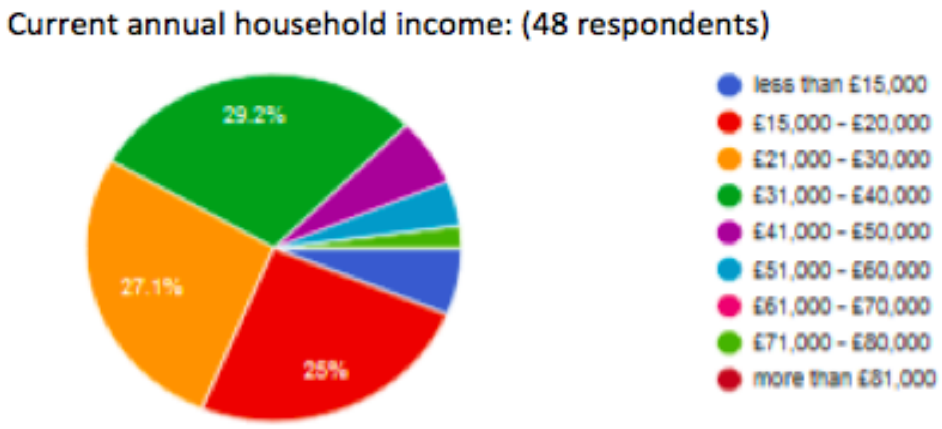

Figure 11: Prospective residents' annual household income

The results from the survey evidenced that the majority of members' annual income was almost evenly distributed between three categories. 29.2% of members reported having an annual household income of between £31,000 and £40,000, 27.1% between £21,000 and £30,000 and 25% between £15,000 and £20,000. From the remaining 18.7% of prospective residents whose annual house hold incomes did not fit into these brackets, two thirds had incomes above £40,000 and one third below £15,000.

The prospective resident members were also asked to provide information on their current housing situation, which generated the following results:

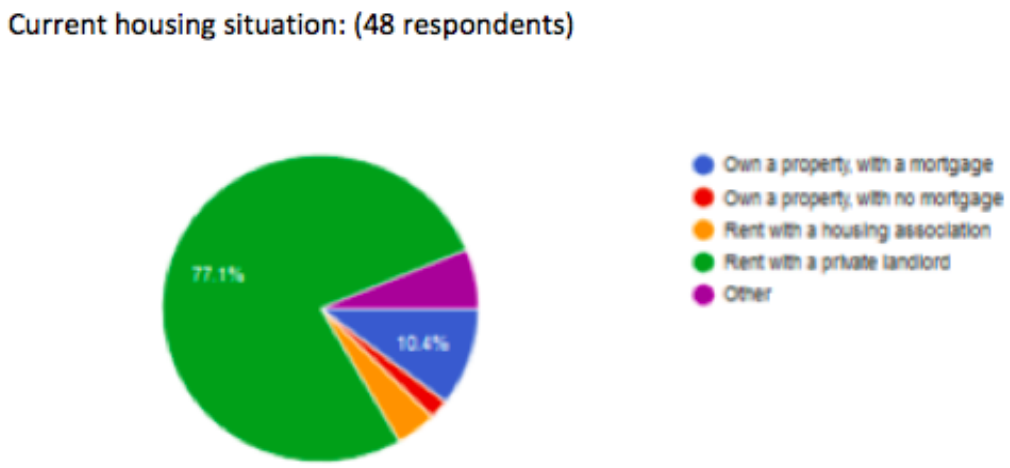

Figure 12: Prospective residents' current housing situation

The chart presented above highlights how 77.1% of prospective residents lived in private rented housing, whilst 10.4% had a mortgage on a property. Of the remaining 12.5% around half either owned a property outright or lived in a Housing Association property and the other half did not fit in any of the above housing categories. The 'other' category included living with friends or family members, or in non-official housing such as boats, campervans and caravans.

The other survey question relevant to this research asked why members wanted to live in the Shaldon Road community:

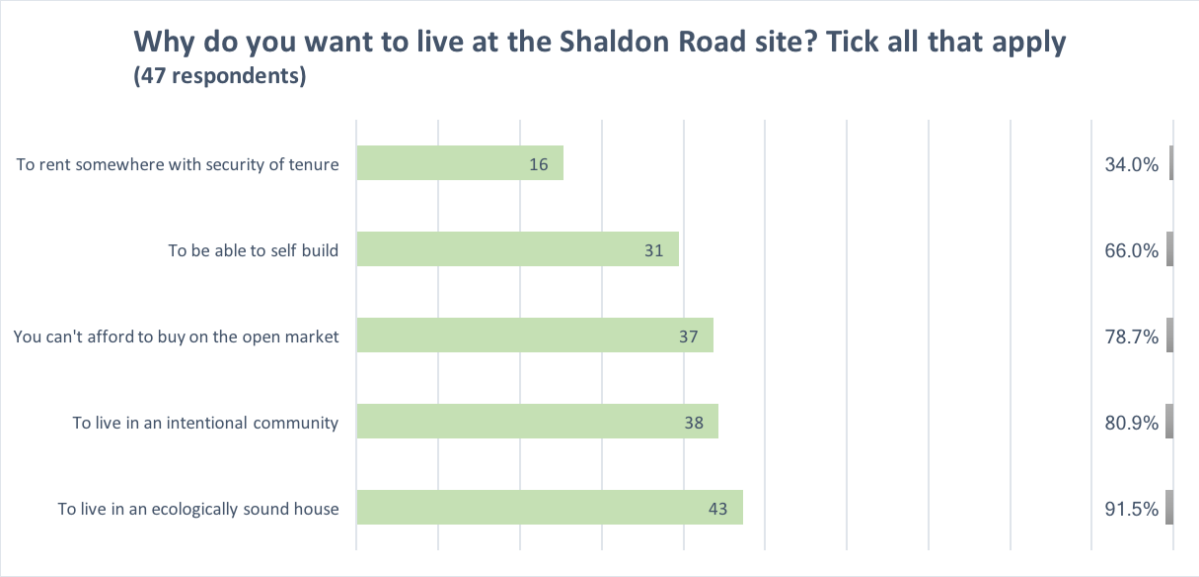

Figure 13: Why prospective residents' want to live in the Shaldon Road community

From the responses provided 91.5% of prospective residents wanted to live in a house that enabled them to reduce their environmental impact. A desire to live in an intentional community motivated 80.9% of members[6]. This was closely followed by a perceived inability to afford to buy on the open market, which 78.8% of prospective residents selected. The option to self-build also appealed to 66% of members, whilst a secure rental tenancy was only highlighted as a motivating factor by 34% of members. At the time that this data was collected, and with no qualitative information to provide further explanations of prospective residents' responses, the low percentage of people who selected security of tenancy as a motivating factor compared to the 77.1% of members who stated that they were currently living in

[6] Whilst there is no definitive definition of an intentional community there are some shared understandings of the term. Characteristics cited in existing literature include; shared common spaces and collective activities (Metcalf, 1995); living (and working) together towards common goals (Sargisson, 2000); working to enhance collective values or to achieve a collectively defined purpose (1994).

private rental housing could suggest that many of the prospective residents who currently lived in rental housing were hoping to transition into home ownership through the shared equity model being offered in this project. In Chapter Eight I present findings from a qualitative exploration of why members were motivated to be involved in this project. In presenting these findings I capture the individual voices and stories of members who took part in this survey.

6.2.3) PLACE

In the previous section I gave an overview of the people engaged in the Shaldon Road project. In this section I provide some contextual information on the location in which the development is taking place as well as specifics of the process of acquiring the land.

BCLT's second development, which is the focus of this research, is taking place in Lockleaze, Bristol. Lockleaze is a ward, in the north of Bristol, with good access into the city centre and major roads out of the city. Lockleaze ward is highlighted in the following image:

Figure 14: Map of Bristol (Source: Google maps)

The main highway through Lockleaze is a no-through road meaning there is limited traffic passing through the ward. In the centre of Lockleaze is Gainsborough Square which has been re-developed with the aim of creating a central community space. The square now houses a community hub with a range of activities and services for local residents, as well as a community café, large play area and green space. Whilst being well positioned Lockleaze has always had high levels of deprivation. The following figure is taken from the Lockleaze Statistical Ward Profile (Bristol City Council, 2017):

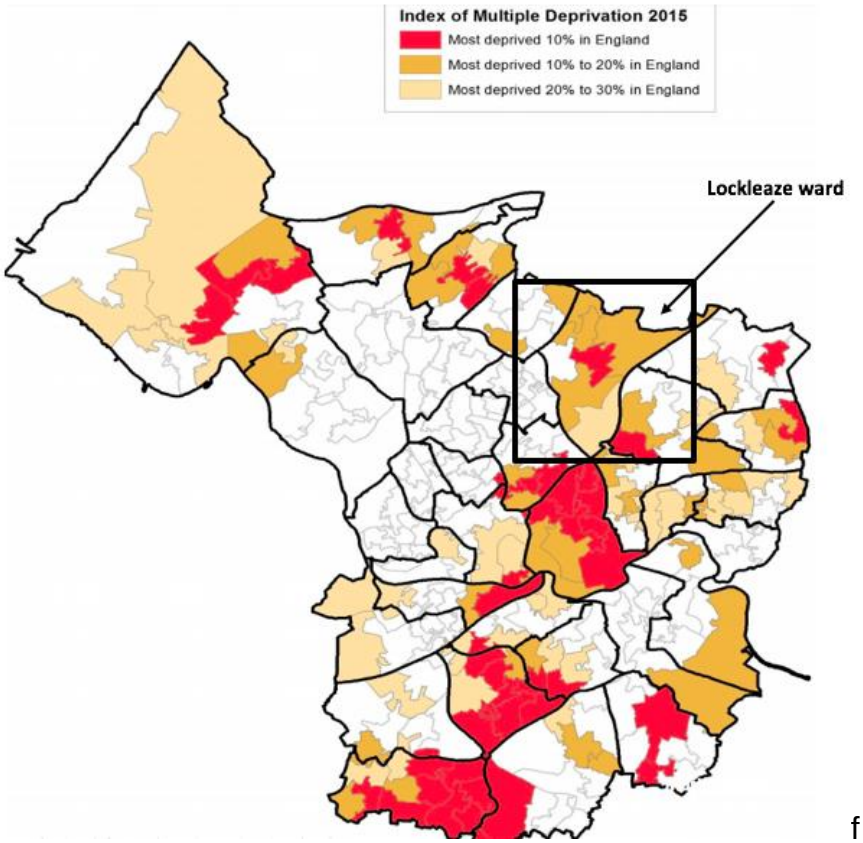

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Figure 15: Index of deprivation by ward (Source: Bristol.gov.uk)

As is highlighted in the figure above, nearly all of Lockleaze ward is classified in the most deprived 30% in England, with the majority of the ward being in the most deprived 10-20%. 30.1% of residents in the ward are from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups compared to the Bristol average of 16%. Lockleaze has lower than average home ownership and higher than average social rented units. The majority of houses within the ward were built as social housing,

51.6% of which are now privately owned. 43.6% of properties in the ward are semi-detached, compared to a Bristol average of 26.3%. Terraced houses make up 35.6%, whilst there are significantly less flats than the Bristol average, making up just 17.5% of housing stock. Despite having high levels of semi-detached housing

the ward is ranked above average for overcrowded homes. Whilst Lockleaze has significant levels of deprivation, it has also been described as having a strong sense of community (bristol.gov.uk,2010). Both local residents, and Bristol based organisations have been actively engaged in trying to improve the quality of the area and increase the wellbeing of its residents. Within the ward there are a range of active community organisations including, South Lockleaze and Purdown Neighbourhood Group (SLAP), Buzz Community Café, the HUB Community Centre, Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust and Eastville Library, which is community owned and run.

In 2013 Bristol City Council identified a site just off Shaldon Road for development. They invited bids from interested parties. The site is hard to access and sloped which meant that there was little interest from non-community developers. BCLT were the only organisation to submit a bid and subsequently won the site.

The site is in South Lockleaze, off a cul-de-sac, bordering residential housing on three sides and a train line on the fourth.

Figure 16: Map of Shaldon Road site (Source: Google Maps)

BCLT secured a deal with Bristol City Council (BCC) that they would acquire the land for £1. BCC were keen to support BCLT to develop a second larger scale scheme after the successful delivery of their first. In order to transfer the land for the agreed price of £1 the council had to sell the land to a local Housing Association, who could then transfer ownership to BCLT. This was due to BCC having a list of organisations to whom they can transfer land to without having to go through a long and protracted legal process. The gifting of this land came with an agreement that BCLT and the Housing Association would work in collaboration with BCC to deliver a scheme that met BCC's expectations.

BCLT initially intended to deliver this scheme without funding from HCA[7], this was to reduce the external requirement they would need to meet. However, as BCLT had become a registered social housing provider to receive funding for their first project, they had to meet requirements irrespectively of if they took funding. The decision was reached to apply to the HCA which they received.

At the end of 2017, whilst writing up this thesis, BCLT obtained planning permission for a 49 unit development. This will be a mixed/blind tenure development with 24 of the units being owned and managed by the Housing Association and the other 25 being shared equity and privately rented by BCLT. In addition to the residential units there will be a common-house, to be used by the residents for eating and socialising and opened up to the wider community for workshops and events, a shared workshop and communal gardens, and a micro energy grid which will provide energy to meet residents' needs. The following image shows the site designs:

[7] In the final stages of writing up this thesis Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) was replaced by Homes England. Given that the empirical research was conducted before Homes England, I have used HCA in this thesis.

Figure 17: Architectural design (Source: bristolclt.org.uk)

Whilst BCLT and the Housing Association are keen to deliver affordable and high quality housing, which fosters a strong sense of community on the site, they have put a significant amount of energy into considering how the local community can benefit from the development. BCLT and the Housing Association felt strongly that the Shaldon Road community should not be closed off from the wider area and that the design should encourage local residents to walk and cycle through the site. Additionally, in developing ideas for the community gardens all members of BCLT and the Housing Association have expressed a desire to ensure the design encourages families from the rest of the neighbourhood to use the space.

6.3) Timeline of key events

The following timeline identifies key events and milestones which took place during this case study. It focuses specifically on events and milestones relating to the development of the Shaldon Road project rather than to this research (for a research timeline please refer to Chapter Two).

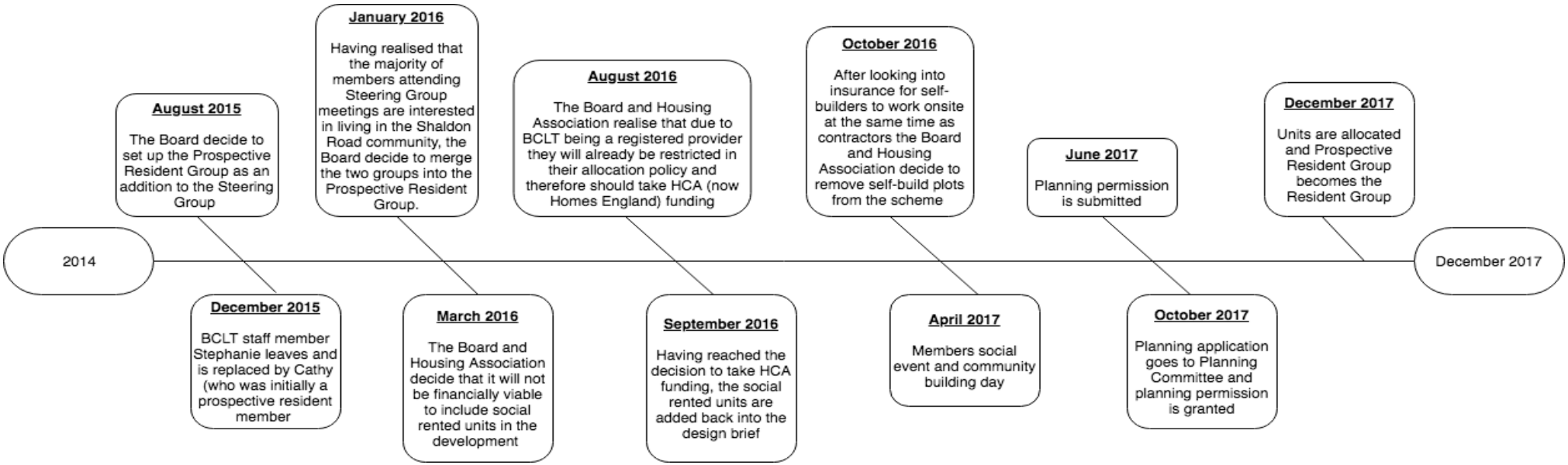

Figure 18: Timeline of key events

6.4) CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an overview of the BCLT case study group. I have given context to the project by discussing the wider housing market in Bristol. Additionally, I built on the stakeholder information set out in Chapter One by documenting key relationships between individuals and different stakeholder groups. Finally, I provided details on Lockleaze, taken from the BCC's ward profile. Whilst these detail lack the voice of residents, they assist in providing some context on the area in which the Shaldon Road project is taking place. Over the following three empirical chapters I build on the themes discussed in this chapter to develop a narrative of the processes involved in bringing the Shaldon Road to fruition.

CHAPTER 7: CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY- DEVELOPING A VISION FOR THE SHALDON ROAD PROJECT

The following chapter presents the findings from the process of generating and analysing data during this research. Over the two and a half years I spent immersed within BCLT I was involved in many different discussions and debates through which the group developed a vision for the Shaldon Road community. These moments in time tell the story of contentions and harmony in constructing a sense of community. Examining what motivated individuals to join BCLT and their aspirations for the Shaldon Road project assists in understanding how the members experienced the social and organisational practices. In this chapter I evidence that the early stages of the Shaldon Road project were more than merely a process through which the development was conceived and designed. Rather, this stage of the development process is a space where individuals attempted to find commonalities to rally behind, but also where the Prospective Resident Group begin to negotiate conflicts and attempt to establish their role in the organisation. I argue that this stage of the development process impacted significantly on the extent that prospective residents felt their voices were being heard and how they perceived the distribution of power between the different stakeholder groups.

This chapter draws together data from interviews and workshops conducted as part of this research. Additionally, I refer to some of the informal conversations that inevitably arose as a result of the participatory and collaborative research approach. Finally, I bring my own reflections to the narrative. These include observations from the data collection stage, captured in my research diary. They also incorporate retrospective understandings, which only emerged once I had distance and space from BCLT. This chapter begins with an account of the motivations and aspirations of members from the different BCLT stakeholder groups. These capture the stories that informed members' decisions to join BCLT. Following this, I examine how these personal motivations and aspirations interacted with the wider BCLT aims to challenge inequalities in housing delivery in Bristol and to become an exemplar of community-led affordable housing. Here I reflect on the tensions that arose as members attempted to balance their own needs and positionalities with their commitment to BCLT's aims and negotiate their personal positions within a collective. Finally, this chapter discusses how prospective residents spoke about demonstrating a commitment to community through material measures and how that related to BCLT's aim to engage a diverse range of participants.

As I write this chapter the questions posed as part of the theoretical framework for this research remain a constant reference to which I return. They encourage an additional layer of analysis, through which I challenge my initial assumptions and interpretations, and seek to understand the complex social, political and power relations captured in these stories. In making sense of how community was constructed within the Shaldon Road project, I return specifically to questions on who is participating, the attention

given to different stakeholders' voices and how the social engagements between different stakeholder groups effect prospective residents' ability to form bonds.

7.1) Exploring aspirations for a sustainable community

Both the literature reviewed in Chapter Six and the conversations that took place during the extensive stage drew attention to a need to examine why people decided to join a community housing group. Exploring these motivations and aspirations provides a useful starting point for further analysis of the experiences reported during this case study. They depict stories of excitement and anticipation at what could be and provide insights into the members' concerns and fears about the future. Identifying what has brought people to BCLT assists in understanding the frustration and anger felt when community actions do not align with what the members aspire to or are motivated by.

7.1.1) Chasing community- disconnection, isolation and nostalgia

Encapsulated in the members' motivations for engaging in the project was a deep concern about a perceived disconnection with a sense of belonging to a community. This was often identified as a major contributor to poor mental wellbeing, manifesting in feelings of isolation and loneliness. In all 20 interviews undertaken during this case study, a desire to belong to a community was identified as a motivating factor for engagement in the project. This sentiment reflects that of sociological theorists such as Durkheim (1960) and Putnam (2001) whose scholarly contributions examine the notion of the loss of community and growing individualisation in urban life. It also

chimes with more recent research into the nature and form of community-led housing groups including the work of Jarvis and Bonnett (2013), Lang and Novy (2014), Jarvis (2015), Sullivan (2016) and Ruiu (2016) who explore how factors such as individual identities, social capital and progressive nostalgia are experienced in communities.

In Sullivan's (2016, p.603) work on individual and collectivist values in a U.S. co-housing community, she highlights how the aspiration to develop strong community bonds is central to the intentional community movement. Sullivan claims that:

> *'Intentional community advocates (...) envision a different society through community and believe they can collectively create alternatives to ubiquitous housing options that insulate people and weaken neighbourhood ties'*

Similarly, members of BCLT, voiced how they wanted to belong to a close-knit community, which had been designed to intentionally foster close social interactions. These aspirations were expressed as a direct response to a dissatisfaction with how their lives had become more individualistic. In an interview with Cathy, a BCLT staff member, we spoke about how she felt fortunate to be surrounded by family and friends. She reflected on how it might feel to not have that support network around, saying:

> *'I don't think that people belong alone and I think loneliness is a big thing. I think there are lots of mental health challenges that many people go through at different times in their lives and actually having people around you, it helps you overcome that' (Cathy-BCLT staff member)*

Cathy expressed how BCLT sought to respond to an apparent demise in community by creating space for people to come together and develop relationships in both the physical design and the development process. Cathy spoke extensively about how the project demographics would help those more vulnerable to isolation or poor mental wellbeing. She highlighted how the mix of shared equity and social rented residents, a condition built into the non-resident members' draft of the allocation policy (see section 8.3), would enable those who had previously been in poor quality or precarious housing situations to develop a sense of belonging and create a support network of other residents.

In an interview with Mary we spoke about her current home and how infrequently she engaged with her neighbours. Mary already lived in Lockleaze and shared comical stories of the social interactions she had experienced with other residents on her street. She recalled a memory of hosting a Christmas party when she had first moved in to the house, and realising that many of her neighbours did not get on with each other. She also shared a story of when a chicken escaped from a neighbour's garden but the other residents presumed it was hers because she looked like someone who should keep chickens. Whilst Mary laughed as she regaled these stories there was also an evident dissatisfaction with these social relations which she felt unable to address due to a lack of opportunity to get to know her neighbours any better. She said:

> *'I kind of feel like here I'm living in a box that's kind of isolated from the other people behind the doors and maybe the people that are behind those doors are people who share the same values as me, but I've got*

> *no way of knowing if they do or they don't, and then you kind of end up assuming that they don't' (Mary- prospective resident)*

When talking about how the Shaldon Road project might differ from her current home Mary expressed excitement about the prospect of being able to share in everyday events with other people living in the community. She talked with great enthusiasm about being able to sit with other people in the shared gardens drinking wine while her children played. Whilst seeming like a small thing to express excitement about, it actually represented a desire to be part of a community and benefit from the support networks and solidarity associated with this. Later in the interview Mary explained how she did not feel it would be necessary to enforce social interactions through making meetings and communal meals compulsory but that shared facilities such as laundries, gardens and vegetable growing spaces would provide opportunities for informal social interactions which would enable people to get to know the other residents.

In addition to concerns about a growing disconnection within neighbourhoods and a desire to belong to an actively engaged community, some of the members spoke about a fear of isolation in old age. These members expressed feeling that living in the Shaldon Road development would increase their independence and ability to remain in their own home in older age. They associated this with having people around them who were inherently more likely to offer support and assistance because they had signed up to be in an intentional community. This was consistent with other literature examining elder co-housing. Glass (2009) describes how older people are drawn to co-housing because of an increased ability to self-govern and

maintain independence, whilst Durrett (2009) describes how senior co-housing may increase quality of life and provide community support for aging residents. What was interesting in my research was the demographics of members who referred to this point. Glass (2009) found that there was more interest from older single women without children, however in this research it was younger women who raised concerns about their future housing security. Rachel, in her early 40s, spoke about how she felt the Shaldon Road community would offer her a sense of security from knowing that she would have people around her when she was older. She said:

> *'if I had a family it wouldn't seem so important, but because it is just me and it might always be just me I need to make sure I'm around other people. I think this is a really good way to make sure I grow old happily. I can't sit here and just wait for someone to come along and say, "let's live together" (..) I need to get on with it and this is a great way of doing what I want to do, being independent in a really positive way because I'm not going to be isolated' (Rachel- prospective resident)*

Similarly, Katie, a women in her 30s, discussed how belonging to the project would reduce the concerns she felt about the 'what if' questions such as growing old without having a family.

> *'My identity as a single woman is quite an important one. I don't want to condemn myself to remaining single and never having a family, but I need to look after myself. The most important thing for me is not wanting to be isolated when I'm older. If I remain without a nuclear family of my own then I think it would be nice to have a place in a community' (Katie-Prospective resident)*

Clare, a women in her early 30s spoke about a similar desire to be part of a community in older age. She expressed how living communally felt more natural than the individualised lives that she believed are dominant in Western society today. She said:

> *I think it's just the natural way of living, people have been doing it for ever and we're kind of creating this community now where we're really disconnected from people. I've been thinking for a long time that this is the way I want to live, especially when I get older, to be somewhere where people have an interest in each other, in looking after each other and helping each other out' (Clare-Prospective resident)*

What Rachel, Katie and Clare highlighted in our conversations was how they felt that having more certainty about their futures enabled them to feel a greater sense of independence in the present. For members who expressed concerns of isolation in old age it was evident that they felt being part of the Shaldon Road community could counteract the potential disconnection and loneliness they might experience. In raising this point, it is important to note that there was a noticeable relationship between gender and concerns of future isolation. I decided not to explore this further as it fell outside of the parameters and scope identified for this research. Additionally, prospective residents did not express a desire to examine this in greater depth. However, gender, in isolation or in relation to ageing, is being explored within CLH research (Fernández Arrigoitia and Scanlon, 2016; Toker, 2010).

An extension of these concerns regarding isolation and a disconnection within communities, was nostalgia for a time in the past when people living near each other were more connected and had a stronger sense of solidarity. A number of BCLT members expressed a desire to live in a way that was more aligned with their childhoods, describing how greater value had been placed on community during that time of their lives. Yet in the literature there is significant criticism of nostalgic thinking and despite some attempts to examine its role in the construction and practices of community it remains a contested concept. It is useful to acknowledge how the concept of nostalgia, especially with regard to community and social connectedness, may appear to be in conflict with a growing acceptance of difference and attempts among researchers to problematise the dominance of privileged voices, be those, white, male, western, heterosexual or able-bodied. Similarly, the concept of community, whilst generally viewed as positive may also compound issues of elitism, exclusion and difference. Putnam (2000, p. 354) writes about the pitfalls of constructing identities around community, arguing that a decline in social capital can be attributed to a general increase in tolerance for difference. In examining the downturn in membership to secular clubs he writes:

> *‘Didn’t the decline in old-fashioned clubs simply reflect people dropping out (or never joining) because they were more tolerant (..) while the clubs weren’t? Didn’t we become more tolerant precisely because we were freed from the suffocating, parochial influences of those hermetic social compartments?’*

What Putnam describes here is a shift away from a romanticised view of the past, or of tendency towards nostalgia. He argues that ‘those who care about both liberty and

community face a painful trade-off' *(ibid)* offering solace in the fact that alongside the decline in social solidarity is a rise in individual autonomy. Yet, thinking back to the work of Mouffe (1992), documented in Chapter Five, it is possible to see beyond a simple trade off, one or the other, community or individual liberty. Rather Mouffe argued that radical democracy opens up opportunities for both. In a similar vein, I suggest that it is useful to examine references to nostalgia for community living as more than just a residual condition of more secular living. Jarvis and Bonnett (2013) argue that longing for the past is a common condition and that if approached as transformative rather than as a method of reinforcing inequitable practices it may provide useful insights into new forms of collaboration.

As Jarvis and Bonnett (2013, p.2350) highlight, increasing interest in collaborative and sustainable housing alternatives may enable a re-framing of the concept of nostalgia as 'hopeful, creative and transformative—a force for change, rather than as merely or simply conservative and backward-looking'. Practices such as traditional building methods may then be seen as acts of resilience rather than harking back to times that were less accepting of difference. This was also apparent in the data generated as part of this research. Nostalgia was in part linked to more radical or post-capitalist motivations. Clare spoke about her experience of growing up in a large family within a rural community, she said:

> *'we were pretty much self-sufficient, it just made sense to do it that way and while the village life can kind of do your head in it's just this community that makes sure that someone is always looking after you or looking out for you and if you don't have something you can go and borrow it from your neighbour and if you need tiling done you can*

probably ask someone and in return you'll give them veg' (Clare- Prospective resident)

What Clare is alluding to here is a desire to be less of a consumer. Throughout her interview she spoke about wanting to radically change her consumption habits. So, whilst it is possible to attribute this to a sense of nostalgia it may also be seen as a motivation to be a part of innovative new models, such as systems of sharing.

Clare's aspiration to reduce her consumption and adopt a lower impact lifestyle was reflected in many of the other interviews and meetings recorded during this research. These aspirations were often framed as a desire to belong to a project that sought radical alternatives to mainstream models of housing delivery and the lifestyles they associated with the home created through these models. The following section addresses this in greater depth.

7.1.2) Being part of a radically different project

Many participants in this case study expressed feeling a growing shift towards individualism, which they directly linked to a disconnect in communities. This was often associated with an underlying dissatisfaction with existing structures of housing delivery and the current housing market. Concerns around the commodification of housing and the social and economic impacts of that were raised in many of the interviews. In an interview with Clare she spoke about how existing housing conditions exacerbated a sense of being alone:

> *'it's just so noticeable that everything is being monetised and it's just people in their house and houses are getting smaller, it creates this environment that everyone's by themselves' (Clare- Prospective resident)*

She discussed her experience of feeling social pressure to buy a house but not being able to due to being self-employed. But more than that she highlighted how she did not want to buy into what she perceived to be a failing model. She said:

> *'I'd rather invest in something that I know will benefit the community so I've kind of lost faith in the traditional, well not traditional, but the prevailing way of doing things and I really don't believe it's going to work' (Clare- Prospective resident)*

This lack of faith in the dominant model of housing was discussed in many other interviews, meetings and workshops. For some participants, they strongly aligned their involvement in the project with a politics of anti-capitalism or activism. Others did not identify any political motivation for their engagement. However, all members shared the same aspiration to reduce dependency on the mainstream housing systems. The members' position that housing had become a commodity, which exacerbates inequality and injustice in the UK, reflects much of the literature that traces the impacts of current housing markets and conditions. Kennett, Forrest and Marsh (2013, p.11) highlight how 'The 2008 economic meltdown brought into sharp focus the instability of the global economy and the housing markets'. In discussing the impact of this instability in housing they identify that:

> *'A key concern is the extent to which home-owning households are going to remain exposed to the vicissitudes of an increasingly unstable*

> *financial system, which appears truly out of control: a system in which tranches of unaffordable mortgages taken out by poor householders became valuable commodities to be traded across the globe.' (ibid*, p.13)

The concern for the future of homeownership in the UK mirrors many of the issues raised by members of BCLT. Full homeownership was not only out of reach for many of the members but also undesirable to them. In the early stages of the development process, when members of the Steering Group were first meeting and getting to know each other, they quickly identified how an aspiration to find an alternative to mainstream housing served as the common concern, which the members could rally behind.

Mouffe discusses the importance of common goals in community organisations. She highlights how finding a shared public politics is crucial in realising radical democratic communities. Mouffe (1992, p.75/76), argues that in conceptualising communities, associations should not be conceived as 'the existence of a substantive common good' but through 'the idea of commonality, of an ethico-political bond that creates linkages among the participants in the association'. In the case of BCLT it was evident that the common bond between different members was centred around their rejection of dominant housing models and the aspiration to find an alternative to them. This common bond was distinct from the members' individual politics, and enabled members, with what appeared to be diverse individual values, to find shared commonalities and begin to build a sense of community. For Mouffe, democratic

communities are rooted in the ability to construct associations that share common concerns, whilst also accommodating individual autonomy. In the following section I discuss how members negotiated their roles as individuals in a collective project, whilst this section focuses on how they negotiated the challenges of turning a common political concern into actions.

In responding to what members identified as a sense of disconnectedness and a failure in mainstream models to provide positive housing options many participants identified wanting the Shaldon Road project to demonstrate an alternative model. Members expressed how the project could become a well-defined physical community that was an exemplar of urban community housing. This was particularly evident in the earlier Steering Group meetings where the members spent time discussing and developing a vision for the project and what shared values would guide the development process. People spoke with great enthusiasm about their ideas, sharing aspirations of how the Shaldon Road community could demonstrate innovation, both in the finished design and in the governance of the development process. These earlier meetings appeared to play an important role in building social relations between the members.

For some prospective residents, there was a direct link between being part of the Shaldon Road community and enacting their aspirations to live a more sustainable life in their everyday actions. This reflected the nostalgic sentiments highlighted in the previous section. However, members often spoke specifically about how they believed being in a community would encourage them to practice more sustainable

behaviours. Many of the members reflected small incremental changes in their behaviours that they hoped to achieve through being involved in this project. Practicing more sustainable behaviours was commonly discussed in relation to self-betterment, and in the context of creating a new system or model that would challenge members to live in a way that was better aligned with their ideological views. Whilst sharing experiences of being involved in group projects, Kate, a prospective resident, described feeling a greater sense of accountability for her actions:

> *‘I always find I’m a much better person when I’m working in a group. You’re more able to act like the person you want to be because people are looking at you’ (Kate- Prospective resident)*

In interviews with other prospective residents, we spoke about specific lifestyle choices which would be challenged through living in the Shaldon Road community. One example that arose in interviews was the frequency of car use. Members talked about how they would like to decrease dependency on vehicles as a way of reducing their environmental impact. For those individuals who identified this, they felt that the project’s commitment to promote car-sharing and cycling would motivate them to make these personal changes in their own lives. Prospective residents expressed feeling that the public visibility that comes with living in a community would motivate them to align their behaviours with their ideological and political beliefs. Some members spoke of how they would often use their car to go to the shops or pick up their children when they felt they could be walking or cycling. These members often followed on by saying how they should not be using their car but felt that they were unlikely to be seen by anyone who knew them, so would sometimes do it anyway.

Self-betterment was discussed in the context of a range of other activities such as growing food, energy consumption, learning group facilitation skills and developing building skills required to self-finish homes. For the members who discussed self-betterment, they generally associated this with living in the finished community rather that the development process.

In addition to aspiring to be part of a community that sought to find alternative ways of delivering and maintaining affordable housing, many of the members spoke about why and how they envisaged this aspiration being realised through the Shaldon Road project in particular. The Housing Association was identified as playing an important role in ensuring the Shaldon Road community had a diverse membership. In an interview with Kate, a Steering Group member, who later became a prospective resident, she spoke about the potential for this project to be replicable and scalable. She emphasised how her engagement was about more than meeting her own needs:

> *I'm really committed to working towards wider social change. It's not just about having a really nice place to live. I like BCLTs wider ambition about creating more of these and being an example for other people to use' (Kate- Prospective resident)*

Kate had lived in different communities over the duration of her life and we spoke about why she had decided to dedicate her time to BCLT over a different CLH project. Whilst she did not explicitly refer to the collaborative partnership with the Housing Association, it was evident from our discussion that she was significantly

motivated by how the project was accessible to individuals who may not have got involved in CLH. For Kate, it appeared that it was these conditions, which she associated with increased diversity and wider social change, that offered the potential to challenge what she perceived to be inequalities in current housing.

In an interview conducted early on in this research with Eric, a prospective resident, we spoke about why he had decided to become involved with BCLT specifically. He talked openly about his experiences of living in social housing and expressed how angry he felt about the inequalities he had witnessed over his time engaged with the social housing system. He discussed how he perceived the current housing market to be repressive and unrepresentative of the majority of UK citizens. He said:

> *'I demand to have a much greater contribution than that, and I'm not being invited to the table basically. You know there is a table, ideas are being bought there, I haven't got access to that. We need to build our own tables and I have got some pieces that I want to bring to that table' (Eric- Prospective resident)*

For Eric, it was particularly evident that reforming the current housing system was not an adequate solution. His interview lasted two and a half hours and our conversations during that time were mainly focused on how strongly he believed that there needed to be radical change in the organisational structures of western society. He spoke at length about how he felt his experiences of being homeless and in temporary social housing had changed his perception of what was important. He expressed how many people in his situation might have felt too disempowered to engage in the discourses that frame radical projects but he believed his experiences

had empowered him to be more engaged. Eric recognised the tensions of building collaborative partnerships with the Housing Association. He expressed feeling that the partnership would be difficult to negotiate and highlighted how he thought it would be important that the Housing Association adopt a more community focused approach if the project was to be a success.

The prospective residents' aspirations to provide an alternative to mainstream housing delivery was shared by many of the non-resident stakeholders. Whilst this research was predominantly focused on the experiences of the prospective resident members, the views of non-residents form part of the development process story, which this research seeks to convey.

Cathy, the BCLT staff member, spoke in her interview about how she wanted the project to champion new ways of collaborating:

> *'…we don't want the situation to be an experiment but we do want a willingness to build to new methods of co-operation.' (Cathy- BCLT staff member)*

Similarly to prospective residents, Cathy expressed how she believed BCLT was innovative in the way it bought people to community housing who would not have normally engaged with it. She spoke of how she felt it was important that this project served a wider demographic than those who might usually be associated with CLH, identifying a tendency for community housing projects to be accessed by white, middle class individuals who had the time and finances to enable them to engage with collaborative projects.

The idea of there being scope for new levels of diversity and accessibility was also discussed in Jane’s interview. Jane works for the partnering Housing Association and had extensive experience in delivering affordable and social housing developments. Whilst her interview reflected many of the same viewpoints as Cathy, it felt very different. Jane had a clear strategic view on how the process should be carried out, informed by the existing skills and knowledge acquired from years of working in the affordable housing sector. Yet there was clear synergy in what she perceived the potential outcomes of the project to be. Jane also spoke about the type of people who might be accessing the housing as Shaldon Road. She said:

> *‘I think it’s going to be ground breaking because there are a significant number of people who are going to be a different type of resident and this will be different from what they’ve ever understood or envisaged before (..) There will be a large percentage of people who wouldn’t ordinarily look to or even know about co-housing. It wouldn’t have been on their radar as a way of accessing housing. I think that will be a challenge but it will be amazing.’ (Jane- United Communities staff member)*

This quote captures Jane’s aspiration to ensure BCLT presents opportunities for people from different demographic groups to access the housing units. Jane demonstrates an awareness of the potentially positive impact the Shaldon Road community could have on people’s lives. Over the duration of our conversations it became evident that she felt passionately about improving living conditions for low income people who access housing through the Housing Association. What was also

apparent was that she was unsure of how to engage these individuals in the process. She spoke openly about her concerns regarding the practicalities of involving people with no built environment skills, some of who may be in potentially precarious situations, in the decision-making process. Whilst Jane believed that communities should be a central consideration when designing the project and that tenants should be encouraged to be actively involved in the governance once living on site, she felt a sense of unease about the scope for community leadership and active participation in the development stages. Jane's feelings on the scope for prospective residents to lead the project may be further understood by returning to the questions posed in the theoretical framework, specifically questions around who is participating and who has access to social engagements where, in this example, decisions are made. These questions relate to Habermas' ideal speech situations in which he proposes that anyone who is competent should be able to take part in a conversation. The points from Jane's interview draws attention to one weakness in Habermas' ideal speech conditions, which is that competency is subjective and vulnerable to being assessed through normative assumptions and rationalisations of who is best equipped to make decisions. For Jane, there is an assumption that including prospective residents in the development discussions will be time intensive and require the professionals to support the non-professional prospective residents. If Jane's assumptions are examined through power theories then they may be critiqued using Flyvbjerg's (2003) contribution on rationality and power or Boulding's (1990) model in which knowledge power is wielded by those who have more experience in a given situation over those who have less. Analysed against these theories this highlights an obvious power imbalance between the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders.

In an interview with Colin, one of the project managers, he described how he felt the development should:

> *‘…challenge the established order, it’s activism in a constructive way. Rather than protesting we are coming up with something constructive. I always look at protests and think great, I’d come along with you but you’re just protesting, you’re not coming up with creative alternatives. Let’s use this as a model, let’s drive change via the model we’re putting forward, in a small way.’ (Colin- Project Manager)*

What Colin expresses in this quote is a desire for BCLT to find alternatives to dominant models of housing delivery. Yet he also demonstrates a disregard for the politicisation of housing that underpins attempts to reclaim land into common ownership. At numerous times during his interview he spoke about how he felt protest was an inefficient way of bringing about positive change, failing to acknowledge that direct action might serve as a valuable tool for disenfranchised citizens to raise the profile of their voices. Similarly to Jane, it appeared that Colin felt a tension between wanting to be part of something community-led and a desire to work within existing structures.

The extracts from Jane and Colin’s interviews calls into question whose voices are being heard within BCLT. On the one hand it is evident that BCLT is an agitator against mainstream models of housing delivery. Through its actions it is demonstrating the potential for CLTs to develop housing, and is challenging assumptions that developers are best situated to undertake developments. However,

in examining the aspirations of the different members involved in the project, it is possible to see how BCLTs seemingly progressive social and organisational practices remain governed by an institutional logic that values the skills and expertise of professionals over the citizens who will live in the finished community.

This reflects the findings of Rowe, Engelsman and Southern (2016, p.602) who undertook research into the politics of CLTs in the UK and US. They concluded how in the UK case study 'the collaboration to bring a CLT idea to fruition suffered because of this top-down approach to development despite adherence to much of the rhetoric associated with self-help housing'. Whilst evidencing a commitment to deliver more equitable housing Colin expressed the view that this would be best delivered by professionals who consult with citizens. Over the duration of this research there were discrepancies between how non-residents spoke about their aspirations for community leadership, and how they framed their position when explaining why certain practices were less community-led. These discrepancies were identified and challenged by prospective residents at a later stage in the development process and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

In this section I have provided a detailed account of the range of different motivations for engagement with BCLT. I identified that there were shared aspirations both within and between stakeholder groups, but acknowledged how these aspirations were prioritised differently. The way members spoke about their aspirations for the Shaldon Road project shared many similarities with Hodkinson's (2012, p.425) writing on anti neo-liberal alternatives to housing:

> *I believe we need to ground our activism in three ethics of commoning: the prefigurative desire to ‘live-in-common’ and solve our housing problems collectively in the here and now; the strategic need to defend and produce ‘anticapitalist commons’ (…); and the hegemonic quest for an alternative world in which commons and commoning can be generalised at the expense of capitalism.*

For prospective residents, the opportunity to be part of a housing project, which they believed would enable them to realise their aspirations, motivated their continued engagement with BCLT. The Prospective Resident Group expressed excitement about how the Shaldon Road project could demonstrate an alternative to mainstream housing delivery, which they believed had significantly negative impacts on many aspects of people’s social and private lives. Members of each of the stakeholder groups articulated feeling that both the process of bringing the project to fruition and the completed development would foster a strong sense of community and facilitate collaborative relationships between the residents. Additionally, members drew attention to the opportunity to bring different people to community housing and the direct impact that could have on improving their quality of life. For prospective residents, there was a clear desire to engage with people who would not usually be involved. They believed this would be supported through the inclusion of social rented tenants and in the engagements with the local community during the development process and once completed. Over the remainder of the empirical chapters I interrogate how the social and organisational practices impacted on these aspirations for the Shaldon Road community and examine how these aspirations were negotiated as individual needs, external pressures and conflicting values arose.

7.2) Seeking individualism in a collaborative project

The growth in grassroots housing delivery has been largely attributed to a rejection of prevailing social conditions that promote individualism and privatism (Sullivan, 2016). As a result, BCLT, like many CLH groups, seek to reimagine the close community ties that Putnam (2000) claimed to be lost in the wake of modernised society. Yet there are also apparent contradictions in these ideological motivations as newer models of CLH attempt to align themselves with the principles of homeownership and privatisation. Commenting on this, Rowe, Engels and Southern (2016, p. 611) suggest that CLTs 'may allow individuals to pursue the dream of petite bourgeois status'. On the one hand we may perceive this individualisation as both a cause and symptom of community housing shifting more towards the normative principles of the dominant housing market. However, it is also possible to see how this contributes to diversifying the demographics of people choosing to engage with the CLH movement. In this way it can be argued that newer collaborative models such as CLTs and co-housing assist in deconstructing stereotypes that posit CLH as niche. Additionally, it is interesting to consider these models in relation to the work of Mouffe (1992) and her argument for greater individual liberty within community endeavours. Mouffe's proposition for a new radical democracy proposes space for both individual liberty and collective action. She argues how:

> *'our choice is not at all between an aggregate of individuals without common public concern and a premodern community organized around a single substantive idea of the common good. How to envisage the*

> *modern democratic political community outside this dichotomy is the crucial question.' (p. 75).*

In this quote Mouffe proposes what she argues to be a vital question for community researchers, how the social relations of a community group may support both individualism and collectivism. This relates to the question posed as part of the theoretical lens, which seeks to examine the extent to which members are able to maintain their individual autonomy over the development process. In order to understand the relations of communities, and contribute to discussions pertaining to them, we need a body of evidence from projects attempting to balance individual autonomy and collectivism. Questions regarding the space made for different social positions, the members' ability to challenge things they disagree with, and the capacity to see conflict as a product of individual voice, all relate to Mouffe's call to better understand radical democracy.

Whist many of the prospective resident members articulated how important a commitment to building a community was, the majority also identified a need for individual space and an opt in/out system for collaboration. Being able to take part in communal activities when they wanted, as opposed to being required to, was a clear motivation for being involved in a CLT rather than a more traditional CLH project. During the extensive stage I spoke with members of other CLH groups who emphasised the challenges of finding and maintaining individual space and voice whilst living collectively. In an interview with Rachel, one of the prospective residents, she spoke about how she had wanted to live in a community for many years but each time she had previously considered a project she felt that there were

too many requirements to attend community events such as meals or work days. She described how she wanted to be involved in these things but for them not to be an expectation.

> *'because of the way I am, because I am a bit of an introvert, I want my own space, it's really important, not to have to go to meals if I don't feel confident that day. But I also really need to have some sort of interaction with people, some strength of community. To be living with a bunch of like minded people, who I know and trust and respect. I love that idea. I think it's brilliant' (Rachel- Prospective resident)*

Here Rachel expresses a desire to be part of something collective. Her use of the term 'strength of community' suggests that there is something about the intentionality of the Shaldon Road community that will provide an additional layer of support. Yet she also subscribes to the notion of individual space and autonomy.

Similarly to Rachel, Simon, another prospective resident, spoke about his experience of going on a BCLT organised trip to Springhill Co-housing in Stroud. Springhill Co-housing is a community housing scheme which adopted many of the physical designs and governance structures that BCLT aspire to include in the Shaldon Road project. BCLT organised a trip to Springhill Co-housing which was intended to provide prospective residents with an example of the type of community BCLT hoped to create. When talking about this visit Simon reflected on how he was pleasantly surprised with the level of autonomy each resident had. He said:

> *'I suppose some people might be worried that it is living on a commune you know and like too much. I can see that, I need my own personal*

space and I need to make my own decisions on some things, and I guess having that free choice taken away from you would be a bad thing. But actually seeing the reality of that at Springhill and knowing BCLT is looking to do something similar, it dismissed those concerns. You have your own private space, decisions which impact the community were made communally and by consensus but you know your own life is your own life.' (Simon- Prospective resident)

As the project developed the prospective resident members' desires for personal space and individual autonomy seemed to become more prevalent. At the beginning, they had spoken with much enthusiasm about shared garden space, communal laundry facilities and car sharing. In Steering Group meetings there had been talk of designing the common-house to include guest bedrooms so people would not need them in their individual homes. After a few months of conversations around the proposed sites designs many of the prospective residents were calling for small private gardens, space for individual washing machines and spare bedrooms in their own homes. Each of the members had been motivated to join the Prospective Resident Group because they aspired to a more communal way of life, however, as the design process developed it was evident that many of them wanted to retain many of the private domestic features of a non-community home.

One example which I recall when reflecting on this apparent disconnect between individual and collective ideals was a discussion that took place in a Prospective Resident Group meeting over the external ground directly around each of the homes. One of the members asked how much space would surround the houses on the

finished development. Due to the different size units, some will have very little space beyond the footprint of their building, whilst larger units will have a small amount of garden space, and the flats will not have any individual outdoor space although there remains some debate over the scope for private balconies. When some of the members realised that the house plots would include some external space it instigated a conversation about if there could be fences put up in order to provide some privacy. For some of the units it was expected that there would be little more than a walk way to allow rear access to the property yet it was evident that for certain members who were concerned with privacy, having this area fenced was an important factor in the design. This sparked a discussion between the prospective resident members, with a few individuals expressing how they felt this would detract from the communal feel of the development. What was evident in this discussion was that the debate over the possibility of a fence was actually a symptom of a bigger challenge in which members were faced with questions that related to their level of commitment to commonality and shared space over individualism. Sullivan's (2016) research uncovered a similar scenario in a US co-housing scheme. Unlike BCLT's situation, Sullivan's case study group was faced with the question of if it should build a physical boundary around the edge of the site. Sullivan's account of the discussion pertaining to this decision shared many similarities with those that took place within Prospective Resident Group meetings. While reflecting on her case study group's debates about creating what was essentially a gated community, Sullivan stated that the 'way they addressed this issue revealed the limits of their idealist beliefs when they encroached upon ingrained attitudes of domestic privatism' (p.617). In much the same way, when in the initial stages of constructing the Shaldon Road community,

discussion around private space became a negotiation of how much privacy the members were willing to sacrifice in order to live in the development.

Debate over the scope for individualism emerged at other times in the early stages of the design process. Many of the members expressed a desire to be able to personalise the design of their own homes. This became particularity apparent in consultation meetings with the architects where prospective residents raised concerns about the uniformity of the units. Due to the homes not being allocated to residents before the planning application was submitted it was not possible for individuals to have control over the design of their own units. However, there was an additional layer of frustration expressed by some of the non-resident stakeholders about this response to the designs. In an interview with Jane from the Housing Association we discussed this. She spoke about her feeling that this dissatisfaction with the uniform design was a symptom of a bigger problem in which some of the members were too focused on their individual motivations rather than what was most effective for the community. She highlighted how personalised units would have cost significantly more and expressed frustration that some members were not considering how this would make the development less accessible for people with less finances available to them. She said:

> *'…if you can afford individuality do you think you need this scheme, for example at the last consultation someone said if they got enough people together could they have round windows and I said no, you know if they need this much individuality on their units then I don't think this scheme is for them' (Jane-Housing Association staff member)*

This demonstrates the precariousness of balancing individualism with collectivism. In this example Jane describes how enabling a greater sense of individuality in the design of the units would significantly impact on the affordability of the development. Here we see an example of how individuals were required to think beyond their own personal desires and to subscribe to what Mouffe (1992) refers to as a common good.

In examining prospective residents' response to the lack of autonomy in designing the homes, it was useful to re-examine the aspirations they held for the project. To suggest that prospective residents appeared to become less motivated by the collective aspect of the design or that they were not as committed to building a strong community as they had initially stated would be too simplistic an answer. Being afforded the opportunity to develop close relationships with many of the members it was evident that this was not the case. Whilst prospective residents began to express desires for more individual autonomy in the design they still placed a lot of weight on the communal spaces and articulated how they felt that more should be done to build relationships between the prospective resident members. Rather, I propose a range of reasons why prospective residents became more focused on the individual aspects of the design, which relates to prospective residents' ability to identify what Mouffe (1992, p.71) refers to as 'common action in the view of common good'. The prospective residents' response to the uniformity of the units provides an example of the tensions between individual autonomy and collective common good.

In the early design and visioning stages of the Shaldon Road project, the Board had decided that it wanted the project to include self-build and self-finish units. This had been conveyed to the Steering Group, and was presented as a non-negotiable aspect of the project. Some of the Steering Group members had initially expressed concerns about their own skills and ability to undertake the work required, especially in order to self-finish[8]. However, as they learnt more about how self-finish had been used in other projects they became excited at the prospect of having autonomy over much of the internal layout and design of their house. Later in the development process the Board, Housing Association and Project Group decided to remove the self-build plots from the site design. This decision was reached after they had researched the logistics of self-build insurance and found that it would not be possible to have contractors and self-builders insured to be working on the site at the same time. It was also decided that the self-finish element would remain in the development plan but be reduced to smaller tasks such as tiling bathrooms and fitting kitchen units. The impact of reducing the scale of self-finish was reported to have a twofold effect. Firstly, prospective residents highlighted how it would mean the shared equity units would cost more as the contractors would be doing more of the building work, and there would be less opportunity for rental members to gain sweat equity. Secondly, some of the Steering Group members, and later in the process prospective residents, reported feeling that the decision impacted on their sense of autonomy. They highlighted how the ability to finish their own homes would have enabled them to better express their individuality within the community. The

[8] When BCLT proposed having self-build plots, it was intended that the residents would develop these independently and could use their own builders if desired. Self-finish work would be carried out by the residents.

removal of self-build plots and the reduction of self-finish elements provides an example of how the Steering Group members and prospective residents had to adjust their expectations on the scope for individuality with the Shaldon Road project. From the conversations I participated in regarding self-build and self-finish, it was evident that the decision to reduce and remove them from the project was not because of conflicting opinions but rather because of external conditions that restricted BCLT realising this aspiration. I discuss the impact of external restrictions in greater depth in the following two chapters.

In Mouffe's conceptualisation of the radical democratic citizen she posits that the rules of a community should not be forced upon members in a way that compromises their individual liberty, but that 'the individual's belonging to the political community and identification with its ethico-political principles are manifested by his or her acceptance of the common concern' (p.81). While the Shaldon Road project makes space for individual autonomy, especially in regard to the long term governance of the community, there is a distinct need for members to be committed to a common political and social vision. In the case of BCLT this vision was to create a more accessible community housing project, which enables a diverse range of people to live in the finished development. As the community began to form, it was evident that prospective residents shared the same vision as the non-resident stakeholders, however, because they had less voice in constructing it, the process of turning a vision into practiced common goals was harder to achieve. Whilst each of the prospective residents had identified being motivated by building close relations with the other prospective residents, which in turn would contribute to a stronger

sense of community and collectivism, the reality was that there was little action taken to engage socially outside of the meetings.

Reflecting on the dynamics between individualism and collectivism in the Shaldon Road project it is evident that BCLT requires members to subscribe to a common concern of making the project accessible to a diverse range of people. This may be seen as a commitment to create space for people from different demographics. Different demographics in this context includes class, skill sets, disability, local connection and housing requirements (ie: single occupancy through to larger family units). It is this commitment that guides BCLTs progression towards realising its vision. As previously highlighted, the focus on accessibility is what sets BCLT aside from many other more traditional CLH approaches. However, this impacted on the individuals' ability to express their opinions. In certain instances, it was evident that the Prospective Resident Group was unable to actively participate in discussions about design decisions in case its views were at odds with the vision it was being asked by BCLT to subscribe to. This was further exacerbated by the prospective residents' lack of input in the construction of that vision despite spending many meetings developing ideas that it wanted to be included. Additionally, some other

7.3) Demonstrating commitment to the construction of community

As discussed in the previous section, the construction of the Shaldon Road community was very much a negotiation of ideological ambitions, political identities, collective citizenship and individual autonomy. Each member came to the project with their own interpretation of how the project could be a success. Navigating these

different positions became a central part of the development process, and as part of this process members were challenged to examine the parameters of their own ideologies. As such, identifying and finding ways to measure commitment to the Shaldon Road project posed a significant challenge. In assessing individual's commitment, BCLT was required to consider members' efforts to date as well as their scope for future contributions. This commitment to the construction of community was seen as an important factor in the allocation of homes. Simon, a prospective resident, expressed how:

> *'there needs to be a motivation for each person to want to live within the community, that's important, people who join the group want to live in a community, because they're attracted in a different way of being in a community' (Simon- Prospective resident)*

This idea of a 'different way of being in a community' may be understood through the factors that prospective residents ascribed to successful community living. These included sharing time and skills. In particular, prospective residents spoke of the importance of participating in everyday tasks, such as cooking meals together, gardening, child care, food shopping and cleaning common areas. Whilst many of the prospective residents did not feel these tasks should be compulsory they expressed how collaborating would make them more pleasurable and would provide members with additional free time. Members acknowledged that people may not want to engage with community tasks all the time but that there should be a basic commitment to take part most of the time.

Commitment to community arose at many other points during this research. In an interview with Simon, a prospective resident, he spoke about how the financing of the common-house demonstrated people’s commitment to building a strong community. He said:

> *‘what was heartening was when we were asked the question how we would like to fund the common-house, would we be happy to pay a percentage on top of our own places? I thought people would go oh actually we don’t want it that much, but people were like yeah sure, we’ll do that, and people talked about self-building it, building it together’ (Simon- prospective resident)*

When Simon spoke about his desire to live in a strong community it was evident that, for him, this was the most important factor in his future housing choices. He talked about how he had experienced some conflict as to whether he should stay in Bristol and dedicate his time to the Shaldon Road project or find a more traditional rural community. Although Simon did not explicitly say that he felt disheartened by the level of social development the Prospective Resident Group had made, he did express how his relationships with other prospective residents had not developed beyond meeting fortnightly to discuss the project. However, the willingness from the group to contribute both time and money to the common-house had re-assured him of other members’ commitment to a collective common goal.

At the point where I concluded my time with BCLT, it had not formalised a process through which the common-house would be funded. Members of the Prospective Resident Group had been in contact with external funding bodies to see if they could

secure some financial help towards the build costs. There was a clear commitment from the Prospective Resident Group to ensure this element of the site remained in the scheme. However, the group also demonstrated an awareness of the challenges it faced in trying to formalise a system for monetary contributions. Questions arose such as, how to decide what financial contribution should be made? Would it be based on the size of their homes? How would they ensure that people who could not afford to contribute financially had an alternative way of demonstrating their commitment? This final point was particularly important for the social rented tenants who would not be joining the scheme until further along the development process and could not be expected to contribute financially.

The common-house became an important material indicator of the Prospective Resident Group's commitment to constructing a strong sense of community. Despite there being questions and uncertainties about how the Prospective Resident Group would finance and build it, it was evident that there was an underlying understanding that the common-house represented more than just a physical structure within the Shaldon Road development. This structure symbolised the Prospective Resident Group's pledge to be active citizens in the finished community. Additionally, thinking about what this structure meant in terms of the questions posed as part of the theoretical lens of this research, the common-house afforded the prospective resident members the opportunity to not just participate in the discussion but to lead it. Their collective voice was given more than equal attention compared to the non-resident groups. When prospective resident members spoke about their intentions for the common-house they described how it should be the heart of the community. Reflecting on the conversations relating to the common-house that I was involved in,

it was clear that for many of the Prospective Resident Group it would represent a particular autonomy from the Board, Project Group and Housing Association, because it was conceived and delivered by the members as a physical manifestation of their commitment to the Shaldon Road community and wider Lockleaze neighbourhood. As highlighted by prospective residents, there remained a challenge over how social rented members would engage with the common-house if they had not been involved in the design. This relates to Habermas' ideal speech conditions, which encourage critical engagement with the question of whose voices are being heard. The inclusion of social rented members is an important part of the Shaldon Road project and is one of the key factors that sets CLTs apart from more traditional CLH models. However, if the common-house is such an important material indicator of community, yet is designed without any input from this stakeholder group, it raises questions about what impact that will have on the power relations and sense of ownership over the space once the site is inhabited.

7.4) Chapter summary

Over this chapter I have discussed how community was constructed in the early stages of the development process, drawing attention to the aspirations of prospective resident and non-resident members. I highlight how in much the same way as prospective residents, the Board and Project Group appeared to be motivated by the potential of creating something radically different to the mainstream housing model. In interviews, meetings and workshops it was clear that many of the non-resident members felt passionately about engaging communities in the development of new housing. However, these members also placed significant

weight on relationships with BCC and the Housing Association. This was evident in the way they expressed a need to be able to ‘play the game’ and ‘speak the same language’ as the BCC. This impacted on the ability of prospective residents to take a leading role in constructing a vision for the Shaldon Road community. This echoes Rowe, Engelsman and Southerns, (2016) findings which demonstrate how the scope for radical alternatives may be reduced to system reform in community-institutional partnerships.

However, the Housing Association also demonstrated a clear commitment to champion alternative models of housing delivery. During interviews and workshops the Housing Association staff expressed how they saw potential for significant social change through collaborative partnerships with prospective residents. However, their opinions of who was best situated to lead these partnerships was somewhat at odds with the community-led ambitions of BCLT. Over the two and a half years spent researching with BCLT it became evident that the Housing Association was motivated to be part of an innovative project but struggled to relinquish the level of leadership that it would usually have in a housing development, where they would be project managing and overseeing the development without any involvement from the future residents.

Over this chapter I have drawn attention to the challenges different groups faced in trying to build social relations within and between stakeholders in the early stages of the development process. Examining members’ experiences of ‘community’ in this project uncovered a range of different influential factors. The presence of non-

resident stakeholders significantly impacted on prospective residents’ ability to build a sense of community, due to feeling uncertain about their role in turning BCLT’s vision into practice. During this chapter I have begun to build a case for why it should not be assumed that CLT projects will automatically reduce power imbalances or provide platforms for less dominant voices to be heard. Undertaking research into the motivations and aspirations of BCLT members has highlighted why it is important to employ a more in depth methodological approach. Being immersed within BCLT for two and a half years, attending meetings and social events, and building relationships of trust with the prospective resident members, has enabled me to better understand the tensions between members’ ideological aspirations and personal motivations for the Shaldon Road project.

When members were initially asked why they had joined BCLT there was clear consensus that they wanted to be part of something that challenged mainstream housing delivery and for the Shaldon Road project to become an exemplar of good practice. However, as the project developed it became clear that there was a range of other, more everyday factors, that impacted on these ideological aspirations, such as the need for housing, perceptions of how individual skill sets could help progress the project, requirements to achieve planning permission and secure funding. This reflected the stories I heard in the extensive research stage where members of existing CLH groups expressed how differences in members’ motivations and aspirations can lead to conflict within communities. When tensions between BCLT’s ideological aspirations and the more everyday factors surfaced, they were often seen as contradicting what was at the core of BCLT’s values. The balance between the non-residents, and their expertise in the built environment, and prospective

residents, who had limited knowledge in planning or construction, is an important factor that I return to over the remainder of this thesis.

Whilst the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders' perceptions of how to deliver the project impacted on the sense of community, external factors also played a significant role. The obstacles that the Board, Housing Association and Project Group had to overcome in the early stages of the development process reduced their capacity to engage with prospective residents . From engaging with non-resident members it was evident that many of them felt they were always adopting a reactive role. Non-resident stakeholder expressed feeling confronted by trade-offs between their aspirations and the reality of progressing the scheme, as well as having to respond to external requirements. In the following chapters I return to this point and discuss the impact of external power relations in greater depth.

To assist in making sense of the different stakeholders experiences, I have drawn on theories of power and community presented in Chapter Five, and specifically at the questions posed in the theoretical framework. Mouffe's (1992) writing on radical democracy and agonism has assisted in making sense of the dynamic relationship between common concerns and individual autonomy. Additionally, I have reflected on who has access to the different conversations and spaces in which the community is constructed. Habermas' ideal speech conditions provide a useful tool for identifying who has access and the nature of that access. However, in the same way as Mouffe, Habermas' theory of communicative rationality seems to lack the pragmatic reflexivity of balancing social and organisational ideals with the real life

challenges of community action. Examining the way prospective residents reflect on the community they are constructing in this project demonstrates that members consider how they situate themselves as individuals within the community through questions such as; does the project align enough with my aspirations? What does the community require from me (both now and once finished)? What would I require of myself when living in the community? How might I take personal actions that align with the shared common concerns? This challenges Habermas’ notion of complete consensus, aligning more with Mouffe’s claim that consensus will only ever be partial and conflictual. The way different stakeholder members spoke about their roles in constructing the community suggests there was an awareness from the beginning that this project would involve trade-offs between different ideological aspirations. Many of the prospective residents acknowledged that seeking to create a more diverse housing community meant conversations took place between BCLT and HCA and BCC which they were not invited to be a part of. Over the next two chapters I return to the members’ experiences of these trade-offs, examining how they develop in the practices of community and the impact on the distribution of power within BCLT.

CHAPTER 8: PRACTICES OF COMMUNITY- SPACES OF CONFLICT AND COLLABORATION

In the previous chapter I examined how community was constructed in the Shaldon Road project. I discussed what motivated members to join BCLT and their aspirations for the project. These motivations and aspirations provided insight in to the members' expectation of the Shaldon Road community. Analysing the way expectations were negotiated through the lens of power assisted in developing the story of the development process. I highlighted how in Steering Group and Prospective Resident Group meetings, members were constantly required to reassess their expectations to align with the dynamic changes that were happening in the development. Tensions arose in trying to balance individuality and collectivism within the project which fed into debates on members' commitment to BCLT's vision to find ways to challenge mainstream housing delivery and provide community-led affordable housing. It is evident that BCLT is committed to ensuring the Shaldon Road project attracts a diverse range of potential residents. This, I argue, is what sets it apart from more traditional models of CLH. However, this also impacts on the scope for prospective residents' to take ownership over the projects' development and exacerbates uneven power relations between the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders.

In this chapter I continue to tell the story of the development process. Whilst the last chapter focused on the way members spoke about constructing community and examined the initial 'visioning' stages of the project, this chapter examines the

practices involved in bringing the Shaldon Road project to fruition, specifically, decision-making and communication practices. I begin with a detailed discussion of how these practices were experienced by different stakeholders, drawing on theories of power and community to understand how they impacted on prospective residents' ability to participate in the process. I then reflect on the discussions undertaken in Workshop Two and the proposed steps to improve these practices. I draw on interviews and workshop activities, as well as research diary entries and governance documents. As with the previous chapter, theories of power and community provide a lens through which to analyse and understand these experiences.

8.1) Introduction to examining decision-making practices

The decision-making practices employed in this project were identified by members as being one of the main factors shaping their experiences of the development process. In one-to-one interviews, prospective residents, Housing Association staff and Board members all raised issues relating to how decisions were reached. This was one of the main topics addressed in Workshop Two. Whilst analysing the interviews, workshop and research diary data it became evident that members spoke about the decision-making practices in multiple ways. These included, decisions that they felt were out of the control of BCLT and the Housing Association; the different level of influence members felt different stakeholder groups had over decisions; and actions that could be taken to improve the decision-making practices.

Whilst this thesis is not structured as a chronology of the development process, I begin by discussing the early development stage practices which took place when I

first began attending meetings. In 2014 it was intended that the Steering Group, which later merged into the Prospective Resident Group, would be acting as both the client and designer for the Shaldon Road project. At this time it was expected that the Board and Housing Association would adopt a supporting role, acting as facilitators of the development process. The aim was to use the pre-existing skills of these non-resident stakeholders to help guide the Steering Group through the planning application and to assist in devising a financial model that would ensure the units could be delivered at below market value and would remain affordable for future residents. At this stage in the project the Housing Association was expected to contribute towards the pre-planning costs and to take control of around one third of the units in the finished development. This saw the majority of the project being controlled and delivered by BCLT and driven by members who had expressed interest in being part of the development process. At the time I started attending meetings the Board was finalising details with the architecture firm who had been selected to develop the site designs. In order for BCLT to advertise their request for tenders for the architectural contact, an initial brief had been developed by the Board for the Shaldon Road site. This captured a broad vision for the site to be centred around communal spaces and to be built to a high environmental standard (see Appendix One for Board's vision). Shortly after this document had been developed by the Board, the Steering Group was asked to start developing its own vision for the site (see Appendix Two for a summary of the Steering Group's visioning workshop).

The fact that the project had two different visions was interesting in terms of who was perceived as the client and who the architects would be designing in collaboration with. Whilst the Board wanted to support the Steering Group to act as designers,

writing the brief for tender arguably affected the long term relationships between different stakeholder groups. By defining their own brief the Board had given more weight to their own project vision than the one the Steering Group had developed. When the chosen architects made their first presentation of ideas at a Steering Group meeting it was evident that they had been working to the Board’s brief rather than the vision developed by the Steering Group. This initial presentation by the architects symbolised a change in how the Steering Group members perceived who had control over the development process. Up until the first meeting with the architects the Steering Group meetings had been spaces for innovation and creativity. The members had been relishing their shared visions for the Shaldon Road site, whilst maintaining a level of pragmatism that compromises would need to be made in order to make the development affordable. Following the first engagement with the architects the meetings shifted to focus on how they could still try and ensure the designs captured some of their less radical ideas. The loss of ‘radical’ aspects of the project is something which I return to later in the analysis, when I look at the range of different experiences recorded in this research. However, in the context of the relationship with the architects and the prospective residents’ sense of voice in the physical design decisions, the perception that there was not scope to adopt more radical design ideas led some members to express frustration at being asked to contribute to the initial master planning discussions at all. In the meetings I attended I observed a growing scepticism and lack of trust in the architect’s commitment to work with the Steering Group/Prospective Resident Group to develop the project designs.

In October 2016 the Board, Project Group and Housing Association decided to raise concerns with the architects about the way they were conducting the community consultation. This resulted in a new lead architect being assigned to the project. In Workshop Two, which took place shortly after this decision, Tim, one of the Board members, expressed how he felt these tensions at the beginning of the project had contributed toward issues of transparency and the Prospective Resident Group's feelings of not having been properly consulted on the designs. He said:

> *'The architects were meant to be driving it and this is why we're in this place now, because they didn't engage with the process, presenting designs, getting feedback, feeding that in, but that didn't happen.' (Tim- Board representative- Final workshop)*

The formal and informal discussions at Prospective Resident Group meetings and Core Research Group meetings highlighted that many of the members' concerns and frustrations were partially reflected in Tim's statement. The relationship between the architects and BCLT was based predominantly on conversations between the Housing Association, Board, Project Group and the lead architect. The majority of contact between prospective residents and architects took place in the consultation events when the architects presented their designs to prospective residents . Under the first lead architect there was very little contact with prospective residents and the few consultation meetings that took place were organised to enable to architect to present ideas with little or no time for feedback.

Jane, from the Housing Association shared similar feelings to Tim on the initial relationship between the architect and prospective resident group, stating how:

> *'The team they'd fielded wasn't responding to the needs of the residents in terms of participation'*

and how after raising concerns with the architecture firm they:

> *'…presented us with a new team who took what had been done before and came up with some alternative solutions' (Jane, Housing Association staff- Final workshop)*

This is one example of how normative assumptions on who was best situated to make decisions begun to be challenged by the practices of BCLT. The initial marginalisation of prospective residents from the design process reflects Foucault's (1980;1984a) conceptualisations of norms and power. Assumptions were made about whose voice was most valid based on people's perceptions of what skills were useful or important. These assumptions were not made because of an intent to disempower prospective residents, but because of structural norms that prioritise certain skill sets over others. As has been highlighted at other points in this thesis, there was a tension between the aspiration for the project to be led by the community and the fact that the non-resident stakeholders had the expertise to reach decisions independently and speed up the development process. The Board, Housing Association and Project Group acknowledged the lack of opportunities for prospective residents to influences the design, and responded to this by demanding greater collaboration from the architecture firm.

In seeking to understanding how norms around who the Architect engaged with were challenged it is important to acknowledge that the prospective resident

representatives in Project Group meetings were a vital part of this challenge to existing practices taking place. This line of communication enabled the Prospective Resident Group to raise its concerns with the Project Group. In this instance the Project Group provided a platform for the Prospective Resident Group to be heard and for the non-residents to acknowledge their concerns and take actions to address them. This is one example of where the Prospective Resident Group was able to use the representatives to bring about positive change to existing practices. Contrary to this there were other instances where the Project Group did not respond as proactively to issues bought to them by the Prospective Resident Group representatives. It was evident in Prospective Resident Group meetings which were attended by Project Group members and in one-to-one interviews that the Prospective Resident Group's concerns about the lack of consultation and transparency from the architects was mirrored by members of the Board, Housing Association and Project Group. In this instance the concerns of the Prospective Resident Group were addressed because they aligned with the professional opinions of the non-resident stakeholder groups. Without the support of Project Group, Housing Association and Board, the Prospective Resident Group would have been unable to challenge the architect's practices. The lack of bi-directional communication meant that there was no way for them to idependently feed into the design process, and the non-residents became the gatekeepers to the architects. From my observations, it was evident that this resulted in the architects being perceived as an elusive body of people working in a silo from the rest of BCLT. It was apparent that this fostered a sense of distrust for them which was raised in many of the earlier interviews.

Once BCLT had raised their concerns to the architect firm and a new lead architect has been allocated to the project there was a series of consultation events with the Prospective Resident Group. During these consultation events prospective residents were presented with a range of different design options and were asked to feedback on which elements of each of the designs they would like to carry forward into the final proposal. This made a significant difference to the Prospective Resident Group’s experience of their engagements with the architects and in meetings, interviews and Workshop Two, members expressed feeling like it gave them a much greater sense of voice in the development process. The following extract is taken from Workshop Two, during a discussion on how relationships with the architects had impacted on prospective residents’ ability to feed into conversations about the site design. The following extract comes from a conversation between two prospective residents and a board member:

> *‘M: (…) You know there’s been a few very successful architect-resident workshops about allowing us (prospective residents) to really have a bit more of an active role in the design process*
>
> *M: yer I do feel the new architect team have responded better*
>
> *M. (…) They presented us with a new team (..) we as a professional team and Housing Association narrowed it down from four to two because two of them weren’t feasible, too many cost implications and not enough units, we then put them to the residents, then the residents*

group voted on them and the majority came down in favour of Option 1. And then the architects were challenged with developing that and taking some of the comments about things people liked in the other option and putting them in to option 1, then what we've done as a design team is develop that further, the technical stuff, but there are limitations because of the site, like the gradient of the site' (Final workshop)

This extract reflects two key points which I return to later in this chapter. Firstly, that prospective residents did not expect to have full control over all decisions. There was agreement in the Prospective Resident Group meetings that they were happy with the non-resident stakeholders presenting them with viable options and responding to their feedback, rather than being part of every design conversation. The prospective residents appeared to acknowledge that this was an important distinction between CLTs and more traditional CLH projects, and felt the benefits, in terms of reduced time commitment, outweighed the negatives, such as having less control. However, transparency and openness were central to this being experienced positively. I critique this in more depth in the following two sections of this chapter, comparing the experiences reported in this research with literature on community participation. The second point that is reflected in the extract was how conflict played an important role in improving the relationship between the architect and Prospective Resident Group. Acknowledging, and to a certain extent, embracing the conflicts that arose between the architects, non-resident stakeholders and prospective residents led to more honest engagements. There was a shared sense that the design was not based on any one groups' ideological vision and did not meet all the aspirations of any of the stakeholder groups. After the change in lead architect and the consultation

events, there was a general sense that the different stakeholders were starting to work towards overcoming design obstacles together.

Thinking back to Mouffe’s writing on radical democracy it was evident that in this situation it was vital for the different BCLT stakeholders to acknowledge and embrace the conflict situation that had arisen in order to move beyond practices which the Prospective Resident Group experienced as disempowering. Building on Oakeshott’s model, Mouffe (p.78) argues that ‘*respublica’,* the practice of civility and public concern, ‘is the product of a given hegemony, the expression of power relations and that it can be challenged’. She proposes that in seeking to create a unified collective or community there must be space for ‘diversity and conflict’. The very nature of creating a ‘we’ or ‘us’ means there will also be a ‘them’. In acknowledging and embracing conflict with the architecture firm, BCLT took a small step towards becoming a more radically democratic political community. It began to challenge hegemonic assumptions of who holds power and who should have a voice in the development process.

This negotiation of the relationship with the architects is one example that captures the way community was practiced during the case study. It is denotive of the nature of BCLT’s sociopolitical development which felt experimental and at times, contradictory. But it was this sense of trial-and-error which contributed to the richness and complexity of the stories emerging from this case study.

BCLT is constructed from a diverse range of aspirations and political identities. In constructing a common vision these factors seem to complement each other, yet when experienced in the practices of bringing the project to fruition, they compete and collide. The form the CLT model is taking within this project is founded on a tension between community-led, grassroots organisation and top down leadership. This was evident in the members' expectations of the practices of community and their perception of how the structural and organisational systems should be managed. Following a Prospective Resident Group meeting in November 2016 I wrote about this tension in my research diary. One of the agenda points for the meeting had been to address how the group would raise money to fund room hire in order to continue to hold regular meetings. This discussion had been instigated by a message that had been passed down by the BCLT staff member, to say that the group could not continue using a free venue, which was the upstairs room of a pub, as it was excluding some prospective residents from attending due to their religious beliefs. The following text is taken from the minutes of that meeting:

> *Mark feels that it is fair to ask the question to BCLT and Housing Association about what support there is for us in terms of structural support (money, meeting space), as part of being community-led is also making sure that an environment is created where everyone can attend meetings (through venues that work for all), and that people don't have to pay for meetings. (Project Group meeting minutes, 01/10/2016)*

The discussion surrounding this issue resonated with me as a point of interest. That evening I wrote in my diary:

In today's meeting we discussed covering the cost for room hire. Cathy had contacted the Prospective Resident Group to say we need to find another venue as the Miner's pub is not an inclusive location for all members of the group. It had been brought to her attention that there were certain members who had registered their interest in the Shaldon Road project, but were unable to attend meetings due to their religious beliefs. The group admitted that they hadn't considered this up until now and felt they needed to act on it quickly to ensure they were inclusive of all potential residents. One of the Prospective Resident Group had negotiated the free use of the Miner's pub event room. However, any different location would need to be paid for. This instigated a discussion on how the group would cover hire costs for a different location. Mark, a Prospective Resident Group member, expressed feeling that BCLT should be financially supporting the Prospective Resident Group meetings. This was partially because BCLT were the ones who had advertised for interested members to form a group and also because he felt it would demonstrate their commitment to the community-led aspiration. This raised some interesting questions for me, about the way members are conceptualising community leadership. Wanting BCLT to cover the costs of room hire seems to suggest that they have a responsibility for the Prospective Resident Group, which advocates a hierarchy within the organisational structure. This appears contradictory to the desire of the Prospective Resident Group to have more of an equal role in the leadership of the project. My perception of why this is, is that whilst the Prospective Resident Group members are willing to

> *commit their time and energy to attend meetings prior to knowing if they will be allocated a place in the development, they are less willing to make financial contributions to the project in case the allocation policy results in lots of members who haven't attended meetings being given homes in the finished development. There was a sense that this would, in some way, be an injustice. (Research diary- 01/10/2016)*

The extracts documented above provide examples of the tensions between top down and bottom up organising. BCLT practices became the socio-material convergence, which offered scope for transformation and experimentation. However, they also fostered feelings of injustice, inequality and disempowerment.

8.2) The impact of external pressures on the decision-making practices

In many of the one-to-one interviews carried out with prospective resident members, they acknowledged an awareness that some of the decisions were beyond the control of BCLT and the Housing Association. For members who expressed this opinion they recognised the difficulties the Board, Project Group and Housing Association faced in trying to marry the desires of the Prospective Resident Group with the demands of the BCC, HCA and other authorities such as the Highways Agency. In an interview with Clare we discussed her experiences of the decision-making practices. She spoke about feeling frustrated at what she perceived to be external forces that reduced the opportunity for implementing a democratic decision-making system. She expressed how:

> *'I think everyone really wants it to be a democratic process but it seems that there's decisions to be taken about how many units or are we going to take Homes and Communities Agency funding or not? What does that entail? They're not actually options to be decided or even co-decided by the residents group' (Clare-Prospective resident)*

This quote demonstrates Clare's acknowledgment of the challenges BCLT faced in partnering with a Housing Association. Additionally she highlights how the decision to take Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding adds an additional level of complexity to the decision-making process. This extract was representative of a more general opinion of prospective residents, that there were elements of the development process that were dependent on the professional expertise of the Housing Association, Board and Project Group and their ability to engage in negotiations with external bodies. This relates to normative assumptions of who has the knowledge and access to resources to bring the project to fruition. Whilst we see in more traditional models of CLH that groups of individuals, without professional expertise in the built environment sector, can navigate their way through planning, in this case study it became apparent that the Housing Association's pre-existing relationships with BCC and the skills of the Project Group and Board were vital in moving the project forward towards planning. Both the non-resident stakeholder groups and the Prospective Resident Group were aware of this dynamic and whilst the prospective resident members expressed feeling grateful for the professional expertise it inevitably left them feeling less able to demand more voice in the development process.

Over the duration of the project it was evident that the vision changed based on external pressures from third parties such as the HCA, BCC and the Highways Agency. Vehicle access on the site provides one example of how external pressure resulted in BCLT having to adapt its goals. The initial intention had been to reduce car ownership on the site by including a car club scheme. Additionally, the Prospective Resident Group was explicit about its desire for the centre of the site to be car free. This was important to members of BCLT because it demonstrated their commitment to reducing dependency on cars and fossil fuels and because it would ensure that the central areas of the site could be used by children and for socialising without having to worry about sharing the space with motorised vehicles. Keeping the central area of the community car free was an example of one of the more radical ideas which prospective residents and some of the non-resident stakeholders associated with the aspiration to find an alternative to mainstream housing, which prioritised social and environmental in the design.

When the Project Group met with the Highways Agency and BCC they were told that there needed to be a road through the centre of the site to allow access for emergency vehicles and refuse trucks. Additionally, the local authority required BCLT to provide at least one parking space per unit plus additional visitor spaces. As a result of these external requirements on the project the car free element of the vision was significantly reduced. The impact of these external pressures was twofold. Firstly, the vision for the development could be drastically altered by external parties, and secondly, the non-resident stakeholder’s awareness of this made them more cautious of inviting prospective residents to be part of the visioning process. From observing these negotiations over my time within BCLT it was evident that the limited

opportunities for the prospective resident members to actively participate in the initial master planning and subsequent design decisions reduced the sense of a common identity within the Prospective Resident Group. This resulted in some of the members struggling to see beyond their individual needs and desires. The way external requirements impacted on the stakeholders' ability to sustain their common concerns and the affect this had on the social relations, relates to Mouffe's (1992) agonism and radical democracy. As Mouffe argues, when conflict takes place between people with shared common concerns, it can create democratic spaces where individuals are not excluded due to normative assumptions of who should hold power and agonistic conditions can be sustained. However, without common concerns, antagonistic relationships and exclusion may prevail. In the case of BCLT, there were many examples where external requirements left the group unsure on their commonality and subsequently resulted in antagonistic relationships between different stakeholder groups.

8.3) Experiences of Internal decision-making practices

8.3.1) Passivhaus Certification

Whilst many of the prospective residents were sympathetic to the difficulties the Board, Project Group and Housing Association had to overcome, this was also matched by similar levels of frustration at the lack of transparency around decisions being made and anger at the Project Group and Housing Association's apparent disregard for the Prospective Resident Group's opinions. In an interview with Mark, a prospective resident, we discussed his experiences of the decision-making practices. He spoke about his frustration at being asked by the Project Group to discuss the

building design but feeling that the result of that discussion was then not given any weight in the final decision. He said:

> *'Who are you to tell me I can't have a fire in my house (..) if you're telling me that then don't tell me to discuss Passivhaus on a Saturday and then tell me three days later that I am having a sealed house so therefore don't bother considering fires' (Mark- prospective resident)*

The context behind this quote was that the Prospective Resident Group had been asked by the Project Group to discuss if they would like the development to be built to Passivhaus standard. We held a design standard workshop (Workshop One) where members were asked to identify where they would like to see the development's environmental credentials on a sliding scale from a Fabric First[9] approach to Passivhaus certification[10]. During the workshop, I presented some information on the different options and what each would mean for the development process in terms of ability to self-finish and cost. This was followed by a detailed discussion on the pros and cons of each of the different levels. Many of the members expressed concerns about going through the certification process and they felt that the additional costs incurred were an unnecessary expense. There was an agreement that they would prefer the development to be designed based on a Fabric First or Passivhaus Silver standard. Members highlighted how they would still hope to adopt many of the Passivhaus building methods but that it would enable them to

[9] A Fabric First approach follows the principles of Passivhaus but does not make any official commitment to include all the features required for full certification

[10] Passivhaus certification requires that a building meet a strict criteria of environmental design standards including conditions such as air tightness and heat recovery systems, building envelopes and triple glazing

avoid certification costs and to ensure the units did not become unaffordable for many of the members. This reflected their wider concerns about retaining affordability so as not to exclude people from the project. Only one of the residents identified wanting to achieve between silver or gold standard certification.

The following image shows the results from the design workshop:

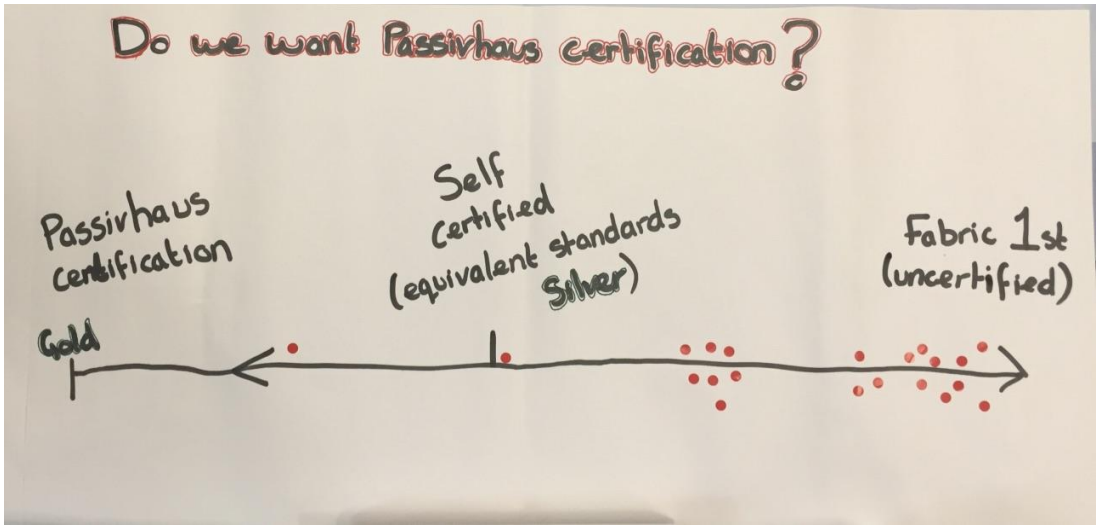

Figure 19: Deciding on the design standard- Workshop One

Contrary to this, the Board and Housing Association highlighted a desire to gain Passivhaus certification for the development. Members from these stakeholder groups expressed feeling that it would ensure Shaldon Road was an exemplar for other projects and would raise the profile of BCLT through being the first certified development in Bristol. This desire to be recognised as being innovative and leading the way in larger scale community housing projects in Bristol was initially viewed by

some of the Prospective Resident Group as serving the need of BCLT over the desires of the Prospective Resident Group.

Prospective resident members expressed anger and frustration at not having their opinions recognised. Here it is possible to think about prospective residents' experiences through Habermas' ideal speech conditions. Returning to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Five, it is interesting to consider this example in relation to the first set of questions relating to the ability for members to participate in discussions, for each voice to be given equal weight, and for individuals to feel able to challenge decisions. In deciding on whether the development should be built to Passivhaus standard the Prospective Resident Group was invited to contribute its voice to the discussion, in this sense it was being asked by the non-resident groups to participate. However, prospective residents' opinions received limited attention and did not influence the final decision. This lack of meaningful participation led many of the members to feel like their time and energy was being wasted by the Project Group, Board and Housing Association.

In this example Habermas' ideal speech conditions provide a useful way of understanding why prospective residents expressed frustration at the form of engagement they were being offered as part of the decision-making process. However, Habermas' ideological position does not assist in proposing alternative ways of practicing decision-making, when the conditions of ideal speech are not achievable, or in the case of BCLT, do not reflect the members willingness for specific members to lead the project. Habermas' ideal speech conditions make an

assumption that members associate fully democratic decision-making systems with empowerment and anything less than full democracy as failed communication. Yet as evidenced in this research, the parameters of what prospective residents find empowering and disempowering are less definitive and more complex than this. As is discussed in depth in the following two chapters, trade-offs are an important part of the BCLT’s development.

In seeking to understand the actions of the range of stakeholder groups involved in bringing this project to fruition, it is useful to consider why the Project Group, Board and Housing Association were motivated to achieve Passivhaus certification in this housing scheme. Tim, a Board and Project Group member, attended the meetings before and after the design standard workshop. He spoke briefly about why the non-resident groups were keen to obtain certification. We also discussed this in more depth in a chance meeting in Bristol. He highlighted how this was not about personal reward or individual gain. Rather, the Housing Association, Board and Project Group were thinking about the long-term prospects for the organisation and how they might raise their profile within Bristol’s housing sector. He described how, in an initial conversation between the Housing Association and BCLT, they had spoken about making this scheme an exemplar, which would demonstrate that it was possible to deliver affordable housing which also met the highest environmental standards. It was evident from our conversation that this motivation was, in part, about highlighting how other larger scale developers could be building higher quality housing. When viewed in this way, it is possible to see how the Housing Association and BCLT were considering the long-term implications of the scheme and attempting to challenge inequalities in existing housing delivery. These tensions between the

long-term impact of BCLT and the needs of the current Prospective Resident Group are important to reflect upon. Whilst many of the prospective residents expressed a desire to be part of something that brings about wider social change there was also a clear need for them to feel they had a recognised voice in this project. That voice was influenced by their housing needs and the desire to have control over their future homes. For many of the prospective residents they identified that involvement in BCLT project was energy and time intensive but that having a sense of power over the development incentivised them to maintain their commitment.

In Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) work on motivations, they claim that individuals only remain incentivised by factors beyond personal reward when they feel in control of the given situation. In this case study it was evident that many of the prospective residents felt a lack of power over the decision-making processes which manifested in frustration or anger towards BCLT and the Housing Association. In an interview with Mark, from the Prospective Resident Group, he discussed the events of a recent meeting in which frustrations had been raised and aimed at a board member who was in attendance. he said:

> *'I think (Prospective Resident Group member) put it well at the meeting on Wednesday when he said, 'at the beginning it seemed like here's an opportunity would you like to design it as a community, where as now it feels like, here's the designed opportunity do you want it?'' (Mark-prospective resident)*

Here it is evident that Mark felt frustrated at the lack of control he had over the decision-making process. This is also reflected in the following quote where, Antony,

one of the prospective residents, discussed his experience of the consultation around the site design.

> *'I wonder if we should have ever been asked that question, why are they asking that question if they had already decided that the best way of doing it is this, so again I think there are some questions about (..) why they bother with the resident group? Why are all these people doing this? Why don't they just build these places and ask the members of the CLT who have had nothing to do with it what-so-ever, to just fill them? Why are they bothering with all this stuff if at the last minute they say it's going to be Passivhaus, it's going to be set design it's going to be this and that? You know I haven't got a problem with that but I think the only reason people have a problem with it is that they were led to believe they would have some input' (Antony, prospective resident)*

This quote highlights a factor that was raised numerous times during this research and was discussed at length in Workshop Two. This was the management of expectations. Members from each of the stakeholder groups expressed feeling that this was one of the key reasons for tensions arising. In the above quote Antony expresses frustration at the Prospective Resident Group's lack of voice in the development process. At the end of this extract he described how prospective resident members' disappointment had stemmed from them being led to believe that they would have an active role in decision-making. Members of the Project Group, Board and Housing Association commented on how they felt the prospective residents' expectations had been incorrectly set at the beginning of the process. These participants spoke about how the residents had initially been told that there

would be opportunities for self-build dwellings and for greater individual influence over units. Additionally, they acknowledged that the decision to not allocate homes had become a cause of concern for many of the Prospective Resident Group. Members of the Project Group, Board and Housing Association recognised why the prospective residents felt disappointed at the shift away from self-build and identified the need for lessons to be learnt from this so as not to repeat the same mistake in future projects.

8.3.2) Social housing

One year into the development process the Board and Housing Association announced that there would no longer be any social housing units in the finished community. This decision had been made because the non-resident stakeholders felt that this was the only way the project would be financially viable. At this stage in the development process it was still the intention to avoid taking funding from the HCA. For Eric, this meant that he would no longer be able to apply to live in the finished community as he would not have the finances available to be able to apply for a shared equity unit.

After Eric left the project we met and had an informal chat. He expressed disappointment that they had decided not to include social housing but felt that this represented a bigger problem in the project. He spoke about how he saw BCLT's radical focus being diluted by the Housing Association. Whilst he recognised that the Housing Association played an important role in funding any social rented units he spoke about how he believed BCLT should be demanding that they adapt their normal organisational practice to align more with their own collaborative and

community-led aspirations. This relates back to concerns raised by Moore and Mullins (2013) and Brennan and Israel (2008) about the ability for community organisations to maintain their commitment to grassroots action when working in partnerships with non-community institutions. Eric’s experience of the relationship between BCLT and Housing Association reflected what has been raised in literature on the risks of these relationships reducing community organisations alterity to non-community organisations.

The responses to the removal of social rented housing from the Shaldon Road project also raised questions about the commitment to the shared aspiration to demonstrate an alternative to mainstream housing delivery. Some members raised concerns about the decision in prospective resident meetings, expressing how losing the social rented units would impact on the diversity of the final community. However, these concerns were not officially raised with the non-resident stakeholder groups. In my role as a researcher and participant in the prospective resident meetings it was not initially clear why the members did not do more to try to reverse the decision. It was only when prospective residents started raising questions about the wider decision-making practices that I began to understand why they had not acted to protect the social rented aspect of the project. In the following chapter I undertake an extensive and detailed analysis of the decision-making practices, at this point in the thesis I reflect on why prospective residents’ voices were not present in the decision to remove social rented units from the project and how this impacted on the shared aspiration to challenge housing inequalities through the Shaldon Road project.

At the time when the decision was made to remove the social rented units from the scheme, prospective residents had no established or official process to feed their opinions back to the non-resident stakeholder groups. On occasions, The BCLT staff member and one board member would attend prospective residents' meetings but they were focused on updating the group on the project's development. In meetings attended by the Board members there was a notable shift in power dynamics. The Board member regularly spoke for over half the meeting, leaving little opportunity for prospective residents to raise their concerns. The way the Board member spoke about the development decisions often portrayed them as non-negotiable. When informing the prospective members about changes to the project the sub-context was usually that it had to be done this way, otherwise the development could not go ahead at all. This left the prospective resident members with little option but to accept the changes and adapt their expectations if they wanted to remain involved in the project. When the project changed without prospective residents being consulted, it had a noticeable effect on their ability to remain committed to the shared concern identified at the beginning of the process. The aspirations, that initially appeared to be shared by all members of BCLT, became less clear. Without a clear common bond between the different stakeholders, some of prospective residents became notably more concerned about whether the project would meet their own needs.

The decision to remove social rented units from the Shaldon Road development was later revoked, when the non-resident stakeholders decided that the project would not be deliverable without taking HCA funding. BCLT was already a registered social provider, having taken HCA funding on the previously completed scheme. The Board

had initially thought that if BCLT did not take HCA funding for the Shaldon Road project then they would not be required to include social rented units. This would have meant avoiding adhering to the HCA’s requirements on who could be allocated a home in the development and would have given BCLT more flexibility to design their own resident criteria. However, when the regulations for registered providers were examined in more detail it became apparent that for BCLT to be exempt from HCA requirements on the Shaldon Road development they would have to de-register as a social housing provider and pay back the sum of money that had been received as a grant for the previous scheme.

The announcement that social rented units would once again be included in the design of the Shaldon Road development was received positively by the prospective resident members. However, the way this aspect of the development process had been handled by the non-resident stakeholder groups had a lasting effect on prospective residents’ perception of their ability to influence the development. In the meetings that followed the re-introduction of social housing into the scheme, prospective residents raised concerns about how important aspects of the project were changing without them being aware of the changes until after they had taken place. The prospective residents reflected on how the uncertainties around social housing provisions had highlighted that they should not place too much expectation on any specific element of the project. The example highlighted above draws attention to the prospective residents’ perceptions of who had control over the project’s development. Examining the impact of these perceptions on the power relations between different stakeholder groups, it was evident that the way decisions on the exclusion/inclusion of social rented units were reached led prospective

residents to believe that there were important conversations happening between the non-resident groups and external parties, such as BCC and HCA, which they were excluded from participating in. Flyvbjerg discusses the exclusion of specific parties in his commentary on the relationship between rationality and power. He argues that rationalisations of who has the existing skills or knowledge to gain access and participate in specific conversations can reinforce norms that exacerbate unequal power relations. In the following chapter I draw attention to how BCLT attempted to overcome this through establishing more open communication and decision-making processes.

The fact that the Board, Housing Association and Project Group realised that the development practices should have been carried out differently demonstrates their willingness to acknowledge and learn from the Shaldon Road project. However, it also reflects some of the warning articulated by Flyvbjerg (1998) in his work on rationality and power. Flyvbjerg expresses a need to be cautious of focusing on what should have happened, as it may mask the more pressing issue of what has happened. By focusing on how something should have been, Flyvbjerg warns of the risk of becoming preoccupied by normative rationality and blinded to the power relations being experienced in practice. In this case study the Housing Association, Board and Project Group demonstrated an awareness that certain practices were problematic and a cause of tension and anxiety for prospective residents . However, they also expressed a need to bring the project to fruition by whatever means possible. They highlighted how there was a need to build a reputation as a reputable housing provider in order to be able to bid for future sites and obtain funding. There was a tendency to frame their acknowledgement of the issues as opportunities to

learn how to do it better in future projects rather than address them in the present. The following extract is taken from a governing report prepared by the Board members for the annual general meeting in 2016:

> *'Bristol CLT is a grass roots organisation that has evolved from the city's special character, but we still haven't found enough good ways to involve members in the processes of project identification and development. Most of the work is still done by board members and our development officer. We have, of course, established a Shaldon Road Prospective Residents Group, which is now working with the architects as client representatives, and we have also just set up a site finding group (…). Over the coming year we will be inducting new board members and looking for new ways to get all our members involved with the aims of BCLT. Now that we have created an operational platform, those of us in the 'old guard' hope to pass the baton on to a new generation of housing activists.' (AGM report-2016)*

This extract conveys the Board's awareness of how it had yet to develop an adequate approach to engaging prospective residents. The final sentence captured a sense that they wanted to find ways to relinquish control over the development process. However, this was matched by a perception that they were better positioned, in terms of skills, knowledge and connections, to develop projects. This begins to uncover what was at the centre of the challenges facing prospective residents as they attempted to realise their aspirations for community. On the one hand the Housing Association, Board and Project Group ideologically aspired to facilitate community leadership, yet their combined skills, knowledge and

connections created a professional appearance. This enabled them to negotiate and collaborate with other professionals in a way that could not be guaranteed if led by prospective resident members. By the non-resident stakeholder groups retaining more power over the development process they could use their expertise and networks to deliver the scheme quicker and with more ease than if it was being led by community members. It also brought the voice of BCLT to the attention of the council and raised their profile as a potential viable contributor to affordable housing in Bristol. Yet, these relations of power also impacted on the Prospective Resident Group sense of control and ownership. They fostered a sense of uncertainty and distrust in BCLT, which manifested in anger and frustration at specific social and organisational practices. This can be clearly seen in the prospective residents' perception of their decision-making powers in the allocation process.

8.3.3) Allocation of homes

Over the duration of this case study the timeline for allocating homes was moved back numerous times, which led the prospective residents to become progressively more concerned about whether they would be able to live in the finished development. Whilst they had been advised, when invited to join the Steering Group, that there were no assurances they would be offered a home, the Board member who regularly attended meetings had continuously assured them informally that he felt confident that everyone who wanted to would be able to live in the community. The prospective residents spoke extensively in meetings about what needed to be incorporated into the early development stages to enable people to demonstrate their engagement in the project and how that may be quantified and measured as part of the allocation process. Participation in meetings was one factor the prospective residents felt could be used as an indication of commitment. They

decided to keep a record of who attended each meeting which was shared with BCLT and the Housing Association when they began the allocation process. They also highlighted how engagement in BCLT tasks should be considered in the measurement of commitment, this included one off events and tasks such as community consultation days, leafleting and door knocking in the Lockleaze neighbourhood, and researching existing CLT projects. Additionally, there were Prospective Resident Group representatives who committed a lot of time to attending Project Group meetings and compiling summaries of those meetings to share with the Prospective Resident Group. The prospective residents were keen that this commitment also be considered in the allocation of homes.

There were two points during this research where the non-resident stakeholders requested input on the draft allocation policy. At the beginning of this research the Steering Group was asked to come up with a draft policy which the non-resident stakeholders would review before deciding on a final version. Over one year later the Prospective Resident Group was asked to return to the Steering Group’s draft and submit a final version for consideration. Based on the initial draft developed by the Steering Group, prospective residents proposed that the policy included six main criteria for assessment. The following table outlines these criteria:

Criteria	***Measurement***
Financial	• Applicants must be able to demonstrate they have a single or joint income under £60K

	• Applicants offered a place should confirm their place by submitting a mortgage in principle offer within two months of the offer of a place
Commitment	• Applicants are required to attend a short interview to assess their commitment to the project. • Applicants are required to sign an agreement that sets out their commitment to the project as well as the ethos. The core values and outcomes of the visioning session are included in this document.
Locality	• Evidence of applicant having a Bristol postcode and having lived in Bristol for at least two years at the time of application • Two apartments reserved for Lockleaze residents. If they are not taken up, they are released to general applicants
Housing need	• Applicants will be asked to complete a questionnaire to enable Bristol CLT to assess their housing need. • Three one bedroom apartments are reserved for single applicants.

First come first served	• Applicants will be ranked by the date at which they declared an interest in the Shaldon Road project either by email, letter or phone call • Attendance at Steering Group meetings and/or Prospective Resident Group meetings
Additional priority criteria	• On the waiting list at Fishponds Road.

Table 6: Prospective resident group- draft allocation policy

Despite being asked by BCLT to develop a draft allocation policy around one year later when discussions recommenced on how the units would be allocated the Prospective Resident Group was told that their draft would no longer be used. This was partially due to changes in the financing of the project and the fact that HCA funding was now being taken for the whole site rather than just the Housing Association element of the project. Since the beginning of the development process the non-resident stakeholders had become aware that they would need to meet the allocation requirements proposed by HCA and BCC. Just after it was announced that HCA funding would be taken for the whole development I was interviewing Simon, a prospective resident, who expressed feeling that this was just one more example of the prospective resident's lack of meaningful input into the project. Whilst reflecting on his experience of being part of the Prospective Resident Group he said:

> *'I think we feel a bit adrift, not really knowing what to do, we just do our own thing, like writing the allocation policy (laughs) that's why I said at*

the beginning that there was no point spending too much time on this because it will just get changed.' (Simon-prospective resident)

After prospective residents were told that BCLT would have to use an allocation policy that met the requirements of HCA and BCC, the non-resident stakeholders requested their feedback. The following table documents the criteria proposed by the Board, Project Group and Housing Association; prospective residents requested changes; and the reasons for the requested changes.

Criteria proposed by non-resident stakeholders	***Requested changes/concerns raised by Prospective Resident Group***	***Prospective residents' reasoning for requested changes***
A household income of less than **£80,000**	A household income of less that **£60,000**	The group felt that this was very high. It suggested that it could at least be lowered to £60,000, which was the upper limit on the last BCLT development
An inability to purchase a home suitable for their housing needs		What constitutes needs? How would this be evidenced eg: room per child over 16 years

		old/location of current house etc
Having access to savings to pay legal fees, stamp duty and other costs of moving	**Being able to evidence that** the household can pay legal fees, stamp duty and other costs of moving	
Not already a homeowner or named on a home mortgage		Unless you are able to show that you are in housing need or in the process of selling. To add something to cover people who may own or be named on a joint mortgage but no longer living there eg: because of relationship breakdown
A good credit history	**At least one of the household to have** a good credit history	Could exclude people with an old country court judgement for example
An ability to obtain a mortgage with a ‘High street’ or other reputable lender		

A member of BCLT		
An ability and interest to participate in self-finish on the homes and wider site;	An ability and interest to participate in self-finish on the homes and wider site; **and participate in management of the communal assets i.e. The Common-house and common gardens)**	This doesn't cover the importance of community involvement. There was agreement within the group that it was important to include this in criteria. This could be assessed through an interview with non-resident members or quantitatively by recording attendance at meetings/events etc.
Have lived or been connected to Bristol for the **past 2 years (only applies to UC properties).**	Have lived or been connected to Bristol or surrounding area for the **past 3 years (for all)**	Is this the city of Bristol, why not in for BCLT? This is not very long, increase to 3 years

Table 7: Non-residents allocation criteria

The main feedback on the above allocation criteria was that prospective residents felt it did not prioritise the commitment to community, either during the development process or once living on site. From discussions in meetings it was evident that

prospective residents placed greater importance on measuring commitment in the development stage than once the project was inhabited. There was a sense that once living on site the community would strengthen naturally through social events and informal interactions. However, in the development stage when people were only meeting twice a month there needed to be a more explicit commitment to the group. The allocation policy provides one example of how prospective residents felt their voices were removed from the important conversations around constructing the community. There was an acknowledgement that this was as a result of external conditions, however, there was also a sense that compromising on the commitment to community significantly impacted on BCLT's scope to demonstrate a different way of delivering housing which was rooted in a form of community.

The longer the allocation process was delayed the more uncertain prospective residents became. In an interview with Will, a prospective resident, we spoke about his feelings relating to BCLT's decision to delay the allocation. He said:

> *I certainly think it is a trade-off, it's getting to the point now where it's getting uncomfortable, initially I was ok with that cause it's true that you put less in but you get less out cause there's no guarantee you're going to get a place, I was aware of that dynamic or balance (Will - prospective resident)*

In this quote, Will expresses how he feels that a certain amount of uncertainty is acceptable given that the Prospective Resident Group was expected to commit less time that in a more traditional CLH project. He identifies this as a reduced sense of entitlement but suggests that BCLT have pushed that too far. This was reflected in a

Prospective Resident Group meeting in September 2016 where the members highlighted how they felt the lack of allocation was impacting on the group's ability to form a cohesive community. The following extract was taken from the minutes of that meeting:

> *'Discussion about investing in the project - ambivalence felt as we still don't know if we are in or not. Feelings seemed to be that we are committed now and invested but that once allocations are completed residents will be able to take more ownership and build a cohesive community base.' (Prospective Resident Group meeting minutes-3rd September 2016)*

From regularly attending meetings and engaging in conversations with prospective residents it was clear that the decision not to allocate the homes influenced the members in numerous ways. The prospective residents felt less able to contribute to discussions or challenge decisions which they felt unhappy with. In an interview with Chris from the Prospective Resident Group he spoke about a discussion that had recently taken place over car parking provisions on the site and reflected on how this was representative of a broader issue around expressing opinions that might influence decisions if the current prospective residents were not going to be the people living in the community. He said:

> *'It's the not knowing, it's the being up in the air. So the residents group just ends up being quiet, you know, how forceful can we be about parking spaces if we might not even be involved and we might not even live there so it's kind of that uncertainty the later allocations goes on, it's like all of the decisions are being made before you even get to the point*

of being able to really feel like you should say something about some of the decisions. Because it's, is it for us to say we might not even be living there?' (Chris- prospective resident)

Many of the residents recognised that they were not necessarily representative of the range of people who might end up living at the Shaldon Road site. This was deemed to be particularly important when considering the residents who would be allocated social rented units. The prospective resident members highlighted that whilst they were keen to see reduced dependency on cars, or even a car free development, this should not be enforced as a rule. This was because of concerns that there may be members whose voices were not being represented, for whom a car was significantly linked to their personal freedom or sense of empowerment. Mary discussed this in her interview, reflecting how she had changed her opinion on car use since having children and needing to drive for her work in communities:

'I really value it (car) now for my freedom. If I was considering it ten years ago, I'd have been really strongly against us having car spaces at all. It would have been for my individual needs at the time. I think it's really hard to think about how that changes and it's really hard when your ethics are really challenged by your own life. (…) But yer, it does change, it's just about respecting that, respecting that someone has a different opinion to you, it may be because their life experiences are different, their current situation and what they're dealing with is leading them to make to decisions they're making.' (Mary- Prospective resident)

In Mary's interview she spoke many times about how the current prospective residents should acknowledge that both themselves and the future residents may not

be able to meet all the expectations that were proposed in the initial visions and aspirations for the project. This consideration of others who are yet to have joined the project, especially those who prospective residents felt might be in most housing need and might also benefit most from the development, surfaced in many interviews and meetings. Whilst on the one hand it demonstrated the prospective residents' commitment to the collective needs of the community rather than just their personal needs, it also resulted in some of the members feeling less able to demand a voice in the decision-making process.

Following on from the previous point, the allocation practices had a far reaching impact on prospective residents, and their ability to build a sense of community. As time passed and new members joined the group some of the members who had been contributing for longer started to express concerns that their time and commitment to the project would not be weighted fairly in the allocation policy. This began to create tension between members of the group as some individuals felt that new members might be ranked higher in the eligibility criteria. Some of the members expressing these concerns had initially highlighted how they would still commit time to the scheme even if it became apparent that they would not be eligible to live in the community. However, in some cases, the idea that newer members who had not been committed to developing the scheme may be allocated homes fostered a sense of injustice. In trying to unpack these feelings, it seemed that some of the prospective residents felt that the level of commitment members had given to the project should be a central consideration in the allocation of BCLT shared equity homes. How the allocation criteria should be weighted raised further questions about whether BCLT should be prioritising members who had committed most time and

energy, or members who were in more housing need. This tension ran to the core of BCLT and was arguably compounded by the lack of clarity over whether the Shaldon Road scheme should be an exemplar of intentional and collective living or of high quality, genuinely affordable housing provisions. These tensions did not impact the allocation of the Housing Association's social rented units in the same way as these units would be allocated based on the Bristol City Council's housing register.

8.4) Non-resident stakeholders opinions on the decision-making practices

As this research progressed it was apparent that tensions around decision-making would form an important part of the final analysis and discussion. In order to gain a better understanding of this I believed it was important to capture the opinions of the non-resident groups. This provided a more detailed narrative around the decision-making practices and enabled me to hear about the challenges the Project Group, Housing Association and board were experiencing as they attempted to engage the Prospective Resident Group and wider Lockleaze community in the design process. In an interview with Cathy, the BCLT staff member, she discussed her perception of BCLT and Housing Associations' commitment to engaging potential residents in the design process. She said:

> *'They don't believe that they have to have residents involved from the start and you can see that the decision-making might be easier. But everyone working on these projects are doing so because they have a passion for community housing or they have expertise they can offer.' (BCLT staff member)*

In the above quote Cathy provides one example that demonstrates the conflicting world views that were trying to be married within this project. On the one hand the Board, Project Group and Housing Association seemed to understand the benefits associated with community-led housing, but contradictory to this they also appeared to find the integration of prospective residents into the process as time consuming and stressful. In an interview with Jane from the partnering Housing Association, she spoke about her experience of the relationships with the Prospective Resident Group, she said:

> *'It feels like they see us as the ones who are making them make compromises that they didn't want to make, and I don't want to have to apologise for that because we're not building utopia, that's not possible. I guess the nature of when we're consulting with the prospective residents it often feels like there's so much criticism. We get the negative views. If we show them a pallet of materials they will always point to the stuff they don't like rather than point to something and go "that's amazing we didn't think we were going to be able to have that or be able to afford it". You know it feels like we get those comments rather than some positivity. It's appreciating each other, valuing each other's input I suppose' (Jane- Housing Association staff member)*

In this same interview we discussed what could be done to enable the Prospective Resident Group to have greater influence over decisions, she expressed how:

> *'I think the reality is that the only time you can completely make all the decisions the way you want them is if you buy a plot of land and build*

your own house and you can finance it yourself' (Jane- Housing Association staff member)

This quote highlights how the CLT model differs from the traditional conceptualisation of CLH. Both the presence of a professional team and the partnership with the Housing Association makes the CLT model significantly different from other CLH models such as a co-operative or co-housing scheme. This is evident in the decision-making practices. Many of the prospective residents recognised that these partnerships added an additional level of complexity to the ways decisions were reached, which was complicated further by taking funding or equivalent support from local and central government.

Non-resident stakeholders expressed different opinions about the level of control prospective residents had over decisions. In Workshop Two a conversation took place between Cathy, a BCLT staff member, and Tim, a board and Project Group member. The dialogue came out of a collaborative exercise where members were asked to brainstorm ways of improving decision-making practices. Whilst Tim was speaking, Cathy interjected and challenged him. The conversation that followed provided valuable insight into the way non-resident stakeholders felt conflicted over the prospective residents' participation in the development process:

'Tim: I think a better way to think about it is that the residents control the professionals

Cathy: but do you think the residents actually have control? What you just said was that the residents control the professionals but do you think right now the residents have control of the professionals?

Tim: well no, but that's where the area of discussion is most profitable because the architect might say "if we give you what you want it will cost a lot of money that we'll have to save elsewhere". So that could be presented to the group so they control the way forward, the way the professional group progress the project (…) My suspicion is that it's more valued for the Prospective Resident Group to have a steering function.

Cathy: I don't disagree with the aspiration of it I'm just not sure that's what I'm seeing Monday to Friday (…) so does it need to be re-named because otherwise it's confusing to everybody or are we just failing to be community-led? Are we community influenced, yes we are, and should we celebrate that? Maybe, and we get on with being a community influenced scheme that has community at the heart of it but I just don't feel like we're behaving in that way and I don't think we know how to do that with the resources we have right now.' (Workshop Two)

This dialogue captured how challenges to BCLT's relations of power began to emerge when the members were in a space that encouraged them to think about how the development process compared to the initial aims and aspirations. In Workshop Two Cathy seemed to open up and speak more about her personal ambitions for the project. She expressed how she found it challenging to balance the

needs of the prospective residents, Housing Association, Project Group and Board, and the expectations from external bodies. Negotiating how different needs are heard and responded to relates to power within the organisation. In the workshop extract above Cathy recognises that the distribution of power between different stakeholder groups has not been equal and questions whether BCLT would be able to implement a fully democratic governance structure, where prospective residents participate equally in decision-making, with their current resources.

8.5) Addressing decision-making through this research

The participatory nature of this research led us to address decision-making practices through group activities. In this section I discuss how two research activities, a participatory video session and workshop, opened up space to challenge power relations in decision-making practices.

In March 2016 I met with Rachel and Katie, two prospective residents and Core Research Group members, to carry out a participatory video (PV) session with Tim, a Project Group and Board member. Rachel, Katie and I had met previously to developed questions, and during the session Rachel filmed and Katie conducted the interview. As I observed this interview take place, I saw how PV can be a powerful tool for addressing poor social relations within a group. As part of the interview, Rachel and Katie asked Tim about why he had decided to be part of setting up BCLT. There was agreement between many of the prospective residents, that Tim would attend meetings, command the space and not recognise the importance of other members' opinions. Because Tim was the only non-resident member to

regularly attend Prospective Resident Group meetings, prospective residents often linked the frustration they were experiencing around their inability to feed-in to decision-making practices back to Tim and the social interactions they had with him. However, when he responded to their questions about his aspirations for BCLT in his PV interview, he spoke openly about what had drawn him to be involved. At one point in the interview he became emotional as he described how he felt passionately about trying to find community solutions to the housing shortage in Bristol. This demonstrated a different side to Tim, which was not seen in the meetings when he was adopting a more professional role. After the interview, Rachel and Katie expressed how they had not realised how emotionally invested he was in the project. They highlighted how hearing Tim speak about his aspirations for BCLT made them feel like he was motivated by the same aspirations as them and that he was on their side. What Rachel and Katie were articulated was a sense of trust that had been built through the PV process.

This is one example of how this research made a small contribution towards improving the social relations between members of BCLT. Whilst this PV activity did not focus on trying to change the decision-making practices, it demonstrated the importance of finding different spaces for the prospective resident members to engage with the non-resident members. It provided an alternative platform for communication which broke from the normal relations in which Tim was seem to hold professional knowledge which he would share with the prospective resident members. In this PV activity, Rachel and Katie had control over the situation and Tim was responding to them. This disrupted normative power relations, in which it was perceived that Tim commanded the space.

Workshop Two, carried out as part of this research, was intended to challenge the members to consider what Flyvbjerg (1998) refers to as what has been done. It provided a platform to reflect on experiences to date and to brainstorm how the Shaldon Road project could move forward in a way that enabled prospective residents to feel they had more voice and power in the development process. As part of this workshop we addressed issues raised by prospective residents about their ability to understand and influence decisions. The remainder of this section will focus on the workshop activities and outputs.

During the workshop we ran a world café exercise where participants were asked to break into smaller groups and discuss their experiences of decision-making and communication over the development process so far. This was followed by a whole group session where participants fed back what had been raised in their break out groups and it was opened out for a full group discussion. During this session a debate emerged between Cathy, the BCLT staff member, and Colin, a member of the Project Group, about how the Prospective Resident Group had been consulted on the options for energy provisions for the site. The following extract captures some of this dialogue and clearly demonstrates how the wider issues around power and control manifested in the everyday practices of BCLT:

> *‘Cathy: do you think that the community should have been offered a different option?*
>
> *Colin: again it’s this trust thing*

Cathy: but no, why couldn't they have been offered it?

Colin: because we're doing a complete development not individual dwellings, you have to look at what is the most economical option

Cathy: but the group is already thinking as a community, they can think what would be the best option for the group not just themselves

Colin: but we're trying to offer a community solution rather than an individual one to the heating and lighting and power needs of the site, that's what we're trying to do, what we need to do is impart those ideas to the group

Cathy: but do you see what I'm saying, I'm not sure we've opened that as a, was there any time that you thought how could I show these cool ideas as actual options to the community for them to decide what we do next?

Colin: it's not just a solution, it's just

Cathy: but you said you've found a solution

Colin: no I didn't' say we'd found it,

Cathy: you're saying I've got the solution

Colin: we've got a range of options and for various reasons we've ruled out certain options mainly driven by economics'

(Workshop Two)

In this extract Cathy is calling in to question the way that BCLT have reached a decision on the energy provisions for the site. She highlighted how the Project Group, Board and Housing Association had failed to recognise that the Prospective Resident Group were capable of making decisions that were in the interest of the community rather than for them as individuals. Whilst this discussion focused on energy provisions, Cathy was actually challenging the power relations related to decision-making practices. She expressed frustration at the lack of control the Prospective Resident Group had in deciding what would be the most suitable energy options for the site.

Many times during this conversation Cathy referred to a concern about how the non-resident stakeholder groups had failed to recognise the capacity for the Prospective Resident Group to be part of this decision. She highlighted how the Prospective Resident Group had the capacity and willingness to decide what was best for the community but that the non-resident stakeholder groups were not giving them the opportunity to do this. Despite highlighting this, Colin continued to state that they (the Project Group) were trying to find solutions that meet the needs of the community rather than the individuals. This demonstrated a wider issue around the Board, Housing Association and Project Group’s perception of the Prospective Resident Group. Because of the lack of communication and interaction between the stakeholder groups the non-residents did not seem to be aware of how committed the group had been to meeting the needs of the entire Shaldon Road community and beyond into the local Lockleaze area.

The above extract is one example of tensions that arose around who was best situated to make decisions. These tensions relate to questions highlighted in the theoretical framework around who can participate, the attention given to different voices, and norms associated with skills and knowledge. In this example Colin expressed feeling that the non-resident stakeholders were more capable of deciding what was best for the group. He highlighted how they were trying to find a community solution rather than an individual one and suggested that this was why the Prospective Resident Group were not asked to participate in the decision-making process regarding energy provisions. In the quote Colin was alluding to the non-resident stakeholders having the skills or ability to make a decision which the Prospective Resident Group could not. He frames this as a capacity to be unbiased in considering different options for energy production, which he suggested the Prospective Resident Group would be unable to achieve due to their personal interests. This relates to norms and rationalisations that lead to assumptions that decisions are best reached when there is distance between the decisions and decision-makers, enabling them to look objectively at the potential options. Yet this conflicts with traditional conceptualisation of CLH and the documented benefits associated with people having more control over their future housing (Cerulli and Field, 2011; Fuller *et al*., 2010; Netto *et al*., 2015; Jarvis, 2015). Furthermore, it seemed to contradict BCLTs own vision to take community-led action against housing inequality in Bristol.

At various points during my time spent within BCLT, different members alluded to tensions between the organisation’s vision and its practices. The following extract is taken from a report generated for the 2016 annual general meeting:

> *‘In the light of the range of new opportunities that are unfolding, there’s now an urgent need to renew our vision. Six years ago a small group of founders set out to build some affordable houses using a CLT model. For most of the intervening period we have been almost entirely focused on achieving that goal. With that now mostly behind us, and with a local and national housing policy framework transforming almost by the day, we need to look at the opportunities that are opening up and set a new course. When we were interviewed by Radio 4, a number of the questions were about why we were using a community-based approach and why we were prepared to make such an investment of volunteer effort. (..) The answer is partly because the mainstream approaches to fixing the dysfunctional housing market are largely broken - with housing completions of all types below 100,000 in England in 2015, and partly that the costs of providing housing are around a third lower in what a new report calls ‘the citizen sector’ of housing, and partly because of Bristol’s strong ethos for tackling social issues with grass roots solutions’ (AGM report-2016)*

Whilst it was evident from my engagements with BCLT that people were acknowledging tensions between the vision and practices, it was also clear that there was no clear strategy for taking any action to address these tensions. This was

partially due to time constraints but I also observed that there was no clear understanding of what improved practices would look like in reality.

Examining people's experiences of decision-making practices in this project highlighted how members from different stakeholder groups understood the practice of community leadership differently. There were noticeable variations in the members' expectations of how much influence the different stakeholder groups would have over decisions. At the beginning of this chapter I discussed how prospective residents demonstrated a willingness to compromise on their initial expectations, especially around their level of input in design decisions, but identified that this was dependent on openness and transparency about why certain decisions had been reached in non-democratic ways. The lack of clear strategy for how to improve decision-making practices and ensure prospective residents felt they were still participating in the development process, highlighted how it was not only external pressure that limited the scope for prospective residents' involvement in making decisions. The hesitancy to involve prospective residents in the decision-making process aligns with Foucault's (1980;1984a) work on norms and power. There were structural norms around who was best positioned to make decisions, who had the 'right' expertise, and who could make a decision quickest, which underpinned many of the interactions between the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders. The way these norms emerged in the decision-making practices, were, as Foucault argued, not necessarily a conscious act to retain power, but related to normative assumptions about capacity and competency. As a result, many of the non-resident stakeholders strongly believed in community leadership and their language suggested a commitment to collaborative and democratic organisation. Yet in their

day-to-day practices they often embodied norms which led them to adopt a less collaborative approach.

In Workshop Two, we allocated around half of the session to surfacing issues around decision-making and discussing them, and the other half was given over to developing action steps which responded to those issues. One of the areas we began to address through this workshop was the lack of interaction between different stakeholder groups. This was seen to exacerbate normative assumptions of who should make decisions, foster poor relations and a sense of distrust within the Prospective Resident Group for the non-resident stakeholders. It was proposed that there should be more opportunities for engagements. One member expressed feeling that:

> *'people misunderstand what other people are saying so I think that getting more people in the same room together, possibly not every month but at key decision-making points, and having more structure so the residents and the group know there's a time coming up' (prospective resident- final workshop)*

Following on from this workshop the Board and Housing Association have already begun organising a second one, to take place towards the end of 2017. Additionally, there has been a community day which was well attended by prospective residents and some Board members.

We also brainstormed how we could develop clearer lines for communicating what decisions the Prospective Resident Group would be asked to engage with. It was suggested that a two pronged approach should be taken. Firstly, in managing the expectations at the beginning of the process. Joanna, a prospective resident, expressed how:

> *'there should be more transparency at the beginning of the process about what the limitations for decision-making will be, it wasn't really done properly.' (Joanna, prospective resident -final workshop)*

This seems to have been understood by the Project Group, Board and Housing Association and in follow up interviews with members of each of these stakeholder groups they highlighted how they felt this has been an important part of the learning that they had taken away from this research and will attempt to do differently in the next project. This is one example of where this research made a small incremental intervention in disrupting the day-to-day practices of BCLT; offering a space in which participants could reflect on their experiences, raise concerns and have face-to-face discussions about how to respond to these concerns.

Secondly, we decided that there needed to be clearer guidelines on which decision prospective residents would be able to engage with. During Workshop Two, one group fed back on what they had written down and discussed during the world café exercise. They said:

> *'we had managing the expectations and the scope for decision-making, so just being really clear about what's the scope of the particular decision and who might be involved in that, is it a decision you*

(Prospective Resident Group) can influence or make?' (prospective resident- final workshop)

In a follow up interview with Cathy, the BCLT staff member, she reflected on this workshop outcome. She said:

'so we were talking about decision-making and saying that it could be clearer what decisions the residents could be involved in earlier on and what is pre-decided by regulatory stuff, so then they know that it's not up for grabs so they don't need to have a meeting about it and they don't then get ignored at the end of it, and they were talking about the programme and if that was clear then they'd know what milestones are coming up and which ones they can be involved in, because apparently sometimes they feel hijacked because they think they're going to discuss X but then they get a message saying "you need to decide this by Friday" so the meeting gets hijacked, so if we have a plan then they know what's coming up and also they'll know that we are moving towards the end, rather than just meeting and wondering if this is ever going to happen.' (Cathy-BCLT staff member)

During Workshop Two we started to develop a tool that would be used by the Project Group' Board and Housing Association to categorise upcoming decisions so that prospective residents knew the level of influence they would have over it. The following image captures what was developed during the workshop:

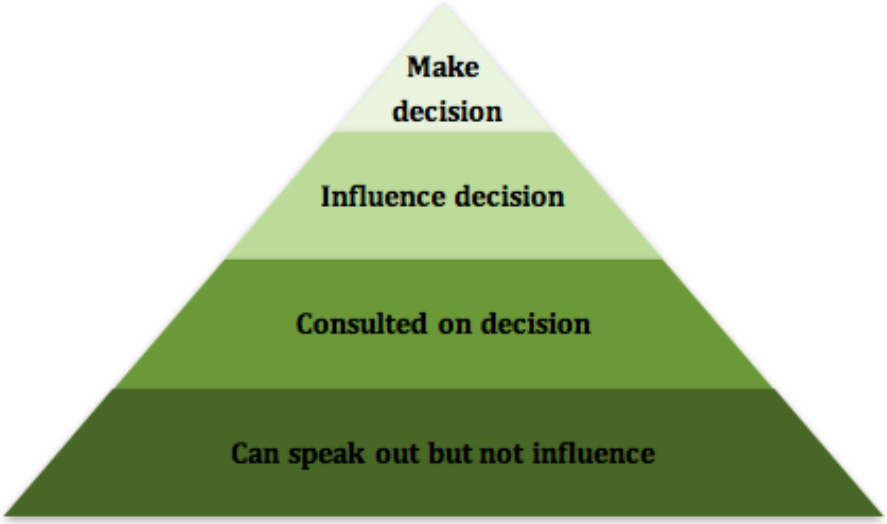

Figure 19: Decision-making pyramid

The different colour coded levels of the pyramid indicate the nature of the input the Prospective Resident Group can expect to have in an upcoming decision. At the top level the Prospective Resident Group would be able to have complete control over the decision. Examples of this would be deciding on some of the internal features such as kitchen and bathroom styles. At the bottom level of the pyramid the Prospective Resident Group would not have any control over the decision, this would include things such as finance obtained through HCA funding. This pyramid was designed by participants of the workshop to be used as part of a new communication process, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

In the first Prospective Resident Group meeting after the workshop we allocated some time to feedback and to discuss how members felt the workshop had gone. The members shared how they thought the decision-making pyramid would be a useful tool going forward to increase transparency between the different stakeholder groups. They described how it would assist in managing their expectations regarding upcoming decisions by providing clarity on what influence they could expect to have.

Additionally, they identified that it would also enable them to hold the non-resident stakeholders to account if they failed to engage the Prospective Resident Group at the level specified for the specific decision. The member’s perception of the usefulness of this decision-making pyramid is important to consider in the analysis of this workshop output. There was significant agreement between members from all stakeholder groups that this was a valuable tool for overcoming some of the practices that prospective residents identified as disempowering. However, it would also be wise to draw on and critique the similarities between the decision-making pyramid developed as part of this research and Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation, which is increasingly criticised for its conceptual and practical contribution to debates on citizen engagement. The follow image depicts Arnstien’s ladder:

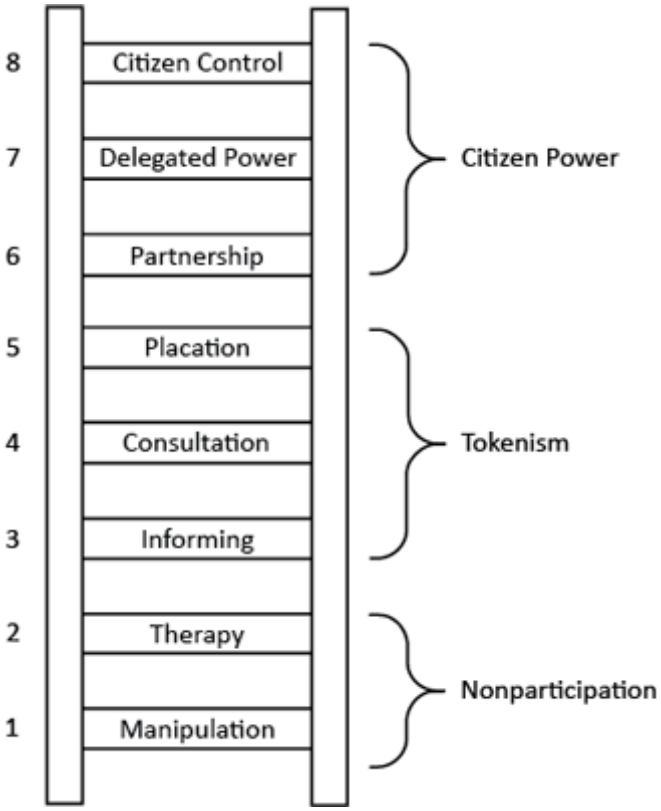

Figure 20: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) (Source: citizenshandbook.org)

In Collins and Ison's (2006, p.1) critique of Arnstein's ladder they highlight how, over 40 years since it was first published, the ladder prevails as a favoured measure of participation by policy makers and practitioners. They suggest that its 'enduring appeal lies in its ability to reveal, in pictorial form, the power agendas implicit in many institutionalised narratives'. However, over the duration of their article they draw on a range of existing literature to develop an argument for alternative methods of examining citizen engagement which breaks from oversimplified conceptualisations of participation as a linear hierarchy ranging from non-participation to full control. In building an argument against Arnstien's ladder, Collins and Ison warn of the potential risks of presuming that full control is the motivating factor behind citizen engagement in decision-making. They refer to the work of Haywood *et al* (2005) highlighting how in Arstein's ladder:

> *'not achieving full citizen control implies some automatic failure or delegitimisation (Haywood et al, 2005) of the participatory process, even though those involved may be content with whatever level has been attained.' (Collins and Ison, 2006, p.3)*

Arnstein's ladder shares distinct similarities to the decision-making pyramid developed in Workshop Two. This above quote by Collins and Ison raises comparable questions around the way the pyramid depicts successful and unsuccessful engagement with decision-making processes in BCLT. In the same way as Arnstein's ladder, the pyramid portrays a linear scale of control that progresses hierarchically from being unable to influence a decision to having full

control. When presented in this way it is implied that the Prospective Resident Group is powerless in the lower quadrant and empowered in the top quadrant. This does not reflect the stories that have been captured in interviews, meetings and workshops, which demonstrate a more complex and multifaceted story underpinning people’s aspirations for the project. On many occasions, prospective residents identified benefits that they attributed to the presence of the Housing Association, Board and Project Group. The professional expertise of non-resident stakeholders had been reported to facilitate a smoother transition through planning and financing applications. This had also been identified as reducing the time commitment required of prospective residents, enabling people to be part of the process who would be unable to dedicate enough time to a more traditional CLH project. Additionally, prospective residents stated how the pre-existing networks that became available to BCLT because of their collaboration and partnering relationship with the Housing Association were a major contributing factor in them securing the Shaldon Road site for £1. When taking these benefits into consideration, it was evident that many of the prospective residents had made a conscious decision to become involved with BCLT over a more traditional CLH project. As part of that decision they had considered the potential limitations in their ability to have complete control over the development process. This challenges the hierarchy of influence proposed in Arnstein’s ladder and suggests that the levels depicted in the decision-making pyramid should not be interpreted as a linear progression from poor to good, or negative to positive decision-making practices. It proposes a more nuanced and contextual model could be developed, which captures the different influential factors and trade-offs that prospective residents consider when discussing their engagement in this project.

In addition to the point made above, Arnstein's ladder has also received criticism for its use of power relations as a conceptual lens through which to analyse levels of participation. Tritter and McCallum (2006, p.157) argue that 'for Arnstein, the sole measure of participation is power to make decisions and seizing this control is the true aim of citizen engagement'. They problematize the use of power relations as the analytical lens, suggesting that it oversimplifies the dynamics of participation to be a struggle between citizens and institutions to hold all the power in a given situation. Whilst acknowledging that Tritter and McCallum's criticism of the ladder of citizen engagement is based on Arnstein's own claim that levels of participation directly relate to experiences of power, I argue that power relations, conceptualised through the work of theorists such as Foucault (1980;1984a), Flyvbjerg (1998) and Mouffe (1992), provide a valuable theoretical lens. In adopting a view of power relations that takes into consideration Mouffe's work on radical democracy, we see power and citizen engagement as more nuanced than either having or not having power in a participatory relationship. Rather, it is possible to view conflict, disagreement and negotiation as a form of democratic citizenship that more closely reflects the nature of power relations in community-institutional partnerships. Additionally, in the work of Foucault we are challenged to consider how power may be embedded in structural norms, rather than as a condition which is wielded by one, over another. Similarly, Flyvbjerg (1998) draws our attention to rationalisations of power, which opens-up a more nuanced discussion than the simple explanation of one person trying to take control from another, as suggested by Tritter and McCallum. Whilst, I agree with critiques of Arnstein's ladder, which interrogate and question the assumption that citizen control is the principle aim of any community organisation, I propose that

theories of power provide a useful lens to understand citizen participation and participant engagement.

The discussion on the different stakeholder groups’ experiences of decision-making practices has contributed to developing an understanding of how and why it has not been possible for prospective residents to realise their initial aspirations for community. Rather than attempting to implement this it became evident that the main desire from the Prospective Resident Group was for transparency and clear guidelines about how decisions would be reached. In the majority of Prospective Resident Group interviews the members demonstrated an understanding of the different pressures the Board, Project Group and Housing Association were under to try and meet a range of requirements from different organisations and groups. However, many of the prospective residents also spoke about a lack of communication and openness about the decisions being reached and this was clearly linked to their experience of power and control over the development process. Many of the members expressed feeling concern, frustration or anger towards BCLT and the Housing Association and this was often associated with feeling as though they were not respectful of the prospective residents’ time and the precarity that they were experiencing through not knowing if they would be able to live in the finished development.

In this section I have examined members’ experiences of the decision-making practices, highlighting that the lack of transparency, openness or clear processes created more tension between prospective residents and non-resident stakeholders

than who actually made the decision. I introduced the decision-making pyramid developed during Workshop Two, as part of this research. I drew attention to the limitations of this pyramid, but highlighted how it provided a useful starting point from which to develop a more transparent process for reaching decisions. In the following section I examine communication practices, which were also identified by members as impacting on the experiences and participation of prospective residents.

8.6) Introduction to examining communication practices

In much the same way as the decision-making practices, the communication both between and within different stakeholder groups contributed to members' experiences of the social structures and organisational practices of BCLT's Shaldon Road project. This was discussed at length in interviews, Prospective Resident Group meetings and workshops. The following section provides an account of prospective residents' experiences of communication over the project. The views of non-resident stakeholders are included to deepen the understanding of factors influencing the communication practices. Finally, I draw attention to some of the actions identified through interviews and Workshop Two, which were intended to improve communication between stakeholders.

8.7) Experiences of communication

For many of the prospective residents, the communication between them and the non-resident stakeholders negatively impacted on their experience of the development process. Unlike the decision-making processes, there was little

empathy towards the Housing Association, Board and Project Group regarding their sharing of information. Whilst many of the prospective residents identified an awareness of the pressures the non-resident stakeholders faced in trying to make decisions to progress the project, they felt that communication was less affected by external factors. In an interview with Simon, a prospective resident, we discussed his experiences of the communication with non-resident stakeholders. He said:

> *'I would say it's been very opaque (…) and I would like to see more openness about things, I think quite a lot of times we just, I don't know, maybe people on the Board didn't understand that there are a lot of people who'd sort of invested their time and energy and thoughts and dreams of their future, in it, and then the ideas that they were having and the opaqueness seemed to be a little bit disheartening sometimes and a bit sort of callous. There didn't seem to be recognition of the time and interest that people were sustaining or are sustaining in the project. (..) is there a need for this opaqueness, what's going on?' (Simon-prospective resident)*

This quote describes how the lack of communication with non-resident stakeholders led to prospective residents feeling frustrated and as if their emotions were not being considered. This was representative of many of the other prospective residents. Simon described how the lack of transparency feels personal, as if his experiences of the process were disregarded by the Board, Project Group and Housing Association. In the same way as highlighted in the previous section on decision-making, this frustration seemed to reflect the level of control prospective residents felt they had over the development process. The uncertainty around what actions

were being taken by the non-resident stakeholders, which stemed from a lack of communication, led to some of the prospective residents expressing feeling helpless and anxious about their futures within the project.

In an interview with Will, a prospective resident, we spoke about how he had experienced the communication between the Housing Association and Prospective Resident Group. He described feeling uncertain about the integrity of the Housing Association and expressed concerns about them not being a community organisation. He said:

> *'I think a lot of it comes down to communication and I've liked it less, the communication that comes from the Housing Association, than anywhere else in the project. It's been very unilateral' (Will, prospective resident)*

Will's reflections on the communication between the Housing Association and prospective residents was representative of more general tensions that emerged over the development process. The Housing Association, whilst bringing a range of technical skills and expertise, had less experience of working in collaborative and participatory ways with communities. Its expertise were in developing affordable housing and although some of their previous developments had included non-residential community spaces, the nature of BCLT collaboration was an entirely different way of working. These tensions were at the core of what I identified in the opening section of Chapter One 'Situating and framing this research' when drawing attention to a distinct need to critically examine how new models of CLH are experienced by their members. Throughout the preceding chapters I have returned

to this, evidencing that the social and political relations documented in this case study demonstrate a need to re-engage and re-define our understanding of the benefits associated with these new models. The relationships between the Housing Association and prospective residents further support this claim. The prospective residents identified a range of reasons why they felt cautious of the partnership between BCLT and the Housing Association. The fact that the Housing Association was not a community organisation was a contributor to their distrust. Prospective residents expressed feeling unsure of the Housing Association’s motives. Will discussed this in his interview saying how:

> *‘I’ve heard bad things from other people that are involved in community housing about Housing Associations and how they are profit driven or how they’re not set up to serve the people (…) in the same way as a CLT is’ (Will, Prospective resident)*

Examined through the theoretical framework employed in this research, it is evident that these experiences relate to questions about the extent to which members were able to participate in the development process, whose voices were being heard and the ability for members to challenge practices that they identifed as disempowering. These questions relate to Habermas’ (1990) ideal speech conditions, where he proposes that all individuals are motivated to reach consensus and that communicative acts, which are grounded in reason and evidence, should lead to open and democratic spaces. As I noted in Chapter Five, I draw on Habermas’ theory with caution, and recognise a problem with his base assumptions about the consensus-seeking intentions of humans in social engagements. However, I also

identified that his ideal speech conditions provide a useful starting point to begin to understand what is happening in a given situation.

In the previous quote taken from Simon's interview, he expressed a sense that the non-resident stakeholders failed to understand the level of commitment the Prospective Resident Group was maintaining. This was raised in other interviews and in Workshop Two and was perceived to be a result of the Prospective Resident Group's voice not being listened to by the non-resident stakeholders. This relates back to previous points raised about the lack of opportunities for the prospective resident members to feed in to any of the communication beyond Prospective Resident Group meetings. When compared against Habermas' ideal speech conditions, it is evident that the communicative engagements between the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders. did not meet the proposed conditions. When identifying the problems with communicative practices in BCLT prospective residents highlighted how they did not feel there were opportunities for them to communicate with the non-resident stakeholders and that their voices were not being considered. Whilst these conditions generate a basic understanding of what happened in the communicative practices, they do not encourage a deeper engagement with questions around why communication was being practiced in such a way.

In Brennan and Israel's (2008, p.88/9) work on power in communities they comment on the impact of withholding interaction between different members of a community highlighting how:

> *'Power can be used to facilitate social interaction or to suppress it. As Wilkinson (1991, p. 17) notes, 'community implies all types of relations that are natural among people, and if interaction is suppressed, community is limited.' To this extent, as interaction is limited, disaffection as a result of fragmentation, anomie, and alienation occur, hindering community from emerging'.*

In this extract Brennan and Israel identify how a lack of interaction between different community stakeholders can reduce opportunities to develop a strong sense of community. This point was raised numerous times by prospective residents over the duration of this research. In Chapter Seven, I drew attention to how the allocation process was hampering the prospective residents' ability to build a cohesive community. The lack of cohesion was linked to frustrations at not knowing who the final residents would be and concerns that people who had committed less time to the group may be prioritised. The prospective residents expressed feeling that their opinions were not being considered and that they were not being provided with the platforms to communicate with the non-resident stakeholder groups about how the allocation policy could be designed. This highlights how the communication practices have had a wide-reaching effect on the members' experiences of the development process. The lack of opportunities for prospective residents to communicate openly with non-resident stakeholders has been attributed to a range of different experiences that prospective residents have identified as disempowering. This fragmentation, as Brennan and Israel (2008) identify it, between the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders, affected the cohesiveness of the collective community and individual members' confidence in their future position in the project.

8.8) Non-resident stakeholders

In the same way as the decision-making processes, I believed it was important to hear the experiences of communication from members from non-resident stakeholder groups. Workshop Two provided a good opportunity to capture the voices of these members as well as one-to-one interviews.

From the data collected over the duration of this research it was evident that the non-resident stakeholder groups felt conflicted over how best to communicate and disseminate information about the progress of the project. In an interview with Cathy, The BCLT staff member, we discussed her experience of this. She expressed how:

> *'The challenge is managing expectations and working through what, who needs to know, when (..) I don't agree that a little bit of information is a dangerous thing or anything but I do think that when you give information without lots of back story it can often be confusing or mis-interpreted and actually what I tried to talk about in the workshop today is that at first, in this role, I expected to have a clear answer and be able to share that answer but what I've found is, (..) what is true on Monday is not true on Friday and if I sent that out to 50 or 100 people I have to go back to 50 or 100 people and say actually what I said on Monday isn't true' (Cathy-BCLT staff member)*

Additionally, Cathy spoke about the challenges she had experienced in trying to communicate information to the Prospective Resident Group. She said:

'The negative side (..) is that it's obviously hugely time consuming because you are replicating the process, you've already done the bulk of the leg work but then you need to get it out to people and say "ok this is where we've got to, we're got three options, these are the impacts of these options, we either do it like this or otherwise there's no options", it's almost like "ok we've got to this point and the only way we've managed to make it work is this, are you guys cool with that?"' (Cathy-BCLT staff member)

In Workshop Two, Matt, one of the Project Group members, addressed prospective residents, after undertaking an exercise intended to reveal people's concerns about the process of communication thus far in the project. It was evident that he had reflected on the concerns raised by prospective residents and that he was responding, for the first time in the workshop, as another member of BCLT rather than in his professional role within the Project Group. He said:

'There's a lot of technical knowledge that the professional team have got. We tried to pull influences from the group (Prospective Resident Group) but it's very hard, we haven't communicated that to you properly, we haven't spoken about how we were taking on board your ideas and where we were having to say sorry guys we can't do everything, we can't meet all your aspirations. And I suppose we have been very remiss we have failed to meet your expectations, failed to justify why we haven't met your aspirations.' (Matt-Project Group- Final workshop)

These two quotes highlight a noticeable divide between the non-resident stakeholders and prospective residents . This is where we see where the CLT model diverges most from more traditional models of CLH. Whilst we have come to expect prospective residents to be fully engaged with the everyday actions needed to bring a project to fruition this is not the case in this CLT project. What is evident is that there are some conflicting ideas between the professionals around how much information should be conveyed to the Prospective Resident Group. This is rooted in a desire to progress the project as quickly as possible and as a mechanism for simplifying engagement with HCA and the BCC. Colin, a Project Group member, highlighted how he felt there was a need to build greater trust for the Board, Housing Association and Project Group within the Prospective Resident Group. He expressed how this would reduce anxiety and frustration associated with not having all the information communicated to them. He said:

> *'I think also what we've got to do is build a level of trust as professionals with the residents that they trust us to make to right decisions on their behalf and that it isn't a top down decision-making process, that we are bound by so many technical factors, but that we take on board what the residents are saying and they trust us to make to decisions based on what they want, and it's that trust that we're lacking' (Colin- Project Group- final workshop)*

This quote demonstrates variations in what different stakeholders perceived the project aims to be. Colin expressed a desire to avoid top down decision-making processes, however, he also wanted the Prospective Resident Group to relinquish their control and place trust in the Project Group to make decisions on their behalf.

This opinion seemed to be in direct conflict with both the prospective residents’ motivations and the wider BCLT aims to create a housing development which was led by the community it will serve. Comparing how Colin talked about trust to the way the Prospective Resident Group spoke about it, highlighted at the beginning of this section, there are distinct differences. Colin expressed a need to build trust so that the Prospective Resident Group allowed the non-resident members to make decisions on their behalf, without needing to communicate and consult them. Conversely, the Prospective Resident Group identified that they needed more communication in order to build relationships of trust with the non-resident groups. This relates to Foucault’s claim that knowledge-power are present in everything, which was examined by Flyvbjerg (1998) in his work on rationality and power. Colin’s desire for the non-resident stakeholders to be able to make decisions for the Prospective Resident Group was underpinned by rationalisations of who was best informed and who holds the knowledge. His opinion was motivated by a desire for the project to develop with ease and without conflict. This desire was shared by Jane, from the partnering Housing Association, who said ‘We just want there not to be conflict’. However, the desire to avoid conflict does not allow for the confrontations that Mouffe (1992) and Flyvbjerg (1998) identify as an important part of developing effective solutions. Flyvbjerg (1998, p.324) describes how this type of power ‘tends to be more effective than any appeal to objectivity, facts, knowledge, or rationality’. Furthermore, he argues that rationality stabilises power but that:

> *‘Stable power relations, however, are not necessarily equally balanced power relations, understood as relations in which the involved parties act of equal terms. In other words, stability does not imply justice’ (p.324)*

In seeking to simplify the practices involved in developing the Shaldon Road project, the non-resident stakeholders employed the logic of knowledge-power and rationality-power. They adopted a position in which they perceived that their skills and expertise could enable the project to progress faster than if prospective residents were consulted on every decision. In relation to the overarching question of this research, this contributes to understanding the challenges prospective residents faced in trying to realise their aspirations for community. The way some members of the non-resident stakeholder groups spoke about how they would like communication practices to develop contradicted the aspiration to create a model of delivering housing, which was empowering, emancipatory and equitable for its members and the wider Bristol community. These members' perceptions of how to best progress the project was not conducive with challenging the normative power relations involved in more mainstream housing delivery. However, these motives should not be simply interpreted as 'business as usual' and there was a clear belief that the CLT model could transform the lives of the people who ended up living in the finished development. For these members, they placed more importance on completing the project and ensuring it was accessible to people on low incomes, than on having a fully inclusive process of getting the units built.

8.9) Actions taken to improve communication between stakeholder groups

Despite there being conflicting opinions over how non-resident stakeholders should engage with prospective residents, actions were taken over the duration of my time spent with BCLT which were intended to improve communication practices. This

section discusses these and reflects on how they changed members’ experiences of the development process.

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, the nature of the communication with the architecture firm had a significant impact on the Prospective Resident Group’s sense of control over the direction of the project. The Prospective Resident Group, Project Group, Board and Housing Association expressed concerns about the flow of information between the architects and the prospective resident members, identifying that the way the architects conducted their consultation did not complement the aim to include the prospective community in the design process. When a new lead architect was allocated to the Shaldon Road project in October 2016 her first step was to hold a consultation event with the Prospective Resident Group. This was well received by the Prospective Resident Group and many of them reported feeling the way information was communicated during this event resulted in them feeling more empowered. This was discussed in the first Prospective Resident Group meeting following the consultation event. After the meeting, I documented their discussion in my reflective diary:

> *In today’s meeting there was a general sense of relief from members that they were being given some avenue to feed into the designs. Following the consultation event many more of the prospective residents seem to understand what they are being offered and if there are elements which cannot be included they have a better understanding of why. There was a noticeable shift in the mood of today’s meeting and people were beginning to get excited at the designs. This has been the first time since when the Prospective*

> *Resident Group realised they wouldn't have as much control over the design that there has been a real sense of excitement about the project. Generally the members seemed happy to have options to choose from rather than being consulted from the beginning of the design process. (Reflective diary entry- 7/06/2016)*

What was captured in this diary entry, which was evidenced at many other points over the development process, was the ability of prospective residents to understand the pressures and limitations BCLT were facing in trying to bring this project to fruition. Whilst many of the members expressed feeling frustrated at the processes of communication and their ability to feed into decisions, they also demonstrated a clear awareness of how they understood that by choosing to be involved in a CLT project rather than a more traditional CLH development, they would be expected to compromise on the level of control they had over the development process. Additionally, the majority of the Prospective Resident Group expressed that whilst they had less control over decisions they also benefited from professional expertise and were required to commit less time to this project than other more democratic CLH groups. The conversations that took place during this meeting clearly demonstrated that open communication between the different stakeholder groups was the most important factor influencing the Prospective Resident Group's experiences of the development process. Many of the prospective residents were content to be guided by the non-resident stakeholders and perceived there to be significant value in the knowledge and expertise they bought to the project. The Prospective Resident Group identified the previous lack of transparency as the root of their frustration and anger. Although they were being consulted on design options that had been shortlisted by the non-resident groups, the Prospective

Resident Group expressed how the consultation event had created space for them to communicate with the architects and understand why they were limited to the options being offered. The prospective residents accepted the need to prioritise affordability in design and were therefore sympathetic of the decision not to include some of the features they had proposed in the visioning exercises.

In addition to the one-off consultation event with the architects, the non-resident stakeholders requested two representatives from the Prospective Resident Group to join the Project Group meetings. This was intended to open-up lines of communication between the different groups. The prospective residents were asked to put forward names of people who they would like to represent the group and then they voted from a list of four names to establish which two members would take on the role of representatives. This marked a changing point in the process where many of the prospective residents had expressed feeling that they were not being invited to take part in the decisions being made. The initial perception of the group was that the representatives would give them more power over decisions and improve the communication between the different stakeholder groups. The two members would attend the Project Group meetings and provide feedback on what was discussed in the following Prospective Resident Group meeting. Additionally, they would bring any questions the Project Group had for prospective residents to the meetings. Simon, a prospective resident, spoke about the decision to set up the Project Group and have prospective resident representatives attending meetings. He said:

> *‘it was a good decision to make and good that we have two potential residents going to it and listening and hearing ‘cause I think when we*

first started out we did feel a bit like, a drift, and not really knowing what to do, we'd just do our own thing' (Simon, prospective resident)

Similarly, in an interview with Kate, one of the prospective resident representatives, we discussed how she felt about the decision to set up the Project Group and invite prospective resident representatives to attend. She said:

'it's definitely improving our input to the work of the people who are actually putting the project together; well it has the potential for that, it feels like it's going that way. In the Project Group meetings they are looking to me and (rep) to represent the residents group where previously they would have to look to (board member who attended Prospective Resident Group meetings) but his head is in so many things and he doesn't attend all the resident group meetings. It feels like there's ways and methods for the residents group to feed in and getting messages back. I think there's a tendency in the residents group to think that's it's sort of happening far off and we can't influence it, but if we're getting reports back on all the meetings and we've got a method that we can report in directly then I think that's great actually, I think it should make a difference, I guess it puts an onus on me and (rep) to really be representing the residents group' (Kate- prospective resident and Project Group representative)

Generally, the representatives were seen as a positive step towards a more democratic development process. However, after a short time of them attending Project Group meetings the Prospective Resident Group starting expressing concerns that they were only being asked to feedback on decisions, and that the

representatives were expected to disseminate information rather than having an equal voice in meetings. Clare, a prospective

resident expressed how:

> *'from the little that I can gleam from what (rep) and (rep) are reporting back, it does seem like they are able to ask questions and to get information, whether we always understand that information is another story. I'm not sure what the effect of that then is, because it still seems like people are unhappy about not being represented on the Board and there's a lot of stuff that we can't influence even though we sit there and receive the information, maybe it's more of a receiving role than an active role, maybe there's more that could be done on their part to actually involve the residents' (Clare-prospective resident)*

This quote highlights two points. Firstly, that even when the representatives had information to share it was not always understood by the Prospective Resident Group. Secondly, that the representatives were adopting a passive role in the meetings. Both of these points relate to the previously discussed tension around professionals and non-professionals. The Project Group meetings were where most of the technical design details were discussed. Aside from the Prospective Resident Group representatives the rest of the members making up this group had previous experience in the built environment industry. Many of the members of this group had worked in professional settings as architects, planners or project managers and had acquired skill sets associated with fast pace housing developments. Whilst the Prospective Resident Group representatives were keen to engage in the Project Group meetings and represent the voice of prospective residents there were

significant barriers in them being able to achieve this due to the pace and technical language being used within these meetings. In Workshop Two, one of the prospective resident representatives expressed how:

> *'it's only one of two people from the residents group and I think it's very challenging to have to keep up with the complexity and the speed of decision-making. People make notes and stuff but it's still difficult to interpret what's been said.' (Kate-prospective resident- Final workshop)*

This had been evident in meetings where the Prospective Resident Group representatives have fed information back to the group. On many occasions this led to more questions or confusion and the representatives had to go back to the Project Group to seek further clarification. Similarly, there have been instances where a representative has attended a Prospective Resident Group meetings with detailed notes on the decisions made at the last Project Group meeting and a board member, who was also part of the Project Group, had been in attendance. Whilst the Prospective Resident Group representative had been providing feedback to the group the Board member had interjected and informed the group that this information was no longer correct and that a decision had to be made outside of the Project Group. In the instances where this occurred it was evident that not only did this impact on the representative's ability to feel they were conveying accurate information, it also significantly decreased prospective residents' sense of having a voice in the Project Group meetings.

Whilst the non-resident stakeholders took action to try and improve their communication with prospective residents, these actions did not result in prospective

residents identifying a significant improvement in their ability to actively participate in the development process. In the following section I discuss the steps taken through this research to improve communication practices in BCLT.

8.10) Addressing communication practices through this research

In October 2016 a small group of prospective residents and myself met to discuss how we could use Workshop Two to challenge some of the existing practices that had been highlighted in Prospective Resident Group meetings to be causing tensions between the different stakeholder groups. The nature of communication between the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders was one of the main concerns that surfaced during the process of designing the workshop. This was further compounded by a sense that the communication which was taking place was evasive and difficult to decipher. We discussed how the workshop should aim to; enable prospective residents to share their experiences of the communication practices; understand how the non-resident stakeholders decided what information should be shared with the Prospective Resident Group; brainstorm what a better system of communication might look like and decide on some actions that would enable BCLT to start progressing towards that.

During Workshop Two we spent time discussing how and why BCLT members felt the communication was unilateral. The Board, Project Group and Housing Association representatives attributed this to a desire not to build the hopes of prospective residents before they were certain that the information was accurate. The prospective residents expressed feeling that there were limited opportunities to

communicate with non-resident stakeholders which had led them to distrust the non-residents' motives. We spoke about how prospective residents felt it was useful to have representatives attending the Project Group meetings, but that the power in that relationship was unbalanced towards the non-resident stakeholders. Prospective Residents expressed how they were frustrated that much of their meeting time was being taken up with accounts of the events that had taken place in the previous Project Group meeting but that it appeared that the Project Group had little intention of gaining their opinions on upcoming decisions. Members of the Project Group were receptive to these concerns, they listened to prospective residents and expressed some regret that they had not addressed them sooner. Some of the Project Group members shared their experiences of the development process, explaining how they felt their time was torn between engaging with external organisations, such as BCC and HCA, in order to progress the project, and communicating with the Prospective Resident Group, to develop greater transparency.

Following Workshop Two I interviewed Cathy, The BCLT staff member who was also part of the Project Group. We reflected on the communication issues raised in the workshop and she expressed how she had previously felt uncertain of how to enable the Prospective Resident Group to feel heard. She described how she thought the workshop provided a good starting point from which to address these concerns. As part of this conversation we spoke about the role of the representatives in the Project Group and how the Prospective Resident Group had expressed feeling conflicted about the extent to which their presence in meetings was contributing to improved communication. Cathy highlighted an awareness that this was just one of a range of different ways of communicating with the Prospective Resident Group, saying:

> *'it's one person's limitations and people misunderstand what other people are saying so I think that getting more people in the same room together, possibly not every month but at key decision-making points, and having more structure so the residents and the group know there's a time coming up' (Cathy- BCLT staff member)*

This was also raised in Workshop Two, where Tim, a Project Group and Board member expressed feeling:

> *'This is great to have everyone in the same room talking face-to-face, with this number of stakeholders and the nature of the Project Group is the onus falls on one or two people to try and disseminate the information and I think it's impossible for one person to try and feed all that back whereas when you're in the same room, you're there and you know it yourself, so whilst the Project Group happens every month, maybe this kind of thing doesn't need to be every month but just a semi regular get together in the same room so it feels like people are on the same page' (Board member- Final workshop)*

What became evident from Workshop Two was that inviting prospective residents to be representatives in the Project Group meetings was only part of the solution to making the Prospective Resident Group feel heard. The workshop highlighted some of the barriers associated with this and provided space for discussion on what other systems could be put in place to support a more bidirectional communication process.

Workshop Two served not only as a space to raise issues around communication, but as an example of how BCLT would benefit from implementing regular meetings where different stakeholders met face-to-face. With regard to the questions posed as part of the theoretical framework, it was useful to consider how prospective residents were able to raise concerns about practices they found disempowering. Through conversations undertaken as part of this workshop it was evident that none of the members felt email and online forum communication was sufficient on its own to enable prospective residents to feel heard. Over my time spent with BCLT I had access to their online forum and was able to observe how members interacted in this virtual discussion space[11]. It was evident that there were less members engaging with this mode of communication compared to members regularly attending Prospective Resident Group meetings. At any one time there would be between six to ten prospective residents contributing to online discussions. Members of the Board and Project Group would occasionally post information. However, there were few occasions where this took place. I observed how the majority of online communication between the Prospective Resident Group and non-resident members was top down, providing information rather than seeking opinions. The human element, such as empathy, which began to emerge in the workshop, was lacking in online communication. There was notable value in the face-to-face meetings where non-resident stakeholders could hear unedited emotional accounts of how prospective residents were experiencing the development process.

[11] Online forum information has not been used as a source of data in this research. It would have been difficult to obtain informed consent from all members who were active on the forum (some of which never attended meetings) over the two and a half years I spent with BCLT.

Having created space to discuss the members' experiences of communication practices, we focused on how we could take actions that would improve the way information was shared. We spoke about the barriers and challenges that were specific to the Shaldon Road group, rather than BCLT as a whole. These included time restrictions, particularly on the staff members who were being paid for their work within BCLT or the Housing Association. These members explained how they were fulfilling their contracted hours between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, they felt unable to commit to attending meetings outside of these work hours except in exceptional circumstances. This led the conversation on to how there could be clearer communication without having all the members in one place at the same time. Whilst the group had identified some limitations associated with online communication platforms, it was acknowledged that if used in conjunction with a range of other information sharing mechanisms, it could improve transparency and provide an easy way of conveying upcoming milestones and decisions. The idea of an online live document was discussed, Tim from the Project Group expressed how he would like to work on developing:

> *'a document online, of all the things that need to happen for the project, which might be difficult to produce but having it where, as decisions are made they kind of go into that slot for that topic area or if a decision is not made yet then these are the options.' (Tim, Project Group and board member- Final workshop)*

The idea behind this document was that it would be available to all the different stakeholder groups and would be updated as the project progressed. It would be organised as a timeline highlighting each development milestone, what decisions

needed to precede it and the level of influence the Prospective Resident Group could expect to have over these. Each decision that needed to be made would be colour coded based on the decision-making pyramid discussed in the previous section.

Following on from Workshop Two the Housing Association and BCLT staff members began working on developing this new system for communication, which they coined a critical pathway document. Around one month after Workshop Two, I carried out interviews with Cathy and Jane, two of the staff members. During these interviews they expressed feeling that this document would bring about a positive change in prospective residents' experiences of the way information was communicated and shared. They acknowledged that this was not going to provide a solution but was part of a process of improving relations between prospective residents and non-resident groups. Both Cathy and Jane highlighted how they felt they were moving through a process of experimentation in the Shaldon Road project, in which they were continuously learning and being challenged to develop new ways of working. They both described how they were still coming to terms with collaborative working and were constantly negotiating tensions between trying to deliver the project quickly and ensuring the Prospective Resident Group was included in the development process.

The negotiation of control and experimentation with different levels of engagement reflect aspects of a CLT's social structure that are distinct from more traditional models of CLH. The communication practices connect to wider tensions around how BCLT found it place within the wider CLH movement. It was evident that the non-

resident stakeholders wanted to support the Prospective Resident Group to be a part of the development process, yet the everyday practices involved in progressing the project appeared to contradict this desire. The paid members of staff were contracted to work hours between 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. This allowed them to attend non-resident meetings and communicate with external organisations such as HCA, BCC and the architects. However, it resulted in them being unavailable for Prospective Resident Group meetings, which were held in the evenings or at weekends. This meant that BCLT needed to find new ways to communicate and build relationships between the different stakeholders. The communication and decision-making practices played a vital role in how each of the members experienced the development process, however, these developed iteratively and through trial and error. They were spaces for experimentation but these also fostered feelings of anxiety and frustration in the Prospective Resident Group. It became evident through the workshop that these were not practices in which experimentation was experienced positively and prospective residents felt that these should have been defined at the beginning of the process.

8.11) Reflections on the nature of power in communcation practices

Whilst the prospective residents highlighted many instances where they felt disempowered as a result of the partnering relationship between BCLT and Housing Association it is important to reiterate that they also identified benefits, discussed at previous points in this thesis, such as access to different funding streams, reduced time commitment and ease of obtaining planning. This draws attention to one of the

central challenges BCLT, and CLT-Housing Association partnerships, face in identifying their role within the wider CLH movement. In Moore's (2016) recent work, he has engaged with this challenge. Moving beyond the argument that partnering relationships with non-community organisations foster inherently problematic power relations, Moore has engaged in a nuanced debate which identifies that these partnerships play a vital role in scaling-up and mobilising CLTs. The above points identified from literature on CLH and community power have been evident in many of the members' experiences of the development process. Building on this it is also apparent that similar debates emerge when analysing the role of the Board and Project Group in this case study. Whilst the Housing Association, Board and Project Group all identify a desire for the Shaldon Road project to be community-led and challenge inequalities associated with mainstream housing delivery, they are also working within the system they are trying to change. Unlike more traditional forms of CLH, that have limited interaction with local and national authorities BCLT is actively seeking to engage with BCC, HCA and the planning authority. As a result, the communication from non-resident stakeholders is focused more towards these authorities, causing the Prospective Resident Group to feel excluded from the important aspects of the development process. Whilst many of the members identify benefiting from the professional expertise of the non-resident stakeholders, the social and organisational practices, particularly around communication, have left the Prospective Resident Group feeling like they have little control over the project's progression.

8.12) Chapter summary

Through this chapter I have examined how both decision-making and communication practices were experienced by different BCLT stakeholders, with a particular focus on prospective residents . I have used theories of power and community power to make sense of these experiences and to use the learning gained from individuals’ stories to reflect on BCLT as a model of CLH.

The way different stakeholders believed the decision-making and communication practices would best support the development of the Shaldon Road project appeared to be in conflict with one another. On the one hand, the Prospective Resident group comprised many socially conscious people, who situated themselves within wider issues of equality and were motivated to challenge the commodification of housing associated with current market conditions. These members expressed a desire to take back ownership of land and find grassroots solutions to the long-term stewardship of that land. Although members of the Board, Housing Association and Project Group expressed similar aims, many of them had professional expertise and utilised their experience and networks to secure funding and negotiate with BCC. The dissonance between these different stakeholder groups arose from what appeared to be diverging world views. These divergences were most apparent in the way different stakeholders related to the systems through which housing is delivered. The Prospective Residents desired to take ownership of their housing futures and whilst they were content to collaborate with a Housing Association they aspired to operate outside mainstream systems. Conversely, the non-resident stakeholders were actively engaging with these systems in order to bring the project to fruition. This draws attention to a more general consideration around the future of CLTs. As we witness increased partnerships between CLTs and Housing Associations

questions arise as to whether these partnerships disrupt and challenge normative top down systems, or if community participation is lost in the struggle to fit CLTs within conventional housing delivery practices.

Having examined how the Prospective Residents experienced decision-making and communication practices, it is possible to see manifestations of the co-option which Moore and Mullins (2013) and Brennan and Israel (2008) warn of. The decision-making and communication practices were noticeably impacted by the BCLT/Housing Association partnership. Furthermore this impact was disproportionately felt by prospective residents, who were left feeling uncertain about their role in the development process. There are distinct similarities between the experiences documented during this research and the findings of Rowe, Engelsman and Southern (2016, p.602) who looked at CLTs in the UK and US. Through their case study findings, they demonstrate how an attempt to develop a CLT project in Liverpool, UK, was thwarted by a top-down approach to governance, despite all stakeholders involved having what they describe as ‘adherence to much of the rhetoric associated with self-help housing’. Additionally, they document how the CLT project was governed by many individuals with professional ties to the local government and built environment fields, with little control given to community members. This reflects many of the findings documented in this research, with regard to both communication and decision-making practices. Accounts from Prospective Residents suggest, in much the same way as Rowe, Engelsman and Southern’s (2016) research, that the practices and structures of BCLT make it difficult for prospective members to command equal participation in their engagements with the non-resident stakeholders.

Returning to the questions posed in the theoretical lens developed for this research, it is useful to consider how this inability to participate in the initial conversations relates to the wider focus on power. Habermas’ ideal speech situation proposes that every member should have opportunities to participate in a conversation, arguing that this is vital in being able to achieve democratic and equitable spaces. Analysed against the conditions proposed in Habermas’ theory, it is evident that prospective residents were unable to participate in many of the conversations where the decisions were made on the project’s trajectory. In prospective resident meetings the members were creating open spaces for discussion and sharing of ideas, however, when non-resident members interacted in these meetings the engagements were predominantly top down and focused on unilateral sharing of information from non-resident to prospective resident members.

In BCLT’s communication and decision-making practices there was a tendency for prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders to make rationalisations about whose skill sets should be valued more. When making decisions and communicating there was a hierarchy between the different stakeholder groups. The professional expertise of the Board, Project Group and Housing Association members afforded them a knowledge of the processes required to deliver the scheme, which the majority of the Prospective Resident Group did not have. This placed them in a position of power as the Prospective Resident Group relied on them to guide the process of acquiring the land and preparing a planning application. This was reinforced further by the pre-existing relationship between the Housing Association and BCC. The Housing Association’s track record of delivering housing schemes

was vital in negotiating the requirements and demands set by the council. As a result of these existing skills and networks, the Prospective Resident Group was dependent on the non-resident stakeholders to navigate the project through the system.

The nature of the decision-making and communication practices in this project are distinct from more traditional CLH projects, where prospective residents would be responsible for managing the development process, but would also be required to make an upfront financial commitment. The impact of the professionals in BCLT may be seen as twofold. On the one hand it reduces the pressures on prospective residents and provides some reassurance to potential members who would like to be part of a community housing project but feel that they lack the time or expertise to commit to a more traditional scheme. However, due to the professional nature of the Housing Association, Board and Project Group, BCC are not meeting with prospective residents . This removes the opportunity for any discourse between residents and the Council. Foucault's (1980;1984a) work would argue that interactions between the residents and the Council would be a necessary condition for challenging institutional norms. This is discussed further in the following chapter.

Over the empirical chapters I have highlighted how members from each of the different stakeholder groups aspired to deliver the Shaldon Road project through community participation and leadership. This posed questions about what stopped that aspiration from becoming a reality in the practices of delivering the project. Using Habermas' ideal speech situation identifies what happened, but not why it

happened. The conditions he proposes, against which to assess the communicative spaces, highlight how the Steering Group members were not able to fully participate, however, it does not provide any way of understanding this non-participation in practice. Here, I argue, it is important to look at the tensions that arose as members attempted to realise their aspirations in the day-to-day practices. This encourages a more critical interrogation of the range of factors which influenced the Prospective Resident’s ability to meaningfully participate in the development process. In the following chapter I build on this point, providing a detailed discussion on the aspirations and reality of developing a CLT project.

Whilst prospective residents highlighted many instances where they felt disempowered as a result of the partnering relationship between BCLT and the Housing Association it is important to reiterate that they also identified benefits, discussed at previous points in this thesis, such as access to different funding streams, reduced time commitment, ease of obtaining planning. This draws attention to one of the limitations of Habermas’ binary conceptualisation of communicative spaces as either good or bad, experienced by participating actors either positively or negatively. In examining why prospective residents did not participate equally in the initial stages of the development process, it should not be reduced to the simple conclusion that BCLT failed to create open and democratic spaces. Rather, it is important to recognise that a range of contextual factors impacted on the Steering Group’s ability to feed into discussions. These factors included being available to meet with external parties, such as BCC representatives or architects, and having the skills or desire to develop a financial model in order to apply for pre-planning finance. As I discuss in more depth in the following chapter, the presence of the

Board and the Housing Association staff played an important role in enabling members to participate in the Shaldon Road project who would otherwise have been excluded due to financial requirements and time commitments.

An initial analysis would suggest that the ideologies underpinning the actions of the non-resident and prospective residents appear at odds and incommensurable with each other. However, after two and a half years immersed within BCLT, developing relationships and hearing about experiences from each of the different stakeholder groups, it is evident that this interpretation does not capture the sense that as an organisation, BCLT are learning from experiences and seeking to increase participation from different stakeholders. The non-resident stakeholders aspire to be more community-led and have acknowledged that there are disparities between their current actions and this aspiration. Similarly, prospective residents have acknowledged that partnering with the Housing Association is important if they want to achieve their aspiration to open CLH out to a broader demographic.

Having recognised that there were tensions and conflicts in BCLT's organisational practices this research sought to engage members in challenging these. The methodological approach employed in this research was intended to inform practice as well as contribute to knowledge. Workshop Two, which provided a space to address the way power was experienced, evidenced the importance of creating opportunities for members of different stakeholder groups to engage with each other. This workshop offered prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders a space to reflect on their aspirations for the project and how these compared to their day-to-

day actions. The prospective resident members were able to identify where they could expect the project to meet their personal needs, where they would be expected to compromise, and whether that compromise was about meeting the wider aspiration of diversity within the community, or because of non-community agendas that were shaped by top down leadership.

Going beyond the perception that CLTs fail to provide an alternative to conventional housing delivery models, it is important that they find their role within the wider CLH movement and identify the challenges and opportunities of working in collaboration with Housing Associations. Moore’s (Moore, 2016) recent work engaged with these questions. Countering the argument that partnering relationships with non-community organisations foster inherently problematic power relations, Moore engages in a nuanced debate, identifying that these partnerships play an important role in scaling-up and mobilising CLTs. Over the remaining chapters I reflect on the future of CLT and Housing Association partnerships and propose that in seeking to scale-up, we should recognise that CLT’s are distinct and need autonomy from other models of CLH.

CHAPTER 9: UNDERSTANDING BRISTOL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST IN ACTION: COMPROMISE AND THE CONSENSUS-CONFLICT DEBATE

In the previous two chapters I have discussed firstly, how members of BCLT imagined and took action towards constructing a sense of community, and secondly, how the social and organisational practices predominantly affected prospective residents', but also the non-resident members', experiences of being involved in the Shaldon Road project. In this chapter I examine how the members' experiences compared to their aspirations identified at the beginning of this research. Following this, I discuss the nature and form of community leadership in BCLT. Finally, I situate the findings from this research within theories of power and the conflict-consensus debate. Drawing on the knowledge gained through my involvement with BCLT I propose that whilst Habermas' theory of communicative rationality (1990) and Mouffe's theory of radical democracy and agonism (1992) are valuable in analysing experiences and developing theory, neither side of the consensus-conflict debate adequately reflects what happened in BCLT case study. Compromise was perceived by many of the remaining members as central to the project's success, however, in practice, compromise did not align with either Habermas' or Mouffe's ontological positions. In concluding this chapter I critique the role of compromise, reflecting on who made compromises and what this meant for community leadership and participation.

9.1) ASPIRATIONS AND THE REALITY OF GETTING THINGS DONE

At the beginning of this case study I explored why members had been motivated to join the Shaldon Road project and what they aspired to see the community become through the development process. This highlighted a tension between a desire for power to be distributed equally between prospective resident and non-resident members, and a belief that the skills and time commitment of the non-residents were vital in progressing the development. The way that BCLT valued different skills impacted on whose voice was believed to be more important. The opinions of the non-residents were prioritised over prospective residents, impacting their ability to form what Mouffe (1992) describes as the sense of community that comes from a commitment to common goals, which represent all voices. Whilst prospective residents began to identify shared and common concerns to rally behind, they did not have a voice in the spaces where these concerns were transformed into actions and goals.

Mouffe (1992) claims that when groups establish common concerns it enables individuals to feel a sense of community, whilst maintaining their autonomy. She highlights how actors are motivated be an overarching desire to research common goals rather than a need to align themselves with a distinct set of values. In this conceptualisation, conflict and difference may be embraced and the need to seek consensus is reduced. In BCLT, conflict and disagreement were experienced negatively and attributed to unequal power relations between prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders. In Mouffe’s conceptualisation of community, conflict and disagreement are normal consequences of a commitment to equality and a desire to challenge injustices. In this case study the problem was not that there was disagreement and conflict, rather that the power always remained with the non-

resident stakeholders. Even when prospective residents could voice their disagreement, the weight of this voice was reduced by their desire and need to be allocated a place in the finished community.

The way power was distributed between the different members of BCLT called into question the extent to which this project was developed through community leadership, an aspiration shared by members from each of the different stakeholder groups I spoke with. Whilst all BCLT members used common language to articulate their aspirations for the project, for example, community-led, democratic, empowering or challenging inequalities, it was evident through undertaking this case study that there was significant variation in how community leadership was practiced. For non-resident stakeholders, there was a trade-off between aspirations for community leadership, democracy and the empowerment of prospective residents, and the motivation to respond to inequalities in the mainstream housing market in Bristol by delivering a high quality affordable and social rented development.

The non-residents' attempts to facilitate more community leadership were thwarted by external conditions and regulations and resulted in them having to work within the confines of normative housing delivery processes (for further discussion see Chapter Eight). Members had joined BCLT with the aspiration to be part of a project that challenged mainstream housing delivery and found ways to work outside of the norms of market conditions which they identified as being inequitable, disempowering and having a negative impact on society. As the project developed the opportunities to work in opposition to mainstream housing delivery diminished

and were replaced by the option of finding new ways of working within existing structural norms. For some of the prospective residents, the way the project shifted was too much of a deviation from what had motivated their initial involvement, and these members dropped out of the project. For the members that remained, they realigned their goals, changed their expectations and, for the most part, focused their energies on finding new ways to work within the system. Those members who had been involved in the project since the early stages of the development process, were required to demonstrate stamina and an ability to deal with uncertainly. For some of the prospective residents, their stamina was borne out of housing need, where the Shaldon Road project was the only potential solution for them to break away from the private rental sector. For other members, there was a clear commitment to the communal aspirations and a belief that this could still be delivered in the finished community.

9.2) The nature of community leadership in Bristol Community Land Trust

Woven into the narrative of this thesis is the need to engage critically with how CLTs fit within the wider CLH movement and to interrogate the nature of participation and leadership in housing developments delivered through the CLT model. In the following chapter I reflect more broadly on CLTs within the CLH movement and draw final conclusions. In this section I look specifically at how community leadership was experienced in BCLT, focusing predominantly on prospective residents' experiences.

In Chapter One and Seven I drew attention to the work of Mckee and Moore (2012) who highlight the risks of assuming CLTs will automatically empower members and challenge inequalities. I also pointed to the notion of exclusion within the wider CLH movement, referring to the work of Thompson (2015), which identified a tendency to reinforce norms that CLH is for specific demographics, based on class and access to significant funds, or political and ideological positions. From undertaking this research it was evident that BCLT attracted a broader range of local citizens than literature suggests has been achieved in previous CLH endeavours. However, the diversity of members attending Prospective Resident meetings varied over this case study. Meetings at the beginning and end of this study attracted individuals interested in different tenure options including social rented and shared equity, whilst for around one year in the middle of this case study it was predominantly shared equity members attending meetings. This was mainly due to the extent of time prospective residents were required to maintain their commitment to the Shaldon Road project, but also linked to the temporary removal of social rented units discussed in Chapter Eight. Over the periods with greater tenure diversity, it was clear that the partnership between BCLT and the Housing Association played a vital role in achieving this. BCLT provides an example of how CLTs can partner with Housing Associationss to create a new space within the wider CLH movement. When members interested in social rented units attended prospective resident meetings it demonstrated potential for the BCLT-Housing Association partnership to challenge the view that communities playing an active role in the delivery of urban housing provisions is a niche or bourgeoisie concept.

Whilst acknowledging the scope and potential for BCLT to engage its members in the delivery of an affordable and social housing project, this research has also captured a sense that BCLT are at a critical point in their development. As the Shaldon Road project progressed the Board and Housing Association sought to identify a role for prospective residents to take within the development process; whether they were partners, collaborators, clients or advisors. The fact that the Board and Housing Association were the ones making this decision highlights how power was distributed within BCLT. The Board and Housing Association were the gate keepers, and prospective residents were replaceable with other BCLT members wanting to live in the community.

In drawing conclusions from the two and a half years spent working alongside BCLT, I argue that the lack of clarity on the role of prospective residents was the source of much of the frustration experienced by members. As I discuss later in this section, the lack of a definitive role for prospective residents impacted on the extent to which members feel the project lived up to their expectations. The idea that non-resident stakeholders needed to provide a more definitive role for prospective residents epitomises a problem within BCLT, which is the need to balance community leadership with the desire to encompass a more economically diverse demographic. Despite members of the Board, Project Group and Housing Association stating that they wanted prospective residents to have more of an equal leadership role, in reality, their presence created a hierarchy, in which they maintained control and prospective residents only achieved partial access to spaces where decisions were made. The inability to allocate homes until after planning permission had been granted resulted in many of the prospective residents feeling a sense of

powerlessness. There was an awareness that if one member left the prospective resident group, there were new members who would jump at the opportunity to take their place. Under these conditions prospective residents could not achieve an equal voice in the development process.

The nature of participants' voice and access in the development process relates to what Boulding (1990) identified as power that comes from holding more knowledge, and what Bachrach and Bratz (1970) referred to as power from having the authority to withhold access to something. Understood in more recent theory, these forms of power have created an environment where prospective residents feel unable to voice their dissent or to feel their voices are given equal attention in the development process. Mouffe (2013) argues that to remove the opportunities for conflict and dissent in community dialogue reduces difference to the 'private sphere' which creates space for essentialist ideologies and for normative rationalisations, as discussed by Foucault (1980a) and Flyvbjerg (2003), to prevail. When prospective residents' access to other stakeholder groups was restricted it reduced opportunities for dialogue in which their concerns and frustrations could be voiced to members who had more decision-making power. This is an example of how disparities between non-residents' aspiration for community leadership and the way communication and decision-making was practiced impacted on prospective residents' ability to participate and have their voices heard. The rationalisation of who should have access to specific spaces arguably reduced opportunities for BCLT to demonstrate a radically different way of governing the delivery of housing. The hierarchy within BCLT, which was not challenged in a way that proposed any drastic alternative, counters the normative ways in which CLH groups organise. It is well

recognised in literature and non-academic resources that the CLT model requires a Board of Directors, and that more people are advocating partnerships with Housing Associations. However, it is important to acknowledge that these conditions create a hierarchy and to consider this in future dialogue aimed at supporting the growth of CLTs.

In order to harness the potential of the urban CLT model, and to reduce the frustration and anger experienced by prospective residents in this case study, there is a need to be explicit about the scope for prospective residents to participate in the development process and to influence and guide the organisation’s trajectory. In the case of BCLT, this involves re-visiting what lies at the core of their vision, to identify where it positions itself within the wider CLH movement. In Davis’ (2010, p.38) writing he describes this as a ‘contest for the soul of the community land trust’, posing poignant questions about the future of CLTs in America, where partnerships with non-community organisations have become the norm and many CLTs now operate at a regional scale. In 2010 Davis asked questions about the future of CLTs in the USA, which are arguably relevant to the future of the urban CLT movement in the UK. One of the questions he asked was:

> *‘Will there still be a place for community in the organizational structure of the CLT, or will the heightened influence of local government or the expanded territory served by a CLT remove or reduce the active voice of local residents in governing the CLT?’ (Davis, 2010, p.38)*

As highlighted in the work of Davis, and reflected more recently by Moore and Mullins (2013) and Rowe, Engelsman and Southern (2016), partnerships with non-

community organisations will inevitably influence the ‘community’ in a CLT. In response to this, I propose that in considering the scope for CLTs to contribute to future housing provisions, we should be asking if the ‘sense of community’ attributed to CLH is diluted through these collaborations and if so, then what makes them unique from the mainstream models of housing delivery that they seek to challenge.

Through this research I have documented a shared aspiration between members to find alternative ways of delivering housing, outside of market conditions which they identify as inequitable. However, observing how this aspiration is embodied in the practices of members from different stakeholder groups has highlighted nuances that make this ideology less definitive in practice. It is evident that the unequal distribution of power between prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders has impacted significantly on prospective residents’ sense of voice and control within the organisation. Over the duration of this case study, there have been numerous examples of the Prospective Resident Group feeling disenfranchised by the actions of the non-resident stakeholders. In Workshop Two we identified that these feelings were predominantly linked to non-transparent communication processes and guarded decision-making. From my own observations it was apparent that some of the non-resident stakeholders were reluctant to give prospective residents equal voice in making decisions because they had failed to understand prospective residents’ commitment to the common concerns and shared aims of BCLT. Rather, some non-resident stakeholders expressed feeling concerned that prospective residents were motivated by personal gain and therefore unable to make well-informed decisions on the future of the project. The findings from this research suggest that, whilst prospective residents were influenced by their individual

aspirations to live in the final community and to have some individual choice in the design of their homes, the majority were committed to their initial aspiration to create a strong community, built on the principles of openness and diversity. The instances when prospective residents were motivated by personal agendas were linked to times when they felt they had little or no voice in the decision making process and when they felt that communication from non-resident groups was poor.

9.3) Who leads? Questioning leadership in Bristol Community Land Trust

During this research members of BCLT took small but significant actions to address practices which prospective residents felt impacted on their level of voice and control over the development process. Workshop Two offered a space that encouraged members to think about what had bought them to BCLT. Members reflected on their aspirations for the Shaldon Road community, creating an opportunity to break from the everyday tasks required to get the project off the ground. Returning to these aspirations assisted in re-establishing a common concern between members of different stakeholder groups and reduced feelings of 'them against us'. Creating a space that enabled members to talk openly about their aspirations and experiences of the development process allowed prospective residents to feel their concerns were being heard. It also provided an opportunity for them to hear about the non-resident members' experiences of trying to bring the project to fruition. The non-resident members talked about the external pressures they were facing from bodies such as the Highways Agency, HCA and BCC, and explained how they were conflicted by needing to adhere to the restrictions being

placed on them by these external bodies in order for the Shaldon Road project to be viable, and their personal aspirations for the community members to have greater involvement. During this workshop there were moments where the non-resident stakeholders challenged each other on how the development process had been led to date. These challenges were more than moments of personal conflicts, they were contestations of community that ran to the core of BCLT organisation. Through these challenges, the non-resident stakeholders were recognising and calling into question the unequal power relations that had developed during the project. Whilst this workshop did not result in a democratic governance structure being implemented, it did encourage those who held power to question themselves and others about how that power could be better distributed between all stakeholders. Through this workshop we identified the need to have clear guidelines in place to increase transparency between stakeholder groups and ensure there were effective processes for communication and decision-making. As an output from the workshop we took the first steps in developing guiding processes, which BCLT and the Housing Association staff members took away to develop further. Over the duration of this research there were other occasions where power imbalances were challenged and clearer lines of communication opened between prospective resident and non-resident members. A participatory video activity, where prospective residents interviewed a non-resident member, was one example where the social barriers between stakeholders were temporarily removed and prospective residents gained insight into the motivations and aspirations of a board member.

For the majority of prospective residents, this project has not developed in the way they expected. This has been particularly apparent in their ability to inform the design

decisions and the lack of certainty over whether they will be allocated a place in the finished development. Additionally, through this research it also became clear that the Shaldon Road project did not develop in the way non-resident stakeholders expected when they initiated the project. This is partially due to conditions and requirements placed on them by external parties such as HCA, BCC and the Highways Agency, and also as a result of wanting to ensure the project houses people who would otherwise not engage with CLH. Whilst prospective residents expressed how partnering with the Housing Association limited the scope for democratic governance, non-resident members attributed the hierarchical social and organisational practice with external pressure from organisations like HCA and BCC, to adhere to the same requirements of non-community housing developers.

Throughout reporting this research, I have highlighted many problems that have arisen during the development process. This has often involved adopting a critical position when analysing the role of the Housing Association, Board and Project Group, and discussing how the social and organisational practices have negatively impacted on prospective residents’ ability to meaningfully participate. However, this is not to say that BCLT have failed to undertake a project that challenges mainstream housing delivery or have re-enforced the unequitable conditions associated with the open market. Rather, I propose, that BCLT is experimenting with new and innovative ways of rejecting the commodification of land for common ownership. Furthermore, BCLT, like other urban CLTs, has set itself the task of challenging dominant housing models from within the system. The potentially wide reaching benefits of partnering with non-community housing providers should not be underestimated. The attention the CLT model is receiving at central government

level offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate how CLTs can contribute socially and materially exemplary housing provisions.

As an initial concluding insight, this section has highlighted how the distribution of power in the social and organisational practices has resulted in the development not meeting many of the prospective residents' original expectations. Additionally, I have called in to question the extent to which community leadership is supported in BCLT's social and organisational practices. However, I have also proposed that this critique should not be interpreted as BCLT failing to develop an exciting and innovative housing project. Whilst it is important to acknowledge where this project has not met expectations, it is equally important to look at the ways in which it has attracted members from a wide demographic and delivered on its commitment to social and affordable housing. Comparing the practices of BCLT with literature on other CLH models, it is evident that BCLT is enacting a less radical model of delivering housing. In comparison to CLH projects that are initiated and led by the future residents, and implement democratic decision-making systems, BCLT has a clear hierarchy with different levels of participation. However, BCLT are engaging people who may not be able or interested in accessing more conventional CLH. The scope for diversity seen in BCLT is what, I argue, offers the most radical potential in the CLT model.

9.4) Returning to theory: consensus, conflict and compromise

In Chapter Five I reviewed a substantial body of literature on theories of power and community. Informed by this review I developed a theoretical framework which was

intended to guide a deeper analysis of the experiences and narratives captured through this research. Additionally, I aimed to make a theoretical contribution by examining the way these theories relate to the practices of a grassroots organisation. I began my review of literature on power by introducing Habermas’ (1987) theory of communicative rationality and his ideal speech conditions. I acknowledged that many participatory researchers draw on Habermas’ work to inform their practice, but highlighted how it is also important to engage with literature that identifies limitations in his theories, most notably his proposition of a universally applicable set of conditions against which communicative acts can be measured. I introduced a range of other key theorists who propose alternatives to Habermas’ conceptualisation of power, discussing Flyvbjerg (1998) and Foucault’s (1980) focus on real-life practices rather than the ideological position adopted by Habermas (1987). I also drew attention to the notions of rationalisations and norms of power (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Foucault, 1980), and the different ways in which power can be used to manipulate practices (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970; Boulding, 1990). I then introduced Mouffe’s (1992, 2013) work, and discussed how her scholarship on radical democracy, conflict and agonsim, can be seen as polarised and incommensurable with Habermas’ theories.

Taking these theories into the field of practice revealed that each may contribute to understanding and analysing the nature and form of power in a community. However, as this research developed and conflicts between stakeholder groups arose, I became particularly interested in the conflict-consensus debate, established in the theoretical frames of Habermas and Mouffe. I argue that in practice, neither of these theories, employed independently, adequately explain the phenomena studied

in this research. It could be argued that BCLT simply failed to meet Habermas' ideal speech conditions. However, in practice his conditions do not acknowledge the nuances of individuals within a community. In the case of the BCLT- Housing Association partnership, the conditions of ideal speech could not have been met, nor do these conditions recognise the importance of trade-offs in members' decisions to be involved with BCLT. Mouffe's (1992, 2013) theory of agonistic pluralism and radical democracy acknowledges the role of the individual and individual autonomy, and unlike Habermas, Mouffe argues for communities to be recognised as spaces of difference and conflict. However, whilst Habermas' ideal speech conditions appear too idealistic or utopian, Mouffe's argument to keep conflict in the public sphere and encourage conditions that lack closure also appear unmanageable when considered in the context of this case study. Whilst conflict was important in challenging power imbalances, this was balanced against the wider aim of delivering high quality affordable housing. This reflects arguments put forward by theorists who have written on Habermas and Mouffe (Hillier, 2003; Jezierska, 2011; Bond, 2011). Bond (2011, p.162) suggests how:

> *'in reality, both ways of thinking about urban democracy brush up against each other, revealing both communicative and agonistic characteristics at different moments in any particular context (…). However, the manifestations of each never fully achieve their theoretical ideal.'*

Habermas' (1990) theory proposes that reason underpins democratic communicative spaces, in which active parties are motivated by achieving the same ends: consensus. Conversely, Mouffe (1992) argues that agonism enables actors to

challenge reason and rationality, as advocated by Foucault (1980), and to interrogate power relations (Bond, 2011). Examining how these theories relate to the practices of BCLT demonstrates, as Bond suggests, how both theoretical frames can inform an analysis of power. BCLT members use reason and rationality, but that does not mean that in doing so they avoid conflict or the potential to challenge the distribution of power through agonistic relations. Both theories point to ideal ways of interacting which, whilst Habermas and Mouffe disagree with each other, could lead to stronger social relations. For Habermas, these would be the conditions of ideal speech, whilst for Mouffe it is less about conditions, but about a shared understanding of radical democracy, focusing on agonism, keeping conflicts in the public realm and only ever reaching conflictual consensus. In practice both of these theoretical perspectives are balanced against the need to progress the project. Mouffe (2013) claims that ‘the idea of antagonism also reveals the existence of conflicts for which there are no rational solutions’ (p130) and argues how ‘to think of the political as the ever present possibility of antagonism requires coming to terms with the lack of a final ground’ (p.131). The condition of not reaching a fixed conclusion, as described by Mouffe (2013), reflects the way the Shaldon Road project developed in practice. There were many examples where disagreements were not resolved or conversations took place that did not lead to final decisions being reached. Mouffe’s commentary on the nature and form of community power better reflects the reality and messiness of balancing different voices than Habermas’ ideal speech conditions and communicative rationality.

Whilst in principle Mouffe’s theoretical contributions appeal to my own interest in interrogating normative practices in CLH and questioning claims of empowerment,

as this research developed it became apparent that there was no definitive conclusion that favoured Habermas or Mouffe's theories, or sides with consensus or conflict. Both provided a lens that called into question the forms of power that developed over this case study, however, neither provided an alternative way of looking at the practice of community that adequately reflected the numerous dynamics of power within BCLT.

In Bond's (2011) writing, she seeks to identify common ground between Habermas and Mouffe's ontological positions and to find an approach to inquiry that draws on complementary elements in both of their theoretical frames. My interest is in understanding the relationship between Habermas' and Mouffe's theories and the practices of a community organisation. There have been numerous examples where Habermas' consensus seeking ideal speech conditions, and Mouffe's agonistic pluralism have assisted in making sense of experiences. However, from the perspective of BCLT members, the ability and willingness to compromise has been the most important condition in enabling community action. Over the remainder of this section I set out a justification for this claim and critique the role of compromise in this project's development. I focus specifically on whether the way prospective residents advocate compromise is a tool for embracing difference and conflict, or a manifestation of disempowerment and a symptom of BCLT being co-opted into the normative practices of conventional housing providers. Indeed, many of the conversations I had with people external to this research reflected the latter concerns, asking if my experiences with BCLT had led me to conclude that the CLT model was no more than a way to embed CLH into neo-liberal political agendas, or whether it was inferior to alternative models, such as co-housing or co-operatives. To

adopt this line of thinking or to de-value the actions of CLTs to such an extent, would be a simplistic interpretation of the model’s scope and potential. Rather than drawing conclusions that favour or disfavour the CLT model over other models of CLH, I conclude by reflecting on the nature and form of BCLT as an example of an urban CLT, which is distinct from other models of CLH. Instead of proposing that one model of CLH is superior, I situate the empirical research in theoretical debate and examine the nature of power in the realities of developing community housing as a CLT. To understand the nature of compromise in this research I consider how it relates to prospective residents’ aspirations for the project, and how it interacts with the forms and dynamics of power already documented in this thesis.

The way members situated compromise was in the space between conflict and consensus, and was rooted in the day-to-day practices and actions of progressing a CLT housing project. The following diagram sets out a synthesis of how compromise was understood by members of BCLT. This diagram was developed using prospective residents’ accounts of compromise in workshops, meetings and interviews. In the upper half of the diagram I document conditions that prospective residents identified as enabling them to compromise without feeling disempowered or unable to participate in the development process. The lower half depicts what happened when prospective residents felt that compromise restricted their access to the development process. This diagram provides an introductory explanation of how prospective residents understood their experiences of participation. I then critique this by drawing on my own observations and discussions on the role of compromise in theoretical literature.

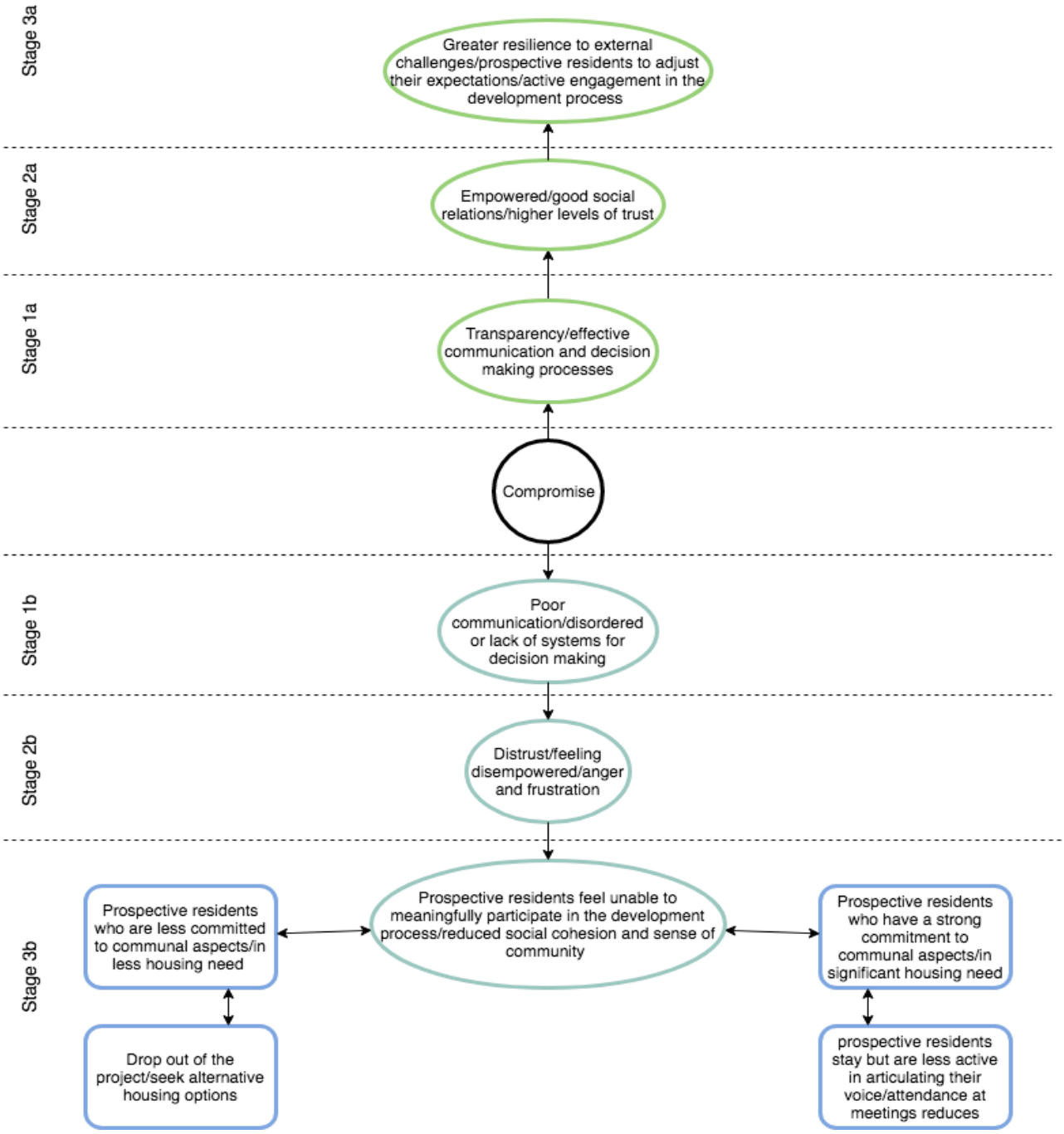
Stage 3a
Greater resilience to external challenges/prospective residents to adjust their expectations/active engagement in the development process
Stage 2a
Empowered/good social relations/higher levels of trust
Stage 1a
Transparency/effective communication and decision making processes
Compromise
Stage 1b
Poor communication/disordered or lack of systems for decision making
Stage 2b
Distrust/feeling disempowered/anger and frustration
Stage 3b
Prospective residents who are less committed to communal aspects/in less housing need
Prospective residents feel unable to meaningfully participate in the development process/reduced social cohesion and sense of community
Prospective residents who have a strong commitment to communal aspects/in significant housing need
Drop out of the project/seek alternative housing options
prospective residents stay but are less active in articulating their voice/attendance at meetings reduces

Figure 21: Synthesis of compromise in action

9.4.1) Positive experiences of compromise

In synthesising the conditions that prospective members perceived to link with positive experiences of compromise, I suggest there are three stages (documented in the upper half of Figure 29). These stages captured how prospective residents spoke about the ideal conditions in which they would compromise. In practice this was not fully realised during this case study. Stage 1a involves transparency between prospective residents and non-resident members, effective communication and decision-making processes, which are underpinned by well-defined guidelines that ensure prospective residents know how they can feed their voices into the conversations. If the conditions of stage one are met then prospective residents identify being able to develop stronger social relations and feeling a greater sense of trust towards the non-resident members (stage 2a). As a result of these feelings the Prospective Resident Group express how they could be more resilient to the external challenges BCLT face in trying to progress the project. Additionally, they identify a willingness to adjust their expectations and maintain their commitment to the shared concerns of BCLT, such as providing high quality social rented units and broadening the demographic of members living in the final community. Finally, prospective residents express a desire to remain actively involved in the development process, taking on more development tasks and responsibilities (stage 3a).

9.4.2) Negative experiences of compromise

The conditions in which compromise were not experienced positively by prospective residents had different outcomes (documented in the lower half of Figure 29). Stage

1b depicts what prospective residents identified as the negative practices of BCLT. These included poor communication from the Board, Housing Association and Project Group, where prospective residents reported feeling confused or unsure about how the project was developing. Additionally, some prospective residents identified feeling frustrated by compromise conditions where the systems of decision-making were disordered and lacked any clear process for them to contribute their voices. When these conditions arose, prospective residents expressed distrust, anger and frustration towards the non-resident members. They also commonly associated these conditions with feelings of disempowerment (stage 2b). As a result of these feelings the members highlighted how they believed they were unable to meaningfully participate in the development process. Additionally, the social relations within the Prospective Resident Group, and between prospective residents and non-residents, suffered and there was less focus on BCLT's wider aims. The prospective residents became more concerned with securing a place in the finished development and less by the common concerns they initially identified as motivating their engagement in the project (stage 3b). Under these conditions there appeared to be two different outcomes, depicted in the lower squares. Outcome A, in which prospective residents who were less motivated by the communal aspects of the scheme or whose housing need was not as great, dropped out of the project and from the conversations I had with members who chose to leave, they were pursuing alternative housing options. Outcome B relates to those prospective residents who were more motivated by being involved in a community-led project or could only afford to purchase a home through BCLT's shared equity scheme. For these members, they remained a part of the Shaldon Road project, but did not voice their

opinions as freely. Additionally, when these conditions arose the attendance at meetings fell.

9.4.3) Reflecting on the role of compromise in BCLT

Identifying the conditions and parameters where prospective residents would compromise without feeling disempowered has helped the non-resident stakeholders to understand some of the frustration and anger felt by prospective residents over the duration of this research. Additionally, it enabled prospective residents to start vocalising their concerns about practices they felt went beyond acceptable limits of top-down leadership (understood as leadership by non-resident stakeholders and external parties). However, from observing compromises being made in action it is evident that there are significant problems with the nature and form that power takes between the different parties involved. In Chan and Prozen's (2018, p.172) paper on ethical compromise in planning practice they describe how compromise is 'commonly characterized by mutual concessions made by conflicting parties to secure this settlement'. In this case study it was the prospective residents who made most of the concessions. The non-resident stakeholders were required to amend some of their initial aspirations but this was due to pressures from external bodies rather than to reach a mutual compromise with prospective residents.

In scenarios that adhered to the conditions which prospective residents associated with positive experiences of compromise, there was a lack of clarity over what these limits look like in reality and what happens if they are crossed. As discussed in Chapter Eight, prospective resident and non-resident members identified that open

communication was a positive condition of engagement, which reduced the prospective residents' uncertainty about the way the project was progressing and enabled them to feel more involved in the development process. Yet the communication in compromise scenarios remained largely top down. This also applied to the guidelines for decision-making (see pyramid of decision-making in Chapter Eight). The prospective residents were pleased to have a better understanding of how they should set their expectations but remained predominantly in the lower two quadrants as passive recipients of information.

In Chapter Eight I provided an example of how decisions on the design standard for the site were made. I described how members were frustrated at being invited to participate in the conversation but feeling that their opinions were not considered in further dialogue between the Architects, Project Group, Board and the Housing Association. The conditions associated with positive compromise would predict that if the non-resident stakeholders had communicated that their reasons for wanting to gain Passivhaus certification were about being an exemplar of how a community organisation can deliver affordable housing that meets high environmental standards, rather than for personal gain, then prospective residents would have willingly gone along with this. But some members strongly opposed the certification process. Some members felt that it limited opportunities to self-finish and individualise units, whilst others were against the certification process because they felt paying to receive certification was aligned too closely with consumerist systems. In this example, compromise would have only ever been partial or exclusionary.

One impact of partial or exclusionary compromises is that people leave the project, as has been seen over the course of this case study. Writing specifically about the implications of compromise on democratic debate, Ruser and Machin (2017, p.44) suggest that there is ‘a danger that compromise emaciates the plurality of the political realm, not just by omitting certain parties, but by ‘covering over’ that omission and then ‘watering down’ the positions that are included’. This quote suggests that compromise may impact not only on individuals, but on whole democratic systems. Similarly to Ruser and Machin (2017), this research highlighted that the frequency and severity of compromises that take place have an incremental impact on the radical aspects of the project. Over the two and a half years spent with BCLT many of the initial aspirations were lost. The self-build plots, which were intended to cross subsidise the social rented units, reducing the need to take HCA funding, were removed from the design. The idea of having bedroom facilities in the common-house in order to reduce the need for extra private rooms in homes was lost from the scheme. Other aspects were also significantly reduced, such as the desire to keep the development car free, and the extent that residents would be able to self-finish their homes. Additionally, the temporary removal of social rented units impacted on the members’ sense that this project was doing something innovative. When Eric left BCLT he was motivated by the decision to exclude social rented units, however, once these were re-introduced he did not come back to the project due to feeling that it did not meet his aspirations to be involved in a radical project. The more the development digressed from the initial ambition of creating a radically different housing project, the more the project became focused on ‘the individual’, such as wanting private gardens, extra bedrooms and individual laundry facilities.

The conditions that BCLT members associated with positive compromise advocated a ‘logic’ in which decisions were susceptible to the rationalisations and norms that Flyvbjerg (1998/2003) and Foucault (1980a) warn against. In this case study there were many social and institutional norms that affected how power was distributed and who could challenge this. Whilst the prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders may have negotiated better ways of practicing open communication and decision-making, the non-resident stakeholders remained the curators of the spaces in which these practices took place. The uncertainty over being allocated a place in the development meant that these spaces could not be fully democratic. Therefore, whilst the positive conditions of compromise were perceived to be conducive to involving prospective residents more in the project’s progress, my observation was that they reduced opportunities to bring radical ideas to the table and served as a way of removing the type of conflict that Mouffe (2001) associates with agonism.

Mouffe (2001, 2013) is critical of compromise, favouring conflictual consensus, which she argues, allows for difference and reduces the risk of specific voices being muted in the decision-making process. In considering how Mouffe’s theory of agonism and radical democracy could have changed prospective residents’ experiences of the social and organisational practices, it is difficult to identify how conflictual consensus would have drastically altered the decision-making processes. Over this case study many of decisions were partial. There were instances where prospective residents disagreed with the actions being proposed by the non-resident stakeholders, yet it was common for them not to challenge these proposals with any resolve. The prospective residents’ inability to voice their dissent was a result of knowing that their

future involvement in the project was in the hands of the non-resident stakeholders who would have the final say on the allocation of units. The prospective residents were often muted by their awareness of the ease at which they could be replaced.

The way dissent and difference were negotiated in this case study diverged from the conceptualisation put forward by Mouffe (2001, 2013) in her theory of agonism and radical democracy. In Mouffe’s conceptualisation, conversations on, and challenges to, the distribution of power between stakeholder groups in the decision-making practices would have been encouraged to remain in the shared spaces between different stakeholder groups. Examples in this case study highlighted how prospective residents were often excluded from conversations and had limited opportunities to engage with non-resident stakeholders. The Prospective Resident Group were asked to provide representatives to attend Project Group meetings but for some members this felt perfunctory and tokenistic. This was because representatives were perceived to be reacting to the needs of the non-resident stakeholders, such as sharing information back to prospective residents, rather than having equal access to, or voice in, the conversations where they could really affect change.

Despite making small improvements to the communication and decision-making practices, the power held by different stakeholder groups remained unevenly distributed over the duration of this case study. The nature of the power relations between different stakeholders were informed by more than procedural processes such as how decisions were made and information was shared. The prospective

residents' sense of power was strongly associated with their ability to access and have voice in conversations. Boulding (1990) refers to this as knowledge power, which comes from having access to information on the topic under discussion. When prospective residents spoke about their experience of positive compromise, they identified that if the non-resident stakeholder communicated openly and effectively with them they felt more able to trust them to make decisions on their behalf. This appears contradictory to their other reports of needing to have access and voice in conversations in order to feel empowered by the process. Tensions around the role of compromise, how it enabled the project to progress, and the impact on prospective residents' sense of empowerment, brings attention back to questions on the extent to which BCLT is a community-led organisation.

9.5) Chapter summary

In this chapter I have discussed how delivering a CLT housing project differed significantly from BCLT members' aspirations. In doing so I have drawn attention to disparities between the way prospective resident and non-resident members spoke about the need for open communication, and the role of compromise. I highlighted that the way compromise was framed suggested a desire to shift towards scenarios where non-resident stakeholders make decisions on behalf of prospective residents . Mouffe's theoretical contribution provides a useful lens for critiquing the relationship between compromise and power. I argued that whilst some members of different stakeholder groups spoke positively about the role of compromise, Mouffe's writing on the importance of keeping differences in the public sphere supports my

observation that compromise conditions left prospective residents feeling less able to meaningfully participate.

In the following chapter I draw more detailed conclusions relating to compromise and power, and aspirations versus the practice of developing a CLT project. Here I reflect on how the experiences captured over the duration of this case study suggest there was limited space for prospective residents to meaningfully participate and have a voice in the development. As the project progressed and the non-resident stakeholders were required to meet external conditions required for planning consent, the initial shared aspiration for community leadership was lost. The conditions required for community-leadership were often in conflict with the way relationships with external parties needed to be managed. Having seen the range of relationships develop over this case study, I drew conclusions that BCLT members’ positive focus on compromise is symptomatic of a struggle between prospective residents’ desire to influence the development decisions and to live in the finished community. Similarly, it was evident that non-residents were also conflicted in their aspiration to support communities to develop their own housing and the desire to prove BCLT is a viable alternative to conventional housing delivery methods.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS

The starting point for this research was a desire to understand whether one CLT project met its members' aspirations of CLH. This was situated in wider debate about how CLTs should be positioned within CLH discourse. I began by highlighting that whilst being rooted in a long and rich history of traditional approaches to CLH, the CLT model of housing was both materially and socially distinct. I identified how the organisational structures vary significantly to what is synonymous with more traditional models of CLH, such as co-operatives and co-housing. Partnerships between communities and conventional housing providers, engagement with external parties such as the HCA and local government would, I argued, impact on the prospective future residents' experiences of being involved in the development process. As Davis (2010, p.38) questions in his research on CLTs:

> *Will the CLT still espouse an operational preference for the disadvantaged—holding lands in trust, keeping homes affordable, and protecting security of tenure for people with limited resources— or will the Gandhian legacy of trusteeship be lost in a frenetic scramble to increase the scale and broaden the appeal of the CLT?*

Sharing similar concerns as Davis, I began by highlighting a need to engage critically with how we understand this relatively new model of community housing, arguing that before considering how to scale-up the CLT movement in England, we need to understand what is happening when groups attempt to bring projects to fruition. I proposed that there was a need to challenge the assumption that CLT developments will inevitably bring about the benefits attributed to traditional CLH, such as

empowerment, equitability and emancipation. I reflected on the small collection of academics who engage critically with the scope and potential of new models of CLH, such as Hodkinson (2012, p.435), who argues that CLTs exist ‘within the confines and logic of private property and [are] not challenging the root causes of housing need’. I acknowledged that the presence of partnerships and professional working relationships may impact on the members’ ability to actively participate in the development process. However, I also proposed that there may be opportunities within the CLT model to respond to some of the criticisms of more traditional CLH, broadening the demographics of people who have access to, and engage with, the process. Practices that initially appear negative need to be examined from a position concerned with challenging wider inequalities in housing provisions. Doing this, I argue, paints a more complex picture of the role of BCLT in the wider CLH movement.

In seeking to engage with bigger questions on the nature and form of CLTs, this thesis set out to explore how the CLT model supports community-leadership, participation and grassroots action. I captured the experiences of being involved in the Shaldon Road project from the perspective of prospective residents, and to a lesser extent the non-resident stakeholders. These experiences informed more critical debate on the distribution of power in the practices of developing housing using the CLT model. To make sense of the experiences reported through this research I proposed the following overarching question:

- *To what extent does the Bristol Community Land Trust meet prospective residents’ aspirations of community-led housing?*

The following three sub-questions enabled me to answer this question:

- *How does power manifest in the social and organisational practices of the Bristol Community Land Trust?*
- *What effect do these practices have on the prospective resident members' ability to realise their aspirations for community?*
- *How does this inform our understanding of the role of community land trusts in providing alternatives to conventional housing delivery?*

These questions guided the analysis of data gathered over the case study. As the research developed it became evident that the members' experiences of power in the social and organisational practices were part of a rich discussion on the role of BCLT in providing alternatives to conventional housing delivery models. The tensions that arose as BCLT attempted to balance community leadership with wider aspirations to challenge the notion of CLH as 'niche' or 'bourgeois' led to a valuable debate on the nuances of access, voice and participation.

The previous chapter drew conclusions from the focused empirical work undertaken as part of this research. In doing this, I set out the how the day-to-day practices involved in developing the Shaldon Road project have often led to frustration and anger, and resulted in tensions arising between the prospective resident and non-resident groups. However, at many points in this thesis I have referred to the scope of the CLT model to open up CLH to a broader range of people and challenge the idea that it is only for a niche demographic. BCLT is at a vital point in its

organisational development, especially as it attempts to negotiate tensions between attracting a broad membership, challenging stereotypes of who CLH is for, being an exemplar for other CLTs, and meeting members' aspirations for community leadership. The way BCLT responds to these tensions will set the trajectory of its future projects, especially regarding the participation of prospective residents and the nature of partnering relations with the Housing Association. The findings from this research enable me to return to the wider concerns about the position of CLTs in the broader CLH movement and propose some insights based on the findings from this case study which relate to the structural governance of urban CLTs more generally. Whilst this research did not intended to draw generalisable findings or to develop outcomes in a manner that was intended to inform policy, there are implications from the case study that can contribute to more general discussions on the future of urban CLTs in England. The following three sections situate the findings from this research within the wider debate on the future of CLTs.

10.1) Relations of power in the social and organisational practices of BCLT

By examining what motivated members from each of the stakeholder groups to join BCLT and their aspirations for the Shaldon Road project, it was apparent that there was a common and shared language. Terms such as 'community-led', 'empowering', 'sustainable', and 'alternative', were regularly used to articulate aspirations for both the development process and the finished community. In practice, it became evident that the members, particularly those belonging to different stakeholder groups, had

different ideas of how these terms should be actioned. The social relations that developed during the initial stages of the development process appeared democratic and there was consensus on the common concerns and goals for the Shaldon Road project. However, once the process moved from visioning towards taking action to progress the development, these common goals became less defined and conflict began to emerge between different stakeholder groups.

The prospective residents had energy and enthusiasm to contribute to the project. Many had professional experience in community development and facilitation, however, they had limited skills in planning or design. Despite having little experience in these fields, they demonstrated a willingness to carry out research to develop their understanding. Conversely, the non-resident groups were made up of members with experience in planning, architecture and housing law, however, these stakeholders did not have the same level of experience as the Prospective Resident Group in community development. The diverse skill sets, as well as prospective residents' willingness to learn new skills offered the potential to explore new collaborations between communities and conventional housing providers, and prospective residents and non-residents. Yet the lack of social interaction between different stakeholder groups as well as the external pressures from third party institutions and government bodies, resulted in these collaborations not being realised to their full potential.

10.1.1) Relations of power within BCLT

Examining the forms of power that emerged over the case-study highlighted how both internal organisational practices and external relations impact on prospective residents’ experiences of the development process. Prospective residents were regularly restricted in their access to the non-resident members. The majority of communication went through two prospective residents who attempted to represent the views and opinions of the whole group at meetings with non-resident stakeholders. This led to many prospective residents feeling excluded from the spaces in which decisions on their potential future homes were being made. Additionally, the lack of interaction between prospective resident and non-resident groups resulted in disagreement and difference being, at best, siloed into the separate stakeholder groups. Within each of the different stakeholder groups there was a noticeable adversity to conflict and dissent. Rather the stakeholders aspired to achieve consensus, yet the awareness, especially from non-resident members, that this would not be possible to achieve, meant that prospective residents were often restricted in their access to project discussions. These restrictions resulted in prospective residents feeling powerless, frustrated and angry at the non-resident stakeholders, or unsure of voicing their own opinions on the design of the community.

Over the duration of this research we identified a need to better understand how to improve relations internally, between prospective resident and non-resident members. In Workshop Two BCLT members identified that establishing clear guidelines, as early as possible, would have a positive impact on prospective residents’ experiences of the development process. When clear guidelines were in place, the members expressed that power imbalances between different groups

were not experienced so negatively. Many of the prospective residents were content for the non-residents to make some decisions on their behalf because they understood that it reduced the time commitment required from them. When there was less transparency, and the guidelines for feeding into discussions on the development process were not clear, the distribution of power between different stakeholder groups led to prospective residents feeling angry and frustrated at the non-resident stakeholders. They reported feeling unable to voice their opinions or having no clear role in the organisation. This suggested that there are certain conditions where prospective residents felt content to compromise on their level of influence and voice and other instances where they were not (for further discussion on the nature of compromise see Section 10.2).

10.1.2) Relations of power between BCLT and external parties

The internal power relations were important in understanding the members' experiences of the development process. However, as the project progressed it became apparent that these experiences were also influenced by power relations between BCLT and external parties. Pressures from external organisations such as the Highways Agency, BCC and HCA meant that the non-resident stakeholders often had to make decisions without being able to consult prospective residents . Members of the Board, and BCLT and Housing Association staff spoke at length about their experiences of continually negotiating with, and trying to meet, the expectations of external organisations. In the same way as prospective residents expressed feeling powerless in their relationship with the non-resident groups, the non-resident stakeholders alluded to a similar sense of powerlessness in their interactions with

external organisations. As a result of this, the non-resident stakeholders expressed concerns about the prospective residents being invited to make decisions and the non-residents having to go back on those decisions because of external pressures. In this sense many of the non-resident stakeholders express a fear of letting the prospective resident down (for further conclusions on external conditions influencing BCLT please see Section 10.3)

The way the project was governed, both internally and externally, had a significant impact on prospective residents’ voice and control over the development decisions, and their ability to form a sense of community. The inability to allocate at the beginning of the development process had a significant impact on prospective residents’ perception of how much voice and power they had in the project. As more urban CLTs mobilise it is important to establish and define the role of prospective residents and to ensure the governance structures align with these. Finding ways that CLTs can, at the very least, create a resident specification, but preferably allocate at an early stage in the development process, would significantly reduce power imbalances between prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders.

Whilst this research set out to examine the internal social and organisational practices of BCLT, the duration of time spent working alongside them highlighted a range of factors, including external pressures, that shaped the way the project developed. How these external pressures influenced BCLT’s social and organisational practices feeds into wider debates on the scope and form of urban CLTs more generally. Over the duration of this research there were many examples

of external conditions shifting the trajectory of the project. In Chapter Seven I discussed the allocation of homes in the finished community. The Boards' and Housing Associations' initial intention had been for the Prospective Resident Group to design the allocation policy for BCLT units. As the project progressed and the conditions of taking HCA funding and BCC land emerged, it became apparent that BCLT would be required to adhere to external allocation requirements. This led to a long and uncertain period of negotiation between the Housing Association and Board, and HCA and BCC, to find a compromise which would allow BCLT to stipulate some wider commitment to the ethos of the community project and for the majority of BCLT members to still be eligible to be allocated a home in the finished development. This is one example of how wider institutional constraints impact on CLTs' ability to engage communities in the development of new homes, and subsequently on prospective residents' experiences of being involved in the project. Adherence to requirements such as allocating to individuals in housing need is important, and arguably plays a vital role in broadening who may access CLH. However, the difficulty BCLT and the Housing Association experienced in getting recognition for other criteria, such as a commitment to living in a community, significantly reduced the time that could be spent engaging and communicating with the prospective residents.

Central government has demonstrated its support for CLTs and CLH more generally through short and medium term funding commitments. Whilst writing this thesis the Minister of State for Housing announced £240 million additional funding for the Community Housing Fund (Sharma, 2017). However, in practice, CLTs face uncertainty due to their lack of autonomy from other conventional housing providers

such as Housing Associations. In July 2015, whilst undertaking this case-study, the government budget set out a one percent rent reduction for social and affordable housing each year from 2016-2020. This would have a direct impact on CLTs, especially urban CLTs, which are either registered providers of social housing or partnering with social housing providers. During 2015 and 2016, the National CLT Network undertook a lengthy campaign for CLTs to be exempt from this rent cut, securing a three year exemption to be reviewed. These examples demonstrate how CLTs differ from more traditional models of CLH. Being a registered social housing provider or partnering with a Housing Association, means that CLTs are vulnerable to policy changes within central government which would not affect other models of CLH. Similarly, the requirements that accompanied BCLT’s funding from HCA and the land from BCC impacted on the scope for community action and participation. In this case study, the lack of autonomy from other, conventional social housing providers, was experienced most by the prospective resident members. It affected their ability to develop a strong sense of community and led to stress and anxiety. Urban CLTs are expected to adhere to rules and regulations that have been developed for conventional housing providers, whilst functioning mainly on volunteer time with very limited staff capacity. This highlights a need for CLH organisations, particularly those that have more engagement with local and central government, to gain autonomy for conventional housing providers. This is an important consideration in conversations on scaling up CLTs in England. If community housing projects do not receive autonomy from conventional housing providers then the challenges documented in this research, relating to prospective residents’ sense of voice and control, will continue to prevail. However, there will inevitably be risks associated with giving CLH groups autonomy from the constraints placed on other social

housing providers and developers. There is a need for future research to examine how these risks may be mitigated. This research highlights how CLH groups may benefit from a separate allocation policy which mirrors many of the conditions placed on social housing providers, with some additional focus given to the need for earlier allocation and for a measure of commitment to the group.

10.2) Realising aspirations: The nature of compromise in BCLT?

Over the two and a half year spent with BCLT I have been involved in many different conversations, meetings and events, and have seen the project develop from initial visioning to obtaining planning permission and allocating the future homes. During this time I have gained substantial access to, and assisted in facilitating, spaces in which the social and organisational practices of BCLT have been discussed. The importance that both prospective residents and non-residents placed on the willingness to compromise, prompted me to engage critically with what this meant for members of the Shaldon Road project, how prospective residents experienced compromise and how these experiences related to wider conversations around power and community leadership.

Compromise is relatively under-examined in community literature, but has received some attention in the fields of community planning and urban studies, and in theories of power. In the previous chapter I discussed how members of BCLT identified compromise as an important condition in enabling the project to progress. However, whilst acknowledging this as the opinion of BCLT members, I question whether prospective residents were deciding to compromise or if they felt this was their only

option if they wanted to remain in the project. This relates to relations of power within BCLT and questions around who is participating and which voices are being heard. Contrary to BCLT members, my observations led me to conclude that the nature of the compromises made over this development process served to delegitimise the opinions of prospective residents, and to prioritise the views of non-resident stakeholders. The example where Mark discusses the way conversations on the design standard for the site developed suggests that there were some aspects of the project that prospective residents had strong opinions on and were unwilling to compromise. For Mark, the proposal to go against prospective residents’ preference to not opt for Passivhaus certification was perceived as an attack on his individual voice and autonomy in the project. Yet Mark expressed feeling unable to voice this frustration outside of our interview conversation because he believed the non-resident stakeholders would be unwilling to change their minds. When Mark spoke about this experience he focused on how the project was not meeting his aspirations. For Mark it was evident that there were some aspirations he held at the beginning which he realised were less important to him, whilst others, such as the flexibility to design the interior of his home, were far more linked to his personal freedom and autonomy within the project. The compromises made over the duration of this case study were predominantly one-sided, in that the non-resident stakeholders did not appear to be joining prospective residents in the act of compromising.

Viewing the nature of compromise in BCLT through the lens of power highlights how the voices of prospective residents are often overlooked or silenced (Mouffe, 2001,2013; Ruser and Machin; 2017). The way in which the act of silencing took

place was often subtle and framed in discourses of acting for the greater good. This reflects the institutional logic and rationality which Foucault (1980a) and Flyvbjerg (1998/2003) argue against, where the opinions of those who appear to have more knowledge or expertise in a relevant field are prioritised over the views of others. The non-resident stakeholders were attempting to represent the needs of the range of residents who may live in the finished community. Yet they were also trying to meet their own aspirations of demonstrating an alternative to developer-led, market-driven housing, which is affordable and built to a high environmental standard. For the non-residents, their desire to legitimise the CLT model and for BCLT to be considered as a viable developer of housing supersedes prospective residents' individual aspirations.

The nature of the compromises captured in this research epitomise the tensions around who BCLT serves and the extent of community leadership it seeks to engender. At many points during this research non-residents members expressed a desire to prioritise the wider aim, to be an affordable housing provider who builds for communities, over the specific needs of the prospective resident members. Whether BCLT is community-led or building *for* the community, relates to questions raised by Davis (2010) and Rowe, Engelsman and Southern (2016) about the future of CLTs. This case study demonstrated that the presence of non-resident stakeholders significantly reduces the voice of prospective resident members. The nature of compromise, even under the conditions identified by BCLT members as positive, demonstrated how rationality, institutional logic and normative assumptions of who should be leading, remained largely unchallenged. Despite many of the prospective residents having skills in the field of community development, the skills of the Board,

Project Group and Housing Association, such as architecture, housing law or finance, were prioritised. The findings in this research shared many similarities with Rowe, Engelsman and Southern’s (2016) research on CLTs in the UK and US. In their conclusions they argue that in the US studies, the CLTs enacted community resistance and activism, whilst in the UK example ‘Social and economic reforms that were hoped for by community representatives always remained secondary to the objectives of the technocrats that maintained control over the agenda for renewal’ (Englesman, Rowe and Southern, 2016, p.609).

As more CLTs mobilise in England there is a need to establish a clearer vision for the movement, which portrays an accurate representation of the extent of community leadership and enables prospective members to understand the level of participation and voice they will have in the CLT activities. Compromise, in the nature and form documented in this thesis, will continue to shape the future endeavours of BCLT and arguably the CLT movement more generally, unless actions are taken to ensure prospective residents have more voice in the decision making and communication processes, compromises will continue to be experienced as disempowering for prospective residents.

The way BCLT members spoke about compromise shared similarities with Habermas’ ideal speech situation, where conditions for democratic decision-making are proposed. Both Habermas’ ideal speech conditions and the conditions of positive compromise identified by BCLT members seek to reduce or eliminate difference and to find agreement between individuals. However, from observing the nature of

compromise in this case study it is evident that prospective residents are the ones having to re-define and re-establish their aspirations to align with the project changes. Similarly to Ruser and Machin's (2017) warning, many of the more radical ideas, that differentiated the Shaldon Road project from well-designed developer-led or Housing Association schemes, were lost as the project progressed and the non-residents faced the numerous pressures and challenges of achieving planning permission. Mouffe's theory of radical and agonistic democracy does not prescribe conditions that would have improved relations between prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders. However, her argument for keeping conflict and difference in the shared spaces between stakeholders would have enabled prospective residents to communicate with non-resident stakeholders about their concerns and frustrations.

The predominant issues raised by prospective residents were not about the project failing to meet all of their initial aspirations but the feeling that their concerns and frustrations were not being heard or respected by the non-resident stakeholders. In drawing conclusions on the experiences captured over this research it is important to highlight that for many of the prospective residents, shifting and adapting some of their aspirations was seen as inevitable and in some cases as a constructive way of building a sense of community within the prospective resident group. Additionally, when many of the prospective residents and non-residents spoke about making compromises, it was rooted in wider concerns about diversifying the demographics of people engaging with the CLT model and attracting prospective residents who would be interested in a range of tenure types. The problematic nature of compromise in this case study was not in prospective residents' inability to enact all

of their aspirations, but rather in the prevailing norms that remained, for the majority of this case study, unchallenged. These were norms around who could make decisions, who should have access to the spaces in which decisions were discussed and made, and whose voices were more important and why. These points raise bigger questions around how BCLT differs from good community planning practice and how, moving forward, it may seek to define 'community leadership' and embed these principles in the everyday practices. The following section draws conclusions on the future of BCLT and identifies how this case study contributes to wider conversations on the future of urban CLTs.

10.3) THE ROLE OF CLTS IN PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO CONVENTIONAL HOUSING DELIVERY

Throughout this thesis, I have returned many times to the concerns I held at the beginning of the research. These concerns centred on whether the collaborative nature of CLTs and their engagement within more mainstream structural systems of housing delivery had a detrimental impact on prospective residents' experience of being involved in the development process. Over this research I have been met with a range of different responses to practices and actions I shared in. At times, I was struck by the seemingly impossible task of trying to unpack and make sense of the complex internal and external dynamics that impacted on prospective residents' experiences. Over the research process I alternated between the belief that BCLT could significantly challenge conventional housing delivery, or that, despite their initial aims, the essence of community leadership was lost in the struggle to navigate structural challenges and obstacles.

When looking back holistically at the data gathered over this case study, it would be a disservice to members of BCLT to fail to acknowledge that steps have been taken to disrupt hegemonic assumptions of who can deliver housing. Within mainstream approaches to housing delivery, BCLT challenges the notion of ‘private’ ‘for profit’ models. However, the resolve of non-resident stakeholders to ensure the project did not become characterised as niche or bourgeois made them cautious of relinquishing leadership to prospective residents. The non-residents’ concerns about ensuring that a diverse range of people could access BCLT draws attention to the problem of who hears about, joins and maintains commitment to CLTs. In the case of BCLT there was a noticeable period in the middle of the research where members who were seeking social and affordable rented homes stopped attending meetings. This particular demographic did not increase again until the latter stages of the project. This can be attributed to the lengthy planning process. In reality, most individuals in housing need will be unlikely to wait three years to know if they are going to be allocated a house in the finished development. For all of the prospective residents, the duration of time that passed before they knew if they were going to be able to live in the final community had a negative impact on their experience of the development process.

The presence of the Board and Project Group, partnership with the Housing Association, close working relationship with BCC, and HCA requirements, positively and negatively impacted on prospective residents’ experiences of the development process. There was a general acceptance that the non-residents assisted in presenting a professionalised image of BCLT to external parties and reduced the

time and financial commitment required from prospective residents . However, reflecting on the nature of these relationships, I remain critical of the extent that CLTs, particularly those partnering with Housing Associations, can support the meaningful participation of prospective residents and lay community members. Whilst initially cautious of partnerships between CLTs and Housing Associations and the risk of communities being co-opted into more institutional systems (Moore and Mullins, 2013), in Moore’s (2016, p.2) recent work he highlights how these partnerships combine ‘Housing Association expertise and experience in housing development with the local stimulus and democratic virtues of CLTs’. Whilst agreeing with Moore that more CLT projects with come to fruition by partnering with Housing Associations, I argue that these partnerships significantly impact on the extent of community leadership and participation. The democratic virtues which Moore attributes to CLTs underpinned the ideological aspirations of BCLT members but in reality the governance remained predominantly top down.

At the beginning of this thesis I highlighted how CLTs are being presented as a viable contributor to overcoming challenges around how we house ourselves both now and in the future. I cited a range of literature documenting how CLTs may contribute housing stock that meets the needs of local residents rather than conventional approaches which prioritise profit (Bliss, 2009; Gulliver, Handy and Morris, 2013; Javis, 2015; Moore and Mullins, 2013; Thompson, 2015; Tummers, 2015). My research has highlighted that whilst BCLT seeks to address the shortage of affordable housing in Bristol, the reality is that the Shaldon Road project has taken over four years to gain planning permission. Whilst this is only one CLT, it is likely

that many of the challenges BCLT faced will be similar to other urban CLTs who partner with Housing Associations.

As the CLT model continues to grow in popularity and receive support from central government, it raises questions about how we position CLTs within the wider CLH movement. Whilst undertaking this research the National CLT Network had to campaign for CLTs to be excluded from conditions which would undermine their ability to hold land in trust. This poses questions about the extent to which CLTs can enact the principles of community leadership whilst operating within conventional housing and planning systems. The tendency to focus on mainstreaming and scaling up in discourses on the future of CLTs draws us away from important questions, which are yet to be discussed in significant depth, about what underpins the CLT movement when we look beyond ideologies of democracy. The story narrated through this thesis tells of how non-resident members struggled to balance their desires to deliver a high quality affordable housing development, with the commitment to engage the wider community membership in the design and development process. This highlights the need for further discussions on the conceptualisation of leadership in CLH. Additionally, to better understand the way leadership is enacted in CLTs we could be looking more to international examples of CLH or, as is more frequently being used in literature, collaborative housing[12], to

[12] Collaborative housing is used as an umbrella term for living collectively, used more in international literature than in the UK. It encompasses a wider range of governance structure, which include varying levels of citizen involvement. Additionally, collaborations between community and non-community organisations are often discussed in collaborative housing literature. Czischke (2018, p.57) describes how collaborative housing definitions acknowledge the 'collaborative nature of the relationships that residents have in this type of housing, both amongst each other and with a variety of external actors'.

explore differing levels of participation in the inception, development and day-to-day running of housing communities.

Whilst there are numerous challenges for the CLT movement to overcome, I conclude that BCLT, as an example of an urban CLT, is still distinct from conventional housing providers, such as Housing Associations delivering housing on their own. A clear commitment to creating long term, strong communities runs throughout BCLT, in both the social and material design decisions. Rather than dismissing the scope for CLTs to contribute to the community-led housing movement, we could better position discussions on how to support CLTs to find new ways of working within the mainstream housing system, whilst also making small but incremental challenges to the normative and dominant models of building homes.

10.4) Research contribution

The question posed for this research was, *To what extent does the Bristol Community Land Trust meet prospective residents' aspirations of community-led housing?* In seeking to answer this question, I propose that this research has contributed many other unexpected insights, which have emerged as a result of the methodological decision to undertake a participatory case study approach. This section synthesises the theoretical and practical contributions that this research has made to BCLT, community-led housing literature and discussions on theories of power and community.

In setting out the contributions of this research, I start by highlighting the value of the single case study. The decision to undertake a single case study enabled me to spend two and half years immersed within BCLT organisation. This undoubtedly provided a much deeper insight into the day-to-day actions involved in bringing a CLT project to fruition. Through this research I came to understand the nuances and complexities involved in the process of developing the Shaldon Road project in a way which could not have been achieved by maintaining a position as an outsider. The narratives captured in this research tell a story of people's experiences, often of frustration and anger, but they also look to the future, and depict expressions of hope and excitement at the scope for BCLT to contribute to challenging housing inequalities in Bristol. In Flybjerg's (2006, p.240) contribution to literature on single case studies, he claims:

> *'Narratives not only give meaningful form to experiences we have already lived through but also provide us a forward glance, helping us to anticipate situations even before we encounter them, allowing us to envision alternative futures'.*

By undertaking this research, I have experienced how narratives provide valuable insights into practices. Additionally, I would argue that through this case study we have not only envisioned alternatives but have begun the take actions towards bringing about positive change. Carrying out a single case study, using a participatory approach (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) afforded me the opportunity to develop a closeness with many of the prospective residents that would otherwise have not been possible, and to have a continued presence in the day-to-

day activities. In considering agendas for future research into CLTs and CLH, I propose that this research has demonstrated a distinct need to undertake more in-depth case studies in order to understand the complexities and nuances of the field.

At the beginning of this thesis I identified how the position of urban CLTs within the wider CLH movement is significantly underexplored in existing literature. This research contributes to the academic debates of Davis (2010), Moore and Mckee (2012;2014) and Rowe, Engelsman and Southern (2016) who have instigated debates on the nature and form of CLTs. The findings generated through this case study highlight the potential for CLTs to respond to the criticisms of more traditional CLH models and draw in a more diverse demographic of members. However, I have also engaged with the limitations and challenges of the CLT model, demonstrating how BCLT is at a critical point in its organisational development. Through this research I have identified the challenges that one CLT faced in trying to maintain its commitment to community leadership whilst also adhering to the regulations and restrictions from external parties.

In response to the overarching research question, it has been possible to conclude that many of the prospective residents felt that the Shaldon Road project had diverged significantly from their initial aspirations. However, the way that prospective residents experienced and reflected upon this was arguably the most fruitful area of this research. Power imbalances between prospective resident and non-resident stakeholders, and between the non-resident stakeholders and external parties, made it difficult for prospective residents to defend elements of their aspirations which they

felt were less negotiable. Furthermore, when prospective residents disagreed with the decisions and actions of the non-resident stakeholders they were not provided with platforms to have their voices heard. The main problem identified in this research was not that prospective residents felt their initial aspirations were not being met, but that they felt silenced by the lack of opportunity to voice their concerns or dissent. Workshop Two demonstrated how bringing different stakeholders to a shared space to voice frustrations and listen to the concerns and opinions of others significantly reduced tensions between prospective resident and non-resident groups, and began conversations on how adopt different practices going forward.

In addition to contributing to the field of CLH, I have engaged with discussions on the application of theories of power and community in research. I have demonstrated how both bodies of literature provide a useful way of engaging critically with the experiences and observations emerging through this case study. As this research developed I became particularly interested in the conflict-consensus debate, centring around Mouffe (1992) and Habermas' (1987) theories. I identified what I believed to be a limitation on both sides of this debate, which was the transferability of theory to practice. I proposed that neither Mouffe or Habermas allow for the nuances of balancing the desire to develop democratic communities with the urgency to get a project off the ground, yet argue that Mouffe's call to retain conflict and dissent in the shared spaces could have significantly reduced the extent to which prospective residents felt disempowered and silenced by the non-resident stakeholders. I set out the conditions of compromise, which BCLT members identified as important in enabling the project to progress. Drawing together findings on members' perceptions

of power in the social and organisational practices and how these related to their expectations, I developed a synthesis that captured how the members experienced compromise both positively and negatively over the development process. Whilst acknowledging that these conditions of compromise were seen as enabling the project to progress I return to theory in order to critique these conditions through the lens of power. Finally, I propose that there are significant distinctions between CLTs and other models of CLH which need to be acknowledged in discourse. I argue that there are opportunities within the CLT model to challenge assumptions of who can access community-led housing and to build cohesive community focused developments for a broad range of people. However, I also highlight a need to be more honest in the accounts of community leadership and participation in CLTs, and suggest that more needs to be done within the CLT movement to identify the parameters and limits of engagement for prospective residents and lay community members.

From the beginning of this case study I set out to embed myself in the day-to-day events of BCLT and to be seen as insider and researcher, rather than outsider. In doing this I sought to reduce power dynamics associated with me as a researcher, and BCLT members as participants, and to position participants as the holders of knowledge. Whilst being mindful that it was BCLT members’ voices that shaped the empirical research, it is possible to conclude that this research contributed towards improving the practices of BCLT. The workshops made space for prospective residents to question relations of power, and to identify how the organisation might overcome some of the tensions between different stakeholder groups. Interviews offered opportunities for members to reflect on and synthesise their experiences. For

some members, the interviews helped them decide on certain actions they would take, or to better articulate why they found specific practices disempowering. Whilst being cautious in making claims about how this research impacted in ways which would not have otherwise been achieved, it is appropriate to conclude that this research created opportunities to question power dynamics and imagine alternative ways of organising.

10.5) Further research

Undertaking this research has inevitably brought about new questions. In this section I set out some potential lines of inquiry which are, in my view, important to future discussions on the scope of CLTs in England.

There is opportunity to undertake similar studies with other urban CLTs to examine if similar patterns are emerging across England, particularly those CLTs who are developing partnerships with conventional housing providers. As an extension to this, I suggest that future research would benefit from adopting a similar methodological approach to those employed in this research. During this thesis I have identified the value of adopting a single case study. In order to develop a deeper understanding of what is happening when CLTs attempt to being projects to fruition, I argue that it is vital that we gather rich data through in-depth and engaged research. Whilst there is arguably a place for larger scale qualitative and quantitative studies, I have highlighted how it would not have been possible to have captured the nuances and complexities of BCLT's development process without creating strong relationships with the members.

Related to the first point, there would be value in examining what changes would need to be made at central and local government level to give CLTs more autonomy from other conventional housing providers and to reduce the current constraints, introduced earlier in this chapter, that limit opportunities for active community participation. As a continuation of this potential research topic is the need to balance the practices that would need to change to enable more community participation with the ability to maintain CLTs current appeal to a wider audience.

Finally, this research has focused on the development stage of a CLT project. Future research could make a valuable contribution by examining the social and organisational transitions between the development stage and life as a resident in the finished community. Having captured a detailed understanding of the development process I would inquire into whether changes must be made to enable residents to live as a community or if the lack of democratic decision-making in the development stage has a long term impact on the social cohesion of the resident members.

10.6) Reflections on the participatory approach

In concluding this thesis, I believe it is important to reflect upon the participatory process which has been so intrinsic to the development of this research. In doing this I also touch upon the non-academic contribution this research made as an addition to the academic contributions discussed in section 10.4.

From the beginning of my doctoral studies I identified wanting to undertake a participatory research project. This was informed by a desire to contribute to the practices of the Case Study Group as well and to academic discussion. Whilst the reality of the participatory process was fraught with uncertainly about being able to meet academic deliverables and concerns about the extent to which the research was challenging inequalities, I have undoubtedly developed my skills as a participatory researcher, and learnt many lessons that will inform my future research endeavours.

My most prominent reflection on how the participatory process developed over the duration of this research is how members' commitment to engage in the design and delivery of the research fluctuated in line with the peaks and troughs of the project. At the beginning of this research I was working with a Core Research Group which was extremely enthusiastic about adopting a role as co-researcher. When prospective residents' frustration at the non-resident stakeholders was at its peak there was a noticeable disengagement with both BCLT meetings and this research. This lack of enthusiasm was sustained until I suggested running Workshop Two in December 2016. At this point I found some of the initial core research members re-joined Core Research Group meetings as well as a couple of new members who had not been involved at the beginning. This highlighted the importance of being reactive as a participatory researcher and ensuring I had the time and capacity to be able to instigate practical actions as soon as challenges arose or opportunities present themselves.

Additionally, at the outset of this research I had not factored in the pressures that prospective residents would already be under from the project and their external lives. This significantly impacted on their enthusiasm for this research. Over the duration of this research one Core Research Group member had a baby and another experienced health problems that resulted in them having to change career. These external pressures could not have been planned for at the beginning of the research, however, they are representative of the types of challenges of undertaking research which seeks to collaborate with other people over a long period of time. As a result of members dropping in and out of the Core Research Group, I was the only constant participant. This raised questions about the extent to which I was sharing power with the research participants. On reflection, I realise how important the earlier stages, where the Core Research Group met regularly, were in setting the scope and parameters for this research. Additionally, it became apparent that by having numerous one-to-one conversations, either through informal chats or in interviews, I could establish common themes emerging and seek out participants’ opinions of how this research could respond to their concerns.

Whist, my initial goal to involve members in the design, delivery and analysis of the research did not develop in the way I had hoped, there have been some small but noteworthy actions that contributed towards positive changes in the organisation and to individuals. The methods identified at the beginning of this research had varying levels of success. The two workshops had different outcomes but both contributed to improving the members’ experiences of the development process. Workshop One was focused on assisting prospective residents to find their voice on specific

decisions, enabling them to put forward a coherent collective position on the design standard they wanted for the site as well as how they would like to see the common-house developed. Workshop Two had a very different goal, which was concerned with addressing power imbalances that had led prospective residents to feel frustrated and angry at the non-resident stakeholders, and to begin to develop alternative ways of practicing community. Both workshops contributed to the development of BCLT. Members from each of the different stakeholder groups commented on how Workshop Two, which was longer and better attended, had made a valuable contribution to the social and organisational practices.

Whilst there was not the uptake I had hoped for in participatory video methods, the times we did work together to create video footage demonstrated how it could be used as a tool to challenge power imbalances between different stakeholders. The members involved in filming each other reflected on how they had really enjoyed the process and felt that it had given them new insights into the people being filmed. The use of participatory video is an example of how participatory research develops in practice, when research participants have numerous different demands on their time.

Following on from the last point, I realised when looking back at the data how important the interviews were to the participatory process. They offered space for members to consider their experiences of the development process and identify how they felt the project was working successfully and which areas needed to be challenged. How structured the interviews were varied between participants. For members who had been attending meetings for longer and knew me better, the

interviews were more conversational and guided by the interviewee. Members who were less familiar with me and my research, or who had only been attending meetings for a short time, would usually require more structure to the interview. At the end of each of the interviews I asked members if there was anything they had not spoken about which they felt was important. In response to this question many of the members reflected on how they had enjoyed the interview and felt that it had provided an opportunity to consolidate all their experiences to date. Simon, a prospective resident member, said:

> *‘I’ve really enjoyed this. Thanks. I realise I haven’t really taken any time to stop and think about what the project has been like so far. It’s been really nice to chat about everything, and yer, kind of work out what I really like about the project and what isn’t working for me. I guess I know what I want to like raise in meetings now, you know, to bring stuff to the group and see if other people are feeling the same’ (Simon-Prospective resident)*

This quote from Simon demonstrates how he felt the interview process had assisted him in identifying how he would like the project to develop. Similar points were raised in many of the other interviews and following interviews I observed members bringing their reflections to the prospective resident meetings to be discussed by the group.

Keeping a researcher diary was useful for documenting the informal conversations and observations that took place during this case study. Prospective resident meetings were rich spaces for observation and reflection, and it was common to see

topics raised in one-to-one interviews take place in practice during the meetings. The diary also offered space for me to reflect on my experiences of being involved with BCLT and draw these experiences back to the question posed as part of this research.

My overarching learning that I take away from this research, is the need for participatory researchers to be flexible and capable of drawing on a range of different methods and activities, rather than being tied to one or two. This research has shown that participatory research can make small interventions in community organisations, which have a cumulative effect on practice. The micro social interactions in interviews and informal conversation were arguably as important in the members' experiences as the large and co-ordinated second workshop. Having engaged with a range of different methods in this research I have come to understand the importance of participatory researchers being flexible in their approach and able to draw on a range of different methods and activities, rather than being tied to one or two.

Doctoral research is about learning and finding a position in the world of research. Over the last three years I have been through a learning process which I will continue to reap the benefits of into the future. In concluding this thesis, I do not cease to engage with this research. I embark on a new stage which is littered with more questions and challenges. This thesis is my academic contribution, which in line with the doctoral requirements makes in long and less accessible to a public audience. As I conclude this stage in my development as a researcher, I shift my

focus towards an exciting new challenge, which is to find innovative ways to summarise the findings of this research and to share these with a wider audience.

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APPENDIX ONE

BCLT vision and design brief (written by the Board of Directors)

Introduction

The board of Bristol CLT (BCLT) wishes to commission the design of an innovative, sustainable housing scheme on a site in Shaldon Road, Bristol and the submission of a planning application for a design agreed by BCLT. It is intended that the scheme should provide a mixture of custom build plots, self-build or self-finish apartments with elements of shared or communal space and units for social rent. The preferred procurement route for built products will be a mixture of a design and build contract, either open or negotiated, along with individual self-build activities. The purpose of this brief is to provide guidance to designers on BCLT's scheme requirements up to the completion of design stage D and the submission of a planning application.

This brief starts from a vision for the project and sets out the design requirements as currently understood. A a number of the detailed decisions on site use, form, positioning of buildings, choice of materials, etc. are still to be finalised. It is expected that these will be arrived at jointly with the design team which will conduct design studies as necessary to assist stakeholders to agree all the remaining elements of a design scheme.

This brief also sets out some objectives and performance standards, but the BCLT board accepts that even some of these could be varied by agreement as the

constraints on the project are clarified during the design process. As far as possible therefore, the design team should identify any elements of the brief that are considered either inadvisable or unworkable as early in the design process as possible, and agree changes with the BCLT board and other stakeholders.

Contexts

BCLT is an Industrial and Provident Society for Community Benefit which was launched in 2011. A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a non-profit, community-based organisation that develops housing or other assets at permanently affordable levels for long-term community benefit. Over eighty Community Land Trusts operate across England, a significant proportion of which are located in the South West region. Schemes already completed by CLT's have been highly successful, and include a number which also manage a range of community assets.

BCLT’s aim is to provide affordable housing in the Bristol area to those who cannot afford it on the open market but who are unlikely to qualify for social housing. As well as affordable housing, BCLT aspires to acquire land and buildings for other community purposes including:

- work space
- community facilities
- allotments
- growing space
- recreation land

Proposal for Shaldon Road

In 2013, Bristol City Council (BCC) officers identified the Shaldon Road site as having potential for “ an exemplary sustainable custom build – market and affordable

self-build housing scheme" and issued a call for expressions of interest to members of the West of England Housing Delivery Panel. The tender asked for a community-based development with high standards of sustainable design. The BCLT board decided to submit a tender in partnership with Bristol Community Foundation Housing (a member of the Panel and now incorporated into United Communities) and the Green Capital Partnership which was leading the Green Capital competition effort at that time. The team was successful in its bid and was invited to prepare a proposal for developing the site primarily for residential purposes.

The Board of BCLT identified the need to secure the support of local residents as one of the key factors in framing a deliverable project on this difficult back land site. It has therefore conducted a series of consultation events aimed at establishing with local people the *bona fides* of the trust and understanding the views and concerns of the site's immediate neighbours and of local organisations.

Current Situation

Following the positive results of consultations, the project has recently gathered renewed momentum resulting partially in its inclusion in the national 'Urban CLT Project' and also from the impetus around Bristol's year as 'Green Capital of Europe'. The board of BCLT has developed a draft agreement with BCC for the acquisition of the land and has secured a finance package to enable design work to proceed. A number of sources of construction finance are also being pursued.

BCC affordable housing officers have supported the development of proposals by facilitating pre-application discussions with planners and site access discussions with BCC Highways. In parallel, The BCLT board has been drawing together a steering group for the project formed of neighbouring residents, BCLT prospective residents and other stakeholders.

Aim of Project

Bristol has a severe housing shortage. The BCLT board aspires to make an innovative contribution to its resolution. At Shaldon Road it wishes to create a mixed-tenure, sustainable community development incorporating elements of shared

accommodation and external space use, and retaining part of the site as wild land. Beyond this however, the board wishes to use the opportunity offered by this exceptional site to explore new ways of financing and constructing low-cost, high-quality housing which could be replicated elsewhere. It wishes to see the results of this exploration expressed in architecture of extraordinary quality, providing an exemplar of sustainable architectural design.

The BCLT board wishes to provide housing opportunities for a number of its members, along with a number of mainstream affordable housing units and some self-build serviced plots for market sale. The completed project should also provide tangible benefits to existing local residents, both in terms of improvements to the built and natural environment and also in new and improved access routes and local community facilities.

The site should be substantially free of motorised vehicles, but arrangements for use and parking of vehicles at low levels and for vehicle access to houses in exceptional circumstances will need to be agreed with BCC Planning Department, BCC Highways Department and the Project Steering Group (PSG).

The project therefore presents a number of design challenges. The BCLT board has identified the chief ones as being:

- The ability of the project to gain the support of existing local residents
- The need to draw several different types of tenure and forms of construction into a coherent overall design scheme for the site
- The ambition to achieve an exemplar architectural design
- The need to reconcile site constraints, funding availability and occupancy requirements
- Forms of construction and materials which allow for a substantial element of self-finish

The Site – Objectives and Constraints

The site is situated on back land to the rear of house numbers 2 -56 Shaldon Road and the former garage site off Morris Road. It is in the Lockleaze ward of the city and in the neighbourhood partnership area of the Horfield and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Partnership. Its area is estimated as approximately 1.4 hectares or 3 acres. It is currently in the ownership of Bristol City Council (Landlord Services).

Constraints:

A number of existing constraints on design options have already been identified, and these are set out on the site constraints plan attached at Appendix I. Among these are the access difficulties, the possible need for protection of some plant and animal populations and potential overlooking issues.

The site was once used for local authority allotments but has become overgrown in the last few decades. It has been discussed as a potential housing site for some years and has recently been included in the council's Site Allocations and Development Management Policy as appropriate for a residential development. Current access to the site is off the main Shaldon Road via a pedestrian route or via the garage of 62 Morris Road.

A number of surveys of the site have been conducted and others required by BCC planners are in train. These are listed in Appendix II.

Project Framing

Generally

The design developed for planning approval shall aim to meet all the reasonable requirements arising from discussions with planners and local authority highway engineers. It should also comply or, where appropriate, be capable of complying with building regulations, HCA housing quality indicators, code for affordable homes and any other reasonable standards set by funders or regulators. Secured pre-development finance requires BCLT to provide a clear route for managing the self-finish works, both to ensure building regulations and NHBC (or similar) warranty standards are met, and also to ensure that the board of BCLT meets its obligation of effective risk management in pursuing its objective of supporting a major self-build element.

The Mix of Uses

It is envisaged that the project will provide accommodation in three different but related types of residential tenure. These will be:

- A series of serviced self-build plots for market sale. These plots are intended both to provide diversity of tenure and also to produce an element of financial support for other elements of the project. A framework for managing the detailed design and construction phase on these plots will need to be developed so that self builders have reasonable scope for customising the form of their accommodation whilst still remaining part of an overall design conception and project framework. It will also be necessary to avoid any individual design customisation invalidating the overall planning permission for the scheme.

- A number of mainstream affordable social housing units built to comply with Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) standards, and partially funded by HCA grant investment.

- A block of unconventional apartment units for BCLT members. These units will function as a co-housing scheme and will share a number of services and facilities and have access to elements of common space. It is intended that accommodation in this block should achieve low build costs by incorporating reduced levels of private space, medium-rise construction and low site costs. It will be funded by a combination of cross subsidy, equity investment from occupiers, sweat equity and where necessary, debt finance repaid by rent.

- The BCLT board also aspires to provide some non-residential accommodation as part of the scheme, in a form that will benefit both new and existing residents and the local community. As with other design elements, the form and function of this will need to evolve from a consideration of available funding (not yet identified), suitable site area and clarified demand. Design studies should therefore consider whether residential accommodation could be focussed in a particular zone of the site making possible some form of hub concept incorporating community space. Alternately consultations will gauge the demand for community shops, crèches, allotment space and external recreation areas to assess whether these or other community uses could be justified. A community building of some form could also function as a temporary logistics base during self-build operations.

The design should be informed by the consultation work with local residents already undertaken. The designers will be familiar with this, the results having been recorded for reference in a report on the consultation process so far. In particular, the design needs to provide an affordable solution to the provision of an appropriate new site access route for vehicles. It should also deal with the existing access lane at the rear of the Shaldon Road houses. A study of desire lines for pedestrian travel around the neighbourhood should inform any proposals for new public pedestrian routes through the site as discussed with planners at pre-application meetings. These proposals should also deal with any potential problems of overlooking, loss of privacy and loss of security which might otherwise be created for new or existing residents.

The consultation process also confirmed the strong attachment that many existing neighbours feel to the 'green lung' at the rear of their properties and the value of the view over trees and wildlife. This confirms that the balance between developed areas

of the site and retention and enhancement of the existing wooded structure is a key element of the project.

The final form and extent of development will need to support a viable business plan for the whole project. This will include measures to ensure that construction can be funded by the arrangements and income sources already ear-marked and other funding sources yet to be identified.

The designers should seek to investigate all these issues together with the PSG and should conduct appropriate design studies in the early part of the design process to enable final space, amenity, performance and layout details to be agreed and incorporated into a planning application scheme.

Project Management

So far the project has been developed by members of the BCLT board, assisted by colleagues at United Communities and by professional support with the consultation process by Architype Ltd. In order to cement the partnership working approach with local people that was promised at consultation events, BCLT is now forming a steering group to manage the continuing project development process through to detailed design and construction. This group (PSG) will be comprised of representatives of existing local residents, representatives of the BCLT membership - especially prospective occupants - and members of the BCLT board. The PSG will oversee design development at regular stages and will be tasked with reviewing design studies and setting design parameters.

As ultimate clients and long-term stewards of the assets created by the project, the BCLT board will need to retain the power to amend PSG decisions, but will seek to do so only in exceptional circumstances. BCLT has agreed with its partner United Communities (UC) that UC will fund the affordable housing element of the design and that its tenants will occupy the accommodation created. The UC project officer will therefore have final decision-making power over that element of the project. Once again, this will be exercised only in exceptional circumstances.

The PSG will have primary responsibility for oversight of the design process. Once a design is agreed and permissions achieved, a combination of contractors and design professionals will manage the construction phase. At present, BCLT expects some or all of this to be within a design and build contract but will review other alternatives with the design team. Once the construction phase is completed, there will be an ongoing requirement for management. BCLT expects its partner UC to undertake any housing management required on the site. There will also be a need for facilities management and ongoing management of the communal areas including communal spaces, landscape management and access routes. The design should be developed with this in mind.

As well as working with the PSG and providing display material to enable group members to grasp design issues adequately, it will also be necessary for the momentum of the wider consultation process already started to be maintained. The design team should therefore support consultation and engagement events in the neighbourhood and on the actual site. It should also allow for presenting design concepts to the Bristol Urban Design Panel during design development.

Budgetary Factors

The finance package for the project is composed of a number of elements derived from different sources, as referred to above, and is innovative in nature. Some of these have conditions attached which may affect the design. In particular, the use of HCA funding and BCC funding will have attendant requirements for minimum space standards in any residential units, and units funded by the Affordable Homes Programme will be required to meet the standards set by the Housing Quality Indicator system.

A copy of the working financial assumptions is attached at Appendix III. The table below shows the interim estimates that the board of BCLT have made of the possible mix of units of each type, their internal space requirements and their target build costs. It assumes that the total number of units in the completed scheme will be 36. Initial viability assessment suggests that this level of development could produce a fundable project. It is clear however, in view of fixed costs related to the creation of a new access, boundary treatments, etc. that viability improves as unit numbers increase. Against this , BCLT needs to balance the difficulty of access, the risk of losing local support by over-development and the objective of maintaining significant areas of wild land and tree screens. Assuming that design studies can show that these concerns can be adequately addressed within a scheme with more residential units, the BCLT board would welcome a rise of up to 30% in unit numbers.

Indicative Unit Numbers and Space Allocation

This table sets out the BCLT board's initial assessment of requirements. It expects that these will change somewhat after design studies and clarification of stakeholder requirements.

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	Build cost m^2	Total £
Self-build plots			6		
Size of unit footprint			50 m^2		
External space			100 m^2		
Affordable Houses		5	10	1400	
Size of unit footprint		75	85		
External space		?	?		
Co-housing	5	5	5	1200	
Size of unit footprint	46	72	85		
External space/balcony	10	10	15		
Shared facilities			100	1100	
Communal outside space			400	60	

Other landscaping	?
Site Access	?

Sustainable Design

BCLT is committed to the development of low energy buildings, both in their use and production. Accommodation units at Shaldon Road should therefore aim to meet the Code for Sustainable Homes standard 4. The board has ambitions to exceed this however, and through the PSG will seek guidance from the design team about how this might be achieved within the cost constraints of the project.

It is assumed that the design will be based on materials and techniques which limit levels of embodied energy in new construction. The priority however will be for high fabric insulation values. Beyond these approaches, we expect the design team to advise on how further investment in energy use, waste management and water and drainage services could be cost-effective.

Planning policy in Bristol requires all residential units to incorporate small-scale, solar PV installations. The BCLT wishes to avoid a response to this rule based on small and low-rated individual installations on each unit and will seek guidance from the design team on how compliance might be achieved by means of a more strategic approach and a more cost-effective scale of provision through cross-site solutions.

Private motorised vehicular transport is a major source of energy use and pollution. The design should therefore seek to minimise trip generation and facilitate low

energy alternatives such as public transport, walking and cycling and liaison with local car clubs. Requirements and ambitions in this area are detailed below.

Other Design Considerations

The BCLT board has an ambition for the project to include structures higher than two stories. The most obvious location for this would be the co-housing apartment units. Medium-rise construction would have the combined advantages of limiting the land take for buildings and also achieving lower overall construction costs for individual units. A medium rise element compatible with local opinion gathered through the consultation process should be considered for inclusion in the scheme.

The use of self-build and self-finish techniques are important elements of BCLT's approach to the development of affordable housing and sustainable communities. In this project they will also have a significant role to play in supporting the overall finance package for scheme. The levels of construction input by residents will need to vary across the different tenure types, with the serviced plot units being almost wholly user-constructed. The co-housing units will need to incorporate a significant level of self-build to reduce contractor costs, but it is assumed that the aim of providing these using medium-rise construction will necessitate a structural build element undertaken by professionals. The PSG will seek advice from the design team on the appropriate split between self build and conventional construction. The affordable homes will need to be constructed mainly by the contractor but could incorporate an element of self-finish.

Evidence from other CLT and self-build projects suggests that residents of the scheme will have a high commitment to long tenure. The design should therefore

provide opportunities for adapting internal arrangements of units over time to allow then to be adjusted to the changing circumstances of residents such as unexpected immobility or additional household numbers.

Urban Design and Vehicle Management

Sufficient motor vehicle routes around the site should be provided to enable all buildings to be reached by emergency vehicles and for delivery purposes. However, it is not intended that residents should bring cars up to their units except in exceptional circumstances. Allowance should therefore be made for residents' and visitors' cars to be parked as soon as practical once they are within the curtilage of the site. The design team should ensure that any parking created has good oversight by residents.

The board of BCLT intends that the project should have as low a level of car ownership and use as practical and will encourage residents to car share or manage without private vehicles, for example by supporting the creating of a car club. The possibility of low vehicle use will be strengthened by the proposed improvements to local train services, and to cycling and pedestrian routes. Nevertheless, the ambition to limit car ownership will need to be balanced by the need to avoid creating parking problems on adjoining streets and by the parking provision required by BCC planners. The minimum parking requirement of planners should therefore be considered as the optimum provision. The design team should support the PSG in finding the optimum solution to parking provision.

It is intended that circulation routes around the site should give priority to pedestrians and cyclists and should be formed of a permeable, non-tarmac surface. Beyond the need to gain access to all buildings and external areas, they should provide

improved pedestrian routes through the site where there is evidence of an existing or potential desire line. In particular, routes through the site should link with public transport stops and pavement routes to local amenities.

While it is desirable that the completed project be permeable for pedestrians, public circulation will inevitably have an impact on the privacy of new residents and existing neighbours. The design should therefore provide clarity on which routes and spaces are to be public, which are for the use of the site community and which for individual residents. There should also be provision for safe on and off street play space for children. The design should also address the future use of the existing service lane along the back of Shaldon Road houses and propose adequate security measures for the rear boundaries of existing gardens.

Other urban design considerations include the removal, retention and suitable new planting of trees, the use of lighting at night, the need for visual screening from existing residents, sound barriers (e.g. from train noise) and security oversight for all parts of the site. BCLT intends that early design studies of possible site layouts should enable the design team to work with PSG to agree a landscape design brief. While it is not expected that the site will produce any elements of flood risk, the design team should allow for a surface water management scheme to be prepared to accompany the planning application.

Time Scale

There is now a strong imperative from BCC to move the project forward by developing the project design and submitting a planning application. There is also an ambition to establish the project design in time for it to feature in 'Green Capital' events before the end of the year. Further ahead still, the scheme needs to be

completed in time for the mainstream 'affordable' element to qualify for funding through the HCA's Affordable Homes Programme which ends on 31st March 2018.

The schedule for design work to planning is constrained by the need to support the planning application with a range of survey data however. Some ecological and habitat surveys can be carried out effectively only in the spring and early summer and the time scale for these will therefore determine the date for a planning submission. Scheme design work should be completed in time to make a planning submission possible as soon as all required survey data has been collected. This is currently expected to be during August 2015.

The design team should review the scheduling possibilities and agree a design work plan with BCLT and the PSG. This programme will form part of the design contract.

Survey	Status	Comments
Archaeology		
Flood Risk	Unlikely to be required	
Soil Contamination	Needed for tender stage	
Mining and subsidence	Needed for site purchase	
Ground conditions	Needed for detailed design stage	
Topology	In hand	
Tree Cover	Completed	
Ecology	Elements completed	Bats and Newts completed summer 2015
Digital mapping	In hand	
Noise		Not yet identified as required

Under ground services	High tension cable route plan available	No other u/g services known

APPENDIX TWO

Summary of main themes from visioning workshops

Relationship with external parties and local neighbourhood:

A key point coming out of the visioning workshop was 'building a strong relationship with the local neighbourhood'- actions points included:

- Consulting the local neighbourhood before the planning proposal is submitted through existing local organisations, an open event, leafleting.
- Ensuring the site is accessible and that facilities (eg: playground) are open to neighbourhood
- That the design of the site draws people in and through- maybe by having some unusual/ quirky buildings (common-house?)
- Pay attention to the edges of the site- keep them green, try not to disrupt view for direct neighbours

'Sense of identity' for the Shaldon Road development:

Ensuring a 'sense of identity' was raised on multiple occasions in the visioning workshop, this included physical and social aspects of the project. Action points included:

- Having a name, community mission statement, narrative and core values
- Ensuring there was some continuity across the units so they are different but still fit well together

Sharing and 'sense of community':

Points relating to sharing and community arose in relation to the process, physical design and social aspects of the project. They included:

Process- having clear rules/systems/guidelines for holding meetings, making decisions and dealing with conflict- to ensure everyone gets heard and all members of the group feel empowered

Physical design- multiuse common-house built first, shared facilities including laundry, corridors that are usable communal spaces, a range of outdoor spaces where no one group dominates and communal growing space

Social: Ensure there is a diverse age range, do fun things together (not just meetings and work), cook communal meals, help each other with practical day-to-day tasks including lift sharing/bulk buying food/sharing childcare/trading skills

Individual privacy:

The balance between being part of the community and being able to maintain individual privacy was discussed. The main action points included:

- Ensuring each unit either has a small garden or balcony
- That there is good sound proofing between (and within) the units
- That communal outdoor spaces have divided areas where people can sit and be quiet
- That there is a certain level of opt in/out of communal events

Safety:

How the design of the site could promote safety was discussed. The main action points were:

- Ensure the site layout promotes natural surveillance (units facing into communal spaces)

- Avoid creating dark areas on the site
- De-prioritise vehicles (speed bumps and natural traffic calming)
- Well placed children’s play spaces- safe/visible

Overall site design:

There were a number of points raised that related to the overall site design these

included:

- The accessibility- that there should be a natural flow that connects the site internally and to local area
- That the community building should be fun and visually interesting
- That communal spaces should be multiuse
- That the overall site design should include organic shapes and a range of colour

Green spaces (green and blue (river) infrastructure):

Points raised relating to outdoor space that have not already been mentioned

included:

- Creating green roof space
- Making the most of trees on site
- Considering the river in the design and making it a feature