Exploiting ambiguity in community development: lesson from the UK Coalition government (2010-2015)

Andie Reynolds

Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, NE7 7XA.

andie.reynolds@northumbria.ac.uk

Abstract

This article scrutinizes the ambiguous nature of community development (CD) in England. It does so by drawing attention to CD's porous boundaries in relation to its allied community-based practices. Empirical evidence is provided – from national policy-making and the policy and practice in a case study local authority in England – that the Coalition government (2010-2015) exploited the ambiguity of CD by re-shaping its practices as social enterprise, volunteering and community organizing. This was to achieve a 'new' permutation of neoliberalism where civil society and its citizens provide local public services instead of 'relying' on state intervention and resources. The article concludes that the CD academic and practitioner field both shapes and is shaped by competing discourses of CD 'fighting' for hegemonic articulation. Yet, to the detriment of the field, this is rarely acknowledged nor engaged with.

Key words

community development, discourse, hegemony, Coalition government, community organizing

Introduction

To scrutinize ambiguity in community development (CD) in England, this article examines the administration of the Coalition government (2010-2015), its policies and resultant practices using a post-structuralist discourse analysis methodology. The formation of the UK

Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government in May 2010, and its five-year program of public sector reform and austerity, attracted considerable media, policy and academic interest. The declared aim of this program was to reduce the 10% deficit the Coalition government supposedly inherited from the New Labour administration (1997-2010) following the 2007/8 financial crisis and subsequent global economic recession (Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011). Prior to the election, the Conservative Party leader delivered speeches about reducing big government to create a Big Society (Cameron, 2009). This became a significant policy driver for the Coalition program. Big Society was introduced as the antithesis of New Labour's 'Big State' characterized by 'excessive' public spending, bureaucracy and unwelcome interference (Alcock, 2010; Tam, 2011). It offered citizens, communities, the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and the private sector more opportunities to run British public services without superfluous red tape (Alcock, 2010; Cabinet Office, 2010a). By 2013, three policy offshoots – social action, localism and social enterprise – had matured and superseded Big Society in national policy debate (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2013; Dean, 2013).

This took place during the Coalition government's adoption of austerity as their principle economic strategy. This proposed '… the biggest set of spending cuts since the Second World War - £81 billion of them' (Timmins, 2011, p.2), of which £53 million targeted government departments and local governments alone (Clayton *et al.,* 2016). The Department for Communities and Local Government was the hardest-hit with its budget slashed by 51% over the five-year span, resulting in local government in England making one-third to one-half of its public sector workers redundant across this timeframe (Bailey *et al.,* 2015). Local government cuts also slashed available funding to the VCS, ensuing unprecedented losses in community development (CD) infrastructure in both sectors (Clayton *et al.,* 2016; Lowndes & McCaughie, 2013). Key voices from the CD field suggest that the Coalition program constricted and altered the landscape of CD in England from 2010-2015, leaving CD's professional profile 'in decline' (Banks *et al.*, 2013, p.3). This article provides empirical evidence, from national policy-making and the policy and practice within a case study local authority in England, that the Coalition program exploited the ambiguity of CD by reshaping its practices as social enterprise, volunteering and community organizing. This achieved a 'new' permutation of neoliberalism where civil society and its citizens provide public services instead of 'relying' on state intervention and resources.

To make this argument, the article divides into five sections. The first presents CD as an ambiguous and contested practice, evidenced by a plethora of definitions in England alone. Yet, as is also explored in this section, empirical theorists claim there are some continuities in its values and frameworks. The second section discusses the blurred boundaries between CD and its related community-based practices; and establish how these reinforce the ambiguity of CD. This section also introduces the state-funded Community Organisers Programme (COP) (2011-2015) and suggests this program adopted unacknowledged CD features. The third section focuses on the methodology used in this study, based on doctoral work, which includes twenty semi-structured interviews analysed alongside fifty-four key texts. The fourth section discusses the findings of this study. It demonstrates that an Enterprise discourse dominated the policy landscape from 2010-2015. This reconstituted the previous New Labour government as a 'failure'; and CD was rejected as a top-down, interfering, bureaucratic and inefficient relic of it. In conjunction with the public sector cuts, CD practices were compelled to re-shape as social enterprise, volunteering and community organizing. The final section concludes that the CD field in England both shapes and is shaped by competing discourses of CD 'fighting' for hegemonic articulation. But, this is rarely acknowledged nor engaged with.

Ambiguity in community development

Consensus exists that CD is an ambiguous and contested practice (cf. Craig *et al.*, 2011; Taylor, 2012). Yet, Gilchrist (2009, p.44) claims there are '… some evident continuities in definition and application'. These continuities are located within CD's values and frameworks, identified as: a commitment to equality, social and environmental justice (Ledwith, 2016); conscientization (ibid) empowerment (Gilchrist, 2009), and community-led social change (Banks & Butcher, 2013). But, these terms are also ambiguous. For example, empowerment can be defined as power developing within individuals and communities (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016) but also '… a process of collective liberation from oppression by becoming critical' (Ledwith, 2016, p.xiii).

In consequence of CD's values and principles being underpinned by such ambiguous concepts, multiple definitions exist. These chiefly revolve around whether CD is: (i) an approach to working that can be adapted by a range of practitioners (Henderson & Thomas, 2013); (ii) an occupation that adheres to particular standards (Banks, 2011), and (iii) a political / social movement (Ledwith, 2011; 2016). However, some definitions incorporate all

three. For instance, the most recent of the International Association of Community Development:

> 'Community development is a practice-based professional and an academic discipline that promotes participatory democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings.' (McConnell, 2016, np)

Nevertheless, this catch-all definition does little to resolve a parallel, and ongoing, argument concerning CD's 'true' focus: whether it should provide public sector services, informal education or commit to campaigning / activism (Ledwith, 2011; 2016). Such debates reveal a radical-reformist binary used to differentiate between CD practices. For example, Ledwith (2011) argues that more 'radical' CD practices are encapsulated through social movements and campaigning work where CD workers facilitate the organization of community groups committed to political action for social change. In contrast, CD as service provision, a way of working and an occupation is more commonly referred to as a 'reformist' practice rooted in conservative and consensus-seeking ideologies critically focusing on community and individual self-help; but rarely connecting to broader social change movements and processes (Banks, 2011).

Porous boundaries between community development and its related practices

There is significant overlap between CD and its related practices of community work, community practice, community organizing and neighbourhood work. Community work and community practice are chiefly regarded as an umbrella term for a range of community-based practices which can embrace CD (Banks, 2011). CD workers are typically characterized as enablers, educators and/or facilitators who '…serve the interest of communities, and help them gain greater influence over the decisions that affect their lives' (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016, p.12-13). This overlaps with the roles of community practitioners (Chanan &Miller, 2013), community workers (Henderson *et al.*, 1980) and neighbourhood workers (Henderson & Thomas, 2013). An underscored difference is that community work, community practice and neighborhood work often include practitioners such as: '… social workers, housing officers, clergy, adult educators or health workers – in addition to, or as part of, their "normal" work' (Twelvetrees, 2008, p.2), which, typically, CD does not (Banks & Butcher, 2013). Yet, as stated in the previous section, CD can also be a way of working that a range of

practitioners - including community workers, social workers and health workers – can adopt. This illustrates the blurred boundaries between CD and its allied practices.

Community organizing is normatively categorized as distinct from CD; although radical CD claims to share some of its features (Popple, 2015). These include an underpinning in Freirean critical pedagogy where community organizers and radical CD workers use '… "critical dialogue" and reflective action (praxis) to raise critical awareness… and to explore the possibilities for radical change driven by community action' (Taylor, 2011, p.161). A radical-reformist binary re-emerges, with reformist practices of CD, community work, neighborhood work and community practice separated from such 'radical' practices (cf. Ledwith, 2011; 2016). But, the inherently 'radical' nature of community organizing is disputed, particularly by US authors who highlight that community organizing ranges from '… community building to economic development, service delivery and conflict (Fisher & Dimberg, 2016, p.100). This suggests that community organizing overlaps with 'reformist' CD; further accentuating CD's ambiguity.

In 2011 this ambiguity deepened with the introduction of the Community Organisers Programme (COP), which offered state-funded community organizing to low-income neighborhoods in England (Crisp *et al*, 2016). It operationalized a hybrid community organizing methodology embedded in the works of Saul Alinsky, Paulo Freire, Edward Chambers and Clodomir Santos de Morais '… as well as the long traditions of English radicalism and community self-help' (Locality, 2010, p.2). Its principal role was to support the delivery of Big Society and localism agendas by working directly with local people to help raise community spirit; encourage local community action; promote indigenous leadership in local communities; create new, locally-run community groups and social enterprises; and inspire democratic and social change (ibid). It received £20 million to train 5000 community organizers in England – five-hundred full-time, paid community organizers and 4500 part-time, volunteer community organizers – over four years (Fisher & Dimberg, 2016).

The program received some initial praise from the CD field, with plaudits for its trailblazing nature as'… no other nation has ever officially and explicitly trained and hired so many community organizers' (Fisher & Dimberg, 2016, p.96) and its similarities to more Freirean CD models (Mayo *et al.*, 2012). Again, porous boundaries between community organizing and more 'radical' CD practices exist. Still, from 2010-2015, national policy debate did not

acknowledge such overlap. Similarly, key theorists stressed links between the program and asset-based CD (cf. Fisher & Dimberg, 2016), but this was not discussed in national policy. Instead, policy concentrated on the program's 'new' and 'unique' commitment to social action under Big Society and localism (Cabinet Office, 2010d; 2013), with social action defined as '… people giving what they have, be that their time, their money or their assets, knowledge and skills, to support good causes and make life better for all' (Cabinet Office, 2010b, p.4). This suggests the Coalition government dismissed CD and exploited its ambiguity with community organizing and social action to fulfil its Big Society and localism policy agendas.

However, exploiting and re-shaping CD is not unique to the Coalition government. Under the Conservative governments of Thatcher and Major (1979-1997) there were blurred boundaries between CD and community work, with the statutory and voluntary sectors reducing the numbers of CD workers (Banks, 2011) but increasing their community workers by five-hundred percent (Popple, 2015). Neither is it exclusive to Conservative nor Conservative-led governments. New Labour's flagship New Deal for Communities fostered intersections between CD, community work and neighborhood work in England under the banners of urban regeneration, neighborhood renewal and creating local partnerships (Taylor, 2012). Therefore, how CD is understood and practiced is also shaped by the political and policy landscapes it is situated within. Following the methodology section, this article moves on to analyze how understandings of CD were shaped through the policy landscape of the Coalition government.

Methodology

This study employed a post-structuralist discourse analysis methodology to re-conceptualize the CD academic and practitioner field in England as a discursive field of knowledge where competing CD discourses 'fight' for dominance and hegemonic articulation. It uses Laclau & Mouffe's (2001) post-structuralist discourse theory and its conceptualization of discourse as: a relational system of signification constructed in and through hegemonic struggles which 'fix' a moral, political or intellectual authority through the articulation of meaning and identity. From this standpoint, CD discourses are competing social and political projects that seek to establish a hegemonic articulation of CD, and shape the identities and social practices of agents working in such projects (ibid; Hansen, 2006).

Post-structuralist discourse analysis methodologies are rarely used to empirically examine CD and/or its related practices. Emejulu (2010) adapted Hansen's (2006) post-structuralist discourse analysis methodology to study CD processes in the UK and US. My doctoral study built on this work and adapted both Hansen's methodology and Laclau & Mouffe's theoretical framework to examine how the CD field responded to the Coalition government's national and local policy-making in England; and what implications this had for CD in England.

The empirical work consisted of twenty interviews with professionals, volunteers and local people involved in three CD projects in a case study local authority in England. These interviews were carried out between May and December 2013. Each project was selected according to five inclusion criteria, presented in *figure 1:*

Figure 1 **Inclusion criteria for community development projects selected**

1. Committed to the values and principles of CD;
2. Contained a mixture of at least six CD professionals, volunteers and local people interested in taking part;
3. Financially secure throughout the duration of data collection;
4. All participants would remain involved in the project throughout data collection;
5. Each project had a different focus, size and/or management structure.

Operationalizing Hansen (2006) and Laclau & Mouffe (2001), the twenty interview transcripts were analyzed alongside fifty-four texts including: discourse by political and policy leaders, national and local policies, and academic debate. An analyst using Hansen's methodology can select texts to examine from pre-set genres across three intertextual models. Influenced by intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980), Hansen (2006) argues that no single text exists in a vacuum as all texts relate and build upon each other implicitly or explicitly. It is through this interconnected web of texts that each text procures its meaning. Hansen (2006) uses genres to establish similarities and distinctions between texts; with each genre having its own style and institutional location, and its own claims to knowledge. By citing respected authors in their genre, writers seek to produce authoritative and canonical texts to be widely cited by others in, primarily, the same genre. Both 'direct quotes' and 'key concepts and catchphrases' from such texts then appear in other genres to be adapted, debated and/or resisted (ibid, p.8). These intertextual repetitions are the dominant practices of competing discourses. Within a

discursive field of knowledge, competing discourses seek to articulate these dominant practices in exclusive ways; highlighting main areas of contestation within debates. A hegemonic discourse uses its political and intertextual power to temporarily 'fix' the meaning of dominant practices; and reconstitutes the norms, values and traditions within a field of knowledge until it is superseded (Hansen, 2006).

The more intertextual models and genres an analyst uses, the stronger the foundation to assess the hegemony of a particular discourse; and for uncovering competing, but comparatively marginalized or silenced, discourses (ibid). This study analyzed six genres of text across two intertextual models: three genres from official discourse (key political influences on policy; national policy documents; and case study local authority policy documents) and three from marginal political discourse (CD academic books; academic journal articles responding to official discourse, and interview transcripts with social actors in the case study local authority). All seventy-four texts fulfilled three criteria: (i) were authored from 2010-2015 to cover the administration of the Coalition government; (ii) discussed the practices of social actors involved in CD, or related, processes; and (iii) explored at least one of five key policy strands during this timeframe, i.e. Big Society, localism, austerity, COP, and social enterprise. In doing so, which CD discourses were present from 2010-2015, and the implications of these discourses for CD in England, could be determined.

The twenty participants were anonymized through pseudonyms solely reflecting the CD project they were involved with and their role in it, i.e. CP1_Prof1 (CD project 1, professional 1). The names and locations of these three CD projects are not specified and the case study local authority is anonymized.

Competing discourses and the hegemony of Enterprise

The empirical findings establish five competing discourses of CD present from 2010-2015. These were the Enterprise, National Transformation, Partnership, Local Transformation and Social Justice / Democracy discourses. *Table 1* presents definitions of these discourses; how CD is defined under each discourse, and in which genres these discourses appear:

Table 1

Discourse	Definition of discourse	Definition of community development	Genres

Enterprise	Endorses the devolution of service provision responsibility to civil society and its key social actors, and nudges these actors to form social enterprises or voluntary community groups that cater to local (service) needs.	An ineffective relic of the previous New Labour government that was bureaucratic, top-down, inefficient and interfering.	All six
National Transformation	Promotes the political transformation of both the Conservative and Labour Party, and the transformation of public services through public sector professionals and local people coproducing services.	An out-of-date practice descendant from technocratic and bureaucratic social democracy dominant in the Labour Party since the 1940s.	Key political influences on policy CD academic books
Partnership	Ratifies a communitarian revival of civil society where central government encourages the public, private and voluntary sectors to work in partnership to incite social actors to participate in civil society through active citizenship.	A state-endorsed practice that empowers local communities to influence policy and service delivery, and participate in civic and community life.	All six
Local Transformation	Facilitates both neighborhood and personal transformation, and fosters community spirit through participation in community development processes.	An empowering process that effectively breaks down barriers that inhibit neighborhood and/or personal transformation, and the fostering of community spirit.	Case study local authority grassroots debate
Social Justice / Democracy	Offers an alternative to neoliberalism and supports civil society movements committed to radical and active democracy, and egalitarian and redistributive equality and social justice, which operate independently of the state.	A radical and active democratic process that operates within civil society movements that are independent of the state and are committed to egalitarian and redistributive equality and social justice.	CD academic books Journal articles Case study local authority grassroots debate

According to Laclau & Mouffe and Hansen's criteria, only the Enterprise and Partnership discourses have enough intertextual and political power to achieve hegemonic status. This is due to their presence in all genres analyzed. The Partnership discourse hegemonously dominated the English policy landscape under the previous New Labour administration (cf.

Emejulu, 2010). The Enterprise discourse directly challenges this hegemony with claims that the Partnership discourse is synonymous with New Labour and 'big government':

> '… over the past decade, many of our pressing social problems got worse, not better. It's time for something different, something bold – something that doesn't just pour money down the throat of wasteful, top-down government schemes.' (Cameron, 2010, np)

> 'In recent years, the [New Labour] state has taken a bigger and more interventionist role in society, thus increasing the burden of bureaucracy and removing decision-making from local communities. Not only has this stifled local imitative and enthusiasm, it has led to an overdependence on the state.' (Woodhouse, 2013, p.6)

Both the Partnership discourse and New Labour governance is discredited in these extracts as inefficient ('pouring money', 'wasteful'), 'top-down', 'interventionist', bureaucratic ('increasing the burden of bureaucracy') and fostering dependency ('led to an overdependence on the state'). All allude to a central argument promulgated by the Coalition government that New Labour had 'broken' Britain (Blond, 2010; Cameron, 2010). Thus, the Enterprise discourse was positioned as a superior alternative to the Partnership discourse. The former pledged to rebuild 'broken' Britain through the devolution of service provision responsibility to civil society and its key social actors. Both social action and social enterprise ascended as dominant practices to engineer such reconstruction. For Cameron (2010), social action meant civil society actors giving their time (volunteering) and money (philanthropy); messages replicated through national policy documents during this period (cf. Cabinet Office, 2010a; 2010b; 2011; 2013; Woodhouse, 2013). National policy debate also reproduced Philip Blond's (2010, p.241) predilection for social enterprises delivering public sector services 'previously monopolized by the [New Labour] state' encouraging public sector professionals – including CD workers, community workers and neighborhood workers – and voluntary community groups to establish social enterprises to run local services (cf. Cabinet Office, 2010a; 2010b; 2011; Woodhouse, 2013). Under the Enterprise discourse, employee and voluntary-run social enterprises emerge as more innovative, entrepreneurial, bottom-up and efficient than the public sector services delivered under New Labour's Partnership discourse. With this 'truth' in place, service provision responsibility was increasingly devolved to civil society organizations whose spectrum of social actors were encouraged to form social enterprise service delivery structures and/or voluntary community groups to provide local services.

The Localism Act fortified these developments; which has roots in New Labour's 'new localism' and community asset transfers (CATs) (cf. Cabinet Office, 2007; 2008), and assists communities, the VCS and the private sector to '… take over public services, community assets and influence planning and development' (My Community, 2012, p.1). Thus, public sector, VCS and private sector professionals, and voluntary community groups, could legitimately 'bid' to take over council assets – including community, youth and children's centers – and run them as social enterprises.

Local policy texts confirmed these changes, with social enterprises '(t)ransforming public services, through delivery, design and innovation' (Council, 2010, p.7) and CATs providing '… substantial savings by local government through better use of its property' (Council, 2014, p.2). CD project two (CP2) was targeted in one text:

> 'Those involved in [CP2] looks to solve problems regarding service provision themselves as opposed to the expectation of the council and partners being the direct provider. The next development steps for the organization are to diversify income streams, making substantial requests to funders for long-term funding, and researching the development of a social enterprise to enable [CP2] to become fully self-sufficient in the future.' (Council, 2012, p.8)

The hegemony of the Enterprise discourse is visible in this extract – the expectation that CP2 will solve income generation issues by soliciting non-statutory revenue streams and re-structuring as a social enterprise. This materialized at the grassroots level, with CD projects two and three moving towards a social enterprise service delivery structure:

> 'So… that's where the social enterprise thing comes in – which we are exploring. So, if we could establish a viable business that had an income stream… of maybe 10 to 15 thousand. Then, potentially, you would have a self-sustaining unit. So… if the funding bus squished [the paid CD workers]… then [CP2] would be able to operate without us.' (CP2_Prof2)

> '… if we raised £10 000 a year through social enterprise… [It] could fund the likelihood of… one or two activities a year. Like a support group.' (CP3_Vol2)

Both CD projects appraise social enterprise structures as more financially sustainable than their existing structures due to their historical reliance on pots of public sector funding; suggesting the successful incorporation of the Enterprise discourse into CD projects throughout this timeframe. Nevertheless, CD project one (CP1) *is* a social enterprise yet it struggles financially:

> '[CP1] has never been a council building, but it has been supported over the years with a yearly grant. The grant and room rental has sustained the costs of running the building and its services… Over the years the grant funding has decreased significantly. And I think this year it will be reduced more… and possibly next year more again… until there is no grant. We will be in the position where we have to find the extra shortfall. Most of the rooms here are let five days a week… and also on a weekend. It's going to be difficult to try and raise more revenue to keep this building open, and for the use of the community. It means increasing the rent [for the rooms]. But if you increase your rent too much, people can't afford it. And then a lot of groups disband. People just don't have the money.' (CP1_Vol2)

This extract positions the Enterprise discourse's endorsement of CATs and social enterprises as unsustainable as both are dependent on local people's financial contributions to keep them afloat; and increasingly so under austerity. Instead, this participant decrees that sustainable social enterprises require local council and independent grant funding *in addition to* service user contributions. The Enterprise discourse's neoliberal roots are evident, with CATs and social enterprises exposed as devices to ensure the normalization of communities managing and paying for their own services; facilitating the roll-back of the welfare state.

This emphasis on citizen, rather than state, responsibility reproduces as a clear dominant practice of the neoliberal Enterprise discourse. *Table 2* provides further examples of how this practice is adapted, debated and resisted across all genres:

Table 2	**Citizen responsibility**	
Genre	**Text**	**Extract**
Discourse by political / policy leaders	Cameron (2010, np)	'The Big Society is about a huge culture change where people, in their everyday lives, in their homes, in their neighbourhoods, in their workplace don't always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face. But instead feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities.'
National policy documents	Woodhouse (2013, p.2)	'In his speech to the Conservative Party conference in October 2009, Mr Cameron spoke of the failings of "big government", of how it undermined the "personal and social responsibility that should be the lifeblood of a strong society", and of the need for a "stronger society… stronger communities"… all by rebuilding responsibility.'
Local policy documents	Council (2012, p.2)	'Build upon [local authority's] established approach to engage and empower communities, including devolving resources and responsibility to communities and neighbourhoods.'

CD academic books	Banks (2013, p.113)	'"I think it's nonsense really… expecting people on a voluntary basis to manage services and serve on committees and things… I don't think sustainability is about independence for local communities.'
Journal articles	Dean (2013, p.46)	'Since the United Kingdom's General Election of 2010, mainstream politicians have tried to claim the mantle of "responsibility" for their party (Cameron, 2010; Clegg, 2010; Miliband, 2011).While this covers the responsibility for prudent management of a continuing fiscal crisis, there is increasingly a drive to be seen as the leader who will instill, either through legislation or public presentation, a greater sense of responsibility among the wider population – from greedy bankers to rioting teenagers.'
Interview transcripts	CP2_Prof1 (2013)	'I see [CD's] role as a bit of a plumb-line in things. So, actually, I do make decisions about what happens in [CP2]. I do that with the steering group so that we talk about the way that things have been managed, and that local people have a voice in all that. But I think they actually quite like to *not* have the responsibility. We've asked our local people "who will have the key?" because more activities could happen in the evenings. But nobody wants to do it.'

Texts from all three genres of official discourse reproduce this dominant practice through arguments that responsibility (particularly service provision responsibility) should be devolved from central and local governments to local neighborhoods as this is an 'empowering' process for the latter. Marginal political discourse ratifies this dominant practice's presence and power in policy developments, but counter-argues it is not as sustainable and bottom-up as it claims; with policy enforcing this dominant practice on to local communities. This is not new as since the Second World War successive socio-democratic and neoliberal UK governments have turned to communities to provide local services as a solution to social problems (cf. Taylor, 2012). Still, academics (cf. Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011) and some participants claim this intensified under austerity. Hastings *et al.'s* (2015) empirical evaluation of the Coalition program underscored a new shift towards individual citizen responsibility through nudge economics. Nudge economics emerged, in the US, from a libertarian critique of the state's interventionist role in citizen's lives, and asserts the state should 'steer' citizens to promote their own welfare by emphasizing how citizens are empowered through choice (Thaler & Sunstein, 2003, p.179). This highlights how the

Enterprise discourse used citizen responsibility to achieve a permutation of neoliberalism where civil society and its citizens provide public services.

Analogous findings echo throughout social action. As previously stated, national policy debate ratifies social action as a 'bottom-up' activity that engenders citizen responsibility independent of the state. Cabinet Office (2011, p.11) contradicts this, however, with central government investing '… over £40 million in volunteering and social action'; with half this budget allocated to the COP (Bunyan, 2012). These mixed messages were intended to be counteracted by claims that volunteering and the COP '… will be rapidly self-sustaining' (Cabinet Office, 2012, p.9).

Unsurprisingly, academics and the participants challenged this. Often, solely voluntary-run projects fail due to issues including: commitment ('you can't really depend on volunteers' (CP3_LP1)), responsibility ('[local people] don't want to run their own services – they just want services that are responsive to their needs' (Taylor, 2011, p.260), financial instability and burnout:

> 'I think my own family suffered as a result [of my volunteering]. My husband and I actually separated for a time. Because he didn't agree with the amount of work I was doing for nothing. No one can afford to work for nothing. We were working very, very long hours and within the first year, it must have cost me about £2500 to volunteer.' (CP3_Vol1)

These excerpts combine to suggest the Enterprise discourse was destabilizing existing CD projects due to unrealistic expectations of how local CD processes operate and the levels of responsibility social actors in them should have. Such criticisms chimed with those concerning the COP, also operating under the Enterprise discourse. In their training year, each community organizer was expected to recruit and train nine volunteer community organizers to support fledgling community projects' development into social enterprises (CP2_Prof2). Comparatively few developed into sustainable projects; arguably due to the Enterprise discourse's unrealistic expectations of volunteers, and the lack of training, resources and professional support to develop volunteers appropriately (cf. Grimshaw *et al.*, 2018).

To summarize, the Enterprise discourse had resounding implications for CD in England. As *table 1* illustrates, the Enterprise discourse did not endorse CD. Instead, it dismissed it as an ineffective relic of New Labour. This narrative of inefficiently and unwelcome interference effectively silenced CD in national policy debate; even with volunteering, social enterprise and the COP adopting unacknowledged features. This offered the Coalition government an

opportunity to re-shape CD through a neoliberal Enterprise discourse committed to rolling-back the welfare state by devolving public service provision through citizen responsibilization. In an austere climate with pots of funding increasingly unavailable to CD projects, CD was compelled to re-structure its activities under the more financially 'sustainable' banners of volunteering, social enterprise and community organizing. This re-shaping of CD was evidenced in the case study local authority with policies actively encouraging CD projects to undertake CATs to restructure as voluntary-run community groups and/or social enterprises. By May 2015 all three CD projects involved in this study adopted a more prominent social enterprise structure, received less central and local government funding, and were more reliant on volunteers. Also, CP1 and CP2 applied for central government funding to host COP community organizers to secure more financial resources. This exposes, in practice, the Enterprise discourse's silencing of CD as a distinct and legitimate practice to further the Coalition government's neoliberal commitment to rolling-back the welfare state.

Conclusions and lessons for the field

Using a post-structuralist discourse analysis methodology, this empirical study explores the wide-ranging implications of a discursive shift in English policy-making for CD. It provides empirical evidence that that Coalition government's Enterprise discourse exploited CD's ambiguity by re-shaping its practices. Seen in microcosm in the case study local authority, all three CD projects were compelled to re-structure as social enterprise, volunteering and/or community organizing. This contributed to the silencing of CD as a distinct and legitimate practice during this timeframe.

This article concludes that understanding CD as its own discursive field of knowledge, where competing discourses 'fight' for hegemonic articulation, offers academic and practitioners in the field an alternative toolkit to examine how CD is re-defined and re-shaped in changing socio-economic and political climates. As *table 1* illustrates, five competing discourses were present from 2010-2015; with each endorsing its own definitions and practices of CD. But, only the Enterprise and Partnership discourses had enough political and intertextual power to achieve hegemonic status. Through discrediting the Partnership discourse as synonymous with inefficient, interfering and top-down New Labour governance, the Enterprise discourse was able to hegemonously totalize the policy landscape and incorporate some practices of

competing discourses as its own. These included employee-owned cooperatives and social enterprises coproducing services with local people from the National Transformation discourse, and cross-sector partnership working from the Partnership discourse. But, the Coalition government's covenant with austerity ensued that practices unable to self-generate income, and requiring mid-to-long-term state investment, were rejected or re-modelled under the Enterprise discourse. Without the necessitous intertextual links across all genres, the National Transformation, Local Transformation and Social Justice / Democracy discourses could not challenge such hegemony.

A crucial lesson is that discourse, hegemony and intertextuality matter to CD. Whilst recognition exists in the field that CD is shaped by the political and policy landscapes it is situated within; this is rarely discursively examined. Instead, the field tirelessly responds by providing 'new' and 'improved' definitions of CD, to defend CD '… from the consistent ideological confusion surrounding it' (Craig *et al.*, 2011, p.9). In consequence, a range of competing definitions exist where most can be divided into competing factions as 'radical', 'reformist' and, occasionally, 'pluralist'. Arguably, this has fractured the CD field; with factions disputing definitions that conflict with their own. This study provides empirical evidence that the discourse CD operates under is what determines how CD is defined and practiced, not solely the definition. It also demonstrates that each CD discourse must 'fight' for hegemonic articulation to ensure its dominant practices are not re-shaped or rejected by competing discourses.

This article calls for the CD field to unite in generating counter hegemonous discourses that contest the political use of ambiguity in CD within increasingly neoliberal and austere milieus. This can be achieved through the production of authoritative and canonical texts that confront hegemonic discourses emerging from political and policy leaders by disputing their claims to knowledge; and offering a counter hegemonous discourse instead. Counter hegemonous discourses must present a concise definition of CD; specify the relationship between CD and its allied practices; outline how these allied practices are also conceptualized under these discourses; and establish clear dominant practices that can be debated, adapted and/or resisted in genres beyond academia and individual CD projects. These dominant practices should be quantifiable across as many genres as possible. This will ensure sufficient political and intertextual power to temporarily 'fix' the meaning of CD, and its related practices, to effectively shape national and local policy; legitimating the identities and social practices of social actors operating under such discourses.

Dr Andie Reynolds is a Lecturer in the Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing at Northumbria University.

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