What Can Social Capital Tell Us About Planning Under Localism?

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Abstract: Local government and the planning system in England are set to be significantly overhauled with the passage of the Localism Act, which received Royal Assent on 15th November 2011. The localism agenda sees a new enhanced role for community participation but this raises a number of key questions: Who will get involved? Will the Act foster NIMBYism? How far can the localism agenda engender action toward implementation? Using the concept of social capital we examine these questions and outline what the key dilemmas may be for localist planning, in the process assessing the value of the social capital concept for such an analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2010, the first coalition government in the UK since the Second World War took power following a closely fought election. Comprising a majority Conservative Party partner and a minority Liberal Democrat partner, the coalition sought to negotiate an agreement so that governing and power could occur. One area of common ground between the two parties was a dislike of 'big government' and a commitment to community empowerment. For the Liberal Democrats one could argue that this is an historical, foundational, ideological first principle; for the Conservatives, while an anti-state position can also be seen as fundamental doctrine, the association with community empowerment is arguably more recent, arising from the Prime Minster, David Cameron's espousal of a 'Big Society' agenda (Cameron, 19 July 2010) following the writings of Dick Atkinson (2005) who was himself influence by Etzioni's (1993) communitarianism and Schumacher's (1973) "small is beautiful". Some critics have seen this as a cloak for rolling back the state and reducing welfare services to the bare minimum (Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011). However, Conservative spokespersons have continued to present it as a positive new agenda that deftly removes what they see as cumbersome state regulation whilst simultaneously engendering a sense of community spirit (Pattie and Johnson, 2011).

For the planning system in England, the impact of the new agenda is being felt in the form of localism, a partial and voluntary decentralisation of the state to the community or neighbourhood scale, given statutory expression in the Localism Act 2011. While presented as a reform or amelioration of a flawed planning system, this is yet another example of central government seeking to reshape the landscape of governance (Morphet, 2005). This raises interesting questions about how this new governance landscape will impact on public engagement with planning problematic, the capacity for a strategic vision for an area, and the implementation of plans in the face of power. This paper addressed such questions and assesses the value of the social capital concept as a framework of analysis. First it fleshes out the localism agenda before outlining the key elements of the social capital concept. It then goes on to consider how localism will impact on planning using the social capital concept and, finally, it concludes on the analysis of localist planning and the value of such a social capital analysis.

THE LOCALISM AGENDA AND PLANNING

While the Localism Act makes a range of changes to the role of local government, for the planning system the key elements are the creation of Neighbourhood Development Plans (referred to colloquially on the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) website – and here – as Neighbourhood plans or NPs) and Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs). In the Act NP are to be created by either Parish Councils or (where these do not exist) Neighbourhood Forums (NFs) and approved via a referendum passed by a simple majority of voting residents. NFs themselves have to be approved by the local authority and comprise at least 21 people. This is potentially a significant decentralising of planning powers and responsibilities in England. 'Front Runners' have been given funding of £20,000 each by DCLG to support work on neighbourhood planning; under the first four rounds of bids, 126 communities were so designated with a fifth round under consideration.

Operating in the context of the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) (already being prepared by local government under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) and National Planning Policy (established by central government[1]), NPs will set out how communities would like to see their areas develop over time. NPs are supposed to comply with the Core Strategy prepared as part of the LDF. However, by the end of 2010 only 72 of 354 expected Core Strategies had been adopted and 178 had not yet been published (DCLG, 2010b). This raises issues of how the NPs will nest under broader local planning authority strategy for council areas.

NPs are complemented by NDOs, which would amend the development control regime for the local area by permitting certain approved developments without the need for separate applications to the Local Planning Authority for planning consent. This is an extension of the provision for extended permitted development rights under the Local Development Orders regime instituted by the 2004 legislation; however, that was a discretionary system under the control of local authorities, whereas this is a community-led approach. NDOs will be subject to an independent examination and formally adopted by the local authority.

Significantly, the 2011 Budget statement (predicated on the HM Treasury report *The Plan for Growth*) made two key changes to the original proposals for neighbourhood planning. Firstly, the right to create NPs and NDOs has been extended to businesses,

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[1] See www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/

which can now play a leading role in the creation of these plans and orders. Secondly, the Treasury has firmly stated that NPs can be used to "...shape development, but not to block it", thereby embedding a 'pro-growth' vision of planning into the process (Treasury, 2011b: 1.82-2.16). This has been given expression in the new draft National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF (DCLG, 2011a) which controversially contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Ministerial forward makes it clear that "*Development* means growth" and "*Sustainable*" is very broadly interpreted to mean "ensuring that better lives for ourselves that don't mean worse lives for future generations". Later the NPPF clearly states "without growth, a sustainable future cannot be achieved" (S. 13).

Since the Localism Act is thus firmly aligned with a pro-growth agenda, ways of encouraging local communities to permit new development are also included. The New Homes Bonus is a financial incentive that will accrue per unit of development, and be available for investment in community facilities. This supplements the Community Infrastructure Levy, which predates the localism reforms and provides for local authorities to set a levy on new development to fund identified infrastructure requirements in the local area (under the Planning Act 2008). The idea is to avoid new development being a financial (or otherwise) burden on the local area and instead see it as funding desired facilities. Greg Clark, Minister for Communities and Local Government, in the Report stages of the Bill, stated that it was important for the community to "see the cake grow" so that they "recognise that development is not against their interest but contributes to a better community for them" (HoC, 2011: 33). Indeed, more generally, local planning authorities now have to consider how a development proposal could benefit their area financially when considering planning applications.

Both the Localism Act and Budget statement are grounded in a discourse prominently based on the belief that the current system of planning curtails growth and is overly bureaucratic (Treasury 2011: 1.26). This narrative of a lethargic, market-hampering planning system in need of overhaul has been repeatedly and periodically expressed by central government from the Thatcher government, through the Major regime to New Labour (Thornley, 1993; Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). What is novel is the attempt to combine this with decentralisation of plan-making and associated permitting of development. For such a narrative has tended to support greater centralised control rather than the passing of such control to localities. The abolition of the Regional

Spatial Strategies (including their indicative housing targets) by the Localism Act would seem to cement the down-scaling of planning. However, this is not the complete story.

There remain a range of planning measures which retain a degree of central control (particularly over significant developments) and further embed a sense of hybridity in the system, potentially producing tensions between central control on the one hand and increasing participation on the other (Raco *et al*, 2006; Brownill, 2009). Firstly, the appeal regime continues to be a key element of the planning system whereby developments that are refused permission may be considered and decided upon by the Planning Inspectorate – a central government agency. It remains to be seen to what extent the Inspectorate will permit development that has been refused because it does not comply with a Neighbourhood Plan. Secondly, central government policy as set out in National Planning Policy (including the NPPF) remains significant – particularly in planning appeal decision-making where Inspectors are required to give it weight in making their decisions and recommendations. Finally, a separate regime now exists for major or nationally significant infrastructure projects (set up under the Planning Act 2008), streamlining the planning permission process through the involvement of a dedicated unit of Commissioners (originally forming the Infrastructure Planning Commission but now absorbed into the Planning Inspectorate as the Major Infrastructure Planning Unit). They work to guidance in the form of National Policy Statements, issued by central government and agreed by Parliament; the final decision on the project has been transferred to the Secretary of State (from the Commissioners) under the Localism Act.

Thus, these new reforms would appear to reinforce a form of localism that exists in the shadow of centralism (Brownill & Carpenter, 2009) where the "tools of metagovernance remain with the centre" (Barnett, 2011: 287). Nevertheless, the localism agenda sees a new and enhanced role for local communities in planning their areas and this raises a number of key issues that deserve exploration. The first concerns the question of who is likely to get involved in localist planning. The second addresses the criticism that localism is likely to foster NIMBYism and prevent issues of the broader 'collective good' being considered. Finally, the extent to which localism will alter power dynamics and engender action towards implementation of community-generated plans must be questioned. There are sound reasons to suggest that the

concept of social capital may be useful in assessing these questions, as the next section outlines.

THE USES OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Over the past 20 years there has been a clear and sustained interest in social capital that has impacted on both academic and policy communities. Whilst some have considered it to be a "chaotic" concept (Healey *et al*, 1999), a great deal of effort has gone into clarifying and strengthening it through both finding methods to measure its endowments (Lin and Fu, 2001; Putnam, 2001), and also in further subdividing the concept into different types or forms to better facilitate analysis (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001; Rydin and Holman, 2004). Central to all definitions of social capital is the understanding that networks imbued with trust, norms and values can operate to impact on numerous problems including community cohesion and broader collective action.

There have been two broad uses of the social capital concept relevant to planning. Firstly, academics have used it to help better explain community engagement and activism. This has been based on the identification of bonding social capital within communities (see Portes and Landolt, 1996; Woolcock, 1998; Rydin and Holman, 2004). Bonding social capital is typified by strong links, homogenous actors, common norms particularly of trust, but also reciprocity and mutuality. It is often thought of as the 'glue' that binds groups together. Friendship and kinship networks would well-describe bonding social capital, but one must always be cognisant of the fact that these networks may be forces for social good and mutual support or they may harbour negative properties that create suspicious and inward looking groups that form factions (Vervisch, 2011). Nevertheless social capital has been lauded for fostering a sense of community identity and leading to community activism. It particularly fosters participation by community members through the exercise of 'soft sanctions' of blame for non-participation and the creation of positive solidarity benefits from interacting with other members of the community (Chong, 1991; Magnani and Struffi, 2009).

Secondly, social capital has been used in policy contexts to analyse the governance of policy formulation and implementation. This has involved attention to networks of heterogeneous actors and the identification of the benefits of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) more typical of stakeholder engagement in consultation and other policy exercises. This has been captured in a number of variants of the social capital concept.

Bridging social capital is used to describe weak horizontal ties between heterogeneous groups of actors who may nevertheless share some common norms. If bonding capital is the 'glue' that binds groups together, Putnam has described bridging capital as a sort of "sociological WD40" (2000: 19) that enables diverse groups to 'get along' and allow communities to create more outwardly oriented networks (Elliot et al, 2010). Again, antisocial outcomes have sometimes been tied to bridging social capital with the case of drug cartels in Columbia cited as a prime example (Vervisch, 2011). Linking social capital is a subset of bridging social capital with ties between heterogeneous groups, but this time scaled upwards and 'linked' to actors with power or resources. Woolcock (2000) describes this type of social capital as performing the work of getting connected groups ahead by providing them with access to key actors at a higher tier. Here again, Vervisch (2011) also warns us that 'unresponsive' or 'exploitative' linking capital can also have its 'dark sides' by blocking other important developments in the network. Finally, bracing social capital has been used to describe a combination of bridging and bonding social capital but with more attention paid to network form and the combination of weak and strong ties that define that form. Bracing capital is not simply a group level attribute; it also helps us to identify hubs within networks, and therefore network manager who can be important for operationalising connections across the network and facilitating policy work (Rydin & Holman, 2004; Rydin & Falleth, 2006).

Planning under localism brings together community engagement and policy work in a ways that suggests that both these dimensions of social capital will be relevant. Thus it is apposite to consider how far the concept of social capital can help us understand the potential of localist planning. We consider this under the heading of three key questions about how localist planning will work in practice.

WILL PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH LOCALIST PLANNING?

One of the major problems that the planning system has faced over the years is generating sufficient, meaningful and constructive participation in plan-making and planning decision-making from among local communities. The 'affectedness principle' suggests that all those individuals affected by an issue should be involved in its determination (Barnett, 2011: 281), and various methods have been used to try and engender this engagement. These have ranged from the more usual publicity campaigns and consultation exercises, through to innovative deliberative measures such as citizens' juries, deliberative panels and charrettes (Sanoff, 2000; Andrews et al, 2008). More

hands-on forms of engagement have also been pioneered by tools such as Planning For Real (see www.planningforreal.org.uk/) or PlanLoCal (see www.cse.org.uk).

However, while the more innovative measures seem to deliver a higher quality of engagement they are resource intensive and, by definition, can only involve a smaller number of people. Furthermore, all these methods have difficulty in reaching a wider range of community representatives beyond the 'usual suspects'. This has led some critics to point out that "how 'publics' are constituted within planning and within consultation exercises has been shown to be itself exclusionary" (Brownill, 2009: 366). The reforms being made under the localism umbrella need to be cognisant of these criticisms if they are to truly deliver a new participatory form of planning system.

One of the key aims, therefore, of localist planning will be to break the collective action problem that constrains participation (Rydin & Pennington, 2000) and engage a much wider cross-section of the local population in the in-depth and detailed work of creating NPs. The collective action problem refers to the way that for many people, the current and certain costs of participating in planning outweigh the uncertain and future benefits, as seen from the point of view of community members. It further points to the tendency for people to free-ride on the participation of others on the basis of a judgement that their own personal contribution is unlikely to make much discernible difference and therefore the time investment associated with participation is not commensurate with its rewards. The social capital literature suggests that building social capital can help resolve this collective action problem.

The key idea is that building social capital within a local community (or mix of communities) will create links between people that are imbued with certain key norms. It is these norms that build commitment and encourage people to reframe their incentive structure so as to participate in an activity that otherwise would fall foul of the collective action problem. People will participate if they feel they have a mutual interest in doing so and that there will be reciprocal benefits forthcoming from their making the commitment to participate (Holman, 2007, 2008). In addition, trust between those involved in a localist planning exercise will cement the commitment further. Should this be insufficient to produce significant participation, the wider networks of social capital will then create the opportunity for the soft sanctions of blame and shame to be exercised, stigmatising those who fail to join in (Chong, 1991: Magnani and Struffi, 2009).

The question is whether the shift towards localism will also shift attitudes to participation. Planning under localism presents itself as planning by local communities for local communities. As noted by Shona Dunn, Director of Planning at the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Localism Act, alongside other reforms to the planning system, aims to change both the mindsets and the behaviours of communities with respect to planning, persuading them that they may directly influence their locale (RTPI 2011). As such, she is suggesting that the chances of participation at the community level having an impact on the plans drawn up, and the planning decisions made, is much greater under localism. The perception of such an impact could itself alter the scale and nature of participation.

The social capital concept would suggest that, where close bonds exist within a community, the embedding of the notion that control within the planning system is now vested in local communities could alter the incentive structure for participation and lead to significantly more involvement (Stoker, 2004). And those who readily see the value of engaging in neighbourhood planning exercises may then pressure others, also, to become involved. Thus, building bonding social capital and creating the conditions for successful neighbourhood planning (in terms of participation) go hand in hand. Where such bonding social capital is present, it will be easier to generate more participation; and, furthermore, successful localist planning is likely to generate more bonding social capital, creating a virtuous cycle. However, it should be noted that whilst this type of collectivity can emerge, it generally does so over time, and some would suggest that it does so best within a clear organisational framework that allows participation to be generated slowly through a reflexive process rather than suddenly through the creation of a new regime (Haus & Klausen, 2011).

However, as alluded to above, while this picture is attractive, there are likely to be pitfalls. Much of its success depends on people being convinced of the importance of their role within neighbourhood planning exercises. Lay-folk may not care sufficiently about the impacts of planning policy to get involved; there are more important things in their daily lives. The 'promises' of localist planning may not be believed sufficiently to outweigh the costs in terms of effort, disturbance to routines, and childcare and transport costs that accompany participation; communities may not trust government to leave the future of their locality in their hands. The role given to business within neighbourhood planning, the threats from centrally-sanctioned infrastructure development, and the presumption in favour of growth may all result in the incentive

structure remaining firmly weighted against participation. In addition, the work involved in localist planning could be quite considerable and this is highly likely to vary between localities depending on local environmental, economic and social contexts. In turn, this may require more input than attendance at previous planning consultation exercises. Thus the impact of the promise of control has to be seen against the greater burden of participation that localism envisages. This may constrain participation to only the most committed of local activists.

A further issue is that the idea of a virtuous cycle within localist planning depends on the notion of strong bonding social capital within local communities. However, a strongly bonded community can also be a firmly bounded one, with the 'dark side' of exclusionary social capital coming to the fore. Strong bonding social capital also generally assumes relatively homogeneous communities. However, communities are usually diverse and bonding links typically connect sub-groups within the broader local population rather than tie all that population together equally. For localism to work, it will therefore be necessary to build linkages – bridging social capital – across these diverse groups and, more problematically, to imbue them with common norms. On its own, bonding social capital can entrench insular pockets of community activism. Therefore, it needs to be accompanied by bridging social capital to further solidify and enforce community linkages across networks.

One key way to build both bridging and bonding social capital is to identify a 'common threat' that affects all local groups within the community (Pennington and Rydin, 2000). As McClymont and O'Hare (2008) found when studying two such cases, the threat of specific and imminent unwanted development can result in stronger community ties and significant activity as disparate groups come together to protect 'their community'. Yet creating a network within a community that is strongly connected and highly active to generate plans and manage development will be much more difficult as these activities are often more abstract and less immediate. Much will depend on how substantial the perceived benefits generated from the development are, and how those benefits are to be distributed across local households. If the incentive to participate broadly across a community is to be maintained, those benefits will have to be shared broadly as well.

WILL PLANNING PROBLEMS BE FRAMED IN PURELY LOCAL TERMS?

The main criticism that has been levelled at the localist planning agenda thus far is that it will foster NIMBYism: that is, neighbourhood-scale planning will embed an 'anti-development' bias within the planning system (and we have indicated above how this may go hand-in-hand with closely bonded local communities based on threats from 'outside'). Understood from a social capital perspective, this is about the 'dark-side' of the concept (Portes and Landolt, 1996). It particularly refers to the potential for bonding social capital to create such a dense set of local network ties that the community becomes cut off from the influence of outside perspectives.

From a planning perspective this would mean that only local, neighbourhood concerns get taken into account, potentially rendering the interests of individuals, groups or organisations outside the network as automatically illegitimate regardless of whether there is any merit in meeting their requirements. This could mean that meeting the needs of businesses for premises, or new households for accommodation, is more difficult to achieve. It could also mean that developments that meet a broader public interest might be resisted – including the classic 'LULUs' (or Locally Unwanted Land Uses) such as waste treatment facilities. An excellent example of this is provided by Aldrich and Crook (2008) discussing the siting of mobile homes in neighbourhoods in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. Rather than strong bonding social capital resulting in networks of social support, this very 'social good' had negative outcomes in that these organisations concomitantly helped to block the siting of unwanted relief housing in their neighbourhoods. Aldrich (2008) further found that measures of <u>low</u> civil society activity in Japan were the best predictors of positive siting decisions for nuclear power plants, airports and dams. What both these cases illustrate is that areas with stronger levels of social capital are better able to resist and sometimes deflect unwanted land uses.

Currently the proposed system is relying on the financial inducement of the New Homes Bonus and the current tools of S106 agreements and CIL to deliver benefits from new development that will encourage local communities to incorporate such development into their NPs. It will however require a degree of skill – presumably arising from the professional support from local authority or private sector planners to local communities (perhaps funded by wealthier residents or business interests) – to produce a plan that generates sufficient benefits to convince those communities of the benefits of growth or

intensification or new non-residential land uses. Currently the skills of place-making and of negotiating amendments to planning applications are attuned to balancing local concerns with a broader perspective on desirable change in the locality, and both occur within the broader structure set by the Local Development Framework. The new system provides a financial driver for residential growth in an attempt to overcome the potential NIMBYist tendencies of a strongly bonded local community actively involved in neighbourhood planning but fails to consider the broader planning task involved in spatially structuring land uses and the location of new development.

Co-ordination across development plans in multiple neighbourhoods or at different scales could also be undermined by excessively localist tendencies fostered by strongly bonded local communities. The danger of fostering bonding and even bridging social capital within local communities in the pursuit of localist planning is that it will be at the expense of bridging ties outside that community and linking ties to organisations at a greater scale or covering a wider territory. In terms of multi-level governance this could represent a failure to 'scale-up' or 'work sideways' with other stakeholders (Lundqvist, 2004). What is needed to ensure that these non-local interests are taken into account is that the networks of actors involved in planning include ties outwards to representatives of heterogeneous and non-local actors. Thus, a mechanism needs to be created whereby those engaged in neighbourhood planning encounter actors that speak for other interests in order to debate and recognise the legitimacy of those interests. While it might be expected that local communities may not recognise the interests of every business or household that wishes to locate in their area, debate within the localist planning arena might at least confront the community with the needs of non-locals and, in particular, the consequences of not providing for key facilities that serve the broader society.

At present, localist planning will have to rely on the new 'duty to co-operate' set out in S.110 of the Localism Act to achieve this bigger picture and, in particular, to ensure co-ordination of neighbourhood plans with other plans in other localities and at other scales.   In short, the 'duty to co-operate' "...will ensure that local authorities and other public bodies are involved in a continual process of active engagement to maximise the effectiveness of working on strategic planning issues and the preparation of local plans." (DCLG, 2011b). However, as currently written, the duty does not appear to direct neighbourhood forums or parish councils to interact with one another. Rather the local authority is left with the duty to co-ordinate the multiplicity of neighbourhood

plans in their area, but without any apparent means of doing so given that the power and responsibility of neighbourhood planning is vested on more local forums. Generating vital bridging and linking social capital amongst and between communities and organisations that share boundaries and territories could be an important way to generate some co-ordination under localism.

WILL ANYTHING HAPPEN AFTER PLANS ARE DRAWN UP?

To be effective, the new planning regime must not just draw up plans, but also deliver them. Failures of implementation could, themselves, be a significant barrier to building up community involvement in the planning exercise itself (as explained above). Studies into parish plans and town plans, upon which some feel this new system was developed, suggest that residents are far more likely to engage with topics like traffic calming, litter and other 'quality of life' issues than they are to tackle more abstract land-use planning problems (Bishop, 2010). In part, this is due to the fact that topics like litter abatement and traffic calming are 'action-and-results-oriented', where residents can readily see the results of their participation and evaluate its effectiveness. However, the outcome of participatory efforts and the eventual implementation of NPs raises key issues regarding power and resources, upon which there has been much recent scholarship (Ross & Osborne, 1999; Sullivan, 2005; Taylor *et al* 2005; Sinclair, 2011).

There is nothing in the new system of NPs that makes planning more proactive and action oriented in terms of bringing land and development forward to achieve plan outcomes; nor does it seek to address power imbalances that may occur in neighbourhood planning exercises. For change to occur, communities still must rely on sufficient investment by developers, companies or agencies to be implemented. Therefore, not only do the networks of local communities need to be considered in terms of 'how' their social capital is built up and nurtured over time. But also, we need to understand the nature and longevity of networks and social capital developed between local authorities, business organisations and developers, as these linkages could impede the progress of community-led planning.

The lens of social capital is useful in shedding light on a number of aspects of power and implementation within the localist planning frame. For example, the works of Sullivan (2005), Taylor *et al* (2005) and Sinclair (2011) all point to the real difficulties voluntary organisations found in community planning due to power imbalances.

Firstly, Sullivan (2005) noted that despite an often real desire on the part of the local authority to involve voluntary organisations in planning, implementation and decision making, local authorities found that they did not necessarily require the input of these groups to operate effectively. Both Taylor *et al* (2005) looking at voluntary and community organisations in England, and Sinclair (2011) examining Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland, have also shown that these groups are simply not given the same weight and value in partnerships as are businesses and formal public sector partners.

The reason for this would appear to be that the resources that community groups 'bring to the table' in terms of plan preparation and implementation are small when compared to their business and public sector colleagues' resources for achieving urban change. Those voluntary and community groups that do get valued tend to be those that "...have something to trade", be that good quality evidence for the policy process; novel policy ideas; or help in delivering and implementing policy locally (especially engaging 'hard-to-reach' groups) (Taylor *et al*, 2011: 7). Here, again, we see a role for bonding social capital, where groups have built up over time around a common interest and therefore have either local specialist knowledge (this especially holds true for environmental groups - Taylor *et al*, 2005) or networks that allow for access to groups not normally reached by local government.

Linking social capital networks are also particularly important because they involve resource flows into and out-of local communities. For example, as businesses have now been invited into the process of creating NPs, situations could occur where the bridging and linking capital between businesses and local authorities is strengthened by localist planning, shaping local policy agendas and development outcomes. This might 'trump' any strong ties formed between and within local community groups. In such a situation, a strong community perspective on neighbourhood planning may not prevent the agenda being dominated by economic development interests. Indeed, the presumption in favour of sustainable development already sets a structural condition by strengthening the ties of developers within their networks compared to those of communities.

The Community Infrastructure Levy and the New Homes Bonus are in the established tradition of planning gain, allowing some local benefits to be funded through taking a share of development profit or development land gains (as discussed above). However, they are not means of implementation of complete NPs in themselves. The Localism

Act does make provision for community assets to be designated in a list, with a view to providing a 6 month pause to any proposed disposal and giving the local community a change to bid for an asset. This is largely with a view to preserving their role in supporting community services; however, the latter mechanism does raise the possibility of communities adding the power of landownership to that of strong network ties. While community assets, themselves, may play only a marginal part in making communities more able to implement their neighbourhood plans, the 'community right to build' may be important, as it will provide a mechanism for community groups (such as community interest companies or Community Development Trusts) to own and develop land as a collective enterprise. The community right to build is effectively a special form of NDO specifically permitted community development. This follows in the spirit of the original Garden Cities movement (although on a much smaller scale). Here the landownership resource may imbue community networks with much more implementation power. But it will not do so on its own; creating such an organisation will, of necessity, open up community networks to engagement with a wider range of actors in order to deliver the desired development outcome.

From a social capital perspective, to achieve implementation of their plans the community needs to situate itself within networks that go outside the tight community ties of bonding social capital. The ties that need to be built here are rather specific and oriented towards bringing the necessary resources into the enterprise to deliver the desired investment (see also Stone, 1989 and Holman, 2007 on network power). The bracing social capital concept describes this mix of strong and weak bonds, bringing some clusters of homogeneous actors (as within the local community) together but also connecting them to heterogeneous actors outside the community (development expertise, finance sources, etc.) in a very targeted way. The network and mix of actors and ties needs to be tailored according to the needs of the development activity and mobilise norms of mutuality (in pursuit of a common development enterprise), reciprocity (to release and apply all the necessary resources: financial, organisational and political) and trust (to ensure the smooth working of the network over the time-scale of the development activity).

CONCLUDING ON THE VALUE OF THE SOCIAL CAPITAL CONCEPT IN UNDERSTAND LOCALIST PLANNING

The Localism Act seeks to engender a new enthusiasm and appetite for planning at the neighbourhood level. Whilst this is arguably a noble aim, and certainly something that planners have been trying to achieve since the Skeffington Report of 1969, there are a number of issues that have to be considered. We have outlined these using the lens of social capital to help us understand how these dilemmas may play out under the new system. Considering the combination of network ties with the norms operating through the network sheds a new light on how the planning reforms might work and the difficulties they might encounter.

The first issue concerns engendering participation beyond the usual suspects, and breaking the collective action problem. Here we have demonstrated how the building of networks based on shared norms could encourage participatory action that might not otherwise have taken place. In terms of social capital this relies on a delicate balance of bonding and bridging capital to create norms of participation across a diverse community. However, we have also underscored that the emphasis on a pro-growth agenda and the elements of control that remain outside the local community may undermine the ability of such social capital to build participation, since the underlying promise of neighbourhood planning to deliver what local communities want for their area may not be believed and may not off-set the considerable effort involved in neighbourhood planning.

Secondly, we tackled the issue of NIMBYism illustrating how too much bonding social capital can cause communities to look inwards and fail to consider more strategic and cross-boundary issues. The formal duty to co-operate (written into the Act) that requires various neighbourhoods to come together to examine important strategic issues may be insufficient. What is needed is a mechanism that encourages networks of bridging links to overcome the inherent tendency of localism to produce inward-oriented plans at the community scale.

Finally, the question of action needs to be asked of the localism agenda. Whilst there are elements contained within the Act that would allow for the community to purchase local assets, there is little to help them to realise their plans since these require outside investment over which the community has little control. What local action for

neighbourhood plans will require is the generation of linking social capital and carefully designed bracing capital networks, bringing together key actors with key resources to achieve implementation, perhaps within institutions such as Community Development Trusts.

Localist planning could work provided that bonding and bridging capital is fostered to deliver participation, and the mutual ties within a community are not undermined by the threat of a dominant pro-development agenda. Such planning could take a broader perspective, considering the needs of communities in neighbouring locations and at broader scales if networks of bridging ties are developed. And plans could result in changes on the ground in line with community wishes if attention is directed to the specific combination of bracing and linking ties that are needed to deliver the resources and commitment needed for implementation.   While not wishing to argue ourselves for neighbourhood planning or to claim that the generation of social capital with communities is always beneficial, there does seem to be merit in using the window offered by localist planning to ensure that patterns of development achieve greater legitimacy with those local communities. To achieve this will require careful attention to how social linkages and associated norms are developed within local areas.

In making this analysis of the prospects and challenges for localist planning, we have also sought to test out the value of the social capital concept to understanding such changes in the landscape of local governance. We contend that this has demonstrated the considerable value of such an analysis. We have attempted to emphasise the importance of the networks that local communities are part of, and the norms and resources embedded in those networks. The varieties of social capital that the literature identifies are useful in nuancing the analysis and highlight different aspects of the ties that local communities have internally and externally. And the emphasis on relationships within networks is useful in identifying the dynamics of community involvement and non-involvement in planning exercises.

However, there are some limitations to the concept that are also brought out by our analysis. First, it is difficult sometime to distance social capital from the very normative use made of it, particularly within the practitioner literature, where it is almost always seen as a positive feature of communities. It is important to retain a neutral stance on the building of social capital to allow its analytic potential to be demonstrated. Second, while the concept of linking social capital explicitly covers

connections across scale, there is much in the dynamics of multi-level governance that is not captured in the concept and that deserves attention; this includes organisational and institutional arrangements across tiers of government, the embedded nature of certain policy discourses at different levels and the flow of resources across tiers, levels and territories. Generally one might argue that the social capital concept, while it can engage with issues of resources and power, does not itself fully incorporate them. This is a limitation as our discussion of planning in the face of power to achieve change on the ground shows. Social capital analysis operates at a micro, if not pico level and thus needs to be embedded in a broader institutional analysis for the full picture.

Finally, it should be recognised that such networks are not static. The concept of social capital, by using a 'stock' metaphor, can suggest that some communities have more and others less social capital 'in the community bank'. And indeed, a focus on networks can emphasise this by providing a snapshot of relationships within a community or locality at a point in time. However it is important to recognise that such networks are dynamic. The social capital – of whatever kind – inherent within a network can be created or destroyed; can atrophy or grow. This means that there is scope to 'shape' networks in order to deliver more effective planning (see Holman, 2008). We have identified above how networks should be shaped in order to deliver effective localist planning. Currently the rhetoric of localism is in danger of delivering only failed promises and thwarted desires for local communities. However, planners could regain a key role under the new agenda by focussing on how they could actively build the networks and specific forms of social capital needed in order achieve participation, frame localist planning in broader terms by injecting much needed planning skills into the neighbourhood planning exercise, and deliver development that meets community needs and wishes by actively considering the necessary resources and engaging with those who have the power to deliver such change.

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