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When Do Community Leaders Matter?

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines when community leaders make a difference. It lays out the structure of a PhD thesis primarily focussing upon the establishment of the problem, the questions that will be used to address it and an appropriate methodology alongside some early research findings. The community leader literature predominantly takes an agency perspective. In response, the paper establishes a theoretical approach which places community leaders as 'situated agents' operating in a context which affects them utilising the fresh perspective offered by new institutionalism. An emphasis is placed upon how the perceptions of actors are translated into action and how they interpret the difference this makes. Research in two case study neighbourhoods within Sheffield highlight the development of community leaders and the extent to which they operate within numerous governance arenas. Community leaders are seen to make compromises in order to be of significance based on a perceived need for state support and approval. This places community leaders in a position of dependency upon the state. The potential ability of other actors such as council officers and regeneration staff to affect community leaders is also highlighted alongside the actions taken by community leaders in response. It concludes by laying out lessons for future research by proposing the need for a more ethnographic approach.

INTRODUCTION

Community leaders have been the focus of a substantial body of research (for example Bang and Sorensen 2001, Purdue 2005, Anastacio et al 2000, Barnes et al 2004) and a variety of government initiatives in the UK and internationally. The community leader literature outlines the benefit of involving individuals drawn from communities in the formation and delivery of public policy. It then commonly moves on to identify the problems experienced in practice which questions the impact of these individuals in the process of governing. At the heart of this debate lies the question of when community leaders matter to public policy. Are they free agents able to mould and shape public policy, or are they constrained by existing structures to a largely symbolic and marginal impact?

It takes as a starting point Bang's concept of an 'everyday maker' and draws attention to the focus upon the capacity of actors whilst neglecting the relevance of structural factors within this analysis and the wider community leader literature. This study employs new institutionalism to offer fresh insight into the debate by emphasising the regulating and constraining affect of institutions upon actors. Bevir and Rhodes (2006) show the need to consider community leaders as 'situated agents' by examining the relationship between the actor and the environment they operate in.

The emphasis upon formal and informal rules within new institutionalism (for example Ostrom 1999) is seen as problematic because of ambiguity surrounding what constitutes a rule. In response to this, the paper offers a new approach by examining how community leaders make sense of their environment and translate these perceptions into action. Community leaders are inherently understood as being situated forming perceptions based on a dialogue with their environment. This environment is seen to be made up of factors related to the state and community alongside their own agency and experiences. Based on such an approach, what it means to matter is determined by the interpretations made by the community leaders themselves. These interpretations are seen to have symbolic, substantive and procedural dimensions which will be discussed using illustrative examples from the cases. This shows that within the complexity of their context, the interpretations of difference offered by community leaders contain aspects of each of these dimensions.

A case study approach is used to allow rich analysis of community leaders in two areas of Sheffield and the environments in which they are situated. The piece moves to consider the implications of interview methods rarely used in public policy and more commonly associated with disciplines such as anthropology and mental healthcare. These approaches are used to track the development of community leaders and their perceptions concluding that a modified version of a biographical interview is appropriate. The storylines for community leaders will also be compared with those of other groups of actors involved in governing; council officers, regeneration staff and councillors. The sampling of community leaders is based upon reputation and position (Bonjean and Olsen 1964) and the potential flaws of this are considered alongside other concerns about the extent that individuals can be seen as members of larger groups and the impact of the researcher on 'data generation' (Yanow 2006a).

Although the primary aim of the piece is to establish a conceptual framework to examine when community leaders make a difference, some research findings are also presented. The research findings begin by introducing Sheffield and the neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey. It then considers the development of community leaders highlighting the number of groups and cultures with which they are involved. It is suggested that in order to understand the perceptions of community leaders it is important to consider the importance of time. As community leaders develop they are also seen to come into increasing contact with the state and navigate between governance levels and cultures. In order to do this, community leaders are seen to modify their behaviour based on their environment. This draws attention to the apparent significance of other actors such as council officers and regeneration staff.

It is suggested that in order to make a difference community leaders must make compromises. This stems from perceptions that place community leaders in a position of state dependency where part of their success is associated with being granted legitimacy and funding from the state. Community leaders emphasise local level achievements and find the higher rungs of governance harder to work successfully within. Community leaders also show awareness of the constraints imposed upon them and are able to respond to some of these. For example, community leaders are seen to band together with other actors and organisations and proactively approach the council whilst at the same time competing for legitimacy. The article concludes by laying out lessons for future research using a similar methodological approach arguing that a more ethnographic approach is required to see the relationship between community leaders and their environment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Community Leaders in Governance

The involvement of community leaders in governance alongside other actors revolves around the notion that "the classic hierarchical model of public administration does not work" (Hendricks and Tops 2005 p476). It is argued to be ineffective in addressing persistent policy problems, or so called 'wicked issues' and to suffer legitimacy problems. As a result the process of governing is now carried out by numerous and various stakeholders operating in new public governance spaces (for example Hirst 2000, Rhodes 2000). This reduces "government to only one of many actors" (Rhodes 2000 p63). Amongst this milieu are individuals drawn from civil society to represent a discernable community (such as a geographic area of council tenants).

Community leaders are individuals defined by a number of characteristics within the literature. Firstly, they commonly sit on recognisable organisations such as a tenant's association or regeneration board (for example Purdue 2005, Anastacio et al 2000) and have a history of community action (Barnes et al 2003, Lowndes et al 2001). Such individuals are considered as a legitimate mouthpiece for their community (for example Thake and Zadek 2000, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002) and also by the state

and other governance actors with which they interact (Purdue et al 2000 and Purdue 2001). This is reflected in the methodologies used within much of the community leader literature involving the examination of the involvement of community leader across partnership case studies (for example Anastacio et al 2000). These individuals will be referred to collectively under the banner of 'community leaders' throughout this piece for ease of communication.

The rationale for involving community leaders is that they possess expert local knowledge which serves to improve the quality of decision making. Furthermore, their involvement provides a link between increasingly divorced and disengaged citizens and councillors and council officers (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000) and improves the legitimacy of decisions (Purdue 2005). By working collaboratively, the collective strengths of state, voluntary and community sector and the private sectors combine to provide an appropriate means of tackling wicked issues and have become a mandated part of government policy (Purdue 2005).

Community leader are expected to "deliver their communities" (Taylor 2003 p138) in governance arenas. A key feature of the community leader literature concerns the position which actors find themselves as a result of their involvement, and the issues this creates. Taylor (2003 p185) argues that community leaders operate in "no man's land" rather than as a bridge between state and citizen. On one hand, they may stray too heavily towards their public sector partners and becoming incorporated (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). They begin to mimic the discourses and institutional practices of state players in features such as the language they use (Barnes et al 2004). In so doing the community leader becomes detached from their community and ceases being considered as a legitimate representative by the community (Anastacio et al 2000). They run the risk of shouts of "you've fucked up the estate and now you're carrying a briefcase!" (McCulloch 1997) from members of the community.

By becoming involved community leaders are seen to capitalise on an opportunity (Purdue 2005) and gain social capital. However, this can only occur wider if the benefits are passed down to the community (Maloney et al 2000 p812) through the leader. The term 'usual suspects' is used to show that it is a relatively small number of community leaders that become involved within governance and these individuals may simply replicate existing social exclusion patterns (Purdue et al 2000, Mayo and Taylor 2002). On such a basis their involvement goes as far as being detrimental to those "already struggling with social exclusion on the basis of race, gender, occupation or age" (Anastaico et al 2000 p2).

On the other hand, community leaders can be criticised by their public sector partners who can accuse them of being unrepresentative and unable to represent beyond their community (Taylor 2003). In order to be seen as a legitimate community leader, an individual needs to be considered so by their community. However, it appears more important that they are seen as such by the state partners (Barnes et al 2004, Anastacio et al 2000). Moreover, whilst councils are increasingly required to involve communities and community leaders, they are reluctant to do so leaving a sense that community opinions are "not sought after but their support needed" (Purdue et al 2000 p32). On such a basis, the involvement of community leaders is more "council bureaucracy than a route to citizen empowerment" (Purdue et al 2000

p32) and communities remain marginalised (Taylor 2000). Individuals who agree with the council agenda are deemed 'acceptable' and preferred to those seen to be rocking the boat (Anastacio et al 2000, Dearlove 1973). The community leader is therefore in a position where "they do not decide the game that is being played; they do not determine the rules of play, the system of refereeing or, indeed, who plays" (Taylor 2003 p123). For example, the heterogeneity amongst BME's is unlikely to be adequately represented by the single seat that is sometimes offered on a partnership board (Smith and Stephenson 2005). The dominance of state players in establishing the rules for the involvement of community leaders may also affect the type of person likely to become involved, encouraging the atypical few possessing the necessary management skills (Taylor 2003, Mayo and Taylor 2002) and personal contacts (Hendricks and Tops 2005).

The Agency Logic of Community Leader Theory: The Case of Bang's Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens

A common feature of the community leader literature is an underlying belief that it is individuals that "made (it) work" (Hendricks and Tops 2005 p480). This is perhaps best illustrated by an examination of Bang's concept of the everyday maker. Bang's analysis shares a number of similarities to that of the wider community leader literature. It begins by observing the declining levels of civic engagement and collective participation in politics drawing on Putnam's social capital work (for example Putnam 1995) to show that citizens are increasingly "bowling alone" (for example Bang 2005). In the face of this increasing individualisation members of the political elite acknowledge that they can no longer govern in a top-down manner. Instead, actors from different 'life worlds' must enter into communicative relationships and "talk openly and share with people rather than talk down to them or preach for them" (Bang 2005 p174). Actors operate through "horizontal arrangements" (Hendricks and Tops 2005 p476) in a new discursive arena to solve complex policy problems, something Bang labels as 'culture governance'.

Everyday makers are conceived as 'laypeople' (citizens) working at a grassroots level preferring "to be involved at the lowest possible, local, level" (Marsh and O'Toole 2005 p25). Table 1 shows the credo of an everyday makers provided by Bang and Sorensen (2001). Alongside it are the principles for Hendricks and Top's (2005) 'everyday fixers' produced in response to Bang's work to fit the Danish case (Bang's work is based in Holland).

Table 1: The Principles of Everyday Makers and Fixers

Everyday Makers (Bang and Sorensen 2001)	Everyday Fixers (Hendricks and Tops 2005)
1. Do it yourself…	…but don't do everything yourself (do what your good at)
2. Do it where you are	Begin "with yourself, your street and your own neighbourhood" (Hendricks and Tops 2005 p484)
3. Do it for fun but also because you	Such necessity comes before fun

find it necessary (a worthy cause- Bang 2003b)	
4. Do it ad-hoc or part time…	…but it will take up far more time than formally contracted
5. Do it concretely instead of ideologically…	…but ideals will give it purpose
6. Do it self-confidently and show trust in yourself…	…but responsibility is sentiment and accountability is if the project works
7. Do it with the system if need be (but preferably with other lay people- Bang 2003b)	But working directly overcomes these- all hands on deck?
(8. Do it with respect for others (Bang and Dyberg 2003) and with respect for the differences of others)	Do they get diversity or narrowness?
Do it by looking at expertise as an other rather than as an enemy	But experts are likely to be restricted by rules, guidelines etc…

Everyday makers overlap in many areas with the definitional practices of community leaders. However, a major point of departure is that the everyday maker is not interested in "participating in formal institutions" (Bang 2005) and is "largely uncoupled" (Bang and Dyberg 2003 p234) from the state structures. Instead everyday makers operate in a "flatly organised" system (Bang 2005 p161). Citizens who seek access to the culture governance table working full time are labelled by Bang and Sorensen (2001) as an 'everyday activists' or 'expert citizens' ([Bang 2004] the term expert citizens will be used in this piece for clarity). These individuals are seen as being incorporated as members of the state system elite and block other citizens from participating in the ways discussed above.

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

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

The neglect of the role of structure can also be seen in the claim made by Bang and Sorensen (2001) that everyday makers are able to operate largely outside the state system. The examples of everyday makers (Bang) and fixers (Hendricks and Tops) are all engaged with institutions. Hendricks and Tops' example of an everyday fixer works for a neighbourhood development corporation which engage and interact with the state (Hendricks and Tops 2005). This shows that even those who try to bypass institutions

will be unable to do so as fully as they would wish. On such an understanding the distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens becomes unclear. The only other criterion offered to distinguish between makers and experts is based upon the hours they put in. However, the research of Hendricks and Tops (2005) found that whilst their everyday fixer was only formally contracted to do three hours a week, in reality they did far more. It is not uncommon for the work load of such individuals to be described as akin to a second job seeming to further blur Bang's distinction. On this basis the difference between everyday makers and expert citizens is not whether they are involved with the state or not but the extent to which such interaction occurs.

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

A Structural Critique of the Community Leader Literature

It is perhaps unsurprising that the community leader literature centres on the agency of such individuals. However, the agency focus of this literature leads to questions of whether, and how, the structural analysis can add fresh insights. In other words, what is the significance of forces that extend beyond the 'flesh and blood' (Hendricks and Tops 2005) of community leaders? The framing concept of the everyday maker in agency terms opens up the community leader literature. It is taken as an exemplar of the analysis in terms of the wider structure-agency issue amongst the community leader literature; an issue which McAnulla (2002) argues is unavoidable in political science. The aim is therefore not to critique the existing community leader literature but to express a need to reposition the analysis in a manner which incorporates institutions.

It is clear from the literature that whilst community leaders are seen to 'make it work', in practice they experience a number of constraints upon their agency. The literature provides examples of both formal and informal institutions which restrict the ability of community leaders to make a difference. For instance, by only having a single BME seat on a partnership board, the formal design of the organisation serves to affect who can (and can't) become involved. Furthermore, community leaders are commonly seen as legitimate only if they are drawn from a formal voluntary and community sector organisation. On the more informal side, the perceived existence of a "secretive organizational culture" (Purdue 2005 p261) within the council was found to make working with them difficult. There also appears to be strong reluctance amongst councils to embrace new ways of working and alter policy in the wake of community leader input (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000, Taylor 2000). Smith et al (2004 p520) argue "councillors in particular have failed to learn new operating codes".

Although community leaders appear to be working in new spaces created by the shift to governance, the above analysis suggests that there is resistance within long-standing institutions which limit the impact (Barnes et al 2004). Community leaders find themselves amidst formal and informal institutions leaving them seldom able to exert influence with the exception of an atypical few who are able to play the rules of the game to their advantage. This is not to say that a community leader is completely at the mercy of the institutions that surround them, a "prisoner to their environment" (Hay 2002 p104). What is needed is a more considered approach which examines community leaders and the impact of the institutional settings in which they operate and how these two spheres interact and influence one another. This discussion lends itself to a somewhat blunter core research question; when do community leaders matter?

New Institutionalism and Situated Agents

New institutionalist theory has experienced a surge in popularity within the field of public policy in recent years. Lowndes (1996 p182) observes that there is no singular new institutionalist theory which all academics within the field agree upon; the theory represents "many streams of argument". Within new institutionalism sit a number of approaches to institutional phenomena, which in itself is contested. For example, Peters (2005) identifies six approaches whilst other authors (for example; Rhodes 2006, Hall and Taylor 1996, and Koelble 1995) commonly identify three main strands; historical, rational choice, and sociological. Each of these strands originates from a different discipline,

> "Political science gave us historical institutionalism, economics gave us rational choice institutionalism, and sociology gave us sociological institutionalism…the several proponents squabble." (Rhodes-forthcoming chapter on 'Old Institutionalism')

Each approach has different implications for research in terms of how institutions are defined, change and the role of actors. This has been examined in greater detail by the authors above (for example Peters 2005, Hall and Taylor 1996, Lowndes 1996) and highlights the ease with which writers can become lost in new institutionalism and the apparent difficulty of relying upon the notion of a single 'new institutionalism' (Rhodes-forthcoming). The branches also contain different models. For example, the concept of path dependency frequently utilised in public policy (for example; Gains et al 2005, Crouch and Farrell 2004, Lowndes 2004) stems from the historical stream (Peters 2005).

In terms of the structure-agency issue identified above, new institutionalist scholars begin analysis with structure (institutions) rather than individuals (Peters 1999 p141). Institutions are understood in general terms as having a number of common features and frequently by the use of examples (such as those of the formal and informal institutions shown above in the discussion of the community leader literature). The structural features of institutions affect the behaviour of individuals acting to constrain them. This results in a certain amount of regularity in human behaviour extending beyond

the individual to include the members of that institution (Peters 2005). Whilst affecting individual behaviour, institutions themselves are the product of human action. Grafstein (1988 p578) however, observes the prevalence of such paradoxes in society,

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

The debate regarding the relative significance of structure and agency shows the two to be interwoven and interdependent. Bevir and Rhodes (2006 p72) recognise that in order to understand agency, it is also necessary to understand structure by identifying situated agents,

> "Agency…always occurs in a social context that influences it. Agency is not autonomous- it is situated."

Of the three main new institutionalist approaches it is sociological institutionalism that offers the most potential for actors to be significant. Institutions are conceived as modifying continuously over time, their development likened to that of coral reefs (Sait 1938 as referenced by Rhodes-forthcoming). In comparison, some of the other streams of new institutionalism are seen to rely too heavily upon human compliance and long periods of institutional fixity. Sociological institutionalism bases the study of institutions upon the changing behaviour of actors, their interactions and interpretations so it is necessary to see small steps and changes (Lowndes 2005). In such an approach definitions extend far beyond formal structures to incorporate "habits of decision making and belief systems" (John 1998 p58). Within such an understanding "almost nothing is left out" (Peters 2005 p116) resulting in the methodological issue of how such amorphous structures can be analysed, something that will be considered below. Nonetheless, what remains vital is the methodological implications of new institutionalism; namely that any understanding of actors is incomplete without an understanding of institutions (and vice versa). Actors are better recognised as situated agents.

Rules and Perceptions

The apparent openness left by definitions of what constitutes an institution has obvious implications regarding research methodology. In conceiving institutions as rule sets there is a focus upon the identification of rules. Ostrom (1999 p38) defines rules as,

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

Such a definition draws attention to both the formal and informal nature of rules. For example, Wagenaar's (2004) study of a public administrator in the Dutch Immigration Office shows that formal rules alone do not explain the

behaviour of actors. Instead the complexity of everyday situations means that the administrator has to "turn the partial description of such situations, as exemplified in formal rules and procedures, into concrete practical activities" (Wagenaar 2004 p651). Lowndes et al (2006) argue that informal rules are at the very least as important as the formal in "shaping the behaviour" (Lowndes et al 2006 p542). This creates an obvious methodological issue in that informal rules are not as readily visible as the formal. Indeed Ostrom (1999 p37) argues that the most powerful institutions are 'invisible' so the question is; how do you identify something that is invisible?

In addressing this issue, Lowndes et al (2006) draw attention to Ostrom's concept of rules-in-use (Ostrom 1999) to focus on the formal and informal elements that make up "the distinctive ensemble of 'do's and don't'" (Lowndes et al 2006 p457) that are visible on the ground and particularly when someone new to the institution is being socialised into it. Ostrom (1999 p53) states simply that the researcher should ask the actors involved "how are things done round here?" However, this does not serve as an appropriate research question in itself to identify institutions and their effects. Indeed, when asked in interviews the question elicited fairly pedestrian answers which almost felt scripted and highlights the difficulty of identifying informality (Klijn 2001) not only for the researcher but also the respondent themselves. Rather, Ostrom's question seems more to act as a statement of intent suggesting a methodology rather than laying out a step by step guide.

Hall's concept of 'standard operating procedures' offers some improvement since the focus is upon routine activity (Peters 2005) and rules that are recognisable to the actors even if they are not necessarily followed in all instances (Lowndes 2006). However, these must be inferred from the way actors talk and are revealed not through direct questions such as "what rules do you follow?" but by studying what actors "say and do" (Klijn 2001 p134) since rules are created by interaction between actors. So whilst rules provide uniformity and stability a sociological understanding also shows that they are constantly being contested and reinterpreted in the day-to-day of each situation. Ostrom's definition of rules also highlights the potential for rules to be imposed upon actors showing the interactions between institutions at various levels.

There are wider issues related to the study of rules in new institutionalism. Firstly, in the same way that the definition of institutions leaves almost nothing out, if behaviour cannot be explained by the existence of identified rules there is a tautological assumption that behaviour is therefore the result of rules that were not identified. This leaves an approach that is non-falsifiable (Peters 2005) but not necessarily useful. Secondly, the focus on rules seems to offer a limited conception of agents operating in a simplified policy environment. The complexity of governance results in uncertainty leaving multiple options available to actors that could be deemed as being appropriate (Scharpf 1997). There is also the possibility that actions will result in "unintended, perverse consequences" (Hajer 2003 p185).

The usefulness of studying rules that are conceived in such a rational and calculated manner has also been questioned,

> "Rationality in the west has become identical with analytical thinking that is, with conscious separation of wholes into parts. Arational

> behaviour, in contrast, connotes situational behaviour without conscious analytical division of situations into parts and evaluation according to context-independent rules."
> (Flyvberg 2001 p22)

On the basis of such an understanding coupled with the risk of focussing too heavily on the significance of structure or agency rather than seeing the two as interdependent, another approach to studying institutions and rules may be desirable. Since institutions and rules are created and remade based on the subjective interpretations of actors, 'perception' is offered as a replacement for rules. A perception is concerned with how an individual "apprehends by means of the senses or of the mind" (http://dictionary.reference.com). It is concerned with how an individual makes sense and meaning in relation to their context. As a situated agent, an individual is in a constant dialogue with the environment in which they are embedded. A perception is formed through a process of understanding that occurs in dialogue with this environment. Such meaning making is a dialectic, social process that occurs in collectives (Yanow 2000) based upon the environment in which the situated agent is located.

The focus on perceptions may also provide a more appropriate means of examining community leaders operating at a highly local level than that offered by rules. The studies which focus upon rules are based on larger cases, for example, Lowndes et al (2006) concentrate on local authorities whilst Hall (1989) is concerned with the shift from Keynesianism to monetarism within a nation state.

The perceptions of individuals are likely to change over time as actors constantly re-interpret their ever changing surroundings in keeping with the sociological interpretation of new institutionalism. The focus on perceptions highlights the significance of seeing actors as being embedded in a structural context which needs to be understood but readily sees the relevance of agents.

A Model for Understanding Situated Agents

All individuals are inherently situated agents and based on this understanding, a community leader is in constant dialogue with their environment. This is illustrated in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that a community leader has a perception X which leads them to take action Y which results in difference Z. This process is ongoing with the difference made feeding back to the subsequent perceptions of actors. As such, perceptions and actions are seen as closely linked meaning that in order to understand perceptions there is a need to examine the actions that animate them and vice versa. What is produced through this chain can be linked to Yanow's (2004) concept of local knowledge. Local knowledge is defined as,

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

Figure 1: Perception-Action-Difference
(attached as a Power Point slide)

This knowledge is contextual in the sense that it is specific to a particular setting and reflects "very mundane yet expert understanding…from lived experience" (Yanow 2004 p12). In this instance, community leaders can be seen as possessing local knowledge concerning their community. Within governance this local knowledge is seen as valuable to the community leader but is considered essential in successfully tackling policy problems.
In using perception X as the start point for analysis there is an issue concerning how the actor came to find themselves in that state. Actors are situated in terms of both context and time and these factors needs to considered in any analysis of the perceptions of community leaders. The dimension of time shall be addressed first. Since perceptions are the result of an ongoing dialectic process there is a need to examine how an individual developed and came to be at their present position. In other words, in producing an appropriate methodology it is essential to give community leaders history. This involves a consideration of their prior knowledge (Yanow 2000) and how this has evolved and developed.

Since perceptions are formed by the interaction of actors with their particular, embedded context it is also necessary to examine in what a community leader is situated. By being involved in governance based on their local knowledge a community leader will experience at least three cultures (Yanow 2004). The community leader is part of the culture of their community organisation (such as a TARA) and secondly their individual, internal practice. Finally, alongside these are the external cultures of the organisations with which the community leader interacts in their governance role. This final cultural aspect can be expanded upon in greater deal to include levels of the public policy environment.

Maloney et al (2000 p803) use the concept of 'political opportunity structures' taken from social movement theory to establish the role of political structures and institutions upon civil activity. Tarrow (1994 p85-6 as quoted by Maloney et al 2000 p809) defines political opportunity structures as the,

> "Dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success or failure."

Political opportunity structures are shown in Figure 1 as making up part of the environment that community leaders are situated in and interact with in forming perceptions and actions. Lowndes et al (2006 p545) observe the role of local governments in establishing the opportunities for actors and groups to become engaged in governance for example in the provision community facilities, the design of public places and the openness of their decision making machinery. Smith et al (2004) argue that local authorities can promote inter-organisational co-operation but argue that in so doing, authorities face a dilemma. Co-operation is seen as being easier amongst a closed, small number of groups with similar identities. Coupled with this, local authorities do not have the "resources or even the will to engage" with all of the community organisations within the area (Smith et al 2004 p527) meaning authorities must be selective in who they engage. However, the decision of who to include is likely to foster mistrust amongst the excluded groups (Smith et al 2004) making co-operation difficult.

Political opportunity structures will be interpreted differently by agents and will also change and develop (Maloney et al 2000) again serving to show the need for time to be factored into analysis. Actors have the ability to "shape and bend institutional forces in new directions" (Lowndes et al 2006 p559) thereby privileging neither agency nor structure.

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

> "The public…does not just 'respond' to organisational initiatives but brings a whole range of assumptions drawn from other experiences of social and community engagement."

It has been observed that meaning making happens in collectives or what Yanow (2000) labels as 'communities of meaning'. Figure 1 therefore draws attention to the role of a community leader's community and of other community leaders in their formation of perceptions. This touches on aspects such as mobilisation and support which can be linked to the literature on social movements (see for example Nepstad and Bob 2006, Tarrow 1994) and the need to examine the differential resources held by actors (Lowndes et al 2006).

The focus of this section has been upon the difficulties associated with the use of rules within the new institutionalist literature. In response, it has outlined an approach which stresses the need to understand community leaders as situated agents in an ongoing dialectic relationship with their environment. This process results in the formation of perceptions which lead to actions and an assessment of the difference made. The focus upon the perceptions of individuals provides scope for them to be unearthed through interviews.

What Does it Mean to Make a Difference?

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

The substantive aspect is concerned with the impact and affects that community leaders have throughout the governance process from the policy agenda through to outcomes. An article by Nepstad and Bob (2006) discusses "when do leaders matter?" in the context of international social movements. The authors do not address the issue of mattering directly and focus upon the traits of leaders but their understanding centres on this aspect. For example, they consider the impact of leaders on three of the processes in

the development of a movement. A similar approach is taken in Barker's (2001) study of head teachers. Barker is concerned with how the leadership styles of head teachers contribute to the success of their schools examining the school's OfSTED performance and the views of pupils and teachers (p72). Such an understanding is concerned with examining situations within which the actions of a particular individual (in this case community leaders) result in a deviation from the course of events that would have occurred were that individual not there. Whilst it is clearly impossible to examine how events would have unfolded were the community leader not there, it is possible to demonstrate that an individual perceives that a change has occurred as a consequence of their behaviour which has in turn affected outcomes.

The symbolic dimension is concerned with what a community leader as a situated agent represents and communicates. For example, the politics of presence (see for example Phillips 1998) considers attempts to ensure the more equal representation of women and/or ethnic minorities in elected assemblies. In this context, the involvement of community leaders in the process of governing can be seen as a symbolic recognition of the value of their contribution to policy and an opening up of governing processes. One of the community leaders interviewed as part of this project felt that they made a difference by having offices in their neighbourhood. Residents knew where these offices were and could choose to engage with the services they offered if they wanted. Conversely, another community leader interviewed felt that they served simply as 'important window dressing' on a partnership board. This suggests that their involvement is emasculatory since their presence serves primarily to legitimise state action rather than to utilise their local knowledge. This aspect of difference is also suggested by Nepstad and Bob (2006 p7) who draw attention to the recognition "both internally and externally" of the leaders in their study.

The procedural dimension of mattering relates to the role of community leaders in the way that governance is carried out. This aspect relates to the political opportunity structures established across the various levels of the state. For example, it is often a requirement in receiving regeneration funding that community leader approve development plans (Purdue et al 2000). In examining the dimensions of making a difference it is clear that there are likely to be overlaps in the interpretations made by community leaders given the complexity of the specific contexts in which they find themselves. To use an example from this research project a community leader in one area opposed the building of a new development on the grounds it would increase the flow of traffic in an area with a number of schools nearby and a large proportion of elderly residents. The development went ahead in spite of the opposition from the community leader's organisation but the individual was asked to join the board of the new development and secured the installation of traffic calming measures around the area. In this case, the individual did not achieve the outcome they initially intended, namely that the development did not take place. They were however able to substantively change the manner in which the development took place taking into account the issue regarding road safety. Furthermore, in becoming a board member there is a symbolic aspect to their impact and they may be better placed to affect future decision making (a procedural dimension). Such an example and the above discussion shows the complexity of what it means to make a difference and

highlights the aim of the research to present the interpretations made by actors rather than to try and make a positivist assessment.

METHODOLOGY

The above sections have sought to establish the research problem regarding the ability of community leaders to make a difference based upon critical analysis of the existing community leader literature. This led to the core research question of (1) when do community leaders matter? A number of subsidiary questions can be hung from this based on the examination of the community leader literature coupled with new institutionalist theory. These research questions are; (2) how do community leaders develop?; (3) does the impact of community leaders vary in relation to the level in the governance system in which they operate?; and (4) how do the perceptions of community leaders affect their ability to matter? The next stage combines these strands to provide a suitable methodological approach to meet the research aims and research questions.

Given that the focal point of the research is community leaders it is wholly appropriate that they are the primary focus of analysis and 'data generation' (Yanow 2006a) through interviews. The wider approach of case study will be utilised to place community leaders in context to help better understand how they operate within the fixed context of a single city. The use of a single case study is criticised as findings are only valid in that sole instance. However, on this occasion such 'cultural parochialism' (Hay 2002) serves as an advantage since new institutionalism highlights the need to understand actors as situated agents operating in particular settings. The use of a single case study allows this environment to be readily and widely examined. This lends itself to 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) and also allows the reader to experience the context (Erlandson 1993).

Sheffield, a city in northern England is used as the case study area. The city was selected as; (1) it was seen to have a number of potential areas for research; (2) has a history of participation and research into communities (for example Hampton 1970 and Longmore 1998); and (3) reasons of accessible convenience for the researcher. Within the city, the two neighbourhoods of Burngreave and Southey are focussed on in greater detail to allow analysis of the community leaders operating within these areas and cultures. The two areas were selected because both are in receipt of central government regeneration funding (in the case of Burngreave NDC and in the case of Southey, SRB) necessitating the involvement of the community thereby presenting a rich seam of situated community leaders.

Alongside interviews sit a range of techniques within a case study approach (Yin 2003). It will be important to examine Sheffield as an institutional setting which will involve the use of existing research (for example Hampton 1970), documentation and archival records. More specifically, the historical context of the city and features such as the development of the council covering Labour's dominance, councillor information, turnout at elections and areas in receipt of regeneration funding. There is also literature produced by the council and community organisations and groups that are

engaged in regeneration, for example, Burngreave New Deal produces The Burngreave Messenger.

Identifying and Sampling Community Leaders

The definition of community leaders provided earlier highlighted how such individuals are commonly members of voluntary and community sector organisations and are alongside the partnership boards created in the wake of the receipt of government funding. The identification of community leaders should therefore be relatively easy given that by their very nature they are visible in their community. So, an obvious start point is to identify what projects are working in the city and who is frequently involved using internet and local media sources.

From this start point of purposive sampling, interviewees were asked at the end of interviews to identify other community leaders that they felt were relevant for the study. This combines what Bonjean and Olson (1964) label as a 'positional approach' and 'reputational approach' as used by Purdue 2005 (p252). As well as interviews with community leaders, a number of other 'communities of meaning' (Yanow 2000) were identified; councillors, council officers and regeneration staff (paid professional staff employed by bodies involved in governance but not the council). These interviewees were also asked to identify other potential interviewees and this was done until the names offered were those of people already interviewed.

Such a sampling method of selecting respondents 'serially' and 'contingently' (Erlandson 1993 p92) means actors are internally and externally recognisable (Nepstad and Bob 2006) but is not without flaws necessitating a number of caveats. Firstly, in identifying community leaders based on their position within an organisation inherently institutionalist and pluralist assumptions are being made that community leaders sit in formal and therefore recognisable organisational structures and positions within them. The individuals identified are also likely to be more at the expert citizen end of the community leader spectrum as opposed to the everyday maker end. However, in the early stages of research such an approach is considered necessary as a way in to the neighbourhood and the issue is addressed partly by the request to interviewees to identify individuals alongside the use of media sources. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that in using such an approach, where the snowball rolls may exclude certain individuals. Further, those additional actors identified may be ones who work happily with the state whilst those with whom actors have a more acrimonious relationship may be overlooked alongside those who are commonly excluded.

Biographical Interviews and the Identification of Stories

Since the phenomena under examination in this study are community leaders and their perceptions it is unsurprising that there is a methodological focus on interviews. The research questions show the apparent significance of time in explaining the development of community leaders and how their behaviour alters in particular contexts based upon their constant reinterpretations of rules and perceptions. This results in frequent, small changes (Lowndes 2005). The interview methodology needs to be able to

factor in the time dimension since “man cannot be carved into slices. He is a whole” (Febvre 1962). At the same time, this is a study of limited resources which excludes the possibility of longitudinal interviews over a long period or an ethnographic approach. Besides this sits the recognition within the literature that community leaders are seldom given the opportunity to speak for themselves (Anastacio et al 2000).

A number of interview methods were trialled to see whether they would be suitable since they are rarely used in public policy. These interview methods (life histories, memory work and biographical interviews) stem from disciplines such as anthropology and mental healthcare (for example, Korpelianen [2003] uses life histories to examine demographics in Finland between 1870 and 1949). Therefore, the extent to which these methods can be successfully transferred needs to be considered. The methods were piloted in three areas of Sheffield. From these pilot areas, Burngreave and Southey were continued whilst Manor was excluded for reasons of limited resources and apparent similarities with Southey. Of the three interview methods tested for suitability it was found that biographical interviews were appropriate providing rich data of life arcs, motivations, perceptions and opinions on interactions. However, some alterations to the method were found to be necessary. For example, to ensure that the research questions were covered some guiding questions were used (including “can you give me an example of a case where you’ve made a difference?”, “what organisations are you a member of?”) bringing the interview method into a more semi-structured approach than the previous weighting towards the unstructured end of the interview spectrum. Furthermore, some respondents were more comfortable talking largely uninterrupted than others shown in the varying length of time taken to answer the ‘grand tour question’ (Spradley and McCurdy 1972) used at the beginning of interviews (“How did you get here?”). Responses ranged from under a minute to well over thirty so with the more taciturn respondents more questions were necessary. In this sense the interview departs from the norms of an everyday conversation and required the interviewees to be put at ease. Soss (2006 p136) acknowledges similar experience reflecting he “had to help (my) interviewees get comfortable with the idea that it would not be rude, in this context, to hold forth on a topic for fifteen minutes without giving me a turn to talk.”

The interviews were recorded with notes taken throughout and then transcribed in full. It was found that respondents offered stories to answer questions providing an opportunity to see behaviour (Peters 2005 p26) and identify perceptions. As Feldman et al (2004 p147) observe stories “are a basic tool that individuals use to communicate and create understanding with other people and for themselves”. The interview transcripts were analysed to identify stories from their accounts and common themes were pulled out. This led to the production of storylines for each community leader showing their development over time. These storylines were also produced for the other communities of meaning to examine their trajectories and assessment of the environment to allow comparison with those of community leaders. These themes were kept open and then re-examined to consider how different actors interpreted these themes and where conflicts arose. This results in a number of iterations of themes and the consideration of analysis as a continuous process means that the initial write up of findings began whilst transcription

and analysis were still on going with alteration made where appropriate (Erlandson 1993). Such systematicity and the re-examination and questioning of research findings is seen as crucial to the analysis (Lynch 2006) and helps maintain a 'scientific attitude' (Soss 2006 p101).

An Interpretive Approach

In placing principal value on the data provided by interviewees there are a number of points that need to be addressed. Firstly, there is an assumption that these individuals are representative of the bodies for which they work. It is inaccurate to consider community leaders as simply doing what is appropriate in a given situation as it neglects the scope for actors to bend and break rules. Also, the complexity of their working environments means that actors operate in multiple roles simultaneously and are likely to have multiple 'appropriate' responses open to them (Scharpf 1997 p42). However, nor are actors solely motivated by their own self interest. Whilst they are not necessarily representatives they are certainly members of collectives or cultures such as a family or in this case, units such as a community organisation, community or council. As such, they act from the perspective of these larger units. So it is likely that when interviewing a council officer their "critical unit of reference" (Scharpf 1997 p61) will be the council. In such cases it is "common and legitimate" to use aggregate categories for describing the actions of populations of individuals sharing "certain salient characteristics" (Scharpf 1997 p53). Also, it is important to recognise that meaning making doesn't occur only individualistically but happens in the collectives within which individuals are part (Yanow 2000).

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

> "When studying norms and beliefs, the distinctions between fact and fiction are meaningless."

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

from PhD research there is a risk of analysis taking place in isolation. Peer de-briefing helps protect against this and is furthered by member checking with interviewees to ensure that the researcher's interpretation accurately reflects the meanings of the stories communicated by interviewees. In reflecting on this process, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2006 p318) observe,

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

Soss (2006) argues that it is more likely that some members will disagree with some aspects of the researcher's representation. In such instances, it is important for the researcher to show their reasoning for their representation using quotes and other sources of data. The process of clarification shows a "methodological commitment to 'get it right' from the perspective of situational actors' lived experiences" (Schwartz-Shea 2006 p105). This also serves to address the problem of transferring the vocal event of an interview which extends far beyond being a simple exchange of words (Soss 2006) into a written one. Transcription is seen to "flatten voice" (Yanow-reference) and something is lost in this translation (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2006). In addition the interpretations made by the researcher of individual's stories are also correlated with those of other interviewees and of other research methods such as document analysis to pull out patterns and contradictions.

Yanow (2006b) makes a distinction between an individual's public self which is seen 'front stage' and the private self seen 'backstage' (and adds the possibility of a part of an individual known neither by the self nor others). The view that people presented of themselves in interviews was one of rationality and altruism, of people who work cooperatively with others for the greater good. Respondents were far more at home discussing their successes rather than their failures and showing how relationships have been built up over time rather than conflict (although it should be noted the combative zeal of many of the individuals still shone through). Whilst it would perhaps be unexpected for an individual to state they became a community leader for the power (and would be aware of it as a motivation) the positive slant of the interviews potential skews analysis, furthered by the researcher's shared viewpoint.

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

> "Knowledge is acquired through interpretation, which necessarily is 'subjective'. It reflects the education, experience and training, as well as the individual, familial, and communal background of the 'subject' making the analysis."

The researcher is "not an objective machine but a positioned subject" (Shehata 2006 p261) but acts as a 'translator-story teller' (Yanow 2000). This also applies with the use of Sheffield as the case study as it is the researcher's home and this was frequently expressed in interviews. Such marketing of Sheffield credentials was not meant as a cynical means of

gaining access but was found to help build a rapport and foster trust in interviewees (Neal and Walters 2006). So whilst as much as possible interviewees were encouraged to speak in their own words and many commented on process being almost therapeutic or even enjoyable the influence of the researcher in the process should not be ignored. The researcher is selecting the topics under discussion and whilst the account is emic, reflecting the "insider's or native's perspective of reality" through the analysis and decisions of what to include (and what to leave out) there is a shift to an etic perspective of an "external, social scientific perspective of reality" (Fetterman 1998 p22). The case study offers a reconstruction of respondent's constructions (Erlandson 1993).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The primary aim of this paper is to establish the skeleton of a larger piece of work. The most attention has been given to the foundations of the work namely establishing the problem and a conceptual framework leading to an appropriate methodological approach. However, the piece will now move on to lay out some of the headline findings of the research alongside an introduction to Sheffield and the two case study areas.

Sheffield: A Short History

In establishing the cultural context of Sheffield the question becomes how much history and which aspects are relevant. It is hard to avoid a broad brush potted history or something that is overly parochial. This section will seek to outline the features of the city from historical development to present day. The city of Sheffield located in South Yorkshire has been in receipt of cutting remarks throughout history with George Orwell (1937) labelling it the "ugliest town in the Old World". The city is "a child of the industrial revolution" and so developed in a timeframe "too short for the niceties of aesthetic layout to be given much consideration" (Hampton 1970 p27). The prevalence of steel, cutlery and iron in the city resulted in substantial job losses in the wake of the 1980's deindustrialisation. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 rank Sheffield Local Authority as the sixtieth most deprived in England and a third of the city's wards consistently score high on the indices.

The city has found it hard to shake off its industrial legacy visible recently when a local music group received a national music award after derogatory remarks were made about the city responded with a sarcastic 'well that were funny weren't it'. The view may not have been helped by the way the city is depicted in films such as The Full Monty and in visual reminders such as the Tinsley Cooling Towers which stand alongside the M1 and Meadowhall Shopping Centre. However, there has been controversy over plans to demolish the towers (see for example Sheffield Star 2006, www.dontgo.co.uk/cooling.php, www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/image_galleries/tinsley_cooling_towers_gallery.shtml?1) as it is seen to symbolise the city's heritage and partly due to the success of a local magazine in securing a place in a national art competition incorporating the towers

(www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/). This goes some way to highlight the cultural aspects of the city alongside the number of successful bands it has produced. For example, in 2006 two Sheffield bands were short listed for the prestigious Mercury Music Prize. This is furthered by the hosting of the Snooker World Championships at the Crucible Theatre and the redevelopment of the city centre including the Winter Gardens.

The city sits within seven hills and the confluence of five rivers with a third of the city lying within the Peak District National Park. Partly as a result of the geographical isolation this causes (Hampton 1993) Sheffield has been labelled as being the "largest village in England" (Hampton 1970 p28). The population of 513,000 is predominantly White (91.2%), 4.6% Asian and 1.8% Black.

The city is governed by the Sheffield Metropolitan District Council in the wake of the abolition of the South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council in 1986. The city has a strong Labour history since the 1920's (Hampton 1970) and under the leadership of David Blunkett in the 1980's the city highlighted the conflicts between central and local government seen throughout England's urban areas. Seyd (1993 p151) states "the city became the epicentre for challenges to the orthodoxies of Westminster and Whitehall. The campaigns for cheap bus fares and opposition to rate-capping drew a great deal of their inspiration and leadership from Sheffield." The dominance of Labour was interrupted in 1999 by the Liberal Democrats but the council returned to Labour leadership in 2002. In 2005 the council's 28 wards and 84 council seats were made up of: 44 Labour councillors, 35 Liberal Democrats, 2 Conservatives, 2 Green and 1 Independent.

The council has a CPA rating of 'excellent' and won the LGA 'Council of the Year' award in 2005. The Sheffield Development Framework shows an aim for Sheffield to become a "successful, distinctive city of European significance". Neighbourhoods are focussed upon through Area Panels established in 1995 as part of the Area Action initiative dividing the city into twelve corporate areas aiming to link the council to the community. The aim of the Area Panels is to increase local voice, improve local service and support local regeneration with each receiving an NRF allocation weighted to those most in need (www.sheffield.gov.uk).

Introducing Southey

Southey Green is located in the north of the city and has a population of 14,000 (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk). The housing is predominantly rented from the Arm's Length Management Organisation, Sheffield Homes (62%). This is reflected by the number of Tenants and Residents Associations (TARA's) in the area totalling fifteen, by far the largest concentration in the city. The area has a strong working class tradition and is predominantly white (95%) and has a strong history of Labour support making up all the councillors for the area since 1974. The area was affected by Sheffield boundary changes in 2005 which reduced the number of wards from 29 to 28.

In the late 1990's the North East Sheffield Trust (NEST) was formed made up of local people. NEST undertook a community audit which highlighted the issues faced in the area and alongside council support bid for

SRB funding. In 1999 Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration (SOAR) was established after the receipt of SRB 5 (£20.53 million) and European Objective 1 funding (£4 million) over 1999 and 2006. The area covered extends far beyond Southey Green to include other parts of northern Sheffield: Foxhill, Longley, Parson Cross, Hillsborough/Winn Gardens/Owlerton, Shirecliffe. SOAR is managed through a Partnership Board and is structured spatially through six Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG's) and thematically by seven Theme Groups (Community Empowerment, Crime and Community Safety, Education and Lifelong Learning, Employment and Economic Development, Environment Leisure and Transport, Health and Social Care, Housing).

Introducing Burngreave

In sharp contrast to the ethnic homogeneity of Southey, only 59% of the 13,800 Burngreave residents are White. The neighbourhood is located close to the centre of the city and reflects the waves of immigration to the city since the second world war; 23% of residents are Asian, 12% are Black and 5% Mixed (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk) although the diversity is perhaps better shown by a recognition of one of the community leaders working in the area that seventy-six languages are spoken in the area (not including regional dialects).

Similarly to Southey the area is also predominantly Labour and the areas also share high rankings on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Burngreave (joined with Darnall and Tinsley) received SRB 4 funding and later Burngreave New Deal for Communities (BNDC) was established after receiving £52 million from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) from 2001-2011. BNDC is made up of a partnership board of ten community representatives, six statutory representatives, five voluntary and community reps, three from the business community and one councillor. There are also a number of Theme Focus Groups covering; Education, Employment, Crime, Health, Housing, Environment and an Over-arching group.

The Development of Community Leaders

The opening element of this section follows the interviews. It begins by seeking to understand how they came to be in their present role in order to give them history and place them in context. Whilst each storyline is unique, a number of common themes are visible in the accounts offered by respondents. Firstly, many of the respondents have a strong tie to the area. Many of them have lived in the neighbourhood for a period often running over decades having either grown up in the area (and never leaving or returning in later life) or remaining there after an earlier move. Particularly in Burngreave, a number of community leaders reflect the high proportion of ethnic minorities in the area having immigrated to Sheffield some time ago and remaining in the area. There were some exceptions to this trend, for example, a religious leader came to Southey after they had requested a placement based on criteria such as a desire to be involved in community work. Those individuals who move into the area predominantly do so as expert citizens having been

members of organisations from the voluntary and community sector such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

In the early stages of involvement, the political opportunity structures appear to have little influence upon community leaders. There are only a few instances of involvement through formally designed engagement structures. It is more likely that a perceived failure of political opportunity structures to meet the needs of an area explains the early actions of community leaders. The strong tie to the area combines with a sense of responsibility for the neighbourhood and a perception that there is a deficiency in terms of what is available. For example, one community leader told a story of how the lack of children's facilities was the start point for their involvement. This initial perception, frequently manifesting itself in a feeling of frustration or sense of lack needs to be translated into a decision to act. Rather than being a premeditated decision, the involvement of community leaders seems to be a product of circumstance, something that is almost stumbled into. This challenges a conclusion of Lowndes et al (2006) which emphasises the possibility for local authorities to affect participation. What seems to be more pressing are the personal beliefs held by individuals linked to the sense of responsibility to 'give something back' to the community.

On this understanding, the community leader's membership of, and engagement with their community is more significant in explaining their initial decision to act than political opportunity structures. Involvement stems from how community leaders experience their everyday environment and community. This shows the apparent significance of familial upbringing and the role of "socialisation processes within the family life and early adult experiences" (Whitely 1999 p42 as quoted by Roberts and Devine 2004 p286). Almond and Verba (1963) also recognise the potential for less intentionally political areas such as family, peer group, school and workplace in the formation of civic culture. The influence of family is apparent in a number of instances in terms of parents but also children and spouses.

The Roles of Community Leaders

Whilst the start point for a community leader's involvement may appear somewhat uncalculated, once picked up it is something that they find very difficult to put down; involvement begets further involvement. A snapshot shows the sheer number of organisations an individual becomes involved with as a member. This passion often revolves around a common theme (such as housing). This involves the community leader moving and operating at multiple governance levels and spaces, something which Hajer (2003) labels as 'scale jumping'. Community leaders are engaged with a far greater number of cultures than just Yanow's (2004) three. They are involved in more than one internal culture as they are members of multiple community groups. Externally too they are involved with numerous cultures such as those of the other governance actors in partnership boards that they interact with. These settings are all likely to have their own unique cultures and practices (Fischer 2005). Although community leaders were uncomfortable to admit it, they adapt their behaviour to each of these unique settings "picking and choosing" (Peters 2005 p26) between their institutional loyalties based on their

perceptions and interpretation of their role in that particular setting (Hay 2004).

In operating in these contexts it is clear that community leaders do not instinctively know how to behave. They feel out of place in the early stages and go through a process of learning. Much of this takes place by virtue of being in the new setting for an extended period allowing the actor to build up sufficient local knowledge. Some learning occurs through training by regeneration staff and often involves 'buddying up' with existing community leaders. This shows the potential for other actors to affect a community leader's perceptions as they act to socialise them into their new surroundings. There are also examples of community leaders not only adapting to their new setting but adapting them to better suit their needs. In one case, a community leader told a story where unable to follow what was happening in their first meeting, they simply put their hand up and stated they didn't know what was happening. As a result of this intervention pre-meetings were held so any issues that weren't understood could be raised. The language used in meetings was also altered to me more inclusive.

Making a Difference Locally

A unifying theme in the community leader's stories of making a difference was the micro level of their focus. There is a symbolic aspect to the focus upon the local level discussed previously. There is a perception that the presence of an individual as a member of an organisation in their neighbourhood made a difference. This local presence was able to secure small changes in the lives of those in the area such as improving the gardens of elderly residents who had previously been victims of 'cowboy gardeners' charging high rates for poor quality work.

The danger of this finding is that it could imply that community leaders get vertiginous and are unable to make a difference at upper levels. Simply because a community leader is able to work at one level does not mean that they are successful at another. Many find it difficult to work at higher governance tables. However, this may simply reflect how community leaders interpret what it means to make a difference. It is the very local level that community leaders perceive as being the most important place for them to have a substantive impact. A council officer used a story to show his frustration that a newly created community organisation in Burngreave supported by the council to help work strategically with other bodies such as the hospital was being prevented from doing so by the community leader's unwillingness to work at this level. Instead they favoured discussions on micro level issues such as duck ponds and dog mess.

The assumed path of the relationship is that community leaders find it harder to operate the higher up within governance they ascend where there is also likely to be less space created for their involvement. For example, one community leader who sat on a city wide strategic board felt out of place at the meetings. They remarked that they couldn't think of anything strategic to say to the other board members all of whom came from the state or private sectors and were being paid to attend. The individual was more comfortable at the local level where they could readily see the impact in their actions. However, the ability to sit at these tables reflects the capacity of the individual

to translate their local knowledge to other contexts. In doing so, an agent increases the opportunities for them to make a difference at these higher levels acting as a translator of local knowledge rather than simply a passive conduit (Yanow 2004). It is important to remember that this relationship also works in reverse so, those councillors and officers who most frequently sit at higher levels find it more difficult to work at lower levels. This suggests that operating in the no man's land of being neither fully a community member nor council professional may create opportunities for community leaders.

The local focus of the community leaders shows some overlap with part of the everyday maker credo of 'do it where you are' (Bang and Sorensen 2001). However, as noted earlier, community leaders are not uncoupled from the state and those interviewed were very much engaged with state and organisational structures. Some of those interviewed were in receipt of salaries for aspects of their work but could still be classified as community leaders due to their multiple other roles. Further, many were members of political parties and some had previously been councillors in the local authority. This suggests that the majority of the individuals interviewed in this study are more readily understood as expert citizens rather than everyday makers. However, there appears to be room for some distinctions to be made based on the extent of an individual's interaction with the state. For example, an individual sitting on a local authority led, city wide board can be said to be far closer to the state than an individual who is an expert citizen by virtue of the hours they work as a member of a TARA. It is also important to consider how an individual interprets their position in relation to the state.

Making a Difference in the Shadow of the State

The discussion concerning the uneasy distinction between everyday makers and expert citizens introduces the importance of the state in the stories told by community leaders. The state and the significance it is accredited with was constant and recurring throughout the accounts given by actors. This reflects a perception that making a difference is related to the adroitness of a community leader (and their organisation) to win state funding. This also demonstrates a perception that community leaders need to be seen as legitimate by the state.

In order to explain both the focus of community leaders upon the state and the micro level it is necessary to understand the development of the two areas. Community leaders in both areas worked at first without any state assistance and with limited resources. At this stage the community leaders of BCAF in Burngreave and NEST in Southey can be seen as coming close to spirit of Bang's conception of everyday makers. They were motivated by what prompted them to act in the first place, a perceived sense of lack in some aspect of their neighbourhood. It is therefore logical that at this stage a community leader associates difference with actions which rectified this perceived lack such as the redevelopment of the local park.

Over time however, as community leaders become increasingly involved they perceive greater needs. In order to address these needs and make a substantive, community leaders need funding. This leads them to seek government assistance in the form of funding. It is here then that political opportunity structures begin to play a more significant role in the

perceptions of community leaders since community leaders are mobilising in order to access state support. In the same way that the varying levels of governance locally were seen to have different environments, so too the levels of the state were attached with differing perceptions by the community leaders. Whilst both Southey and Burngreave are in receipt of central government regeneration money, central government itself is considered as a far off obelisk that cannot be affected by the behaviour of community leaders. In order to access it, community leaders instead went to the city council and marketed themselves. In Southey for example, community leaders in the area formed NEST which undertook a community audit highlighting the issues in the area and went to the council who then supported an SRB bid.

Interestingly, the community leaders identify the stage where they operate as everyday makers with little state assistance as crucial in securing state funding later on. The community leaders have successfully mobilised the community and demonstrated a need in the area. This process serves to show the appropriateness of community leaders (and their respective organisations) for state assistance and funding in order to tackle the problems of the area.

The Role of Council Officers and Regeneration Staff

In seeking central government assistance, community leaders are accepting and working within the constraints that this brings. They are becoming more and more expert citizens based on a perception that to make a substantive difference, money is needed necessitating state support. As community leaders start working closer to the state they come into increasing contact with state actors across the various levels of governance.

There seems to be what is considered a natural progression in the relationship between council officers, regeneration staff and community leaders moving from a position of initial mistrust to one of working collaboratively. This exposes the wider negative feelings held by people in Southey and Burngreave towards the council. The explanation for this is based on the same perception that prompted many community leaders to act; namely, that the needs of their areas have been historically overlooked by the state. Indeed, this is so prevalent amongst the communities that it is seen to hinder other people from getting involved and can impede the work carried out between community leaders and staff.

The relationship between staff and community leaders in SOAR was seen as so good that outsiders at meetings would comment that it was impossible to tell staff, officers and community leaders apart. Whilst held up a ‘good thing’ it also hints at incorporation with one councillor suggesting that community leaders behaved the way they thought they were meant to in meetings. However, those who do not move from this initially hostile stance were seen as having limited success in both areas. In Southey, a member of the regeneration staff referred to community leaders who raison d’etre was simply to complain and go against the regeneration team which was seen as part of the state. These ‘loudmouths’ were ultimately ignored and in Burngreave a community leader felt they were unable to make a difference because of their hostility towards the council and also BNDC. Based on such an understanding, the willingness to enter into dialogue and the behavioural

changes this requires appear important. The passion (often bellicosity) and fundamental values of such community leaders do not go away but instead they make a decision that it is better to work with rather than against.

The initial points of entry for community leaders shown in the above section seem to have little impact downstream. For example, one community leader became involved because of the threat (and eventual demolition) of their council house and maintained their aggressive stance refusing to make compromises. However, another community leader who became involved through similarly negative circumstances and frustration found it to be more advantageous change their stance and work with state actors.

The importance of community leaders learning how to operate in new contexts and the relevance of marketing themselves highlights the apparent significance of council officers and regeneration staff. It is these actors who display the most agency in their accounts acting as gatekeepers able to decide who is (and in the case of 'loudmouths' who isn't) allowed to participate. They also serve as interpreters passing on 'the way things are done round here' to new community leaders. This helps draw attention to the relevance of informal ways of doing things in relation to the formal. The SOAR handbook given to new board members as part of their formal training was found to be out of date with one of the regeneration staff observing that in practice there was a need for a more easily understandable book and most of the training was done verbally and therefore, informally.

The formal/informal divide was also apparent when actors explained their understanding of their role. For example, when discussing their role one council officer stated that they could answer by referring to their job description (formal) but felt that it would be of little value as it would not accurately reflect what their job actually entailed (informal). Indeed, government policy seen as incomprehensible by community leaders was considered by council officers to be so ambiguous that it gave them considerable freedom in decision making.

Regeneration staff were identified as a new tier within the process of governing and as such received both praise and derision from community leaders (as was found with councillors and council officers). A key aspect of criticism was a perceived tendency amongst some regeneration staff to attempt to steer and overly influence meetings. This interpretation amongst community leaders of such behaviour meant that it did not go without a response. Firstly, community leaders in both areas hold pre-meetings to ensure that they are all 'singing from the same hymn sheet'. Such banding together extended to the formation of community groups made up of other community groups. For example, in Southey the considerable number of TARA's joined together to form the Area P Alliance based on Sheffield Homes' administrative boundaries.

It is apparent that whilst community leaders may modify their behaviour with regeneration staff and council officers, they maintain their combative nature and are keen to express that they are not 'yes men'. There were examples where an unwillingness to compromise and bend to council demands were perceived as successful such as in establishing the regeneration priorities of Burngreave. This sits uncomfortably with the notion that some groups are considered as more worthy than others and those with differing views would be avoided (for example Dearlove 1973, Smith et al

2004). This is furthered by a member of SOAR staff arguing that it is not in their best interest to have a supine board. However, this in itself would suggest that regeneration staff have the ability to decide what type of person to involve.

Despite there being no easy answer to the issue of whether community leaders are blocked by council officers and regeneration staff what is clear is that these actors have the potential to influence community leaders through their own institutions and interpretations. Officers and staff are also likely to develop 'rules of thumb' (Dearlove 1973) concerning the types of individuals they prefer to work with. Whilst community leaders are not unaware of this nor are they powerless against it, there does seem to be a perception that a good working relationship with such individuals is important to making a difference and as such may require some compromises.

The Paths of Community Leaders and Councillors

In tracking the development of councillors, there is considerable similarity with those of community leaders. Some councillors identified themselves as being community leaders while others felt that they had started out as community leaders then decided that in order to make a difference they should become a councillor to 'be part of the system'. Using Bang's understanding such an individual moves quickly from being an everyday maker to expert citizen and finally a councillor.

The trajectories of the community leaders are similar to that of councillors in that many of them move from everyday makers to actors that work progressively closer to the state as expert citizens. However, none of the community leaders interviewed expressed a desire to become a councillor and of the few who had previously been councillors, all said they would not want to return. Some felt they were too old to be a councillor and that they would not have the time required. However, the more common reasons were based on a perception that being a councillor came with too many restrictions (party political, procedural etc…) whilst some decisions were beyond their influence. This perception was supported by many of the councillors interviewed. Community leaders have a desire to speak their mind and perceive that as they work closer and closer to the state, they are less able to speak as they wish.

Bang (2005) argues that everyday makers will only have minimal interest in party politics. However, this reasoning does not provide an adequate explanation for why community leaders do not want to become councillors. Many of the individuals interviewed were members of political parties (predominantly Labour) and some had moved from being councillors to expert citizens. A community leader in Burngreave who was a longstanding member of the Labour Party also told a story concerning their refusal to stand as a councillor as they perceived that it would divorce them from the community. The apparent significance of political parties can be attributed to the backgrounds of both areas. For example, in Southey, the strong working class tradition can be associated with Trade Unions and Labour party membership. This suggests a failure in the everyday maker literature see actors as situated agents tacking account of the significance of context.

There is a sense in which becoming a councillor is a stage too far for many community leaders. Instead they prefer to be expert citizens and make an assessment about how closely they can work with the state whilst maintaining their agency. Each community leader will perceive this position on the expert citizen spectrum differently. For example, one TARA based community leader did not work in city wide housing structures created by the council because they felt they would be 'led by a nose ring'. Conversely, another TARA based community leader was happy to sit at this level and went further by going to other cities with council officers to advice other local authorities and their community leaders on council housing issues such as stock transfer. Also, it has been shown that some of the community leaders were paid for their role blurring their distinction with regeneration staff.

The existence of parallel structures of those led by the council (such as the Area Panel) and those that are regeneration led suggest that whilst the two overlap in terms of role and membership, a choice is made by actors as to which is the most appropriate to utilise to make a difference. This can result in friction between the two with councillors sometimes felt to try and block community leaders.

The levels at which a community leader operates reflects their ability to adapt their behaviour to the culture but also a decision about what levels they are comfortable working at to make a difference. This suggests that there is a shortcoming in the everyday maker literature as it fails to understand the trajectories of community leaders and how they perceive their position within the levels of governance.

The Changing Perceptions of Community Leaders and the Community

The potential friction between community leaders and councillors raises the significance of other community leaders and organisations in the neighbourhood. This is perhaps most apparent in Burngreave where there was a battle for legitimacy between the larger community organisations in the area, namely BNDC and the Burngreave Community Action Forum (BCAF) and it's administrative arm the Burngreave Community Action Trust (BCAT). BCAF was seen as having been vital in Burngreave being awarded New Deal funding by successfully uniting the disparate communities (primarily based on ethnicity) of the area together. However, since the creation of BNDC members of BCAF and BCAT perceive themselves as having been crowded out. This follows the assertion in sociological new institutionalism that there is only space for a certain number of bodies; environments are not wholly capacious (Peters 2005).

By making the compromises identified as coming attached to state funding the community leaders involved with BNDC (some of whom were fundamental in the creation of BCAF) are criticised by some other community leaders from BCAF as having become little more than puppets of government. In other words, the expert citizens of BNDC are perceived as moving too close to the state by the expert citizens of BCAF. In turn, community leaders from BNDC perceive BCAF and BCAT have ceased to be the best link to the Burngreave community with poor attendance at meetings, particularly amongst Pakistani members. It was also perceived as having an inability to deliver the services that it was being financed to do through BNDC.

Over time, how the community is perceived by community leaders is seen to change particularly amongst those at the expert citizen end of the spectrum. Whilst in the early stages community was seen to play a major role in the formation of perceptions, in later stages political opportunity structures become more relevant. This means that groups may compete with one another in order to access funding. For example, the ethnic diversity of the Burngreave means that there is competition between BME groups for resources and when BNDC is awarding funding it must attempt to not be seen to overly favour a particular BME group. In the mean time, a community leader may start to express annoyance with a community that has not been on the same journey as them and remain apathetic and antagonistic towards the state.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established the skeletal structure of PhD project concentrating primarily on the identification of an issue and a way of addressing it. The community leader literature appears to make assumptions about the agency of actors and their ability to make a difference. It is seen to neglect the apparent significance of institutions. As such it is beneficial to reposition analysis using the sociological branch of new institutionalist theory to offer a fresh perspective. This highlights the need to examine community leaders as situated agents. This considers actors as operating in specific contexts, their agency affected by the institutions around them.

In seeking to address this structure and agency issue it was seen to be difficult to identify a single, unified new institutionalist approach. Instead guidelines are offered leaving considerable ambiguity in terms of for example, what constitutes a rule and how one could be identified. Part of the contribution of this work lies in highlighting the methodological difficulty of studying rules based partly upon the lack of clarity on this issue within the new institutionalist literature. It also makes an attempt to address the shortfall. In response, there is a focus upon the perceptions of actors and how this affects their actions. The examination of perceptions places a premium both on agents and institutions and is concerned with how actors interpret and make sense of their surroundings and situations. In this instance, how actors perceive the situations where they have or haven't been able to make a difference.

Community leaders are situated agents entering into continual dialogue with the political opportunity structures and also the context of the local community within which they are embedded. This process (shown in Figure 1) shows the need to consider the development of community leaders over time making them actors with history. Whilst time is a feature of some of the studies concerning community leaders, they are rarely the primary focus. For example, Purdue (2005) considers the life cycle of partnerships in relation to community leaders but begins with the partnership and not the individual. A rarely used approach of biographical interviews was taken in an attempt to identify perceptions and how such sense making evolves over time. The interviews with community leaders sit alongside the wider use of case study and the interpretations of the other actors involved in the process of

governing. The biographical method provides a rich source of data and readily demonstrates the importance of informality as well as formality. However, the study of perceptions is better suited to a more ethnographic approach, one that was not taken for reasons of time and resource.

The piece then discussed some of the themes found in the research. Community leaders were examined in two case study areas of Sheffield, Burngreave and Southey. Both areas have a rich history of community organisations and community leader activity and are in receipt of central government regeneration funding. In examining these cases, the aim was not to provide a handbook for community leaders but to provide a commentary on how community leaders develop, interact with their environment and how this affects their ability to be of consequence.

Community leaders were seen to enter into their role not through premeditation but as a result of personal beliefs activated often as a result of dissatisfaction with a particular aspect of the context in which they find themselves. Once begun, community leaders operate within numerous groups at multiple levels necessitating a process of learning particularly at the higher governance levels. In working at these levels community leaders are engaged with multiple cultures.

Community leaders were seen to perceive the difference they make as being based at a highly localised level and also upon their ability to secure state funding. Success is attributed to those able to secure funds and situations where funding has been removed are prevalent in stories of being unable to make a difference with actors often unable to make modifications. In order to explain these perceptions it is necessary to examine the development paths of community leaders. In other words, past community leader research has failed to adequately consider the significance of the time dimension in understanding community leaders. For example, since the initial prompt for action was related to perceived deficiencies in their neighbourhood it is unsurprising that it is here where community leader see the substantive difference they make.

In the initial stages of involvement the community leaders attached to BCAF and NEST can be understood as being close to everyday makers working without state funding. However, over time both areas perceive that in order to make a more substantive difference they needed to secure state assistance. As community leaders develop and move closer to the state the political opportunity structures play a more significant role in the perceptions of agents. Community leaders working closely to the state must adapt their behaviour to match that culture and move across levels. Community leaders also find it more difficult to be affective at higher tables and perceive there to be less space for them to work. However, community leaders perform a valuable role of being able to move between spaces and arenas, something that state players are often unable to accomplish.

Community leaders are often forceful, even hostile with council officers, councillors and the council in the early stages of involvement although it is believed that a key development for actors comes in learning to listen and entering into a dialogue with council officers and regeneration staff. This reflects a shift away from the hostile view of the council held by community leaders in the early stages based upon their everyday encounters as members of their community. Although the community remains an important

influence on the perceptions of community leaders throughout, it appears less significant to those actors working closely with the state and some stories express frustration with the wider community. This reflects their position in 'no man's land' as a growing proximity to the state naturally results in some movement away from the community.

The apparent significance of council officers and regeneration staff as interpreters and gatekeepers perpetuates the notion that community leaders have to play by rules that they themselves did not create. Although this raises concerns of incorporation and that involvement serves the state not the community leaders and their communities (as suggested for example by Dearlove 1973) actors are aware and in response can hold pre-meetings and work together to form larger units. Inconsistently though, a focus on government funding means that community leaders compete with each other for legitimacy and the scarce resources available. Officers and staff see little benefit in having community leader who are puppets, although it should be acknowledged that a failure to enter into dialogue is likely to mean that individuals will be ignored. Further, it is unlikely that community leaders allow themselves to become incorporated given their combative nature and commitment to the community.

The everyday maker literature fails to adequately distinguish between everyday makers and expert citizens. A more useful distinction occurs by examining the proximity of community leaders to the state. In addition it is important to understand how community leaders perceive their relationship to the state. This is illustrated by comparing the development paths of councillors with those of community leaders. Councillors move quickly from everyday makers and expert citizens perceiving that they will be better able to make a difference as a councillor. The community leaders interviewed however saw becoming a councillor as a bridge too far; it would require them to make too many compromises in relation to the potential rewards. From such an understanding the community leader literature does not fully consider the development paths of community leaders and how such actors make sense of their position and change their paths.

The sheer scale of the work undertaken by each community leader means that the landscape would look very different were they not there. Although something is lost when community leaders become embroiled in the plot of governance, through the modifications of their behaviour and the compromises necessary to receive funding, community leaders are 'playing the game' in order to be able to make a difference. As such this reflects an exertion of agency and upon entering these spaces actors are able to secure changes to processes, decisions and outcomes. Community leaders adapt to new setting but in so doing also adapt the settings.

Future studies should seek to better explore the dynamics and processes around how community leaders exert agency when operating in governance spaces. An ethnographic approach would be appropriate to allow the nuances and subtleties of the agents and their context to be readily examined. Such an approach would also help to explain changes in the developmental trajectories of actors as they move between being citizens, everyday makers, expert citizens (with varying degrees of state interaction), councillors and regeneration staff. Also, given the sampling bias of this study

it would be beneficial to focus upon individuals who could be understood as everyday makers by choosing to operate outside of state funding streams.

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