Community development as counter-hegemony

Andie Reynolds

Introduction

Both politics and community development have changed in England since the 2007/8 financial crisis. Prior to the crisis, a decade-long renaissance of community development was supported by the New Labour Government (1997-2010). Through its communitarian and third-way agenda, New Labour endorsed community development as a tool to foster social capital to build 'stronger' and more 'cohesive' communities (Kay, 2006). Its scope expanded, with considerable infrastructure investment in the public sector, and in service delivery contracts to the voluntary sector (Taylor, 2012). The financial crisis disrupted such growth which, this chapter argues, has facilitated the decline of community development activity in the UK, particularly in England.

This chapter analyses the relationship between the decline in status of community development, entrenching neoliberal hegemony, and the rise in populism in England. It does so using a post-structuralist discourse analysis methodology to analyse seventy-four texts which span national policy debate and the policy and practice within a case study local authority in England. The empirical evidence shows that, during the administration of the Coalition Government (2010-2015), neoliberal and left-wing populist discourses competed to shape community development debate and practice in England. This chapter calls for community development to unite with left-wing populist strategies to generate and practise counter-hegemonic discourses. But the chapter also cautions that such discourses can reproduce unhelpful binaries which the community development field must attempt to reconcile.

Community development after the crisis

The 2007/8 global financial crisis has significantly shaped UK politics and social policy (Taylor-Gooby, 2011; Bailey and Ball, 2016). While the banking sector was responsible for the financial crisis (Ivashina and Scharfsen, 2008; Barrel and Philips, 2008), UK media debate blamed the New Labour Government (1997-2010) for two 'failures': (i) to regulate the financial sector effectively, and (ii) to sustainably control the level of public sector spending in the years preceding the financial crisis (MacLeavy, 2011; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011). Academic debate challenged this, countering that UK public sector spending only increased in 2007/8 to bailout failing banks, provide investment capital and to cushion rising unemployment (Taylor-Gooby, 2011; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011). Yet, a consensus remained that a substantive portion of the blame for the financial crisis was New Labour's governance of the public sector.

This consensus presented an opportunity for the main opposition parties – the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats - to argue that New Labour was unable to deliver on promises of economic prosperity, and could not 'promote an alternative economic vision' (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011:2) in time for the 2010 general election. An ideological battle for centre ground resulted between all three parties (Cutts and Russell, 2015). The Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, urged the historically centre-right Conservative Party to transform and forge a centrist path (Blond, 2010). Cameron shared Philip Blond's Progressive Neoliberal Conservative (PNLC) vision to replace the Conservative Party's individualistic neoliberalism with compassionate conservatism (cf. Page, 2015). This promotes a libertarian theory of justice where '… people are entitled to the full fruits of their labour and to their assets, provided they have been obtained through fair exchange' (Burchardt, 2011:10). The PNLC agenda also has roots in 19th century conservative communitarianism which '… emphasises 'organic solidarity' in the form of voluntarism and 'natural' inequalities, and strongly opposes equality' (Corbett and Walker, 2013:456). Hence, the PNLC vision rejects a redistributive conceptualisation of equality and social justice.

The Conservative Party won the largest number of seats in the 2010 general election. But not enough to form a majority government. They quickly negotiated with the Liberal Democrats to form a coalition government, with Cameron becoming prime minister (Robinson, 2010). Prior to this, Cameron had delivered speeches about reducing big government to create a Big Society (Cameron, 2009). This became a noteworthy policy driver for the Coalition's programme of public sector reform and austerity (2010-2015). Big Society aimed to reduce 'big government' by offering citizens, communities, the voluntary sector, and the private

sector more opportunities to run British public services without superfluous red tape (Alcock, 2010; Cabinet Office, 2010). This was influenced by Blond's (2010) predilection for social enterprises running public sector services; and calls for public sector professionals – including community development workers – and voluntary community groups to form such social enterprises. While the Liberal Democrats did not use the term 'Big Society', they did share with the Conservatives a commitment to devolution and localism (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011). Both terms appeared in New Labour's policy debate in the early 2000s as 'new localism'. New localism was an approach to public sector modernisation dedicated to building community partnerships, and a strategy '… aimed at devolving power and resources away from central control and towards front-line managers, local democratic structures and local consumers and communities' (Stoker, 2004:117). Such repetitions reveal a striking convergence of ideological stipulations, and their policy implications, between all three political parties prior to the 2010 general election.

Once in office, the Coalition Government re-named the Office of the Third Sector as the Office for Civil Society (Ricketts, 2010). New Labour had applied the term 'third sector' soon after their 1997 election win to fuse organisations and groups not affiliated with the state or the market as one sector (Kendall, 2000). This name change was core to the Coalition Government's programme of public sector reform and austerity: to stress that the public sector not only 'crowds out' the voluntary sector and the private sector, but also civil society. In the Coalition programme, community groups and citizens were key civil society players that the term 'third sector' did not adequately convey (Alcock, 2010). This would increase 'efficiency' in service provision throughout civil society; with all three sectors 'encouraged' to work more collaboratively and holistically (Hastings et al, 2015). The Localism Act 2011 fortified this. It assisted civil society '… to take over public services, community assets and influence planning and development' through community asset transfers[1] (My Community, 2012:1). Thus, public, voluntary and private sector professionals, and community groups, could legitimately 'bid' to take over council assets – including community, youth and children's centres – and galvanise social action to run them as social enterprises.

This all took place during the Coalition Government's adoption of austerity as their principal economic strategy. It proposed £81 billion in public sector cuts, with £53 million cut from government departments and local governments alone (Clayton et al, 2016). The Department

for Communities and Local Government's budget was slashed by 51% over the five-year span, with local governments in England making one-third to one-half of its public sector workers redundant (Bailey et al., 2015). Local government cuts also slashed funding available to the voluntary sector, ensuing unprecedented loses in community development infrastructure in both sectors (Lowndes & McCaughie, 2013; Clayton et al, 2016). Services most affected included support groups and refuge for women, children's services, youth services and libraries. Key voices in community development suggested that the Coalition program constricted and altered the landscape of community development in England from 2010-2015, leaving community development's professional profile 'in decline' (Banks et al, 2013:3).

This is the landscape that community development was negotiating itself through from 2010-2015. This chapter now turns to explore how this landscape facilitated the rise of populism in the UK, which also has implications for community development in England.

The shift to populism

Since the 2007/8 financial crisis, populist parties and movements have become a key feature of European political landscapes (Sanders et al, 2017). This can be explained as the convergence of a post-political consensus, a populist moment and post-democracy. Prior to the financial crisis, two conditions prevailed in Europe: the hegemony of neoliberal globalisation (Crouch, 1999; Harvey, 2005; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011); and a convergence on centre ground between parties on the political left and right (Powell, 2013; Mouffe, 2018). According to Crouch (1999:102), this gradually eroded popular sovereignty, with citizens increasingly deprived of exercising their democratic rights and '… 'politics' once again becoming an affair of the elite classes.' This loss of popular sovereignty, distrust in 'elite' politicians and the financial crisis was a challenge to neoliberalism's hegemony and its sculpting of politics. Mouffe (2018:1) calls this 'a populist moment', which has destabilised existing neoliberal institutions and reconstituted the political landscape across Europe.

Populism is a highly debated and contested concept (cf. de la Torre, 2015; Müller, 2017; Sanders et al, 2017). Laclau's (2005) theory of populism rejects populism as an ideology, political regime or an arena outside of politics. Instead, it is a discursive strategy that can bypass existing political institutions to achieve power and governance for 'the people'. It does so by constructing a political frontier that divides society into two camps – 'the people' (we) and the evil elites (they). Like politics, populism's central axis of conflict produces left and right-wing variations. These variations use the construct of the political frontier to divide society into these two opposing camps; but do so differently. For example, right-wing populism uses nationalism to stigmatise and scapegoat migrants (they); and appeals to the lower-middle classes (we) who are constructed as the losers of 'open door' immigration policies (Pelinka, 2013; de la Torre, 2015). It also seeks to 'liberate' the 'hard-working people' (we) from state bureaucrats and welfare 'scroungers' (they) (Pierson, 1994:75). In contrast, left-wing populism defends equality and social justice by constructing a political frontier between 'the people' (we) as the oppressed, and 'the oligarchy' (they) as the oppressor (Iglesias, 2014; Mouffe, 2018). This tactic was most famously used by the left-wing populist movement, *Occupy*, and their 'We are the 99%' (we) slogan; used to expose the 1% 'global super rich' (they) (Ledwith, 2016:165).

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) is illustrative of the rise in populism in the UK. UKIP is a right-wing populist party that constructs the lower-middle classes in Britain as losers (we) in the European Union's (EU) 'open door' policies that favour EU migrants (they). Its political objective is for the UK to exit the EU (Ford and Goodwin, 2017). From 2010-2015 it experienced a meteoric rise in profile, culminating in the 2014 European Parliament Election where they won 27.5% of the UK vote and the largest number of seats (Hunt, 2014). In four years, they had succeeded in swinging traditional voters from both the Conservative and Labour parties, and consistently out-performed the Liberal Democrats in polls and elections (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Hunt, 2014). Their party membership more-than-doubled during this period, showcasing one of the most successful challenges to the main political parties in British history (Ford and Goodwin, 2014).

In 2013, Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP, was asked to explain why 'the people' *en mass* were turning to, and voting for, UKIP:

> They are fed up to the back teeth with the cardboard cut-out careerists in Westminster. The spot-the-difference politicians. Desperate to fight the middle

> ground, but can't even find it… the politicians who daren't say what they really mean. (Farage, 2013, cited in Ford and Goodwin, 2014:4)

Such views demonstrate that right-wing populist parties do not solely 'Other' migrants who represent a threat to the people (de la Torre, 2015:1), but also include the 'evil oligarchy' in the category of 'Others'. To combat the rise of such right-wing populist parties, Mouffe (2018) calls for a left populist strategy to defend equality and social justice. It also positions 'the people' (we) against 'the oligarchy' (they). Such a strategy was initiated in 2011, with anti-austerity protests erupting across Europe. This unevenly materialised in the UK. In Scotland and Wales, the main centre-left and nationalist parties – the Scottish National Party (SNP) and *Plaid Cymru* – soon adopted left-wing populist discourses rooted in a critique of austerity (Massetti, 2018). An anti-austerity and left populist critique was auspiciously absent in English politics, with UKIP and the British National Party (BNP) reframing the August 2011 riots, in low income suburbs and towns across England, as national discontent with the establishment, immigration and the EU (Ford and Goodwin, 2017; Massetti, 2018). This chapter highlights that an anti-austerity and left populist strategy was largely absent from mainstream English politics from 2010-2015; which has implications for community development in England.

Irrespective of orientation, two criticisms are levied at populism. The first concerns how the role of the leader can slip into authoritarianism (de la Torre, 2015; Sanders et al, 2017; Mouffe, 2018). Populist representation involves 'merging and full identity between a representative and those that seek representation' (de la Torre, 2015:9). Thus, a populist leader claims to be 'like' the people, but this often manifests as the leader believing they are the 'incarnation of the people' (de la Torre, 2015:9). Additionally, 'the people' are often represented as lacking agency and critical consciousness; thus, they need the power and agency of populist leaders (de la Torre, 2015; Sanders et al, 2017). As recent events in Venezuela and Nicaragua highlight, this can result in populist leaders dismissing dissenting voices and expressing a reluctance to renounce power (cf. Agren, 2018; Wade, 2018). Secondly, both left and right-wing populism can 'display a rhetoric of exclusion which stigmatizes and scapegoats' (Sanders et al, 2017:553). Although left-wing populism includes socially marginalised groups as 'we'; to do so it must marginalise and stigmatise 'Others' as responsible for their marginalisation (they) (Sanders et al, 2017). This calls into question how inclusionary left-wing populism is; and can have implications for community development discourses and practices influenced by such strategies.

Competing discourses

As previously discussed, populism is a discursive strategy that both left and right-wing political parties can adopt to achieve power and governance for 'the people'. But, it is under-researched whether community development processes can adopt populist discourses for similar ends. Community development is rarely examined as a discursive strategy, and its relationship with populism is often overlooked.

The author located her research in this lacuna and operationalised Hansen's (2006) post-structuralist discourse analysis methodology to re-conceptualise community development as a discursive field of knowledge where competing discourses 'fight' for dominance and hegemonic articulation. Community development discourses are competing social and political projects that seek to establish a hegemonic articulation of community development; and shape the identities and social practices of agents working within such projects (Hansen, 2006). Using post-structuralist discourse analysis, the author analysed seventy-four texts that spanned national policy debate and the policy and practice within a case study located authority in England. These texts included interviews with twenty professionals, volunteers and local people involved in three community development projects in the case study local authority in England. All interviews were carried out between May and December 2013; and all participants are anonymised using pseudonyms.

The interview transcripts were analysed alongside fifty-four texts including: discourse by political and policy leaders, national and local policies, and academic debate. An objective of this research was not to generate discussions solely at a national, local authority or community level. An analyst using Hansen's (2006) methodology can determine which discourses materialise across *all* three levels. This is achieved by including texts from pre-set genres across different intertextual models. For 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 marginalised or silenced, discourses. This study analysed 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

(community development books; academic journal articles responding to official discourse, and interview transcripts with social actors in the case study local authority). All seventy-four texts were authored from 2010-2015 to cover the administration of the Coalition Government; discussed the practices of social actors involved in community development processes; and deliberated the Coalition's programme of public sector reform and austerity. In doing so, which community development discourses were present could be determined; and if any of these discourses were populist. Whilst this research cannot claim that all three hundred and twenty-five local authorities in England will follow the case study local authority, it can establish whether the case study local authority is following national trends.

Volunteering, social enterprise and community organising emerged as state-endorsed practices to engineer the devolution of service provision responsibility to civil society, and its reconstruction. Such developments led to the silencing of community development as a unique and legitimate practice. In an austere climate with funding increasingly unavailable to community development, a common response for community development projects was to re-structure their activities under these state-endorsed practices. This created a 'new' neoliberal discourse of community development solely endorsing entrepreneurial community-based practices capable of self-generating income and dedicated to the devolution of service provision responsibility. I identify this as the Enterprise discourse.

By May 2015 all three community development 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. Two of the projects (identified as *Community Action* and *Foundations*) also applied for central government funding to host community organisers[2] to generate more income. This suggests that the Coalition Government's neoliberal Enterprise discourse successfully reshaped existing practices of community development within a case study local authority in England.

An alternative response was to practise marginal or silenced discourses. A discourse I call the Social Justice and Democracy discourse (SJDD) materialised across three genres of text as a largely silenced, but counter-hegemonic, discourse shaped by left-wing populism. The following section presents this discourse, how it manifested and developed at a national and local level, and its implications for community development in England.

The Social Justice and Democracy discourse

The counter-hegemonic SJDD offers a concise definition of community development as: a radical and active democratic process that operates within civil society movements that are independent of the state and are committed to redistributive equality and social justice. Its dominant practices contest, debate and resist those promulgated by the hegemonic Enterprise discourse. These oppositional practices appear in texts across the community development field, wider academic debate and a community development project, *Autism Action*, in the case study local authority.

First, the SJDD attacks the Enterprise discourse's conceptualisations of equality and social justice. It claims the Enterprise discourse – rooted in Blond and Cameron's Progressive Neoliberal Conservative (PNLC) agenda – does not engage with either concept. Instead, it champions economic justice; arguing that entrepreneurial freedom – obtained through community asset transfers and owning public assets – is crucial for communities and local people to overcome economic deprivation. Such recommendations echo throughout national policy texts. For example, Cabinet Office (2011:4) states the Coalition Government's 'overwhelming imperative' and 'urgent moral purpose' is its 'desire to reform public services… to make opportunity more equal.' Cabinet Office (2012:13) also claims: '(w)e will help everyone realise their potential irrespective of their background, and tackle persistent inequalities in access to training and jobs and in educational outcomes.' Both extracts understand equality as different groups in society accessing education, training and employment opportunities to overcome economic injustice and inequality. This confirms the PNLC agenda's presence in the hegemonic Enterprise discourse, and its rejection of a more redistributive equality and social justice.

It is precisely a redistributive conceptualisation of equality and social justice the SJDD champions. The Community Development Exchange (2010, cited in Bunyan, 2012:127) declares that 'equalities is (sic) not a luxury item', and advocates that the Coalition Government needs the values, principles and inclusive methods of community development to ensure equality - including equal opportunities and access to services - for all. The SJDD also attacks consecutive neoliberal governments and discourses for contributing to the '…

dilution, distortion and appropriation of community development values and principles regarding social justice and equality' in England (Mills and Robson, 2010:12). In doing so, it lambasts the Coalition Government's explicitly neoliberal objective '… of ending social justice as the basis of political community' (Powell, 2013:15). This suggests the PNLC agenda is culpable for the dismissal of community development in national policy debate.

Similar to Mouffe's (2018) left populist strategy, the SJDD seeks to re-establish the links between politics, equality and social justice. It uses community development 'underpinned by a framework of equality and social justice' (Mills and Robson, 2010: 12) to achieve this. A left populist the people – wealthy elite binary emerges. The SJDD argues 'the wealthy elite' have become 'even more powerful', with everyone else slipping 'further down the ever-narrowed pyramid' (Tam, 2011:33). This discourse also accuses the Coalition Government's programme of public sector reform and austerity of eroding popular sovereignty, by making 'the people' financially responsible for a 'corrupt' and unscrupulous wealthy elite (Powell, 2013: 25; Tam, 2011). It does so through a left populist lens that is anti-austerity and champions a more redistributive debate on rights, equality and social justice.

Next, the SJDD challenges the Coalition Government's central claim that it was New Labour's inefficiency, bureaucracy and unwelcome interference into the lives of citizens that 'broke' Britain. It counter-argues that neoliberalism, and its resultant financial crisis, was responsible (Taylor-Gooby, 2011; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011). The SJDD also dismisses the Coalition Government's localism as '… a continuation and intensification of neo-liberalism and its post-welfarist reconfiguration of 'the social' as a series of individuals who operate within a framework of quasi-markets to provide services and expertise' (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2013:559). As a result, the Enterprise discourse's ratification of localism '… is part of a broader repertoire of practices through which the [Coalition] government has constructed the local as antagonistic to the state and invoked it to restructure the public sector' (Featherstone et al, 2012:177-8). With the Enterprise discourse and the Coalition Government's localism discredited, the SJDD is free to re-articulate what is a political alternative to neoliberalism.

It invokes left-wing populism to do this and looks to radical democratic and left-populist strategies, i.e. *Occupy* and Spain's 15M[3], to disrupt neoliberalism's fixation on the local to engage instead with global processes and networks (Powell, 2013). The SJDD re-articulates

localism as *progressive localism*; defined as: 'community strategies that are outward-looking and that create positive affinities between places and social groups negotiating social processes' (Featherstone et al, 2012:179). These strategies are left populist, underpinned by social justice, equality and solidarity; and grounded in democratic projects that embrace difference, dissent and antagonism to bring to the fore oppressive forces within society so that they can be challenged (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001).

Empirically based theorists promulgating the SJDD carefully draw attention to how successive neoliberal governments and discourses have re-shaped community development until it is, arguably, unrecognisable. For instance, Taylor (2012:18) distinguishes between community movements and sectors; defining the former as: 'a counter narrative that told of the co-option by the state of community resources and energies, endangering the distinctiveness and independence of the community voice.' In contrast, a community sector is defined as: 'mainstream community work… embedded in a social work tradition, promoting non-contentious models… based on a pluralist and consensus-orientated model of society' (Taylor, 2012:18). Consequently, community development *must* be practised within community movements, not sectors, to retain its roots in radical and active democracy.

Such fault lines parallel the Coalition Government's narrowing of civil society to a sector where citizens and the statutory, voluntary and private sectors work collaboratively to deliver more 'effective' services. The SJDD broadens civil society to a communicative space where independent (of the state) social action and social relations occur (Alcock, 2010; Powell, 2013). Thus, the SJDD actively promotes civil society *movements* over a civil society sector and argues that the removal of 'movement', and addition of 'sector', from both community and civil society is a deliberate neoliberalisation of both spaces to disrupt the proliferation of counter-hegemonic movements and strategies (cf. Powell, 2013). Accordingly, the SJDD 'fights' to re-articulate key concepts vulnerable to re-shaping by neoliberal discourses, i.e. localism, civil society, community and community development.

These findings from national debate replicate within the case study local authority. Like national policy, local policy understands equality as equal opportunities. For example, Council's (2010a:4) local policy vision from 2010-2015 is 'to improve the wellbeing and equality of opportunity for everyone in [local authority district] so that all residents and businesses can fulfil their potential.' The Enterprise discourse's focus on overcoming economic disparity through equality of opportunity is clear. Although, an alternative narrative

on equality exists. Council (2010b:3) promotes 'equality for all people, and tackle(s) discrimination on the basis of race, age, disability, gender and gender identity, religion or belief.' Still, this narrative does not extend to social justice. Also reminiscent of national policy debate, discussions on social justice are silenced. These only materialise in *Autism Action* which, the analysis will demonstrate, adopts a left populist strategy.

It does so as equality and social justice underpin *Autism Action*. Its focus is the injustice experienced by autistic people, their families and carers in the case local authority. Its co-founder, Maggie, discusses the incident that propelled her to start *Autism Action*:

> 'So… I tried to get my son statemented. It took me five years to get the statement. And all the way through… I was told that he would never be statemented… and he would never go to [a special needs school]. Because [local authority council] were going to close it. So, I started helping the school to fight the closure. Because the council had… sold land which didn't belong to them. [They] thought that no one would kick up a fuss. But, obviously, the staff and the parents at [the school] all started to do their own detective work and… I think the council had to pay back quite a bit of money… to the land developers… because they promised them things that they obviously couldn't deliver. [The school] then became a Trust school.'

Paralleling academic debate, *Autism Action* uses the SJDD to directly challenge the Enterprise discourse. It does this through a left populist strategy that discredits local and central government as a bureaucratic and unscrupulous elite 'who are only… lining their own pockets' (Jeff). *Autism Action* mobilises 'the people' of the local authority to demand equality and social justice from local and national governments by using the campaigning and activism methods of community development. This confronts the Enterprise discourse's articulation of campaigning and activism as volunteering, social action and state-funded community organising. Instead, *Autism Action* and the SJDD redefines campaigning and activism as using community development's confrontational and capacity-building methods – grounded in radical and active democracy - to 'empower' citizens through pressurising government into giving 'the people' the services and resources they need.

All *Autism Action* participants discuss the injustice experienced with professionals in their local authority; including doctors, teachers, social workers and senior civil servants. For example, Dave, an unpaid carer, discloses how four successive general practitioners (GPs) refused to refer his client for an autism diagnosis. Maggie intervened and overturned the fourth GP's decision using confrontational methods to stress and exercise the legal rights of the client. These methods were successful, with the client soon diagnosed as autistic. For

Autism Action, this example illustrates how the socially marginalised can be repeatedly blocked by 'incompetent' professionals employed with, or working on behalf of, the local authority. This creates a left populist 'the people' – bureaucrat / oligarchy binary where ordinary people are denied their sovereignty and democratic rights by 'incompetent' agents of the state.

This binary critique extends to the voluntary sector. Paul admits: 'I've got concerns about the voluntary sector becoming more engaged with statutory work… we are moving towards voluntary sector organisations doing more statutory work but being less critical.' Jeff agrees: 'the best thing we can do is be independent from the council because we'd have to fear that the council were going to take money off us.' Taking this money would make *Autism Action* 'worthless' as 'we'd have to give into the council all the time' (Jeff). This parallels academic analysis that successive UK governments have diluted the criticality of such organisations so that they cannot challenge the policies and practices of local and central government. As a result, the SJDD's left populist strategy only legitimates radical democratic community development processes that are independent of the state; and committed to redistributive equality and social justice.

These debates have implications for social actors engaged in community development processes both nationally and across the case study local authority. Characteristic of left populist strategies, the SJDD constructs the people (we) – oligarchy / bureaucrats (they) binary. Only 'empowering' and critically conscious leaders, like Maggie, who work independent of the state are endorsed as authentic community development practitioners. Similar practitioners who receive state funding are discredited as incompetent, unscrupulous and 'disempowering' agents of the state who deny 'the people' their sovereignty and democratic rights.

Similar issues arise with the SJDD's articulation of 'the people'. They are also binarised as angry, active, motivated and critically conscious; *or* apathetic, passive and lacking critical consciousness. Both nationally and locally, the latter can present as disempowered by bureaucrats and/or the oligarchy; thus, requiring the intervention of community development practitioners and/or angry and critically conscious local people to obtain power and agency (Ledwith, 2011; Tam, 2011; Powell, 2013). This echoes criticism levied at left populism where 'the people' require the agency of populist leaders to foster agency and critical consciousness. Whilst this chapter has argued that left populist strategies are needed to

reinvigorate community development, it also underscores the importance of reconciling this drawback to effectively generate and practise counter-hegemonic discourses of community development.

Conclusions

This chapter offers new insights into the relationship between politics, populism and community development. It does so by examining the social, economic and political landscape of England since the 2007/8 financial crisis and during the administration of the Coalition Government. From 2010-2015 two political conditions prevailed in England: entrenching neoliberal hegemony and the rise of right-wing populism. Empirical evidence demonstrated these conditions facilitated the decline in status, and reshaping, of community development - nationally and within a case study local authority - in England.

The evidence also presented a counter-hegemonic and left populist discourse of community development with the potential to deconstruct neoliberal, austere and right-wing populist discourses. It endorses 'independent of the state' community development practices that employ rights-based campaigning and activist methods to challenge the professional 'incompetence' of central and local government; including their associated institutions and organisations. Characteristic of left populist strategies, this discourse is underpinned by redistributive equality and social justice; and reproduces a 'the people' (we) – oligarchy / bureaucrats (they) binary.

While this discourse presents an opportunity for the community development field to unite against the oligarchy and/or bureaucrats, its binaries can override community development's objective to 'empower' local people as power and agency can be bequeathed to community development practitioners and leaders. Echoing criticisms of left populism (cf. de la Torre, 2015), this could result in such leaders and practitioners dismissing dissenting voices and presenting a reluctance to renounce their leadership, power and agency.

To conclude, this chapter advocates that community development should connect to left populist strategies emerging from spaces independent from the state and the civil society 'sector'. Such connections will reinvigorate community development and produce counter-

hegemonic discourses that directly challenge neoliberal and conservative discourses and practices evident in some forms of community development in England. But the community development field should be sensitive to the problematic aspects of binary constructions within left populist strategies, and work to reconcile them[4].

Notes

[1] New Labour defined these as processes to allow local people to control and manage publicly-owned assets (Cabinet Office, 2007). This was part of New Labour's short-lived interest in asset-based community development (Durose & Rees, 2012).

[2] The Community Organisers Programme was a £20 million state-funded programme to train 5000 community organisers (450 paid workers, 4500 volunteers) over four years (2011-2015) in low-income neighbourhoods in England (cf. Grimshaw et al, 2018). The *Foundations* project was successful in this application.

[3] 15M is an anti-austerity movement that uses digital platforms and community organising strategies to coordinate protests and occupations of public squares, in addition to 'actions to stop evictions, self-management initiatives, bank boycotts, popular legislation initiatives, protest outside politicians' homes… and new political parties' (Feenestra, 2018: 1205-6). It began in Spain on the 15th May 2011.

[4] This could include an appraisal of Marxist and Alinskyan community development practices also using binary constructions, such as Alinsky's have and have-nots and Marx's oppressor and oppressed, to establish strategies to resolve such drawbacks.

References

Agren, D. (2018) 'Criminalisation of health care in Nicaragua's political crisis.' *The Lancet,* **392** (10150): 807-8. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(18)32116-0.

Alcock, P. (2010) 'Building the Big Society: a new policy environment for the third sector in England' *Voluntary Sector Review,* **1**(3): 379-389. DOI: 10.1332/204080510X538365.

Bailey, N., Bramley, G. and Hastings, A. (2015) 'Symposium introduction: local responses to "austerity"' *Local Government Studies*, **41**(4): 571-581. DOI:10.1080/03003930.2015.1036988.

Bailey, P. L. J. and Ball, S. J. (2016) 'The coalition government, the general election and the policy ratchet in education: a reflection on the 'ghosts' of policy past, present and yet to come.' In Bochel, H and Powell, M. (eds.) *The Coalition Government and Social Policy: Restructuring the welfare state,* Bristol: Policy Press, pp 127-152.

Banks, S., Butcher, H., Orton, A. and Robertson, J. (eds) (2013) *Managing Community Practice: Principles, Policies and Programmes* (2nd edn.), Bristol: Policy Press.

Barrell, R. and Philips, P.E. (2008) 'The evolution of the financial crisis of 2007-8.' *National Institute Economic Review,* **206**(1): 5-14. DOI: 10.1177/0027950108099838.

Blond, P. (2010) *Red Tory: How Left and Right Have Broken Britain and How We Can Fix It,* London: Faber and Faber.

Bunyan, P. (2012) 'Partnership, the Big Society and community organising: between romanticising, problematizing and politicizing community', *Community Development Journal*, **48**(1): 119-133. DOI: 10.1093/cdj/bss014.

Burchardt, T. (2011) 'The UK welfare state going west', in N. Yeates, T. Haux, R. Jawad and M. Kilkey (eds) *In Defence of Welfare: The impacts of the spending review,* Social Policy Association. Available at: http://www.social-policy.org.uk/downloads/idow.pdf, pp 7-9.

Cabinet Office (2010) *Building a stronger civil society: a strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises,* London: Office for Civil Society.

Cabinet Office (2011) *Open Public Services: white paper*, London: The Parliamentary Bookshop.

Cabinet Office (2012) *Creating the conditions for a more integrated society.* London: Office for Civil Society.

Cameron, D. (2009) 'Hugo Young Memorial Lecture.' Transcript [online], 10th November Available from: http://conservative-speeches.sayit.mysociety.org/speech/601246.

Clayton, J., Donovan, C. and Merchant, J. (2016) 'Distancing and limited resourcefulness: Third sector service provision under austerity localism in the north east of England', *Urban Studies*, **53**(4): 723-740. DOI: 10.1177/0042098014566369.

Corbett, S. and Walker, A. (2013) 'The big society: Rediscovery of 'the social' or rhetorical fig-leaf for neoliberalism?' *Critical Social Policy*, **33**(3): 451-472. DOI: 10.1177/0261018312471162.

Council (2010a) *Vision 2030 Sustainable Community Strategy for [Local Authority]*. [Local Authority]: [Local Authority] Council.

Council (2010b) *The [Local Authority] Compact 2010-2013: Delivering Vision 2030.* [Local Authority]: [Local Authority] Council.

Crouch, C. (1999) *Social Change in Western Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cutts, D. and Russell, A. (2015) 'From Coalition to Catastrophe: The Electoral Meltdown of the Liberal Democrats.' *Parliamentary Affairs*, **68**(1):70-87. DOI: 10.1093/pa/gsv028.

Davoudi, S. & Madanipour, A. (2013) 'Commentary: Localism and Neoliberal Governmentality, *Town Planning Review*, **84**(5): 551-63. DOI: 10.3828/tpr.2013.29.

de la Torre, C. (2015) 'Introduction: Power to the People? Populism, Insurrections, Democratization', In C. de la Torre (ed.) *The Promise and Perils of Populism.* Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, pp 1-28.

Durose, C. and Rees, J. (2012) 'The rise and fall of neighbourhood in the New Labour era', *Policy & Politics*, **40**(1): 38-54. DOI: 10.1332/030557310X550079.

Featherstone, D., Ince, A., Mackinnon, D., Strauss, K. and Cumbers, A. (2012) 'Progressive Localism and the construction of political alternatives', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, **37**(2): 177–182. DOI: 10.1111/j.14755661.2011.00493.x.

Ford, R. and Goodwin, M. (2014) *Revolt on the Right: Explaining support for the radical right in Britain*, London: Routledge.

Grimshaw, L., Mates, L. and Reynolds, A. (2018) 'The challenges and contradictions of state-funded community organizing', *Community Development Journal.* [online]. Available

from: https://academic.oup.com/cdj/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/cdj/bsy040/5100752?redirectedFrom=fulltext

Hansen, L. (2006) *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, London: Routledge.

Harvey, D. (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hastings, A., Bailey, N., Gannon, M., Besemer, K. and Bramley, G. (2015) 'Coping with the Cuts? The Management of the Worst Financial Settlement in Living Memory', *Local Government Studies*, **41**(4): 601-621. DOI: 10.1080/03003930.2015.1036987.

Hunt, A. (2014) 'UKIP: The story of the UK Independence Party's rise.' *BBC News*, 21st November 2014. Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21614073

Iglesias, P. (2015) *Politics in a Time of Crisis: Podemos and the Future of a Democratic Europe.* London: Verso.

Ivashina, V. and Scharfsen, D. (2008) 'Bank lending during the financial crisis of 2008', *Journal of Financial Economics*, **97**(3): 319-338. DOI: 10.1016/j.jfineco.2008.12.001.

Kay, A. (2006) 'Social capital, urban regeneration and urban policy', *Community Development Journal*, **41**(2): 160-173. DOI: 10.1093/cdj/bsi045.

Kendall, J. (2000) *The mainstreaming of the third sector into public policy in England in the late 1990s: Whys and wherefores.* Civil Society Working Paper 2, LSE Research Online. Available from: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29028/1/cswp2.pdf.

Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, London: Verso.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2001) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2nd edn.), London: Verso.

Ledwith, M. (2011) *Community Development: A critical approach* (2nd edn.), Bristol: The Policy Press.

Ledwith, M. (2016) *Community Development in Action: Putting Freire into Practice*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Lowndes, V. and McCaughie, K. (2013) 'Weathering the perfect storm? Austerity and institutional resilience in local government', *Policy & Politics*, **41**(4): 533-49. DOI: 10.1332/030557312X655747.

MacLeavy, J. (2011) 'A "New Politics" of Austerity, Workfare and Gender? The UK Coalition Government's Welfare Reform Proposals', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, **4**(3): 355–367. DOI: 10.1093/cjres/rsr023

Massetti, E. (2018) 'Left-wing regionalist populism in the 'Celtic' peripheries: *Plaid Cymru* and the Scottish National Party's anti-austerity challenge against the British elites', *Comparative European Politics*, **16**(6): 937-953. DOI: 10.1057/S41295-018-0136-z

Mills, J. and Robson, S. (2010) 'Does community organising empower or oppress?' *CDX Magazine* (Winter): 12-14. [online]. Available from: http://www.cocollaborative.org.uk/resources/does-community-organising-empower-oroppress

Mouffe, C. (2018) *For a Left Populism*, London: Verso.

Müller, J-W. (2017) *What is Populism?* London: Penguin Books.

My Community (2012) *Community Right to Bid: Understanding the Community Right to Bid.* [online] Available from: https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/understanding-the-communityright-to-bid/

Page, R. M. (2015) 'The coming age of progressive neo-liberal conservative 'welfarism' under the Coalition government of 2010-15', in L. Foster, A. Brunton, C. Deeming & T. Haux (eds) *In Defence of Welfare 2,* Social Policy Association. [online]. Available from: http://www.social-policy.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/IDOW-Complete-text-4-online-secured-compressed.pdf, pp 52-54.

Pelinka, A. (2013) 'Right-Wing populism: Concept and typology', In R. Wodak, M. KhosraviNik and B. Mral. (eds) *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp 3-22.

Pierson, P. (1994) *Dismantling the Welfare State? Regan, Thatcher and the Politics of Retrenchment,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Powell, F. (2013) *The Politics of Civil Society: Big Society and small government* (2nd edn.), Bristol: Policy Press.

Ricketts, A. (2010) 'Office for Civil Society unveiled by the Cabinet Office. *Third Sector*, [online] 18th May 2010. Available from: http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/office-civil-society-unveiledcabinet-office/policy-and-politics/article/1004125.

Robinson, N. (2010) 'How the Coalition government was formed.' *The Telegraph* [online], 29th July. Available from: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/7915918/How-the-Coalition-government-was-formed.html.

Sanders, K., Molina Hurtado, M. J. and Zoragastua, J. (2017) 'Populism and exclusionary narratives: The 'other' in Podemos' 2014 European Union election campaign', *European Journal of Communication,* **32**(6): 552-567. DOI: 10.1177/0267323117737952

Stoker, G. (2004) 'New Localism, Progressive Politics and Democracy', *The Political Quarterly*, **75**(1): 117-129. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-923X.2004.627_1.x

Tam, H. (2011) 'The Big Con: Reframing the state/society debate', *Public Policy Research,* **18**(1): 30-40.

Taylor, M. (2012) 'The changing fortunes of community', *Voluntary Sector Review*, **3**(1): 15–34. DOI: 10.1332/204080512X632700.

Taylor-Gooby, P. (2011) 'The UK welfare state going west', in N. Yeates, T. Haux, R. Jawad and M. Kilkey (eds) *In Defence of Welfare: The impacts of the spending review,* Social Policy Association. [online]. Available at: http://www.social-policy.org.uk/downloads/idow.pdf, pp 12-14.

Taylor-Gooby, P. and Stoker, G. (2011) 'The Coalition Programme: A New Vision for Britain or Politics as Usual?', *The Political Quarterly*, **82**(1), pp. 4-15. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-923X.2011.02169.x.

Wade, L. (2018) 'Universities 'held hostage' in Nicaragua's political crisis', *Science,* **362** (6421), pp 1338. DOI: 10.1126/science.362.6421.1338.