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COMPLEXITY AND COMMUNITIES

**THE APPLICATION OF COMPLEXITY
TO COMMUNITY STUDIES**

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PhD

2015

Complexity and Communities:

**The Application of Complexity
to Community Studies**

David Nathan Large

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the
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ABSTRACT: 287 words

Understanding community dynamics has always been a challenge for policy-makers. Often community policy has been ineffective and wasteful. This research explores and sets out an alternative, complexity-informed approach to community studies.

The research develops an innovative, two-stage interview methodology informed by complexity considerations. This methodology is applied to two case studies of community-based organisations in Newcastle upon Tyne. The two case studies allow a comparative assessment of the complexity-informed methodology. In this way, the research uses a complexity-informed approach to produce a holistic and realistic view of the community being examined. By analysing the contribution of those present the research is able to capture information that is relevant and that may be used to bring about change. Complexity-informed approaches are thus shown to be open, flexible, insightful, confidence-building and engaging, when considering people living and working in communities.

The research finds complexity considerations to show that, to be effective, public policy needs to offer choices to local people as to how they want to interpret local government policy in their area. This requires more than evidence gathering and assessment of the evidence gathered. It requires the active involvement of the community. Complexity factors such as interaction and emergence are used to identify important relationships and to assess social, economic and environmental changes from the community point of view. These are considered in the context in which they occur and for as long as the situation applies.

A complexity-informed approach is shown to open the way for community interventions based on community views and needs. In doing this complexity is able to support genuine decision-making and action by communities for communities. Through discussion and reflection, the thesis finds this to be a suitable basis for public policy formation.

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Preface

What is valuable and hence worthy of study is what matters to us. And what can matter more than people living their lives as best they can, using the resources they have available? This implies that to be successful, public policy needs to appreciate the presence of the people affected and to embed this in government practice. The way to bring this about is through government interaction with people and reflection on what they have said about the things that matter to them. Such reflection consists in thinking about what they have said and working out how to include this in subsequent actions.

The thesis takes up this challenge by using insights from complexity to help understand communities and to explain changes in them. It is about the people that make up communities and what they do in them. This means that room must be made for the views of community members giving significant weight to their concerns. This stands in contrast to traditional methods that may carry out official instructions or flow from statistical calculations. To do this, the thesis develops a complexity-informed approach to community studies that is intended as a tool for future use in any number of situations and circumstances.

The size of this challenge should not be underestimated. Complexity comes from the physical sciences. Public policy and politics are situated within the social sciences. While there are complexity practitioners based within the social sciences they remain the exception not the rule. This thesis looks forward to the establishment of a fully developed discipline of complexity-informed social science.

To Jane and Sarah

Sine qua non

‘Oh, what happened to you?
Whatever happened to me?
What became of the people we used to be?
Tomorrow's almost over,
Today went by so fast,
Is the only thing to look forward to the past?’

From ‘Whatever Happened To You?’

By Highly Likely

(Hugg & La Frenais, 1973)

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DECLARATION

COMPLEXITY AND COMMUNITIES:

THE APPLICATION OF COMPLEXITY TO COMMUNITY STUDIES

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work.

The thesis fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others and is free of plagiarism.

Ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis was sought and granted by the School Ethics Committee on 7 July 2011.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Aim, Question and Objectives

The aim of this research is to develop and apply a complexity approach to the study of communities. To meet this aim the thesis asks the following research question:

What insight does a complexity approach give to the study of communities?

The objectives of the research are:

- To evaluate the application of complexity to community studies.
- To develop and apply a complexity approach by using two case studies.
- To analyse the outcomes and elicit the insights of the complexity approach.

The outcomes of this research will be:

- To develop a complexity approach for the study of communities and evaluate the insights it provides into understanding community dynamics.
- To highlight the disadvantages of traditional approaches by conducting two case studies.

The thesis takes an innovative approach to researching communities and their interactions with local government and central government based on complexity considerations. This approach rejects talk of 'customers' or 'service-users'. Instead people are considered as they are, namely real, live human beings. To do this the thesis, taking a lead from complexity, examines the interactions that take place. These interactions may be between individuals, groups, organisations, government agencies and so on. It argues that taking such an approach can produce better public policies, allow more insightful research and deliver better results for the communities concerned (6.5).

The thesis goes on to consider complexity approaches to the study of human interactions. Human interactions are interpreted in the context of networks of community organisations. These networks are generated by human interactions and conform to no single organisational recipe (2.3.8). To do this, the thesis develops a complexity-informed approach to form a complexity methodology for the investigation of community activities (3.1)

The methodology uses and develops complexity-informed methods to account for the emerging social, economic and environmental structures. This includes emergence at the macro-level of observable behaviours (such as the daily commute to work) and structures (such as house building). It also includes emergence at the micro-level of interactions between actors and stakeholders leading to the emergence of behaviours (such as not crossing community boundaries), cultures (such as bingo evenings) and structures (such as the local football club) recognisable by members of the relevant communities (3.5).

The methodology is tested through the examination of two case studies, Centre West and the Walker Hub. These case studies are set out to show communities exhibiting aspects of complexity (4.2 & 4.3). The first case study is on Centre West in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne. This is compared and contrasted with the second case study on the Walker Hub in the east end of Newcastle upon Tyne. Both case studies are about deprived areas suffering post-industrial decline. A key difference is that Centre West came from one of a number of ten-year long, community-led New Deal for Communities programmes where the community was put in charge of a multi-million pound budget. Walker, while receiving some public sector funding, had no such scheme. For the activities discussed in both case studies the thesis asks whether they delivered something extra not usually picked up by traditional approaches. Key factors and lessons learned from the case study research are then discussed in terms of the thesis question (Chapter 5).

In this way the thesis shows how complexity considerations can be used to create useful analyses of community and public sector interactions at a local level. By 'local' the thesis means the area where an individual or a group live, work and play. It is the space in which freedom and choice can be deployed by the people concerned. In addressing these questions the thesis holds complexity concepts to be a useful way to research the topics of community studies and public policy. In this way the thesis supports the production of useful relationships between communities, local government and academics (5.5).

The findings set out the contribution of complexity, the methodology devised and the consequences for examining communities (Chapter 6). Complexity is found to offer a useful range of options for social science in general and for community studies in particular. Communities are found to be complex in the way set out and ways of working may be developed that take this into account. This in turn means that while complexity is valuable for assessing communities, communities offer valuable points for the development of complexity. The thesis has thus developed an approach to communities that relies on factors that are present in communities including local activists, private sector businesses, public sector agencies, physical facilities and environmental factors (6.5).

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the research in terms of the research question and takes a look at where the research findings may lead. In this way the worth of the research is demonstrated and possible next steps for this area of work are indicated (Chapter 7).

1.2 The Researcher

How the researcher is situated requires consideration (Schon, 1983). The researcher is an experienced practitioner with some practical knowledge of the subject being researched. The researcher is a native of the north east and has lived and worked in Newcastle upon Tyne for many years. As such they are aware of the tensions between the impoverished east and west and the wealthy areas in the centre and the north of the city.

A philosopher by training the researcher studied at King's College London then at The Queen's College, Oxford University. Having spent some time teaching part-time at the Centre for Continuing Education, Newcastle University (Large, 2003), the researcher helped to found and run Newcastle Philosophy Society (Large, 2005, 2006a & 2010). The researcher was employed by a local voluntary organisation as their volunteer co-ordinator and then by a national charity as an operations officer. Using this experience they moved to Newcastle City Council (NCC) where they were employed for over ten years. This included policy work with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), the local strategic partnership and in the education department.

The researcher achieved an MSc with distinction in Urban Policy and Regeneration. For this they wrote a dissertation on the Newcastle Local Strategic Partnership. This noted both the marginal role allowed for the VCS and the disdain the public sector representatives had for the VCS representatives. It further noted the lack of a substantial private sector contribution (Large, 2006b). More recently, the researcher became a self-employed, VCS consultant specialising in policy issues and funding requirements (Large, 2012 & 2013a to 2013f).

As the then chair of Pottery Bank Community Centre, the researcher was one of the practitioners involved in the Walker Hub. For the Walker Hub case study they chose not to interview themselves, nor did they set out their opinions as part of the evidence considered. Nevertheless, the researcher is present both as the interviewer and as a practitioner (4.3.2).

1.3 Introducing Complexity

“A definition may be very exact, and yet go but a very little way towards informing us of the nature of the thing defined” (Burke, 2008).

The term ‘complexity’ covers a range of adaptive and emergent phenomena. This means that there is no single, all-purpose definition of complexity. Nevertheless, complexity has grown in influence and has come to be used in a number of disciplines (Mitchell, 2009).

Founded in the work of mathematical physics (Briggs & Peat, 1989) and systems thinking (Prigogine, 1987) complexity moved into the biological sciences (Maturana & Varela, 1980) and entered the social sciences (Mainzer, 1994; Richardson, 1999; Haynes, 2003; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). In particular, complexity has taken root in management studies (Mintzberg, 1980), leadership theory (Wheatley, 2007) and has moved into the field of public policy (Geyer & Rihani, 2010; Byrne & Callaghan, 2013).

Complexity is characterised by the emergence of phenomena through interactions (Pluhar, 1978). In this way, complexity analysis may be understood as the study of interactions to show what has emerged and how it has emerged. This will involve the examination of the nature of the interactions and the effects of those interactions (Wolfram, 2002).

Complexity helps us understand why small changes can have big effects, big changes can have small effects, and why effects can come from unanticipated causes (Mikulecky, 2001). For example, an elaborate multi-year health education programme may have no discernible effect on health behaviours in one community while having a major impact in another (Cooper & Geyer, 2007). In particular cases a small change may have a large and unexpected effect. Such changes are sometimes referred to as ‘butterfly effects’ (Lorenz, 1963; Large, 2014).

Furthermore, complexity picks out features that follow the same pattern at different levels. For example, in several key respects the behaviour of a community centre committee may follow that of a company board may follow that of a national government may follow that of the United Nations and so on. Once the pattern is identified various versions or iterations may be looked for (3.5). In these ways complexity may be seen to offer a way of anticipating changes and effects that are not foreseen by other approaches for they are not considered by them. And that makes complexity both powerful and valuable (6.1).

Complexity has made progress in organisational theory and its application (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). This understanding is, however, not complete. For example, there is no general theory of the mechanisms that lead to self-organisation (Reynolds, 2004). The definition of self-organisation varies across different fields, and different researchers use different theories and models that deal with self-organisation to form conceptual frameworks that suit their purposes (Bogg & Geyer (eds.), 2007).

Complexity allows us to address problems in a very different way to traditional approaches and should not be thought of as a tool to be used under the overall theory and method being employed (Mowles, 2014). Traditional research is set out in terms of wholes and parts where the aim is to reduce a whole to its component parts. Complexity is different, taking a whole or a situation and seeing what emerges from it. In this sense, due to emergence, the whole may be seen as greater than the sum of its parts. In this way, as the traditional approach follows reductionism so complexity suggests holism (Brower & Jeong, 2008). Furthermore, traditional analysis examines wholes and parts at a general level whereas complexity examines particular occurrences through consideration of individual parts. In this way, rather than each part having a specific purpose, with complexity parts are considered in terms of themselves and how they adapt. On the traditional view changing or removing a part can lead to a break-down whereas with complexity each part and the changes that occur to each part are the subject of the examination (Edmonds, 1999).

Complexity is comfortable with behaviour that is theoretically unpredictable and offers an explanation of chaotic behaviour. Rather than seeking a single explanation, with complexity different world views coexist simultaneously (Montuori, 2013). Early complexity methods and techniques were regarded as predictive but they did not give the expected results. During the 1970s they became used for learning through considering different possibilities rather than producing fixed results. In this way complexity has come to provide a range of methods for the analysis of data (Al-Suwailem, 2011).

Social science and public policy use complexity in a general sense rather than applying a restricted definition (Morin, 2007). It is the general use of complexity that is the concern of this thesis. To do this the thesis considers how social science has been influenced by complexity with respect to community research and examines approaches that may be used to carry out such research (Gerrits, 2012).

1.4 Considering Communities

This thesis uses ideas from complexity to understand communities. To do this it discusses the application of complexity to community studies, taking-up public policy considerations as they relate to communities. In doing this no single definition of community is adopted. Such a move is taken to be too prescriptive and presumptive. In doing this the thesis acknowledges the contested nature of the term 'community' (Crow & Mah, 2012).

Traditionally, communities divided into communities of place, and communities of identity and interest. Complexity-informed practice is able to capture the commonalities and differences present within these communities without relying on such a prescription. This applies in localities and among people who, while leading different lives, identify themselves as a single group, for example mental health service users (Launchpad, No Date).

What is presented here is a study of communities not procedures. The thesis accepts that information, such as the economic profile of local residents, may be relevant, and that statistics, such as the number of people with disabilities living in a given area, may be useful (Fraser, 1990). But what concerns the thesis are the people themselves, their actual lives, rather than any economic assessments or performance reviews. So while a standardised typology of communities may be useful for statistical categorisations, to understand people living and working in communities something better is needed (Dworkin, 1977; Hardill & Baines, 2009).

Communities are made up of individuals interacting with a number of organisations and in a number of ways. Organisations include families, friends, groups, and companies. The ways include random, informal, philanthropic, voluntary, training, and employed. From this we can see that how people conduct themselves is far more than pragmatic and predictable. It is the non-linearity in human behaviour that provides the complexity (Sice, Mosekilde & French, 2008).

Communities are not made up of people who are like-minded in all respects. There are many areas of debate and many ways of conducting community life. Where disagreements occur conflict may be present. Such conflict may be generated by topics raised, the questions asked or the way the discussion is conducted (Yankelovich, 1999). Issues arise around power and professional practice that may lead the participants consciously or unconsciously away from making a direct and full contribution (Unwin, 2004).

In this way we can see that to interact with communities is to engage the ethical. Such engagement is not a theoretical debate such as deontology (obligation and duty) (Gaita, 2000) versus utility (outcomes and results) (Singer 2011). Rather it is to draw out the values of the people involved (Parfit, 1986). To do this, the thesis examines situations in ways that are sensitive to the presence of the people in them; individuals with their own beliefs, desires and needs (Burge, 2003). This does not reduce to information about the area concerned and these individuals do not reduce to statistics about relevant social factors (Stevenson & Hamilton, 2001).

Communities are based on our understanding and at the same time go beyond our understanding. There is no set formula for a community or for community interactions. For every definition offered there is another factor that could be included or another aspect that is relevant (Crow & Mah, 2012). For the purposes of this thesis we can think of communities as groupings, interested in living fulfilling lives, and regarding their interactions as the way to maintain this or to bring it about. The study of such communities may be conducted using a complexity approach (Gershenson, 2011).

This thesis takes ideas from complexity to examine communities. In doing this it broaches a wide range of subjects in policy, political studies and social science. The thesis cannot give the final word on any of these subjects and nor does it attempt to do so. What the thesis presents is a view of communities from the point of view of communities and it does this in a way that is informed by complexity (6.3).

1.5 Public Policy and Ideology

In this work 'policy' is used to refer to approaches to be implemented together with a general specification as to how this is to be done (Nilsen, Ståhl, *et al*, 2013). The term 'public policy' refers to policies that affect groups of people, such as residents of a geographical area, those with disabilities, or those without employment (Minogue, 1983). In this way public policy-making is seen to involve analysis of evidence, advice to interested parties, decision-making, policy implementation and the assessment of consequent actions (Colebatch, 2006; Cartwright, 2013a). For example, it may be decided that a council needs an area-based approach to regeneration rather than an issue-based one (HCCLGC, 2011). Hence the council forms an area-based regeneration policy that they then carry out and review (Knill & Tosun, 2012; Mallach, 2014).

Public policy is about objectives and substantive measures chosen to improve a situation or to deal with a particular problem (Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993). In this way public policy may be seen as structured statements by an authority about its intentions for the public realm (Kravchuk, 2008). Public policy may then be characterised as intentional (designed to achieve a stated or understood purpose), as involving decision-making and as dealing with the consequences of this (Cairney, 2012b).

To introduce a complexity approach to public policy is to say that what counts is what works and that what works is what the people affected say is what works. This means that if we ignore the views of those affected, we should not expect our public policies to be effective (Cartwright, 2012). The first task of public policy formation then becomes the identification of relevant actors and views, and to prioritise them over other actors and views (Popper, 2002). In this way public policy becomes a question of what happens to thinking and feeling flesh and blood rather than, for example, the compilation of tables of numbers (Lowe, 2013).

Furthermore, public policies are determined by the prevailing ideology in which they are formed and assessed (Craib, 1997). To consider public policy in terms of those affected is to engage both with the prevailing ideology and the ideologies of those concerned. Indeed should the views of those affected be placed at the heart of policy formation, the prevailing ideology will be in-line with the ideology of those concerned (Cairney, 2013a).

Here we may understand 'ideology' to be our habitual way of understanding the world and as explaining our spontaneous responses to it (Žižek (ed.), 1994). On such an understanding, ideology does not offer a fully explained account but is rather a gut-feeling about the way things are. In this way ideology frames our way of well-being, our satisfactions and dissatisfactions (Žižek, 1989).

Complexity studies engage with ideology by taking the view that adopting a complexity stance will offer improvements on what has gone before (2.1.1). Adopting a case study approach involves an ideological commitment to what was better or worse for the organisations concerned (Ramadanovic, 2014). In exploring the views of an interviewee their ideological stance may be discussed and recorded (2.3.6).

In this way, public policy, complexity studies and case study methods may be shown to involve certain ideological views and commitments. The structured presentation of such material and their connections to public policy for communities is made possible by the complexity-informed approach adopted (Chapter 6).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The aim of this research is to develop and apply a complexity approach to the study of communities. To meet this aim the thesis asks the following research question:

What insight does a complexity approach give to the study of communities?

The objectives of the research are:

- To evaluate the application of complexity to community studies.
- To develop and apply a complexity approach by using two case studies.
- To analyse the outcomes and elicit the insights of the complexity approach.

The outcomes of this research will be:

- To develop a complexity approach for the study of communities and evaluate the insights it provides into understanding community dynamics.
- To highlight the disadvantages of traditional approaches by conducting two case studies

The thesis begins to address the research aim with a literature review conducted and presented in three parts (Fink, 2013). The first part looks at complexity considerations that may be suitable for application to social policy and community activity (2.1). The second part focusses on social policy related to communities (2.2). The third part examines the types of complexity methods that are appropriate for studying communities and developing community policy (2.3).

Both complexity and public policy have extensive literatures including many different theories and procedures (Bearfield & Eller, 2008; Nilsen, Ståhl, *et al*, 2013; Schlager & Weible, 2013). The thesis focusses on literature that will allow both the interpretation of complexity in the public sector (Geyer & Rihani, 2010) and the formation of a functional complexity paradigm that is available to social science (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013). This will include positions and approaches that allow the introduction of complexity considerations into community research and public policy. In doing this the literature review examines interactions at the social level that lead to the emergence of social outcomes (Meek, 2010) and explores the relevance of complexity to public policy in the current context (Slater, 2012; NCC, 2014a).

2.1 Complexity Literature

2.1.1 Complexity Theory

Complexity has its origin in physics and mathematics but is now an interdisciplinary field, with a widening number of applications in the social sciences. As an interdisciplinary field, complexity-involving research faces challenges associated with organising, funding, and evaluation. These are linked to the persistence of traditional categories of knowledge such as physics, biology, and chemistry, the separation between pure and applied research, and the linkages between social science and public policy (1.3). Some understand complexity as emergence from the rule-based interactions of discrete agents and explore it through agent-based modelling. Others argue for a more general use of complexity (Morin, 2008) and for the development of case-based narratives deploying a wide set of approaches and techniques (Riessman, 2008).

Complex phenomena are greater than the sum of their parts. The parts are interdependent, interacting with each other and combining to produce non-reducible products and behaviours. Small interactions can have large effects and large interactions can have small effects. Complex phenomena focus on initial conditions. What emerges depends on them and they can produce long-term momentum or what is termed 'path dependence'. They may produce elements or exhibit behaviours resulting from interactions between the elements themselves. They may contain attractors or demonstrate extended regularities of behaviour which may be interrupted by short bursts of change (Zhichang, 2007).

Though related, complexity should not be identified with systems theory. Both complexity *simpliciter* and systems theory focus their attention on interactions and what emerges from those interactions. Both reject reference to an overarching explanation or theory beyond what emerges from an investigation. However, while complexity looks at the relationships between phenomena in a non-deterministic way, systems theory goes further by modelling and so generalising these relationships (Hooker (ed.), 2011).

Complexity shifts analysis away from individual parts to how these parts relate to each other. It examines these interrelations and their consequences. It looks at how interactions come together to form networks that are distinct from the parts that form them (Mitchell, 2006). Such networks produce behaviours that cannot be reduced to the actions of these parts. For example, a meeting may agree to set up a creche. No single part of that meeting is the agreement. What may be minuted is that agreement has been reached but the agreement itself is formed by those present, together as a whole (Hoffman, Casnocha & Yeh, 2014).

2.1.2 Complexity in Social Science

There are the diverse schools of complexity (Alhadeff-Jones, 2008). Within the social sciences, complexity has been used in a multiplicity of ways, from health inequalities to the organisation of large scale firms (Dennard, Richardson & Morçöl, 2008). Social theories have been reinterpreted through a complexity lens and methodological programmes within social science have been recast in complexity terms (Mowles, 2014). Some social scientists are working towards complexity-informed academic practice, investigating the arguments for a post-disciplinary, open social science (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013).

Complexity-informed social enquiries have consequences beyond the academic world. In particular, a complexity approach can be used to inform new and improved policies. This thesis argues that such a complexity approach can deliver better public policies and better results for people in the places where they live. It does this by arguing that a complexity approach is a better alternative to top-down, bottom-up thinking and to *ad hoc*, 'you never know your luck' approaches (3.2). In this way the thesis looks at some of what complexity can offer the social sciences. It considers what sort of considerations can enable social scientists and public policy-makers to make progress using complexity techniques (Morçöl, 2012).

With complexity we can consider social conditions where a small change produces a lot of flexibility in the outcomes. The consequences are unpredictable and can be both good, for example setting up a playgroup and bad, for example leading to a run on a bank. Taking the good example such a situation demonstrates adaptability through changing circumstances, emergence in the numbers of people involved, attractors in organising the playgroup in a similar way to a large corporation, self-organisation in the staff, and children interacting for mutual benefit as the playgroup is established as part of the community. In the same way the thesis aims to show that with communities there is strong evidence for adaptability, emergence, self-organisation (for groups) and autopoiesis (for people) (Maturana, 1981).

Adaptability is useful particularly when judging the ability of local agencies to adapt to changing circumstances both favourable and unfavourable; emergence is key particular where it is observable and the outcomes are surprising; attractors, patterning and scaling are phenomena that normally repeat. This shows that they can be useful for prediction, and as such they can be used to assess what is likely to emerge from social policies and interventions (Bedau & Humphreys, 2008).

For attractors the situation with communities is less clear. Complexity argues for the same patterns occurring at different levels and where the same pattern occurs at a number of different levels we are able to identify an attractor. Certainly within social science we are able to analyse the interactions between communities, public bodies and private organisations (Mackenzie, 2005). Further, we can say that community groups hold meetings to make decisions in the same way that national governments and the United Nations does. But is this saying any more than 'people talk about something, some agree and some disagree, then they make a decision'? Well, we could call this the 'meeting attractor'. Nevertheless it is not clear from this that attractors are either clearly present or even desirable with respect to analysing communities (Marston, Jones III & Woodward, 2005).

All of this suggests that it is time for the social sciences to work out their own complexity approach (Chapter 7). This can be done by taking a view that the interactions between people both magnify and enrich the complexity of the situation. This applies both from the one to the other and from the other to the one (Etzioni, 1989; Buber, 2004). We should then consider the complexity of human situations in terms of the awareness of the people involved in those situations and their competence in judging, emoting, planning, and so on (Zeeuw, 2011).

While the use of complexity in social science is relatively new, comparable approaches have been discussed within public policy studies. These include street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 2010), incremental policy-making (Lindblom, 1959 & 1979) and implementation structures (Hjern, 1982). Though such approaches may share some of the features that appear in this thesis, they do not adopt a complexity-informed, community-centred approach (Blackman, 2013). Rather they attempt to increase democratic input by encouraging communities to take part in centralised policy consultations or to access governmental consultation processes (Schneider & Ingram, 1997).

Likewise, there have already been a number of complexity approaches to social policies (Teisman & Klijn, 2008). These have included areas such as rail management (Groot, 2007), education policy (Eppel, 2009) and social policy methodology (Hutchinson, 2012). What is different about the approach presented by this thesis is the focus on communities in general and local community groups in particular, together with the complexity-informed approach developed to address them (6.5).

2.1.3 Research Paradigms

Research paradigms provide a sense of direction and set the boundaries of a piece of research. They may be divided into three types; positivism, interpretivism or constructivism and post-positivism.

Positivism assumes the reality of the physical world. It understands phenomena that are experienced by using quantitative methods such as measurements and observations (Nagel, 1989). So for a positivist, the world around us operates with respect to cause and effect. This leads to a deterministic worldview that may be researched by repeatable experiments using quantitative methods (Giannatasio, 2008).

Interpretivism, in contrast to positivism, uses and emphasises qualitative methods. It seeks to understand a multitude of constructed realities through subjective beliefs of individuals hence it is also referred to as constructivism (Trochim, 2009).

Post-positivism does not accept positivism, rejecting the assumption of the reality of the external world. It is still possible to retain belief in an objective reality but only by taking into consideration the subjective nature of individuals (Agger, 2002). Post-positivists try to reduce the experimenter's bias and error by considering multiple realities and by making measurements. These are brought together to form an inclusive view (Ponterotto, 2005).

According to the post-positivist view, achieving perfect objectivity is never achievable but only approachable (Peacocke, 2009). Thus it becomes important to take a multi-perspective approach (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002). Some view such multi-perspectives as simply a convenience (Datta, 2001). Others support the multi-perspective approach often in terms of pragmatism (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994).

At the same time, social research involves practice, worldview (*Weltanschauung*) and the relationship between the two. This thesis attempts to build knowledge using a complexity-informed approach that sits alongside other compatible practices and worldviews. It does not attempt to replace them (Crotty, 1998). Likewise, the inferences drawn and the conclusions arrived at are done so on the basis of the research presented. They are not delivered with absolute authority (Falconer, 2002).

This thesis commits to a complexity approach for social science driven by the employment of relevant qualitative and quantitative methods. It rejects the traditional division between interpretivism and positivism and in this sense it may be seen as post-positivist. The motivation for this is not distress at the downfall of positivism or indeed anything. The complexity approach produced is driven by the desire to look at what is actually there; to understand it and explain it in a way that makes it open to formal study (Blackman, 2013). This in turn will allow the production of fully informed policies that are appropriate for the people they affect (6.3).

Such an approach may be put in terms of our experience of reality (Whitehead, 1979) expressed through our language or more carefully the language we use to express our experience (Wittgenstein, 2009). Complexity embraces such attempts to understand this reality. It assumes a reality that exists independently, outside our knowledge and perception, and that complexity-informed research offers a way of approaching that reality (Sayer, 2000). At the same time, complexity does not imply positivism. Indeed hallmarks of positivism, such as controllable conditions and repeatability, carry little weight when taking a complexity-informed approach (Rescher, 1998).

2.2 Community Policy

2.2.1 Public Policy for Communities

Public policy is complex and changeable, involving both central government and local government and contributors with different views, values, and preferences (PASC, 2013). The thesis here looks at what has happened with community policy and gives the setting for what is presented later.

From the end of World War II in 1945 to the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 the political consensus was 'state welfarism'. This sought to ensure a healthy life free from poverty for every citizen (Williams, 1979). Though very ambitious, progress was made towards free health services, decent housing, good education standards and wages that people could live on (Glennester, Hills, *et al*, 2004).

However, the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major saw attacks on the trade unions and the drawing back of the welfare state (Hennessy, 1993). These attacks appealed to popular sentiment insofar as they were portrayed as protecting the 'hard-working and deserving' from 'lazy freeloaders' (Hall & Jacques (eds.), 1983). This differentiation continued under the New Labour governments (1997-2010) and is being pursued by the current Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition (Coalition) government (HMG, 2013; Greve, 2015).

The introduction of the Community Charge, or Poll Tax, to Scotland in 1989 and to England and Wales in 1990 broke the coordinated link between local government finance and local government policy. Though replaced by the Council Tax in 1993 this link was not restored, reinforcing the difference between the goals of central government and the ability of local government to carry them out (Jones & Stewart, 2012).

With the election of New Labour in 1997 state welfarism was gradually replaced by 'stakeholder welfarism' (Etzioni, 1995; Giddens, 1998). This included changes to the way the general population was regarded by central government and how many people came to see their place in society (Levitas, 2000; Stoker & Wilson, 2004). This period of stakeholder welfarism ended in 2010 with the formation of the Coalition government.

Coalition policies have been introduced to reduce the size of government through cuts and to stimulate bottom-up activities, all with the intention of producing a community-driven social landscape (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2013). David Cameron, the Coalition Prime Minister, has claimed that "we are all in this together" (Cameron, 2011b) and has referred to himself as a "giant Dyno-Rod in Whitehall" clearing blockages, removing barriers and helping communities achieve control of their affairs (Cameron, 2014). Many of these policies are set out in the Localism Act and are reflected by the Coalition's Big Society initiative (HMG, 2013; Large, 2013a).

At the same time the Labour Party have dropped the name 'New Labour' and are reassessing the policies of the New Labour years. Their view is that although New Labour widened the party's appeal it did not do enough to change the balance of power from the wealthy to the rest. Though New Labour talked about sharing rights and responsibilities it did not balance them across the population (Milliband, 2014).

In 2012 Labour began a new policy programme called 'One Nation'. With this in place, Labour intends to reduce economic inequality, reduce social unfairness and so reunify the rich and the poor. It seeks to do this by removing social barriers and to build an economy that works in the interests of working people (Labour, 2014b; Labour, 2014c). In 2014 Labour began a 'zero-based review' of government spending. This review is intended root out waste and highlight areas where savings may be made. This review will report in time for the General Election in 2015 (Labour, 2014a).

2.2.2 Localism

The Localism Act 2011 established a series of community rights, together with referendums to elect local mayors, veto council tax rises, and allow neighbourhood planning. These measures were accompanied by significant cuts to local government funding. This was intended to move the onus away from the public sector and to reduce government spending (Osborne, 2013; Cox, 2014).

Localism is not new. Local communities have long set themselves apart from central government. Since medieval times, cities have been granted trading privileges, licensing rights and powers to collect taxes. At the same time residents have attended public meetings and served their local communities (Zimmerman, 1938). More recently, localism has focussed on debates about whether communities are better governed centrally using big data sets or locally with specific information. The outcome of such debates is usually that a mix of both is desirable (Richards, 2014).

The New Labour government used 'New Localism' in reference to their local government policies (Lovering, 1995). The new localism debate focussed on getting the most productive relationship between central government and local government (Corry & Stoker, 2003). In this way localism came to be seen as a way of deepening democracy through the proliferation and flourishing of independent areas of governance using small-scale deliberative processes¹ (Parkinson, 2007; Spours, 2011).

Different kinds of localism may be articulated. For example, conditional localism occurs where central government gives powers to local authorities only if they achieve nationally determined outcomes or service standards. Community localism sees communities taking over local public services. The idea of people-involving, public services is being supported by both the Coalition government (Clarence & Gabriel, 2014) and the Labour opposition (Miliband, 2014).

¹ This view is not uncontested as seemingly harmless decisions by local groups may have harmful consequences for other groups (Schelling, 2006).

One way to bring about changes to locally–led public services is to use representative localism. This involves the decentralisation of powers to independent, locally elected, legally empowered bodies² (Cox, Henderson & Raikes, 2014). Such bodies can bypass local authorities and report directly to central government (Hildreth, 2011). For the purposes of this thesis all types of localism are open to consideration using a complexity-informed approach.

The power to create public policy lies with central government and a group of permanent civil servants who discuss, create and organise policies that are then applied by others (Donnelly, 2014). In this way policy formation is taken to be a function of central government. This assumption is underpinned by the way our democracy operates. We vote locally for MPs to sit centrally, in parliament. How we vote depends on factors that are diverse and often unpredictable (Kellner, 2014).

Proposals that power should move away from parliament understandably meet with scepticism and opposition (Becker, 1967). Should such proposals be pursued then a degree of reluctance and inertia may be expected. The intention is that, once underway, the shift of power from central government to local communities will be both irresistible and popular. Such a fundamental change is what localism proposes with local decisions being made by local people (Jenkins, 2004). At the same time, complexity tells us that the ability to influence and change things lies with those involved. In this sense localism and complexity are aligned (Cairney, 2014).

A key aim of localism is to shift the responsibility for local affairs from central government to local communities. This would mean the role of local government becomes the facilitation of the needs and wishes of the local community as a co-operative partner and not as a delivery agent (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2013).

² The question of whether such elected bodies would be descriptively representative of the local population is left open. For example, would they have 60% female or 20% non-white members? (Childs & Cowley, 2011).

One consequence of this is that the link between local government and central government becomes indirect with the local community standing between central government policies and local government actions. At the same time, central government ministers become empowered to bypass local government and to intervene in local issues directly and as they wish (Carrington, 2014). Such issues have included increased parking restrictions, intrusive CCTV, reduced wheelie-bin collections bin, and planning permissions for house building (Pickles, 2013). Taken together this means that on the one hand localism transfers powers to local people and on the other hand it increases the control of central government (Wilson, Cornforth, Baines & Mawson, 2011). This suggests that localism is a broad brush intended to establish the idea of local people looking after their own area overseen by central government, rather than establishing any specific changes (Bentley & Pugalis, 2013).

There is then concern over the sincerity of the Coalition's localism measures and whether they are mainly intended to weaken the position of local government (Featherstone, Ince, *et al*, 2012). So far central government has taken a substantial role in local politics while there is little sign of local people taking control of their communities by forming autonomous structures with legally agreed principles (Hay, 2002). Instead the Coalition exerts control through conditional powers and scattered local adaptations (Hildreth, 2011).

It would therefore be helpful for the Coalition to clarify what they mean by 'local'. They should set out what is to be done at each level, for example, community centre events, council services, city business developments and regional transport infrastructure (Mah, 2012a; Cox, Henderson & Raikes, 2014). In addition, they should explain how each localist measure is to be financed for example, by direct taxation, government grant, or local charging (Cox & Jeffrey, 2014).

The Localism Act claims to create certainty and consistency. Yet there are concerns that it may produce a postcode lottery among locally-based services and locally-determined policies. For example, low-income families face inconsistencies between local authorities in the level of support they may receive (Bushe, Kenway & Aldridge, 2014). The suspicion then becomes that, rather than engendering trust and collaboration between agencies and local people, localism is simply another way to cut public spending and reduce the role of the public sector (Padley, 2013). If so then this would mean that localism and austerity are two sides of the same coin (Donovan, Clayton & Merchant, 2012).

2.2.3 Big Society

“Jesus invented the Big Society” (Cameron, 2014).

The Coalition claim that Big Society is about the social recovery that is needed alongside the economic recovery. They have brought together a range of measures intended to assist local people in establishing the Big Society. These measures are largely contained in the Localism Act (HMG, 2010b). In this way the act may be seen as a range of enabling measures to assist the development of Big Society together with a set of legal guarantees to prevent restrictions on this development (Elvidge, 2013).

The notion of Big Society embodies the choice presented by the Coalition to communities. This holds that the Labour government had been spending too much so the Coalition is looking to save money and to recoup what it reasonably can. Communities can carry on as they are with less government money or they can get together and do things for themselves (HMG, 2013). There will no longer be financial support or practical assistance from government. Instead government will shrink to save costs and to leave space for communities to grow, resulting in ‘Little Government’ and Big Society (IPPR, 2013b).

With Big Society the Coalition is saying to communities that ‘it’s up to you’. At the same time they are removing support from the most vulnerable. They have for example imposed the Bedroom Tax, moving the basis of housing benefit from rent charged to individual circumstance (Meers, 2014). The consequence of this is that benefit claimants may no longer receive enough money to cover their rent charges (Bates, 2013). This means that communities are being asked to do more than ‘get on with it’. They are being asked to look after their most vulnerable members and their own communities by themselves without government support (Scott, 2014). This means that Big Society is also about community resilience, creating a safety net to secure community resources and ensure community well-being, as with the Castle Vale Neighbourhood Partnership (My Community Rights, 2012).

In some communities, a web of healthy social and economic relations may yield an emergent quality of resilience such that, within their own space, the members are likely to remain unaffected by significant adverse events, such as an economic slump, or a natural disaster (Krugman, 1996). In other communities the social and economic interactions yield an overall condition of vulnerability such that the members are likely to suffer seriously from even moderate or small perturbing events (O'Brien & O'Keefe, 2014). The point being that economic thinking about communities needs to be conducted in terms of ethics (Sandel, 2013). Differences in the distribution of income and goods are linked to processes of perceiving the self. Those with less, the poor, perceive themselves as being of less worth and as being less able than those with more (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). Economic policies that do not take this into account cannot assess or assist communities accurately (Loughnan, Kuppens, *et al*, 2011).

Big Society supports changes to communities as long as they do not require public money (Levitas, 2012). And there's the rub. To date Big Society has foundered on a lack of government investment, and localism has only really produced results where the necessary infrastructure already exists (Bale, 2013). So it is all very well practicing austerity and repeating the need to balance the books but it is the community who either pay for improvements or go without them. When it comes to local powers and local control, it looks very much as if the buck, along with everything else, stops with the community (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2013).

To support organisations that are seeking funds for their communities the Coalition set up Big Society Capital. This is an investment bank that works with social investors. These social investors form companies that offer loans to groups with social aims using money supplied by Big Society Capital (Big Society Capital, 2013). From a complexity point of view, this is a social version of adding redundancy to a power grid or air traffic control network to give time for a response to a change in conditions. If Big Society Capital works then Big Society may be able to work (Mackinnon & Driscoll-Derickson, 2012).

So far, however, Big Society has not handed power to communities. Indeed there is evidence that, insofar as it has reduced the role of local government, it has left communities with less involvement in making decisions that affect them than they had before it was introduced (Civil Exchange, 2015).

2.2.4 Austerity and the Cuts Agenda

Since coming to power in 2010, the Coalition has been conducting public policy in terms of their austerity agenda. This government-imposed austerity is a response to a recession caused by the global financial crisis in 2007-08. The stated goal of austerity was to achieve cyclically-adjusted current balance by the end of 2015-16 (HMT, 2010). In 2013 this was put as reducing the government spending deficit and the size of government debt beyond the 2015 general election (HMT, 2013).

The Coalition argues that because of the global economic crisis and the previous Labour government's spendthrift policies the UK can no longer afford to pay for the welfare of its people (Cameron, 2013). The post-1945 ambition of welfare and prosperity for all has been replaced by austerity for many and privilege for a few (Weldon, 2010; NEHTT, 2014).

While the Coalition's policies cover a number of different areas they share a clear and determined commitment to cutting the government spending deficit. To do this they are deliberately and purposely reducing the size of the public sector (Maude, 2013). Public services are being cut and cut again and the NHS is rapidly losing its public service status (Unison, 2014). At the same time, no political party wants to be seen as spendthrift so all parties agree that the public accounts need to be rebalanced (Rowley, 2011). Both Coalition policy and Labour's policy alternatives are based on a reduction in government spending (Cameron, 2014; Miliband, 2012).

While the Coalition has won the argument as to what happened and what needs to be done about it there are differences in where this will lead. The Conservative part of the Coalition wishes to re-establish a form of patrimony where the rich look

after the poor, whereas Labour is focussing on redistribution through a reformed approach to the welfare state (Freedland, 2014; Greve, 2015).

As well as promoting austerity, the Coalition has abolished regional institutions and instead advocated local responsibility as the best approach for shaping the public sector and promoting economic development (Bentley & Pugalis, 2013). At the same time, the Coalition has made significant funding cuts to local authorities (Aldrick, 2011), especially high-spending ones like those in the north east (Donovan, Clayton & Merchant, 2011). This has meant that the established funding system for local authorities has broken down and many are being pushed toward failure (Cockell, 2013). So, while the Coalition continues to hold that business support and increased economic activity is all that is needed (Cameron, 2013; Osborne, 2014) it has not addressed the effects of funding reductions and budget cuts it has made since coming to power (HMT, 2010; HMT, 2014).

For the VCS, the cumulative effects of these funding cuts have been grave (SIGOMA, 2013). It is unrealistic to expect charitable funding and gifts to make up shortfalls of this magnitude. The effect of these cuts has been to reduce the size of the VCS both in number of organisations and operational capacity. This reduction will continue unless central government provides sufficient funding and opens up public service contracting to the VCS (Locality, 2014).

Public service and VCS budget cuts have resulted in job losses and service reductions that are in turn adversely affecting the vulnerable and the needy (Manson, 2012). The Coalition intend to continue with further spending reductions in order, they say, to stimulate private sector growth (HMT, 2013).

This means that since the Coalition came to power in 2010 the public sector has changed materially and in spirit. There have been large scale redundancies and many front-line staff have been withdrawn. Those that remain are now expected to do a range of tasks. This may be common practice in the private sector but it is problematic where specialist skills and knowledge are required, for example carrying-out community programmes (Pugalis & McGuinness, 2013).

At the same time, many senior public sector managers have been retained and even rewarded for their efforts to save money, balance budgets and reduce staff numbers. Councils offer a corporate rationale for this saying that central government has cut their budgets and therefore they too are suffering the imposition of austerity (Harris, 2014).

The intended benefits of austerity include a smaller public sector, a more independent VCS, and increased private sector activity (HMT, 2013). The Coalition claims that its localism measures will enable communities to more than make up for this loss (Brandon, 2011). At the same time, by withdrawing resources from councils and leaving decisions to the community, the Coalition may make local government unnecessary (Cockell, 2013).

As the Coalition cut local government budgets so much local government cut, or ended, its VCS funding. Full grants were replaced by contributions. In addition, the Big Lottery Fund was reshaped, the Community Foundation reduced its grant schedule and the emphasis shifted from funding activities to funding preparations to become a social enterprise (Ogden-Newton, 2013).

At the same time as imposing austerity and cutting the public sector, the Coalition has turned to the general public to fund the VCS, or at least the VCS organisations that matter to them (JustGiving, 2012). And indeed in the United Kingdom around 22.6 million people give money to their local community. However, this money is neither reliable income nor is it all directed at social disadvantage (Smith, Lepine & Taylor (eds.), 2007). It is thought that more people would contribute more if it were easier to give locally and if they could see the impact of their donations. At the moment, however, there is no dedicated funding stream just for communities sector (UK Community Foundations, 2013).

Increasingly, VCS organisations are becoming social enterprises. In doing this, the VCS is becoming part of the private sector. Though praised by the Coalition, some of those involved do not see this as a change for the better (Huckfield, 2014). It is one thing to say that VCS organisations had become too comfortable, living off

grants doled out on an annual basis. It is another thing to ask organisations to charge the poorest, the most vulnerable, and the most chaotic for services which are often specialist and come with a large price tag (Unwin, 2013).

The VCS was never meant to be commercially viable. If it had been, it would not be the VCS but a division of the private sector, termed something like 'community traders' (McGill, 2011). Who would ever think that an organisation that for decades required grant funding could run itself as a viable business? Yet that is what community groups are being asked to do; run their community facilities as small business (Large, 2015). And instead of grants they are offered information about funders (Governmentfunding.org.uk, No Date) and the possibility of business loans through Big Society Capital (Big Society Capital, 2013).

In Newcastle, community centres are now expected to turn into viable commercial enterprises through the application of a business plan produced with the help of the Open Doors project (The Ouseburn Trust, 2012). At the same time commercial interests are taking money out of the north east economy and economic investment is less in the north east than in other regions (High Pay Centre, 2013).

Clearly the VCS cannot continue as it was, relying on grant funding and regularly renewed public sector contracts. Then again there need be no rush to become part of the private sector with the emphasis on trading and the corresponding change in values (Large, 2015). For example, taking complexity into account the VCS could take up a role as the catalyst of change to fight austerity and assert the ethic of helping others (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012).

Whatever course is taken, the current situation cannot go on indefinitely. Reserves will only last so long and competitors will not wait for VCS organisations to catch up with them. In such circumstances it is better for the VCS to make a positive attempt to change within desirable parameters than to have unwelcome changes forced upon them (Corner, 2013).

2.2.5 Political Participation

Having examined the Coalition public policy agenda, the thesis now considers those who are governed, that is people living in communities. Political participation is usually analysed in terms of the macro and the micro. 'Macro' refers to nations or political systems while 'micro' refers to individuals or small groups (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). In taking a complexity-informed view, the thesis does not adopt this distinction. Rather it discusses the interactions of individuals, community groups, local government and central government, in a way that makes them available for policy formation (Myers, 2004).

The thesis discusses political participation in terms of the place in governance for the community, the public sector and local businesses (Milbrath, 1960 & 1968). As such it usually relates to situations in which it is difficult to attribute outcomes to the decisions of central government (Rhodes, 2013). Here a complexity approach to political participation is suited to understanding the key variables, namely contributions made, outcomes achieved and costs incurred (3.5).

In public policy terms, the purpose of community participation has changed from New Labour's funded programmes to do-it-yourself Big Society activities carried out under the localism of the Coalition (Scott, 2014). Yet both approaches take raising levels of effective local participation as important. Raising these levels can build conditions in which local people become able to take control of their community and of their local services (McKenna, 2011; Cox, Henderson & Raikes, 2014).

In doing this local political activity can be analysed as part of community activity. No distinction is drawn between exclusively political activity and the thoughts, beliefs and intentions of the people involved (Crow & Allan, 1994). Nor is participation in community life reduced to stimuli, personality, social position, or economic categories (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Instead, local political activity is put in terms of what the community has sought to achieve and what is currently going on to achieve this (Lofland, 1983).

This activity is discussed in terms of communities and public policy development. To date central government policy-makers have maintained rigid hierarchies and produced top-down, centrally managed policies (Donnelly, 2014). The combination of top-down imposition and statistically-focussed performance management has led to expensive, temporary interventions such as City Challenge (Fearnley, 2000) and the Single Regeneration Budget (DCLG, 2007).

More recently, the Coalition has been asking for and supporting measures such as Social Impact Bonds, Inspiring Impact, Realising Ambition, Project Oracle, the Early Intervention Foundation, the Alliance for Useful Evidence, and NESTA's Standards of Evidence. As before, these measures miss the point that while they may affect the community, the community are not directly involved in them (Bediako, 2013).

All of which implies that because community environments change unpredictably and because organisations need to adapt as necessary, a single strategy for public policy-making cannot be relied on (Musgrove, 1984). In other words, there is no guarantee that a policy strategy that is successful in one context will be successful in another context (Blatter, 2003).

Moving away from a laws-based approach using idealised explanations towards case-based interactions and interpretations removes an unrealistic commitment to certainty (Geertz, 1983; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The commitment met by a complexity approach is to set out clearly and to maintain the meaning of what is being done. A complexity approach achieves this by setting policy not in an idealised form but through what has gone before, that is recent history, and by setting consequent interventions not in terms of government aspirations but in terms of what the people involved are doing at the moment (Mowles, 2014).

2.2.6 Community Governance

The term 'governance' has been used to describe several different things. For practitioners, governance often refers to public administration or more generally the way in which an organisation is governed or steered (Waldo, 1955). Within social science, governance is the coordination of different social interactions and describes how organisations manage their interactions both internally and externally (Leach & Percy-Smith, 2001). Complexity has been engaged to understand this coordination and to enhance these descriptions through conceptual considerations and modelling (Koliba, Meek & Zia, 2010; Koliba & Zia, 2012).

The government is the dominant actor both governing and executing governance (Weiss, 1979). This has been questioned as unhealthy for all concerned (Sbragia, 2002; Hill & Hupe, 2006). In addition, traditional policy-making practices have not delivered satisfactory results for communities and those who work in those communities, for example, City Challenge (Fearnley, 2000) and the Single Regeneration Budget (Hale, 2007).

Community governance raises the issue of replacing tried and tested bases of power with new local governance structures (Hay & Stoker, 2009). This could be based on several simultaneous processes. Firstly, through deregulation of financial markets, national governments will lose some control over the actions of both institutions and individual actors. Secondly, there will be a change in the processes of interaction between different actors in such a way that they can take their own position, regardless of central government. Thirdly, the independence of local and regional level actors from central government will be strengthened (Castells, 2008).

Operationally, community governance implies a change from the traditional form of government as command and control to a more inclusive form with management responsibilities being shared among government and local people (Cairney, 2009). Already there is some evidence of a greater desire for community-level governance and local policy-making (Cox & Jeffrey, 2014).

To accommodate this, government and the public sector could be reduced and replaced by community governance through local networks (Clark, 2007). This would require a change from the current form of local government to a network of local agencies involved in the governance of their area (Dobson, 2013). At the moment, however, while localism and Big Society are being promoted as alternatives to government control (Cameron, 2011a) other measures are being taken to strengthen central government control (Bale, 2013; Davoudi & Madanipour, 2013).

2.2.7 Public Policy-making

The traditional approach to policy-making uses concepts and methods to design and form policy instruments that put in place institutions, make laws, and set regulations. Social scientists and policy-makers acknowledge that they do not know enough about the social world to create precise, accurate policy in advance of its application or even to avoid errors and unintended consequences (Cairney, 2012b).

Public policy is made within central government usually by ministers and senior officers, who discuss, create and produce policies that are then applied by local government and other public bodies (Donnelly, 2014). Policy-makers have to justify and be accountable to ministers, Parliament and to the public (Rhodes, 2013). To provide justification, policy-makers draw on sources such as the knowledge of academics and the expertise of practitioners (Talbot & Talbot, 2014).

Public policy-makers often confront issues, such as welfare reforms and public sector cuts, whose common feature is their complexity. These issues involve large numbers of diverse interacting parts that produce behaviours that cannot be easily derived from knowledge of their constituents. Further, the highly diverse interactions of social, economic and political elements produce communities that are open to big and rapid changes (Ackoff, 1978; Greve, 2015).

Policy-makers generally expect policies to achieve part, but not all, of what is hoped for. They hope to avoid negative unintended consequences and welcome pleasant surprises. Therefore policy usually proceeds through a series of incremental changes intended to minimise the risk of serious mistakes or lasting problems (Lindblom, 1959 & 1979). In doing this, policy-makers are dealing with complexity. Here complexity is an expression of the complicatedness of public policy. As such complexity lends itself to the presentation of the issues and approaches of public policy (Meek, 2010).

Furthermore, the traditional way to see policy-making is from government to the governed. Government ministers form policies aligned with government departments and more specialist concerns across those departments. Senior civil servants delegate responsibility for policy-making to officers, who seek information and advice from groups as they see fit. Some departments may have operating procedures that favour particular sources of evidence over others. Pressure groups and lobbyists external to government seek access to and potential influence over government ministers (Cairney, 2012a). However, power is concentrated in central government which takes a top-down, 'we know best' approach (Blunkett & Richards, 2011).

At the same time, central government recognises that they do not have all the policy-making expertise. Indeed they may wish to gather evidence and insight from external experts and have committed to open policy-making³ (Rutter, 2012). Nevertheless civil servants use management techniques to control government action meaning that what is produced is largely outside the control of policy-makers (Cairney, 2014).

Community groups and their local networks will formulate their own policies, or at least try to coordinate common efforts to influence policy-making at different levels (Bookchin, 1995). This implies a movement of power from local communities, through local government, to national government, and on to international bodies such as the European Union. This gives a view of policy-making in which members of the public as well as professionals participate in problem solving and opportunity creation (Cairney, 2012b). Yet, as things stand, central government still holds much of the power. This means that local government, local organisations and community networks are not influencing public policy processes to any significant degree (Schlager & Weible, 2013).

³ The Civil Service has a website dedicated to open policy-making (Civil Service, No Date).

Moreover traditional public policy interventions are not delivering satisfactory results for communities and those who work in those communities. Such interventions often rely on setting out the expected results and measuring the effects of the intervention in terms of these expected results (Weiss, 1979) as exemplified by City Challenge (Davoudi, 1995; Fearnley, 2000) and the use of the Single Regeneration Budget (DCLG, 2007; Hale, 2007). This suggests that something different is needed, something that delivers not what central government says it can offer but policies that people are asking for, policies that they believe will make their lives better (Crozier, 2004).

Enlarging the scope of the public policy process would make it more open to influence from communities (Hudson & Lowe, 2009). This would also affect established forms of representative democracy and lead to an adjustment in local democratic structures and procedures (Childs & Cowley, 2011). In particular, handing power to local representatives would duplicate, if not replace, the role of other, less-local representatives (Flyvbjerg, 1998). For example, creating neighbourhood representatives implies a reduction in the role and number of ward councillors but does not explain how this would be brought about (Sinclair, 2011)⁴.

These public policy challenges require approaches that recognise and take into account inherent complexities. In complexity terms, understanding these challenges involves tracking the interactions and assessing the outcomes, both intended and unintended, that emerge (Carter, 2012). Focussing on the interactions of the policy-makers only gives part of the story. The interests of local communities and the relationships they share with others are required too (Howlett, 2012). This means that the main constraints on policy changes are not the government's intentions or the policy programmes pursued; they are the past circumstances and previous conversations that led to the current position (Geyer, 2012).

⁴ There is a similar debate around elected city mayors. Electing city mayors appears to increase local control. They can act as powerful advocates for future investment and development. At the same time, having an elected mayor reduces the influence of ward councillors and hence that of local people (Heseltine, 2012).

In this way, successful policy-making depends on the ability to understand and predict such complex behaviours. This will allow government infrastructures, regulations, programmes, and assessments to be more effective (Sanderson, 2006). This is where complexity approaches can come into their own, for example with the Munro Review (Munro, 2011; Munro & Hubbard, 2011).

Traditionally, public policy has been done to communities (Table 2.1). Some programmes such as New Deal for Communities, have attempted to change this (DCLG, 2008). However, these programmes worked within the traditional top-down and bottom-up framework (Head, 2013) and adopted a version of the traditional approach (DCLG, 2008). Already, flaws in traditional assessment and evaluation such as target-based performance management have been recognised. Hence there have been moves from outputs to outcomes and to impacts (Callahan, 2008). However, such approaches will not work because they are doing the same thing differently rather than doing something different (Table 2.1).

Complexity identifies properties found in the social world such as non-linear dynamics (where some actions are amplified and others are dampened), positive and negative feedback, sensitivity to initial conditions (the effects of early decisions and events), attractors (regularities of behaviour), and emergence (surprising developments). In this way complexity concepts may be linked to policy practices (2.3.7). Yet immersed in multiple streams of various issues, policy-makers tend to focus only on the concern at the top of their agenda (Kingdon, 2014). In the same way, many managers and many governing bodies believe that current circumstances result from the decisions made in their past (Cairney, 2014). While such beliefs may be more or less correct, taking a complexity-informed approach will help them to appreciate their true situation (2.3.9).

Table 2.1: Approaches to Public Policy

Source: Author

Complexity Approach	Traditional Approach
Policy Principles	Policy Principles
Those directly involved have the largest stake and hence the biggest say	Those directly involved are told what to do and have no say in policy production
Public policy is formed with them and carried out by them	Public policy is formed by government officers who do not carry it out
Policy Cycle	Policy Cycle
Work with communities on policy programme	Policy programme is done to communities i.e. delivered
Communities engage to enact policy initiatives	Policies may prove inappropriate and may not be fully enacted
Initiatives succeed and feed into ongoing policy programme	Communities are not engaged and policy programme stops
Assessment and evaluation	Assessment and evaluation
Asks those directly involved what actually happened	Asks for output, outcomes and impacts using proxy indicators
Produces accurate evidence in relevant areas	Produces flawed evidence often in general terms
Specific learning allows better policy-making	Sporadic learning leads to poor policy-making

2.2.8 Social Measurement

This brings us to the questions of how we measure society and how we should conduct such measurement. Are the standard measurements appropriate? Do they lead to effective policy-making? Even if they are accurate, can complexity considerations offer a better way to carry this out?

Policy-makers and managers applying public policies attempt to measure the effect of their activities by collecting outputs, outcomes and impacts. These measurements may be general, such as changes in employment rates, or they may be specific to an intervention, such as number of residents engaged (Parsons, Gokey & Thornton, 2013).

Such measurements are often used to assess the performance of the public sector staff involved. This means that the outputs, outcomes and impacts become not only the measure, but the focus of activity. In this way, the outputs, outcomes and impacts collected often bear little relation to the reality of what happened or is happening. They do not say what has actually happened in the communities concerned (O'Donnell, Deaton, *et al*, 2014). So if the intention is to improve the community then collecting data and compiling tables will never explain how this has been done nor provide useful information as to how it is to be done (Brower & Jeong, 2008).

Tables may indeed show fewer cases of chronic illness or rising average income for the area but they cannot explain what was done, how this came about or simply whether an eccentric millionaire has moved into the area (Geyer, 2013). Similarly for collecting data and compiling it in terms of key categories; of course numbers of doctors' appointments and rates of employment are important but they say nothing about the experience of living in the area or whether living there has improved, stayed the same or got worse (Benwell Community Development Project, 1978a).

Attempting to measure the effects of interventions in terms of categories of improvements is also problematical. For example Walker Riverside Industrial Estate is fully let. Two substantial companies operate from the six units located there (Spencer Business Parks Limited, 2011). However, their premises are well away from local shops and facilities. Their car parks are full of cars driven by managers and employees who drive into the area in the morning and drive out in the evening. The local people never meet them (4.3.2).

When we are considering communities of human beings we need to consider their interactions. In general we may say that human beings interact in such a way that similarities and differences emerge. While this may seem to overlook the detail it encompasses an attitude of looking away from principles and categories, and towards actions and consequences (Stacey, 2003). This requires a way to assess human interactions that explicitly supports comparison through testimony and experience. This will allow comparative explanation and analysis through the use of concepts that both situate the discussions and allow them to be deferred for further consideration (Blackman, Wistow & Byrne, 2013).

To capture what is actually happening and to appreciate the true value of what is at stake requires a way of finding-out and assessing what matters to the people in the local area. A complexity-informed approach provides such a way. The complexity concepts provide a way to assess what matters in a way that makes the experiences of real people accessible to managers, academics and policy-makers (Johnson & Cook, 2013).

To do this complexity explains the interactions among people as a permanent, on-going disequilibrium, where equilibrium would be a special case (van Buuren & Gerrits, 2008). This can be discussed using time as the key concept from which our understanding flows. In other words, as long as a suitable method is employed, we understand more today than we did yesterday and we will understand more tomorrow than we do today (Large, Sice, *et al*, 2015).

And the same things do not happen twice. From the public sector point of view, the local authority acts differently in each situation and on each occasion. The same amount of money, the same number of staff and the same desires of the community do not bring about the same interventions each time (Lawless, 2011).

Nevertheless complexity can help us to research communities on their own terms and in a way that can improve understanding. Nothing is assumed in advance, no check list is employed, no impact assessment is required. Rather the complexity-informed approach gives a way to understand what is happening that is recognisable to all concerned (Krippendorff, 2011). For example, taking this approach lends itself to investigation by case study (Chapter 4) where each intervention, each project, each happening may be shown to be different, in terms of what was said and what resulted (Nutley, Powell & Davies, 2013).

2.2.9 Community Interventions

Community interventions are based on desired outcomes derived from prior research. A set amount of money is allocated for prescribed activities to take place over a fixed period of time. There is usually some flexibility over the activities allowed within the bounds of the project and maybe over the time allowed. This time-limited approach takes no account of the complexity of the situation and has been judged too rigid to promote success (Callaghan, 2008).

Complexity allows the assessment of such interventions in terms of what actually happened and is happening. This is done by examining the interactions and what emerges from those interactions. Complexity accepts that the consequences or outcomes may take many years to emerge. In doing this it discourages centrally driven target setting and linear performance management (Hardill & Baines, 2009). At the same time, complexity encourages more freedom for local bodies and trial-and-error exercises to be adopted or rejected quickly. It teaches policy-makers to be less risk-averse and less anxious when things go wrong (Hallsworth & Rutter 2011).

Assessments about whether policies or practices are working are complicated. They depend on a range of constraints, considerations and desires. This entails valuing the multiple interests of officials, professionals, volunteers of all ages and local people in an on-going course of actions that value alternative judgments, competing policies and rival interventions (Hall & Thelen, 2009; Birdwell & Miller, 2013). Complexity acknowledges this saying that interventions should be made in the same way that you play a strategic game, namely you make your move and then see what happens. If it is what you expected then fine. If not then you rethink your interventions. Take the example of Facebook. No one wanted it to happen in the way that it did. There were no plans, no course of action, and no core group of influencers; it just happened (Phillips, 2007). The lesson here is: observe how things are developing; choose when to act; see what happens; decide how to respond; and most importantly, keep repeating these steps (Sanderson, 2009).

Complexity holds that communities work in a similar way. What matters about communities are the people affected and what they are involved with. And this is an on-going, iterative procedure called living their lives. Take, for example, the community of 'health-service-participants' and the National Health Service's 'iwantgreatcare' scheme. By using the website, patients, doctors, charities and providers are able to feedback on the health services they have received or have provided. Hence it is possible for those directly involved to review actual provision in an ongoing, iterative and patient-centred way. While this is neither perfect nor comprehensive it is more useful to patients and providers than a report written by experts, according to a remit issued by government that is due to be published in five years' time (iwantgreatcare, 2008).

To move forward communities need much more interaction with the public sector and indeed with the private sector. Equally the public sector needs to get out into the community and, in complexity terms, interact with them. The private sector too should be interacting with communities not just advertising to them. They should be sharing the benefits of private enterprise and entrepreneurship (Massetti, 2008; Goldstein, Hazy & Silberstang, 2008).

Across the public, private and voluntary sectors, deep relationships need to be forged. Time-limited projects and shallow, pacifying community engagement has not proved adequate. To do this senior government officers need to get involved at the community level. They need to meet and develop relationships with the people they provide services for and show that they are accountable to them (IPPR, 2013a).

Furthermore, central government and the public sector need to think in terms of the communities are involved with. This is, after all, one of the principles of localism. Government institutions can then focus on strengthening relationships with local people and give them the ability to put forward improvements and to tackle community problems together (Sennett, 2012; DCLG, 2013).

This of course is easier said than done. Indeed it is nothing less than a demand for public services to be reconfigured. No more silos, no more directorates, no more 'you can't go in there', and no more 'top and bottom'. And this means saying goodbye to the staff who either will not action such changes or may oppose them (Mulgan, 2012). It is now clear is that the public sector needs to embrace the complexity that makes up all of our daily lives. Only then will we be able to form the public service partnerships and create the private sector relationships that will meet the needs of our communities (IPPR, 2014b).

One way of doing this is to gather community practice around a dedicated team and form a local governance partnership (ODPM, 2005). To be effective such a partnership needs strong leadership from local residents which in turn requires engaging and training the very people hit by Coalition cuts and welfare reforms (Pugalis & McGuinness, 2013; NEHTT, 2014).

In Scotland, such partnerships already exist. Under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 all councils are legally obliged to set up Community Councils. These are legally recognised groups of local people with an interest in their local community. The size of each Community Council varies usually between five and eighteen people. Their main role is to represent their local area, to consult with local residents passing their views on to public sector organisations such as the local authority, the Scottish Government and major utility providers such as Scottish Water (The Scottish Government, 2013).

At the moment much local government interaction with communities is done in terms of a top-down and bottom-up approach. This is used with the intention of encouraging staff to refrain from desk-based planning. It is sometimes done following a community consultation but even in such situations the interactions with the community are designed to suit the professional, managerial agenda. This suggests that bottom-up community policy-making simply does not happen (Head, 2013).

Current community policy-making can, at best, be characterised as 'not doing what the public sector wants straightaway but leaving it for a bit'. At best this gives the community time to get used to what is going to happen. At worst this is deliberately deceitful. Why is it like this? Well, one reason is that much community intervention work is done in terms of projects and carried out through a project plan. As such they have a purposely closed and limited structure. There is deliberately no place for the community. There is deliberately no intention to involve the community. Further there is every intention to withdraw all resources, everything, at the end of the project. There is no intention to provide anything lasting for the community (Coaffee & Headlam, 2008).

A phrase sometimes used by professionals working with communities is that getting local people to do anything is like trying to 'herd cats'. Taken on its own terms this is a plain insult. It may not be intended as insulting but it is. Taken in the context of community interventions it is a consequence of project planning (Head, 2013). What the professionals are referring to is that people are reluctant to give up their free time to examine and agree a lot of project documentation that has already been agreed by council officers and councillors. This often involves 'regeneration', that is developments that are carried out to improve existing facilities or are intended to attract new people to the area in question (Cameron, 2003). Furthermore, woe-betide any community member who reads the documents and ask questions about their concerns. These people are labelled 'troublemakers' (Myers, 2004).

By examining their motivations, we see that regarding interaction with local people as unnecessary and counter-productive suits many professionals. They can use it to dismiss the community and get on with doing what they want in the way that they want to do it (Edwards, 2002; Jay, 2014). At the same time, from the community point of view, public money is spent on projects they did not ask for and services provided by people they do not know (Large, 2006b). The project staff may achieve successful outcomes and may receive consequent promotion. At the close of the project the community may well return to the way it was, showing that this is no way to pursue public policy (Cairney, 2012a).

In contrast a complexity approach holds that, to be successful, interventions should adopt a non-linear approach that makes use of multiple conversations and interpretations. This in turn will be used to form an understanding of the intervention in terms of interaction and emergence (Chapter 3).

Yet linear models, exemplified by project planning documentation, still dominate. They state that an intervention is needed and its impact can be assessed, without taking into account actual context, interacting activities and multiple unforeseen variables (Reynolds, Forss, *et al*, 2012).

Turning now to the evaluation of community interventions, the traditional approach is by quantitative measurement of selected factors. These measurements produce the evidence used to determine the success or otherwise of the intervention (Centre of Excellence for Evaluation, 2012). Such an approach begins by making the following assumptions:

- 1) Evidence aids scaling the intervention to the optimum size or the best fit
- 2) Evidence prevents replication
- 3) Evidence can attract the expertise of leading academics to benefit practice
- 4) Evidence can fit with government policies that work and so save money

The traditional approach goes on to say that the easiest and most effective way to gather this evidence is through quantitative approaches; easiest because it avoids tiresome recording of written evidence and most effective because, once the tables and spread sheets are set up, the figures for any area or community can be added easily (Mark, Cooksy & Trochim, 2009; Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2007).

There are, however, considerable drawbacks in adopting a traditional approach to evaluation. Taking each point in turn:

- i) Scaling is determined by available resources not by the actual circumstances or by measurement of actual need (Smith, 1992).
- ii) It is not evidence itself that prevents replication it is evidence of the same or a similar taking place. The way to find out about this is to ask the people involved, not to look at tables of figures (Cartwright, 2011).
- iii) Evidence can provoke interest from academics and expert practitioners. However, what brings such professionals in are resources and a feeling that their efforts will be worthwhile here rather than there (Blackman, 1995).
- iv) Trying to save money where there is none is foolish. Taking money from the poor is counter-productive. Not investing in community infrastructure is plain folly (Webb Memorial Trust, 2013). Measurements will indicate this by displaying poor numbers on an after the facts basis. Talking to people in communities identifies need and directs investment there and then (Dunn & Norton, 2013).

Yet the traditional approach holds that no public project is signed off until all the data has been gathered and project evaluation has been completed. Moving from outputs to outcomes to impacts does not change this as they are all compiled for the purpose of standard statistical analysis (Cartwright, 2011). This means that if we are interested in what happened to the public money invested in a community then we should be interested in finding out what happened to that community⁵ (Lowe, 2013).

⁵ While criticising the traditional approach, collecting numbers and compiling data can play a useful role, for example, in comparative assessment (Blackman, Wistow & Byrne, 2013).

Central government has tried to address the failure of interventions by changing the methods of evaluation. Specific targets have been largely replaced by norms. The agencies involved moved from collecting output figures to measuring outcomes, and now assess impacts using software to cope with many chosen variables and to process large amounts of data (Ógáin, Svistak & Las Casas, 2013; Sinzer, 2014). Nevertheless, none of this will achieve an accurate assessment of what is happening until they include the views of the community involved (Franklin, 2013). To do this effectively the agencies need to take complexity considerations into account. The evaluation methods that would be most useful for this are part of a programme of work that this thesis can contribute to (Vesterby, 2008).

Evaluation for government purposes means that the interests of the community members affected are not considered. It may be objected that these interests are covered by the indicators chosen and the methods employed but where is the cross checking with the community? When do the managers meet and talk with those they have affected? So the separation of the government from the governed is enhanced by project-based funding and evaluation methods which intentionally exclude those they directly affect (Cairney, 2009).

At the same time, consultations and opinion polls are often exercises in asking someone else (usually community development staff or contracted consultants) to ask people they consider to be suitable, questions that government officers want to be asked in order to deliver answers that government officers judge to be suitable. What happens is that even where they are consulted, the community is simply ignored (Dobson, 2012).

Where central government takes an interest and shows some concern it is usually through statistics, tables, plans and budgets, rather than by listening to what the community has to say. What happens is that reports are prepared and passed up the line. When is any consideration given to the people whose lives they are supposed to be changing (Gaita, 2000)?

When working with communities we need to actively search and strive for the authentic (Feldman & Hazlett, 2013). It is not sufficient to say how 'real' or 'connected' a project was. It is not sufficient to say that the people involved were the 'salt of the earth' or other such patronising phrases. This means that our concern here is not government or managers but communities and the people who make them up (Kaplan, 2001).

This means that if you want to help communities, if you want to make a difference to the people in need then you need to talk to them, listen to what they say and set out your evaluation on the basis of a balance of views arising from these conversations (Mintzberg, 2014).

2.2.10 Our Communities

Our communities are important. They shape our lives, our identity and our relationships with others. Although they face some common problems, every community is different, with its own particular character, assets and challenges. Moreover, communities shape the identity of those who live and work there: who they talk to, the homes they live in, where they shop, the schools they go to and the services they use. They shape us and help to make us the people that we are (IPPR, 2013b).

Through our local knowledge and relationships we, in turn, shape our communities through the ways we choose to live in them; villages, towns, suburbs and estates. Importantly the ideas of home and of workplace remain significant (IPPR North, 2013). Yet public funding and decision-making remain centralised and local people have little or no control over what happens to their community (Hildreth, 2011).

The government recognises that not everyone wants to be or needs to be involved in community affairs but equally there is plenty of appetite for involvement in most places. Economic pressures demand that public services yield maximum benefit for the money available and the imperatives of social harmony and social justice are recognised by support for those who wish to overcome inequalities where they exist (HMG, 2010a). While this may be true it is clear that the government, both central government and local authorities, are not going to do this for you (Dorling, 2011). They will not prescribe how communities should move forward and they will not tell communities what they should be doing (Large, 2006b). This means that the role of community groups is fundamental to the whole question of community involvement and practice (Sandel, 2009).

Community activity is about people doing things together, and as soon as people do things over a period of time, meeting repeatedly, they take on some sort of group existence. Groups with a long-term existence are the basis of community activity. Collectively they can be described as the community sector (Williams, 1980).

Communities are shaped by their histories and cultures, waves of migration, poverty and wealth, connections with other places and government interventions and policies (Veit-Wilson, 2006). In addition they are ever-changing, responding to local, national and global changes (IPPR North, 2013). However, recent Coalition policies both local and national often invoke community involvement without appearing to understand how fundamental local groups are to the life of a community (Durose, Justice & Skelcher, 2013).

More radical theories have held that the state and its agencies are themselves the primary source of poverty and inequality (Bookchin, 1995). Such a view fits with those who say that the Coalition's welfare reforms are acting against the interests of the poorest and are reinforcing inequality (Derbyshire (ed.), 2013). If this is the case then central government measures are not only impractical but counter-productive. There can be no successful community growth under such conditions (Hirsch, 1976; Greve, 2015).

It is, however, more common to see a democratic state as a mechanism for decision-making, which must respond to local opinions and interests (Myers, 2004). This view offers more options for change than the current situation where the government takes action and the community, or rather certain groups of people, responds to these actions (Aspden & Birch, 2005).

Community organisations have become used to collecting evidence of their outputs, outcomes and impacts (National Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network, 2014). Under New Labour such evidence would usually be enough to ensure a further grant and could lead to substantial funding for expansion and growth (Kail, Keen & Lumley, 2011). Under the Coalition this is no longer the case. For example, the What Works Centres set up in 2013 support the use of evidence in policy-making but they do not provide funding for groups they work with. Everything they produce will concern what has already happened (Cabinet Office, 2013).

Clearly the Coalition understands that in order to meet the needs of local people without creating dependency, a participatory ethos is required in which local voices are heard, their influence is seen to be effective and benefits are produced. Hence they have produced the localism measures and promoted the idea of the Big Society. It may then seem strange to find a government committed to localism and the Big Society at the same time removing the national framework of local support and reducing funding for local public services (Barnard, 2011).

This raises the question whether the methods developed under New Labour and the lessons learned from previous generations can still be applied to communities that are declining and where local authorities will not spend money on them (Waterhouse & Scott, 2013).

Furthermore, the VCS is made up of two very different types of organisation. On the one hand there are professionally run charities and not-for-profit organisations with salaried employees. On the other hand there are community groups run by volunteers that, while they may generate some income, have relied on grants from the local authority, from other grant-making bodies such as the Big Lottery Fund and from European grant programmes (Kane, Mohan & Rajme, 2010).

The major role for national government in strengthening communities is to recognise that local communities need strategic support without close direction or oppressive monitoring. National government needs to ensure that there are effective resources available through good policy-making, adequate public sector resourcing and effective partnership working with the private sector alongside the community (Colebatch, Hoppe & Noordegraaf (eds.), 2010).

Coalition encouragement to form social enterprises and bid for contracts may fit with the aspirations of the professional organisations but it runs counter to the purposes of the voluntary community groups (Conservatives, 2008). This means that there is a big, possibly unbridgeable, gap between the ambition of a dynamic, co-operative, co-productive set of local social enterprises and the reality of much of the current community sector (Chanan & Miller, 2013).

The current policy agenda is one of austerity (HMT, 2014) leading to slow recovery from recession (Pugalis & McGuinness, 2013) and inequality (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Under the previous government things were generally okay and where they were not, they were getting better, for example unemployment was falling, school exam results were improving. New Labour's public sector policy was to move towards decentralisation at a moderate pace. The effects seemed relatively benign and worked relatively well. It had built-in mechanisms to correct radical deviations, such as scrutiny and oversight committees and the Audit Commission to protect "the public purse" (Audit Commission, 2004; Kitthananan, 2006).

In taking money out of the public sector, the Coalition has removed much of the grant funding for the VCS. This has resulted in fewer community projects, the marginalisation of the Voluntary Sector Compact, and the reduction or end of many local community groups and medium-sized voluntary organisations (Simms, 2013). The message from central government is that it's up to you to decide what you do (Goulding, 2011). So how the VCS responds to this change depends on the local circumstances in each area and the people in charge of the VCS groups affected (Locality, 2014). Complexity theory holds that complex situations need order to produce positive outcomes and, with the situation brought about by the Coalition, that order cannot be guaranteed (Delgado Díaz, 2004).

There is potential for communities to improve their conditions through the application of policy frameworks at local, regional and national level. That the determining factor on what is done in a local community is the residents and the local stakeholders is not contested. What may seem strange is that while localism is promoted by the Coalition they are at the same time removing the sources of funding to allow it to happen (Miliband, 2014).

So how should the Coalition's approach be assessed? Well, the localism measures provide a counterpoint to previous regeneration strategies (Coaffee, 2005) and there has been a withdrawal from central government monitoring and evaluation on the assumption that this is the responsibility of local areas (Centre of Excellence for Evaluation, 2012). However, if practice and evaluation are simply left to local agencies and communities it will be difficult if not impossible for central government to assess what is happening and draw worthwhile conclusions (Cox, 2014). Which leaves us in a position whereby central government is committed to improving communities, and policy-makers struggle to come-up with effective ways of achieving this.

Furthermore, local governance is not something that can be done by volunteer residents in isolation. They need the support of the local authorities (Aspden & Birch, 2005). Deliberate and prolonged erosion of mainstream public services by the localist Coalition has made it increasingly difficult for communities to function as have done, let alone transform themselves into a Big Society (HCCLGC, 2011).

2.2.11 Community Inclusion and Exclusion

A number of concepts are used to describe the positions of different groups and individuals found within communities. These include, for example, included and excluded, homogeneous and segregated, active and inactive, wealthy and deprived, independent and grant-dependent (Schelling, 1969 & 1971). The terminology is intended to give community life a manageable structure and meaning that can produce shared understanding (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). However, these terms also work as negative labels, keeping these communities at arms-length, outside the mainstream (Crow & Allan, 1994). The use of such terms in policies and during decision-making contributes to the formation of boundaries and hence to exclusion (Schermer, 2006).

To understand this it is necessary to begin within ourselves. By viewing our own position and behaviour as distinct and different from the decision makers it soon becomes obvious that it is about us and them. While it is possible to analyse and compare communities in terms of historical, economic, cultural, political, religious and administrative variables, such an approach will not provide a complete explanation of inclusion and exclusion, nor of the processes of marginalisation (Farmbry & Bennett, 2008). The explanation rather has to be looked for in the relationships between people living and working in a local area. What counts is how people establish relations when they work, play, go to school, worshipped or relaxed together. These basic forms of social life develop mutual dependency and constitute the basis for the existence and formation of the local community (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Here it is important to consider differing attached values of community members and their local networks. It may be that the views that the established parts of the community have about themselves are based on an idealised form of their own particular group. The views of others, outside their group, tend to be negatively enhanced. This goes for members of other localities, council officers and policy-makers alike. This is not a static situation, but a continuous dynamic process with particular people and certain organisations coming into and going out of favour (Elias & Scotson, 1994).

This person-centred approach draws attention to the fixing of boundaries as a process of on-going discussions and rearrangements. A boundary does not need to have actual content or focus. In this sense the boundary can be in place without being real. This has been discussed in terms of a post-modern, global world where there is a tendency to blur the shape or the description of boundaries but this applies equally to local actors and relatively small scale interventions, up to national policy level and on to transnational or global considerations (McLuhan & Fiore, 2008).

Community exclusion and inclusion is understood as a dynamic processes evolving both over time and in time. These processes occur as a consequence of individuals or groups meeting or not meeting (Carter, 2012). Community members are not therefore excluded in any absolute sense hence the terms 'exclusion' and 'self-exclusion' are problematic to use. Rather as non-officers they are not invited to officers' meetings or as busy individuals they do not have, or cannot find, the time to attend. However, through their interactions the officers engaged are related to individuals in the community. They operate in a symbiosis, based in a figuration of power and dependency, governed by social interactions and by the structures of the community in question (Elias & Scotson, 1994).

This means that, as complex entities, new activities emerge from communities all the time. The question is whether government wants to, or should want to, intervene in this. If it does then is it better to choose key factors and intervene in those? If it does decide to intervene in this way, the result is something like an NDC programme (4.2). Or would it be better, perhaps, to give money to parish councils and let them spend the money in their local areas? In any case, to have empowered and engaged local communities government needs to radically rethink the way it spends and saves public money (Dunn & Norton, 2013).

Here there is an opportunity for a complexity-informed approach to reveal contradictions inherent in the goals of community interventions and in the aspirations of the people involved and to use these to enable a better understanding of what is happening and why things may not be working. Exploring such contradictions gives the opportunity for compromise and may prevent things heading in an unfavourable direction. With project planning, for example, goals and actions are set in advance. There is no space for contradictions or for a mix of motives. This means that contradictions and mixed views are not considered hence standard monitoring methods will not pick them up (Callahan, 2008).

For example, setting up a community business may create viable employment and it may provide a service for the local community. The business may fail to make a profit yet it may provide a much-needed, well-used and appreciated service. In this case the business has failed in one way and, at the same time, succeeded in another. Taking a complexity approach uncovers this contradiction because it values all of the people involved not just the professionals' views or the monitoring officers data (Groot, 2009).

There is then no single method for understanding communities. This makes the ordinary words used at meetings and in relevant conversations the best way to consider community-involving interactions. Groups meet, discussions are held, decisions are taken. These dialogues represent a collective inquiry into the assumptions, presumed certainties and contradictions that compose everyday experience (Isaacs, 1993). As such they express meaning as embodied in a community. To learn what is going on, all we need do is use the terminology in use to describe and so structure the unbound, less integrated, pluralistic world of the community (Hammond & Sanders, 2002).

2.2.12 Learning from the Community

There is a lot of work done by professionals saying how communities should be shaped and how members of communities should act (Bamber, 2010). Taking a lead from this work, the literature review suggests that local people have important and relevant knowledge for public policy and subsequent community interventions. It is not that local people know everything but that local people know what they want to achieve and, maybe with some help, what they can achieve (5.5).

What then does the community have to say to academics, administrators and practitioners? If you know your history you will know who and what you are, which in turn means you will understand your local environment and be able to articulate what matters to you about where you live (Musgrove, 1984; Meek, 2010). Through this knowledge, you will be able to express your identity and see off any attempts to co-opt you into a project or a way of life that is alienating or oppressive. Further you will not simply accept political decisions that have been made for you. You will not regard yourself as simply subject to the power of others (Taylor, 2010). So rather than maintaining the *status quo* or reforming existing structures such an approach could, in time, lead to a lasting and renewing transformation of our society; one that would represent and include all views (Cunliffe, 2009).

Practically, this means getting together with friends, neighbours and advisors to ask; what is good, what is bad, and what you want to happen next. This brings in the question of leadership both of individuals as leaders and groups as leading an initiative or working with others to achieve a goal or to just keep going (Sice, Koya & Mansi, 2013).

There are then strong reasons for local people to get involved in community activities. Humans are social animals and social engagement gives rewards and satisfaction. These rewards of course include resources such as food, clothes and shelter, safety but also less tangible things such as volunteering, forming friendships and good feelings (Foot, 2009; Birdwell & Miller, 2013).

So acting together within communities gives benefits that no amount of individual possessions can bestow. Involving yourself in community activities benefits not only the other community members but you yourself as well. To value and to be valued is both an achievement and a gain (Caprariello & Reis, 2010). All of these 'acting together' activities have personal benefits such as a sense of well-being, a feeling of being in control of yourself and the knowledge that you count (Mill, 2002). What you do also has indirect or fringe benefits. You become known as a good person, as someone who stands up and is counted. People may come to like you and your reputation may grow and spread. You therefore have powerful reasons to get involved with and to help your community (Schelling, 2006).

Furthermore, there is something intrinsically social about the desire to help others and to make things better (6.3). What takes hold of us from making friends as children, working with colleagues in our employment, forming close personal relationships and having families of our own is the notion of the public good, of acting for the best (Tainter, 2006).

Such a rich and developed notion of real people living in social communities shows the inadequacy of the Coalition approach. At the same time it shows the irrelevance of the efforts of civil servants, national and local, to the community. Put simply, meaningful relationships are not developed by the kind of engagement that is designed to serve the purposes of public sector professionals (5.4). Such relationships require genuine dialogue where professionals are keen to learn from the community and everyone contributes not only to the design but also to what happens throughout the process. The failure to appreciate the complexity of the issues, in particular the unwillingness to recognise the importance of relationships with non-professionals, contributes to the failure of professional practices and the need for further interventions (Johnson, 2005; Jay, 2014).

There is then more to communities than the pursuit of utilitarian items and community activity is not just about creating or enhancing local resources. Increasing or decreasing local interactions, affects the health and well-being of those involved (Scott, 2014). Which raises the following disjunction; central government and local government likes to pursue activities through the medium of projects. Projects have a beginning, middle and an end. Projects have fixed budgets and a more or less fixed staffing requirement. In contrast, communities dislike projects. Projects mean people come in, carry out the project plans, get local people's hopes up, and then withdraw leaving things as bad, if not worse than they were before (DCLG, 2009).

If central government and local government are serious about co-operating with communities they will drop projects. Public sector managers will learn to do without the security of project plans and opt instead for the safety of community buy-in. They will abandon project costings for on-going spend profiles. And they will stick to them (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan (eds.), 1997). This, however, is a big ask. After all they have been trained in project planning methods such as Prince2. It is what they are good at. This leads to consideration of whether we have the right people managing the public sector (Peacock, 2011).

2.3 Complexity and Social Situations

2.3.1 The Complexity Approach

Complexity offers an alternative to determinism. Historically, it began in physics, came into biology and is now part of social science. Academics in different disciplines continue work on the analytical and predictive uses of complexity. By developing suitable analytical and computational tools they have discovered that even very complex phenomena can be modelled and understood. Some of the principles and laws that have been discovered have a wide degree of application even to areas that are seemingly unrelated (Prigogine, 1982; Gerrits, 2012). Recent advances in computational technologies are enabling a larger number and greater variety of academics to conduct complexity-informed work. This has led some to regard complexity as a good way to address difficult social issues (Bertram, 1997).

The predictability-control, single output paradigm holds that the role of actors is to put together and enact organisational strategies and policies, and to control associated activities. In this way progress is made towards intended outcomes. This depends, however, on making predictions of the consequences of the actions and their outcomes. While this may work for some time the assumed predictability is often far from certain and sooner or later the paradigm collapses (Zhichang, 2007).

Complexity talks of the 'edge of chaos' often in reference to organisational structure. This says that too much structure produces rigidity and too little structure leads to chaos (Lewin, 1992). A balance between the two harnesses the dynamics at the edge of chaos where beneficial changes emerge (Gleick, 1988). Here actors cannot predict behaviour or plan for detailed outcomes. Instead they choose to move their project to the edge of chaos keeping activities loosely structured on the one hand while relying on targets and deadlines on the other (Pascale, 1999).

This leads to an appreciation of the fitness landscape. Here strategies are thought of in terms of populations searching for a fit landscape to operate in. Some strategies represent incremental moves up peaks or down valleys, and others amount to discontinuous jumps to other parts of the landscape (Merkuryeva & Bolshakovs, 2011).

To manage a situation complexity-aware practitioners will employ a number of strategies that mix incremental and discontinuous changes. This would appear to require continuous movement from the initial conditions, continuous monitoring of current performance and regular adjustment of strategies. However, if the rules are specified and imposed then they are not genuinely emerging (Beinhocker, 1999). Now, if a number of strategies, rather than a single strategy, is employed, then more planning and implementation will be able to take place (Pülzl & Treib, 2007). Such an approach relies on anticipation and foresight. Furthermore, while strict design and control are not appropriate, the mix of strategies may be changed in accord with corresponding targets and deadlines (Mintzberg, Lampel & Ahlstrand, 2008).

One response to this challenge is to put in place just enough structure to get things moving in the right direction. This looks as though it will turn complexity into a predictive enterprise for it requires that we know in advance what is just enough. But on our current terms complexity simply cannot do this (Cilliers, 2002). And this is where complex responsive processes come in. What this thesis investigates is a complex responsive process approach with just enough structure to get things going. Here 'things' may be large scale policy documents or more specific monitoring observations, project reports, grant applications and so on (6.4).

Within the social sciences complexity is often regarded as applying to organisations and to people regarded as actors within those organisations (Espejo, 2012). The thesis views organisations as groups of interacting individuals (Baianu, 2010). With this understanding the thesis makes reference to individuals, to the contribution that individuals' interactions make to an organisation, and to phenomena that emerge at the organisational level.

2.3.2 Complexity Concepts for Social Research

Complexity is a discipline shaped by a number of key concepts. Many of these came about through mathematical investigations or the study of fundamental physical, chemical or biological phenomena. A number of these concepts apply to the social domain (Ackoff, 1994). Not every case of complexity shares all of these concepts. Rather they overlap in such a way that cases may be said to share family resemblances (Wittgenstein, 2009). It is therefore important to be familiar with these concepts.

i) **Autopoiesis**

Autopoiesis denotes the organisation that characterises self-generating operations (Mingers, 1989). It was originally intended to define and explain the nature of living systems (Maturana & Varela, 1980). As such it was contrasted with allopoietic. Allopoietic systems use external components such as raw materials to produce external structures, for example a car manufacturing plant produces cars (Buchinger, 2006). The use of autopoiesis was extended to include organisms that are self-producing such as human beings (Mingers, 1995). They are contrasted with autonomous entities that are self-organising but are not self-producing (Maturana, 1987). This use was subsequently enlarged to encompass human society and social activity (Luhmann, 1995; Mingers, 2002). Social activities and their qualities emerge as a result of the on-going autopoiesis of the individual components of those systems (Introna, 1998). It is not the people themselves that are autopoietic. Rather autopoiesis occurs in the ways that individuals organise themselves into and within communities (Gumbrecht, 2006).

ii) **Emergence**

Emergence refers to the outcomes of interactions in local circumstances rather than from central factors (Pepper, 1926). As such it is one of the most important and most contested topics in complexity (Bedau & Humphreys, 2008). It may be thought of as novel interactions that are not predicted by the properties of the parts under consideration. Such interactions are regarded as emergent factors. For example hydrogen oxide is a simple, unexceptional three-atom molecule, H₂O. But combining a large number of these molecules produces liquid water with unusual physical properties, such as transparency, solvency, capillary action, and expansion upon freezing. Similarly, weather is an emergent property of air, moisture and land interactions (Marston, 2000). Emergence can be thought of as scaled in two general ways. There is emergence at the macro level concerning observables, behaviours and structures. This is outside, without. Then there is emergence at the micro level concerning rich interactions between actors and stakeholders leading to the emergence of behaviours, cultures and structures. This is inside, within. This, however, is too quick. Even a very simple community structure such as a residents group is more complex than straightforward feedback will allow. While we may claim knowledge about what goes in in a particular situation, generalising from that situation is something we impose on reality; in other words, upscaling to or downscaling from an actual situation leads to the production of human constructions (Heylighen, Cilliers & Gershenson, 2007). Complexity holds human interactions as complex and emergent. From the interweaving of human intentions in social situations emerge outcomes that no one has intended (Mowles, 2014). When considering emergence in social situations it is important to resist the reductive urge that regards emergence as the explanation. It is always important to consider what is being studied in its own right (Corning, 2012). What needs to be emphasised here is the necessary on-going negotiation and renegotiation that takes place among community groups and between community groups and government agencies (Blackman, 2013).

iii) Interactions

Interactions and in particular rich interactions may be explained as actions between each participating subject. This does not mean a series of actions such as '1, 2, 3' but a number of combined actions such as '1&2, 2&3, 1&4, 2&4' and so on (Baljko & Tenhaaf, 2008). Human enterprises take place within a network of rich interactions between human agents. Through these agents these interactions are capable of spontaneous self-organisation producing emergent, orderly, evolving patterns of behaviour without any prior blueprint (Sice and French, 2006).

iv) Iteration

For complexity, iteration means ongoing repetition that usually approaches a desired goal, target or result. Each repetition is termed 'an iteration' and is usually substantially different to the previous iterations (Morse, 2012). The result of one iteration becomes the starting point for the next iteration. In this way a series of iterations may lead to the emergence of key points or lessons (Reed & Harvey, 1992).

Iteration offers an alternative to the fixed model of determinism. It allows for certainty and assuredness without committing us to for-all-time requirements (Derrida, 1978). By taking an iterative approach complexity offers a mature and sophisticated way of answering problems that seemed intractable or impossible when considered by the lights of traditional, linear methods (Cilliers, Biggs, *et al*, 2013). It does this by regarding human interactions not as actions *simpliciter* but as interdependent. In this way any explanation is not complete until the relevant set or series of interdependent interactions are considered. To put it another way, the puzzling result may only be puzzling because the all of the relevant interactions have not been considered (Baljko & Tenhaaf, 2008).

v) Non-linearity

Non-linearity occurs where there is no linear connection between the effect or outcome and time. Such cases are not power laws because they do not necessarily result in positive feedback. In other words they are exponential rather than linear. In complexity non-linearity is viewed as a constraint. For example, you may run out of a resource but not because of time. People may get fed up, run out of money etc. Non-linearity can be used to explain this (Mitchell, 2009).

vi) Self-organisation and Attractors

In complexity, self-organisation relates to what organises and gives back in such a way that further organisation takes place. In this way it links to attractors or more precisely to points of attraction. This means that self-organised situations don't stay the same and nor do they collapse, rather they re-organise (Ottino, 2003). In this way groups, institutions or institutional forms are able to meet the ever changing variety of the environment. If the environment is changing fast so that changes cannot be predicted well in advance, interactive and spontaneously self-organising engagement is needed to generate information, enable learning and allow constant adaptation (Beer, 1979). This applies to communities too where they are regarded as independent and self-organising groups (Bryman, 2012).

Complex systems sometimes spontaneously and consistently revert to recognisable dynamic states known as attractors. Attractors pull you towards a certain state in the future. For example if the pendulum of a clock is nudged it may move erratically for a short time but soon settles back into a regular swing. Similarly, norms and customs may be regarded as persistent, hard to displace attractors (OECD, 2009). Married couples who have rich interactions with a social network are more likely to follow traditional roles. Those with few such links are more likely to diverge from traditional divisions of responsibility (Gardner & Wampler, 2008).

With social science we are able to analyse the interactions between communities, public bodies and private organisations. Hence we should be

able to identify attractors occurring within communities and follow them through different levels. Nevertheless every community is different with different people doing things their own way (Mackenzie, 2005). Taken together this suggests that for complexity communities both follow certain patterns, called attractors, and are constituted by unique and multiple sets of interactions (Gerrits, 2012).

The use of these complexity concepts is subject to consideration in terms of the complexity approach adopted. We may suppose that if something cannot be answered, determined, or summed up, it is unknowable. This cognitive closure is deeply unsatisfying and is anathema to academic study (Morçöl, 2005). One response to this is to say that the answer has yet to be found or maybe that we are asking the wrong question. That the answer has yet to be found means either we need to throw more effort into working out the answer along existing lines or that we need to think again and find another different yet similarly linear route that will lead us to the answer. Furthermore if every avenue of research has been exhausted and if the answer still eludes us then logically we cannot know the answer. If we accept that there is an answer then it must lie in an area of knowledge that is cognitively closed to human beings. Nonetheless, our pragmatic response to this is to keep trying (McGinn, 1993).

In contrast complexity holds no such thing. With complexity we are faced not with inevitable unknowability for that is simply cognitive closure but with a known or knowable set of answers or rather ways of determining the answer at a particular time or place, or within a given scenario. Alter a relevant condition and get a different answer. Complexity therefore allows a range of answers dependent on particular times or conditions. In this way complexity shifts the emphasis from the answer to the conditions that pertain at the time in question. This suggests that complexity is tied not just to the data being analysed but to time or more accurately to the temporal position of the question in relation to the response sought. For example, predicting the weather tomorrow will be more accurate than predicting the weather next week (Heylighen, Cilliers & Gershenson, 2007).

Here we should ask whether this means that complexity says any more than 'less accurate data produces less accurate predictions'. While accepting that less accurate data produces less accurate predictions, complexity goes further. It holds that the temporal component present in every real situation introduces a complex, and indeed a chaotic, element. This means that once we use data beyond a certain future time the results or conclusions we may draw are little better more than random, though importantly they are not completely random (Hayles, 1991).

This suggests that complexity holds that for a set of defined but currently unspecified questions the range of possible answers, or outcomes, is so large that it makes any meaningful prediction impossible (Wodak, 2011). However, this is not the end of the matter. From this complexity says that if we are to conduct meaningful research and participate in useful activities we need to get close to the question. We need to find out what is going on now and if we do we may be able to draw some meaningful lessons. In this way complexity stands against both random luck and unqualified determinism (Sternan, 1988).

2.3.3 Complexity and Systems

Complexity is often expressed in terms of systems. Here a system is defined as a whole produced by its parts and separated by a boundary from other wholes. A system can be studied using complexity where it is bounded. It is within the boundaries that the complexity occurs (Cilliers, 2001). While it may be true to say that the systems being studied are not straightforwardly linear, care must be taken not to assume that complexity implies randomness, disorder or chaos (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984).

Complexity science usually uses the term 'a system' to refer to a model of a phenomenon. As such the model shows us that we cannot predict the behaviour over time because the system is so sensitive to minor changes. Again it should be emphasised that the model itself is clearly delineated and while the behaviour of the system is not predictable it is not random either. In this way the key characteristic of a complex system is that it exhibits emergent behaviour that is not determined in advance (Gershenson, 2007).

A complex system is composed of many parts that interact with and adapt to each other and, in so doing, affect their own individual environments and, hence, their own futures (Rihani, 2002). The combined behaviour arises from the rich interactions of parts that are, in turn, influenced by the overall state of the system. Widespread patterns emerge from the autonomous but interdependent mutual adjustments of the components (Ottino, 2003).

Complexity researchers may search for and then scrutinise these patterns. Where they succeed in identifying consistent tendencies, effective ways of positively influencing the system may be derived. Some existing successes point the way to powerful future applications including change models in the health service and new approaches to business organisation (Phister, 2010).

Complex systems in the natural domain consist of a large number of agents that interact with each other to form systems that adapt to the environment (Rihani, 2002). The key question here is, how do complex non-linear systems function to produce novel patterns of behaviour in the absence of any overall blueprint? This agent-based approach is of interest to social scientists because human groups, organisations and societies may also be thought of as agents interacting with each other (Ackoff, 1994).

Among complexity theorists a systems approach has become the established norm. Such theorists have no problem talking about complex systems *per se* and about self-organising systems as complex systems. This has built into a theoretical approach known as 'complex adaptive systems' that has become widespread (Miller & Page, 2007). This approach has, however, been challenged by another complexity approach using complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2011). The thesis discusses this challenge later in this chapter but first it considers the systems approach specifically through complex adaptive systems.

2.3.4 Complex Adaptive Systems

Complex adaptive systems are complex systems that both exhibit behaviour that requires self-organisation and involve behaviour that leads to the emergence of something new. This emergence is then fed back into the system in such a way that something else emerges; this in turn is fed back so that something else emerges and so on (Hooker (ed.), 2011).

The behaviour exhibited by complex adaptive systems is sensitive to minor changes. This sensitivity can be understood in terms of a bifurcation point where two paths are possible yet the determining factors are so small as to be practically indiscriminable. One hour you may want coffee, the next tea and so on. So with complex systems it may be said that you get more for less because the system balances itself, finding its own equilibrium. Additional time and resources are not used creating this balance. This represents a clear difference from both command and control systems analysis, and from a 'test cases leading to learning scenarios' approach (Kaneko & Tsuda, 2000).

In this way complex adaptive systems identify the characteristics of successful interactions and apply them so that the use of these characteristics exhibits complex adaptive system behaviour. Some interactions are very little effort and work well because they proliferate. Where this happens the complex adaptive system is successful. Where the interactions proliferate the complex adaptive system is regarded as successful. Where they do not, the complex adaptive system is regarded as less successful (Ottino, 2003). This means that complex adaptive systems are acutely sensitive to the relevant initial conditions (Lorenz, 1963). In saying this we refer back to a debate begun by Poincare in the early years of the twentieth century. This debate concerns the position and role of awareness in the system about what is happening outside the system (Poincare, 2012). To account for awareness it is not enough to know the current conditions of a system; you need to be sensitive both to the initial conditions and to the conditions outside the system if the model is to be successful. Here 'success' means to be useful, to be of some use (Kaneko & Tsuda, 2000).

The dynamics of a system are determined by the pattern and by the nature of the relationships within the system. The response to any perturbation in the system is determined by these dynamics. Stabilising the behaviour of the system means repeating the past. In this way the system is held to be capable of recognising fluctuations in the environment and of generating flexible behaviours in response to these fluctuations. Organising the system to respond to perturbations is achieved through continuous adaptation and learning (Sice & French, 2006).

Complex adaptive systems may be applied to phenomena that are social and not necessarily physical. These complex social systems have characteristics that are different to biological systems but they have similarities too (Bovaird, 2008). For example, the movements in a crowd before it breaks into a stampede appear chaotic. When the stampede occurs there is order: a strong, directional flow in which individuals can be trampled. Complexity researchers have identified patterns in crowd dynamics that are immediate precursors to stampedes such as stop-and-go waves and turbulent motions. Using these insights, public authorities and engineers have designed and organised public spaces so as to inhibit the precursor patterns and, thereby, prevent stampedes (Kaneko & Tsuda, 2000).

To account for social phenomena, complex adaptive systems use models to develop and build theories of interactions. The models show how systems behave within fixed constraints, the constraints normally being the terms of the model. In the same way complex adaptive systems may be used to build mental models made up of psychological concepts. These mental models need not be exclusively psychological. Indeed using psychological concepts alone risks building a solipsistic theory. Rather the concepts that form the mental model are chosen to reflect the rich interactions between the psychological beings in questions and the outside or physical world. This does not necessarily imply dualism as the only commitment required at this stage is to interactions between the psychological being and their environment (Meehl & Sellars, 1956).

In the social realm what is required is that people interact through their mental models. In this way we may link mental models to the here and now. This means that mental models are not inert theoretical items but are types of description of actual, living beings. Indeed the effectiveness of a mental model may be judged by whether it is adequate to an actual situation (Wolfram, 2002).

For complex adaptive systems supporters this means that these models are useful and explanatory in their own right. They offer an account of complexity concepts, including emergence at the social level, in their own terms (Morgan, 1982). In this way complex adaptive systems practice involves developing models that represent the system in question (Miller & Page, 2007). This means that taking a straightforward complex adaptive systems approach risks putting the model before the subjects. Adding richly informative material could ensure this does not happen. Using such modified models would then enable us to encompass the views of a range of subjects without putting the model before the subject (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003).

However, if the emphasis is on the subjects themselves and their experiences, putting this into a model or system seems unnecessary if not distorting. Everything that is important to the subjects is important to the research. In particular, we make sense of time in our interactions; we make sense of the present by reflecting on our actions and those of others. If we wish to capture this reflection in our research we cannot rely on models or systems. Indeed, individuals and groups are far richer in terms of reasons and more complex in terms of actions than models can capture or systems represent (Dweck, 2006).

While the complex systems approach is a useful way of expressing certain forms of complexity it does not do everything. For the social such an approach does not fully account for lived experience; that is the beliefs, desires, hopes, disappointments and ethical commitments that are part and parcel of everyday life (Chu, 2011). This means that we should be wary of any approach that holds systems to be the focus of attention. Instead we should focus on the nature of what is under examination that is the social, the people and the communities involved. Where the emphasis is on constructing robust systems the resulting complex adaptive systems are left with insufficient richness to be accurate about the situations under consideration (Stacey, 2010).

Human endeavour is driven by novelty and creativity which emerges from the varieties and differences of human interaction (Stacey, 2005c). However, a system is usually defined as a whole produced by its parts and separated by a boundary from other wholes. Here what emerges is usually regarded as a property of the whole and is not found at the level of parts. Yet in having no place for what lies outside of the system, systems thinking omits an account of human novelty and creativity (Cilliers, 2001).

Similarly, managers participate in organisations. They are a part of the whole and therefore cannot be detached observers. Yet systems-thinking holds managers have to act as if they are. Furthermore a single part cannot be free because it cannot follow its own interest and goals, since if it does it would be acting for itself and not for the whole. Freedom and agency are therefore confined to people outside the system at particular moments when they can make changes to what is expected. These changes are usually made by managers and directors (Ackoff, 1994). However, if an organisation is thought of as a system, it cannot at the same time be self-organising. It is rather organised by managers as detached observers at special moments. This means that organisational changes are not genuinely emergence since what the system unfolds is chosen for it by the managers (Grobman, 2005).

This may imply that with complex adaptive systems there can be no internal new ideas or novelty. All come externally from outside the system. Furthermore, human agency as a day-to-day, on-going characteristic of human action is not possible. Discerning simple rules, moving organisations to the edge of chaos and formulating multiple strategies and so on, are all to be done by managers acting on the system (Bateson, 1972; Von Forester, 1984).

Attempts to avoid this outcome usually involve redefining the boundaries of systems in one of two ways. The first way involves the creation of a second-order systems level. Here there is a vertical expansion of systems to include higher cognitive level functions such as managing (Churchman, 1968; Checkland, 1981).

An alternative approach is to use critical systems thinking to expand system boundaries in a horizontal direction, so as to incorporate more systemic features such as multiple viewpoints, cultural influences and community activities (Capra, 2014). It also includes stakeholders as participants in identifying and designing systems that govern their own actions (Midgley, 2000; Jackson, 2007). Nevertheless, these moves appear to simply give managers dispensation to be involved as part of the system, be it through second-order inclusion or by extending the boundaries.

This problem applies to systems thinking because it is built on a spatial metaphor. The means it requires a whole separated by a boundary from other wholes. Drawing a boundary creates an inside, which has to be different to what is outside. Hence there is always an inside and an outside. This in turn delivers dualism in which one kind of interaction applies to the inside and another kind of interaction applies to the outside. In other words there must be something outside the system that defines the boundary of the system, yet what that something is, is unclear (Stacey, 2003).

Consider the actions of individuals as free agents. Systems thinking holds there to be individual agents who are autonomous, reasoning beings acting in their own individual interest. At the same time systems thinking assumes that these individuals are not autonomous at all but subject to the causal forces of the system of which they are a part. Here we find causal dualism in the systems thinking approach with individuals cast both as autonomous agents and as subjects of causal forces (Salmon, 1998).

So how can individuals be both autonomous and not autonomous? One way to approach this is to say they are autonomous with respect to their actions and constrained with respect to the system. This could be fine so long as the individuals restrict themselves to clearly personal actions and clearly system-involving situations. But here the problems start for how are we to define the difference between personal actions and system-involving situations? Surely it is reasonable to say that our lives and our actions are situated? In which case the relevant situation that concerns us is the situation we live and act in (Hurley, 1998).

To follow the view of complex adaptive systems we should say that we act within a system as part of that system. But this is precisely what the theory of complex adaptive systems has difficulty in accounting for clearly and adequately. Better then to seek a more straightforward alternative than to commit complexity to such indistinctness. Nevertheless, it is too simple to say that if there are sticking points with complex adaptive systems we should embrace complex responsive processes.

2.3.5 Complex Responsive Processes

Complex responsive processes are discussed here as an alternative to the use of complex adaptive systems. The objections presented focus not on complex adaptive systems *per se* but on the role of and prominence given to such systems. Complex responsive processes depart from the notion of an organisation as a system and from the focus on the individual as the change-agent. In doing this they draw on strands of thinking in sociology that stress human interdependence and regard individuals as thoroughly social selves that arise in human interaction (Elias, 1978).

Complex responsive processes focus on individuals and reject analyses in terms of organisations as systems. Instead of systems, complex responsive processes stress human interdependence and regard individuals as fully formed social selves arising in human interaction. Where humans relate to one another there are interactions such as communication, communicative interaction, and conversational processes (Habermas, 1986). They also involve patterns of power relations and choices made for ideological reasons (Žižek (ed.), 1994).

With complex responsive processes interactions hold the semantic weight. Accordingly explanations are given by interactions not by systems or by models. Further for conscious, social actors such as human beings, our interactions are to be understood in terms of complex responsive processes. Complex responsive processes of relating encompass joint action and identity creation leading to knowledge emergence. They are the basis for all forms of human joint action no matter how sophisticated the joint action may be. Through such interaction identity, as a sense of self, is both formed and transformed (Stacey, 2012).

Complex responsive processes occur as the living present and are local in nature. They are being continually iterated for they are processual; occurring both as and in the living present for they are ontically primary; and they are local in nature for they are natural and ungeneralisable (Stacey, 2010).

To satisfy his objections to dualism and to accommodate the rejection of ontological layers, Stacey posits patterns of relating involving processes and no structures of any sort (Stacey, 2003). This raises a number of questions: without an understanding of structures, how can we know whether agents' relationships are transformative, that is how can we discern where patterns of relating are self-organising towards? Without an understanding of the structures of relationships, how can we know what is global and what is local, how localities are to be distinguished and what the differences are? Without structures can we make ethical judgments about whether an agent is conducting relationships and interacting justly and fairly? And surely we need structures of some sort in order to analyse the distribution and configuration of power for example between central government, local government and communities?

While determined to collapse dualism, it looks as though Stacey's emphasis on process and rejection of formal structure may in fact prevent the complex responsive processes from fulfilling their full potential (Layder, 2006). Further work is needed to establish interdependence between community members. Describing the social world in terms of patterns of relating alone lacks ontological depth and, on its own, is unable to capture the richness of the varieties of lived experience⁶ (Caprariello & Reis, 2010).

The approach taken by the thesis places the emphasis on lived experience and it explores this through testimony reported by the people involved. Using complex responsive processes requires examination of an actual situation because they are about happenings in the world. Actual situations have a position, in other words a location and a time. And happenings in the world have authenticity. They are not drafts or models (Feldman & Hazlett, 2013).

⁶ This does not mean that the thesis accepts determinism nor that it adopts dualism (3.1).

This means that in order to explain the way situations actually are, complex responsive processes are iterative, flowing into each other and reflecting back on what has gone before. This is achieved through interactions being in the 'now' hence what emerges is real. For human beings what emerges is awareness, awareness of ones place in the interaction and subsequent awareness of how this may be considered (Stacey, 2012).

The theory of complex responsive processes rejects a spatial metaphor of inside and outside, accepting instead temporal processes of continual reproduction and potential transformation. In practice this means that complex responsive processes are formed by power relations and ideologically-based choices that in turn form new power relations and open new ideologically-based choices (Žižek (ed.), 1994). This means that interactions between people are iterated processes of interrelating. There is no notion here of a system. What people produce in the course of their interactions may be said to be further patterns of interaction from which they imaginatively construct wholes. For Stacey such imaginative wholes are to be understood as ideologies, as idealised constructions, and not as systems (Stacey, 2011).

Complex responsive processes explain the evolving processes between people who interact in any way. This is the basis for a theory or strategy, where human interaction is perpetually constructing the future as the known–unknown, that is, as both continuity and potential transformation at the same time. While Stacey calls this 'a game', the perspective reflects a theory of transformative causality, in other words a fundamentally paradoxical theory of causality; what is caused is caused by what is caused. This paradox is resolved by the movement or flow of time. If it is held static or if it is taken as analytic then the paradox becomes vicious (Stacey, 2012).

In this way human interaction can be described as complex responsive processes of human relating. These usually take the form of conversations involving power relations and ideologies (Žižek (ed.), 1994). As conversations, human interactions may be understood in terms of communication, communicative interaction, and conversational processes. Through such interactions both the individual identities and the collective identities of those involved emerges. Such interactions can be described and accounted for as complex responsive processes of human relating (Stacey, 2010).

Complex responsive processes of relating are descriptive, describing what people are doing. They are not prescriptive, describing what they could or should be doing. In this way they are able to describe the joint actions of people that both result in knowledge creation and bring about changes. This 'dynamic epistemology' is a perpetual construction of the future in terms of identity and difference. Through these joint actions people construct their future in the present. Prediction or more strictly predictability emerges in the present (Stacey, 2011).

As knowledge is gathered, or learned, so meaning emerges. Knowledge itself cannot be stored, but reified symbols can be stored as artefacts. Here artefacts are understood as abstracted themes describing past interactions and the qualities that emerged in those interactions. Through such co-operative interactions the identity of humans, both individual and collective, emerges (Stacey, 2010).

Complex responsive processes explain how people explore the world around them. From above, people interact and from these interactions further interactions emerge. As sentient beings what emerges for people is awareness of what is around, of what is going on. This means that people examine the world by reflecting on actual experience in the present, and not through models and modelling. With complex responsive processes we are able to make assessments and predictions in the now. We do this by attention to the now and by consideration of how we interact. We focus on what emerges from our interactions, reflect on what we find, decide how to go on and learn as we go on (Large, Sice, *et al*, 2015).

People interact with each other and from this emerges roles and hierarchies. Importantly no individual, nor any group alone, can determine what emerges (Elias, 2000). However within these processes some people are included while others are excluded and some groups are favoured while others groups are left out (Marullo & Edwards, 2000). In such cases we find differences and inequalities emerging from the ongoing interactions (Butcher, 2012).

While the powerful and the influential are able to choose their policies, they are unable to choose the responses of others. This means that the outcomes of their policies and implementation strategies will often be considered surprising (Nilsen, Ståhl, *et al*, 2013). It may therefore look as though the practices of public policy, the visions of political leaders, the strategies of government officers and the initiatives implemented by local managers are often no more than best-guesses based on a chosen imperative and maybe some evidence if it is available (Solesbury, 2001).

On this view, strategy becomes the evolving pattern of what a group or an organisation is, or rather is becoming (John, 1999). In other words, the identity of a group and the strategy adopted by that group (as what that group intends to do) amount to the same thing (Lyotard, 1984). A group or organisation is what it is because of a history of relating (of forming relations) and interacting (of using those relations). It becomes what it becomes in the local communicative interaction and relations between people in the present (Stacey, 2012).

Overall this means that complex responsive processes undertake analyses through reflection on our activities and practices. Models and modelling are rejected as static and as not addressing awareness through reflection. These factors make complex responsive processes useful in considering real people in actual situations. This may involve power relations or more carefully patterns of power relations as well as ideological choices (Žižek (ed.), 1994). In these ways humans form views and opinions from their current thinking. In this way public policy will look to offer choices tailored to and informed by the options that coming through such conversations (Dowding & John, 2009).

2.3.6 Social Complexity and Metaphysics⁷

Having examined complexity in its own terms we are now in a position to examine the use of complexity in the social realm and hence show the relevance of a complexity approach to social phenomena. Previous discussions of social complexity show that it can be used within social science to understand communities not only through interventions and outcomes but in terms of their needs and desires. These discussions involved emergence and self-organisation as well as more familiar social and political considerations (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013; Gerrits, 2012; Geyer & Rihani, 2010; Morçöl, 2012). This thesis shows which complexity methods are appropriate and how understanding of communities can thereby be improved.

With the social, the intuition followed is that we should focus on individuals or groups of individuals rather than on systems comprised of models (Cilliers, Biggs, *et al*, 2013). Taking a lead from grounded theory the study of social situations is to be undertaken with reflection on the background and underpinnings of the situation being studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This gives understanding of the status of beliefs expressed within the social situations examined. It also allows us to question the validity of the knowledge claimed in the subsequent analysis (Dane, 2010). This means that the fundamental task of social research is the explanation of social phenomena by revealing the causal mechanisms that produce them (Cilliers, 2001).

Complexity theory holds that you cannot find the causal mechanism from the cause because you do not have full knowledge and in addition there are non-linear phenomena that could not be determined in terms of cause and effect (Stengers, 2004).

⁷ By 'metaphysics' the thesis refers to ontology (what exists), epistemology (how things are known) and the relationship between them.

Now, causality cannot be established by assigning partial contributions to discrete variables. We always have to think in terms of complex cause or to put it another way we have to account for emergence. This means we need to question the reality of variables as entities which can be detached from the real social cases which are the object of social research (OECD, 2009). This is not to question variation or the value of the measurement of variation. Rather it is to question the ontological status of the entities discussed as existing in and of themselves. This suggests that we do not need not further reductive studies using ever more variables. What we need is the opposite, a holistic approach that examines the key factors such as people, environment, and history fully and for themselves (Westhorp, 2012).

But here we have an issue to address. Research in psychology and behavioural science focuses on individual choice within static or discrete tasks. Research in personal or micro-economics tells us only how to act in particular circumstances, assuming complete knowledge of all relevant decision parameters (Mulej, Zenko, *et al*, 2003). In the real world, human decision makers have to cope with much more complicated situations involving incomplete knowledge about the situation in which they operate. There are also inter-temporal couplings, such that decisions taken at one instant influence the conditions under which subsequent decisions are to be made. In addition co-operative, competitive or destructive interactions with other individuals need to be accounted for (Cilliers, 2002).

As we have seen, with complexity we can interpret the definition where needed and seek evidence for the outcome that is desired. There is nothing disreputable about this. Indeed it is the most honest approach we can take for why should a single definition be important or desirable? We should be looking at the evidence and using that. We should use all our expertise and be open about all of our views (Nutley, Powell & Davies, 2013). This in turn raises the metaphysical basis for complexity in the social sciences, in other words what we can know about (ontology) and how we can know about it (epistemology) (Heil, 2003).

For ontology, complexity adopts a post-deterministic, non-modernist, yet law-governed outlook. In doing this it takes the approach that what there is to know is more-or-less what we find (Hammersley, 2001).

Likewise, complexity adopts a realist epistemology. It asserts that our task as subjective investigators is to stand in relation to the objective world so that we behold it as it truly is (Ingold, 2011). To meet this assertion, epistemology asks how we can have knowledge and what we can know? This question is traditionally considered in terms of a general method of finding-out related to theory and belief (Dancy, 1985). In this thesis the question is used more precisely to form the way the case study research and interview technique is undertaken (Byrne, 2005).

Complexity focusses instead on the relationship of an organism with its environment that leads to the emergence of meaning (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Such a view is committed to epistemological qualities that are embedded in environmental grounds. For example, I know it's a tree because trees grow in my environment and as I explore my environment I find out about them. Similarly, I know Sherlock Holmes has a friend called Dr Watson because there are Sherlock Holmes books in my environment and as I explore my environment I find out about them (Large, 2003). This suggests that how the world appears to us is inseparable from our way of being, of living in the world. Our interactions with the world help to specify the world. We do not stand and observe from an Archimedean point⁸ outside of our world. It is this specified world that helps constitute our knowledge of the world. So it is through our particular way of being that we act as observers (Heidegger, 1978).

⁸ An Archimedean point is a hypothetical point from which an observer can objectively perceive the subject of inquiry. It is used to express the idea of removing yourself from the object of study so that you can see it in relation to all other things and remain independent of them (Rawls, 1999).

In this way we simultaneously behold the situation together with the background. We do not see the situation separate from its background. Rather, we see or behold or examine the environment from our place in it (Gibson, 1979). As such human actions are regarded as by someone in particular in a particular place and at a particular time. Consequently, our capacity to distinguish, and therefore, our capacity for knowledge, depends on our make-up in general and on our disposition in particular (Montuori, 1998).

Complexity considers existence and the nature of what exists in terms of wholes. With a complexity-informed ontology, the observer is part of what is considered. This means that any analysis in terms of 'inner and outer' is too rigid (Heil, 2003). Hence the subject matter of social complexity is a society of minded individuals rather than parts of that society such as the privileged and the deprived. Such a society of minded individuals may be regarded as living together in communities. These communities will have different concerns and these concerns may be used to distinguish them from each other (Tainter, 2006).

This research, as with all research, is situated in time or rather it is tensed. The research subjects, the interviewees, are speaking in the present about what happened in the past and about what they imagine may occur the future (Matthews, White & Long, 1999). Now, the way things are today is not the same as the way things will be tomorrow, if only because things are this way today and will not be that way tomorrow. So the interviewees are giving accounts of how things came to be this way and speculations on how they may change later (Hume, 1975). From this we can say that thinking about the past from a complexity point of view allows bifurcation and indeed multiple bifurcations. In complexity terminology, the past acts as a pushing attractor (Rössler, 1976).

In the present we choose how we act. Our past is determined; it is in the past as the past. Though we are who we are because of our past, we are not constrained in virtue of who we are. Our future is not pre-determined nor is it predictable with absolute certainty. The future is imagined and imaginable. Such imaginings enable us to choose (Dennett, 1984). In complexity terms the future is an attractor that gives us different paths forward (Matthews, White & Long, 1999).

These considerations are used to form a position for complexity in the social sciences. Key to this is the emphasis placed on the examination of groups of individuals by an observer or observers where the observer is part of what is under consideration. Such examination should be done in terms of interactions, with the observation and recording of interactions becoming the focus of our attention. So for a given study, the set of recorded interactions will deliver the domain of that study. This domain may shift as other interactions emerge or as identified interactions turn out not to be as significant as first thought (Gershenson, 2011).

Given this emphasis it is important to develop an appreciation of complex interactions. If interactions are simple mathematical formulae then they are epistemically thin (Morcol, 2002). However, the role given to rich interactions goes far beyond this. Interactions are time-bound and ramify across events and actors. Interactions involve being aware of the presence of the other. If one or more parties are not aware of the other then any plans will go awry. Furthermore things can snowball, moving rapidly, unpredictably, go out of control (Noe, 2012). This means that predictions or, more carefully, deterministic approaches to what will happen, are not going to be reliable (Mouzelis, 1995).

The important point is to be aware of what is happening, that is of the interactions and what emerges from them. This means that an austere conception of interactions, such as the one allowed by complex adaptive systems, is inadequate. What is needed is a theory that is equally time-bound, event-involving and agent-centred. To this end a suitable version of complex responsive processes will be developed for use in the case studies undertaken (3.4).

As observers we make distinctions. By making distinctions we specify a unity as an entity that is distinct from its background. We characterise the unity and the background with the properties with which the distinction endows them and we specify their separability (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Proulx, 2008). We may use this distinction to define unity. That is, through its properties, a unity defines the space in which it exists and the phenomenology it generates (Morçöl, 2005). If an observer applies the operation of distinction recursively and, thus, distinguishes the components within the unity, it is redefined as a composite unity. A composite unity is something that exists in the space of its components (Kogler, 2011).

Complexity may then be seen as a useful way of understanding how we come to possess our knowledge and beliefs in a social environment. If we regard coming to possess such social knowledge as complex then it becomes possible to view social environments holistically. In other words as individuals in a society interact they gain knowledge and acquire beliefs about each other and that society (Di Paolo, 2005). This is one way to regard the different views that different actors have of the same events and processes. The implication of this for complexity theory is that iteration at a social level becomes engagement on a continuous basis (Reed & Harvey, 1992).

Complexity holds that interactions take place in time, as we go, and what emerges is indexed by the time it appears. What emerges engages in further interactions leading to further emergences, and so on. This is freer than a dialectical approach but retains a Hegelian impulse to develop through time (Hegel, 1979). This means that regarding iteration at a social level as 'engagement on a continuous basis' suits Stacey's approach rather well (Stacey, 2005b). In this way we come to see that what exists is what happens at a time and that there is no Archimedean point, no Platonic realm and no presence outside of time (Heil, 2003).

What we gain from this approach is the importance of the here and now. This gain is based on a sound appreciation of what we can know and how we can know it given the complexity considerations discussed above. Considering the here and now means that in the short term we can predict what will happen next by deciding how we act in the here and now. The predictions or stories we tell ourselves about what will happen next are usually extremely accurate. For example I will go to bed usually means that I will soon be in bed, I will wash the car usually means that I will soon be washing the car and so on. That this approach is useful is shown through its application in many areas including philosophy, linguistics, experimental psychology, therapies of different sorts and in diverse kinds of literature (Rorty, 1982; Quine, 1986).

Previous thinking in this area centred round mental models hence previous thinking was reductionist (Johnson-Laird, 1983). Complexity moves us to a more holistic understanding and away from a reductionist attitude (Hawkins, 1997). What this means is that minded behaviour leads to social interactions that are analysable through the use complexity-informed methods within social science (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991). We are taught to look for solutions to problems and here we recognise that the way to the solution and the solution found are pre-conditioned by the frame of reference we apply. Thus, before we embark on a chosen course of action we should consider the assumptions we are making and the models we are using (Wertsch, 1985; Johal & Williams, 2013).

A realist stance tells us that the world evolves and changes continuously. Each model or description of the world is both partial and temporal; it is located (Nagel, 2012). Complexity approaches are no different to other realist approaches in this respect. Consequently, any complexity analysis will fail to fully match the actual complexity that exists. What we can know about is only what lies within the boundaries that we draw (Cilliers, 2005).

Furthermore, our self-conception comes mostly from our own experience. We believe ourselves to be conscious, rational, social, ethical, language-using, autonomous agents who possess free will (Kane, 1996). These beliefs come from people interacting in the social realm. What they are doing, trying to do, and trying not to do can only be understood by collaborative interaction (Sanderson, 2006).

This collaborative interaction requires the desire to spend time and make an effort to understand what others are saying and doing. To be successful this requires goodwill, as the desire to learn and share, from all parties. There may be interaction but it is goodwill that produces understanding by providing the impulse to move things forward⁹ (Platts, 2003). Such considerations may lead to a conception of our world and of our place in that world that supports a form of relativism both about the world and about our actions (Rorty, 1982). However, the complexity-informed, metaphysical foundations set out here are explicitly not relativist, leading to the view that we live in a world that we can make judgments about (3.1).

When considering social theories it is only reasonable to consider them in a social context (Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2007). So to consider social complexity what needs to be examined is how we are together in the here and now. We describe self-referential prediction as planning, that is deciding what we are going to do, how we are going to do it and when we are going to begin. In terms of complexity theory this may be referred to as folding back the here and now while going forward in time. In such a way humans are able to address the complex notions of their world. In such a way humans are able to interact in a social way (Stacey, 2012).

⁹ This is not to say that what is understood through goodwill must be used for good purposes. For example, a community group may learn who is funding another group and use this knowledge to 'steal' the funding.

2.3.7 Public Policy and Complexity

We have seen that there is no single definition of complexity and that there are many ways to approach it (Rescher, 1998). In the social sciences we find different complexity approaches being adopted for different social disciplines (Jorg, 2011). This means that for public policy, complexity may be used to create effective interventions in a number of ways (Wallis, 2011). The thesis now looks at what policy-makers are actually faced with.

Public policy is based on deterministic, law-governed models (Ostrom, 1990). This means that policy changes often seek uniformity and involve shifts to the centre. Such a policy approach does not suit local needs because it does not intend to. Therefore we are in need of a public policy based on post-deterministic, law-governed thinking and non-linear methods (Fraser, 1990). It will, however, be challenging for policy-makers and academics to move beyond determinism if they are to engage in decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and complexity (Howlett, 2007).

Government officials and policy-makers increasingly encounter a number of issues that are composed of large numbers of interacting parts (Donnelly, 2014). These issues are prone to large-scale, seemingly uncontrollable, and sometimes surprising behaviours. These traits are the hallmarks of complexity (Morçöl, 2010). However, those responsible persist in taking a traditional linear approach usually project planning with measurement in terms of outputs and maybe outcomes (Gerrits, 2012).

The lack of control and subsequent surprise at results comes not from the phenomena involved but from the linear way the issues have been approached and the time-limited project methods that have been employed. In other words, with social interventions the issue is a complex one and approaching it with linear methods can only produce confusion and bafflement. Worse such interventions can prove to be a waste of money and may actually make the situation worse (Hicks, 1995).

This implies that we do not know exactly what difference a policy measure will make. If this is so then policy-makers should be careful when making an intervention. They may adopt trial-and-error policy-making, take lessons from pilot projects and involve the public in their policy production (Schneider, Ingram & deLeon, 2014). Where things go wrong or results are unexpected they should seek to adapt quickly and change the policy rather than admit failure and abandon the intervention (Little, 2012).

Government strategy, public policy and local practice meet at the level of community. For all three this means that they cannot be done satisfactorily without the involvement of people as community members, and for practitioners as agents of community change (Fraser, 1990). The thesis argues that this involvement can be achieved through the application of a complexity-informed approach and that this represents a change from the way that central government goes about measuring and assessing policy outcomes (Geyer, 2012).

Understanding communities not as objects to be acted upon (the traditional approach) but as self-organising (the complexity approach) has important implications for policy-making. Understanding communities in this way gives a genuine notion of community space and allows community interests to be discussed in terms of this space (Hillier & Hanson, 1984). This in turn allows communities to take ownership of their space and to explore ways of expanding or reshaping it (Krugman, 1998). From this an understanding of how the community shapes itself can be developed in terms of characteristics such as available resources and services, while respecting the non-linear nature of communities (5.2). Both public policy and community action are independent of models and processes¹⁰. Public policy actions and community interventions need to take heed of this if they are to be successful (Blackman, 2013).

¹⁰ This reflects a shift from general, law-governed, deterministic, law-governed models and processes to particular, contingent, complexity-informed approaches (Reed & Harvey, 1992).

We are now in a position to begin working on a formal and considered way to approach community policy that includes and engages local actors and local agencies such as councils and health services, alongside local physical constructs such as green spaces and play areas. In this way the thesis offers a complexity-informed alternative to traditional approaches to community policies that have had limited success (Cooper & Geyer, 2007).

Complexity focuses on dynamic connections and evolving interactions. It highlights the importance of influence, likelihood and even randomness. From this flow conceptual implications of interest to policy-makers around prediction, lack of control, and the role of explanation (Room, 2011).

With respect to predicting outcomes complexity focuses on identifying and analysing trends and probabilities, rather than seeking to predict specific events. Traditionally, an inability to make a definitive prediction has been considered an inadequacy (Taleb, 2007). Complexity acknowledges that, for some phenomena the only alternative to probabilistic knowledge is none at all (Nicolis & Prigogine, 1989).

Control too is generally made possible by identifying cause and effect chains and then manipulating the causes. But with complexity cause and effect are distributed, intermingled for example across organisms and their environments, and are not directly controllable. This means that policy-makers need to be able to use evidence flexibly bearing in mind that what works in one place will not necessarily work in another place (Head, 2013). In this way the policies they produce will be flexible and the resulting strategies will influence rather than control (Cartwright, 2013b). By adopting non-deterministic, situated and time-bound approaches, complexity offers insights into finding desirable ways forward and identifying potentially dangerous tipping points (Byrne, Olsen & Duggan, 2009).

As with the strategies formed, a complexity approach will require that the explanations given will have to change too. One advantage of an enquiry in terms of cause and effect relationships is that the findings provide a sense of surety and

a quantitative understanding of how things work. However, when analyses are done using complexity methods, insights about the underlying circumstances that lead to complex behaviour are revealed (Byrne, 2012). Although deterministic quantitative prediction is not generally achieved, the elucidation of the reasons for complex behaviours are often more important for comprehending what might otherwise be puzzling, real-world events (Van Bouwel & Weber, 2011). Whether a complexity-informed explanation is found to be as satisfying as a traditional explanation is not at all obvious. It could, for example, be a matter of personal preference (Large, 2006a) or of following a particular ideology (1.5).

Local policy and local practice meet at the level of community. This means that neither can be done satisfactorily without consideration of the involvement of local people (as community members) and of practitioners (as agents of community change). For local people the traditional community development approaches have only had limited success (Coaffee & Deas, 2008). This suggests that an alternative is needed to previous methods, such as top-down and bottom-up delivery, that have often been neither efficient nor effective (Shaw, 2011).

A complexity approach holds that established community groups have thick interactions. This means that the nature of the interaction is constructed by the participants, as one of many possibilities, at the time they engage in it (OECD, 2009). This will apply for any relevant subsequent interaction or interactions. Here the local interactions themselves are complex and here it is the local interactions themselves, rather than any overarching systems, that display the emergent features (Ben-Yosef, 2005).

2.3.8 Towards a Complexity Approach to Communities

Having considered the role of complexity in social science, the thesis now goes on to look at the application of complexity to community studies. This will then be used to develop an understanding of the purpose of the case studies presented (Chapter 4).

Traditional research methods seek results that are theoretically predictable. Rather than seeking procedure and predictability, complexity looks for interaction and adaptation. Likewise, traditional methods seek objective knowledge and certainty, whereas with complexity different world views coexist simultaneously (Morin, 1999).

Communities are complex because they are made up of human beings and human behaviour shares the main features of complexity. Both communities and complexity are anti-deterministic, non-linear, situated, dynamic, interactive, iterative, emergent, and possibly self-organising or autopoietic. While there are works on complexity and social science there is no established complexity research method specifically for communities (Blackman, 2013; Byrne & Callaghan, 2013; Jorg, 2011; Reed & Harvey, 1996; Walby, 2007).

For communities, it is the local people who through their very presence provide the rich mix of complex interactions. While community interactions may not be formal they are focussed, for example community centre training events. Their interactions are rich and focussed. They cover topics such as neighbours planning a day trip. Yet interactions among local people are not fixed. They involve motivational factors such as power. Furthermore, the immediate local intentions of the interacting agents are continually emerging. This means that the flexibility to learn and innovate is essential if communities are to flourish and grow (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013).

What we have then are communities that display complexity features and a body of literature relating to the use of complexity in social science. This raises two questions; can complexity be suitably adapted to assess communities? And can complexity concepts and methods be developed to assess these actions within the terms of social science?

While pragmatism helps in extending the range of options and thus the chance of improving outcomes (Creswell, 2013) it falls short of a full description of community interactions. Also community interactions may not be formal but usually are focussed for example community centre training events. Nevertheless the interactions are rich and may cover many different topics such as neighbours planning a day trip. Rich, focussed, and non-linear interactions are complex interactions. So what is required is an account that comes to terms with uncertainty and surprises, in other words a complexity-informed account (Shotter, 2000).

Here we will begin to examine these questions by looking at the concepts available to advance the exploration of the social by means of complexity (Urry, 2006). This discussion is not tied to a single procedure or method but looks at what has taken place previously and learns lessons as the discussion progresses. These lessons will be used to construct a methodology for the subsequent case study research (Woodside, 2010).

With respect to complexity theory, human agents are not interchangeable as different people get different outcomes or results. That the field of social complexity is interaction among human beings introduces motivational factors and power factors. Seen through complexity, community interactions may fall into both virtuous and vicious patterns (Stevenson & Hamilton, 2001).

In this way the immediate local intentions of the interacting agents are continually emerging in a context. The dynamics are determined by the pattern and nature of the relationships among agents. The response to any perturbation is determined by these very dynamics (Dimitrov & Woog, 2006). Stabilising the behaviour of the network means simply repeating the past. Through operating in the chaotic region the network is capable to recognising fluctuations in the environment and generating flexible behaviours to respond to it. Tuning the network to respond to perturbations is realised through continuous evolving of structure, in other words by adaptation and learning (Mainzer, 1994).

The flexibility to learn and innovate in continuously changing environments is essential. Far from equilibrium conditions, organisations if nudged to perform in the chaotic region begin to perceive the smallest changes. Since variety absorbs variety, organisations respond by self-organising themselves to react to fluctuations and to adapt to the environment. There are multiple paths from which to choose. Dissipative structures emerge that promote alignment with the environment. From these come new orders and possibilities for future development (Sice, Mosekilde & French, 2008).

Turning to communities, we may ask about the most appropriate way to introduce complexity theory and terminology. A direct approach would ask community members questions about interactions, institutions, repetitions, unusual outcomes and emergence. This would be instead of more traditional questions about outputs and outcomes. But how would community members react to this head-on presentation? Here a less direct approach is judged to be more productive, for example introducing complexity through terms that people recognise or are already familiar with (Room, 2011; Taylor, 2010). This fits with the view that there are no distinct organisations as such only relationships of different kinds. In other words what we call 'organisations' are more accurately understood as interactions between people that, at a push, could be described as organisational. Thinking this way opens up many possibilities and opportunities. It avoids the barriers created where rigid rules and restrictions are in place (Stacey & Griffin (eds.), 2005).

With more collective cultures, for example in Asia or Africa, the people have a more enriched view of what the community creates. They do not, or cannot, rely on the government to provide for them. Things follow similar patterns and these patterns may form attractors. This is mainly because each level has the same sort of constituents. These constituents could be social, economic or political and they could be formal (ordered) or informal (disordered) (Scott, 1998).

Compare the Brazilian and the South African approaches to HIV. In Brazil they said 'This is an emerging illness. We need to tackle it. How? Look at the interventions (or interactions) that would allow it to be solved.' And things gradually got better. In South Africa they said 'We don't have the money. Whatever we do, it will be too little.' And things became even worse (Geyer, 2011). We should then consider the full range of possibilities. Don't start with the constraints. Many social interventions get into trouble by setting limits and by not considering the necessary interactions (Neske, 2008).

Communities are often divided into passive, motivated and active types. Passive communities are where people talk to their neighbours, put the bins out and keep themselves to themselves. Motivated communities are defined outside of community concerns for example in terms of religion or income. This usually implies the exclusion of others through no-go areas or gated communities. With active communities, local people take action in their local area. This is often around a deficit such as the closure of a local school, changes to a bus route or the removal of community services. These actions can be positive too such as the creation of a play area or setting up a community café (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Which type of community emerges in which circumstance requires examination of the circumstances but it is clear that two factors are important, namely power and belief (Smith, 2006).

In contrast, complexity-informed research does not start with a division into categories. Rather with complexity we look at what is taking place as close as possible to what is taking place. Nevertheless we need a range of suitable concepts to hang our enquiry on. Here, for power we need to look at who has the relevant power. This may be more than one person. We also need to examine what these powers are. Often economic powers or budgets are regarded as most significant (Cypher & Dietz, 1997). Turning to belief we need to look at the interplay of beliefs. Which are dominant and in which situations? Here we mean all beliefs whether religious, cultural or political (Taylor, 2010).

It is perhaps understandable for public sector officers and other professionals to miss the fact that communities are complex entities. Often things just trundle along and no one seems to be too bothered. Issues arise when there are perturbations to the complex situation (Sober & Wilson, 1998). For example, a series of problematic council interventions can generate a lot of unhappiness in the local community. Thinking about communities in terms of complexity allows favourable comparisons too. By not being bound to targets, outputs, outcomes or impacts complexity-informed performance management gives space for a range of positive analyses (Auspos & Cabaj, 2014).

Communities are characteristically amorphous and ever changing. Experienced community practitioners dislike talk of 'the community'. Instead they speak of what a community thinks or wants or desires (Chanan & Miller, 2013; Craig, 2011; UK Community Foundations, 2013). Now a complex system has been described as walking through a maze where the walls keep changing; the walls move, there are fresh transformations, things won't always work out but sometimes they do (Gell-Mann, 1994). Similarly with communities; no one gets everything they want but with a bit of luck, things work out and the community gets what it needs and maybe a bit more. Interestingly this means that a forward plan gets you nowhere, or worse, it gets you to the wrong place.

If we are dealing with uncertainty and acting without a project plan then for community activity to succeed what is needed is trust; trust that you will go in the right direction. Trust helps you form connections and gets things moving. Though things may not be perfect, with trust all involved will try to make it work (Powe, 2013).

The reverse is also true. Where there is no trust, there is only obedience. For this to work subjects must follow the instructions they are given, such as when dispensing insulin injections for diabetes. Evidence suggests that people will not do things on demand, even for their own benefit. However, if they are given the information and the materials, they may be trusted to look after themselves (Cooper & Geyer, 2007).

Similarly, in a rapidly changing situation, sticking to a rigid spending plan with no ability to alter course will mean that the money is lost (Geyer, 2012). The same principles apply for individuals and for organisations, namely interaction, iteration and emergence with possibly a fractal nature being expressed (Morales-Matamoros, Tejeida-Padilla & Badillo-Pina, 2010).

By stepping back from common practices and setting aside usual procedures allows us to see that for communities, project planning methods are not necessary requirements and further that an insistence on taking a project planning approach may prove counter-productive. For example what might be produced is a project that the planners desire but the community rejects or regards as not relevant to them. What takes place may end up benefitting the officers involved but may leave the community worse off than they were at the start (DCLG, 2008).

Stepping back, we find that what really counts in community activities are not the recorded outputs but the significant interactions and in particular the confidence and trust held in individuals and hence their organisations (Ellis, 2007). And a lack of trust means a loss of reputation leading to command and control being imposed from the centre. Worse still, without trust no one is interested in making things better. In such circumstances there is no alternative to failure so organisations are closed and the resources are lost. This shows the shortcomings of linear thinking about communities (Geyer, 2011).

With communities there is a complex situation of intangible needs and a lot of chaos and unpredictability, for example childhood obesity, drugs and alcohol etc. The relevant factors are not obvious, indeed they be changing all the time. For example in a tall block of flats, smoking can calm the nerves. So back off the smoking, build trust, gain confidence and maybe then come back to the smoking (Geyer, 2013).

In this way complexity says that what is needed is trust that you will go in the right direction. Trust helps you form connections and gets things moving. It will not be perfect but with trust we will all give it a go. The reverse is also true. If there is no trust then you are left with compliance. Here people may do what they are told but they will mostly likely devise a whole range of responses both positive and negative. And nothing destroys trust like broken promises and government failure to deliver (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2006).

Consider the National Health Service (NHS). There would be no NHS without National Insurance. It is the willingness of people to contribute their own earned income that allows the NHS to function. This willingness is separate from any profit motive. There is simply the belief that if such services are required then they will be provided. This requires an element of trust and the NHS is only possible through such goodwill and trust (Geyer, 2004).

There are a number of situations from health, education and planning where trust is more efficient and effective than obedience and compliance. These include simple things like the trust a family has with a particular health professional for helping them to manage their teenage daughter's diabetes or the trust a community places in a group of GPs to manage the new care commissioning process (Cooper & Geyer, 2007; Geyer, 2013).

Where there is trust, community behaviour can be organised and can be self-organising. This stands even though sometimes it is assisted by government agencies (DCLG, 2010). It can also be dependent or led by an expert or someone charismatic (Wheatley, 2007). Different cases will be differently organised depending on different existing and prevailing conditions such as a substantial government grant or the presence of strong leaders. From this we see that for complexity a healthy situation is one with lots of connections. But these must not simply be hand waving gestures such as inclusion on an e-mail circulation. The connections need to be integrated into the needs and activities of the agents. In other words they must lead to further connections (Chapter 7).

2.3.9 Complexity-Informed Community Policy

Complexity shows how to research communities on their own terms and in a way that can improve our understanding of them. Nothing is assumed in advance, no check list is employed, no project plan is approved and no impact assessment is required. Rather the complexity approach itself gives a way to understand what is happening that is recognisable to all concerned and helps them to achieve their full potential (Krippendorff, 2008).

With communities there are usually a lot of people involved. This introduces collective ideas, leading to proposals and offers. Some elements run away, some slow down and some stop. Choices emerge and are discussed, leading to further ideas. Such choices are not made by certain people sitting down and deciding what is best (Hyman, 2013).

Using a complexity-informed approach gives both a detailed description and a developed understanding of the present situation allowing good development opportunities to be actioned and others to be seen as fall-backs or as not worth consideration. When opportunities arise they may be evaluated and a project may be formed. The change is the way project is operated with the people running the project having freedom to change activities and to introduce new ideas (Stacey, 1992; Auspos & Cabaj, 2014).

A key concern in communities and community-involving partnerships is working together or taking joint action. Joint action comes from human beings living together as social animals. One distinctive feature of this is the range of ways in which human beings co-operate with each other in order to survive and develop. This often involves efforts to transform their environment in the interests of themselves and of their community (Musgrove, 1984). But not always; think of disputes about the height of neighbouring house extensions or hedges. In any case such endeavors require continuous communicative interactions between the people involved (Ingold, 2000).

In addition, real people are able to judge things as right and wrong or, if you prefer, they are able to display their possession of an ethical faculty (Haidt, 2001).

Moreover, for the study of the social we require an account of real people and all of their attributes including the ethical. This means that if complexity is to address the social it needs both an explanation of the ethical and a way of accounting for ethical judgments (Gaita, 2002).

We have seen how complexity moved from the mechanistic to the living and now to the social realm, that is real people. This move gives a position for ethical considerations within complexity. In other words early complexity theory involving quantum physics and organisms, matter and energy and so on had itself no ethical element. Later complexity theory involving living organisms and self-organising systems had an indirect ethical component; and now social complexity theory, involving thinking organisms and ethical beings, requires fully social expression with a matching ethical account (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012).

If there is a degree of agreement on ethical values within in a community then that community will have a degree of ethical stability. If there is agreement on ethical values between communities then so much the better; if there is disagreement then common values need to be sought and then established. But none of these matters can be decided in advance of discussion with the individuals and the communities concerned (Sunstein, 2005). Such a heuristic approach does not entail ethical relativism for there can be, and often is, agreement on ethical values both within communities and between them. In other words, the social admits the ethical in virtue of the community (Parfit, 2011). In this way we see that what distinguishes one community from another are its ethical and social commitments (Sandel, 2005).

Turning to everyday community activity we may suppose our autonomy is given by our unique, individual thoughts. These thoughts are our enablers, guides and tools. And when we discuss local communities, our thoughts will turn to housing, leisure, business (Webb, 2010), and to our relations with local government (Norretranders, 1991).

Local government activities are usually based on a single set of evidence examined once and for all in a linear fashion. The results are then produced and the actors often respond with dismissive statements such as 'it's not like that here' or 'that was then then but things are different now'. The overall result is that this leads to over simplified conclusions, policies and programmes. In contrast, a complexity approach seeks to find key interactions that hold over time (Klijn, 2008).

Likewise, local authorities including councils form strategies and try to act according to policies based on a single set of evidence, a snapshot. Partnerships and local people tend not to behave in this manner, and create pressure on councils to act differently. In addition restricted budgets are now bringing about internal pressures within councils, forcing move them to move out of this box. In this way local people are no longer actors, performing scripts handed to them by government and others. What is needed is an end to previous ways of working and the rejection of straightforward linear systems (Head, 2013).

Policy-makers, however, tend to focus on tackling perceived problems often in terms dictated by senior politicians or managers. In doing this their work does not follow one fixed model but depends on the particular line to be taken (Colebatch, 2006; Groot, 2009). Further, public policy outcomes are usually seen in broader terms than the measured and tabulated outputs of specialists. So what policy-makers actually do and achieve depends not on theories, models or procedures but on the application of theories, models or procedures (Morçöl, 2012).

It is important to get this the right way round. Taking a complexity approach enables us to link models and processes to the work that local actors are doing in their community but neither their work not that of policy-makers depends on such models or procedures (Ambrose, 1994). Indeed the interactions and emergence view is not like the outputs and outcomes approach because what emerges cannot be determined or set in advance (Bedau & Humphreys, 2008). This means that we are able to account for the decision-making processes of policy-makers and for the activities of local actors in a way that is not reliant on any particular theory, model or procedure (Haynes, 2008).

Public policy often holds actors to behave in linear ways. For example, drug users seek drugs, use drugs and seek more drugs. It is easier for government and agencies to work this way. They assume this enables them to see where they are going. And should things go wrong there is an element, part of the line, to attach blame to. But linear thinking restricts the agencies' ways of functioning. If things are not the way that they should be then they either act to make them that way or they abandon that particular project saying 'the community weren't ready' or something similar that shifts the focus and hence any blame. For example, public policy scenarios sometimes adopt the 'war on' approach such as the US 'war on drugs' and the 'war on terror'. But humans have always chewed leaves for pleasure, fought over possessions, sought power through foul means and fair. Talk of war makes it sound as though there is an enemy and that there is a fight that can be won. It makes it seem that there are battles to be fought and fixed ends to be achieved. So are these 'wars' wars on human nature? No, these are not wars at all, at least not in any substantial sense. They are about drawing unfavourable attention to certain types of people (Vulliamy & Ray, 2013).

Similarly with project planning for communities; if there is a project plan then there is a beginning, and middle and an end. Once the project ends then the community issue is resolved, yes? Well, experience and common sense both tell us that the answer is no. By taking a linear approach to a complex situation we create a situation that can only fail in its own terms (Geyer, 2011).

We should then watch out for linear thinking exemplified by phrases such as 'the project ended' and 'the objectives were met'. Complexity tells us that complex situations and hence social situations never end. Better to say that 'it always was a mess and it probably always will be' or rather 'it always was a complex situation and it probably always will be'. Start planning from there bearing in mind that the happy place never shows up and every plan will need to change. For example, smoking cessation is great but within a generation a new popular drug may turn up. It may have done already. Then we will be looking back to the golden days when all we had to worry about was the effects of tobacco (Geyer, 2012).

Here we have an approach that includes the local community and does not model situations in one particular way and does not measure success on a single or even a set of outcomes. Indeed the complexity approach implies no particular way of working but rather that what works for the local actors is the way to go (Ben-Yosef, 2005). What needs to be asked is 'what is allowed, or not allowed, to happen?' rather than 'what can we alone make happen?' By asking this question we will be able to gauge the current social, economic and political situation with respect to the establishment of local control, council reshaping and on-going budget reductions (John, Cotterill, *et al*, 2011).

Which bring us to the nature of communities as self-organising. Here the difference between autonomous and self-organising is that autonomous can mean 'independent but not self-organising' as with a community group serviced by council officers, whereas self-organising implies independence from any other group (Reynolds, 2004).

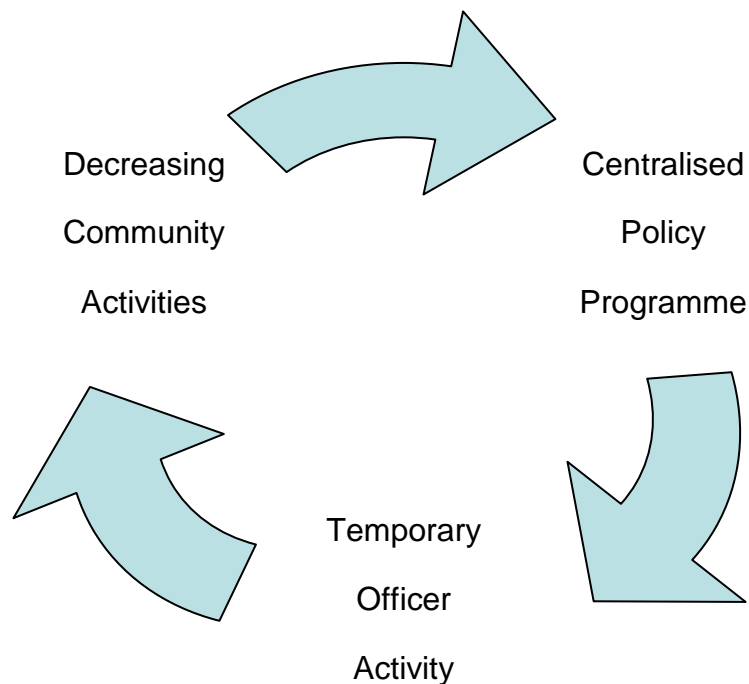
That communities are self-organising explains why they are so different and yet so readily categorisable. There are local communities, ethnic communities, virtual communities and so on. While open to external influences and external changes, communities themselves exist and persist on their own (Smith, 2006). This matches the way that communities and community groups learn about what is available to them in virtue of being communities and work together within the community and with those outside of or semi-detached to the community. Indeed attempts to create communities have proven rather difficult. European colonists, for example, had great hardships in creating new communities in the New World often failing within a relatively short space of time (Sarson & Greene (eds.), 2010).

The view of communities as self-organising systems has merit explaining why communities are so different and yet so readily categorisable. Furthermore, while undoubtedly open to external influences and external changes, communities themselves exist and persist on their own (Fuchs, 2002).

Public policy is for the community so it should take account of community interests and further them as far as possible. This, however, stands in contrast to the current practice of collecting outputs and measuring impacts that serve to reinforce failure and finds policy-makers reluctant to develop new and, as they see it, riskier policy strategies (Gerrits, 2012). This means that current public policy practice is based on limited knowledge of the community or communities affected. It is, rather, restricted to the sphere of officer activity, usually government officers. This practice develops into a vicious cycle whereby, to stop things going wrong again, more and more limits are put in place to further restrict community involvement (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Vicious Public Policy Cycle

Source: Author

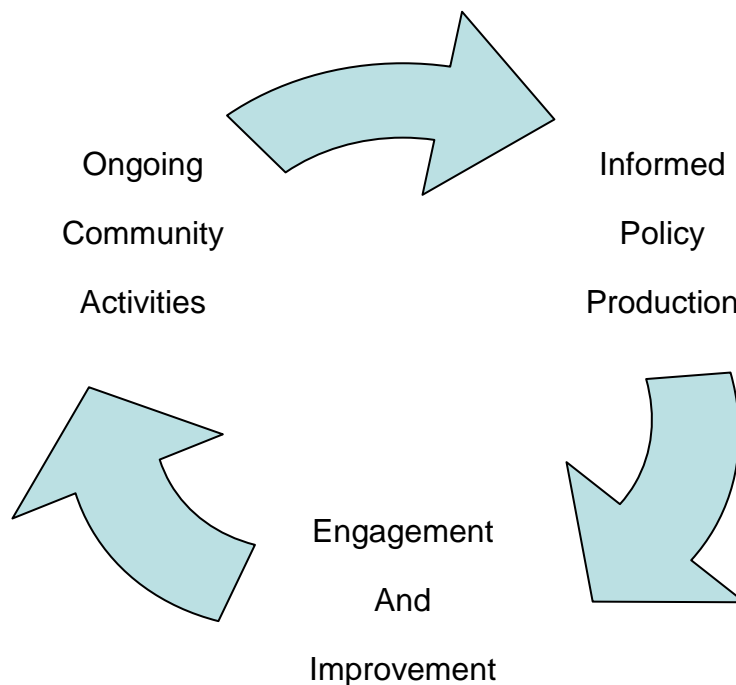


In contrast to such assumptive behaviour, complexity allows public policy to build on insights gained from previous policies and interventions. By drawing on past experiences, both positive and negative, complexity develops virtuous cycles whereby theory and practice develop in ways that benefit those directly involved (Figure 2.2).

In this way complexity-informed public policy builds on actual achievements, making clear and rejecting ways that have already failed. It enables policy-makers to see things from the community point of view and provides a way of demonstrating the value being placed on the local community.

Figure 2.2: Virtuous Public Policy Cycle

Source: Author



Taking the complexity-informed approach requires officers to value the positives present within the community and to re-iterate the positive results in future public policy formation. In doing this the vicious cycle of failed public policy initiatives can be turned into a virtuous cycle of clearly accountable public policy and continually emerging public benefits (Figure 2.2).

Adopting complexity-informed practice may not be easy for professionals skilled in carrying out projects according to established systems. However, a government that is serious about localism and about allowing local control knows that it can rely on communities to self-organise. Such a government knows that they can assist by giving communities the means to do the job. If however they choose not to support this self-organising capacity then life will go on. There may be hardship and perhaps not every community will go on but through their own efforts life and the community will carry on (Sober & Wilson, 1998).

2.4 Summary of the Literature Review

This chapter has shown the importance of complexity to social research, in particular to the study of communities. What has been shown is the importance of using the views of local people to change mind-sets and develop policies in local and national contexts (Myers, 2004). The way the thesis will approach this is by going deep into two case studies and considering how to assess what emerges in a complexity-informed way (Chapter 3).

Two key factors emerge from the literature review as important to the research that follows; general social complexity and the appropriate use of complex responsive processes. Complexity was considered as a staged approach from physical theory through the biological extension to the development of a general social complexity (Geyer, 2011). Complex responsive processes have been considered as a way into finding out what really matters, what is really important, to particular actors considered as whole persons (Stacey, 2010). Both general social complexity and complex responsive processes are concerned with public issues hence both are appropriate for a complexity-informed examination of government interventions in local communities (Chapter 4). Taken together the combined view of general social complexity and the appropriate use of complex responsive processes, places the thesis in a position to build a robust and more complete approach to how we can conduct a complexity-informed investigation of society in general and of communities in particular.

The literature review has presented an understanding of complexity, discussed how others have used complexity in relevant ways, and produced a context for the application of complexity in social policy concerning communities. The thesis now goes on to develop an appropriate methodology for case study research that addresses the research question, the research aim, the research objectives and meets the intended research outcomes.

Chapter 3: A Methodology for Complex Communities

The aim of this research is to develop and apply a complexity approach to the study of communities. To meet this aim the thesis asks the following research question:

What insight does a complexity approach give to the study of communities?

The objectives of the research are:

- To evaluate the application of complexity to community studies.
- To develop and apply a complexity approach by using two case studies.
- To analyse the outcomes and elicit the insights of the complexity approach.

The purpose of the methodology is to allow an evaluation of communities through case study research informed by complexity considerations (Byrne, 2009). To achieve this, the analysis conducted in the literature review is developed into an approach that will allow the complexity concepts to be openly applied in the case studies (Fink, 2013).

The discussion in the literature review focussed on an approach to communities that considered situations and interventions from the point of view of the people involved. It found no established method of assessing communities in these terms. Rather consultations and community events were often undertaken to enhance the top down approach being adopted.

Though data on communities is gathered it is often generalised and tailored to central government requirements. This implies the need for an approach that puts the community at the centre and that considers the situations as the people involved experience them. Such an approach does not settle for traditional survey or sampling methods but utilises research in complex adaptive systems (Miller & Page, 2007) and in complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2011).

The chapter goes on to discuss the complexity-informed interview method employed and the ethical procedures applied. In undertaking this work a suitable method of analysis is developed. While acknowledging similarities to traditional methods, a complexity approach requires a change of style and emphasis. Taking this into account, a complexity-informed approach is devised that is sensitive to the contributions of the people involved and that may be used to research different kinds of communities (6.2).

This complexity-informed approach is used to set out a fresh methodology that is then applied to two case studies (4.2 & 4.3). These case studies present practical examples of the use of the complexity-informed approach. The complexity-informed approach, methodology and application are viewed as an alternative to traditional methods as they place the weight on the people involved rather than on sets of qualitative and quantitative data (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Mercier & Sperber, 2011).

3.1 Developing a Complexity-Informed Approach

Complexity methods usually place an emphasis on the general through the use of models and systems. If we judge the social to be concerned with the qualitative experiences of individuals, and models and systems to be concerned with the general application of quantitative data then there appears to be a disconnection between the social, and complexity models and systems (Blackman, 2013). What is argued here is that applying complexity to the social pulls us away from models and systems, and takes us to beliefs and decision-making. It is not that models and systems are wrong but that they do not help when considering social interactions that are based in the present and their subsequent iterations (Stacey, 2012).

We, as human beings, are marked out by our potential for self-determination. We need to acknowledge that our rationality enters into the possibility of describing ourselves in terms of what our senses give us. There are no gaps between ourselves, our self-determination and what our senses give us. Likewise it is a choice for us to reject self-determination and to ignore what happens around us (McDowell, 2011).

Taking communities as social groupings we find that social issues such as employment, well-being and health, and environmental pollution involve several interconnected issues that elude accurate assessment by traditional approaches (Scott & Bell, 2013; O'Donnell, Deaton, *et al*, 2014). Complexity offers a way of grasping the intricacies of these issues (Morçöl, 2012).

The methodology adopted here seeks to be sensitive to these factors and to adopt a balanced view of the situation that actually meets those involved. In order to do this aspects of complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2011) and complex adaptive systems (Miller & Page, 2007) and are taken together to form a methodology that allows generalisation and yet is sensitive to the views of those involved.

Both complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems shape how we behave, respond and think in a context. Complex responsive processes involve reflections on interactions that take place in time. But you cannot stop time so these present reflections always refer back to a present now gone. In contrast, complex adaptive systems are analytic tools. They are not explicitly in the present or in time at all. But they shape our thoughts and actions which are in the present (Large, Sice, *et al*, 2015).

To resolve these tensions a synergy of the two different approaches is adopted. This says that without complex responsive processes, complex adaptive systems leave the world alone. They are straightforwardly models. And that without a complex adaptive systems account, here informed by people living in communities, the complex responsive processes approach is very limited. It offers no more than an account of a given case. Together, however, they offer rich and detailed accounts of particular cases from which useful generalisations may be drawn (4.2 & 4.3).

Furthermore, a synergy between complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems goes beyond richer descriptive abilities. We can combine, or reorganise, the approach to complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems to show how we address the complex notions of our world. And we can do this in a holistic way, not just as a directive, such as an output of a decision-making system but as grounded in our experience. In this way, taking a complexity-informed approach presents us with a tool for the study of complex social phenomena (Large, Sice, *et al*, 2015).

The research concerns actions that have taken place. The task of the case studies is to present past actions in a way that accord with the present views of those involved. To do this, an iterative approach is adopted and applied. In this way complexity can be applied to better understand communities and how social issues affect people's lives (3.1).

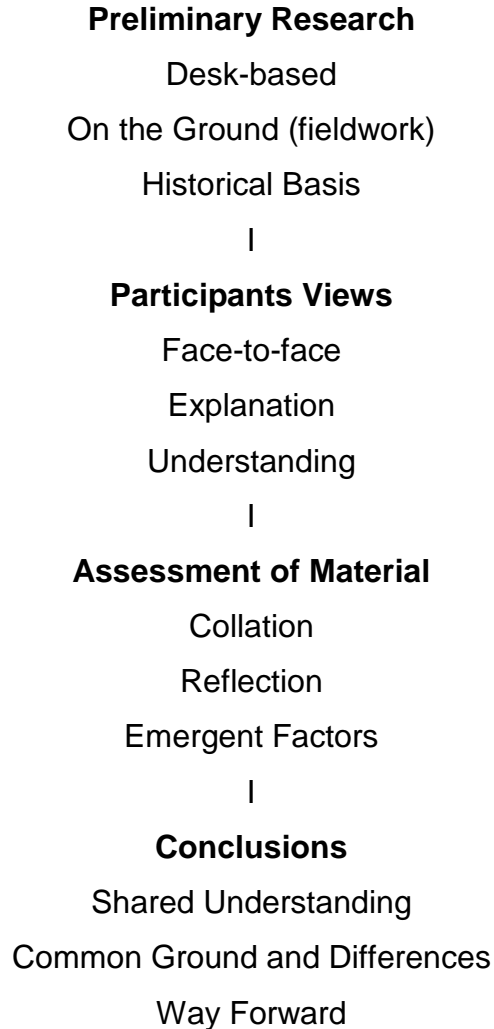
It may be objected that different opinions give rise to different appreciations of the same situations. Some may judge things to have gone well, while others judge the same things to have gone badly. Some may see measures as allowing or enabling while others may see them as blocking or obstructive. Some things are felt to be good by some and to be bad by others. This is a merit, rather than a disadvantage (Sennett, 2012).

Following a complexity-informed approach, the methodology accounts for differences in view and uses them to make comparative analyses of opinions, expectations, and outcomes. Rather than limiting our studies to a set path with a single outcome, complexity provides the information to make balanced judgments and the knowledge to make effective decisions (Blackman, Wistow & Byrne, 2013).

The methodology may be considered in four phases; preliminaries, views of the participants, a rounded assessment, and conclusions drawn (Table 3.1). The methodology uses these phases to draw out local information and examine aspects particular to those directly involved. In this way the methodology is able to build a rich picture of what is happening through a deep understanding of the community being examined.

Table 3.1: Four Phase Methodology

Source: Author



Following such a methodology requires four active steps:

Step 1 Preliminary understanding of the situation to be studied

Understanding a situation includes the history of relevant factors such as the geographical area and the organisations involved. This is gathered from written material such as reports and secondary documentation, and from first-hand observations such as site visits.

This information may then be used to set out an idea of 'how things came to be' and of the sorts of people involved. From this, current intentions and of the purpose and extent of current activities may be attributed (Holliday, 2007).

Step 2 Understanding the situation from the perspective of the stakeholders

It is important to identify the people who are relevant to the main issues. From this group we can assess who may be available for interview and form a pool of potential interviewees. This pool is flexible as other potential interviewees may emerge. Also some people may drop out for example if they change job or move away. Talk to these people and explain what is proposed. Some will agree to the process, some will offer an alternative and others will decline to share information. Take up suggestions from the interviewees for additional interviewees as the study progresses. Pay careful attention to the type of the language being used and the patterns of conversation present within groups (Fontana & Prokos, 2007).

From a complexity point of view it is important to interview a number of people who are familiar with the situation rather a fixed list of so many people from this group and so many people from that group. The researcher should not be too prescriptive about this set. Similarly they should not worry too much about the order of the interviews.

For the interviews, a preliminary understanding of the situation is required to allow meaningful interactions. Both the researcher and the interviewee should be prepared to reflect on the interview material being discussed. They will seek to develop a shared understanding of the points raised rather than trying to determine what is right and what is wrong. They will listen out for points being revisited and developed, in other words iteration. Some interviewees will ask about the technique being employed. The researcher should be prepared to explain this and to refer back to it in the course of the discussion (Yankelovich, 1999).

In order to make best use of the information available, all of the first interviews should be conducted before the second interviews take place. In practice this will not usually be possible; therefore the interviewer will ask to follow up any specific points with the interviewees at a later date. Participating in two reflective interviews requires a considerable commitment from interviewees. Bear in mind that they are not simply delivering information. If conducted properly, the interviews should examine and develop the interviewees understanding of what they are involved with and their own practice within this (3.2).

Step 3 Reporting What Has Taken Place

The research will be reported using the understanding developed from the interviews, supported by the preliminary understanding of the historical situation. The views of the participants rather than those of outsiders will be the focus of the report. It is for them to say what is important, what is successful and what is disappointing. It is not for external officers or agencies to do this. Quote statistics where they are helpful in explaining points made by the interviewees. Do not use statistics or comparative material to form a view or to develop a position. The interviewees will give this.

The understanding of the interviewees is used to develop the researcher's understanding of the situation from the perspective of the participants. The information gathered is used to frame the study, for example 'this is about group x at time y' (Finlay, 2012). In this way the interviews are used to produce a set of conclusions that explains things from the point of view of the people involved. A point of view is then formed showing what was involved and what the current consequences are. This is used to suggest a way forward both for the community and for those who interact with that community (5.5).

Step 4 Presenting the Findings and Forming Conclusions

The material may be presented to suit the task in hand be it an academic piece, a monitoring exercise, a final report and so on. In this thesis the complexity-informed approach is demonstrated using suitably modified case study method. Such modified case studies match the interview technique employed so that the case is understood from the perspective of the interviewees.

For complexity, cases are both a function of the activity itself and a product of the strategy adopted such as dialogical engagement in participatory research. This means that cases are empirically founded entities that occur at the social level. Hence they are open to all the features complexity brings in terms of their inherent nature and potential for change (Harvey, 2009).

The case studies are presented following a modified form of the traditional case study approach (Yin, 2012). Modified because the traditional approach does not allow full consideration of the relevant interactions and what emerges from those interactions. Further, the conditions under which we credit an individual with thinking, intending, understanding, or meaning such-and-such vary (2.1.2). Hence the methodology employed takes the view that how we make sense of another's action is best explored by investigating how we reach agreement in our ascriptions of their intentions and the intentions of those involved at the time (Tanney, 2008).

While bearing similarities to traditional methods, the complexity-informed approach requires a change of style and emphasis. This is not a simple matter of considering the intentions of a single person but requires a complex ascription of intentions to all involved at the time. Within such a description there may well be competing intentions and unique intentions held by only one person. This approach is demonstrated through the presentation of the case studies (Chapter 4) and, from this presentation, its suitability is assessed (Chapter 5).

With this research it is important to be aware which criteria set the basic parameters being examined. A community seeks to obtain its primary needs, not simply to follow directives or to participate in projects. So the method adopted must allow community needs to be addressed fully. There will always be other criteria that appear to be not that important for the current study but which nevertheless play a role in what is happening. These may arise only briefly or they may come to be seen as important, emerging as the study progresses (Bamber, 2010).

In attempting to accommodate this, an iterative approach is taken to each interviewee's experience. Part of the interview process is the opportunity for the interviewee to spend time in reflective consideration, developing awareness of their capabilities and of the significance of their interactions. To do this both the researcher and the interviewee pay careful attention to their interactions and their responses, in other words their feelings, statements, and behaviours.

To facilitate this approach the first interview asks general questions, gaining relevant information and details that were shared among those involved. The researcher then goes back to the complexity literature (2.1) and reads complexity terms into the first interview answers. The second interview is more structured, discussing relevant topics in terms of complexity-related concepts. The second interview asks a set number of questions. Each question explores an aspect of complexity that has emerged from the examination of the first interview. In addition the researcher may refer to what others have said on a given topic in order to enrich the aspects of the discussion relevant to a complexity-informed analysis.

Following the interview stage each case study is drafted. This involves going back to the literature review, the interview material and the thesis write-up so far (Creswell, 2013). The researcher will use their experience and knowledge together with the information that is now available in order to reflect and write-up the case study.

The researcher will be aware that what they are being told may be misleading. Given that people are unlikely to volunteer to be interviewed in order to lie, a more realistic concern is over exaggerated claims and over emphasis on certain aspects for their own purposes or even unconsciously. This is more difficult to deal with precisely because the research is asking interviewees about the factors that are most important to them. That said, given sufficient interviews, certain things will be seen to fit together and certain statements will ring true or not as the case may be. This will allow certain checks to be made and a balanced view to be presented (4.2.2 & 4.3.2).

So the researcher will take the initial draft and look for gaps in narratives, inconsistencies and outright contradictions. These considerations will lead to suitable amendments. Once the researcher is satisfied that the information is as faithful and as complete as possible they will produce the findings and recommendations. The case study will then be complete and the findings and recommendations may be used to inform and to guide future practice (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

3.2 Interview Method Employed

The interview method used takes a qualitative approach based on the principles of complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2011). This is used to produce an interview facilitation method, based on two interviews, that is open to complexity considerations developed for social science (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013) and for policy-making (Cairney, 2014).

For the first interview, in order to increase the engagement and sense of joint enterprise the interviews were recorded in the researcher's own hand. The intention is to prevent interviewees feeling they had been captured on tape or similar. The intention was not to record every syllable that was spoken but to engage in an interactive process that would produce a rich understanding.

The second interview focussed on a number of themes. These are recorded on the Second Interview Theme Sheet (Appendices 3 and 6). The actual questions asked depended on an analysis of the first interview in terms of what the interviewee had talked about. These areas are discussed in more depth. Further comparisons can be made so allowing different contrasts to be drawn.

This approach allows the researcher to become a facilitator who guides and enables the interviewee to articulate and reflect on personal experiences when answering the interview questions. At the same time the interviewee holds the responsibility and ownership of the meaning created in the process; it is their view they are articulating (Wodak, 2011).

Taking such an approach is not unproblematic. The interviewee may be seeking the 'right answer' or may be seeking to paint a rosy picture and so on. Similar considerations apply to the researcher who must not try to provoke evidence for their pet theories or to put words in other people's mouths. To address such difficulties the researcher worked in whatever way the interviewee found appropriate and comfortable, for example choice of venue, time of meeting or having a colleague present (De Vignemont, 2013).

Taking this approach involves reflection or thinking about, and reflexivity or on-going self-awareness (Roulston, 2012). The focus of this reflection and reflexivity is their own practices and assumptions, and how they can deal with ambiguity and indeterminacy (Quinn, 2013). Such an approach helps critical thinking and can clarify confusions by gaining insights from real life experiences (Fontana & Prokos, 2007). This in turn allows for the development of a shared understanding between the researcher and interviewee (Broussine & Ahmad, 2013).

The relationship between the researcher and the interviewee helps to determine the adequacy of the interview and the analysis of the case study material (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). Taking this into consideration, together with the points discussed above, the interview research was undertaken in the following way:

- 1) Desk-based research to set out the case study using original materials and monitoring documents.
- 2) Interviews with key participants from the community, the public sector and the private sector.
- 3) Following a period of reflection on practice and a review of the method, a round of second interviews took place where the researcher presented a considered view of what had been said. This was to develop the understanding of both the researcher and the interviewee, and create a ground for fruitful interaction.

The interviews look for emergence both in terms of what emerges from the interviews and what emerges from analysis of the interviews. The interviews cross-check each other both in terms of facts and opinions and also in terms of the interactions referred to and the values placed on those interactions (Fontana & Prokos, 2007).

Having judged what has emerged from the interviews, time is spent reflecting on what has taken place and the suitability of this complexity method for the case study undertaken. The lessons learned will be used to draw more general conclusions for complexity practitioners and community activities (Yin, 2009).

This leads to an assessment of the effectiveness of a community-centred approach and a view on the relationship between public policy and community interventions (Fischer, Miller & Sidney (eds.), 2007). It is therefore important to leave considerations of public policy to the end of the study. The hope being that the methods tested here will allow for more successful interventions and better use of resources. This in turn will serve to illustrate the contribution of complexity to the advancement of public policy (Gerrits, 2012).

At the start of the interview period each interviewee was told that there would be two interviews. At the first they would be invited to give their views with minimal intervention from the researcher. At the second, the researcher would present reflections on their first interview and invite their response. This would lead into a dialogue from which shared understanding would emerge (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012).

Interview one

The questions chosen for the first interview were aligned to the complexity terms explored in the second interview. They took the following general form:

- How did you get involved in ... ?
- What was the most important thing you were involved with?
- Who were the most influential people?
- What do you think of [the relevant organisation]?
- Would you like to see more projects like ... ?
- What do you think should happen next?
- What would you say to another group setting up a similar organisation?

The interviewee was free to talk about issues and areas of interest to them. The questions were there to keep the conversation flowing and to allow reminders of relevant points. The intention was to allow the interviewee free expression within the topic and not to lead them towards certain responses that followed particular lines (Appendix 3; Appendix 6).

Interview two

For the second interview the researcher focussed on particular complexity-involving themes relating to topics raised by the interviewee in the first interview. This meant that the themes did not set the topics of the second interview. Certain topics were raised, discussed in more depth, different comparisons were made and different contrasts were drawn. In this way the discussion was an interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, shaped by careful consideration of the first interview.

In the second interview the following themes and complexity aspects were put forward for discussion:

Theme A - Overview

Your partnership
Approach to the issues faced
What really made a difference?

Theme B - Activities

Working together
Alternative approaches
What would have made more of a difference?

Theme C – Public Sector Role

Self-working
Role of outside bodies
Different sorts of involvement

Theme D - Results

Outcomes
Expectations
Particular results

Theme E – National View

Understanding of government policy – localism, Big Society

Role of training

Effect on activities

What should emerge?

Theme F – Way Forward

Use of resources

Type of activity

Development opportunities

Alternative use of resources

Who is involved?

The task for the researcher was to enable the interview to flow while making sure the complexity aspects were discussed. This was achieved by organising the second interview questions according to a number of themes each of which explored an aspect of complexity. Each theme explored an area of the interviewees' experience that is relevant to case study. The themes were named according to general areas. The detail was provided by looking at the first interviews and picking out relevant subjects to be confirmed or denied and explored in the course of the second interview. Taken together, the general form of the questions asked is as follows.

Theme A - Overview

You began by talking about ...

This involved a number of partners ...

Was this a good way to approach the issues you face?

Theme B - Activities

.... were very important to you and the project.

It seems to me that ... could have been involved too.

Do you think that ... were missing?

Would their involvement have made a significant difference?

Theme C – Public Sector Role

A lot has been said about the council and the public sector, such as ...

Would a different sort of council involvement have been more useful?

Would it have been better not to include the council at all?

Theme D - Results

You seem dis/pleased with the outcome. In particular ...

Was this because of your expectations (not) being met?

Was this because of particular results such as ... ?

Theme E – National View

The current government has engaged on localist agenda. It also has the Big Society initiative.

How much did the success/failure depend on the training provided?

Would more training have produced better outcomes/results?

Having been through a successful government process what do you think should happen next?

What would you like to see happen?

Theme F – Way Forward

A lot of time and money was spent on [your project].

Do you think this type of activity is a good use of public money?

Do you see something like ... as the next step on from [your project] in community governance?

Do we need to go further?

Or are such programme a waste of money?

If so then how should the money be spent e.g. loans to businesses?

Or should it be used to subsidise tax rises or even fund tax cuts?

Who would benefit from these measures?

The role of these questions was two-fold. The first role was to develop and explore the issues raised in the first interview. The second role was to discuss complexity concepts in a way that brings out their application to the case study.

The use of themes provides a way to compare the discussions held and allows the researcher to cross-reference the interviewees' thoughts and comments. In this way it is possible to produce a case study that reflects the perspective of those interviewed (Holliday, 2007).

3.3 Research Ethics, Researcher's Position and Anonymity

It is important to discuss the ethical considerations raised by the research in the areas of research design, the conduct of the interviews, and use of the material.

The design of qualitative research imposes certain ethical demands namely informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, social justice, and practitioner research (Ellis, 2007). Given the complexity approach taken and the nature of the participants engaged, a sensitive approach is required both to the research ethics involved and to the particular situation engaged (Christians, 2011). For this to succeed, notice needs to be taken of the perspective of each interviewee be they government official, community worker or local volunteer. By taking these considerations into account, appropriate ethical procedures for the case studies were considered and developed (Israel & Hay, 2006).

The Northumbria University ethics forms were completed and the research conformed to the regulations set out therein. In doing this the thesis adopts ethical principles from nationally recognised practice (Lancaster University, No Date). These principles lead to clear guidelines as to what should be expected. They do not say how to behave in each situation.

- 1) Mutual respect between all participants including listening to who is speaking
- 2) Equality and inclusion with emphasis on people whose voices are often ignored
- 3) Fair participation by encouraging and enabling all participants to contribute their views to the research
- 4) Active learning by viewing desk-based research and the interview process as an opportunity to reflect and learn on their practice
- 5) Making a difference by using the interviews as an opportunity to identify positive changes

- 6) Developing personal integrity by not accepting things interviewees found to be wrong. This was enhanced by presenting a summary of the first at the beginning of the second interview
- 7) Anonymity in open discussions. It was important for the interviewees to be anonymous and for their anonymity to be respected

The conduct of the interviews raises ethical considerations regarding power, reciprocity and contextual relevance (Shaw, 2008). To address these concerns each person is interviewed twice: the first time to elicit their responses and to encourage their thinking; the second time is to engage with them in a way that is both genuine case study enquiry and is directed towards the research question, aims and objectives (1.1).

The first interview sets a ground for discussion led by the interviewee. To achieve this, the interviewee is asked to address the factors that are most important to them. This material is used as a basis for the second interview which introduces certain consistent complexity terms. In this way it becomes possible to produce a relatively bias-free set of discussions of a particular situation from a complexity-informed point of view (Stacey, 2007).

As well as direct ethical considerations, there are the beliefs of the practitioners and the practices that they have adopted. From the literature review it is clear that there is no established methodology for the complexity-informed community studies undertaken here (2.2.1). This means that phrases will be used and material will be presented in unfamiliar or non-traditional ways (Elliott & Kiel, 1997).

The position of the researcher also needs to be considered as participatory involvement is a first-person, individual-centred experience (Elias, 1983). The interview technique used builds this into the method used. The researcher worked with several of the interviewees while at NCC though they had no direct involvement with NDC Westgate and Centre West. At the time the case studies were conducted the researcher was directly involved with the Walker Hub as Chair of Pottery Bank Community Centre (1.2).

Taking all of these points into account the researcher is satisfied that the interviewees expressed feelings and reasonings that capture what was genuinely important to them. They therefore consider the findings to be both appropriate and useful to academics, policy-makers and funders.

In addition, there are ethical issues raised by the analysis and use of the research material (Shaw, 2008). The material gathered was documented according to methodology (Chapter 3) and set out in the case study analysis (Chapter 5). This in turn points to the findings (Chapter 6) and the conclusions drawn (Chapter 7).

In the case of Centre West a previous piece of academic research (not conducted by Northumbria University) had led to a number of anonymous contributors being identified in print. This meant that the Centre West group were understandably wary of taking part in a similar exercise. The researcher took time to discuss this with a number of people and it was agreed that in the main the interviews would be conducted through the Centre West staff. This route led to a good-sized group of willing interviewees. These interviews appear in the thesis with the prefix 'CW'.

The Walker Hub case study was conducted in different circumstances. Most of the public sector staff approached were happy to talk about the Hub and their involvement. However, several members of the community sector expressed reservations about taking part in the research. Their key concern was having things written down which could be held against them in the future. This goes back to previous experiences where they had talked to people who had subsequently used the information they had provided in ways they did not like. In particular, there was a lack of trust of the public sector and suspicion about future public sector intentions. As with Centre West the researcher spent some time talking to a number of key individuals about their concerns. Given assurances of anonymity a group of willing interviewees was gathered that represent the Walker Hub. These interviews appear in the thesis with the prefix 'WH'.

The general lesson from this part of the research is try to make sure that the people you are talking to are willing to take part. This speaks to the complexity principle that the best learning comes from a combination of people rather than the best qualified or the person with the best idea (Senge, 1990).

Turning to practical considerations, the first interviews set the ground for discussion by giving interviewees the opportunity to express what they considered relevant and to reflect on this. The first interview responses were then analysed to address particular issues within a complexity-informed structure.

For the second interviews the researcher raised issues from the first interview and introduced complexity considerations such as emergence. This was done by dividing the discussion into a number of themes common to all the second interviews. The purpose of this was to provide a common resource for later consideration and analysis.

As the second interviews progressed it became clear that some of the questions were too general to receive a response that focussed on the interviewees' area of knowledge and expertise. The researcher therefore took the decision to not ask every question of every interviewee and to angle the questions to the subject of the discussion. Nevertheless, the second interview explored a number of common themes. Some interviewees were interested in the complexity approach taken and the researcher engaged with them, explaining the interview process. Others were happy to address the questions. In this way the interviews drew out a rich, informative dialogue that was used for complexity-informed analysis (Chapter 5).

As discussed, the first interview allowed the interviewee free expression. The researcher considered that using a recording device would be too distracting and possibly constraining. The first interview was therefore recorded by the researcher's handwritten notes.

The second interview followed set themes. It was recorded using an electronic recording device. This allowed the researcher to focus on the discussion and listen-back to the interview while writing up the interview. Furthermore the recording stands as evidence of the discussion. In addition to the recording, the researcher made handwritten notes to sit alongside the electronic record.

The Centre West case study was conducted first. It was therefore important to see what sort of information the first interviews contained before proceeding to the second interviews (4.2.2). For the Walker Hub the interview process was established and it was a case of finding the most convenient time for the interviews to take place. No substantial alterations were made to the method employed (4.3.2). For each case study, once both sets of interviews had been carried out they were analysed in terms of interactive dialogues focussing on the points made by the interviewees (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

3.4 Case Study Method

Case study research may be defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Woodside, 2010). The case study must be significant. Cases must be both unusual and of general interest, and the underlying issues should be of national or international importance. Their importance can be theoretical, policy driven or practical (Thomas, 2011).

Case studies must be complete in themselves. This means setting explicit boundaries. The research must distinguish between the phenomenon being studied and its context and must declare any time intervals or spatial boundaries. In particular, the analysis should be shown and supported through logical argument and the clear presentation of evidence (Holliday, 2007).

Case study is the study of the particularity and the complexity of a single case. It examines significant activity within important circumstances and considers a number of perspectives. To do this a range of views are canvassed and approaches are sought that challenge traditional assumptions (Stake, 1995).

The case study must display sufficient evidence. Here judicious and effective presentation of the most relevant evidence is necessary in order to allow the reader to reach an independent judgment (Yin, 2009). At the same time a degree of cultural relativism is acceptable. The views formed by each case study are set by those interviewed and are presented as such within the constraints discussed. In this way the case studies are objective while being grounded in the views of those directly involved (Glaser, 1992).

Criticisms of the case study method include saying that the study of a small number of cases offers no grounds for establishing the reliability or generality of the findings. Also intense exposure to the case may lead to bias in the findings. Such criticisms can lead to the view that case study research is useful only as an exploratory tool. Yet with careful planning, case studies may be used to investigate and explore real-life situations (Yin, 2012).

The doctorate by case study research is a well-established method within the social sciences. It is well suited to complexity studies in the social sciences, allowing numerous iterations of interactions to be set out explicitly and in their own terms (Alexander & Bennett, 2005).

The case studies presented in this work address both how effective a complexity approach is for case study research of communities, and how suitably adapted case study research is able to demonstrate the use of complexity methods in this area of social science (2.1.2).

In undertaking this approach the researcher needs to reflect on what the interviewee has said and to prepare questions that involve the main complexity concepts. The interviewee too needs time to reflect on their answers, recall additional information and prepare appropriate responses. To accommodate these factors, a two-interview case study technique was adopted that differs from the traditional approach (3.2).

Case study research in public policy usually follows six main steps (Molloy, 2010):

- 1) Determine and define the research question
- 2) Select the cases and determine data gathering and analysis techniques
- 3) Prepare to collect the data
- 4) Collect data in the field
- 5) Evaluate and analyse the data
- 6) Prepare the report

Ideally the research would leave the case study elements the same and vary the complexity elements (Flyvbjerg, 2006 & 2011). However with a two-interview method this is not practical. To accommodate the complexity-informed approach adopted, the case studies presented here conform to the following steps:

- i) Determine and define the research question
- ii) Select the complexity terms to be explored through interview
- iii) Select the cases as interesting and significant
- iv) Identify willing and available interviewees
- v) Conduct the first data gathering interview
- vi) Conduct the second complexity-specific interview
- vii) Evaluate and analyse the data
- viii) Prepare the report

These adaptations allow the researcher to spend time with the interviewees, determine issues of interest, pay attention to their usage of terms and intended meanings, and to specify the interactions and what emerged from them. In complexity terms this may be seen as an attempt to capture multiple complex responsive processes within a case study framework in a way that is both competent and informative (Emerson, 1987).

In compiling and assembling the case study material a number of additional factors need to be accommodated.

a) Beliefs and Intentions

Beliefs and intentions may be used to describe ways of thinking and to show the extent to which these ways are shared within organisations, networks and groups (Raman, 2011). Shared beliefs and intentions may shape activities while being taken for granted or rarely questioned, for example, as core beliefs, paradigms and monopolies of understanding. New or unfamiliar beliefs and intentions can also be used to prompt a reconsideration of current activities, for example when a new proposal challenges the way that a practice is understood and usually carried out (Kettell & Cairney, 2010).

b) Engagement

For the case study to have value those who are or were directly involved need to be engaged. Their involvement may be as individuals, as volunteers or as professionals. The research need to account for the ways in which they act; their reasoning and motivations. To do this the thesis uses bounded rationality to deliver explanations that focus on the beliefs and intentions of those directly involved (Hyman, 2013).

c) Informal events

Events may be understood as 'what happened'. They can be formal and anticipated, such as elections which produce limited change or introduce new actors with different ideas about problems and solutions. There may be unanticipated incidents, including social changes, natural events, scientific breakthroughs or technological changes. Their unpredictability makes them difficult to account for in advance. The research focuses on how people interpret and respond to events. This means that an event is significant only if those interviewed pay attention to it (Davidson, 2001).

d) Networks

These are the relationships between community members, external decision-makers and other interested parties. Networks exchange information for mutual benefit. They may, for example, seek to influence policy-makers and to improve their access to suitable funders (Castells, 2010) or they may join-up to create more appropriate and more-timely policies (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). Through these networks collective actions often emerge (Byrne, 1989; Mohammadi, Norazizan & Ahmad, 2010). Networks can be effective because central government and public sector bodies have regulations and operating procedures that favour particular types of organisation over others (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2009).

e) Organisational Norms

These are the rules, practices and relationships that influence individual and collective decisions. The choices people make are to some extent explained by their understanding of, and adherence to, these rules, norms and practices. They can be formal and widely understood such as a constitution or a law. They can be informal and only understood in particular organisations, for example as 'what we usually do' (Ostrom, 1990). Organisations establish the venues where decisions are made and the rules that allow particular people, information and ideas to enter into the decision-making process, for example community centre committees, council meetings (Callahan, 2008).

f) Political Conditions

These describe who controls what. They can involve identifying problems and deciding how to address them. They can refer to a sense of community inheritance, maintaining the rules, partnerships and activities that are already in place (Knill & Tosun, 2012).

Overall, such an approach to the case studies offers a way to understand communities in their own terms and in a way that allows for accurate lessons to be drawn. In particular, there is no need for performance management by proxy indicators or for project assessment in terms of indirect benefits (Johnson & Cook, 2013).

To complete a case study using the methodology set out requires detailed data. This may be categorised as background information on the places and organisations involved, who is involved and their contact details, knowledge of what is currently taking place, assessments and evaluations of work undertaken. This information is arrived at by examining the context, collecting information about the organisations involved, contacting potential interviewees and researching documentation about relevant projects (Yin, 2012).

All of the information relevant to a traditional case study approach is relevant to a complexity-informed approach. However, this is not a step by step process. Fresh information will emerge throughout the case study period, for example as the interviewees discuss what they hold to be important. This way of acquiring and incorporating new information is a strength of the approach taken (Finlay, 2012).

The main source of data for the complexity-informed approach is the interviews. Each person who participates fully will be interviewed twice. The first interview establishes how they understood the situation, the significance of their place and role and the important points about their involvement. The second interview seeks to develop complexity points from information given in the first interview. It does not simply go over the information checking facts, nor does it just develop the points made more deeply.

The purpose of the first interview is to establish an information-context that the interviewee and the researcher can share. The second interview has a different purpose, namely to introduce complexity considerations into the shared context and to develop an understanding of the complexity elements present.

The information from the first interview is provided by the interviewee in their own terms. The information from the second interview is again provided by the interviewee but in terms set by the researcher. It is recognised that an interview is a two-way process. It is therefore important to recognise that the first interview is not all about the interviewee and that the second interview is not all about the researcher. There is a mutual understanding to be developed and a degree of give and take from both interviewee and researcher alike.

Some interviewees will not complete the two-interview process. Nonetheless the information they provide is valuable and will be included in the analysis. Where the researcher is aware that the full process is not to be followed they will be able to introduce certain complexity elements into the single interview discussion. Further work is required to establish how effective such hybrid approaches may be.

The practical result of this is that an understanding of the case in terms of the people involved and in terms of complexity-informed considerations is developed. That the terms of these considerations are set in advance means that even where nothing of significance is discussed this is important data and can be recorded as an absence, for example 'there was no council and community joint-working'. Where negative circumstances obtain then again given the terms of the second interview these can be recorded in terms of the complexity elements set out (Holliday, 2007).

The case studies undertaken as part of this research engaged with 36 people (19 for Centre West and 17 for the Walker Hub) and conducted a total of 66 (37 for Centre West and 29 for the Walker Hub) interviews. These break-down as follows:

Table 3.2: Number of Interviews Conducted

Source: Author

31 (18 for Centre West and 13 for the Walker Hub) first interviews were carried out and recorded according to the method described.

29 (16 for Centre West and 13 for the Walker Hub) second interviews were carried out and recorded according to the method described.

6 (3 for Centre West and 3 for the Walker Hub) other interviews were conducted.

The interviews constitute the unique data gathered by the researcher. This data is set out and explored as part of the case study investigations (4.2.2 & 4.3.2). It is then discussed in terms of the research question (5.1).

Setting up the case studies, conducting the research and writing up the case studies took a period of eighteen months. By undertaking this process the research was able to complete two case studies that conform to the methodology set out. Now that the principles of the method have been established it is suggested that future case studies could be completed in a shorter time (5.5).

3.5 Summary of Methodology

This chapter has shown how the strengths of complex adaptive systems and the insights of complex responsive processes may be combined. In generalising, complex adaptive systems were shown to tend towards reductionism. By modifying complex adaptive systems and by reforming aspects of complex responsive processes the thesis is able to show how people address their world and how research can move to a more holistic understanding.

With the complexity-informed approach adopted the subject of the case study research is the people involved rather than a project plan or government policy directive. These people may refer to such plans and directives but the focus remains on the people involved and their interactions seen from their presence, here and now (2.3.6). This also means that the presentation of the case studies is done through the interviews on a theme by theme basis. Each theme is discussed in terms of what the interviewees said about it. Where additional topics are raised these are included under a relevant sub-heading (4.2.2 & 4.3.2).

The approach taken focusses on the people concerned and regards those involved as the primary source of information. Evidence from elsewhere, while relevant, is secondary to both the experience and the knowledge and beliefs of those involved. Rather than adopting factual description and statistical reporting, this approach follows how understanding unfolds (2.3.8).

At the same time, the complexity-informed methodology devised allows for the use of facts and statistics to form a preliminary understanding of the situation to be studied. It then goes on to gain a fuller and richer understanding from the perspective of those who participated in the interviews. This requires an interview method that differs from the traditional format (3.2).

Having completed two case studies that follow the approach set out, the results and reflections on the results will be analysed in terms of the literature studied to generate complexity-informed analysis and general conclusions. In this way the thesis demonstrates a case study method that discusses the complexity phenomena present and uses them to analyse the case study, for example 'the presence of regular verbal interactions at coffee-time generated trust' (5.5).

Chapter 4: The Case Studies

The previous chapter developed a process for a nuanced evaluation of community dynamics (Chapter 3). This chapter presents two case studies undertaken using this process. The subjects of the case studies are Centre West (formerly New Deal for Communities Westgate) in the West End of Newcastle upon Tyne, and the Walker Hub in the East End of Newcastle upon Tyne. Both case studies are community interventions involving paid professionals. They are not straightforward community groups. Each case study is examined in its own right. They are then compared and contrasted (Chapter 5).

4.1 Information about Newcastle upon Tyne

4.1.1 Historical Background

Newcastle upon Tyne is a city in the metropolitan county of Tyne and Wear, in north east England. It is situated on the north bank of the River Tyne. Newcastle grew in the middle ages as a centre for the wool trade and later became a major coal mining area. The port and the yards lower down the river were developed in the sixteenth century and by the end of the nineteenth century became one of the world's largest shipbuilding and ship-repairing areas (Fraser & Emsley, 1973). The years following the end of the Second World War in 1945 saw the closure of the heavy industries and the coal mines. While such urban decline is not unique, the industrial ruination and the impact of these changes on the communities affected has been severe (Mah, 2012b).

The full effects of large scale redundancy in the private sector were partly alleviated by the increase in the number of public sector jobs. This has meant that a large percentage of the available jobs have been in the public sector with private sector growth being largely restricted to service provision such as shops and call centres (Robinson (ed.), 1988).

During the 1990s and 2000s Newcastle sought to re-invent itself as a 'party city' with areas such as the quayside becoming popular with locals and tourists for drinking, dancing and generally having a good time (Pointer, 2007). Since 2008, while the party atmosphere may remain, the degree of emphasis placed on nightlife has been reduced (NewcastleGateshead, No Date). From 2010 the Coalition government radically reduced the number of public sector jobs upon which Newcastle had come to depend (2.2.4). While the whole city has been affected, for example through city centre shop closures, the effect of austerity measures and the impact of the welfare reforms have been particularly severe on the impoverished east and west areas of Newcastle (NCC, 2014a). Though the rest of the country may be beginning to pick up, evidence suggests that the north east is continuing to decline (Harris, 2014).

4.1.2 Population

According to the 2011 government census, the unitary authority of Newcastle had a population of around 282,500 (NCC, 2014a). Newcastle is the sixteenth most populous city in the United Kingdom; while the Tyneside conurbation, made up of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside and South Tyneside, is the sixth most populous conurbation in the United Kingdom (ONS, 2009).

Newcastle is home to Newcastle University, Northumbria University and Newcastle College and hence has a large student population. Areas with predominant student populations include Jesmond and Heaton. Centre West and the Walker Hub lie outside the main student areas though Centre West is adjacent to the main campus of Newcastle College (What Uni?, 2007).

4.1.3 Ethnicity

“Newcastle is, to coin a phrase, hideously white.” Neil Murphy, Economic Advisor, HM Treasury, Northern Way Summit, March 2006 (Quoted in Young, 2006)

The ethnic make-up of Newcastle upon Tyne is predominantly White British. In 2011, it consisted of White British 83.6%; White other 04.1%; Asian 07.0%; Black 01.6%; Chinese 01.3%; Mixed-race 01.4%; and other 01.0% (ONS, 2011).

The ethnic make-up of the areas where the case studies are located is different both to the city average and to each other. The non-white population of the Centre West area is considerably higher than the city average being a mix of white British, Asian and eastern European residents. The Walker Hub area is mainly white British with some African refugees and asylum seekers, together with some eastern European residents (ONS, 2011).

4.1.4 Health

The health of people in Newcastle upon Tyne is generally worse than the England average. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average. Life expectancy is 14.3 years lower for men and 11.1 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Newcastle upon Tyne compared to the least deprived areas. Since 2001, all-cause mortality rates have fallen. Early death rates from cancer and from heart disease and stroke have fallen but remain worse than the England average (Department of Health, 2011).

About 21.9% of Year 6 children are classified as obese. Only 54.9% of pupils spend at least three hours each week on school sport. Levels of teenage pregnancy and GCSE attainment are worse than the England average. Estimated levels of adult healthy eating and smoking are worse than the England average. Rates of smoking related deaths and hospital stays for alcohol related harm are also higher than the England average (Katikreddi, Higgins, Smith & Williams, 2013).

Overall, Newcastle, like many areas in the north east, has worse health statistics than would be expected even given their relatively high levels of poverty.

4.1.5 Poverty

The main commercial district in Newcastle is the city centre. There are outlying shopping areas such as Kingston Park and business areas such as Newcastle Great Park. The prosperous suburbs of Gosforth and Jesmond lie to the north of the city centre forming a relatively wealthy core, set apart from the poorer, post-industrial riverside areas to the east and west (OECD Territorial Reviews, 2006).

Deprivation in Newcastle is higher than average with a diverse cross-section of social needs and concentrated areas of poverty. 25% of Newcastle residents live in areas which are in the 10% most deprived areas in England. There are particular problems around child poverty. Newcastle has 29.9% of children living in poverty compared to the England average of 21.2%. 34% of households with dependent children are living in in-work poverty (NCC, 2014a). VCS groups based in Newcastle are taking action such as running food banks and soup kitchens (Large, 2012) and are also developing policies that attempt to end poverty among communities (North East Child Poverty Commission, 2013).

Newcastle has an acute need for the right type of social housing (Pendlebury, Townshend & Gilroy, 2006). Between April and December 2013, 5,388 households in Newcastle had been affected by the changes to housing benefit, commonly known as the 'Bedroom Tax'. 13% of these residents lived in Walker, compared with 0.1% in North Jesmond (NCC, 2014a).

4.1.6 Newcastle City Council

Newcastle City Council (NCC) is a middle sized, metropolitan council. Control changed in May 2011 from Liberal Democrat to Labour. Newcastle is a member of the English Core Cities Group. Newcastle, together with Gateshead, is a member of the Eurocities network of European cities (NCC, No Date (b)).

The researcher worked for NCC for more than ten years. In that time he saw a number of different policy initiatives adopted and then fall out of favour. The controlling Labour group engaged on a co-operative council initiative similar to one adopted in Lambeth (Lambeth Council, 2010). This aims to maintain NCC's functional capacity at a greatly reduced cost (Forbes, 2013).

In 2012 NCC became a Living Wage employer implementing the Newcastle Living Wage. This lies between the minimum wage and the level of other Living Wage schemes. Newcastle also held a Fairness Commission along the lines of the Islington model (The Islington Fairness Commission, 2011). The Newcastle Fairness Commission reported on four areas of fairness; Fair Share, Fair Go, Fair Play and Fair Say and recommended general changes to NCC working conditions and practices (Newcastle Fairness Commission, 2012).

NCC and the local VCS have a close and generally good working relationship. The VCS Liaison Group is chaired by the deputy leader of NCC and is attended by senior VCS figures and NCC directors. The relationship between NCC and the VCS was governed by the Newcastle Voluntary Sector Compact. In 2014 The New Newcastle Compact was agreed between NCC, Newcastle North and East Clinical Commissioning Group, Newcastle West Clinical Commissioning Group, and Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS, NCC, NNECCG, *et al*, 2014). NCC continues to support the VCS in Newcastle mainly through the Newcastle Fund (NCC, 2014b).

4.1.7 Regional Governance

On coming to power in 2010, the Coalition removed the regional tier of government. This is having a negative impact on Newcastle and the north-east. Government Office North East and the North East Regional Development Agency made significant economic interventions and articulated a strong regional voice (Shaw & Robinson, 2012). These changes have generated concerns about the economic future of the north east and scepticism about the Coalition motives for promoting localism (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2013).

The focus on the north east as an administrative and economic construct has been recognised as problematic. Parts of the region, such as Newcastle and Sunderland, are urban while parts, such as Hexham and Rothbury, are rural (Hudson, 2005). While there are a range of views, this concern has led to a pragmatism that recognises that, while the north east needs to take advantage of new opportunities offered by the localism measures, co-ordination and integration at the regional or sub-regional level is still required, for example over transport policy (NELEP, 2013).

Though the Coalition government abolished regional government offices in 2010 some regional-level work is still being done on a case-by-case basis (Shaw & Robinson, 2012). It is not clear whether this will benefit impoverished areas and poverty-stricken populations (Hunter, 2014). Nor is it clear how such *ad hoc* regionalism sits with other Coalition policies such as austerity, localism and Big Society (Barnard, 2010; Harris, 2014).

4.1.8 The Voluntary and Community Sector

There are around 1,000 registered charities, Community Interest Companies (CICs) and Industrial and Provident societies with addresses in Newcastle upon Tyne. Alongside these bigger organisations there are approximately 3,000 smaller community based organisations¹¹. This is a comparatively large number for a city of Newcastle's size. This has been explained by saying that Newcastle is the regional capital of the north east of England (NCVS, 2014b). The activities of these groups bring benefits to the communities served by the groups. These benefits include social gains such as improved well-being, increased economic activity and environmental improvements (Kane & Mohan, 2010).

Newcastle's VCS, excluding housing associations, private schools, and three national charities based in Newcastle, has an income of around £140m and grant making trusts and assets of around £500 million¹² (NCVS, 2014b). Newcastle's VCS has a paid workforce around 6,500 people in 5,000 posts (NCVS & VONNE, 2012). It is estimated that for every £1 in grant funding Newcastle's VCS can leverage an additional £7 (NCVS & NCC, 2009).

Nationally, two thirds of the VCS paid posts are held by women. This proportion is higher than the private sector and is comparable with the public sector (Clark, McHugh & McKay, 2011). This proportion appears to be the same for Newcastle-based VCS organisations (NCVS, 2012).

Nationally, one fifth of the VCS paid posts are held by people with a disability. This is a higher proportion than both the private sector and the public sector (Clark, McHugh, & McKay, 2011). The surveys studied gave no figures for VCS paid posts held by people with a disability in Newcastle upon Tyne.

¹¹ Using an estimate of three community groups for every registered charity (Kane & Mohan, 2010).

¹² These estimates are based on the income of 600 Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service members at the time of the survey in May 2014 (NCVS, 2014b).

Volunteer Centre Newcastle deals with between 6,000 and 8,000 volunteering enquiries each year (Volunteer Centre Newcastle, 2013). This means that for every paid employee in the sector there are between 2.5 and 5.8 volunteers (Kane, Mohan, & Rajme, 2010). Turning to community groups, the income of the majority of Newcastle's community organisations is under £10,000. Indeed 5% have no income at all relying on volunteers and grants. This means that they are particularly vulnerable to public sector cuts and to reductions in the level of available grants (NCVS & NCC, 2009).

VCS organisations in the north east are more reliant on public funding than the VCS organisations nationally. In 2010, of the £847 million income for north east voluntary organisations, £398 million came from statutory sources, £291 million came from individuals, and £61 million from the VCS itself (Ipsos Mori, 2010). This means that they are vulnerable to central government cuts to local government funding (Hillier, 2014).

Locally-based, grant dependent community groups may be looked at from a number of angles. For example they may be seen as a vital support service staffed largely for free, or they may be seen as a low-cost extension of the public sector with grants instead of wages and pensions. Similarly, it is possible to see community groups as upholding the values of ordinary people, motivated by family values and sound common sense (Green, 2009). Or it is possible to view them as people with nothing better to do, amateurs, gatekeepers, nimbys (not in my back yard) and even as a liability (Clark, McHugh & McKay, 2011).

For VCS groups their core value is independence. This independence enables them to work with individuals and communities to identify and address the issues that really matter to them (NCVS, 2013a). The key point here is that many VCS groups are rooted in the communities they work with. No matter how successful or unsuccessful they may be judged to be by others, they are trusted by their communities, hence they are responsive to community needs and good at finding flexible and innovative solutions (Hillier, 2014).

4.1.9 Summary of Background Information

This information reflects the reality of the situation in Newcastle upon Tyne. It gives a general view that is useful for academics and policy-makers. On its own, however, it is not enough. It does not say anything about the personal experiences, good or bad, of those living and working in Newcastle upon Tyne (NCVS, 2013b).

To understand what is actually happening and how the people concerned are dealing with their circumstances we need to set out specific details based in an actual context (3.4). The thesis will now do this through the presentation of two case studies selected for complexity-informed examination.

4.2 Centre West Case Study

4.2.1 Centre West Case Study Presentation

This section presents the background to the first case study. The focus is on the people involved and the activities taking place at the time of the case study research. This includes their thoughts and feelings together with their memories of what has taken place and their hopes for the future. The study captures how particular local groups present themselves and the spirit of the activities they are involved with.

The first case study is of the New Deal for Communities Westgate project, referred to here as 'NDC Westgate', and its successor organisation Centre West. NDC Westgate has already been the subject of detailed study (Dargan, 2002b; Community Sense, 2009; DCLG, 2010). The case study presented here takes a different approach using complexity to understand what took place and what could be done differently in the future.

a) New Deal for Communities

The national NDC programme was rolled out by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It was closely connected with DCLG, the Social Exclusion Unit and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and was part of The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. The NDC Programme placed a major emphasis on engaging and empowering local communities (DCLG, 2008).

The national evaluation conducted by Sheffield Hallam University gathered general evidence. Their report found there was no guarantee that locally-based activities bring residents together. Furthermore, most people in deprived areas do not get involved even within the context of a well-funded, local initiative such as the NDC Programme. The report concludes that it is difficult for locally-based initiatives to shift social and community indicators (DCLG, 2010).

b) NDC Westgate

NDC Westgate was one of 39 New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas selected by central government from the bids received. Each NDC had close links with their local council, with councils co-ordinating NDC bids and holding the money allocated to successful NDC bidders.

Figure 4.1: Map of the NDC Westgate Area
Source: Centre West, No Date



NDC Westgate covered the inner west area of Newcastle upon Tyne centring on the wards of Elswick and Wingrove. It included two distinct areas, one mainly white working class by the River Tyne (Elswick) and one an ethnically diverse community around Westgate Hill (Wingrove) in the north of the area.

c) Governance

NDC Westgate began in 1998 and formally came to an end in March 2010. A resident-led board determined and delivered measures across the NDC area in partnership with a number of local agencies. The board focussed their efforts on a healthier future for local people, better homes to live in and a safer, more attractive environment. They also helped local people into jobs and training, supported local businesses starting up, helped the police to reduce crime, and strove to raise education standards in local schools.

Having been through the process of formation, NDC Westgate decided to appoint a Chief Executive. The Chief Executive served for a period of time from 2004 to 2007 when the position was deleted (DCLG, 2008). The researcher met with the Chief Executive on a couple of occasions in the course of their NCC employment. Once the Chief Executive post came to an end the Chief Executive moved away from the north east.

Several of the interviewees talked about this subject in some depth. Some said that the former Chief Executive was a very good appointment pointing out that he was adept at handling complex situations without being distracted from the purposes of the NDC programme (CW12). Indeed he received an honour in recognition of the work he had done for NDC Westgate. Others were not so enthusiastic. They found his manner distracting, his apparent concern ungenune and some of his actions reprehensible (CW17).

d) NDC Westgate Neighbourhoods

Area 1 - Arthur's Hill North West

Figure 4.2: Map of the NDC Area 1

Source: Centre West, No Date



Area 1, Arthur's Hill North West, is the area between Newcastle General Hospital, St. Nicholas Cemetery, Nuns Moor Park, Ponteland Road/Barrack Road, Beaconsfield Street, Philip Street, Croydon Road, the north side of Stanhope Street, and Crossley Terrace as far as the hospital.

Area 2 - Arthur's Hill South, Bentinck and Elswick Triangle

Figure 4.3: Map of the NDC Area 2

Source: Centre West, No Date

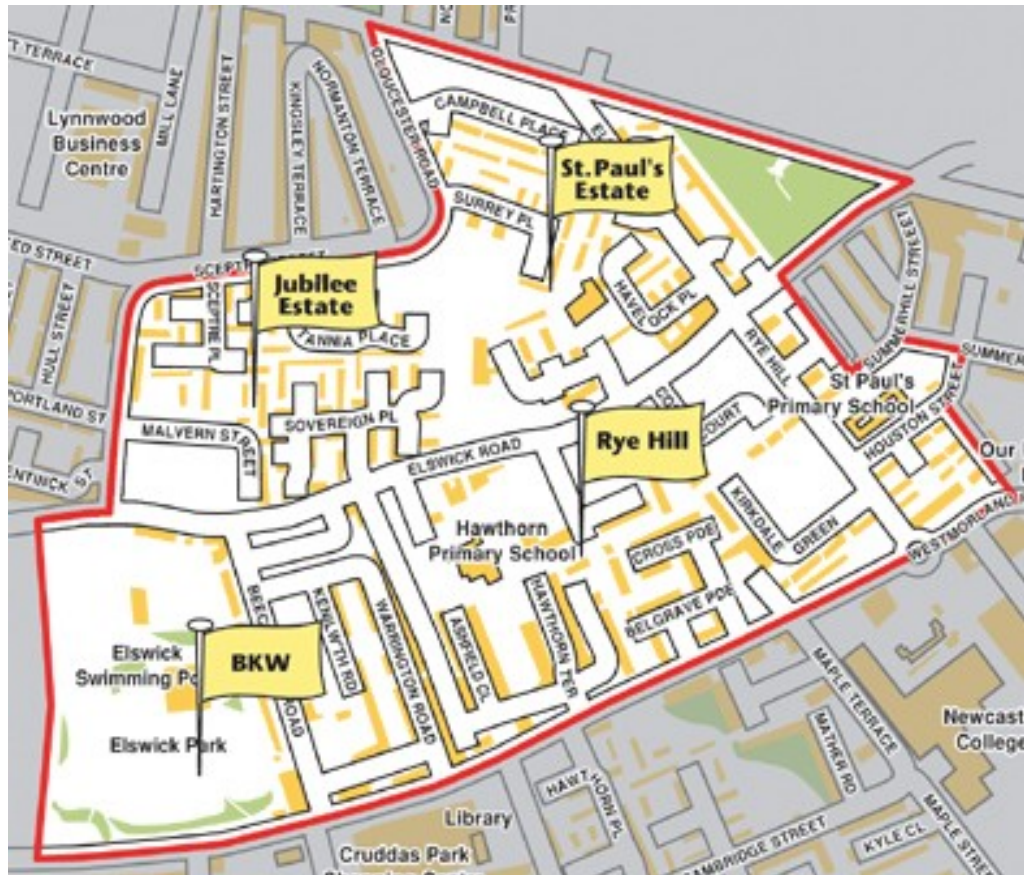


Arthur's Hill South, Bentinck and Elswick Triangle form Area 2. This area is bounded by the General Hospital, Moorside Primary School, several residential streets and Westgate Road up to the hospital.

Area 3 - Jubilee, St Paul's, BKW and Rye Hill

Figure 4.4: Map of the NDC Area 3

Source: Centre West, No Date

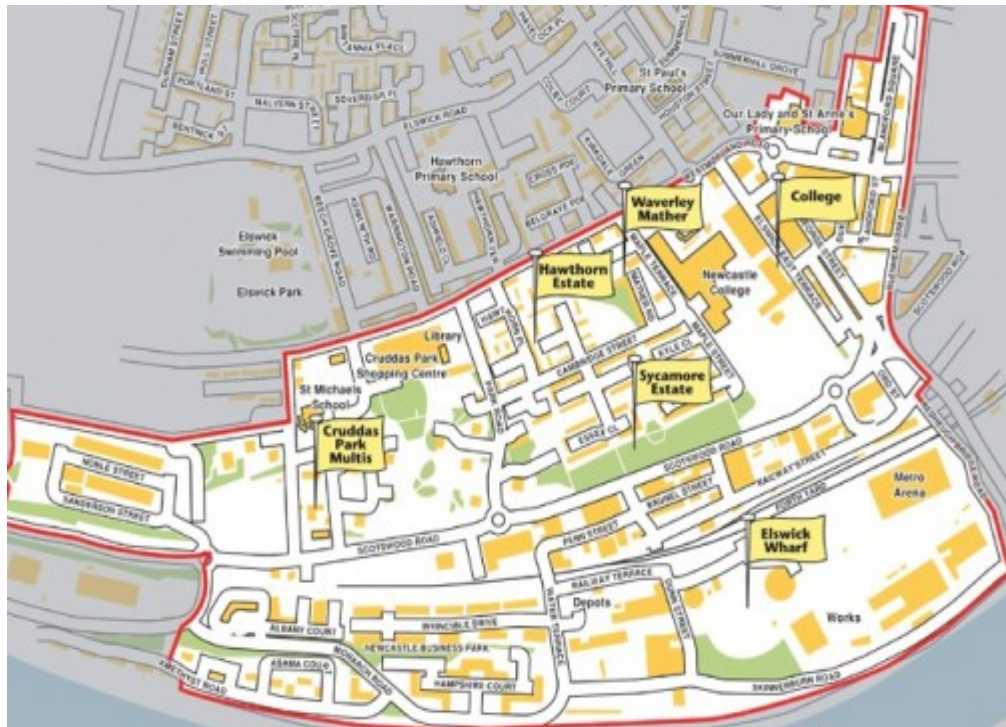


Area 3 is the Jubilee Estate, St. Paul's Estate, BKW (Beech Grove, Kenilworth and Warrington Roads, plus Ashfield Grove) and Rye Hill. This area is bounded by Elswick Road, Mill Lane, Sceptre Street, Westgate Road, Rye Hill, Victoria Street, Westmorland Road and Elswick Park.

Area 4 - Cruddas Park, Hawthorn, Sycamore and Park Rd Estates

Figure 4.5: Map of the NDC Area 4

Source: Centre West, No Date



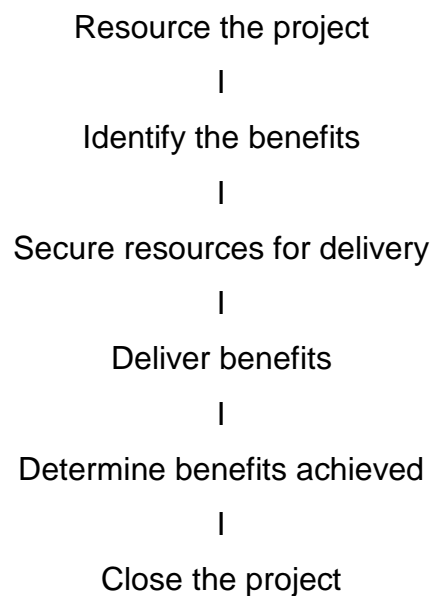
Area 4 is formed by Cruddas Park (now re-named Riverside Dene) and the Hawthorn, Sycamore and Park Road estates. This area is bounded by Beaumont Street, Wolsingham Street, Brunel Terrace, Westmorland Road, Blandford Square, Blenheim Street, Redheugh Bridge Road and the Business Park.

e) The Rationale for NDC Westgate

After their experience of City Challenge the local community were disillusioned about regeneration and the efforts of local government to improve their area. The City Challenge offices had been located in their ward but the staff remained distant from the community (CW15). Indeed the previous history of large projects in the area was one of constraints, namely fixed time frame, appointed staff, limited and managed areas of intervention (CW14). In other words, previous regeneration interventions had taken a linear approach and had made project-based interpretations (Table 4.1). This meant they offered little opportunity to adapt to changes and address unscheduled issues (Davoudi, 1995).

Table 4.1: Linear Project Plan

Source: Author



To address the growing demands for action the ward councillors decided to hold public meetings in the community to discuss the way forward. Elswick Leisure Centre was chosen for the first event but the meeting was made up of councillors and officers. There were no community members present.

“Clearly something was wrong and things needed to be changed” (CW15).

At the time in 1998 the New Deal for Communities programme was being set up. The criteria for an NDC area were 4,000 households and high, multiple levels of deprivation. The question then was who would own this.

“We didn’t want officers’ pet projects brought down off the shelf” (CW09).

Consultation meetings were held both with the community and within the Civic Centre. Eventually it was agreed to make a bid for an NDC area. The big question that remained was how this was going to be put together and put together in such a way that it was successful.

Previous funding consultations had been carefully managed in the sense that the result was known before the consultation took place. Then, when the money ran out, the project stopped and the professionals went back to where they had come from.

“Things had to be different this time; the residents were demanding it.” (CW09).

A group of residents became interested in NDC and committed to making a bid. They recognised that they were people with a concern for their area and wanted to legitimise themselves through elections. Living in their neighbourhood was important to them but they did not want to follow ward boundaries and they did not want to represent the whole NDC area. So the Electoral Reform Society were brought in to draw up areas that reflected community boundaries and to oversee elections to the NDC Westgate board. The board make-up was agreed at a public meeting; twelve elected community reps, two councillors, nine officers. The community had a built-in overall majority of twelve to eleven. The community members involved were satisfied with this arrangement (CW06).

Many of the councillors at the time were “machine politicians who would follow the party line” while other councillors’ saw their job as telling people ‘what I’m going to do for you’ (CW09). It was therefore important to involve the right ones. Since NDC, the practices in the area have changed. Councillors now ask the residents what they would like though those concerned, both residents and local councillors, are not sure that this has fully succeeded (CW07).

For NDC Westgate the criteria set by government were statistical. This meant they did not specify what had to be done. NDC Westgate found them hard to achieve so they went back to the government through GONE to ask for assistance (CW12). In certain cases flexibilities and benefits were allowed. For example, paying NCC for work NCC wanted doing in the current financial year, in return for NCC paying for work NDC Westgate wanted done in the next financial year. This was a good example of how NDC Westgate worked with NCC, in this case to smooth the budgets out (CW17).

However, the proposals were not always agreed. For example, to help meet the single mothers’ target, NDC Westgate asked that the mothers be allowed to remain on full benefits while undertaking specified training. Central government said no. This meant that the women concerned would suffer a steep drop in income if they undertook the training hence very few did. Here is an example of “community good sense being blocked for reasons of government red tape” (CW16).

What was different from previous interventions was that with the NDC Westgate approach the community planned what was to happen. This was both popular and successful and led to significant reductions in Anti-Social Behaviour and crime and lasting improvements to the area (CW12).

f) NDC Finance

NDC Westgate was awarded £54.9 million to spend over 10 years from the ODPM. It began with £1 million then £3 million in years 1 and 2, rising to a peak of about £7 million by years 6 and 7 then falling as activities started to wind down. Each tranche of money was subject to the submission and approval of an annual budget plan (DCLG, 2010).

NDC Westgate managed to leverage a further £75 million using the ODPM money as match-funding. The match-funding ratio was about £1.50 to £2 for each ODPM pound. This was not and was never intended to be limited or restricted. Some of the match came in the form of cash from partners like the police or PCT. Some was in-kind, in terms of manpower and resources. More match-funding came from other government programmes such as residual Single Regeneration Budget projects and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, and a lot came from European funds, namely European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. In terms of housing investment Your Homes Newcastle and Bridging Newcastle Gateshead were the major contributors with NDC Westgate adding funds to specific, relevant projects (CW16).

NDC Westgate aimed for better homes, better open spaces, jobs for residents, help for businesses, a safer community with less crime, improved health for residents, and greater learning opportunities. They brought local people together to decide how to go about this. To manage this, the NDC Westgate area was divided into four areas. Each area elected three community members to the board. This meant that there were twelve community board members. The remaining eleven board members were made up of ward councillors and significant partners such as NCC, the police and the health service (DCLG, 2010).

g) NDC Delivery

Whatever the original intentions, central government ran NDC as a ten-year project delivery programme (CW12). The pace of programme delivery reflected both the type of engagement between the community and officers, and the level of involvement of the community in what was happening.

For NDC Westgate years 1 and 2 saw the community involved but not feeling they were being listened to (CW14). Years 3 and 4 were stable. Some community members stopped coming to meetings possibly because they had made their contribution (CW16).

During years 5 to 7 the pace of delivery picked up. Seven projects were considered at each board meeting. This went smoothly as a lot of work had already been done around how the project would engage, the solutions proposed, who was to deliver, and what the cost would be (CW02). The community members took on a consultative role. There was little room for new ideas but there were opportunities to create new ways to deliver agreed outcomes (CW07). In years 8 to 10 the projects wound down and preparations were made for the successor body, Centre West. The board kept going as before but partners drifted away and the enthusiasm of the local people gradually waned. The board marked the end of NDC with tea and cakes (CW03). These moves were not planned in advance. It was not possible to predict when a leap forward would come. Something anticipated as tricky might go smoother than expected. The NDC staff were pleasantly surprised by the way community members championed and spoke-up for projects (CW02).

With respect to the transition to Centre West the decision was taken to keep NDC Westgate and Centre West separate. A Centre West team was created and placed in a separate office. This meant they were seen by some as commercial people who were not part of the NDC activity (CW10).

Though the Centre West board structure is basically the same as NDC Westgate with many of the same people, there was no formal handover. Having been purposely set up during the final NDC years, Centre West was handed the assets (CW15). This may be seen as a smooth and effective transition. However, given the commitment made to local people through the NDC years, it is surprising there was comparatively little community input into what was to come next.

With NDC the money acted as a focal point and agencies such as the police were keen to be involved because of the funding. But from the time Centre West was starting up through to the present the other agencies have been facing their own cuts. This meant they were looking inwards at the time when NDC Westgate was floating ideas of light touch community engagement and joint local projects (CW15).

Centre West was set up without the plan of small top-sliced budgets from partner agencies being enacted. With the end of the NDC programme the NDC Westgate community development team was lost and the established, long-term relations with the community could not be maintained. All this meant that ambitions for Centre West had to be reduced (CW16). Nevertheless, NDC's commitment to closing the gap has been taken up by Centre West. This means robust monitoring, outcomes focus, and equalities with an emphasis on the multi-cultural, though on a much smaller scale (CW10).

h) The Hat-Trick Project

NDC Westgate funded projects were set up, delivered and then disbanded when the funding stopped. One notable exception is the Hat-Trick Project.

The Hat-Trick Project is a community football project, based in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne. It began in 2005 as a NDC Westgate community project funded as a partnership between them and The Football Association. In 2007 they were selected by The Football Association as a national model of good practice for social inclusion. As part of this they hosted a showcase event with special guests including HRH Prince William, Sir Trevor Brooking and Steven Taylor from Newcastle United. They are now hosted by Centre West and receive support from The Football Foundation as well as the local partners for whom deliver sessions and programmes. There are three paid workers supported by a number of volunteers who are mainly young people (Hat-Trick, No Date).

Since 2006 over eighty local volunteers have qualified as an FA Level 1 football coach. Many volunteers come from BME communities and include young people not in education, employment or training and individuals at risk of committing crime. Hat-Trick helps these young people to make positive life choices and become role models in their own communities. They work with around one thousand young people every week across school, community and club activities. They cater for boys and girls regardless of ability or background in a range of street play (CW11).

The groups include Street Skillz, an urban football programme incorporating music, portable goals and free-styling moves to create fun street soccer sessions; WAGS (women and girls soccer) which includes after-school activities, teams and skills challenges; sports leadership courses; schools coaching; tailor-made programmes for hard-to-reach groups; and regular tournaments for all the groups they work with (CW07).

In 2010 Hat Trick went to South Africa. Team were out in South Africa, to work with the street children of Durban with the Lionsraw Project during the World Cup. They turned up to the NDC Westgate Board asking for £5,000.

“It was so brilliant I would have happily given them £10,000. It was so positive. They said, give us £5,000, we’ll get the rest” (CW07).

Ten local young people and five senior coaches from Hat-Trick made up the team. Each team member volunteered for 50 hours in the run up to the trip on the Street Skillz programme which engages 250 young people every week. The skills and experience developed during this period were invaluable for the work carried out in Durban, South Africa. Each volunteer received their FA Level 1 Coaching certificate and a Creative Development Certificate in street soccer. The senior staff members were trained in mentoring in order to establish a buddy system on the team. All the coaches attended an HIV awareness course before travelling. Many of the group had never left the UK before. The trip changed their perception of themselves and their home as they got to witness extreme poverty. They learned how their work as football coaches can bring smiles to faces and build bridges between communities. From subsequent feedback they feel that the people they met and worked with benefitted in similar ways (Lionsraw, 2014).

In April 2012 Hat-Trick won the Best CSYV (Cooperative Sports Young Volunteers) Award at the national Street Games annual awards. This was due to the hard work of the entire Hat-Trick team in recruiting and retaining the volunteers.

“Hat-Trick has done fantastically well, going into schools, tackling obesity, raising self-esteem, improving health; Women And Girls sessions include Asian girls” (CW10).

i) The West End Asian Traders Association

NDC Westgate sought to support existing activity in the community be it public, private or VCS.

In the early days of NDC Westgate there was a fledgling traders group operating mostly in the West End known as The West End Asian Traders Association. Despite its name the group tried to represent all traders irrespective of ethnic origin. NDC Westgate worked in partnership with members of the group to develop a project called Trade Safe which was a cross cutting project across the Jobs and Business and the Crime and Community Safety themes. The traders association was identified as the potential delivery partner for the project but as they had no previous experience of delivering what was a complex project it was decided to partner them up with other organisations in the short term, involve them in the governance of the project and develop the association's capacity to take on more of a management role as the project progressed (CW02).

NDC Westgate used the Trade Safe project to support the development of the association into a stronger organisation. The membership of the association did grow and the appointed project manager did help with the strengthening of the association. The Trade Safe project was designed to improve safety for traders and their customers which was a problem at that time. They sought to improve trading levels through a programme of shop front facelifts; new doors, windows, locks, roller shutters, lighting, signage etc. This was a complex project in terms of finance, procurement, logistics and management (CW16).

A trader joined the board as an elected community representative. They went on to become a private sector representative on the board nominated through the Chamber of Commerce. They remained a member of the board through the transition to Centre West until standing down in 2012.

A number of trading outlets were improved over the lifetime of the project. Since the end of the NDC programme the traders association appears to have lapsed. However, the connections remain and the retail areas became and remain relatively healthy. The stresses of being involved with a complex project like Trade Safe placed its own strains on the association and may have contributed to its demise (CW02).

There are other trader networking groups in the area. Asian Business Connections for example focusses on traders in the catering and restaurant trades. In 2013 they became a tenant at the Beacon.

j) Centre West

NDC Westgate first thought about succession around 2005. A succession strategy was developed that included asset transfer arrangements, new thematic groups, the delivery of new services and arrangements for new partners. Due to problems related to the end of NDC, the strategy was not fully implemented (CW02). Nevertheless, the board did decide to ring fence between five and six million pounds for assets, not necessarily buildings. Outside help was commissioned to identify potential assets that fitted the asset strategy. This was about empty properties, school buildings, empty residential properties (CW16). Towards the end of the NDC programme it was agreed to allocate some resources to setting up a successor body with largely the same ethos and aims as NDC Westgate. Two posts were created to work on this and a business model was developed. Local people had always been at the heart of this work so it was decided that Centre West would form as a charitable company with a community vision.

“We believe that communities, working together with service providers, can identify local issues and find solutions in ways that the public sector alone often finds difficult. The shared challenge is to sustain the improvements of the past few years, and to build on the area’s successes” (Centre West, No Date).

Unlike NDC Westgate, Centre West receives no government grants or resources by right. However, it was allowed to retain the asset portfolio accumulated by NDC Westgate as its legacy (discussed below). These assets generate enough income to retain a small number of staff and enabled Centre West to build and run the Beacon, in partnership with Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle.

The Centre West board is a smaller version of the NDC Westgate board. Their aim remains to improve life in the west end. This means investing in assets to ensure the community has its own income and money to pay for further improvements to the area. It means working with NCC, the police and health services to ensure that local people continue to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives (CW10).

Each area now elects two community directors to the Centre West Board making a total of eight. There are a further three trustees. At the time of the research in 2012-13 these were the Chair, Anna Siddall (Resident Co-option), Councillor Geoff O'Brien (Westgate Ward) and Councillor Nigel Todd (Wingrove Ward). During the interviews regret was expressed that new people from the community do not want to join the board (CW11) and that organisations with an interest in the area do not seem to want to attend the board (CW02).

The board also has representation from partner agencies. NDC Westgate had representation from NCC Children's Services Directorate and from the now disbanded Bridging Newcastle Gateshead (Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder), and Newcastle Primary Care Trust. In 2012-13 Centre West had Elaine Easton from the Department of Work and Pensions, Inspector Leigh McManus from Northumbria Police and Yaqoob Mohammed representing the local private sector (Centre West, No Date).

k) The Beacon

Figure 4.6: The Beacon at Night

Source: The Beacon, 2012



Centre West's flagship building is the Beacon. It is a partnership between Centre West and Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle. The Beacon opened on 3 April 2012. Situated on Westgate Road the building provides affordable, flexible office space, artisan workshops and a place to meet, eat and discuss business in the bistro. The top floor has function suites and outdoor balconies. Externally there are 81 car parking spaces and paved areas for outdoor meetings and activities (The Beacon, 2012).

The Beacon grew out of the relocation of the West End fire station. This left an empty building in grounds at the top of Westgate Hill, on the junction of the West Road and Wingrove Road. NCC originally thought about redeveloping the existing building and there were several proposals including the formation of a mosque. Community members and local councillors got behind the Beacon proposal at the early stage of development, and Centre West built on this to create a legacy for the area (CW10).

Residents were involved in the design phases. More than seven hundred people attended a consultation event in August 2009. Many gave their views on how the building should look and what it should be delivering.

To develop the site Centre West went into partnership with the environmental charity Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle. They obtained funding from One North East (the north east regional development agency) and from the European Regional Development Fund (CW02).

The Beacon is following a sustainable business model based on income from rents and room hire providing the money to spend on other activities. The artisan units are charged at £50 per week though this may be negotiable if the proposed activity has a community element (CW16).

Centre West intend the Beacon to be a focal point for the community to develop enterprises, employment, training, education, and local artisans. With The Beacon Centre West want to embrace the multicultural ethos of the area by showcasing local talent in twelve artisan units that offer visitors a unique creative environment. The workshops offer creative people a place to design, make and sell their wares alongside other local craftsmen (CW10).

I) Beacon Businesses

The purpose of the Beacon is to work with tenants and grow a community of businesses who will develop, grow and collaborate with the local community. One of the lessons from the NDC years was the difficulty new businesses have in becoming established and the importance of growing strong, local connections (5.5).

To give an idea of the range and nature of the businesses hosted by the Beacon a selection of their website advertising appears below (The Beacon, 2012).

i. Amazing Leisure

Amazing Leisure aim to amaze you! Whether you are interested in a great night out with family or friends, hold a conference, organise a wedding, or simply want to hire a super club, Amazing Leisure guarantees an amazing experience. The range of venues are flexible to meet all demands. Starting from an intimate meeting for 2 people all the way up to an amazing 2,300 they are able to offer room layouts to cater for all needs.

ii. Excel 5

Excel 5 is Excelsior Academy's creative space offering an opportunity for pupils to practice, produce and retail high quality crafts and art works. Excel 5 hosts a rolling programme of exciting and creative workshops that allow pupils to develop and showcase their artistic talents as well as developing a community sense of belonging and purpose.

iii. Kaptech Design

Kaptech Design has a vision to provide high quality services at low prices. They do not believe in over pricing their products. Kaptech Design provides a large range of services from website design up to full e-commerce websites.

iv. Klier Solutions

Klier Solutions and the sister company Property Recruitment Specialists are a permanent recruitment agency specialising in the property, engineering, commercial and sales sectors. They work closely with clients and candidates to make the perfect match. They chose The Beacon because of its central location and the flexibility they offer.

v. NiSaPa

NiSaPa offers a wide variety of activities based on South Asian music and performing arts. They teach Indian classical vocal music, and provide instrumental tuition on tabla, sitar, and santoor. They offer tuition in Bollywood dance, Kathak dance and Bharatnatyam dance. Classes are available on a one-to-one or group basis. They are very interested in working with schools on workshops and tailor-made packages of tuition.

vi. Noor Couture

Noor Couture provides high fashion, custom fitted clothes, including an exclusive designer collection to meet all your fashion needs.

vii. Spice FM

Spice FM is an exciting new radio station providing radio shows made by people across Tyneside. It caters for everyone interested in Asian and world music and entertainment. It offers views and issues and educational and informative content that matter to the community.

viii. Studio North Films

Studio North Films are a dedicated and professional creative team providing a contemporary and bespoke cinematic experience for your special occasion. They specialise in Asian weddings of all faiths, and understand many cultural traditions and ceremonies. Their approach to wedding filming is quite simple, casual and relaxed. They have a creative eye and use an unobtrusive approach which allows you to relax and enjoy all those wonderful and unforgettable moments of your special occasion.

ix. Style Creatives

Style Creatives takes inspiration from a Hollywood make-up room. It is a personal beauty haven for all your make-up needs. They offer a bespoke make-up application service for all skin tones and all occasions including bridal, personal, photographic, hen nights and make-over parties.

x. Talem C.I.C.

Talem is a registered social enterprise, working with individuals to empower them to live independent and fulfilling lives. Talem gives them the tools to build their confidence and self-esteem, and realise their full potential. Though based at the Beacon, Talem serves the whole of the north east. The Beacon's facilities and helpful staff, combined with its competitive rates and supportive enterprise community ensure they have everything they need to develop and grow our business.

4.2.2 Centre West Case Study Interviews

This section presents the information provided by interviewees in the course of the interview programme. The responses of interviewees and the discussion of their points form the main body of evidence. It is therefore important to be faithful to their tone and intention (3.5). The theme titles follow those used in the interview process itself (Appendix 3).

The interviews tell rich stories about NDC Westgate and Centre West and it is important that the issues discussed are the ones raised by the interviewees themselves. Approaches such as mental models are therefore rejected as unsuitable for presenting such material (Johnson-Laird & Byrne, 1995). And it is important to not fit the views expressed into pre-defined categories nor to enter their responses on a spread sheet nor follow any similarly impersonal process (Jones & McBeth, 2010). The thesis rejects such approaches in favour of a more natural, narrative form that focusses on personal accounts, accurate transcription and complexity-informed analysis (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

Anonymised quotes from participants are used throughout. Links to the research aim, question and objectives are made throughout (Chapter 1). Reference is made to the literature discussed (Chapter 2). In this way the research question is explored and analysed. The thesis then goes on to discuss these analyses (Chapter 5).

The Centre West case study was conducted before the Walker Hub case study. It lasted from July 2012 to July 2013. Contact was made with the Centre West Partnership Director who agreed to assist the case study. The researcher emailed board members, staff and others considered to have valuable information and provided a room at the Centre West offices for interviews to take place. The only condition placed on the interviewees was that, if at all possible, there would be two face-to-face meetings. The researcher here places on record their gratitude for the support received from the Director and from the staff of Centre West.

Nineteen people responded to invitations and eighteen were interviewed over a period of just under twelve months. Sixteen of those eighteen completed the interview process. One person agreed to be interviewed but would not confirm an appointment. Another person met for the first interview then moved away. A third person met for the first interview but was too busy to meet for the second interview and sent responses by email. With these exceptions all of the interviews took place according to the method developed (3.2)

Most of the interviews took place at the Centre West office building though some took place at other venues for the convenience of the interviewee. It was explained to each interviewee that the questions were optional and that the interviewee should focus on what they wanted to say. The researcher here thanks all the interviewees for their assistance (Appendix 4).

In order to increase the engagement and sense of joint enterprise the first interviews were recorded in the researcher's own hand. The intention was to prevent interviewees from feeling they had been captured on tape or were being obliged to speak on the record. The intention was not to record every syllable spoken but to engage in an interactive process that would produce a rich understanding.

The themes and developments put forward at the second interview followed those recorded above. These themes did not set the subjects of the second interview. The matters discussed were an interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, shaped by careful consideration of the first interview. The second interviews were recorded for later use. This allowed the researcher to focus on the discussion and to note particular points. Given the content of the interviews, the presentation makes explicit reference to two complexity concepts, namely emergence and butterfly effects. These discussions appear under the headings Theme Bii – Emergence and Theme Eii - Butterfly Effects. At the time of the interviews they were part of Theme B – Activities and Theme E – National View respectively.

Theme A - Overview

The original plan for was for NDC Westgate to evolve into a neighbourhood management organisation that would develop the local community. It would be supported by an asset base that would provide a financial resource and a sufficient body of mainstreaming for NCC, the Primary Care Trust, the police and the fire service to continue funding their involvement (CW16). It also offered the possibility of a holistic approach to neighbourhood management in the west end. For example, the partners would leave some staff seconded with the successor organisation and carry on the partnership arrangement. However, the NCC Regeneration Directorate maintained its own governance structure that duplicated NDC's role in the west end. They showed no interest in continuing the partnership arrangement with a successor organisation (CW02).

From their beginning in 1998, the NDCs were wrestling with the appropriate level of community involvement (CW12). The aspiration for NDC Westgate was to have community involvement at the centre and build the programme around it. Hence NDC Westgate had greater levels of community involvement than other programmes and became a case study theme for the national NDC programme (CW02).

Understanding why this should be is a question of who had control of the Westgate area and what was happening to the community at that time. It should be appreciated that the community were generally very critical of previous interventions (Smith, 2006). They had sharply negative perceptions of previous regeneration efforts and a widespread mistrust of NCC. In particular, they saw NCC as "playing both gamekeeper and poacher" by providing resources for the community then using them to carry out their own plans (CW18). Further, there was mistrust of VCS organisations and their multiple agendas (Kingdon, 2014). Why were they really there? Much of this focussed on misconceptions of groups working with the criminal justice system, the police and social services. Over time the misconceptions were challenged and trust was created (CW16).

“It was not too difficult to get people to come to NDC meetings but in the early days it was difficult to get people to work with partners or collaboratively” (CW15).

With NDC Westgate the initial community engagement and the period spent setting up the community governance could have been a lot smoother. However, HM Treasury wanted to assess NDC performance on the basis of money spent. This meant that discussions soon became about “quick wins” to keep HM Treasury happy and not about what the community wanted to do (CW12). In this way a key difference emerged, namely that HM Treasury wanted something to show for the money they were spending whereas the community wanted to achieve lasting results and were in no rush to spend all the money.

“It was a pressure cooker anyway. The pressure to spend added to this” (CW16).

Central government was asking a dysfunctional, weakened community to form a working relationship with government agencies. This led to frustration from the agencies who saw the community as fractured and chaotic. Also a lot of local people who had been involved dropped out having suffered a bruising experience. This led to some unpredictability in what happened.

In 2002 the national NDC programme became more structured and NDC areas were required to report performance indicators against baseline assessments. In NDC Westgate the officer team developed baseline indicators comparing NDC Westgate to the Newcastle upon Tyne average, not to England as a whole. Then in 2004 central government imposed a performance management requirement through a self-assessment framework. For NDC Westgate this was done by the programme delivery team. The self-assessments were collected and moderated nationally with annual ratings. NDC Westgate’s first rating was ‘poor’. It then jumped to ‘excellent’ and remained there (CW16).

The programme delivery team consisted of specialist staff working on secondment from NCC. They ran the programme like a council project. The programme delivery team reported to the board. Talking to the community did not come naturally to them. The Chief Executive had wanted the team members to be employed directly by NDC Westgate but this did not happen. When the NDC period ended the programme delivery team was disbanded and many of the team returned to NCC. This meant that the board no longer had their input (CW17).

The programme delivery team worked to a commissioning model so the task was to find an agency who could deliver. This was done by working around interest groups and area-based groups. Government priorities meant the NDC money was mainly for capital projects. Local people would have preferred to put community money into something on the ground such as play and youth revenue items (CW16). So for this NDC Westgate used its Neighbourhood Programme, a pot of funding distributed through the participatory budgeting model developed by NCC (NCC, 2011).

“There were a lot of trade-offs on how the budget was spent and it could have been spent many times over” (CW16).

The general ethos was to work with existing projects and broaden them to achieve community control or if not meaningful participation. This was preferred to starting an entirely separate programme of activities or duplicating existing work.

“More pooled budgets would have been good. This would have enabled more projects like the West End Women and Girls projects, the Newcastle City Council play projects, Scotswood Youth Strategy’s targeted work” (CW02).

In this way NDC Westgate became the interface between what local people wanted, what the statutory organisations wanted and what central government expected. This was an odd landscape both for the NDC staff and for the NCC community development team (CW02).

By 2003 the community representatives were in place and the focus groups and local interest groups had formed. But that was not the end of the unpredictability. Relations between the board and the partners kept changing. Sometimes meetings were amicable and business proceeded smoothly. Other meetings were rowdy and led to surprising decisions. The expectations of the partners and of the community towards each other kept changing. It was a very complex organisational structure and it was on a timeline (CW12). In the event the management team decided to end the direct involvement of partners and the focus groups in 2008. This caused some consternation among the programme delivery team who saw it as “letting the partners off the hook” (CW17).

After two or three years both the community and the professionals became familiar with this way of working. The community representatives worked in a more cohesive way and became adept at dealing with the constitutional issues. They became productive and strong-minded. The professional agencies ensured that the community representatives were in a majority and that the community was in the driving seat (CW15).

While the programme delivery team were developing projects the NDC Westgate community development team were making lots of connections within the community. They had £3 million over the ten-year programme period to set up and develop community groups in the NDC area. These new groups themselves raised another £280k in funding. The community development team worked with the community groups and the residents. The plan was to leave a legacy of strong, active community groups. However, when the NDC money ended there were no resources to maintain this link. Once dedicated community development support was withdrawn, the groups collapsed. Here the lesson learned was that “only intensive support maintains this sort of infrastructure” (CW16).

It was always intended that local residents would be involved in governance directly through elected membership, and indirectly through widespread engagement and meaningful activity (CW01).

Internally, there was little interconnection between the community development team and the programme delivery team. This meant that once the programme delivery team was in place there was little connection between the community and the board (CW16).

As people developed roles, relations evolved; some good, some not so good. How this worked out could not have been predicted. And the organisation itself was complex. This meant the relations were being played out at a number of different levels for example at the board, during project design. Several interviewees both professionals and residents found it disappointing that it was the same local board members in all the groups. Indeed one of the harder things turned out to be getting non-board member residents involved. Visits to other NDCs and similar projects were arranged to encourage them to participate by showing them what was being done in other places. This was reported to be quite useful (CW02).

People did get used to working with each other, though there were “nothing but surprises in the first couple of years”, from people on all sides, including those who were previously familiar (CW01).

In the early stages of the NDC programme there was a lot of personnel turnover both from the partner agencies and from the local residents but a stable core went through into the middle of the NDC programme. Indeed one or two people went all the way through to Centre West. They were happy with the principles involved and made an on-going commitment. “People got used to each other” (CW16).

“I liked the approach. Previous experience told me to involve residents in the nuts and bolts and also the strategic thinking” (CW02).

Theme B1 – Activities

NDC Westgate achieved well in terms of ethnic balance, geography, and gender. There could have been more under 30s but from time to time young people did get involved. Furthermore those wanting educational experience and employment experience, those with different sexuality, people who have not worked, home-keepers, those developing transferable skills, all such people benefitted from NDC projects and spending (CW02).

Benefits for the community did emerge and develop as time went on. This in spite of some mixed messages at the start. It took a while for people to reach a common understanding. Nevertheless this common ground was reached to a large extent (CW19). Regeneration professionals were developing a lot of ways of measuring the measurable indicators and outcomes in order to show degree of improvement. A lot of their language and techniques were difficult to embrace and did not mean much to the board (CW04).

It took about three years for residents and partners to work out and understand that NDC was about developing projects. Then it took some more time, two to three years more, to see the projects improving the measurements, for example pass rates for qualifications (CW02).

The data sets were small so it was hard to give the on-going results too much credence. What the data sets did do was to give encouragement that things were going in the right direction. That said it took the board and the staff a while to understand that NDC was a ten-year programme and that the results would not be clear for several years (CW17). There was some consternation from the board that they were being judged by year-on-year data. Looking back now, this was unfounded (CW16).

All the relevant factors were measured and all the relevant figures were collected in 2010-2011, the last year of NDC. These included “where they were, where they are at present, and where the successor organisation [Centre West] wants to be in two or three years’ time” (CW11). Originally this was to be for the evidence review required by government. However, by this time (2011) the Coalition had abolished regional government offices and “everyone was leaving” (CW17). So no one, neither partners nor succession staff, seemed interested.

“This information either will never be used or may just be waved away by referring to relative past prosperity compared with current austerity” (CW15).

With NDC Westgate the assembled management team had experience of doing similar things in different parts of the country. They went through case studies, techniques and practical themes at the same time as rolling them out to all sorts of people, gender, race, age. They also provided the interested residents with the means to visit other people doing the same thing for example at other NDCs (CW11).

NDC held ‘fun days’ to bring in local people, show them what NDC was about in general and get their views. For neighbourhood planning different estates had different approaches. They sent out postcards with quirky remarks to provoke questions, held ‘events in tents’ to give a sense of informality, asked open questions to see what people would pick up on, and asked people to prioritise local services from 1 to 5 to gain their interest. In more Asian areas there were women-only activities, and for older people there were trips to Alnwick Castle. And there were lots of stalls in the street. These engagement activities were phased over time from Waverley-Mather to Rye Hill to Arthurs Hill. All of this was intended to get local people to give their views and opinions on how they would like to see their area develop (CW02).

NDC Westgate had a big board and the whole board was engaged in options appraisal. This meant there were long meetings up to four hours. This might have been too much for some people. Nevertheless there was a lot of 'razzmatazz' for the yearly elections (CW07).

"We already had a board but still we went out and encouraged people to stand against the existing board. We wanted people to know it was for them. We did this while watching out for pitfalls and we never actually had any attempted extremist take overs" (CW02).

In the early days NDC Westgate tried to set up a community forum. However, they struggled to find the right relationship between the forum and the board. There were power struggles and the forum lapsed.

"Making decisions about policies and about keeping things within budgets are not everyone's cup of tea" (CW15).

The board was made-up of community members not members of political parties so there was no party line to follow. And board members were not paid. They received out-of-pocket expenses, a lap top and refreshments (CW02).

The process changed over time, over a seven year period. After six or seven years the focus moved from development to succession. This was quite simply because everything had to fit the government timescales for the NDC programme (CW17).

Theme B2 - Emergence and Butterfly Effects

For complexity the term 'emergence' refers to what emerges from a situation rather than looked-for results or intended outcomes. It therefore includes what may be expected but also what is unexpected. Usually this will be a benefit and may be a pleasant surprise to those concerned. Sometimes, however, there is a negative outcome that was not anticipated and come as a shock (2.3.2).

With NDC people had mixed feelings about the original list of projects.

"Was it THE list? Do we pick and choose? Are there other ideas we can deliver? In other words, was it a race to deliver the list or were they just ideas about what we could do?" (CW07).

Part of the tension was that the residents felt it was the public sector doing 'business as usual' or at least doing things they had always hoped to do irrespective of the community.

While the partner organisations were supporting NDC additional things were able to emerge so that the whole was greater than the sum of the parts. In particular, there was useful feedback from Jobcentre Plus about employment training and placements, and from the West End Police about the Community Wardens programme. They were happy to do this because they were funded by NDC (CW11).

Some of the NDC projects developed a life of their own but they remained dependent on NDC funding. The handy-person scheme worked well and helped not only the residents but the handy-people too (Davidson, Dodds & Powell, 2004). But it was unable to run as a paid-for service and stopped when the funding ended. Similarly, the community bakery was a highly regarded projected but was closed down because it could not make enough to cover its costs (CW11).

Following the end of the NDC programme directly funded activities ceased but positive benefits continued to emerge. For example, there is Go West, a job brokerage body run by Centre West and Newcastle Futures. Unfortunately the NDC funded projects, apart from Hat-Trick, were closed down before the Beacon was built. Had the Beacon been operating they could have had help to continue. Hat Trick was picked up by the commercial manager. It raised its own funds and became self-funding. Indeed they were the only NDC funded project in a position to do this (CW10).

At the time of the case study Centre West was still in the process of development. Having more or less established the Beacon they were looking to link up with groups that support communities.

“The board are looking at the map and thinking if we had particular groups such as a library group, we’d support them” (CW07).

Such an approach may be open to ‘butterfly effects’ where a relatively small activity or a small amount of money has a relatively large effect whether intended or unintended, whether good or bad. This may be thought of as a kind of emergence (2.3.2).

With NDC some emergence was identified and this was picked up on when discussing butterfly effects. During the NDC years, NDC Westgate was criticised for spending a large amount on a governance structure to involve residents. The board approved a feasibility study that had an initial cost but tested their approach before any significant problems arose. NDC Westgate thus avoided the difficulties that arose in some other NDCs. What had not been expected was that this process engaged residents in ways to achieve their aspirations that matched the NDC community development approach. This led to better joint-working in a number of ways that the interviewees identified as butterfly effects (CW16; CW17).

A further effect was that a high degree of community ownership emerged from this approach (CW02). By looking at the governance alongside the community, the community saw how NDC Westgate worked and that they could own much of it. While this was reported as part of the discussion of emergence it falls short of what is usually meant as a butterfly effect (Large, 2014).

With Centre West no butterfly effects were reported. The Beacon is engaged on supporting local communities through enterprise activities so they could happen. At the time of the interviews the entrepreneurs engaged had only had a year of support and were only just starting to trade (CW10).

Theme C1 – Public Sector Role

Newcastle's west end had seen a number of government interventions aimed at regenerating the area (Blackburn, 1993). These usually began with demolition and, rather than the proposed developments, ended with something less than the original plan (Mah, 2012a). For the interviewees this meant that the west end had seen a flow of interventions including community development projects, City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budgets, Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Shaw, 1995). The interventions set up quangos, tasked to deliver a set of objectives (CW01). These quangos did not want to let go of the powers given to them and, in particular, they did not have a budget for the community to use for themselves (CW09).

NDC was different. NDC Westgate made sure the community were listened to and that there was money for the community to spend. At the time NDC started, the NCC 'Going For Growth' regeneration plan was underway. This meant wide scale demolition for Scotswood in the west and for parts of the east end. This did not happen in the NDC Westgate area because it had its own community-based and independently funded programme (CW12).

The public sector role evolved over time (John, 1999). There was a high expectation of delivery from the outset. NDCs in London, Brighton and Bristol had tried to capture project ideas at the very start. NDC Westgate compiled a project log theme by theme. The public sector and the larger VCS organisations saw this as an opportunity to "realise a lot of their pet ideas that had been sitting on the shelf for some time" (CW17).

By the end of NDC Westgate the feeling was that they – community, NDC staff and partners - had achieved against all of the thematic areas. This feeling was confirmed by an evaluation commissioned by NDC Westgate (Community Sense, 2009) and backed up by the national evaluation (DCLG, 2010).

Furthermore, the work had been joined up. For example, NDC projects plus YHN Modern Homes programme plus BNG Pathfinder work meant that many properties were face-lifted and not demolished as they were in Gateshead. Plus there were improvements to the private houses. Over the NDC years, house prices in the area “went through the roof” with £70k properties being sold for £150k, though this may have happened in any case without the presence of NDC (CW02).

There is still talk of sharing budgets and of jointly focussing on a particular problem. But the interviewees doubted whether this will come to much. Boldness is required to share budgets but “these are not the times, socially, economically or politically, for bold moves” (CW09).

This lack of mainstreaming raises the question whether NDC was simply seen as an additional pot. The interviews suggest it was (CW03). Some activities such as the street wardens were picked up but in the main NDC was seen by the partners as a resource. When it came to an end the main providers did not lose much because they had not put much in, at least not in terms of community development. “They came out with lots of rhetoric but made sure that they did not have that much to lose” (CW17).

“I’m disappointed by the lack of cultural change in some parts of some organisations including the council. This means they have not created the conditions for this new area of do-it-yourself responsibilities. They are happy to put pressure on communities to raise the cash and if they don’t, they’re happy to close the facilities” (CW16).

In contrast NDC encouraged communities to take charge of buildings. The assets would then be owned by the community. But NCC would not lease the assets to community organisations. For example NDC helped the community raise £1.5 million to replace a rundown play centre.

“A condition of the euro funding and of NDC was that the council would lease it to the community. It’s still not. After things like that you can’t turn round now and expect communities to suddenly take control” (CW07).

While the NDC programme seems to have been worthwhile, the sequence of events since 2010 - economic collapse, public sector cuts, council budget restraint - means that resource levels are much lower than before. This makes an accurate comparison difficult even if the will to draw such a comparison was there (CW16).

The economic situation also means there will be no challenge to the lack of continuity because austerity measures lead to budget cuts and changes to staffing (2.2.4).

“There are now loads of finance and resource explanations to explain the lack of the public sector doing things differently” (CW02).

Theme C2 - NDC Westgate and Newcastle City Council

Newcastle City Council (NCC) were interested in how the ten-year project would work. They took an active part in setting up the governance arrangements and helped with practical things such as office space (CW09). When asked for assistance with budgetary matters they took a 'how can we make this work' approach (CW08).

"Once things were underway they were not slow to come forward" (CW17).

From the interviews, NCC regarded NDC Westgate as a ten-year project and no more. While there was some goodwill from NCC, "knives were being sharpened and pet projects were pushed, and then left on the shelf when rejected" (CW02). This reflects the tendency for local government to package activities in projects with a fixed beginning, middle and end. This in turn may suit the career paths of the professionals involved as they can say they were involved in 'these' projects that achieved 'those' outcomes (Large, 2006b).

However, once the project has ended, this approach can leave communities wondering what all the fuss was about (CW12). While ten years is a relatively long time for a project, it is a short time in which to remove disadvantage and bring about lasting social change (Smith, Lepine & Taylor (eds.), 2007).

To address this there was an emphasis on NDCs bending mainstream service provision. This could not happen without positive interaction with NCC (CW16). Councils have far reaching roles and particular responsibilities around service delivery. They have lots of statutory powers. Groups look to them for help. Some would not function without NCC's collaboration (CW08). Nevertheless there was a strong desire among interviewees for NCC to move away from 'business as usual' and embrace the NDC experiment in community governance and respond differently to problems that may occur elsewhere in Newcastle (CW10; CW16).

What was disappointing for interviewees was that while some parts of NCC responded creatively to NDC funding, for example the schools people, other parts were very much 'business as usual' (CW01). For example, the Director of Highways and Environment's response to NDC's creative traffic management proposal was point blank refusal. "That killed it stone dead" (CW02). So while NDC saw some co-operation and sharing of budgets that has been no lasting bending of mainstream budgets (CW16).

Towards the end of NDC, the NCC officers started to withdraw. Relations with NCC became trickier and have remained so with Centre West.

"People who we had relied on to say 'yes', stopped responding. It was made pretty clear that we were on our own" (CW17).

By the end of NDC, NCC's attitude came across as "we've had to doff our caps for long enough. Thanks for the offer but we're in charge" (CW02). This meant that there was no help from NCC with setting up or with running Centre West. This reflects the views of several interviewees that while NCC was a very important player they were at the same time "a necessary evil" (CW10).

So while the link from NDC to NCC through Central Government and GONE was positive this has not followed through to Centre West.

"It didn't help that GONE was abolished and regional policy ended. It didn't help that no-one talked to us about this" (CW02).

The members of the Centre West team recognise the expertise and democratic rights that rest with NCC. However, issues have arisen where NCC have made significant changes to the area without consulting Centre West, for example over the location of a bail hostel (CW16).

NCC are regarded as having reverted to type. They have gone back to what they did before and that is to implement a command and control model of operation. For example, the NCC 'Elswick Quarter Regeneration Group' was described as 'window dressing'. "The scheme was officer-driven. An engagement plan was drawn up with a leaflet but this never went out" (CW02).

Overall, the interviewees felt that while NCC officers came to meetings in good faith, the requested NCC actions often did not take place. This demonstrates a lack of engagement of senior NCC officers who could have ensured a joined up approach (5.4). That offers given in good faith were not carried through only leads to more and more cynicism about the true intentions of NCC (CW14). It is significant that such views and feelings are unlikely to be picked up by outcome assessments or impact-based evaluations.

Theme D1 - Results

During the late 1990s there was a debate about Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programmes.

“They were coming to an abrupt end, a cliff edge. DCLG encouraged VCS asset acquisition as a solution to sustainability. That influenced all of us; community, council and public sector” (CW09).

The Development Trust Association was helping organisations become less reliant on grants by having their own asset streams. There was, for example, Sherwood Energy Village which later closed, and the successful Coin Street Community Builders (Coin Street Community Builders, 2014). So the practice of community organisations being financially self-reliant was established long before the Coalition came to power (CW16). Central government encouraged NDCs to set up schemes like these to secure their own futures and so avoid a ‘cliff-edge’ where the activities and community assets provided through the NDC would stop at the end of the NDC project period. For example Bradford Trident built a health centre and leased it to the Primary Care Trust through a kind of VCS-led Private Finance Initiative agreement (CW16).

On reflection the interviewees saw that NDC did have some opportunities to lock-in the partners. These were missed. And not carrying-out a robust partnership programme made life difficult after 2010 (CW10).

Three areas of disappointment were raised. For Centre West, the expectation of a community forum was not met (CW11); for the children and young people, NCC was not interested in refurbishing the Mill Lane centre (CW07); and for the community there was nothing new for the local residents who were willing to lend a hand (CW02).

In addition, with the current austerity measures, community organisations are having to make-do with a patchwork of funding and activities. Some are re-inventing themselves to match the requirements of the available funding (Large, 2015). While understanding the position the organisations are faced with, none of the interviewees saw this as desirable:

“It ends up being ‘chase the money’, and it is not there for people in this area” (CW02).

NDC Westgate was in the interesting position of being both a delivery organisation and a campaigning organisation. As for the idea of Centre West continuing the level of community involvement that NDC had, “it’s just too big a task” (CW10). So the Centre West charity is low key compared to a national NDC scheme.

NDC Westgate set out to create an asset base as a legacy for its successor body. In that they were clearly successful. Centre West has a substantial asset portfolio. It has used that asset base to construct and operate the Beacon. It is now in a position to take further steps.

“It’d be interesting to see if we could play a community development role. Engagement and involvement are needed but there’s always some cost attached” (CW02).

Centre West has a small staff and not the wherewithal to act on the aspirations. So why would people want to get involved and perhaps become trustees? (CW09) Well, Centre West could become a super-community group with the allocation of resources led by residents. That would be quite unusual. For this the board of trustees would need to be professionalised unless they are genuinely people who have a passion for their whole community. Why else would they want to give up their time? (CW18).

This was compared with voters at national elections. “Once they’ve voted that’s it. They hope the party in power will do the right thing. Your responsibility comes and goes with your vote” (CW06).

At the same time, the Coalition localism measures received short shrift. “What would people do with a neighbourhood assembly? Why would they want new-style parish councils? So much for the Localism Act” (CW02).

But maybe we should begin by looking at what is already going on in the area. Greening Wingrove focusses on local environmental concerns and had lots of planning before it received any funding. “That made them strong in what they do” (CW08). They now have about £1m (Greening Wingrove, 2013). Another local group, Community First Elswick has £30k for their proposals (Community First Elswick, 2012). These are relatively small sums of money but they provide opportunities for new activities involving community interactions leading to further growth.

Theme D2 - Institutional Pathways

Institutional pathways are the ways in which organisations make strategic decisions, allocate budgets and generally get things done. They are often rigid and fixed for example following management hierarchies (Bryman, 2008). They proved unpopular with the interviewees and were seen as unnecessary. There are significant benefits to multi-agency working and to community neighbourhood planning and management but not to spending time and money on institutional structures and following the procedures necessary to allow them to operate (CW15).

“It’s the big institutions that propose ‘business as usual’ so institutional pathways lead to ‘business as usual’” (CW04).

For the interviewees the issue comes down to institutional pathways versus communities doing it for themselves. On the institutional side they identified Health Watch and their community bursaries. They mentioned the North East Local Enterprise Partnership but could not see any use for it. On the community side they viewed Centre West as a small organisation helping to start social enterprises. They thought they could also promote local benefit for example by campaigning for a living wage (CW02).

Theme D3 - Training for Communities

On the whole the interviewees were wary of training for the sake of training (CW01). Some thought that the sort of training offered did not really help with their situation (CW14). They did not see how sitting on committee after committee would make their community better. Yet they acknowledged the need to get more people involved (CW07). Furthermore, people are more likely to listen to people like them who have shared their experiences.

“Anything that gives them more skills would be beneficial” (CW19).

So while it is important to develop these skills and to do things in the right way, by doing this it is also very easy to put people off (CW11). These views compare closely with the views expressed by the interviewees in the Walker Hub case study (4.3).

Theme E – National View

The interviewees viewed the Coalition as setting out policies telling people to stand up for themselves, be more self-sufficient and take on more responsibilities.

“This is an ideological message; it’s not practical” (CW09).

For the interviewees there is nothing substantial about Coalition policies. They have not influenced lifestyles. All they’ve done is withdraw resources. What has made this worse is that NCC have followed the Coalition ideology by passing on the reduction in their resources as cuts to staff and services.

“The council is saying the same thing but from a needs must basis” (CW09).

This has meant that local people have found themselves having to carry on, as they always have, only with less than they had before.

“Where have they [the Coalition] come from? If that’s government influence, they can keep it!” (CW02).

Theme F1 – Way Forward

Discussing future plans raised the question whether it is the responsibility of communities to fix themselves. Should the community be doing all this work or should the government be getting more closely involved? The interviewees said that the community did have a role and that was to work with the government on bringing about the changes needed. Further it was the government's responsibility to tackle the problems in the Centre West area (CW05). No one interviewed said that the community was responsible for creating the problems they face.

Short cuts such as loans to businesses sound good but community policy experiments are finding that unleashing local enthusiasm is fine but if the outcome is not what the government wants e.g. a demand for more and better social housing, relations can become very strained (Benwell Community Development Project, 1978b).

If communities are to find a way forward that involves them planning and providing what they want then they will have to address this themselves by becoming the local community planner and provider (CW07).

Theme F2 - Private Sector Involvement

Each interviewee was asked about private sector investment and links with local businesses. At the start of NDC Westgate the residents generally had animosity towards the private sector. This was because they saw the term as referring to the presence of wealthy businessmen who each owned a number of local shops. They did not view the private sector as providing jobs and facilities for local people. While this view was challenged and things did improve, the board did not view private sector involvement as a major priority. Nevertheless they did support the setting up a number of enterprises such as the ICT scheme, the bakery and the Hat Trick football project (CW16).

While Hat Trick continues to thrive (Hat-Trick, No Date), creating local businesses was not a priority for NDC Westgate. In contrast, getting businesses into the Beacon became a key aim for Centre West and a cornerstone of their business plan (CW02).

Among the interviewees there were different expectations for the Beacon. Some saw the primary function as a community centre (CW15). But the Beacon was set up as a business partnership between Centre West and Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle. And it has been successful in getting local entrepreneurs into the Beacon business units (CW10).

At the same time it was always intended that the Beacon business activity would provide a catalyst for community activity. Local people would be attracted by what was going on and become motivated to set up their own groups and run their own activities. In this way the whole community would become involved (CW16).

Theme F3 - The Future

The interviewees were asked to speculate on how they saw the area developing. The established source of staff and resources was NCC. Yet they are making deeper and deeper cuts, and laying-off more and more staff (Hankinson, 2013). For the interviewees this meant that NCC could no longer be relied on. New partners and new resources need to be found (CW04).

Several thought that current activities could be shaped better and be more joined-up (CW02). To do this Centre West would need to create dialogues and find out how many people are out there. There may be money, staff, and resources already in place (CW10). In complexity terms they need to begin by looking at the relationships between the number of relevant interactions and the quality of those interactions.

This means that the bigger ideas are beyond Centre West's current capacity to do. But the interviewees attitude was why not try? The right kind of proposal might stand a good chance. After all, Greening Wingrove is up and running (CW08).

For Centre West the past three years have been about keeping the show on the road. They are now looking to expand their remit and explore their structural options (NCC & NELEP, 2012). While so far it has been about relatively small projects structural change could lead to something great (CW02).

4.2.3 Centre West Case Study Discussion

This section uses the Centre West case study to set out insights that the complexity-informed approach allows for evaluating community dynamics.

a) Why did NDC happen in Newcastle upon Tyne?

It may seem strange that a radical intervention like NDC was required in an area like the west end of Newcastle. With an established and embedded Labour council stability and continuity may have been expected. When NDC Westgate was set up, Newcastle was a Labour controlled council in a solid Labour area (Tyne and Wear) at the time of a Labour government. So why did an NDC project take off and succeed here when the interventions were what you may have expected a Labour council to be doing in any case? Well, though in control of NCC, the Newcastle Labour group was far from united. Indeed after thirty years in power they lost control to the Liberal Democrats in 2004. After seven years of Liberal Democrat control, Labour regained it in 2011 (NCC, No Date (a)).

Then there is the nature of the NDC programme itself. From 1997 to 2007 the Prime Minister was Tony Blair who was the MP for Sedgefield in County Durham. He had several MPs for north-east constituencies in his government. These included Hilary Armstrong the MP for North West Durham. She was Minister for Local Government from 1997 to 2001 so NDC fell under her brief. This meant that within the government there was a feeling that the north east had had a raw deal under the Conservatives and it was time to make some amends. In addition John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister had the view that money raised by the previous Conservative government from the sale of council houses should be given back to the communities where many of those houses were situated¹³ (Lawless, 2011).

¹³ On coming to power, the New Labour government did not halt the sale of council houses.

Clearly the Blair government wanted to address community issues in a different way. Specifically, they did not want another grants programme such as the Single Regeneration Budget to be allocated by central government and controlled by local government (Hale, 2007). Rather they wanted the people affected, the local people, to have a say. This meant that policy changes were taking place in central government that allowed NDCs to form and to operate in a way that each NDC chose to form and operate. It was a very deliberate decision to exclude councils from much of the process (Robinson, Shaw, & Davidson, 2005).

At the time the NDC programme was being set up people living in Newcastle's west end were looking for a way of controlling public sector investment in their area. So while the originality of the approach and the inclusivity of the mechanism may both be questioned (Dargan, 2002a), NDC Westgate worked because there were local people who wanted to be involved and central government wanted to make it work (DCLG, 2010).

At the same time, the early NDC Westgate board meetings went hours over their allotted time and were marked by insults, threats and the use of inappropriate language (CW03). The government observers reported what was happening. Central government gave the board a 'yellow card' saying that if there was no improvement, NDC Westgate would be shut down (CW12). So the councillors and the NDC employees decided to map what they had done against what the community said it wanted. There was a pretty good fit and clear signs that the community were getting what they had asked for. They showed this to the community and gradually things turned round. Meetings calmed down. People got on with what they were supposed to be doing and started to achieve positive results (CW16). The board explained to central government that while not everything was perfect, they were meeting the targets set. So the government let them carry on (Community Sense, 2009).

b) Community Representation or Community Co-option?

The interviews raised a question as to the precise status of the community members involved in running NDC Westgate and now Centre West (CW01). The board required a majority of community members. A lot of effort was put into making them effective. This involved training them to articulate their views in a way that could produce their desired results and giving them the skills they needed to engage with senior public sector managers (Robinson, Shaw, & Davidson, 2005).

Which raises the question whether this meant that the senior public service managers listened and responded to the requests from the community or whether the community members were taught to do what the senior public service managers wanted (Auspos & Cabaj, 2014). The evidence presented here suggests that the managers took what they could for their service and left the community to its own devices. This is shown by the lack of pooled budgets, the lack of shared projects across services, and the indifference shown when the NDC years came to an end. This suggests that for these managers, the community members were there to give NDC Westgate sufficient credibility to provide a set of funded projects that met their service objectives (CW10).

Project ideas began with the community or at least the community members of the NDC board. These ideas underwent a rigorous vetting and preparation procedure that was widely praised and judged to be a very useful tool (Community Sense, 2009). Such processes can remove the community input and creative decision-making that could have led to the emergence of innovation and cost-savings. Taking a project approach allowed the community ideas to be replaced with public service procedures (Phelps, 1997). In this way, while broadly aligned with community wishes, it is possible to view the projects as an extension of public service delivery. Notably, when the projects ended, so did the involvement of the public sector managers (IPPR, 2013a).

Forming strong relationships between partners and the community was difficult because partner organisations sent different people to different groups. In particular senior officers attended the NDC board meetings but not the focus groups or engagement meetings. This meant that the local people did not meet them. At the same time the senior officers of partner organisations gathered views on the basis of the NDC board meetings, not on the basis of local people expressing opinions at community meetings. Had the senior officers of partner organisations attended the full range of NDC meetings they would have been able to understand local needs and show themselves to be accountable. This could have built trust and led to a better working relationship (CW16).

c) Trust

The creation of a degree trust was very important to the formation of NDC Westgate. Following a stormy beginning NDC Westgate settled down and the residents and officers shared a degree of appreciative understanding (CW03).

Central government showed trust by setting broad parameters for NDC and in learning to work with local government within those parameters; Local government was somewhat in the middle. It showed trust by working within the central government parameters and in learning to work in a broad range of ways with a broad range of local people. Local people showed trust by turning local desires into deliverable projects and in learning to work within local and national government parameters (CW07).

“There was enough trust to allow the projects to run and the returns to be filed” (CW16).

But what could have been done with more trust and genuine understanding? The feeling was that much more could have been achieved (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2006).

d) Race

The west end of Newcastle has a relatively high proportion of non-white residents (ONS, 2009). A population from Pakistan settled there in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1970s and 1980s a generally poorer population from Bangladesh settled there. There is a history of generally good relations though there have been occasional serious racist incidents (Kundnani, 2007). Race is an issue with which everyone in the area is very much aware (CW07).

It was clear from the interviews that with NDC race was an issue (CW16). What is not so clear that there was direct racism as opposed to people using racism as a means to an end. Indeed one interviewee claimed that reverse-racism was being used to obtain additional resources for the non-white population (CW04).

With the Beacon, there has been take-up of office space and other facilities from non-white people and organisations. This led to some suggestions that the Beacon was not intended for white people and was aimed at supporting non-white people (CW14). The research found no evidence to support these claims but needs to report that such feelings persist. It is true that the Beacon is located in the Wingrove area and there are activities operating there run by non-white people. This in itself does not show any racial or ethnic bias.

e) The NDC Legacy

“It’s not knowing what you want to do but being in a position to do it that counts” (CW10).

In one sense it is easy to say what the legacy of NDC Westgate is; Centre West, the asset portfolio and the Beacon and all the activities that are based there (CW10). There is then the question of a legacy for community empowerment and for community governance; what would that be? And the answer to this question is much less clear (Large, 2006b).

NDC Westgate had a big idea and that was to have elected community representatives. Every interviewee agreed with this. This form of representation is not as prescriptive as NCC. It allows different communities to turn their ideas into activities, groups and facilities. Further there were no political parties directly involved so there were no party lines to be followed (CW06). In other words NDC Westgate created a number of flexible policy areas that had the actors required to turn the policies into actions with beneficial outcomes (Cairney, 2012a).

NDC Westgate did not create any lasting businesses, Centre West apart. Nor did it help others set up their businesses, Hat-Trick apart. It did not create a significant number of permanent jobs nor did it attract large numbers of people to the area. It did not raise educational attainment significantly in local schools. In particular it did not engage local people in large scale and lasting community activity nor did it create a new type of elected representative (CW15).

But what can be expected with a limited amount of money with which to do everything? Projects ran, people were trained and large scale demolition was prevented. What NDC Westgate did was sensible, worthwhile and had the support of the community members involved at the time (CW15).

Centre West has a significant asset portfolio. At the time of the research it was considering how to move forward. The discussion is around engaging the community that are not currently involved. The main issue is where the resources for this will come from. Proposals concern expanding the use of the Beacon to involve more local people, for example by setting up a food bank and offering classes in cooking cheap and healthy meals (CW10).

It is not clear where Centre West will be in ten years' time but it is clear that there is a future and that future is in the hands of the Centre West board and the members of the community that sit on that board (CW04).

f) Government Programmes and NDC Westgate

Government programmes are funded from taxation that includes monies provided by the communities themselves. This is the community's stake in them (Bovey & Hede, 2001). However, government programmes are rarely, if ever, based on community views. Nor are they based on what the community would say (CW04). Hence the community feels that the interventions made are often not worth the effort required nor are they a good use of their taxes. Similarly the services provided by government are not the services required by the communities (CW18).

NDC Westgate was genuinely different taking decision-making to the community. Further, NDC gave the community a say in the interventions that then took place (CW07). It was DCLG policy to promote the interest of communities. They chose to do this through the NDC programme but still maintained a distance between public policy and the community (CW12). Nevertheless NDC required different levels of interaction; central to local government, local government to community and indeed central government to community. The self-organising community and both central and local government met in organising a programme through a joint-board with its own staff (DCLG, 2008).

Setting NDC Westgate up was a difficult process for all concerned. Indeed more dialogue and a formal start-up period would have helped (CW16). Nevertheless, the intention was carried through, namely to allow the community to engage with the professional class in a way that could allow the needs, wants and desires of the community, or at least part of it, to be realised by the professionals (CW12).

However, things did not work out as planned. NCC saw NDC Westgate proposals for different ways of doing things as 'opponentist' and as criticism of their methods and past failures (Sabatier, Hunter & McLaughlin, 1987). Indeed NCC is reported as expressing hostility to all, even the most constructive, NDC proposals (CW17). This leaves NCC criticising the community for being hostile to their proposals while at the same time acting with hostility to the community's proposals (CW02).

But why would the agencies NDC Westgate was helping and giving money to oppose them? Proposals for different ways of doing things were seen to be against the interests of the public sector and against the career interests of the public sector officers concerned (CW04).

"Their attitude was that's our business, not yours and if we do what you say we'll be viewed as rocking the boat" (CW02).

Furthermore, the public sector officers were not on board with either central government thinking or the NDC Westgate approach (CW12). Their attitudes reported in the interviews were; don't tell us how to do our job; who do you think you are to tell us what to do?; we'll have to pick up the pieces; and if we sit on our hands you'll soon be gone and we can get back to 'business as usual' (CW07). This meant that the public sector partners waited until the NDC money was spent and indeed went back to 'business as usual' (CW17).

This means that Centre West is not a consideration for them. They have not taken up Centre West's invitations. They have not involved Centre West in their discussions about the area.

"They think Centre West is just the group running the Beacon" (CW10).

g) Finding Patterns in NDC Westgate and Centre West

Complexity seeks to identify features that follow the same pattern. Once the pattern is identified various iterations of similar patterns at different scales may be sought (2.3.2). In several key respects – make-up, operation, conduct and collective responsibility - the NDC Westgate board, and now the Centre West Board, followed the pattern of full council meetings (CW15). These in turn follow governmental cabinet meetings that in turn follow European Union summit meetings that follow the General Assembly of the United Nations; and *vice versa*. The pattern is repeated at different levels though perhaps not in every respect (Stacey, 2005d).

However, it is not clear that the case study yields other examples of patterning. There was some similarity in applying for and then spending funding at community, council and national levels (CW16). But is this what complexity means by repeating patterns? For example it is not clear that this says any more than applications were made to different funders.

Rather than repeating the patterns of other organisations NDC Westgate and Centre West were intended to be different from other organisations (CW02). What comes out here is that in some ways they may be said to follow established patterns and in other ways they may not.

h) Emergence in NDC Westgate and Centre West

As discussed, for complexity, emergence refers to what emerges from a situation rather than looked-for results or intended outcomes. It therefore includes what may be expected but also what is unexpected. Usually this will be a benefit and may be a pleasant surprise to those concerned. Sometimes, however, there is a negative outcome that was not anticipated and may even come as a shock (2.3.2).

Taking the example of setting up the NDC Westgate Board, the traditional approach gives:

The community required NDC to be run by local people. So with the assistance of the Electoral Reform Society, local areas were drawn up and area elections were held.

Whereas a complexity approach offers a richer picture and a more developed understanding giving:

From the Cruddas Park meeting emerged the requirement that NDC be community led.

From this requirement emerged the need for the board to be legitimised, not just a collection of self-appointed individuals.

From this need emerged the necessity of elections.

From this necessity emerged the rejection of ward boundaries.

From this rejection emerged the formation of community areas.

From the desire to bring this about emerged the appointment of the Electoral Reform Society.

It may also be said that Centre West emerged from NDC Westgate. This may not seem so surprising now but at the beginning, middle and even at the end of NDC Westgate, the creation and survival of a follow-on organisation was far from certain (CW07; CW09; CW16).

Considering emergence allows us to break general statements in to different factors that may then be examined likewise. This case study demonstrates that the key to this is an assessment in terms of propositional attitudes such as beliefs, hopes and disappointments (2.3.6).

4.2.4 Centre West Case Study Lessons

For complexity things happen now, in the present, because of their history, their past. So the role of the past is to tell you why things happened. Current interventions are in the present. They are what is happening now. Imaginative leaps and expressions of hope are about the future. The role of the future is to make room for imaginative leaps and for expressions of hope (Green, 2008).

Around 2005, half way through the NDC programme, NDC Westgate remembered what had happened in the past with Single Regeneration Budget and Reviving the Heart of the West End (RHWE, No Date). The money ran out, the projects stopped, the organisations changed and things went back to the way they were before. The end result was nothing. There was no change just a feeling among a small group of local activists of having been let down (CW14). The board looked to the future and imagined a continuation of their activity in a smaller form but based on the same community principles. They developed a business plan that set out a different but on-going structure and acquired a number of assets that would finance this new body. This eventually led to a going concern, Centre West, and the building of a focus for community activity, the Beacon (CW16).

The Centre West business plan for 2013-2014 was agreed in September 2013. One key concern is the number of event bookings in the Beacon Skylight Suite. To date there are not enough corporate bookings and local bookings are not bringing in enough revenue. Looking ahead the focus will be on finding one corporate booking per month or £10,000 per annum. The juxtaposition with Newcastle's city centre shopping and leisure area will be emphasised along with the on-site car parking, the catering facilities and the excellent travel connections. Centre West is a going concern, one that is developing all the time (CW10).

For community policy the lessons of the Centre West case study are:

- Engage the community and keep them engaged. Look to diversify and enhance their role. If some people drop out, engage others.
- Future planning needs to include a role for partners. A straightforward business plan is not sufficient for a community-involving organisation.
- Major community projects should have community buy-in. This not only prevents accusations of exclusion but encourages greater diversity of activity and increases the development opportunities.
- Council policy needs to fit. Duplication is both a waste and an obstruction. Working together, co-operatively on a policy plan for the area benefits the community and council alike.
- Agreeing delivery targets helps cement the relationship between the local people, the community groups, NCC officers and the service providers in the area.

For complexity approaches to community studies the lessons of the Centre West case study are:

- Decision-making is best done by interacting with the community about their ideas and proposals.
- Emergence is a key factor in determining what happens.
- Patterning is problematic and risks triviality.
- Rigid project planning works only in its own terms. Complexity suggests a much more flexible approach.
- What matters to people is what they see happening and can use.

The Centre West case study demonstrates the application of the complexity principles well. The view of the participants came across well and clear messages came out of each theme.

The nature of the community involvement was clear with considerable input at the NDC set-up stage, important contributions to the NDC process and a gradual easing out as project management techniques took precedence. Their continued and possibly increased involvement may have prevented the partners from walking away in the way that they did.

The disconnected nature of the transition to Centre West came across well. This may seem surprising given that it had been planned well in advance. Groundwork apart, the lack of partner organisations for Centre West is also apparent. The police, the health services and the local schools could have been expected to have remained involved. The way forward is joint policy planning involving Centre West, the organisations it works with, NCC and most of all the local people (5.5).

4.3 The Walker Hub Case Study

4.3.1 The Walker Hub Case Study Presentation

This section presents the background to the second case study. The focus is on the people involved and the activities taking place at the time of the case study research. This includes their thoughts and feelings together with their memories of what has taken place and their hopes for the future. The study captures how particular local groups present themselves and the spirit of the activities they are involved with.

The second cases study retains the methods employed in the first case study. There were some slight tweaks to the procedure to assist the flow and execution of the research. These are detailed below. There were no substantial changes.

At the time of the interviews the researcher was chair of the PBCC Board of Directors. As such they were involved in the development of the Walker Hub (1.2). In studying the Walker Hub they have followed the case study method developed (3.4). The case study does not present the researcher's views as a practitioner but only those of the interviewees. Nevertheless the possibility of researcher bias and of presenting a personal view remains (Hansen, Gerbasi, *et al*, 2014). For the purposes of the thesis, it is therefore important to compare both case studies and come to an overall view (5.5).

a) The Walker Hub Formation

The second case study follows the method and pattern of the first case study. It is set in Walker a suburb of Newcastle upon Tyne located three miles east of the city centre. Thought rundown and deprived, Walker is seen by those who know it as a cheap place to live and handy being so close to the city centre (WH15).

The regeneration of Walker Riverside began in 2003 following the demise of the NCC's citywide Going for Growth plan (Cameron, 2003). The new area-based approach was to replace large-scale demolition and *en bloc* redevelopment with local, community-led planning. One of the first areas of Newcastle to be selected for this approach was around the riverside in Walker hence NCC planners named it Walker Riverside (WH03).

One phase of the Walker Riverside redevelopment plan was the Heart of Walker (HoW). It covered an area east of St Anthony's estate, west of Walker Park, north of Walker Road and south of Wharrier Street. This was dedicated to shops, schooling, health, leisure activities and community facilities. Pottery Bank Community Centre is outside this area, to the south, a fact that caused some consternation (WH08; WH13).

The original idea for HoW was never realised. Instead the Walker Hub, or The Hub as it became known, was formed to accommodate community needs. The Walker Hub was open to organisations based in and around the Walker Riverside area. The core members were Pottery Bank Community Centre (PBCC), Central Walker Church of England Primary School (Central Walker Primary), and Walker Activity Dome (WAD) (WH14).

While the core members set the quarterly meetings, all organisations working with the local area were welcome to join the Hub and attend the meetings. In this way the Hub became a discussion group for organisations that work with the community in the local area (WH02).

This meant that the degree of community involvement in the Hub became a matter for individual Hub members. For the WAD this was through their users, for the school it was through contact with the parents of the pupils, and for PBCC it was through the community members who are PBCC directors and the community members who use the facilities (WH11).

The Walker Hub was managed by NCC's community development team for the east of Newcastle upon Tyne. At a Hub meeting held at Central Walker Primary on 10 May 2013 the NCC representative announced they were withdrawing support for Hub meetings with effect from September 2013. They invited the Hub members to apply for one-off pieces of support through the usual channels. The Hub agreed to carry on with support from its members (WH10).

On 8 July 2013 the Walker Hub members met at PBCC to discuss meeting without council support. Not every Hub member was present and the meeting agreed it was too soon to make binding commitments. A Hub meeting was arranged for 17 September 2013 (WH09). This meeting did not take place. The members had other commitments and were not willing to meet at this time. To date, no further meetings have been planned. Nevertheless the three core members keep in contact with each other on an informal basis (WH15).

The case study now gives details of the core members of the Walker Hub; Pottery Bank Community Centre, Central Walker Church of England Primary School, and Walker Activity Dome.

b) Pottery Bank Community Centre (PBCC)

Figure 4.7: The Entrance to PBCC

Source: PBCC, 2013



i) The Organisation

PBCC delivers services and encourages local participation and ownership from the local community, in addressing the issues which affect people's lives. There a number of activities held there around training and education, children, young people and families, leisure, social and health (PBCC, 2013).

During 2012 the centre was refurbished. Towards the end of 2012 the groups moved out to allow completion of the building work and into the nearby Greenford Road Community Room. The stand-alone community room was much smaller than PBCC. The services that could be offered were reduced to Community Café; Out-of-Schools Services, Action for Children; Early Years Services, Action for Children; and Newcastle Futures employability sessions. Following PBCC's return to Yelverton Crescent, Greenford Road Community Room was demolished by NCC.

"The community lost another amenity and got one back" (WH05).

PBCC reopened on the Yelverton Crescent site in January 2013. In addition to the above services the playgroup re-opened and Walker Technology College began operating the Hyem unit. To mark these changes and to reflect the location of the building, the name of the centre was changed from the Thomas Gaughan Community Centre to Pottery Bank Community Centre (PBCC, 2013).

PBCC aims to provide an inclusive quality service to people of all ages in Walker. It does this by working in partnership to meet the needs of individuals and families, to restore pride and passion to make a difference in the community. Its motto is “Bringing people together” and is intended to remind everyone of “the spirit and sense of community that exists in Pottery Bank” (PBCC, 2013).

ii) Governing Body

In 2012 the centre became a registered company with limited liability and a Board of Directors. At the same time it was a registered charity. This meant that the previous management committee of local people and building users continued to meet but now as directors of a registered company. The intention was to offer limited liability and thereby attract local people onto the board as volunteers. However, efforts to recruit local people foundered. With one exception, those approached found the formal nature of what is involved off-putting. It was therefore decided to offer training as part of the volunteer recruitment programme that took place in autumn 2013.

In the meantime the directors continue to be supported by a building-users group, a local ward councillor and Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) (NCC’s housing arms-length management organisation) who are legally responsible for the building.

iii) Services Available from PBCC

a) Baby Equipment Loan Scheme (BELS)

Prams and pushchairs are available along with smaller items. ID is required from all users and loan periods can be extended to suit family needs.

b) Community Mini Bus

Local community groups can hire the mini bus at a reasonable rate. ID is required from all users. The mini bus has proved more and more popular as the number of community mini buses in the area has reduced. Over the course of 2013 the mini bus users were reporting problems with the vehicle. The PBCC directors arranged a meeting in January 2014 with regular users with a view to making a joint funding bid for a new vehicle (WH13).

c) Conference and Meeting Room Hire

PBCC offers space for companies and others to hold professional meetings and private functions. There are three different sized rooms to choose from.

d) Crèche Facilities

PBCC has a purpose built crèche area which can be booked to coincide with your room bookings. Conditions apply and there is a charge for this service.

e) Go As You Please Library

There is an area set aside for book lending and reading. The books are donations. Local people are invited to drop in and borrow books on a trust basis. It is local, hassle free and seems to work well. Additional donations are always welcome.

f) IT Suite

The IT suite has a number of computers, lap tops and printers. It is open between 9.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday. ID is required from users.

iv) PBCC Groups

There are a number of groups that use the building either full-time or on a regular basis.

a) Action For Children

Action for Children is a charity working with vulnerable children. Having had a long association with PBCC they see it as a neighborhood family centre offering services to support families in ways that the families require. Their services are tailored to local needs and are different to the services they offer elsewhere.

Figure 4.8: The PBCC Cafe

Source: PBCC, 2013



b) Community Catering Initiative Limited

Community Catering operate the café from 8am to 2pm, Monday to Friday. They serve breakfast and lunch with daily specials. They cater for parties, functions and meetings with a range of hot and cold buffet menus. Community Catering hold adult cookery courses for anyone interested in making nutritional meals for themselves and their family.

c) Community Spirit

Community Spirit is run by Newcastle Central and East Methodist Circuit. They offer spiritual and emotional support for all members of the community. They began as a project helping refugees and asylum seekers who have come to live in the area. They now provide support for all local people.

d) Hyem

Walker Technology College, the local secondary school, saw that the normal school environment is not suitable for some of their pupils. In January 2013 they opened an alternative curriculum setting within PBCC. The pupils chose 'Hyem', the Geordie dialect word for home, as the name for their new facility (NCC, 2013). Hyem is managed by a Deputy Head Teacher and the activities are led by a local youth worker. In January 2014 proposals were tabled to extend the facility and increase the number of pupils. This would be done by merging with Linhope Pupil Referral Unit based outside of the Walker area (OFSTED, 2014).

e) Newcastle Family Support Volunteer Project

This project recruits local people to support families attending the Family Club. A new intake was trained from September to December 2013. They are now offering support to families. It is hoped that some of the volunteers will eventually become directors of PBCC.

f) Newcastle Futures Drop-In

Newcastle Futures offer a service designed to help unemployed residents find the right job. They have taken an office in PBCC and hold drop-in sessions from Tuesday to Friday.

g) Pottery Bank Bingo

This group offers bingo sessions for all ages. They run on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday evenings from 7pm to 9pm. Local residents look after the running of the sessions and the group finances.

h) St. Anthony's Children's House

St. Anthony's Children's House has been in Walker for over twenty years. They work in partnership with PBCC to provide services for children from birth to 11 years old and their families. The Saturday morning drop in for 5 to 11 year olds is particularly popular.

i) St. Anthony's Playgroup

St. Anthony's Playgroup is run by staff from Heaton Community Centre. The OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) registered playgroup is open Monday to Friday for pre-school children. Charges apply though parents and carers are offered help with funding applications.

j) Sure Start East Children's Centre

PBCC is a setting for Sure Start East Children's Centre who offer services for children under five years of age and their families. They work in partnership with a range of organisations to provide help and advice about parenting, family support, healthy eating, lifestyle choices, play, childcare, education and training. The services at PBCC vary from term to term but include the 'Time to Talk' group for families from communities who have English as a second language.

v) Resident Groups

Local representation was provided by two residents groups. The area to the east of PBCC was represented by Pottery Bank Tenants and Residents Association (PBTARA). The area to the west was covered by Belmont Area Residents Association (BARA). Both held their meetings at PBCC, paying the room hire rate for local groups and providing regular income for the centre.

In November 2013, the PBCC board and both groups agreed to form a single Pottery Bank Area Residents Association (PBARA). To this end BARA was wound-up in December 2013 and PBTARA was wound-up in January 2014. Newcastle Tenants and Residents Federation were engaged to oversee the process of bringing the new group together. At the time of writing, in summer 2014, the new PBARA group had yet to begin meeting.

c) Central Walker Church of England Primary School

Figure 4.9: Central Walker Primary School

Source: Central Walker, 2012



i) The Organisation

Central Walker Church of England Primary School caters for boys and girls aged 3 to 11, as well as providing 26 nursery places. It is a two-form entry school run by The Diocese of Newcastle. Central Walker opened on 10th September 2012 replacing Wharrier Street Primary School to the north and St Anthony's Church of England Primary School to the south. The school has a range of resources including a music studio, plasma screens, up-to-date ICT facilities, outdoor dining equipment and outdoor table tennis. The first Head Teacher, Julie Kadleck, was a regular attender at Walker Hub meetings. She left in December 2013 and was replaced by Barbara Redhead as Executive Head Teacher.

Central Walker seeks to establish ethical values through their vision statement, "Inspiring and encouraging excellence". This is based on a Christian ethos and on promoting the health and well-being of ourselves and others. To do this the school adopted a mission statement, "Valuing and guiding every child on life's journey". In addition the school has adopted core values of "respect, love, honesty, courage and fairness". These are practiced through three simple rules, "Respect everyone and everything; Do as all staff members ask; and move safely around school" (Central Walker, 2013).

ii) After-School Activities

The after-school activities run from 3.15pm until 4.15pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The school aims to have every child in at least one club. The clubs change each half term to allow the children a turn at each activity within their year group. Activities on offer include art club, books and stories, rock and pop choir, football (girls and boys), ICT, i-pads, reading, gardening, junior zumba, choir, news team, cooking club, gym apparatus, debating, dance, and film club. The clubs are free with no additional charges. If parents need their child to attend the clubs as they are still at work the school tries to accommodate them.

iii) The Friends of Central Walker

The Friends of Central Walker is a group of parents and carers who fundraise for the school. The group is run by the school's Parent Support Advisor who organises meetings and ensures members are aware of their roles.

Activities have included a MacMillan coffee afternoon, discos for the children, preparation of party food, nativity plays, parent consultation sessions, seasonal fairs, bag packing at local supermarkets, cake sales, festivals including Walker Park and Ouseburn, and an end of year treat for each year group.

d) Walker Activity Dome

Figure 4.10: Walker Activity Dome

Source: Active Newcastle, 2012



i) The Organisation

Walker Activity Dome (WAD) is located on Wharrier Street, back-to-back with Central Walker Primary. It is open Monday to Thursday from 8am to 9.30pm, Friday from 8am to 9pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 8am to 4.30pm. The Sports Hall, Progression Gym Suite and Impulse Gym Suite are available for use at these times. The WAD is closed on public holidays. There are 160 parking bays and 4 bays for special needs parking.

The Walker Activity Dome (WAD) was officially opened on 11 February 2012 with a new motto 'Discover Newcastle's hidden gem'. This followed extensive repair and refurbishment to the building that was previously known as the Lightfoot Sports Centre.

The function suite was upgraded and an activity studio and an indoor cycling studio were added. The free weights area was updated to include the latest resistance equipment. For football, the WAD now includes ten five-a-side pitches, three seven-a-side pitches and one eleven-a-side pitch. There are new changing facilities, a players' lounge, café and bar. The WAD has a number of additional activities from trampolining and gymnastics, through to boxercise, netball and a kids-only SHOKKage gym. The staff aim is to keep down time to a bare minimum, and welcome new ideas (Active Newcastle, 2012).

Figure 4.11: Walker Activity Dome Entrance

Source: Active Newcastle, 2012



ii) Walker Library

Walker Library moved from the Lady Stephenson Building on Welbeck Road to the WAD opening on Monday 22 July 2013. In January 2014 the library staff and the WAD staff became part of the same management structure.

iii) Public Computer Suite

There is a set of computers with internet access available for public use. A library ticket and personal access code are required. The public computers are available during opening hours but are automatically turned off 15 minutes before closing time.

iv) Newcastle Roller Derby

While several sports clubs use the WAD facilities Newcastle Roller Derby regard the WAD, or what they call 'the spaceship', as their home. Formed in 2009, Newcastle Roller Derby consists of two women's teams, 'The Canny Belters' A-team and 'The Whippin' Hinnies' B-team, and one men's team, 'Tyne and Fear'. Their home bouts, practice sessions and training activities all take place at the WAD (Newcastle Roller Girls, 2012).

4.3.2 The Walker Hub Case Study Interviews

This section presents point made by the interviewees in the course of the interview programme. The responses of interviewees and the discussion of their points form the main body of evidence. It is therefore important to be faithful to their tone and intention. Following the methodology, it is not important to fit the responses into categories that may be entered on a spread sheet or to follow any similarly impersonal process (3.5). The theme titles follow those used in the interview process itself (Appendix 6).

The interviews tell rich stories about the Walker Hub and it is important that the issues discussed are the ones raised by the interviewees themselves. Approaches such as mental models are therefore rejected as unsuitable for presenting such material (Johnson-Laird & Byrne, 1995). And it is important to not fit the views expressed into pre-defined categories nor to enter their responses on a spread sheet nor follow any similarly impersonal process (Jones & McBeth, 2010). The thesis rejects such approaches in favour of a more natural, narrative form that focusses on personal accounts, accurate transcription and complexity-informed analysis (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

The Walker Hub case study was conducted following the Centre West case study. The interviews took place between 28 April 2013 and 19 August 2013. Contact was made with key partners in the Walker Hub. Hub members, staff and others considered to have valuable information were contacted either in person, by email or by telephone. The only condition was that, if at all possible, there would be two face-to-face meetings.

Seventeen people responded to invitations and sixteen were interviewed over a period of twelve months. One person agreed to take part but changed their employment and broke-off contact before the interviews could take place. Two people said that they were too busy to agree a formal time. Nevertheless one of these people engaged in semi-structured discussions. One person said that because of their health they could not undertake the two-interview process but

was happy to offer their views. This meant that thirteen of the remaining sixteen people completed the interview process. Two of these people were from the same organisation and asked to be interviewed together. This was agreed. All other interviews took place according to the method set out (3.2).

Some interviews took place in the facilities of those concerned. Others took place at nearby venues. All were conducted at the convenience of the interviewee. It was explained to each interviewee that these questions were optional and that the interviewee should focus on what they wanted to say. A full list of interviewees appears as Appendix 6. The researcher here places on record their thanks for this assistance.

In order to increase the engagement and sense of joint enterprise the first interviews were recorded in the researcher's own hand. The intention was to prevent interviewees from feeling they had been captured on tape or were being obliged to speak on the record. The intention was not to record every syllable spoken but to engage in an interactive process that would produce a rich understanding.

The themes and developments put forward at the second interview followed those recorded above. These themes did not set the subjects of the second interview. The matters discussed were an interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, shaped by careful consideration of the first interview. The second interviews were recorded for later use. This allowed the researcher to focus on the discussion and to note particular points.

Given the content of the interviews, the presentation makes explicit reference to two complexity concepts, namely emergence and butterfly effects. These discussions appear under the headings Theme Bii – Emergence and Theme Eii - Butterfly Effects. At the time of the interviews they were part of a discussion Theme B – Activities and Theme E – National View respectively.

Theme A - Overview

Beginning with the Heart of Walker (HoW) regeneration project and moving to consideration of the Walker Hub, this theme looks at the issues faced and the procedures adopted to deal with them. This leads into the question of whether HoW and the Hub were thought out in advance or were driven by necessity and guided by circumstance (4.3.4).

Around 2005, the housing market in the area was very difficult. It still is. This meant that the HoW concept stayed away from housing and focussed on retail, housing, leisure facilities, and a community centre. A HoW Programme Board was convened to coordinate urban design and delivery in these four areas (WH03). The HoW was a professional-led, urban regeneration programme that would plan, build and deliver (Mallach, 2014). By 2007 things had changed. There was a recession and resources for regeneration programmes became scarce (WH02).

The viability of the HoW scheme depended on finding a large retailer willing to locate in the area. This would generate income to be spent on creating the community facilities. Indeed this was planned as the only substantial source of income for these facilities. In the event, no suitable retail offer was forthcoming and NCC found itself without money for the planned community facilities (WH02).

NCC's community hub policy was introduced just after HoW scheme was up and running. The policy was to focus council resources on a small number of buildings in each local area that would form community hubs (WH01). At the same time the policy meant the sale or demolition of the unwanted buildings. In the event this required a city-wide level of investment that NCC was not prepared to make. However, by forming the Walker Hub they were able to combine HoW resources with community hub resources. This allowed plans to go forward for a new primary school, refurbished leisure facilities and an extended community centre (WH03).

"Financial circumstances conspired against us but what we have is a sensible compromise" (WH03).

The HoW plan involved a new community building to host a range of community facilities. This meant the demolition of existing local facilities such as the Greenford Road Community Room and the Thomas Gaughan Community Centre (later renamed PBCC). However, the lack of finances, lobbying from local people and the creation of the Hub produced a rethink, and NCC decided to refurbish and extend PBCC (WH03).

When NCC decided that PBCC would be part of the Walker Hub, the future looked positive. The threat of demolition had been lifted and there was the promise of a much-improved facility. But HoW and the community hub policy were not developed together. HoW was a project from NCC's Regeneration Directorate whereas community hubs were planned from within NCC's Community Engagement and Empowerment service, situated in the Policy, Strategy and Communications Directorate (WH02).

As a community hub the intention was to involve local people. As the Walker Hub developed so the community involvement would develop. Community members were to be consulted in planning the facilities in order to make sure that the new assets were appropriate and useful. In this way the Walker Hub is more than a project planning group but oversees a wide range of community services (WH01).

All of which reflects the professional point of view. But what about the community and those who work with the community? For them the Hub was not about buildings. It was about local partners who understand the local community, sharing their understanding with others to provide better and better local services (WH12). Yet the Walker Hub activity was focussed on three local buildings.

"The Hub was never intended to be just two or three community buildings. It was supposed to be something much bigger" (WH14).

Several interviewees regarded HoW and the Walker Hub as one and the same, namely NCC's regeneration plan for Walker (WH08; WH12). So were NCC at fault for not communicating the difference? Maybe there was really no difference

between the HoW regeneration project and the Walker Hub? Or were the community members wrong? Were they simply being cynical about NCC?

To address these questions we should go back to the differences between NCC's Regeneration Directorate and the Policy, Strategy and Communications Directorate. In particular we need to distinguish between the HoW plan which was a physical regeneration project and the subsequent Walker Hub development which addressed social issues through provision for local community needs. The professionals identified a matrix of services offered through these three settings. They identified gaps in provision. From this discussion a decision was made to refurbish the PBCC. It was at this stage that the community and the community-based service providers were contacted with a view to active participation in the Walker Hub (WH01).

Nevertheless this still meant that the planning was done in terms of the lead organisations (WH14). The Walker Hub was always intended to provide what they wanted. It was of course hoped that the community would 'play along' and that they might even be pleased but the Walker Hub, not just the HoW, was always intended to be for the professional member organisations (WH07).

So Walker Hub meetings were organised by community development staff and attended by regeneration professionals, staff working in the Hub buildings and a few local community members (WH11). The meetings focussed on those who were employed to do a job and representatives of the three buildings being built or refurbished, namely PBCC, Central Walker Primary, and Walker Activity Dome (WH14).

The only people attending Hub meetings outside of their paid employment were the PBCC representatives. At the beginning of 2013 the Hub talked about putting up posters asking people to come along and help out. But this was judged unrealistic.

“The local people won’t get involved” (WH15).

Several interviewees asked what the Hub is. Judged from the interviews the Hub may be defined as a centre for community activities or in the context of a changing environment many centres of community activity (WH09; WH10). But it does not appear to be any more than this.

What emerges from the interviews is the lack of input from local people. From the interviews they do not appear to have been informed of the existence of the Hub. Nor were their views sought at any stage prior to the completion of the Hub buildings (4.3.4).

Theme B1 - Activities

The purpose of the Hub was inter-organisational collaboration. In other words, the whole of the Hub was to be greater than the sum of its parts. However, one question that emerged powerfully from the interviews was whether such collaboration was real or simply desired (WH16).

NCC saw the original HoW project plan as an important part of the regeneration of Walker Riverside (WH02). Having a community hub would lift the whole area not just HoW. The lack of money caused a rethink including the move from a new community facility to refurbishing PBCC (WH03).

PBCC is in the Walker Riverside area of designated development. This meant that the developers' contribution, usually referred to as 'Section 106 money', for Walker Riverside could be spent on PBCC refurbishment. In addition, as a community organisation, the PBCC committee could bid to VCS funders for money. In the event the PBCC bids were turned down and no contribution was made (WH03).

As it appeared that all the NCC money was going to PBCC, other community groups in the area expressed some disquiet. The local ward councillors asked for a solution so there was also an investment in repairs to Monkchester Community Centre together with the addition of IT equipment and an astroturf area. Nevertheless, PBCC has no regular links with other community centres such as the nearby St Martin's Centre to the north of the WAD (WH16).

While both PBCC and Monkchester Community Centre are owned by NCC and managed by Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), there is a surprising lack of public sector involvement. It seemed to be NCC, the school and the private sector developers who carried the financial burden. Key delivery organisations like the NHS and JobcentrePlus are important players in the Walker area especially for the young the old and for people with disabilities. Yet they were not involved (WH11).

It is not as surprising to find that it proved very difficult to get the private sector involved. Private sector activity in that part of Walker is restricted to a few sole traders. The Walker Riverside Business Park is less than a mile away and is home to several substantial businesses (Shepherd Offshore, 2013). It is, however, tucked away on the north bank of the River Tyne, out of sight and well away from the local community. This means that without an existing contact it is very difficult to get the private sector involved in community activities (WH03).

While it is understandable that the local community may not have the necessary business contacts it is notable that NCC officers and the ward councillors appeared unable to engage any private sector support. It is reasonable to assume that businesses could have been approached in terms of their corporate social responsibility undertakings yet, from the interviews, it is not clear how much effort was made. It was acknowledged that it would have been useful to get a couple of business people involved for a different perspective but this did not happen (WH02).

Turning to the benefits of the Walker Hub, it seems that NCC benefitted as much as the community. The community centre chosen to provide services for the Walker Hub area was PBCC. This did not prevent other community organisations taking part but the money would be spent on refurbishing PBCC. This meant that while the PBCC committee became very important to the project the other community groups in the area were isolated (WH11).

As for future collaboration, at the end of 2013 the PBCC committee were informed that NCC policy had changed from supporting community hubs to asset transfer. NCC presented them with a proposal to take over the building or ultimately face closure. In April 2014 the PBCC committee agreed to consider such a move once NCC had completed the outstanding repairs and improvements (WH16).

The interviewees were all directly involved with the Walker Hub in one or more ways. They were therefore inclined to look for the positives and be upbeat about the Hub and the people involved (WH09). On the other hand the PBCC committee were reported as being insular and controlling. A negative discussion regarding community energy was mentioned. More than one professional identified this but nothing appears to have been done to address this (WH14).

Theme B2 - Consultation

“Consultation has become a dirty word in Walker” (WH14).

The Walker Riverside community was reported as having been ‘consulted to death’ over the Walker Riverside regeneration. The frustration, if not anger, with council consultation comes from a feeling held by several community members that whatever they say “the council takes no notice because they have already decided what is going to happen” (WH12).

The exception to this feeling was the decision to refurbish PBCC and to provide Walker with the Hub facilities. This received widespread praise among the community members interviewed. But this was a close run thing. The plan for the HoW was to demolish PBCC and to provide a community room in a multi-use building (WH03). The proposals to create the Walker Hub could and should have had more engagement with the local tenants and residents associations (TARAs) and more direct contact with the residents (WH09). In addition NCC officers certainly could have engaged more service providers (WH16).

Including more local people would have made a difference to the information about remodelling the area. The plans were on show at PBCC the committee made comments and asked questions about the building. But the primary school and the WAD developments were led by officers whose job it was to work and reflect on the situation (WH10).

Overall, the community was not provided with enough information about the Hub plans to make a meaningful contribution (WH09). A broader, more inclusive consultation process would have helped to bring residents and officers together. They could have formed a common understanding even if they did not agree on the particulars (WH14).

Theme B3 - Emergence

As discussed, for complexity the term 'emergence' refers to what emerges from a situation rather than looked-for results or intended outcomes. It therefore includes what may be expected but also what is unexpected. Usually this will be a benefit and may be a pleasant surprise to those concerned. Sometimes, however, there is a negative outcome that was not anticipated and come as a shock (2.3.2).

The Walker Hub was intended to be a collaboration between partners. Indeed three partners did come together and formed a coherent group (WH11). As part of this collaboration things should emerge and develop as the partnership matured. The interviews provided little indication that this was happening. Nevertheless the potential exists for benefits to emerge.

Central Walker has a Parent Support Advisor (PSA) who helps families with issues such as benefit forms and the Bedroom Tax. They are in an ideal position to extend their activities by organising community support events, first with parents and families and then with others to see what emerges. The school also had the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) for a term which was described as 'fantastic'. But then the CAB lost their funding. The opportunity to join-up and extend this service was lost (WH10).

With the WAD things are slightly different because they are looking to sell specific services. But they are not saying 'here's what we've got, here's how much it costs, take it or leave it'. Rather their approach is to sell services at a price that the buyer can afford such as Henshaws (for people with sight loss), and Daybreak (for people with learning disabilities). They cannot pay the full rate but they do a deal and everyone is happy (WH15).

It became clear that this approach could be applied to partnerships where there is mutual benefit. For example, the WAD has a partnership Sure Start. Sixty to eighty people use the sessions provided. With this partnership the WAD provides the service and the partner is involved in planning and delivery. In time further groups could become involved and further benefits could emerge.

Central Walker and the WAD have formed an informal partnership. They are only 100 metres apart. The school uses the WAD for bespoke exercise activities during the school day. This could be extended and developed. The point here is that they probably would have done this anyway, without the presence of the Hub (WH10).

The WAD makes the same offer to all the local schools; low charges to pay for the staff time with “a bit on top” (WH15). But for the other schools their time constraints put them off. For example, St Vincent’s Primary classes take fifteen minutes each way to walk to the WAD. Add in changing time and that leaves ten minutes out of an hour for activities. The local schools cannot afford buses so unless the school decides to have a longer activity session it is not practical for them. Only Central Walker is close enough for this arrangement to work. It’s about geography, not the will to collaborate (WH10).

WAD staff visit PBCC to give out information leaflets and hold a demonstration sessions. The PBCC rooms are too small for classes so local people have to go to the WAD for full sessions. Central Walker uses PBCC for one-off events such as a Halloween candle procession. Communication between Central Walker and PBCC came across as confused and could be improved. It was suggested that the PBCC administrator attended Hub meetings to find out what was going on (WH10).

All of which means that, while opportunities exist for additional benefits to emerge, the drive and the will required to make things happen are not currently present within the Hub.

Theme B4 - Butterfly Effects

For community interventions, butterfly effects are where a relatively small activity or a small amount of money had a relatively large impact whether intended or unintended, whether good or bad. They can be thought of as a type of emergence (2.3.2). With the Walker Hub little emergence was identified making the question of butterfly effects largely redundant. However what happened in the interviews was that people interpreted this topic in different ways (WH09; WH17). This suggests a lack of clarity around the concept or the explanation of the concept, or both (Large, 2014).

With an organisation such as the Walker Hub lots of butterfly effects may be expected because community facilities are all about nurturing people and helping them to do all sorts of things that they did not do before (WH09). It was suggested that this could have happened to some extent with the pupils at Hyem but that it was too early to say (WH04). Action For Children ran a volunteer development programme at PBCC from September to December 2013. It was hoped that the people on the programme would volunteer for activities at PBCC and across the Hub. What happened was that the volunteers sought activities elsewhere or took on a role they had been trained for on the programme, such as kitchen staff. Only a handful of them were interested in volunteering at PBCC (WH17).

Much more could have been done by linking the Hub with local doctors, social services, the police, fire service, libraries, and so on (WH10). So, while there was plenty of scope for butterfly effects to occur, none appear to have taken place.

Theme C – Public Sector Role

The HoW had public sector involvement because it was a public sector project run by NCC. As the successor to HoW, the Walker Hub was also a council project and was developed along these lines. In this regard the main feature identified by the interviewees was silo working (WH02).

The intention was for the regeneration team and the community team to make the Walker Hub a joint project that involved the community (WH03). But they failed to break-down the silos (WH14). For the regeneration officers the Walker Hub was part of the Walker Riverside development plan (WH02). For the community officers it was about refurbishing PBCC (WH01). Furthermore, “there was conflict between council officers who all wanted to control the project resources” (WH14).

All of which gave the community the impression that the NCC approach was disjointed. For example at one meeting there were four community members and twelve NCC officers. What they should do is identify the skills required and allocate appropriate roles for each officer. But this did not happen.

“The community expected council officers to do things; and they didn’t” (WH04).

At the same time NCC were viewed as necessary as they own the land and the assets, and they held the funding (WH05). Maybe they could have passed some of the resources to the Hub members but this “tends not to be the way that the public sector operates” (WH03).

Several officers thought that local people and residents do not get involved enough. There had been a lot of engagement in Walker and it had not borne the expected fruits (WH11). The sorts of services and the types of facilities in question should be driven by the community (WH03). Yet these resources come from the public sector¹⁴ (WH12).

¹⁴ See the discussions of localism (2.2.2) and Big Society (2.2.3).

At the time the refurbishment started asset transfer was not on the table. PBCC and the WAD were to be retained by NCC as key community assets. That was before the Coalition cuts to local authority budgets (WH15).

From April 2013 NCC engaged on a 'cooperative council' initiative and a community asset transfer programme. For this they are looking at how other people can bear or share the costs of maintaining and operating community buildings. This amounts to a risk of demolition for those buildings that are not commercial properties, including PBCC (WH01).

The interviewees thought that, by and large, NCC does have a part to play. They own most of the land. They are legally liable. For communities there needs to be meaningful support but not control. NCC needs to trust the community to run things (WH16).

Theme D1 – Tangible Results

Capital elements such as the refurbished community centre, the relaunched sports centre and the new primary school were good results (WH15). There was pressure to finish the building work. That was completed, the pressure lifted and attention went elsewhere (WH03). The long-promised retail development was said to be looking very positive yet by summer 2014 nothing had been announced (WH02).

The school uses the WAD regularly. They have a good, working partnership. The organisations that use PBCC are not as involved mainly because the WAD facilities are not appropriate or because their budgets have reduced (WH13).

One notable piece of collaboration is the Hyem project for disaffected Walker Technology College pupils. This is an arrangement between PBCC and Walker Technology College. It was difficult to set up. Several council staff were against it. Several members of the community did not want to see the young people responsible for local anti-social behaviour while they were drinking their coffee and having their lunch (WH08). The NCC facilitator worked with the Head Teacher of Walker Technology College to break-down barriers with the PBCC staff and to create a new-style facility for vulnerable pupils (WH14).

Hyem opened in January 2013. Since that time there have been a couple of incidents of fighting and vandalism (WH04). Perhaps of more concern to the community is that the Hyem pupils use the PBCC café both for food and drink but sometimes for support discussions. The result is a reluctance from café users to continue to use the café and to engage with PBCC activities (WH13).

The Walker Hub was meant to be a pilot for the rest of Newcastle. Now that NCC has changed its policy to asset transfer, what happens to the Hub? Is it down to the three organisations to make sure the Hub works? What part do local people have in this? No urgency or will to resolve these issues was found from any of those interviewed. Rather, what was found were three individual organisations occasionally contacting the other two (WH16).

The real test of the Walker Hub was supposed to be what local people think, yet many local people are now indifferent to the whole thing (WH03). Faced with Coalition-imposed austerity they are more interested in ensuring they have enough food, clothes and shelter (WH12).

While some see the Walker Hub as useful others regret the missed opportunities. The relations between the WAD, the primary school and PBCC are positive (WH10). PBCC's work with Walker Technology College and Newcastle Futures is praised (WH03; WH04). Nevertheless, the matrix of community activities could have been used to identify and work with partners in the most effective and efficient way, for example, by creating business start-ups (WH09). The decent neighbourhood standards could have been used to identify specific types of need and set up the specific interventions required (WH14). The action lists were put together on a geographic basis. They could have been used as a way to get people to think differently (WH11).

Why were these substantial opportunities missed? Well, the interviewees are quite clear; the senior NCC officers were not that interested (WH08; WH12; WH13). Officers are used being given a task and when that is finished they move on to something else, another project or even another employment. As things stand that is what is to be expected (WH14).

A community hub should be a local network of partnerships and collaboration across all sectors (NCVS, 2014a). The Walker Hub falls short of this. At best, it goes some way towards being a partnership between the community, education and leisure sectors.

Theme D2 - Institutional Pathways

Institutional pathways, such as council decision procedures, were unpopular with the interviewees. They are not necessary and worse they put up barriers (WH13). There are significant benefits to multi-agency working and to community neighbourhood planning (WH09) but not to spending time and money on institutional structures and following the procedures necessary to allow them to operate (WH04).

It was widely acknowledged that institutional pathways lead to 'business as usual' and that helps no one but those institutions that impose them (WH07). But if the community reject the institutional pathway model that would mean they would have to do a lot or a lot more themselves (WH03). And for that they will need to be trained (WH11).

Theme D3 - Do Communities Need Training?

Community interventions usually involve a substantial amount of training and development for local residents. This is done in the belief that 'it will help them to help themselves' (WH14). However, the interviews indicate that local people either do not want to be 'upskilled' or that the activities offered are not suitable for their needs.

"It's very easy to waste a lot of time and money on the wrong training at the wrong time" (WH17).

It's not that the interviewees didn't want local people to have the requisite skills but rather that they were not sure that formal training is the way to achieve this (WH13).

For the interviewees the purpose of training is to get more local people involved, and the claim was that local people are more likely to listen to people like them than to a 'pin striped suit'. So any training that brings-in a wider range of local views would be beneficial (WH11). But there was also a warning that the community members involved already carry a lot of responsibility and are invited to large number of meetings (WH14).

This implies that training around local involvement needs a sea change among local communities and their partners. At the moment "the louder local people shout, the more local politicians listen. The politicians then go and shout at the officers" (WH16). There needs to be a different way of working with community members, of sharing responsibilities and all sides accepting that the responsibility has genuinely shifted (WH11; WH14).

Taken together, this means the training that is required; working together, joint spending plans, and developing new ideas. To do this you should use local organisations that provide training, such as local businesses and childcare providers. Supported volunteering is crucial. People need to work in and invest in their own area. Ownership must be shared (NCVS, 2014a). Yet the interviews suggest this is a long way off.

“Officers don’t give credit to volunteers who keep the assets open and who provide local services” (WH12).

“Local groups are sometimes seen as a hindrance, getting in the way of what officers have been told to do by their managers” (WH16).

Theme E – National View

“Mr Pickles has a lot to answer for” (WH16).

The interviewees felt that Coalition policies, such as localism and Big Society, are unhelpful and unsympathetic to the needs of communities. For example, there was resentment that volunteering and volunteer support measures had been brought into the Coalition agenda as if no one had ever heard of them (WH12).

“Volunteering began a long time ago and goes through the generations. Now it has been branded as something else” (WH17)

Worse, they felt that the Coalition were trying to get away from the fundamental desperation they have caused;

“It’s for communities to come together and take local action, it always was. Now they’ve given them more to take action about” (WH12).

Some of the interviewees talked about the transfer of assets (WH11; WH14). This was often in terms of successes such as the transfer of the Byker Wall estate from YHN to the Byker Community Trust (Byker Community Trust, 2012). The regeneration of the Ouseburn Valley through The Ouseburn Trust was held to be a significant example of local action (The Ouseburn Trust, No Date).

Within the Walker Hub no one seemed optimistic about asset transfer though PBCC are looking at the options through the Open Doors project (WH13). The Open Doors project was set up as an independent group with money mainly from NCC to help council-owned community facilities become independent local community groups. The carrot is that the community get to run their community buildings the way they want. The stick is that if they do not take them over, NCC will close them (WH01).

“Things like the Big Society are fantastic if there are resourced, if local people have a vision and if they are involved in decision-making. There should be more of this” (WH03).

While these are big ifs this sentiment echoes the views expressed in the Centre West case study (4.2). However, things like Neighbourhood Planning that was introduced by the Localism Act tend to be for “moneyed shires and local enclaves” (WH15). At the same time, anything that engages local people in making a real difference was considered good, if not required (WH11).

The interviewees thought that the government and their partners needed to recognise that genuine localism requires a lot of resources. It’s not enough the pass a law and leave it at that (WH04). It was thought that localism and decentralisation could in theory offer great opportunities for Walker (WH01). It was recognised that there are strong, articulate local people willing to get involved but that they need help, guidance and resources (WH17). As things stand, if they pluck up the courage to have a go then they tend to get lost in the hierarchical structure at NCC and are easily fobbed off by officers who often seem to have more important things to do (WH14).

To get round this the local community needs to embrace a localist agenda in the form of asset transfer of buildings, community ownership of land, community run services generating profits for that community and so on. To make sure there are local people who able to take control of these assets, training programmes need to be run and local people need to attend them (Blatter, 2003).

“Things need to be taken out of the Civic Centre and brought down to the local level” (WH13).

This is a big ask. NCC's current view is that instead of community groups being reliant on NCC money and services, they will be allowed to be creative and maintain themselves (WH01). The community hear this as "the council will no longer be spending money to support community groups. Community groups will have to look after themselves" (WH17). With the right legal structures and the correct procedures community groups can do this (WH11). In this way localism becomes an opportunity for employment and training within communities, set-up and organised by communities (WH17).

"We can get local areas in Newcastle up and going through collaboration with YHN and creative thinking" (WH14).

An example of such an approach is Blakelaw in the north west of Newcastle where the ward committee and the parish council are developing the Love Blakelaw brand (Love Blakelaw, 2013).

Theme F1 – Way Forward

“It’s right that areas like Walker should have money spent on them” (WH16).

The community hubs were a NCC policy plan and Walker was identified as the first pilot (WH01). Some of this was about co-locating community buildings and collaboration with partners in order to bring about a much more cost-effective way of running community services (O’Donnell, Deaton, *et al*, 2014).

PBCC has now been refurbished. It has a twenty-year life span and has been earmarked for asset transfer (WH14). The WAD will continue to be a great landmark. The primary school is about capital investment that will pay dividends. So the buildings and facilities was money well spent (WH03).

“A lot of really good stuff is going on and the job of the Hub is to get the local services dovetailed” (WH07).

It was agreed that the Hub itself does not need a huge amount of money to be worthwhile. But there is a need to invest in community facilities such as childcare sessions, employment support, and drop-ins. “No one should be dismissive of the situation” (WH02). Further while money has been spent on physical regeneration what is needed now are salaried posts, support activities and training for local people. It was suggested that the government could help by releasing revenue funding which “is very difficult to secure; that’s something that could be changed” (WH01).

At the moment, what Walker needs are high quality facilities run by robust local management groups (WH01). While Walker has three recently refurbished facilities one is run by NCC, another by the Church of England Diocese, and the third by a Board of Directors. There is no Hub governance to speak of (WH15). This raises the issue of representation. The Hub members represent individual organisations. Who then represents the community? As it is set up there is no direct link between the Hub and local people (WH17).

Private sector involvement in community activity is Coalition policy (Maude, 2013). Maybe such involvement could help the Hub with local businesses sponsoring activities, supporting facilities management and assisting fund raising (Big Society Capital, 2013). The private sector could support the Walker Hub through its expertise in finances, accountancy, and business knowledge (Shepherd Offshore, 2013). Yet from the interviews the private sector seems reluctant to get involved with the Hub. Put simply, who is going to pay them for their work? (WH07).

Moreover Walker is not Newcastle city centre. There is very little private sector activity in the area, not much more than some sole traders or a family shop (WH02). Several interviewees suggested PBCC should forge alliances with local retailers (WH07). Others pointed out that businesses are being squeezed by the current period of austerity and the Hub should not expect them to take on new commitments without payment (WH13; WH15).

Theme F2 - The Future of the Hub

“The Hub should be about local people owning their own services. And it isn't” (WH14).

In many regeneration programmes councils have supplemented a lack of resources by topping up the mustered budget. With a renewed community hub approach, NCC would benefit the community by planning what they want and knowing how much they want to spend on it (WH03). This is about councils operating a newly designed partnership to work with local communities (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). But as discussed, NCC have moved from a Hub policy to community asset transfer suggesting they are no longer interested in the future of the Hub.

Some interviewees thought that the Hub should be focussing on business and generate its own income. The Hub had to be bulletproof from government and from cutbacks (WH07).

“Far too many times quango funded initiatives have left nothing but empty buildings and empty land” (WH15).

Yet no one interviewed was prepared to say how this business would come about, whether they would sell goods or services, or who the customers would be.

Perhaps the Hub could look for support from the local councillors and in the spirit of localism? The current situation in Walker was regarded as unfortunate and as a shame (WH07). The ward councillors are missing an opportunity. They need to understand what is around the corner and that they cannot control it (WH14). Surely this makes the need for dynamic localism all the more urgent? Yet the necessary local actors do not appear to be present.

Government budget reductions have meant that communities like Walker need to be able to think outside the box. All those involved, from every sector, need to start talking about what needs doing and to get those things done. This in turn requires those in control to share some power, and to give other powers up (WH01; WH17).

The interviewees who commented on the subject considered PBCC to have made a mistake in appointing a centre manager not a development manager (WH14). A development manager could pop into the school, talk to the people at the WAD, and create locally-based networks (WH04). However, this role had been taken up, at least in part, by several people over the intervening years (WH08).

The Hub members do not know whether the Hub can look after itself. NCC helped with chairing Hub meetings and with sharing their knowledge. This was appreciated by all the Hub partners. This has now come to an end. So what is needed is a Hub-Council strategy to explain how the Hub continues to communicate with NCC and *vice versa* (WH10).

What is missing from future plans is NCC. As a result of the cuts “council staff are running around doing all sorts of jobs without knowing how long they will be in post” (WH15). One result of this is that NCC has promised things that they have not delivered, such as the PBCC ‘Fun Run 2013’.

“It is the local people who are suffering not the professionals” (WH13).

All those who commented, and that was most of the interviewees, agreed that Walker is a special place with lots of active, enthusiastic and helpful people. Moreover, the Hub is three good assets with good services. Any area would want to have them and local people are benefitting from them (WH01). At the same time only a small percentage of local people use the assets.

“We need to find ways to engage more people” (WH03).

It was felt that the Hub assets needed to be built upon and that is not happening right now. Some suggested an independent process to re-evaluate the themes for development (WH02). Others suggested revisiting the matrix – the spade work has already been done (WH14). Most thought that the way through current difficulties was to concentrate activity within the Hub and within Walker (WH09; WH16).

“I know there’s the daily stress and plenty of things to think about already. But it’s great to think in a different, innovative way” (WH14).

Which presents something of a contradiction; The Walker community is reported as special, yet there are few residents currently involved in the Hub or with the Hub members. This may be explained, at least in part, by the lack of attempts to inform or involve local people in the Hub. The Hub has created facilities that bring people together but not as a community but as users of facilities. April 2012 to March 2014 was seen as a transition period. Even without a formal hub there is still a chance to get local people interested and maybe to get them involved (WH01).

4.3.3 The Walker Hub Case Study Discussion

This section uses the Walker Hub case study to set out insights that the complexity-informed approach allows for evaluating community dynamics.

a) Why did a Community Hub happen in Walker?

The interviewees explained what the Walker Hub meant to them, how they became involved, and they discussed their ideas about what it should be doing. There was, however, no definitive agreement on what the Walker Hub is, when it began and what it should do now.

The Walker Hub emerged from two different approaches. Firstly, the continuation of the HoW plan (WH03). This was originally a regeneration plan to deliver housing. Now it is the community facilities that are to drive the house building¹⁵ (WH02). Secondly, it was the development of integrated, user focussed community facilities, namely PBCC, the school and the WAD (WH15).

These two views could be brought together within NCC's view of a community hub as "a set of services based around a particular set of buildings" (WH14). Yet NCC policy is now community asset transfer implying a rationalisation process whereby buildings that were not part of the Hub would be disposed of.

"This was a very sensitive issue for the local community and we needed to be very careful" (WH01).

¹⁵ In summer 2014 the new River's Gate housing estate along Walker Road was nearing completion (Places for People, 2013).

This has meant that NCC is no longer trying to achieve positive outcomes for the buildings and their users. Instead it is trying to reduce its portfolio of assets (WH15).

As things stand the Walker Hub group has stopped meeting. The people involved have retreated and work for their own organisations in their own way. A way forward could be found through joint policy planning. This would involve the Hub, NCC, local groups, local business and of course local people. This need not be difficult. It could be a development from existing relationships (Shepherd Offshore, 2013).

In this sense, localism comes to saying that the knowledge how to improve an area is local knowledge. For this to work the message for central government from the community needs to be 'give us the resources and we'll achieve what you want; don't you worry about how we do it' (Cartwright, 2012).

b) Trust

The degree of trust given to the Walker Hub was high. This was shown by all those involved. There are the national agencies such as the Office for Civil Society who set broad parameters and learn to work with local government and communities within those parameters (WH03). Then there is local government working within national government parameters and learning to work in a broad range of ways with a broad range of local actors (WH01). And there are local actors who turn local desires into deliverable projects and learn to work within local and national government parameters (WH13).

There is, however, a difference between developing trust to build a good working relationship and allocating resources to secure and embed what is already there. It seems that the former was cheap and do-able whereas the latter was not something NCC was prepared to pursue (WH16).

c) Race

The racial mix of the Walker Hub area is very predominantly white with some African refugees and asylum seekers, together with some residents from Poland and the eastern countries of the European Union. All those interviewed for this case study were of a white ethnic background and that the majority of them did not live in the Walker area (WH11).

Across the wider Walker area racially motivated crimes are reported from time to time but no specific patterns have been identified for them. The asylum seekers project, based in Church Walk, just outside of Walker Riverside, was recently wound up. The Methodist Church which previously ran a support group for refugees and asylum seekers now runs a general support group, Community Spirit (WH17).

In the interviews and research materials gathered, the topic of race, either generally or specifically was remarkable by its absence. None the interviewees mentioned race as a specific issue. The main issues that exercised the interviewees were poverty and the lack of funding to address this (WH04).

d) No Ownership, No Growth

A community hub should be an organic entity, growing out of present circumstances and developing naturally through time. While this description has been seen to sit well with complexity theory, it raises questions for those who were managing the Walker Hub (WH09). In particular few residents and workers in the Walker Hub area, outside of the three main facilities, appeared to know what the Hub is or what it is there for. And indeed those interviewed seem to regard the three buildings as separate entities with specific and limited purposes.

“The WAD is there for exercise, the school is there for the little ones and PBCC is a café for youngsters and unemployed people” (WH11).

There was no sense of ownership or of an embedded Hub identity. There was nothing that interviewees could refer to as being the Hub nor did they find it easy to say what it was about. So it seems that the Walker Hub is quite simply an idea that no one owns.

How did this situation come about? It is easy to point to the Coalition government as the bad guys who have pulled the plug on funding for communities. Yet NCC does appear to have money for private sector initiatives (NCC & NELEP, 2012). So maybe the NCC Senior Leadership Team should be asked to account for the current state of affairs in Walker? Indeed it is striking that no one higher than the Head of Service level was directly involved in the Walker Hub. When asked about their involvement, even they said that once the refurbishment process for the community centre was in place they withdrew (WH01).

Clearly the Walker Hub is not functioning as a single entity. Worse, at a time when the services these facilities provide are sorely needed, NCC, rather than providing leadership, maintains a line of complaint about the cuts they have had imposed on them (Forbes, 2012). The point being that no one was prepared to take responsibility for the Walker Hub and that has meant that what growth there was in the local community has been lost (4.3.3).

There is a comparison here between the Walker Hub and Centre West. Both began as part of well-funded government programmes. Both achieved a level of success. And both have been dropped by their supposed partners once the funding ran out or budgets became tight. This may be seen as a return to project thinking where interventions have a beginning, a middle and an end. It may also be noted that given all that has happened, good as well as bad, the NCC councillors and staff appear to have learned little and changed less (Cockell, 2013).

e) Patterns in the Walker Hub

The Walker Hub case study shows some evidence of the complexity phenomenon of patterning where similar patterns occur at different levels.

In several respects, such as make-up, conduct and collective responsibility, the Walker Hub followed the pattern of a council partnership meeting such as the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group (WH11). These in turn follow the style of NCC Policy Cabinet meetings with a core membership, a set agenda and an open invitation to others to attend; and *vice versa*. The pattern is repeated at different levels though perhaps not in every respect.

There is, however, a question about how persuasive and useful this is. The lack of clear examples of patterning reflects a lack of clarity around the Hub and what is for. Indeed the Walker Hub was described as a continuation of the Heart of Walker by other means (WH03), as a group of three community buildings (WH10), and as just the renewed community centre (WH01).

The lack of resources for the Hub, such as money and staff, contributed to a lack of activity that meant there was little or no opportunity to form patterns that would repeat in the way described by complexity (WH09). Here some caution is appropriate. As a collaboration between three groups, PBCC, Central Walker Primary, and WAD, the Hub operated at a meta-level, the Hub level. While it is tempting to look for patterns from the Hub members repeating at this Hub level, the reality seems to be that the Hub was considered by all three as an add-on or an extra to their core activities. They tended not to view the Hub as part of their day-to-day work (WH04; WH10; WH15).

f) Emergence in the Walker Hub

When considering the use of resources, a traditional approach would say something like: 'The Hub was intended to be the forum to allocate resources for community benefit.' In contrast an emergence approach would say that: 'The Hub allocated resources for 'a and b' and that having done this 'c and d' emerged as well.'

Neither seems to have happened. The interviewees could not recall any such instances beyond straightforward co-operation such as that between the WAD and the school, and joint events between the school and the community centre (WH10; WH13; WH15).

In discussing this lack of emergence the interviewees felt that NCC's role as Hub facilitator was not enough. Simply having a council officer invite senior staff to a meeting three times a year was thought to be rather pointless (WH11). Ideas for improvement included employing an independent person to work with groups and facilitate the best ideas that emerge but there was no budget for this (WH09). Yet no one involved appeared to be actively encouraging emergence from the Hub, in part because they did not view it as part of their day-to-day work (WH04; WH10; WH15).

4.3.4 The Walker Hub Case Study Lessons

Council programmes are based on central government policies and local government plans. They are not based on what the community needs (2.2.1). They are, however, funded from national and local taxation that includes monies provided by the communities themselves. This is the community stake in council programmes (WH03). So the community, at least in part, pay for council programmes designed for someone else. No wonder then that the community can feel that the interventions made are often not worth the effort required nor are they a good use of their taxes (Thompson, 2013).

In addition to this, there is an ongoing fear of gentrification or social cleansing; of NCC demolishing social housing and community facilities to drive out the working class population and create middle class suburbs (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). Together this often means that NCC policies and plans are not welcomed by communities and may meet with some resistance (WH08).

The Walker Hub was supposed to be different. It was supposed to take the decision-making process to the locality (Byrne, 1989). Nevertheless the Walker Riverside programme was carried out through a project management format (WH01; WH03). This maintained a distance between public policy, council implementation and the local community. This meant that the key decisions were made in advance and presented to Hub members, “you’ve got this, now it’s up to you to make the most of it” (WH17). That said, the key players did make some of the decisions in some sense, and NCC did allow them to have a say in what was taking place.

The main problem was, and remains, that all the money allocated to the project code has been spent. The Walker Hub itself has no dedicated resources and it never had. All the money was tied to specific project plans with specific codes. All there is now are the resources of the Hub members (WH09).

The Walker Hub required three levels of interaction. 1) The Hub members and NCC needed to discover what resources were available, how to work together, and how to avoid duplication. 2) Together, the Hub members needed to determine how they would engage the community as the Hub. 3) Individually, Hub members needed to meet with the community to engage them in what was on offer.

Of these three levels, the first happened while NCC support was provided. The second has been sporadic, for example Central Walker use the WAD regularly. As for the third, well maybe some of the community have heard something about the Hub but nothing consistent and persistent seems to have been enacted. If Hub members are not sure what the Walker Hub is then how can members of the community be expected to know? (WH10).

What of the future? Thanks to the Coalition rapidly reducing public sector budgets, the resources for the NCC community hub programme have not materialised (WH14). For the Walker Hub, this has meant that things have not worked out as planned. The interactions were always more complex than simply meeting council officers every few months (Large, 2006b). While some of these interactions remain, the opportunity to pull the Walker Hub together has been lost (WH09).

The Walker Hub proposals for agencies to work alongside the community may seem positive but in fact they are seen by NCC as a way of saving money (WH01). NCC is also saving money by cutting community services. For example, in 2012 the NCC community development team was disbanded (WH09). So how are the community to become engaged if there is no one to engage them? Furthermore the other public sector agencies were never on board with the Hub approach. For example, the representatives from the doctors' surgery simply did not attend (WH03).

The absence of applied, evidence-based policy is striking. The Walker Hub may be seen as a response to the failure of the HoW plan and as such NCC may be seen as making the best of a bad job (Cartwright & Hardie, 2012). No one concerned talked positively about the current localism measures and Coalition announcements about Big Society were often dismissed with derision (WH16).

For community policy the lessons of the Walker Hub case study are:

- Engage the local community groups. Give them an incentive to be involved, such as joint-funding opportunities, and keep them engaged. Look to diversify and enhance the role of the Hub.
- Include a role for partners. Simply holding meetings is not sufficient for a community organisation to thrive.
- Community organisations such as the Hub should have community buy-in. This not only prevents accusations of exclusion but encourages participation, generates activity and increases development opportunities.
- NCC policy needs to be specific and supportive. They need to say what they will, who will do it and how much will be provided. It is then up to the Hub to respond, for example by working together on a policy plan for the area. Merely stating that they are taking a co-operative council approach does not benefit the Hub or the community.
- Agreeing activities and setting delivery targets helps cement the relationship between the Hub members, NCC officers and the service providers in the area. These activities can be advertised to local people so that they can understand the Hub.

For complexity approaches to community studies the lessons of the Walker Hub case study are:

- Community involvement in decision-making needs to be genuinely interactive and far reaching.
- Emergence is a key factor in determining what happens.
- Patterning is problematic and risks triviality.
- Rigid project planning stifles adaptation and emergence. Complexity suggests a much more flexible approach.
- What matters to people is what they see happening and can use.

Taking a complexity-informed approach to communities has shown how the Walker Hub was set up and then lapsed. The course of events and the current consequences emerge from the contributions of those involved. From this, lessons for future community activity may be produced.

The Walker Hub case study demonstrates the benefits of the application of complexity principles. The views of the participants came across well and messages came out of each theme that are not present in the other material examined.

The nature of the community involvement was clear with some efforts made at the set-up stage but little community contribution to the Hub process. This was followed by the retreat of the NCC facilitators leaving the representatives questioning the worth of the Hub meetings. The lack of any plan or incentive makes it likely that the Hub partners will not meet as a group and will interact on a one-to-one, needs driven basis.

The nature of the transition from HoW to Walker Hub came across well. It was opportunist and arose from the good intentions of particular NCC officers, not from community members. This may explain why the Hub was not as well established as it may have been, leaving some interviewees surprised to be included in something that had not been prepared for or even known about in advance. The three facilities aside, the lack of partner organisations for the Hub is also apparent. Nearby community centres, local schools, health services, police and local churches could have been expected to have become involved.

The case study tells us that the Walker Hub was the result of the refinanced HoW plan and a community hub policy that was replaced by an asset transfer policy before it was rolled out. This means both that the community received a reduced version of the HoW plan and that the Hub received neither the support required nor did it make the connections intended. The responsibility for this lies with NCC.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the Case Studies

The aim of this research is to develop and apply a complexity approach to the study of communities. To meet this aim the thesis asks the following research question:

What insight does a complexity approach give to the study of communities?

The objectives of the research are:

- To evaluate the application of complexity to community studies.
- To develop and apply a complexity approach by using two case studies.
- To analyse the outcomes and elicit the insights of the complexity approach.

The outcomes of this research will be:

- To develop a complexity approach for the study of communities and evaluate the insights it provides into understanding community dynamics.
- To highlight the disadvantages of traditional approaches by conducting two case studies

This chapter analyses the case studies in order to address the aims of the thesis and to help answer the research question. In doing this it meets the objectives of the thesis and leads to the thesis outcomes.

The chapter begins by discussing how the complexity-informed approach performed when deployed in researching the case studies (Chapter 4). While it was found to be effective in its own terms, how does this approach relate to more traditional community research methods? Did it improve on them and if so how? From the results it is clear that the approach employed was able to draw out findings that had not appeared in the literature reviewed (Chapter 2). Furthermore, it was effective in articulating both the needs of the communities involved and the effectiveness of the interventions employed (Chapter 6).

Where the approach was shown to be less effective was with engaging reluctant participants. This, of course, is a problem for all case studies that involve interviews (Mitchell, 1983). One concern was whether interviewees would deliberately not tell the truth (for whatever reason). The intention here was to interview enough people to show up clear untruths. In reviewing the interview material, no straightforward untruths were found. While interviewees sometimes expressed themselves plainly and colourfully there was little in the way of substantial exaggeration (Chapter 4).

The case studies are formed from the statements of the interviewees. This is neither dogmatic nor restrictive. A range of views are collected that, by definition, are all of equal value. This in turn draws attention to the limits of traditional interview practice that records and describes, as opposed to the complexity approach that engages and interacts (Gerrits, 2012). The question then is how to use the material gathered to form reasonable assessments from an academic point of view and helpful recommendations from a policy-makers' point of view (Yin, 2012).

Complexity argues for the same patterns occurring at different levels and where the same pattern occurs at a number of different levels we are able to identify an attractor (Mitchell, 2009). With communities patterning may not be present. Communities are, for example, distinct from capital-generating organisations.

Furthermore, looking for patterning in communities may lead to trivial results such as community groups and governments both hold meetings (2.3.2). This was supported by the case study research that found little evidence of patterning and the presence of attractors. This means that the benefits of regarding communities in terms of patterning and attractors are not clear.

The case study write-up uses the format of the second interviews as a basis for a complexity-informed analysis that reflects both the nature of the subject being studied and the views of people directly involved (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013).

The resulting information was assessed in its own terms and framed in a set of common themes. These themes were analysed to produce the case study lessons (5.5). This differs from traditional case study research in that there is an emphasis on interviews, the interviews are of a non-traditional type, there is no particular emphasis placed on general lessons, and there is no special value placed on alleged objectivity (Woodside, 2010). The role of the researcher is to engage the interviewee and thereby reach an agreed understanding, and within this researcher and the interviewee may disagree on certain points (3.4).

5.1 The Interviews

The interviews were conducted under the following conditions and constraints:

- The interviews are about a set subject, namely Centre West and the Walker Hub.
- The interview time was monitored and no interview lasted more than two hours.
- The researcher offered the opportunity for additional comments to every interviewee.
- The researcher respected requests for comments and discussions to be amended or withdrawn¹⁶.

The first interview was primarily about what the interviewees chose to talk about. The researcher examined these contributions for key factors and they were ordered according to particular ends. No particular set of outcomes or matrix of importance were applied. Rather data was assessed in its own terms and set out relative to other demands and requirements. In this way a set of interactions, results and factors were produced. The second interview is an attempt to generate a rich complex responsive process. It was explicit about what is agreed, what is not agreed and what is not understood both on the part of the interviewee and of the researcher (3.2).

The second interview explored a number of common themes but not in a way that restricts the discussion. The interviewee was free to speak about what they believed to be important. Some interviewees were interested in the complexity approach being used and here the researcher explained the background to the interview process. The discussion attempted to draw out a rich, informative dialogue that is then available for complexity-informed analysis. This was successfully achieved albeit with a few awkward moments or silences (5.1).

¹⁶ One interviewee asked for amendments to their second interview. Two interviewees sent additional information to supplement their interviews.

This two-tier interview method is a key part of the research. Not only do the interviews tell us about the case under examination but they reveal the strengths and weakness of the complexity-based view of communities adopted. Each of the interviews took about an hour, a substantial amount of time. The first interview drew out the commitments of the interviewee. The second interview introduced complexity terms that were unfamiliar to the interviewees. The interviewee was then expected to reflect on the points raised. While this is a big ask, the majority of interviewees coped with this admirably. They were able to do this because they were being asked about their areas of knowledge and experience. Indeed this is the strength of the approach. It asks people what they know about and forms views based on the experience of those directly involved (4.2.2 & 4.3.2).

Theoretically, this is less than ideal. Two interviews may not be enough to generate a rich exchange. Further iterations may be desirable yet have been ruled out in principle. More time may be required to capture the full set of information available. A balanced set of interviewees may not be available and hence the comments and discussions may be distorted by the set of interviewees, such as many council staff and few community members. Some of these distortions may not be known through this study as the requisite information may not have been indicated (3.2).

Turning to the range of interviews, there was not a split between professionals and community members. Rather the relevant distinction was between the involved and the present yet uninvolved. So while several professionals gave full responses, several did not reply to requests or referred the researcher elsewhere. Equally several community members were aware of the issues raised and responded in full. Others were wary of the whole process and did not want to get involved (4.2.2 & 4.3.2).

On the question of interviewees misremembering, the statements made were checked against the documented record and the other interview transcripts. Where factual errors did occur these were ironed out by reference to these other sources. Where interviewees could not remember particular items they would warn the researcher about this. Such guidance is found to be an important part of the methodology employed (3.5).

5.2 The Organisations

Having explored Centre West and the Walker Hub in their own right it is clear that both serve strong communities and that both embody a lasting will to create a decent living environment and to provide services for local people. At the same time there are clear differences. NDC Westgate was governed by a board where elected residents were in the majority. There was no such resident input to the Walker Hub. Indeed the Walker Hub began as part of a NCC regeneration initiative, the HoW. NDC Westgate came about in part because of dissatisfaction with previous interventions in the area (4.2.3). The Walker Hub came about because of NCC's inability to carry out the original plan for the HoW (4.3.3).

It may be supposed that Centre West, rather than NDC Westgate, is more like the Walker Hub. However, Centre West is autonomous while the members of the Walker Hub sit very close to NCC. Indeed the WAD is owned and run by NCC. This means that the case studies have different types of origin.

There are other differences. NDC Westgate had money to spend whereas the Walker Hub had only the resources of the members. In Walker joint-bids were considered but came to nothing because there was no will to spend time on something that may lead to nothing (WH15).

The types of intervention were also different. With NDC Westgate the intervention was area-based; quite literally a line drawn on a map. With the Walker Hub the intervention is facility-based. PBCC, Central Walker Primary and the WAD are physical buildings. Yet the legacy of NDC Westgate is in large part the people who use the Beacon; and the legacy of the Walker Hub is the people who use PBCC, the people who use the WAD and the children who attend Central Walker Primary.

This raises the question of how far it is possible to generalise across cases. How different are the two cases really? Are the differences substantive or are they procedural? As discussed, the answers to these questions depend on individual perspectives and indeed personal and professional commitments (3.1).

From the community side, more social capital means more ability to cope with changes not only from the local council but from economic changes and national policy regimes (Dixit, Grossman & Helpman, 1997). This relates to the on-going resilience of the community, in other words the ability of the community to pick the ball up and run with it, their ability to recover from trauma, their ability to keep plodding on, and so on until such time as they cease (Shaw & Maythorne, 2013).

Here it is important to remember that the number of active community members who are willing to undertake responsible and onerous positions without pay is limited. This is not simply about building capacity in terms of offering training or engaging community organisers and so on. There is a need to connect and to nurture those connections, though that is easier said than done (Craig, 2011).

It is also important to appreciate the susceptibility of local people to burn out brought on by the constant rounds of meetings the demands on their time and on their resources. A degree of humility and respect may be expected from public sector officers who ask unpaid and sometimes untrained community members to do things for them in their own time (Mayo, 2000). With the case studies such humility and respect was not always found to be present. Indeed the absence of willingness to show an appropriate degree of respect appears to increase with the seniority of the officer in question (4.2.3 & 4.3.3).

5.3 Evidence of Self-Organisation

Thinking about the ability of a community to thrive, to tick over, to manage decline and so on brings us to the consideration of a community as a self-organising entity (Wagenaar, 2007). As has been discussed communities and hence community groups and organisations may be regarded as autonomous and self-organising. In other words communities are operationally closed. This means that, normally, there are sufficient activities within the community to maintain the community as a whole (2.2.10). In practical terms this means that communities proceed in terms of what is important to them. The case studies of Centre West and the Walker Hub illustrate this very well (4.2 & 4.3).

This leave us is a position to compare the lively and engaged self-organising community with the dead-hand of distant government policy. Communities are self-organising in terms of what they perceive to be their own needs. This self-organisation is constrained by the resources available to the community (Nousala & Hall, 2008).

In contrast, government policy is organised in terms of the doctrines of the governing party. These doctrines inform government commitments and these commitments are packaged into government actions. Thus, for communities, government policy is expressed as community interventions. Currently, these interventions are measured in terms of outputs and outcomes (West & Davis, 2011).

Centre West and the Walker Hub are very different in make up yet both focus their success on tangible results, that is the buildings. In the case of Centre West there is the Beacon and the asset portfolio. In the case of the Walker Hub there is Pottery Bank Community Centre, Central Walker Primary and the WAD. Given these results it would be a harsh judge who said that things had failed completely (4.2.3 & 4.3.3).

Yet where is the enthusiasm for the Hub? Where are the people volunteering to support it (NCVS, 2014a)? Where are the businesses that want to get involved with Hub activities? Where are the private sector donations, contributing to improvements in local life? Why aren't local communities involved in company corporate social responsibility programmes through the Hub? Why aren't VCS groups and schools outside the Hub area asking to join in and share?

Both Centre West and the Walker Hub were supported by government officers, local councillors and local people. In both cases many of the groups and community members were already in place. To some degree they were organised (4.2.3 & 4.3.3). So in neither case was there nothing to begin with. In neither case was NCC working with fresh air. Why then have vibrant community organisations been allowed to wither away? Will NCC and its partners allow this to continue until there really is no community presence?

What made things special in both communities was that they were given the opportunity, through resources and funding, to use their abilities to make things better for their areas. Much of the useful community activity was directed and managed by willing and enthusiastic but relatively junior council staff. That they did this when many of the senior council staff had no knowledge of what was happening, or were even hostile to local involvement, is to their credit. That they have been withdrawn or made redundant only adds to the current problems. Certainly, it will ensure that nothing like Centre West or the Walker Hub comes about in the foreseeable future (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2006).

All of which raises one notable question; where were the community members? With NDC Westgate the community were given a number of roles at the start (CW16). These slowly reduced as the working pattern became established. Nevertheless community representatives remained involved at board level and indeed remain involved in the management of Centre West (CW02; CW11).

For the Walker Hub the main community presence is through PBCC in particular the PBCC directors. This would suggest that things were, and are being, left to a small number of dedicated individuals (WH14). This raises the question; where is everyone else? Where are the new and renewing community members encouraged not only by the localism measures and Big Society but by the presence of large community organisations on their doorstep? There is then a need for members of local communities to take an appropriate measure of responsibility, step up and contribute to their own well-being (George, Sice, *et al*, 2011; Padley, 2013; Scott, 2014). Yet the case studies suggest there is little sign of this happening (4.2.4 & 4.3.4).

The case studies showed trust to be very important to building and maintaining the framework of complex interactions that allowed both projects to move forward. Central government, GONE, NCC, NDC Westgate and the Walker Hub, all involved needed to build trust in order to make space for the interactions that would create and maintain relationships (4.2.3 & 4.3.3). Trust tends to be built slowly, it takes time but once you have it things move more easily and issues can be resolved smoothly. The downside is that if you are trusted and you are not delivering, it takes time for this to come to light (Powe, 2013).

5.4 The Absence of Local Government

For the NCC officers actively involved, building a good working relationship with the local community was an important part of the early years of NDC Westgate (CW18). With PBCC things were slightly different. A good working relationship built up since the 1980s was torn apart by the original HoW plans. But thanks to the involvement of a fresh set of officers and the willingness of the community members, trust was re-established and a working relationship was maintained (WH03).

However, for all the talk of holistic approaches, co-operative councils and partnership working (CW07; WH01), public bodies are still divided into departments that act like silos. Each directorate has its own hierarchy and each hierarchy serves its own purposes (Lencioni, 2006). This means that there is no effective and efficient method for departments to work together with communities or indeed anyone else (Blatter, 2003).

In complexity a healthy situation is one where there are lots of connections that are integrated into the needs and activities of the agents. Yet public sector managers often operate within their own teams and react unfavourably to the presence of outside people and agencies (WH03). This is more than silo-working. From a community point of view such practices disregard local people and amount to a refusal to acknowledge a public duty (Teisman & Klijn, 2008).

In the case studies presented, one a national scheme, the other a major pilot project, the senior public managers are notable by their absence. For example, no one interviewed could ascribe any role to the then Director of Policy, Strategy and Communications, yet this person was the lead for NCC's community-based activities and is currently NCC's Assistant Chief Executive.

Some interviewees had heard of the then Director of Area Based Regeneration, yet none had anything positive to say about their contribution. They talked mainly about their role in the demolition of the Methodist Church on Walker Road. Their deputy, the Head of Regeneration, provoked ire among those who had heard of him, particularly in the NDC Westgate area but also in the Walker Hub area. The Head of Community Engagement and Empowerment was similarly absent from discussions though, where mentioned, they were praised for supporting the refurbishment of PBCC (WH14).

Can this situation be changed? What the community can do to influence, shape and change public sector attitudes and actions to fit their particular needs and desires (Quinn, 2013). If they work within the agenda set by the public sector they will be obliged to accept professional practices and procedures. If they act as community members then, as things stand, they are regarded as volunteers who are at best making helpful suggestions. Often they are regarded by officers as customers and not as equals (Callaghan & Wistow, 2008). Then again community members are inclined to offer suggestions and then retreat saying that they are not paid to carry out the changes they are requesting and that is what the officers are paid to do. So we have a number of agents following multiple but not necessarily competing agendas (Kingdon, 2014). This means that if communities are to have a genuine dialogue with professionals, changes are required on both sides (Whiteside & Mah, 2012).

There is then a strong and clear message for central government and for public sector managers and that is ask and listen to the community. Don't let junior staff do this for you. Take notice of what the community say and act on it. Then go back to your communities and ask them again. Encourage them to be positive and enable them to help you (IPPR, 2013a).

5.5 Lessons from the Case Studies

Considering the case studies together allows us to establish a certain amount of common ground. Both communities are long established. Both have been through major changes. Both have been the subject of government interventions, by the national NDC programme in the case of the West End, and by NCC's Regeneration Directorate in the case of Walker (CW11; WH08).

For academics studying communities we have seen that complexity methods offer a way of capturing the reality of what is going, not from a single point of view but in the round from a community point of view.

For policy-makers the case studies offer ways to capture the present as it is for those involved. There is no need to wait for data to be collected after a number of years. There is no need to create proxy indicators from the data to hand. Nor is there any need to come-up with a synthetic theory and hope for the best from experience.

For funders and performance managers the case studies offer a way to capture the effects of interventions on the people affected. They offer ways to assess situations in terms that matter to the people involved. By carefully selecting different communities it is also possible to compare them in a way that offers a guide to the viability of future projects.

From these considerations emerge three areas for particular attention.

1. Absence of Empowerment

Using the complexity-informed method specified, the topics of community involvement and empowerment were found to be notable by their absence. In particular, no one interviewed said there had been successful empowerment of local people or of local communities.

Some of those involved in NDC Westgate had empowerment as an ambition to be achieved through the close involvement of local people. This ambition had dissipated by the time Centre West took over (CW02; CW07; CW17). With the Walker Hub involvement and empowerment were notable by their absence (WH01; WH02; WH12; WH15).

In complexity terms this lack of interaction between communities and local government means that very little emerges. Where there are cases of good practice such as the NDC programme a lot of resources were invested and a lot of time was taken to build complexity into the community-council relationship. Yet even with NDC Westgate the activities were limited and those interviewed found little opportunity for meaningful interaction beyond the NDC project period (4.2.3).

2. Career Professionals

A valuable lesson shown by the complexity approach is the effect of professionalisation. The Centre West case study shows that if you want to have power, if you want to be involved in the meetings that count then you have to act professionally. That is not being more ethical, more responsible and more hard-working than everyone else. It is a straightforward requirement to be professional and to act ethically in public life (Wolff, 2011; Jay, 2014).

With community interventions we may expect to find a set of public sector managers acting for the public good; and a set of public sector officers whose focus is bringing about improvement (Coaffee, 2005; Broussine & Ahmad, 2013). However, the case studies presented show little evidence of this. Rather they show senior managers to be distant from what is

happening with the community. They show officers operating to deliver specific tasks set for them by their manager (WH07).

Further, the case studies reveal the effects of removing the frontline community staff and the junior managers that hold personal knowledge of the communities they work with. In their absence, a considered approach to sustaining good community facilities and effective, value for money community services is required (Mittleton-Kelly, 2011).

Here the complexity-informed approach picks up an important point. Traditional approaches are unlikely to consider such matters or present them in such a direct way. If they did then it is possible that the findings would go across the desk of those criticised and be amended (Large, 2006b).

3. Lack of Resilience

The complexity-informed research has shown serious implications for future national policy and for current local community life (Foot, 2009). The case studies indicate that Coalition policies and actions have alienated not only local communities themselves but the officers who work with those communities (CW15; WH16). This in turn raises a question around the future, namely just how resilient are such communities? The answer from the case studies is 'not very' (5.2).

The case studies show a relatively small number of individuals who have taken part in community activities and may continue to do so. But the removal of public sector support and of grant funding means that very few new people are likely to get involved and those already involved are becoming disillusioned (CW11; WH13).

The Coalition message is that it's up to communities to help themselves (Cameron, 2014) and that they are going to go on cutting government expenditure (HMT, 2014). At the same time they are removing support from the most vulnerable (Miliband, 2013). From the case studies we can see that in the Centre West and Walker Hub areas the social and economic interactions are producing an overall condition of vulnerability. This means that the members of both communities are likely to suffer seriously from

further moderate or small changes (Mackinnon & Driscoll-Derickson, 2012). Moreover, the case studies show no sign of a safety net, rather a reducing number of community-based services (5.4).

Overall then, the case studies give insights into understanding a community by taking a complexity approach. These insights emerge from the findings and may be summarised in terms of general lessons both for community policy and for the discipline of complexity.

For community policy the lessons of the case studies are:

- Engage the community and keep them engaged. Give them an incentive to be involved, such as joint-funding opportunities. Look to diversify and enhance their role. If some people drop out, engage others.
- Planning needs to include a role for the communities. Holding meetings is not sufficient. Business plans must take this into account.
- Community organisations should have a genuine stake in what is happening in their area. This helps to prevent exclusion, encourages participation, generates activity and increases development opportunities.
- Public policy needs to be specific and to fit with community desires. Working co-operatively on policies for an area benefits the community, the public sector and the private sector alike by openly agreeing what will be done, who will do it and how much will be provided.
- Agreeing specific local activities and outcomes helps build relationships between local people, community groups, public sector officers and service providers.

For complexity approaches to community studies the lessons of this case study are:

- All the people affected should be involved in making decisions about their community. This involvement needs to be genuine and comprehensive. It needs to be maintained.
- Emergence is a key factor in reviewing what has happened and in deciding what to do next.
- Focus on what is on the ground, in front of you. Looking for patterns is problematic and risks triviality.
- Plans should be flexible and open to change. Rigid project planning works only in its own terms and if everything stays the same. This stifles adaptation and does not accommodate emergence.
- What matters to people is what they see happening and how they understand it. Once interactions are established positive outcomes are able to emerge.

Both case studies are community interventions involving professional paid staff. They are not straightforward community groups. Nevertheless the evidence presented suggests that a complexity-informed approach would assist community groups and those that work with them in coming to terms with the activities they are involved with.

Reflecting on the case study material gives confidence in the method employed. The approach uncovers what the people concerned think. It does this by giving those involved assurance that the method will allow them opportunities to express their thoughts and that their thoughts will be considered fairly (Chapter 7).

Taking a complexity approach has allowed each case study to be assessed in terms of the interactions, what has emerged and what is emerging. There is no need and perhaps no purpose in appealing to other assessment frameworks. From a complexity perspective, adaptation, creative working, relevant interactions and emergence are in place. From a public policy perspective, the interview themes deliver factors influencing the measures that need to be taken. Careful discussion of both perspectives enables us to form a new way of understanding the effects of public policy (Gerrits, 2012).

The case studies show that complexity offers insights into communities and community programmes that are not achieved by traditional approaches. They show that complexity allows insightful presentation of the views of those involved. This in turn allows the extent of involvement of those involved to be shown clearly. This includes the contribution of those not always considered by traditional approaches such as community members and senior council officers.

Chapter 6: Findings of the Research

The thesis has examined how complexity applies to the social domain (Chapter 2); developed a complexity approach based on this examination (Chapter 3); conducted two case studies to test this approach (Chapter 4); and discussed the relevant advantages and disadvantages (Chapter 5).

This chapter sets out the findings of the research including lessons from the complexity approach developed, the methodology devised and the insights for complexity approach in understanding community dynamics. The findings are set out and discussed in terms of what is valuable, what the limitations are, and who they are useful for.

6.1 The Complexity Approach Developed

A complexity-informed approach was found to be capable of engaging with communities and identifying their needs as they judge them to be and in ways that traditional approaches do not (2.4).

Traditional approaches were found to use evidence to apply and evaluate information in terms of the procedures set for gathering the evidence. These procedures are set in advance of the investigation hence both the evidence and the evaluation are not put in terms of those affected (2.2.12). This means that communities are investigated in terms of what is considered to be of interest by government or by the research institution. In this way the community view is usually taken as a means to an end and not as an end in itself (Kant, 2002).

The thesis developed a complexity approach to the study and assessment of communities that not only includes but focusses on the community view. There were found to be several valuable aspects to this (2.3.8). The literature review showed that complexity-based approaches offer a way to use our knowledge to understand and influence real problems (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013; Cairney, 2012b; Geyer and Rihani, 2010). This complexity approach to communities was formed into a methodology that was tested and analysed (Chapter 3).

In this way complexity approaches to community studies have been shown to be open, flexible, insightful, confidence-building, and engaging (4.2 & 4.3). They do this in part by abandoning extended metaphors and mathematical models and by considering social phenomena, such as people living in communities, in their own terms (5.5).

Particularly important is the inclusion of the community point of view and whether a complexity approach can be used to capture what a community thinks, feels and wants. This was looked at in theory and found to be possible (Chapter 2). An interview-based methodology was devised to examine this possibility (Chapter 3). This methodology was tested by undertaking two case studies (Chapter 4) that were then analysed in terms of the research question (Chapter 5). Together this showed that complexity approaches work and have much to offer in this area (Chapter 6).

At the same time not every aspect of complexity was found to be useful for addressing communities. In particular, modelling is not found to be helpful (2.3.2). Applying complexity to the social takes us to beliefs and decision-making. It examines what is happening in a particular case. This means that models and systems do not help in the consideration of interactions based in the present (3.1).

The complexity-informed approach devised is useful for government departments, academic research institutions and community organisations. Taking complexity considerations on board can assist government to move from centrally controlled community interventions and performance management to a more flexible understanding of local situations (2.3.8). This is because complexity considerations view local people as more able to understand and adapt to changes in local conditions than those not directly involved (3.5).

Overall, the complexity considerations raised by the thesis mean that central government should rely less on pre-determined actions that follow set targets. Instead they should give community organisations freedom to learn from their experiences, good, bad and indifferent, and to adapt accordingly. In addition, regarding communities as central in the consideration of what affects them will assist academic research to be more relevant, appropriate and accurate (5.5).

6.2 The Methodology Devised

The thesis has devised a complexity-informed methodology for the production of case studies to assess community groups. This allows communities to be researched in a complexity-informed way and opens the way for community interventions that are based on community views and needs (Chapter 3).

The research developed an innovative two-stage interview methodology based on complexity-informed considerations. An important point raised by the methodology is that public policy-making requires more than evidence gathering. Taking a lead from complexity the thesis regards the experience of those involved to be the key to understanding what is going on. Insofar as this is the case the thesis argues that public policy should be formed from the evidence provided by such an approach. In doing this the thesis may appear to adopt an evidence-based policy-making approach (Cairney, 2012b). However, simply gathering evidence will not produce an effective policy. The information requires interpretation and context. In this thesis a complexity interpretation is offered, and the importance of context is emphasised as a key contribution to policy formation (Chapter 3).

There were, however, found to be limitations to the methodology devised both in general and in practical terms. In general asking people to reflect delivers specific knowledge about particular situations. This knowledge is what is needed to enable policies and interventions to be relevant and appropriate. Without such knowledge it is not possible to develop the awareness of those concerned for use in the future. With the case studies presented, there were a sufficient number of suitable interviewees to make this possible. However, that all communities are different means there is no prescription that can guarantee success though if enough people learn to develop their awareness and develop sensitivity to key areas then everything should turn out all right. If it does not, then they can try again forewarned and forearmed but there are no guarantees (Stacey, 2007).

Turning to practical considerations, the complexity approach used relies on finding appropriate interviewees and finding them in sufficient numbers. This may be problematic where historic situations are being examined and also where the actual number of people involved was very low (3.2).

Once the interviewees have been obtained there is a further difficulty in asking people to discuss matters in terms of complexity, a discipline that will very probably be unfamiliar to them. Both factors represent limitations on the utility of the complexity approach developed. With the case studies presented there was a suitable group of willing interviewees. Nevertheless, it is easy to envisage cases where those who participated have moved away or may decline to be interviewed (5.1).

The complexity-informed methodology is found to be useful for those who are interested in engaging communities. There are the local people themselves whether paid staff or volunteers in their own community. Academics studying communities can use this complexity method to capture the reality of what is going on and not be fixed to a single point of view. Public policy-makers can use this complexity method to capture the present as it is for those involved. There is no need to come-up with a theory, apply it and then hope for the best. There is no need to rely on data to be collected after a number of years.

6.3 Understanding Community Dynamics

The thesis has developed insights for understanding community dynamics in terms of complexity. Complexity-based approaches are found to be valuable because they are able to address each community as discrete and self-defining (2.3.8). They are also able to produce ways to evaluate key aspects of communities in their own terms and so give insights into the application of outside interventions (Chapter 3).

A complexity-informed approach is able to conduct research and to produce evaluations that are more-timely than other approaches. A complexity-informed approach is able to do this in ways that are less general and therefore more relevant than traditional approaches. There is, for example, no need to wait for government policy programmes or national evaluation. And with a complexity-informed approach local details are not lost within big data sets (Chapter 4).

The case studies have shown that communities can indeed be regarded as complex and that ways of working with communities may be developed that take this into account. This shows that while complexity is valuable for assessing communities, communities are able to make a valuable contribution to the development of complexity (Chapter 5).

The thesis addresses the nature of communities and finds that communities can be autonomous and capable of self-organising (2.3.2). Autonomous can mean independent but not self-organising for example a community group serviced by council officers, whereas self-organising implies independence from any other group (Fuchs, 2002). This means it is misguided to approach communities as if they were a government department through a sequence of time-limited projects (2.2.9).

It is also wrong to attempt to organise or regard communities as a number of projects. This means that handing control from the public sector to communities, whether in the name of localism or co-operative councils, is structurally problematic. There is no guarantee that communities will behave as if they are part of the public sector and a good chance that they will not (2.2.10).

Adopting a complexity approach means you cannot have a one size fits all public policy that takes the same approach to different communities (Taylor, 2003). The inadequacies of such an idea and the benefits of taking a case-by-case approach were to some extent recognised by the NDC programme (Lawless, 2007). Taking a case-by-case approach may be trickier and more expensive to implement than imposing a general model but stands more chance of success both in financial terms and in terms of improving the lives of community members (Fraser, 1995).

While traditional interventions have fallen short of what is required to produce lasting improvement in local communities, applying a complexity-informed methodology allows interventions to become more appropriate, timely and responsive. In particular it means that public money will be more likely to deliver what communities want and need (5.5).

The thesis therefore finds communities to be genuinely complex, involving different kinds of people involved in different kinds of activity. This complexity would suggest a greater number of choices and alternative ways forward than the implementation of a single policy or plan. However, as the cases studies illustrate, community groups currently have a limited range of options. They are, if you like, in a state of relative simplicity (4.2.4 & 4.3.4). This suggests that to be successful community groups should take on more activities, get involved in more events and mix things up. Yet all of this takes time and money, just what people in such situations may be lacking (Adam, 2003). So while wealthy communities may have a rich, complex set of options, deprived communities will tend to have fewer, more straightforward options (Jones, 2011).

Complexity-informed thinking is useful to all concerned because it recognises the intrinsic value of all concerned (2.1.2). Taking the approach adopted by the thesis opens the way for those who are distant to move into the community's circle of concern. In that way they may contribute to the community's well-being and the community contributes to each member's well-being (Nussbaum, 2013).

For public policy, taking a complexity-informed approach enables mutual understanding and co-operation that can allow successful policy implementation. It has been shown to encourage a community approach that asks 'how can we do this together?' (5.5). In this way taking a complexity-informed approach is able to support genuine localism, namely decision-making and action by communities for communities (2.3.9).

6.4 Answering the Research Question

The thesis asked: What insight does a complexity approach give to the study of communities? To answer this question, the thesis presented a literature review, developed a complexity-informed approach from which a methodology was developed and applied to two case studies. This work was used to produce the findings of the research.

While recognising the limited scope of the research undertaken, the findings have shown that complexity offers opportunities to develop public policy in a way that not only makes room for community concerns but takes them to be of central concern (5.5). In doing this complexity can help central and local government form community policy in more appropriate ways than previously used. In particular, taking a complexity-informed approach offers a mechanism for community organisations to initiate policy-making (Cilliers, 2010). In doing this complexity offers a way for groups to articulate their approaches, their activities, and their needs in a way that fits with the methods and understanding of government officers and academics (2.3.9).

The thesis therefore finds that, contrary to the established practice, community views should not be made to fit into existing policy-making procedures. Rather, policy-makers should ensure that the views expressed by communities and the lessons learned from work done with communities are given priority in the formation of public policies (Donnelly, 2014). From this we see that basing public policy on a selection of gathered and collated evidence is not sufficient to ensure that the policies produced are effective and lasting (Cairney, 2012b).

For the formation and implementation of a complexity-informed public policy those involved should be regarded as active contributors to the interactions that form and reform their communities (5.5). In doing this there is no worthwhile consideration of outsiders and insiders or of professionals and residents. All involved are acting in consideration of the same ends (Hill & Hupe, 2006). This

means that for community activity and community policy there is no worthwhile distinction between professional interests and residents' concerns (3.5).

Furthermore, communities can be open to different yet valid interpretations (2.3.8). This makes it important to understand the nature of the community involved in relation to the approach being employed (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Here the complexity-informed approach developed (3.1) fits well with the characterisation of complexity as a position which holds that there is always more than one way of doing things. This may be viewed as a positive recognition of the active and dynamic complexity that manifests itself all around us (Lenz & Dallmann (eds.), 2005).

The thesis finds that adopting a complexity-informed approach is useful for all those concerned with communities be they local people, local government officers, councillors, central government staff, MPs or government officials. In particular, with the recognition of iterative emergence, taking a complexity-informed approach can lead to continuous, on-going improvements for communities and the organisations working with them (Blackman, 2000 & 2001). This is valuable to those living and working in a community and to the politicians and officers who are responsible for the well-being of that community (O'Donnell, Deaton, *et al*, 2014).

Moreover, the research has produced an approach to community policy based on complexity-informed considerations. This rejects policy formation on the basis of professionals and customers or service-users. In doing this it opens the way for fully-resourced, co-operative working between communities, government and professional agencies (Putnam, 2000; Mintzberg, 2014). This finding is particularly important for professionals who work with communities and their managers. The consequences of not working in this can be grave (Jay, 2014).

As a result of these findings, funders and performance managers have a way to capture the effects of their interventions on the people affected. Valid assessments can be made in terms that make sense to the people involved. By selecting communities in different geographical areas it will be possible to compare cases and produce a guide to the likely viability of future activities and interventions.

6.5 Summary of Findings

Complexity science comes from the physical sciences not from the social sciences. Nevertheless there are common areas between social science practice and the complexity point of view, and a number of social science practitioners using complexity insights in their work.

To bring complexity considerations into the community sphere the thesis has taken a particular view of complexity (Chapter 1), followed a line of argument within this view (Chapter 2) and formed a methodology for researching communities in a complexity-informed way (Chapter 3). While traditional methodologies look for answers to a number of set and specified questions, a complexity-informed methodology looks at what emerges from interactive discussions with those involved. The complexity-informed methodology was applied to two case studies (Chapter 4) and has been found to produce informative and useful findings (Chapter 5).

In this way complexity has been shown to be applicable to communities in the following ways:

- i) A complexity approach can be used to capture what the community thinks, feels and wants.
- ii) Communities are shown to be self-organising or capable of being self-organising.
- iii) Complexity approaches to the examination of communities have been shown to be open, flexible, insightful, confidence-building, and engaging. They do this by abandoning metaphors and mathematical models and by considering social phenomena such as people living and working in communities as they actually are.
- iv) Complexity allows communities a way to articulate choices. In considering austerity or funding shortfalls this may mean proposing alternatives to closure or putting up with things.

- v) Community needs and government policy are very different kinds of things. Complexity may be used to suggest and to formulate ways in which one could support the other.
- vi) Complexity shows that to be effective public policy needs to offer choices to local people as to how they want to interpret localism and establish a genuine Big Society in their area.
- vii) Good policy-making requires more than evidence gathering and assessment of the evidence gathered. Each situation is different. Each situation is changing continually. Complexity recognises this, giving space and allowing time for each situation to mature.
- viii) A complexity-informed approach can be used to widen the scope of policy development beyond officials and experts to make room for community contributions.
- ix) A complexity approach opens the way for community interventions based on community views and needs. In doing this complexity is able to support decision-making and positive action by communities for communities.

The thesis has shown a complexity-informed approach to be valuable in the consideration of communities. This approach emphasises the contribution of all involved, not just professionals and experts. At the same time it rejects the pigeon-holing of real people as customers or service-users. In doing this the thesis has found a complexity-informed approach to communities to be of benefit to public policy formation and implementation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis takes communities as important in their own right (1.4). It seeks to find an effective way to involve them in the actions taken by government and others that affect them (1.5). In doing this, the thesis recognises that it is swimming against the tide. Too often communities are ignored and actions are taken on the basis of government desires or are put down to economic necessity. Where community members are invited to take part in consultations, their circumstances are not usually considered nor are their full range of views recorded (Myers, 2004). Too often the humanity present goes unrecognised and human interests are ignored (Gaita, 2000).

This implies that a different public policy process is required, one that gives the interests of the community full value (Mettler & Sorelle, 2014). The suggestion here is that this is what a complexity-informed approach can deliver. Such an approach differs from traditional methods by recognising that public policies are for the public and that community interventions are for the community. Unlike the current situation, public and private sector considerations should only be relevant insofar as they are able to assist the public and can enable community wishes to be achieved (Mintzberg, 2014).

The aim of the research presented in this thesis has been to develop and apply a complexity approach to the study of communities. There is a need for such a complexity approach because understanding community dynamics has always been a challenge for policy-makers and the community policies they have applied have often been ineffective (2.2).

To meet this aim the thesis explored and evaluated an alternative, complexity approach to community studies. This was achieved by exploring relevant literature on complexity and on community studies. A gap in prior knowledge and practice was identified (2.3). The thesis met this gap with the formation of a complexity-informed approach to community studies that put the perspective of the community at the core of the investigation. To enable the use of such an approach the thesis

developed an innovative two-stage interview methodology based on complexity-informed considerations (Chapter 3).

The methodology was applied to two community-based organisations in Newcastle upon Tyne. It was acknowledged that not everyone who may have been considered relevant was able to participate. Nevertheless, by analysing the contributions of those who did take part, the case studies were able to capture and present relevant information that may be used to bring about positive change (Chapter 4).

The two resulting case studies allowed a comparative assessment of the complexity-informed methodology. Complexity factors such as interaction and emergence were used to identify important relationships affecting communities and to assess social, economic and environmental changes from the community point of view (Chapter 5).

A complexity-informed approach has been shown to be suitable for analysing communities accurately and effectively, allowing a holistic and realistic view of the community to be formed. Unlike information offered in subject reports and project evaluations the complexity-informed approach allows the actions of those involved and the consequences of those actions to be shown clearly (6.1).

The complexity-informed approach so-developed can be used to produce direct and timely assessments. There is no filtering through national averages or waiting for the end of project report. These techniques may be adapted to study any situation where people meet and interact with each other. In doing this the thesis has shown complexity to be of use within the discipline of social research (6.2).

Having discussed the relationship between communities and government policy and having assessed the case studies conducted, the thesis found that effective public policy needs genuine community involvement. In particular it needs to offer genuine choices to local people as to how they want to interpret local government policy in their area. Furthermore, the thesis suggests that genuine change and

lasting improvement requires the active involvement of the community. To achieve such active involvement a thorough understating of the community dynamics is required (6.3).

By addressing these issues through a literature review, by taking a complexity-informed approach, by developing a suitable case study methodology and by conducting two case studies using these insights, the way has been opened for community studies and community interventions to be based on community views and needs. In doing this complexity is shown to be able to support genuine localism, that is decision-making and action by communities for communities. Such a complexity-informed approach together with genuine local decision-making is found to be a suitable basis both for community studies and for public policy formation (6.4).

In these ways complexity approaches to communities have been shown to be open, flexible and insightful. They may be used to build the confidence of those participating in community activity. They are able to engage with agencies responsible for community life and with professionals working in communities. The thesis has thus set out and investigated insights that complexity approaches bring to the study of communities (6.5).

The next step for this research is to work with communities to establish what each particular community is seeking to achieve and then to support them to achieve this (Childs & Cowley, 2011). A further step would be to use the complexity-informed approach developed to meet particular requirements such as the needs of a deprived community (Walby, 2007). In recognising this, the thesis looks to the future, to deeper ways of understanding communities, and to the formation of better public policies through a mutual understanding of our society (Lenihan, 2012).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Information Sheet

Northumbria University

Interview Information Sheet

To accompany CEIS Research Ethics Sub-Committee CONSENT FORM – C

Project Title: Complexity and Communities PhD

Name of the Researcher: David Large

Complexity is a way of looking at the world through interactions. These interactions could be physical, logical, behavioural or social.

The researcher is examining complexity theory in the social domain and the use of complexity tools to this domain. This is done via desktop research and case study.

As an interviewee you are being asked to assist the case study section of the research.

Your participation will consist of two interviews:

The first interview will last about 1 hour and will simply be a chance for the researcher to hear your experiences of the case study subject.

The second interview will take place about two months after the first. By then the researcher will have considered what you said and reflected on their own thoughts. The second interview will last about 45 minutes. The researcher will share their thoughts with you. This will enable you to check the researchers understanding and correct any misapprehensions. More importantly it will allow you and the researcher to come to a common understanding of the interactions that took place. It is hoped that this will be useful for you especially when compared to monitoring forms and formal assessments of projects.

For your information, the researcher will include the case study in the body of the PhD. Quotes from your interviews may appear, suitably anonymised. Similarly for any resulting papers or presentations. The researcher is happy to talk with you about this.

On a personal note the researcher hopes that the case study will allow the PhD to show the practical use of complexity tools as a better way of understanding community desires and actions. If this can be done then you will have helped the researcher make a contribution to knowledge and possibly to practice in this area.

Thank you.

Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form

Northumbria University
CEIS Research Ethics Sub-Committee
CONSENT FORM – C

Project Title:

Name of the Researcher or Project Consultant:

Name of participant:

Participating Organisation:

I consent to take part in this project.

I have had the project explained to me by the researcher/consultants **and been given an information sheet**. I have read and understand the purpose of the study.

I am willing to be interviewed.

I understand and am happy that the discussions I will be involved in may be audio-taped and notes will be taken.

I understand I can withdraw my consent at any time, without giving a reason and without prejudice.

I know that my name and details will be kept confidential and will not appear in any printed documents.

The tapes and any personal information will be kept secure and confidential. They will be kept by the researcher/project consultants until the end of the project. They will then be disposed of in line with Northumbria University's retention policy.

Anonymised summaries (if required) will be produced from the discussions to be used in the project report and in other publications. None of the participants will be identified in the project report or in other publications based on this project. Copies of any reports or publications will be available on request to participants.

I have been given a copy of this Consent Form.

Signed:

Date:

Researcher/Project consultant: I confirm that I have explained the project to the participant and have given adequate time to answer any questions concerning it.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3: Centre West Case Study Interview Questions

Centre West Case Study

First Interview Theme Sheet

Interviewee:

Date:

How did you get involved in New Deal?

What was the most important thing you were involved with?

Who were the most influential people?

What do you think of Centre West?

Would you like to see more projects like the Beacon?

What do you think should happen next?

What would you say to another group setting up a similar organisation?

Centre West Case Study

Second Interview Theme Sheet

Interviewee:

Date:

Theme A - Overview

You began by talking about ...

This involved a number of partners ...

Was this a good way to approach the issues you face?

Theme B - Activities

.... were very important to you and the project.

It seems to me that ... could have been involved too.

Do you think that ... were missing?

Would their involvement have made a significant difference?

Did anything emerge or develop as you went on?

Theme C – Public Sector Role

A lot has been said about the council and the public sector, such as ...

Would a different sort of council involvement have been more useful?

Would it have been better not to include the council at all?

Theme D - Results

You seem dis/pleased with the outcome. In particular ...

Was this because of your expectations (not) being met?

Was this because of particular results such as Centre West?

Theme E – National View

The current government has engaged on localist agenda. It also has the Big Society initiative.

How much did the success/failure depend on the training provided?

Would more training have produced better outcomes/results?

Having been through a successful government process what do you think should happen next?

What would you like to see happen?

Theme F – Way Forward

A lot of time and money was spent on NDC and Centre West.

Do you think this type of activity is a good use of public money?

Do you see something like Greening Wingrove as the next step on from NDC in community governance?

Do we need to go further?

Or are such programme a waste of money?

If so then how should the money be spent e.g. loans to businesses?

Or should it be used to subsidise tax rises or even fund tax cuts?

Who would benefit from these measures?

Appendix 4: Centre West Case Study Interviewees

Interviewees were interviewed twice according to the method discussed in the body of the thesis. The dates of both interviews appear below, next to the person's name.

CW01. Centre West Staff Member, 19/9/12 & 22/5/13

CW02. Centre West Staff Member, 26/9/12 & 19/2/13

CW03. NDC Westgate Board Sound Recordist, 30/10/12 & 27/3/13

CW04. Centre West Board Member, 13/9/12 & 8/5/13

CW05. NDC Westgate Evaluation Team Member, 11/10/12 & 19/4/13 by email

CW06. Moorside Community Coordinator, 15/10/12 & 6/3/13

CW07. Centre West Board Member, 26/4/13 & 12/7/13

CW08. Deputy Leader, Newcastle City Council, 17/12/12 & 4/4/13

CW09. Ward Councillor and Centre West Board Member, 2/8/12 & 28/1/13 then 3/4/13

CW10. Centre West Staff Member, 8/1/13 & 1/3/13

CW11. Centre West Board Member, 13/9/12 & 13/3/13

CW12. Former Government Office North East Officer, 20/12/12 & 8/3/13

CW13. Former Chief Executive, NDC Westgate. Agreed to take part then did not respond to appointment requests.

CW14. Community Activist, 4/12/12 & due 12/2/13 but had moved away.

CW15. Ward Councillor and Centre West Board Member, 22/10/12 & 11/4/13

CW16. Centre West Staff Member, 31/7/12 & 2/10/12 then 19/2/13

CW17. Former NDC Westgate Staff Member, 17/10/12 & 28/3/13

CW18. Former NCC Policy Officer, 12/12/12 & 10/4/13

CW19. NCC Community Development Worker, 14/3/13 & 10/4/13

Note: The most relevant title is given for each person.

Appendix 5: Walker Hub Case Study Interview Questions

Walker Hub Case Study

First Interview Theme Sheet

Interviewee:

Date:

How did you get involved in the Walker Hub?

What is the most important thing you are involved with?

Who are the most influential people?

What do you think of the Walker Hub?

Would you like to see the community running more projects like the Walker Hub?

What do you think should happen next?

What would you say to another group setting up a similar organisation?

Walker Hub Case Study

Second Interview Theme Sheet

Interviewee:

Date:

Theme A - Overview

You began by talking about ...

This involved a number of partners ...

Was this a good way to approach the issues you face?

Theme B - Activities

.... were very important to you and the project.

It seems to me that ... could have been involved too.

Do you think that ... were missing?

Would their involvement have made a significant difference?

Did anything emerge or develop as you went on?

Theme C – Public Sector Role

A lot has been said about the council and the public sector, such as ...

Would a different sort of council involvement have been more useful?

Would it have been better not to include the council at all?

Theme D - Results

You seem dis/pleased with the outcome. In particular ...

Was this because of your expectations (not) being met?

Was this because of particular results such as the refurbished TGCC?

Theme E – National View

The current government has engaged on localist agenda. It also has the Big Society initiative.

How much did the success/failure depend on the training provided?

Would more training have produced better outcomes/results?

Having been through a successful government process what do you think should happen next?

What would you like to see happen?

Theme F – Way Forward

A lot of time and money was spent on TGCC.

Do you think this type of activity is a good use of public money?

Do you see something like the new TGCC as the next step in community governance?

Do we need to go further?

Or are such programme a waste of money?

If so then how should the money be spent e.g. loans to businesses?

Or should it be used to subsidise tax rises or even fund tax cuts?

Who would benefit from these measures?

Appendix 6: Walker Hub Case Study Interviewees

Interviewees were interviewed twice according to the method discussed in the body of the thesis. The dates of both interviews appear next to the person's name below.

WH01. NCC Head of Community Engagement and Empowerment, 23/5/13 & 28/6/13

WH02. NCC Community Planner, 21/5/13 & 21/6/13

WH03. NCC Area Programme Director, 28/4/13 & 1/7/13

WH04. Deputy Head Teacher, Walker Technology College, 20/5/13 & 8/7/13

WH05. Director, Community Catering Initiative, and Board Member, Pottery Bank CC. Discussed the interview topics but did not agree to the interview process.

WH06. East Area Co-ordinator, Newcastle City Council. Interview dates were offered but then their team was disbanded. They left employment with the council and did not respond to further messages.

WH07. Project Manager, Aura Newcastle, 29/4/13 & 3/7/13

WH08. Board Member, Pottery Bank CC. Declined the interview process due to poor health. Informal discussions took place.

WH09. Development Worker, Places for People on secondment to Newcastle City Council, 6/8/13 & 19/8/13

WH10. Head Teacher, Central Walker Church of England Primary School, 17/5/13 & 26/7/13

WH11. NCC Community Development Worker, 30/5/13 & 25/7/13

WH12. Staff Member, Action for Children, 5/7/13 & 7/8/13

WH13. Director, Community Catering Initiative and Board Member, Pottery Bank CC. Discussed the interview topics but did not agree to the interview process.

WH14. Former NCC Facilities Manager, 30/5/13 & 4/7/13

WH15. NCC Sports Engagement Officer, 20/5/13 & 5/7/13

WH16. Ward Councillor, 1/5/13 & 28/6/13

WH17. Manager, Action for Children, 5/7/13 & 7/8/13

Note: The most relevant title is given for each person.

Appendix 7: Interview Transcript

There follows an anonymised transcript of an actual interview. This shows how the interviews were conducted, first for Interview One then for Interview Two.

Case Study Interview One

Good things

- Democratic board structure
- Weighted for the community
- Exposed people to the democratic process

But ... didn't enjoy the arduous meetings. There was lots of argument and anger, mostly due to the distrust between the communities and the council. People had to learn about board meetings etc.

Centre West got to the point where the board was well-functioning, had a good system of project appraisal, a good grasp of the programme, and stuck to the code of conduct.

NDC worked well towards the end and was highly rated.

There were no projects ... didn't support – the proposals were based on community meetings, and from existing areas for people to bid on: health, environment, crime – all sorts of things were identified.

The NDC police team was a real success.

As things matured, through away days, they came up with the best strategy e.g. not to have a chief executive, purchase some properties to make a lasting mark.

Centre West

The move to Centre West was carefully planned.

Centre West set up the Beacon with Groundwork South Tyneside. ... sits on the board of the Beacon. It's getting to the point that it's making money, not costing. It pays for the Centre West staff and there will be additional income to spend on the area.

The Centre West Board is basically the same as NDC. The aims are basically the same too; closing the gap against the city averages. ... There isn't the same level of support as NDC. They've been moving ourselves from programme spend to programme management. The situation has been stabilised and now they're deciding where to go next. A number of things went. Now where next?

The churn in the west end is not as bad as it used to be. So there aren't as many people asking – What was NDC? What did it do? But do people know about NDC and Centre West. They need to make sure they do.

They need to think how to take things forward with Groundwork.

One regret is that the council was not supportive. This is a great shame. They could have learned about how to get people involved. Councils tend to work in silos.

People

The NDC board was relatively self-appointed They were already involved with their communities. They were people who stepped forward and represented the communities in the west end; ... because of frustration with what had happened.

The jobs and employment programme did not go as well as expected.

The children's work was good – other groups too.

... did a good job.

... did a good job as

... not so. His relationship with Groundwork over the Beacon caused problems.

The officers from GONE were very helpful.

Once they got over the hostile first years things started to work very well.

... is very good.

The accounts manager was a real rock.

Things worked well and were accountable. No one abused the system. They ran a scheme for laptops and mobile phones for community reps. They were talking to the community.

The board residents went to other parts of the country and were quite surprised how good Westgate NDC was. Other NDSs were run by the council.

The reps were representative. One or two oddballs, yes. ... thought the world was against her/him.

Difficulties yes but the activity and proposal doc was established by the fourth year.

And proposals didn't get to the board until they would fly.

Projects

It's harder to spend money than you realise. They made imaginative arrangements. By agreement, the council held some funds until NDC was ready to spend them.

One big failure was the problem of the back lanes. Middlesbrough gated them but NDC didn't want to do that. They tried all sorts of things but they didn't work. Even now the state of the back lanes is pretty bad.

Health went pretty well. The data was very difficult to interrogate.

Schools breakfast and after-school clubs went pretty well.

Some of the environmental projects were not finished off. They ran out of money.

With employment they didn't try to provide lots of jobs but they did do things like improving Stanhope Street.

The best thing was buying Condercum House from the DfE. Centre West is now their landlord. They came to Centre West recently to give answers on the forthcoming benefit changes e.g. the universal benefit. I'm pleasantly surprised by the number who will lose – only about 6 families in Newcastle are currently over the £25k limit.

Statistically there hasn't been much slippage since NDC ended but the gap remains between the west and the rest of the city.

... supported all the projects. ... modified some of them. They worked pretty well.

Would have liked

More progress on environmental projects – Wingrove Road and Stanhope Street were good, not so good in the Elswick Triangle.

I would have liked more money to put into the tower blocks in Cruddas Park to have stopped the demolitions that took place. That would have been good.

I'm glad they got the Rye Hill games area.

There's a whole lot more that could have been done.

Building the Beacon had been good. And all our properties have been leased out. People are working in the area, in our buildings. Those that live here and those that commute, both contribute to the local economy.

The Hat Trick Project had its difficulties but it's turned out well.

The Science City projects worked well.

Centre West redrew the area of benefit to include New Mills. That's good.

Since NDC there's been little visible impact – they've been learning how to get along.

Community cohesion

NDC had a role in this.

NDC Westgate tried very hard – elections, training courses, community strategy

That part of the city is mixed. This was a challenge.

What is a community? There's no really good definition.

That cohesion has risen can be seen through the fall in crime – thanks to the NDC policing scheme and the improved educational standards.

There have been no overt racial or faith-based outbreaks in that part of the city. The Tottenham riots spread but not to Newcastle.

The things they did seemed to bring people together. They tried to improve the image of the area so there was less churn and a rise in the level of satisfaction.

Centre West would like to enhance this but has a lot less money and is just starting to think about a different kind of project. Centre West hasn't got to work like NDC. Besides they've lost the community. They need to think what the real purpose is. The people on the NDC board were there to spend the money. There's not the same attraction as NDC so they need to look at the broad situation rather than specific aims.

Economic impact

The environmental improvements are there to be seen.

The impact on jobs is difficult to judge. Much of the NDC job activity was tied to the NDC money – when that stopped, so did the jobs.

NDC Westgate generated more employment and closed the gap in part. The task now is to close it fully.

Constraints

NDC had £50 million; £5m each year for 10 years.

But it's not for communities to work within arbitrary spend profiles.

The onus is on government to recognise that projects take time to ramp up and get going.

£0.7m was not spent, a relatively low figure.

It's for government to learn from us what they should be doing differently.

There should be a good lead-in time – two years for prepping the document for government and to get the board set up.

The hardest bit was the lack of individual capacity which was a barrier to effective board working. But people won't take part unless they have money to spend.

There's also the question of tapering in and tapering out.

The community took the lead and that is important.

Westgate proved that community-led organisations can be very effective. It's a shame that the local authority hasn't learned from that. The examples are there but so is institutional resistance.

The future

It's up to Centre West to decide how to raise funds. The NDC legacy and the Beacon are both there.

The Centre West board still has ... from NDC.

So where are they going? They need to be viable, flexible, entrepreneurial. They want organisations to want a rep on the Centre West board.

They've expanded the area from NDC

They still have the same aims as NDC

They're committed to elections though maybe the board should be a mix of community reps and key partners.

The focus is on employment

They want to make the Beacon more of a community centre, less an office block.

They want to talk to NCC about the role Centre West could play. ...has talked to ... but has yet to talk to other colleagues.

It's time for a rethink.

Case Study Interview Two

Anonymised version

Researcher's Note: 'DL' refers to the researcher.

Theme A - Overview

DL - You began by talking about community representation and the importance of having a board with a majority of residents. Why was this so important?

The community would have rejected any bid where it was not in a majority. So it was important for the community to have an overall majority.

DL - There seems to have been a lot of unpredictability in what happened. Would you say that this was a good thing?

Yes there was unpredictability but I, nor anyone, knew what would happen. It was experiential learning, learning by doing. Things were put in place as they learned e.g. the code of conduct.

DL - Overall, was this a good way to approach the issues NDC faced? Does this approach suit Centre West? If not, what modifications would you like to see?

Overall it was a good way though a lot more time and money would have helped.

This system carried on into Centre West but they don't have much money and can't get the same community input.

Centre West is reinventing itself now. Watch this space.

Theme B – Activities

DL - Resident participation and engagement were very important to you and the project. It seems to me that even more residents could have been involved. Was it simple a question of time and resources? Would there have been any point to this?

Yes, it was time and resources.

DL - How much did what happened at the board affect local people?
Some people like to dip in and out; some stay the full course. You have to expect this. I'm not unhappy about it.

DL - Did anything emerge and develop as you went on?

NDC Westgate ran a lot of projects. It closed the gap. This improved the area and reduced churn. This made the area more stable and cohesive.

DL - Do you think that anyone was missing – groups, partners, individuals? Would their involvement have made a significant difference?

They never got a good young people's forum together.

They made a difference but I'm not sure if it's a significant difference.

Theme C – Public Sector Role

DL - There was no alternative to NCC as the accountable body. Was this a good thing or would a different arrangement have been better?

They could have used a bank but they'd have charged. So NCC was chosen and they behaved well

What would have been ideal would be a government bank but none existed.

DL - You have been involved with several government initiatives in this geographical area. Do they do the same sort of things each time only with slightly different effects (attractors)? Why should this be? Is it because paid officers dip in then dip out, or are often there for one thing so they come and then they go?

NDC was very different to City Challenge, SRB etc, to what happened before. It happened because it was a pet project of the government of the day.

Government officers dip in and out with no real local connection.

DL - You said that NDC worked because of the effort of the community especially around building capacity. Should the council have any role in building capacity?

Yes, the council should be involved in building capacity but there's a question of resources.

DL - Would it have been better not to include the council at all?

Not so much 'not the council' but the attitude of the council that should be changed. The council can be good if they have the right attitude.

Theme D - Results

DL - You seem pleased with the community chest – the way it was run and the things it funded. Would you like to see a similar arrangement across the city, say on a four areas basis [North, East, West and Outer West]?

Each ward in Newcastle has a ward budget. This was started under ... as part of the Priority Area Teams with, in Westgate, So NDC took the Community Chest idea from the council.

DL - To what extent were your expectations met? Were there any social learning outcomes and anything that particularly struck you?

NDC Westgate moved the stats on health, education etc.

As for social outcomes, really, members of the community learning how difficult it is to run a programme. There was lots of training, IT lessons etc.

DL - Have these been incorporated into the set up and running of Centre West? How is this going at the moment?

Centre West does the best it can but it's a charity not an organisation that spends money. The business is building up but it's never going to have the impact that NDC had.

Theme E – National View

DL - The current government has engaged on a localist agenda. It also has the Big Society initiative. How much of a change has this been? How much of a help has it been to Centre West?

The national view is localism and Big Society. This has been no help at all. It's an irrelevance to Centre West. If the government is serious they should give some money to local authorities.

DL - How much did the success depend on the money provided? Or did the community take what was provided and use it to create more resources? Did the community make the area a better place to live or was it the government money?

You need the money to have the success. They used the money to lever more money in and used the local knowledge of the people who live there. This was a wise use of government money but the wisdom came from the community.

DL - Would more training have helped the community produce better outcomes/results? If so could this have been done better? Could it have been done more economically?

If they had known what was going to happen the programme could have been tailored but they learnt as they went.

DL - Were there any surprises, butterfly effects, where a small activity or a small amount of money had a large impact – good or bad?

Butterfly effects; school uniforms, breakfast clubs, environmental impact reductions, health outcomes, employment opportunities.

DL - Having been through a successful government process and given the current economic austerity what do you think should happen next?

The government should turn localism into reality. Devolve, decentralise power to local people and let them do what local people want. Given the opportunity, local people are surprisingly good.

Theme F – Way Forward

DL - A lot of time and money was spent on NDC and now on Centre West. It was hoped that the investment would feedback and grow but now it's time for a rethink. What sort of changes are you thinking about?

NDC did things differently and it worked. Schumpeter enacted.

There's no government money in Centre West. It's smaller and slimmer. They need to be more effective and to work in partnership e.g. with Groundwork. They should get more such partnerships underway and not worry about working in partnership.

And through the Beacon build a bigger and better intelligence network.

DL - The Beacon needs to be more of a community centre, less like an office block. How are you going to go about this? Do you need to follow institutional pathways or go further to reach out?

Centre West is funded through the properties it owns and 2/3 of the Beacon. If the Beacon succeeds, I'll be really pleased.

The Beacon is not an office block. There's lots of activity with people coming in and out. There are exhibitions and open days.

People are beginning to see that it is something different. All this will change and develop over time. There's a new organisation to help people with the benefit changes.

DL - Should this type of activity be funded from the public purse? Is the Big Society Bank a better approach? Or are such programmes simply unprofitable if not wasteful?

How can local people benefit from these measures?

Public funding? Not necessarily. Some pump priming to get off the ground but public money comes with lots of strings.

As for the Big Society Bank, I haven't seen it. The government is very quiet about it.

Such programmes aren't unprofitable. Getting people off benefits and into work has huge value to the public purse. Government needs to recognise the value of that.

Local people benefit in lots of ways. They get help not just dole but free gym membership for health and proper training e.g. looking after a veg garden.

DL – Any other comments?

Local people should support each other, think outside the box, learn to challenge government messages such as Welfare Reform - go on the radio, write a blog.

Work should pay more than benefits but the problem is that wages are too low, not that benefits are too high. That's why there's a benefit trap. Get people into jobs don't just cut the benefit bill.

Sweden and Japan have 10-12 times, top to bottom pay differentials. The UK doesn't have that. The UK has no surpluses. Use this money to smooth things out and get people worthwhile jobs.

Appendix 8: Academic Journal Paper

Complex Processes and Social Systems: A Synergy of Perspectives

Large, D, Sice, P, Geyer, R, O'Brien, G, and Mansi, S. (2015) 'Complex Processes and Complex Systems: A Synergy of Perspectives', *International Journal of Systems and Society*, 2 (1), ISSN 2327-3984.

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Abstract

This paper considers two contrasting viewpoints: Complex responsive processes which deal with interactions in the present, and complex adaptive systems which focus on learning through the production of what are called mental models. The paper shows that rather than being contradictory, these viewpoints are – at least in some respects - complementary. Complex responsive processes involve reflections on interactions that take place in time. But you cannot stop time so these present reflections always refer back to a present now gone. Complex adaptive systems are analytic tools. They are not explicitly in the present or in time at all, but they shape our thoughts and actions which are in the present. They shape how we behave, respond and think in a context. In this way we can combine, or reorganise, the approach to complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems to show how humans address the complex notions of our world.

Keywords: complex responsive processes, complex adaptive systems, complexity, autopoiesis, social systems

Introduction

The starting point of complexity is interactions and what emerges from those interactions. This approach defines complexity as 'emergence from interactions'. This open definition allows complexity to apply to different domains (Stacey, 2005).

In this paper we consider two contrasting viewpoints: Complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems. Complex responsive processes deal with interactions in the present and involve reflections on interactions that take place in time (Stacey, 2011). You cannot, however, stop time so these present reflections always refer back to a present now gone. Complex adaptive systems focus on learning through the production of what are called mental models (Johnson-Laird, 1983; Johnson-Laird & Byrne, 1995). Complex adaptive systems are analytic tools. They are not explicitly in the present or in time at all. However, they shape our thoughts and actions which are in the present.

The paper shows that rather than being contradictory, these viewpoints are complementary for both complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems address how we behave, respond and think in a context. This means that rather than focussing on the differences between the two approaches we here seek to identify and explore the strengths and similarities of both approaches.

To begin we will clarify our assumptions about cognition and language in a social context. This will show the need to avoid separating the act of knowing from the content of our knowledge.

Cognition and language

The traditional view of cognition and language is based on the metaphor of inside - outside. The outside world, or real world is considered to be the source of information, and the inside of the brain, is considered to be an intelligent processor of this information, with the mind embedded within it. In this metaphor our observations are merely representations of the outside that are thought to

represent the truth and the brain, and the mind within, is the machine that works on these observations to extract knowledge.

In the area of operational systems research, Mingers (1989) stated that a large proportion of the cognitive science is based on the assumption that the human mind works by manipulating objective representations of the environment. By extending this we can see that language is used to describe an objective world. Words stand for real things that exist as a true reality independent of the individual observer.

In contrast, more modern views of cognition such as those of autopoiesis have moved away from this distinction between inside and outside (Sice, Mosekilde, & French, 2008). Cognition is held to be conditional on embodiment, and the ability of an individual to distinguish between different states is thought to be a consequence of that individual's specific embodied structure.

However, since the observer is a living entity, a 'true' insight into the domain of knowledge, requires an understanding of cognition that takes into consideration the phenomenon of living and is also mindful of the observer's role within it.

The theory of the living developed by the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, also known as autopoiesis (self-creation), defines a living entity as a network of processes of production of components that produces the components that: 1) through their interaction and transformations continuously regenerate the network of processes that produced them; and 2) constitute the entity as a concrete unity in the space by specifying the topological domain of its realisation as such a network (Maturana & Varela, 1980).

Autopoiesis is basic to the living individual. What happens to the individual is subservient to its autopoietic organisation for, as long as it exists, the autopoietic organisation remains invariant (Maturana & Varela, 1987). What this means is that its identity, and therefore its emergent global properties, are generated through a process of self-organisation, within its network of components. However, we must

also realise that this process of self-organisation is conditioned by a two-way process of local-to-global and global-to-local causation.

First, there is the local-to-global determination ('upward' causation) through which the entity, with its properties, emerges. Secondly, there is global-to-local determination ('downward' causation), where global characteristics constrain or direct local interactions between the components. Thus, the internal dynamics of the components (such as neuronal nets and metabolic nets) generate and sustain the global properties of the autopoietic entity. At the same time the global properties (such as body, consciousness, mind and emotion) constrain and govern the behaviour of the individual components. This dialectic relationship between local and global levels is described in autopoietic theory as 'reciprocal causality' (Sice & French, 2004). For example, in organisms with a nervous system, the rules of interactions within the neuronal network are in reciprocal relationship with the overall activity of the autopoietic entity.

To a very large extent, behaviour is a regulator of perception. That is to say, what the organism senses is a function of how it behaves, and how it behaves is a function of what it senses. 'Situated behaviour', thus, takes the form of coupling with the environment; where environmental perturbations trigger changes in the entity but do not determine them as these changes are necessarily subservient to conservation of autopoiesis (Varela, 1997).

An autopoietic entity, due to its autopoietic mode of identity, constantly embraces the encounters (perturbations) with its environment and treats them from a perspective that is determined by its internal dynamics. In this way what is meaningful to the organism is enacted from the perspective of an actively constituted identity, and thus, precisely given by its constitution as a circular process of self-production. That is to say, the organism notices and acts on what is important to it, and this both defines and shapes its identity. The permanent action on what is 'lacking', appears to the observer as an ongoing cognitive activity, and the living organism exhibits the properties of a cognitive self (Sice & French, 2004).

The dialectics of the living are based on the necessary emergence of a meaning proper to the perspective of the cognitive self and on a coupling with the environment. This, in turn, refers to the necessary dependence of the self on its environment (Pepper, 1926). This means that the contents of human experience (how the world appears to us) depend on 1) the mutual embeddedness of the neuronal dynamics (embedded in the overall physical and chemical dynamics), 2) the human agent as a unity with global properties (body, mind, consciousness, self) and 3) the environment (Sice & French, 2004).

In this way human experience is shown to be personal but not private for “Experience is clearly a personal event, but that does not mean it is private, in the sense of some kind of isolated subject that is parachuted down onto a pre given objective world” and “an investigation of the structure of human experience inevitably induces a shift towards considering several levels of my consciousness as inextricably linked to those of others and to the phenomenal world in an emphatic mesh” (Varela, 1996).

This irreducibility of human experience, from the duality portrayed by the embodiment and the situatedness of the human agent, cannot be underestimated. Our personal knowing of the world is our way of experiencing it, or more accurately of our bringing forth a world. The act of cognition is a matter of interacting with the world, in the capacity in which one is able to interact, and not simply the act of processing what is objectively to be seen (Sice, Mosekilde & French, 2008).

Epistemology, interactions and systems

The theory of autopoiesis, that is systems that are self-producing or self-creating, was originally developed to explain the particular nature of living as opposed to non-living entities. It was subsequently enlarged to encompass cognition and language leading to what is known as second-order cybernetics.

A number of people working in social systems theory are interested in the idea of using autopoiesis to understand social systems themselves, as self-contained and self-maintaining dynamic systems of conventions and so forth (Gershenson, 2007; Luhmann, 1995; Sice, & French, 2006). Mingers has considered critically the extent to which the theory of autopoiesis, as originally defined, can be applied to social systems – that is, whether social systems are autopoietic - and, if it cannot, whether some weaker version might be appropriate (Mingers, 1989, 1994, 2002).

Our focus is on autopoiesis and cognition (Sice, Koya, & Mansi, in press). We are staying away from the unsettled discourse whether organisations are autopoietic systems (Luhmann, 1995) or autonomous systems (Beer, 1979). This means that for us a system and its characteristics have an epistemological quality that could prove effective or not while acting in a particular domain.

For Stacey (2011) an interaction is not to be separated from the time it occurs. This implies that you should not take a system of interactions out of the time that they occur. If you do the system is rendered inert and any analysis of the system is moribund. This is because the time the interaction took place is an essential part of what took place. This philosophical perspective gives a Hegelian aspect to Stacey's approach (Hegel, 1979).

What we gain from this approach is the importance of time and of the here and now, in driving emergence. We will discuss the implications of this for both the development of complex responsive processes and the application of complex adaptive systems below.

For the purposes of this paper, systems are regarded as epistemically constrained. This means that systems are seen as having the epistemic qualities of the interactions and hence what emerges from those interactions. This in turn renders systems both epistemically dynamic and iterative.

Complex Responsive Processes

The complex responsive processes approach is one of several views of how a complex entity becomes what it becomes. The dominant alternative view is the systemic process view.

The complex responsive processes approach concerns processes relating people through local interactions. These interactions lead to emergent phenomena that may be understood in terms of organisation and in terms of organisations (Stacey, 2011).

In this way complex responsive processes are descriptive (relating to what people are doing) and not prescriptive (relating to what people could or should be doing). Complex responsive processes describe the joint actions of the people concerned that result in the creation of knowledge through perpetual construction of the future as identity and difference (dynamic epistemology). Through these interactions the people or actors construct their future in the now. Prediction or more strictly predictability thus emerges in the now. In contrast, complex adaptive systems usually refer to the creation of an entity or organisation.

Complex responsive processes explain the evolving processes between people who interact in any way. This is the basis for a theory, or perspective, of strategy, where human interaction is perpetually constructing the future as the known–unknown, that is, as continuity and potential transformation at the same time. While Stacey calls this ‘a game’ the perspective reflects a theory of transformative causality, in other words a fundamentally paradoxical theory of causality – what’s caused is caused by what’s caused. This paradox is resolved by the movement or flow of time. If it is held static or analytic then the paradox becomes vicious (Stacey, 2011).

In this way interaction can be described as complex responsive processes of human relating. These processes can take the form of conversations involving norms, values and ideologies (Stacey, 2011). The conversational types we address here are communication, communicative interaction, and conversational

processes. These may involve power relations or more relevantly patterns of power relations. They may also include or be based on ideological choices. As such these responsive processes are picked out by being continually iterated (processual), occurring both as and in the living present (ontically Hegelian), and are local in nature (natural and ungeneralisable). In such responsive local interaction, population-wide patterns emerge and it is these emerging patterns that are the basis of human society (Schermer, 2006).

So with complex responsive processes we are able to predict in the now. We do this by attention to the now and by consideration of how we interact. We focus on our interactions, reflect on what we find and learn as we go on.

In contrast to being a systemic theory, complex responsive processes is a theory of strategy. This theory refers to the evolving processes of relating between people who interact for example to form an organisation. This is the basis for a theory, or perspective, of strategy, where human interaction is perpetually constructing the future as the known-unknown, that is, as both continuity and potential transformation at the same time. This perspective reflects a theory of transformative causality - a fundamentally paradoxical theory of causality (Stacey, 2011).

Strategy is the evolving pattern of what a group or an organisation is, in other words its identity. A group or organisation is what it is because of a history of relating (forming relations) and interacting (using those relations). It becomes what it becomes in the local communicative interaction and relations between people in the present.

The complex responsive processes perspective regards interaction between people as iterated processes of communication and (power) relations. There is no notion here of a system - what people are producing in their interactions are further patterns of interaction from which they imaginatively construct 'wholes' that they tend to idealise. Such imaginative 'wholes' are understood as ideologies rather than as systems. The theory of complex responsive processes, therefore,

represents a move from a spatial metaphor of inside and outside to temporal processes of continual reproduction and potential transformation. This means that complex responsive processes are fundamentally conversational in nature, forming and being formed by power relations and ideologically based choices.

The analysis of complex responsive processes looks at the micro level and concentrates on the paradoxical dynamics of stable instability in which local interaction produces emergent population-wide patterns in relating. These patterns may take novel forms through the amplification of diversity and through human spontaneity. This perspective emphasizes the importance of diversity and deviance to the internal capacity to change spontaneously. In this evolving, potentially creative process, unpredictability is central, inviting further exploration of how people act (Luoma, 2007).

To sum up, complex responsive processes look at actual situations regarded as happenings in the world. Because they're about actual situations they have a position, in other words a location and a time. As happenings complex responsive processes have authenticity. They are not drafts or models. As actual happenings complex responsive processes are iterative, flowing into each other and reflecting back on what has gone before. Complex responsive processes take place as interactions in the present or the 'now' and what emerges from these interactions is real. For conscious beings what emerges is awareness, awareness of ones place in the interaction and subsequent awareness of how this may be considered. This means that the way to examine complex responsive processes is through reflection on our activities and practices. Those that adopt the complex responsive processes approach thus reject models and modelling as static and as not addressing awareness through reflection (Stacey, 2012).

Complex Adaptive Systems

What then is a complex adaptive system? For the current purposes we can say that complex adaptive systems use models to develop and build theories of interactions. They imply the use of models and indeed regard systems as models. The models show how systems behave within fixed constraints i.e. the terms of the model. It would therefore be wrong to say that models deliver a rich epistemology.

So by way of a general definition we may say that a complex adaptive system is something that exhibits a particular kind of behaviour. This particular kind of behaviour requires self-organisation, and it requires behaviour that leads to the emergence of something new, here at the social level. This emergence is then revisited and fed back into the system in such a way that something else emerges (Mitchell, 2005).

So here by 'a system' we mean a model of a phenomenon. As such the model shows us that we cannot predict the behaviour over time because the system is so sensitive to minor changes. We should emphasise that the model itself is clearly delineated and while the behaviour of the system is not predictable it is not random either. In this way, a key characteristic of a complex system is that it exhibits emergent behaviour that is not determined in advance (Nicolis & Prigogine, 1989).

Feedback loops, self-organisation and attractors

Interactions are characterised by feedback loops and can be modeled by feedback loops assuming the causes and effects are known. (Where the causes and effects are not clear, the interaction still exists and can be characterised by a statistical model.)

In this way feedback loops can be used to show how causes and effects are less relevant than the interactions themselves. Positive feedback loops proliferate and

can push the system away from equilibrium. How they proliferate and how much proliferation there is relates to how sensitive the system is (Mosekilde, 2002).

The system is considered sensitive when very small (even minute) variations in conditions or parameters values lead to observable outcomes that are inherently unpredictable. By 'unpredictable' we mean that one cannot add up (or integrate) all the small steps required to predict the long term development

The system can go through equilibrium to periodic and chaotic behaviour within a very narrow range of values of parameters that it is sensitive to. Systems can come into and go out of chaos (Mosekilde, 2002).

In ordinary usage the word 'chaos' implies randomness or lack of order. In complexity science 'chaos' is used to describe processes that look random but are not random - they never repeat themselves yet do not collapse. Recent research shows that unpredictable, random looking phenomena can often be described by simple deterministic models. Here 'deterministic' refers to the property that at any given state of the system the next small step in its development is precisely and uniquely determined.

In chaotic behaviour, the system amplifies minute changes in conditions into major alterations of subsequent behaviour, known as 'butterfly effects'. These were first observed by Edward Lorenz in trying to predict the weather (Lorenz, 1963).

Self-organised systems don't collapse but re-organise e.g. boiling water forms a pattern of bubbles. Hence the notion of self-organisation is related to the interplay of feedback loops and to chaos (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). When feedback systems are pushed far from equilibrium conditions, they are capable of spontaneously producing complex forms of behaviour. This is a form of self-organisation where (it is argued) behaviour emerges from processes at the level of micro-interactions (Nicolis & Prigogine, 1989).

Points of attraction depend on the characteristics of the phenomenon involved. They could be in an equilibrium such as a steady state, or they could be repetitive where they follow the same path. Or they could form a chaotic attractor which has bounded instability. The system orbits in a bounded region yet never repeats itself. Hence bounded instability gives rise to all sorts of behaviours but does not collapse.

An attractor pulls towards itself or towards a certain state in the future. To learn about attractors is to gain knowledge about what is likely to happen. It is in this way that complexity engages with the social realm and, unlike philosophy and pure mathematics, does not leave the world alone (Lear, 1995). Indeed and on the contrary, with complex adaptive systems we are able to make predictions in the short term while knowing why we cannot make predictions in the long term. In this way complexity may be seen to offer a compromise to the sceptic.

Towards a synergy of perspectives

Melanie Mitchell (2009) discusses how there is no single adequate definition of complexity or an agreed general definition of complexity itself. For the social sciences Mitchell talks about “complex systems in which the ‘simple, microscopic’ components consist of people (or companies) buying and selling goods, and the collective behaviour is the complex, hard-to-predict behaviour of markets as a whole, such as changes in the price of housing in different areas of the country or fluctuations in stock prices” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 9).

Indeed according to Mitchell “complex systems science is branching off in two separate directions. Along one branch, ideas and tools from complexity research will be refined and applied in an increasingly wide variety of specific areas. In this book we’ve seen ways in which similar ideas and tools are being used in fields as disparate as physics, biology, epidemiology, sociology, political science, and computer science, among others. Some areas I didn’t cover in which these ideas are gaining increasing prominence include neuroscience, economics, ecology, climatology, and medicine - the seeds of complexity and interdisciplinary science

are being widely sowed. The second branch, more controversial, is to view all these fields from a higher level, so as to pursue explanatory and predictive mathematical theories that make commonalities among complex systems more rigorous, and that can describe and predict emergent phenomena” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 301).

So maybe it is time for the social sciences to work out their own complexity approach, one that is not a metaphorical usage of terminology. Bear in mind that the interactions between people magnify the complexity of the situation. This applies both from the one to the other and from the other to the one (Buber, 2004). We should then consider the complexity of human situations in terms of the awareness of the people involved in those situations and their competence in judging, emoting, planning, etc. (Zeeuw, 2011).

If you take a complex adaptive systems approach and add an epistemically rich approach to your understanding of a social system you could, in theory, retain the models suitably modified. But bear in mind that anything about the situation that is important to the subject – the people involved – is important to the model too. In particular, we make sense of time in our interactions; we make sense of the now by reflecting on our actions. In this way we are not simply relying on the models to carry the epistemic load.

With psychological concepts, complex adaptive systems build mental models. Here we are concerned not only with the usefulness of these models but with their appropriateness. Mental models need not be exclusively psychological, indeed using psychological concepts alone risks building a solipsistic theory. Rather the concepts that form the model are chosen to reflect the interactions between the psychological beings in question and their world. But this does not necessarily imply dualism as the only commitment required at this stage is to interactions between the psychological being and the psychological being’s environment.

By considering mental models this way, what a complex adaptive system exhibits is behaviour, in particular the behaviour of the actors within the system in question.

This behaviour is of course sensitive to minor changes. This sensitivity can be understood in terms of a bifurcation point where two paths are possible yet the determining factors are so small as to be practically indeterminable. One hour you may want coffee, the next tea and so on.

In the social realm what is required is that people interact through their mental models. In this way we may link mental models to the here and now. Hence insights from complex adaptive systems suggest that complex systems have something to offer. This means that mental models matter: They are not inert theoretical items. Indeed the effectiveness of a mental model may be judged by whether it is adequate to a situation.

So why then do we need models at all? When people reflect on their practice they need to think about how they built their interactions and how they will build future interactions. This involves looking for patterns, identifying them and recognising them when they occur and when they occur in modified forms. Such recognition fits the model approach (Lombardo, 1987; Large, 2003). None of this contradicts Stacey's desire to look at the circumstance from within - quite the opposite.

Summary: You can stop what you're doing but you can't stop time

Complex responsive processes involve reflections on interactions that take place in time. But you cannot stop time so these present reflections always refer back to a present now gone. Complex adaptive systems are analytic tools. They are not explicitly in the present or in time at all. But they shape our thoughts and actions which are in the present. As we have seen, both complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems are analytic. They shape how we behave, respond and think in a context.

Now if our epistemic tools are suitably directed they will affect how we perceive, encounter and engage in the present moment. The synergy between complex

responsive processes and complex adaptive systems presents us with such an epistemic tool for our use, for they are both present and interacting with each other. In this way we can combine, or reorganise, the approach to complex responsive processes and complex adaptive systems to show how humans address the complex notions of our world. And we can do this in a holistic way, not just as a metaphor but as grounded in our experience.

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